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INSPIRATION AND SOURCES OF UTOPIA

by Charles Schuetz

Thesis presented to the Faculty of Social, Economic and Political Science of the University of Ottawa, as partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Master's degree.

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INTRODUCTION

The course of history greatly resembles the flighting flow of a stream with its ever-changing run, its whirling vortices and its hidden currents, constantly supported and nourished by influxes from all sides. Likewise the vivacity of movement varies, at times growing into a raging torrent which breaks out of its embankments, tearing down linking bridges, crushing rocks which before were respectfully courted and devastating fertile cultivations in its impetuous superabundance of power and energy.

The 16th century presents an example of such a vehement outburst of elementary forces in which revolutionizing changes precipitate in a torrential swiftness. Man was dazzled by the glaring brilliance of the immense possibilities which offered themselves when he looked away from God and saw nature. He was so much blinded that he endeavoured to find true progress and happiness in this world and began to conquer it with youthful enthusiasm. This craving for an intimate possession of nature led man to dissect the human body, to adventure voyages of discovery and to pry into the universe. A host of new sciences recorded the acquired knowledge with the inestimable help of the invention of the art of printing. The greatest painters and sculptors honoured nature in their masterpieces. The desire for wordly happiness induced man to

build up an economic system which, together with fundamental changes in politics and religion, brought about this entirely different social structure which came to be called "the modern world".

In England, these profound changes did not pass by in the same manner as on the continent but were marked by quite peculiar characteristics. During the Middle Ages, the British Isles lay rather remote from the main centers of culture and Christianity. This found among others its expression in the fact that the feudal structure of society was never as deeply rooted as on the continent, thus making the country more accessible to changes in the social setup which were further facilitated by the almost complete destruction of the nobility in the Wars of the Roses. The situation of this foggy island was completely reversed following the discovery of the New World. Suddenly, England was thrown right into the path of the main traffic. She did not only hold an immensely advantageous position with regard to the New Continent but her population was especially apt to play an important role due to its traditional occupation as seamen. This favoured the establishment of England's leadership in the new development.

These essential changes reached a torrential rapidity hardly matched anywhere else. The transition from the medieval to the modern and enlightened period was practically accomplished in the first half of the 16th century, especially under the reign of Henry VIII. During the first years of that

century, England still adhered to the Roman Church, her great number of monasteries practiced their beneficent work and her peasantry lived from the produce of the common fields. Half a century later, England was a national state with a national church, the monasteries were destroyed or secularized and the common fields became more and more a prey of the Enclosure Act.

These fundamental changes supplied the atmosphere in which the author of the "Utopia", St. Thomas More (1477 - 1535), lived. When he was in his teens America was discovered; when he was a young man, Vasco da Gama made his famous voyage; and, when he had reached the age of 55, Elcano returned from the circumnavigation of the globe which Magellan had begun. Almost a quarter of a century before More's birth the Turks captured Constantinople and six years before his death they besieged Vienna for the first time. One year after the publication of his "Utopia" (1516), Martin Luther nailed his Theses to the door of the castle church of Wittenberg. During More's childhood, the last English feudal war came to an end on Bosworth Field, and he lived to hear the proclamation of the Act of Supremacy. His birth fell in the same year William Caxton printed the first book in England, yet during his lifetime More made a quite familiar use of this new invention in his disputes and controversies.

During the five centuries since the discovery of the art of printing, many books have been written but only a few

of them continued the tradition of the initiating issue. A great number of those books which manifolded writings of inferior quality, achieved a surprising popularity and influence. Although the "Utopia" of St. Thomas More cannot pride itself as an influential bestseller, it, nevertheless, represents a book which contains logic and sage ideas. Even if this is denied by people who presumptuously deem themselves to be wiser than the English genius; the "Utopia" has an extraordinary quality in as much as it affords a very deep insight into the currents of thought which were at work at the time of these fundamental changes of the early 16th century.

St. Thomas More stands at the crossroads of two contrary sets of conceptions. There are universal, absolute, objective, spiritual and hyper-social ideas in opposition to the increasing, individualistic, subjectivist, materialistic and democratic forces.

This thesis intends to discover the peculiar ideas and influences which motivate the character of the commonwealth in "Utopia". Due to the genius of More, there is a great variety of different subjects which have to be considered in order to arrive at a complete picture and a valid conclusion. These points of the subject-matter will be treated under six more or less general headings which will cover the entire range of human relations by dealing with the general, the social, the judicial, the economic, the governmental and the religious conditions.

It is certainly not utopian to attempt such an analysis which yields a threefold harvest. The immediate benefit is derived from a deeper insight into the somewhat controversial "Utopia". Secondly, this study offers a better appreciation of the character and ideas of the author of this book. Finally, a panoramic survey is obtained which displays all the different ideas and theories which were current at that time of fundamental changes. All this is attained besides the humanitarian and idealistic qualities which every true utopian effort has to comprise.

CHAPTER I

UTOPIA

The most significant monument of St. Thomas More has not been hewn into marble but it has been engraved on a living being, the language. Most of the European languages have kept alive the memory of this great Englishman by the introduction and use of the word derived from the title of his book, "Utopia". Thus, in English, the word 'utopia' connotes three different meanings which are only distinguished by the variation in the way of writing it. If written with quotation marks, More's book is meant. If the word 'utopia' begins with a capital letter, it denotes the island described by More, and spelled with a small 'u', it means an ideal, unattainable state of things in general. This chapter treats of the first and the second meaning only. To deal with the former meaning becomes necessary because of the great diversity of opinions concerning this subject. Under the latter meaning, the influences are demonstrated which can be traced in the merely accidental condition and situation of this immaginary island.

"Utopia"

During his last days, Thomas More, prompted by his sad experience, said about his book that, " 'since men by their own default misconstrue and take harm from the very scripture of God', they might also take harm from 'a work that I have written ere this, albeit there be no harm therein' ".[1] Although people might not have taken too much harm from the "Utopia", the amount of misconstruction was and still is very extensive[2]. There are two principal questions about which almost every possible answer has been given. First of all, scholars have been unable to agree as to whether the ideas expressed in the "Utopia" were only wild fancies and dreams or were meant to be taken seriously, either word by word, or in an elastic manner of gradation. The second point of wild dissension occurs among those who refuse to deny the seriousness of More's ideas. In this case the misconstruction reaches such fantastic proportions that everything between a snow-white saint and a deep red communist

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[1] W. . Campbell, More's Utopia and His Social Teachings (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1930), pp. 24 - 25, quoting from English Works, p. 873 G.

[2] Richard O'Sullivan, The King's Good Servant (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1948).pp. 28 -29, from a paper presented by W. . Campbell, "The Utopia of Sir Thomas More", pp. 26 - 39.

is attributed to Thomas More[1]. It might be rather difficult and lengthy to provide a well-attested solution out of this dark labyrinth of conflicting opinions. Nevertheless, it is necessary to establish one opinion which seems to possess the greatest proximity to More's intention and which serves as standard for this treatise. In the matter of the first question this will be done immediately, but the second question is so intimately connected with the subject matter of this paper that it will be discussed whenever necessary, especially since in this case the conflicting opinions are mostly based only on certain aspects or points and do not concern the entire work.

To clarify the first question, it is necessary to find out whether the ideas expressed in the "Utopia" are meant to be seriously or not, as some writers maintain who

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[1]H. W. Donner, Introduction to Utopia (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1945), p. 3.: "More who suffered martyrdom in the cause of an undivided Christendom and who has been canonized by the Roman Church, has, as the author of the "Utopia", been elevated to the Bolshevist hierarchy, and his feast is celebrated in the calendar of the Red Army". He refers also to F. Engels, "Die Entwicklung des Sozialismus von der Utopie zur Wissenschaft" (The Development of Socialism from the Utopia to Science). Also:

Theodore Maynard, Humanist as Hero (New York: The MacMillan Comp., 1947), p. 86, refers to Karl Kautsky's book "Thomas More and the Utopia". Also:

R. W. Chambers, Thomas More (London: Jonathan Cape, 1938), p. 374, tells about a letter of the "Karl Marx - Engels Institute of the Central Executive Committee of the Union of Soviet Republics" seeking information about that great communist Sir Thomas More.

call More a dreamer[1] and his "Utopia" the saddest of fairy tales"[2]. This opinion is based on two main assertions. On the one hand it is maintained that the ideas expounded in the "Utopia" are chimerical and possess no practical value. Even if this were true--a question which will be touched upon in the following chapters--it does not disprove More's seriousness. On the other hand, it is said that the names which More gives to different localities, to his interlocutor and even to the book itself, reveal clearly his intention to make fun[3]. The argument would be cogent if these names were obvious to every reader. But More wrote the Utopia in Latin and obscured the peculiar meaning of the proper names by taking them from the Greek language which, at that time was only known to a few scholars. Therefore the character of these names leads rather to the conclusion that More addressed in his "Utopia" two types of readers and that he wished it to be taken seriously at least by the larger group, the great mass which was ignorant of the Greek language. With regard to the

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[1] Richard O'Sullivan, The King's Good Servant, p. [illegible], refers to Prof. [illegible] Powicke, "The Reformation in England", vol. [illegible], p. 353

[2] George Catlin, The Story of Political Philosophers (New York, Tudor Publishing Co.), p. [illegible]43.

[3] Marie Louise Berneri, Journey through Utopia (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951), p. [illegible], footnote. "Utopia" means "nowhere", "[illegible]", "the [illegible] who has no people", "Amaurot", the capital means 'shadow-town' and the name of the river "Anider" means waterless.

[4] W. E. Campbell, More's Utopia and His Social Teaching, pp. 11[illegible] - 11[illegible], Hythloday means "an expert in nonsense".

second group, the meaning of these names indicated only the non-entity of Utopia[1] and not that the writer produced only nonsense.

There are several reasons to hold to the seriousness of the "Utopia": First of all, Thomas More himself was a serious man for whom it was a principle of living, not to waste time. He would have considered the writing of nonsense as unworthy. Moreover, if Henry VIII tried to lure him into his court[2] it was because of his exceptional qualities, and certainly not in order to get a new fool or jester. This development must also be considered as one of the main causes which provoked More to write his book. He was conscious of the responsibility which he would have to assume if he entered the service of his king, a fact which must have kept him from treating politics playfully. Another reason which inspired More to write the "Utopia", lay in the conditions of his time. He knew how serious the situation was and intended to find remedies rather than to present an entertaining satire. Consequently, More employed the Latin language which served at that time as medium of discussion in matters of importance. The letters of dedication which preceded the edition of the "Utopia", represent a further custom indicating the

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[1] W. E. Campbell, More's Utopia and His Social Teachings pp. 115 - 116.

[2] Ibid., p. 36.

weightiness of the book in the eyes of its author. As a matter of fact, Thomas More was most interested in the reactions of the scholars[1]. This proves that he wished the second group of readers who knew the true meaning of the proper names, to take his book seriously.

Among those who accept the seriousness of the "Utopia", a peculiar custom has spread widely, namely to maintain that "he (More) is neither wholly serious . . . nor is it all a joke"[2]. This opinion must be made responsible for the vast diversity of opinions concerning More. It offers everybody the excellent possibility to accept whatever idea he thinks fit in support of his own opinion, degrading the rest to a joke. Thus we find St. Thomas More throning in the illustrious company of communistic, revolutionary heroes on account of his description of the property situation in Utopia, the very deed for which less materialistic minded judges make him leisurely promenade in Plato's Academy.

Considering the "Utopia", three main purposes seem to be intended: Relating to the author, the scholars and the mass of the people. When Thomas More served as ambassador to

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[1] E. E. Reynolds, Saint Thomas More (London: Burns Oates, 1953), p. 116.

[2] Donner, op. cit. p. 17. This author uses the expression 'patent absurdity' which he appends to some ideas of More, as the idea to mark criminals by chains of gold, despite the fact that he shows in the same instance that Hythloday himself points to the example of the ancient Romans. p. 57 and p. 105.

Flanders, where he found the opportunity to write the second book of the "Utopia", he was meditating upon the stand he should take concerning the entreaties of Henry VIII to join the court[1]. Two main problems in particular had to be solved: Whether he should refuse the king's invitation or not and, in the latter case, which policy he would advise to be followed in the establishment and maintainance of social harmony. In writing the "Utopia", More, perhaps unconsciously, employed a psychological remedy in the solution of his conflict[2]. He did not want to formulate political dogmas, because he was too humble to do so[3]. The "Utopia" was certainly not a declaration of policy[4] or of his intention to put the plan in reality. Nevertheless, the "Utopia" suggests the direction in which the "best state of a commonwealth"[5] lies. When More wrote his "Utopia", it was a time of unrest and war, but the great schisms were not yet effected, so that the possibility

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[1] Campbell, More's Utopia and His Social Teachings, p. 36.

[2] Berneri, op. cit., p. 62.

[3] Campbell, More's Utopia and His Social Teachings. pp. 43 - 49.

[4] Donner, op. cit., p. 23, opposes the opinion of Prof. Herman Oncken who maintained that the description of the Utopian commonwealth constitutes More's political ideal and the "Utopia" the program of a budding politician. - Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie, phil.-hist. Kl. 1922

[5] Thomas More, Utopia and a Dialogue of Comfort. trans. Ralph Robinson (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1951. Everyman's Library, 461), p. 13, subtitle of "Utopia".

of reconciliation and reforms in a peaceful manner were still possible.[1] But this required profound changes in the opposite direction to the evils of the time in order to save the situation and the social harmony. It was the essential idea of More and his "Utopia" that the course of development had to be turned around. Hence, Utopia represents a heathen community to show that the heathen Utopians are much more Christian than the Christians of his time

The purpose of the "Utopia" with regard to his fellow scholars, must be found in the wish to make them aware of his ideas and, in case of approval, to work along these lines together with the leading heads of that time. It seems to be beyond doubt that he had Henry VIII particularly in mind.

The third purpose, though not primarily intended, referred to the mass of the people. In this respect, More wanted to give his "Utopia" the appearance of a true report on an existing commonwealth[2] in order to inspire the common man by a good example. This aim can be much better achieved if Utopia is accepted as true than if everybody knows that it does not exist.

Thomas More chose the dialogue form for his "Utopia". This has been said to indicate the influence of Plato who

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[1] Donner, op. cit., p. 10. and:
[illegible]rner: op. cit., p. 56.

[2] Reynolds, op. cit., p. 327.

used the same form only with the difference that he built his "Republic" in a logical process of reasoning and More presented his principles in working conditions[1]. Another opinion attributes More's choice to his study of Lucian's as well as Plato's writings.[2] On the contrary Campbell points out that More's dialogue represents the old scholastic form of disputation which grew into this lengthier form of discussion on account of the discovery of the art of printing.[3] More himself did not leave us any hint why he chose the dialogue form. It might be correct to assume that neither of the above sources influenced his choice exclusively, but that he felt this form to be best fitted for his purpose and that it was in frequent use as a philosophic tradition of that time.[4]

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[1] A. L. Morton, The English Utopia, (London: Lawrence, 1952), p. 41.

[2] Reynolds, op. cit., p. 64, and p. 120.

[3] W. E. Campbell, More's Utopia and His Social Teachings, p. 26, and Erasmus, Tyndale and More (London: Eyre and Spottiswood Ltd., 194[illegible]) pp. [illegible]7 - [illegible]8. He maintains that in such a written discussion "the disputant upon any particular thesis first of all enumerated fairly and at full strength the main objections to his own opinion. Then having some general and formal reason for a contrary view, he goes on to justify it as strongly but as concisely as may be, and answers for each objection". This, Campbell says, must be kept in mind when reading the "Utopia". "Where he (More) accurately, through the mouth of Hythloday, expresses the contentions of communism, and as clearly differs from them in his own proper person".

[4] Donner, op. cit., pp. 15 - 16, states that Plato's form of dialogue became a characteristically humanist form of expression.

Utopia

The subsequent part of this chapter will be devoted to the discussion of the more accidental and general aspects of this island. Concerning the situation, Thomas More was primarily influenced by the new discoveries, although it must not be denied that a certain influence from the ancient Greek ideal commonwealth of Plato and possibly even his story about Atlantis in the dialogues "*Critias*" and "*Timaeus*"[1] as well as other writers of the Renaissance, was exercised.[2] The most influencial authors on the new discoveries, which literature More eagerly bought[3], were Amerigo Vespucci and Peter Martyr whose work "*De Orbe Novo*" was published in 1511.[4] There is speculation on the exact location of the land that More described[5]--a problem whose solution will be best taken care of by those who hope to find this place. In all these reports

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[1] It is very interesting to observe that St. Augustine in "*The City of God*", a book which More knew very well, mentions the "Atlantics" in book [illegible], chapter [illegible] and in chapter XI of the same book points to "*Timaeus*".

[2] Berneri, *op. cit.*, p. [illegible].

[3] P. S. Allen and H. M. Allen, *Sir Thomas More* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), p. 5 An account of Erasmus in a letter to Ulrich von Hutten.

[4] Donner, *op. cit.*, p. [illegible]7.

[5] Berneri, *op. cit.*, p. [illegible], [illegible], where Amerigo Vespucci left [illegible] people (including Hythloday (*Utopia*, p. 15), Japan or Inka civilisation in Peru.

--the latest of which were always regularly found in Antwerp[1]--More added his own ingenuity and anticipated Magellan.[2]

But the actual island which More had in mind, was England.[3] It is certainly no coincidence that Utopia was originally a peninsula, like England and that the parting canal measures about the same width as the English Chanal, despite the fact that the former was dug by the people of King Utopus[4] and the latter derived its origin from the ice-age. There were two reasons why King Utopus commanded the building of this canal. First of all, the Utopians did not want to enlarge their dominion.[5] This is generally presumed to indicate More's opinion that the size of a state should be limited, a theory which he held perhaps under the influence of the ancient Greeks, though he modified the principles of Plato[6]

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[1]Reynolds, op. cit., p. 113.

[2]Richard O'Sullivan, Under God and The Law(Oxford. Basil Blackwell, 1949), p. 23. According to George E. Parks, a distinguished American geographical historian, Hythloday was first to circumnavigate the globe, from Europe to Cape Frio from where he returned to Europe, as related in the "Utopia" (p. 16), via Taprobane (Ceylon) and Calicut which Vasco da Gama had first reached in 1498.

[3]Morton, op. cit., p. 45, and:
Campbell, Erasmus, Tyndale and More, p. 6

[4] More, Utopia, p. 53.

[5] Ibid., p. 52.

[6]George Sabine, A History of Political Theory, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1951), p. 80. Plato maintained that a city-state should not be larger than to have 5040 inhabitants.

and Aristotle[1] on this point.[2] The main influence which inspired More to introduce this situation in the "Utopia", was provided by the actual example of England and the constant wars she waged on the continent to her great detriment. Similarly, the second reason for the construction of the canal is to reduce the evils of war, because it removes a convenient bridge for invaders and makes Utopia very easily defensible and naturally inaccessible. More again, especially with regard to the defence of the entrance to the great inlet within Utopia, More's ideas were perhaps inspired by such classic examples as the battle of Thermopylae. But the particular influence to mention this rather accidental condition came also from the situation in England where, due to her wars, the great number of solders caused immense misery, although only a few defenders were sufficient to repulse many armies of attackers[3]. More certainly did not follow Plato's idea to institute an entire class of people, the guardians, for defence.

It is certainly justified to maintain that the general spirit of the Renaissance with its desire for reforms and improvements finds a vivid demonstration in various installations, as for instance the excellent means of

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[1] Ibid., pp. 113 - 115. Aristotle demanded that a city-state should not be larger than to enable a person to see from one end of the city to the other.

[2] Charles Howard McIlwain, The Growth of Political Thought in the West (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1932), p. 4.

[3] More, Utopia, p. 56.

communication provided by the great standing pool which enables ships to reach every part of the island[1] or the bridges which do not hinder ships from entering into the cities, as in Amaurote.[2] However, the direct influence in this respect came from his experience as Under-sheriff of the City of London which gave him deep insight into municipal affairs and a perception of the importance of sanitary improvements.[3] The latter idea makes him introduce a system of freshwater-supply[4] --which brings to mind the Roman Aqueducts--healthier living conditions by broad streets and vast gardens behind all houses which are strongly built and roofed with fire resisting materials[5]. To reduce the danger of disease, he suggests to keep the city clean and to locate hospitals outside the city-walls.[6]

All these suggestions for the improvement of the country reflect the influences which inspired him. But, these material conditions represent only minor points which--though they indicate the general trend--do not touch upon the important issues concerning the great problems of social harmony.

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[1] Ibid., p. 55.

[2] Ibid., p. 60.

[3] E. M. G. Routh, Sir Thomas More and His Friends 1477 - 1535 (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), p. 40.

[4] Utopia, p. 80.

[5] Ibid., pp. 60 - 61.

[6] Ibid., pp. 71 - 72.

CHAPTER II

SOCIAL [illegible]

The basic problem in any society is the problem of social harmony. Fundamentally, its solution must lie in the principles governing the status of the individual in himself and in relation to the family and to the community and appearing in the complex of customs by which its members live and which provide a criterion of the intrinsic wholesomeness and the effectiveness of the principles themselves. Where corrupt or ineffective principles govern, people live under conditions of hardship and discontent; while sound customs bring about happiness and harmony. No further explanation is needed of the discussion by More of the essential problem of the happiness of the Utopians and the means by which it is achieved.[1]

The Individual

As a man of the Renaissance, did More perceive that the rising individualism of his time was bringing along a revolution in social thought as well as in the way of life, substituting for the traditional rationality a voluntarist philosophy which would soon find expression in the Calvinist

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[1] M. Beer, Social Struggles and Socialist Forerunners, trans. H. J. Stenning (London: Leonard Parsons, 1924), p. 161.

predestination and, once secularized, culminate in Hobbes' "Leviathan" and John Austin's concept of law? If so, "Utopia" would appear as a deliberate effort to stem the tide and react against this trend. Be that as it may, the work reassumes the earnest convictions of Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics and Thomas Aquinas that it is reason which must discover the principles of social harmony, and, therefore, it is reason which must provide the principles of individual happiness.

In effect, though all Utopians are ignorant of Divine Revelation, they are divided on the theory of happiness according to their acceptance or rejection of religious principles besides pure reasoning. In the latter case, the doctrine cannot but be the pagan, eudaemonistic philosophy which places the highest good and the end of existence in temporal happiness--the possession of pleasure and the avoidance of pain.[1] Utopia represents a country whose development has reached the highest degree that can be attained by man without the help of Revelation. It is no wonder that, to his less religious citizens, More should have ascribed that Stoic philosophy[2] which, by the consistency of its conclusions with

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[1] Utopia, p. 84. "For they judge it extreme madness to follow sharp and painful virtue, and not only banish the pleasure of life, but also willingly to suffer grief, without any hope of profit thereof ensuing."

[2] William Turner, History of Philosophy (Boston: Ginn and Comp., 1929), p. 171, refers to Cicero's "De Finibus", III.5, and Diogenes Laertius, VII., 88.

its basic assumptions, has held such a peculiar position in the development of Western thought and was a major influence in the preparation of a Christian philosophy.[1]

Still more characteristic of Stoicism is the insistence on the firm dependence of this eudaemonism on the order of nature, discoverable by reason and conducive to the practice of the natural virtues wherein, in the last analysis, happiness must needs consist. The highest human act flows from the love of wisdom and the intellectual humanitarianism, so dear to the Stoics.[2] Any higher ideal would seem foolish in the light of their principles, for their minds could not ascend to the loftiness of the virtues of love towards God and towards the neighbour for God's sake.[3]

Generally, however, the former theory--about happiness which enriches human thought with religious principles--is preferred by the Utopians, because they think that they cannot attain the right solution if they, in this matter, limit

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[1] Sabine, op. cit., p. 151.

[2] Bede Jarrett, O.P., Social Theories of the Middle Ages 1200 - 1500 (London, Ernest Benn Ltd., 1926), p. 33.

[3] Chambers, op. cit., p. 120, points thoughtfully to Dante's "Divine Comedy" where Virgil is able to rescue Dante from the dark wood because he followed the four virtues without fault. So Virgil can guide Dante till he meets Beatrice but no further."

themselves to pure reason.[1] This leads to a conviction which, as Hythloday states,[2] resembles our Christian ideas. The element of hope is introduced in this theory of happiness. The Utopians who accept it do not seek pleasure as an end in itself, but enjoy a Christian type of anticipatory happiness which finds its expression in the pleasure which they experience in "the pleasant remembrance of the good life past"[3] because only the hope to be rewarded for it can cause the pleasure. On this point, "Utopia" seems to reflect the influence of St. Augustine who also states that the happiness of the godly citizens on earth consists in hope.[4] But generally, together with this idea, More gives his Utopians that distinctive feature which makes them order their affairs not only on a strictly material and worldly basis but rather for an end that lies in eternity. Although this has not been confirmed to them by the seal of Divine Revelation, they nevertheless accept it, in the same way as other heathen

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[1] Utopia, p. 84.: "Those principles be these and suchlike: That the soul is immortal, and by the bountiful goodness of God ordained to felicity. That to our virtues and good deeds rewards be appointed after this life, and to our evil deeds punishments".

[2] Ibid., p. [illegible]3.

[3] Ibid., p. 90.

[4] Saint Augustine, The City of God, ed. R. V. G. Tasker, trans. John Healey (Everyman's Library. London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1950), Bk. XIX, chap. XX, vol. II, p. 257.

philosophers who had concluded that there must be a God and an afterlife.[1] This aspect of More's "Utopia" was certainly shaped under the influence of the example of ancient Greek philosophers like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle.

The basic assumption of the Utopian commonwealth being that it had not received Divine Revelation, consistency required its inventor to grant every citizen the freedom of choice between these two theories regarding happiness. But, to whatever theory one adhered, a common feature of both was the definite intent towards goodness and righteousness, for both maintained that not all pleasures could bring felicity but only the "good and honest".[2]

There were, indeed, in More's own time "counterfeit pleasures" which, he felt, he must attack by a recourse to Christian masters and, especially, to St. Augustine.[3] As he ridicules the pleasure of vainglory, he lays it down that the basic evil in man is the forsaking of the higher for the lower. As Augustine had said: "Take away vainglory, and what are men but men",[4] so, Hythloday reasons that vainglory derived from reverence, fine garments or precious metals or

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[1] Utopia, p. 84. "Though these (principles) be pertaining to religion, yet they think it meet that they should be believed and granted by proofs of reason".

[2] Ibid., p. 84.

[3] The City of God, Bk. XIV, vol. ii, pp. 26 - 53.

[4] Ibid., Bk. V, vol. i. Chap. xvii, p. 164.

stones really changes nothing in a man.[1] By his insistence that all things are for a definite purpose, he shows the influence of teleologic thought. This is specially demonstrated in his attack upon the use of fine garments and his proposed remedy of dressing all people alike.[2] This measure was certainly based on sound, Christian principles and on the example of religious persons who, throughout history, tried to counteract in this way the pride born of sumptuous clothing. This solution which was proposed in reaction to existing evils[3], was pushed to the extreme of complete uniformity. A further influence in the same direction was provided by More's personal tastes[4] which resembled that of the Utopians to a considerable extent.[5]

It is, then, the "good and honest" pleasure that gives happiness. In this all Utopians agree with Stoic thought that

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[1] Utopia, pp. 67 - 68.

[2] Ibid., p. 63, p. 69.

[3] Jarrett, op. cit., p. 177. "From the reign of the Conqueror the dress of the women hardly changed in England till the reign of Edward III; thenceforward the changes grew in fantastic exaggeration, till they culminated in the Yorkist period, when under the impulse of fashion, both men and women lost all sense of beauty or moderation and placed the achievement of strange and weird effects before everything else".

[4] Maynard, op. cit., p. 30.

[5] Allen, Sir Thomas More, p. 3. Erasmus describes More in a letter to Ulrich von Hutten from Antwerp 23rd July 1519: "In dress he likes simplicity, and never wears silk or purple or chains of gold, unless required. .. To him they are women's work, trivialities on which a man should not waste time."

happiness--whether in the pleasures of this world or in the hope of things to come--is achieved by a "life ordered according to the prescript of nature",[1] and that man is ordained to, and virtue itself consists of, precisely such a life. In short, both groups meet on the basis of a kind of natural law as the norm of moral conduct, although the godly surpass the limits of the temporal order by deriving this natural law from eternal law. Assuredly, Stoicism was of the same mind[2] with the difference that the divine law must be followed out of necessity--limiting man's free will to a rational acquiescence.[3]

These theories are, to a certain extent modified under the influence of the Renaissance spirit which emphasizes a joyful life and ordinary humanitarianism.[4] As the Utopians agree, this "natural delectation"[5] is experienced in both the soul and the body, contrary to Cynic and Hedonist philosophies, and all pleasures form a hierarchy, with intellectual pleasures above those of the body. At the highest level lies "the exercise of virtue and conscience of good life".[6] In this

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[1] Utopia, pp. 84 - 85.

[2] Heinrich A. Rommen, The Natural Law, trans. Thomas R. Hanley (New York: Herder Book Co., 1949), p. 22.

[3] Turner, op. cit., p. 170.

[4] Utopia, pp. 85 - 86.

[5] Ibid., p. 87. "Pleasure they call every motion and state of the body or mind wherein man has naturally delectation".

[6] Ibid., p. 92.

instance, More deviates from the Stoics who claimed that virtue constitutes the only good to be sought, and favours the idea of Aristotle who deemed that other goods are also desireable,[1] as well as Christian sources which demanded for a good life chiefly ethical principles but also a sufficiency of material comfort.[2]

Thus does the author of "Utopia" temper the Platonic excesses by means of his Scholatic philosophy. For these also, natural virtues are dispositions to act according to nature as known by reason. But he seems to stand between the two inasmuch as he stresses reasoning to a degree not reached by Thomas Aquinas. In this he shows the same confidence in reason that was felt by the late Renaissance. It is by correct thinking that such marvellous well-being is brought to Utopia, and does not this foreshadow the 18th century's exclusive optimism in the value of reason?

All philosophical doctrines that concede such a place to reason,are bound to evince a deep concern for an educational system which--contrary to our positivistic and pragmatical times--will not consist in a mere gathering of facts and opinions but will emphasize knowledge and discipline or, rather, knowledge as a condition of sound discipline. This

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[1] Turner, op. cit., pp. 171 - 172.

[2] Berneri, op. cit., p. 52. Refers to "De Regimine Principum" of Thomas Aquinas.

consequence did not escape Thomas More any more than it had escaped Socrates, Plato, Aristotle or the Scholastics. He does not, however, follow any of them slavishly. He seems to believe like Socrates and Plato that "virtue is knowledge", but, unlike the author of the "Republic", he wants knowledge extended to the masses.[1] He agrees with Aquinas that education is conducive to happiness;[2] but while the medieval Doctor accentuated discipline more than knowledge, the Renaissance writer gives prominence to knowledge from which discipline--and, hence, happiness--will result. Indeed, as for Plato's philosopher-kings, More would make of education a full-time occupation[3] of the people "who do bestow in learning those spare hours which ... they have vacant from bodily labours";[4] Besides lectures, the Utopians employ the method of Plato's master, the maieutics, or discussion by questions and answers by which the young Utopians are instructed by their elders.[5] Not that More was a fanatic of education for its own sake. A humanist of the Renaissance, he pressed the cause of education

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[1]Adela Marion Adam, Plato, Moral and Political Ideals (Cambridge: Univ. Press, 1913), p. 117.

[2]Jarrett, op. cit., p. 33.

[3]Joyce Oramel Hertzler, The History of Utopian Thought (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., The MacMillan Comp., 1922), p. 112.

[4]Utopia, p. 82.

[5]Ibid., p. 74.

for the benefits or the pleasures it could provide.[1] It is by means of education that King Utopus transformed "the rude and wild" inhabitants of the Peninsula he had conquered until they, finally, exceeded other people of this globe.[2] With this result achieved, they keep up the pursuit of knowledge as a social pastime.[3] What a contrast to the deterioration of social life in More's own age!

The Family

Unlike Socrates before him and Rousseau after him, or St. Thomas Aquinas who had no family, More is one advocate of thorough education who practised what he preached. In a letter to Peter Giles, he deplores that he has so little time for writing because of the pressure of work, and he allows us an insight into the happy sanctuary of his home.[4]

> I leave to myself, I mean to my book, no time. For when I am come home I must commune with my wife, chat with my children, and talk with my servants. All the which things I reckon and account among business forasmuch as they must of necessity be done, and done must they needs be, unless a man will be stranger in his own house.

Such an exemplary family-man was bound to exalt the domestic society in any ideal scheme of political society,

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[1]Campbell, _Erasmus, Tyndale and More,_ p. 35.

[2]_Utopia_, p. 56.

[3]_Ibid._, p. 65.

[4]_Ibid._, p. 7.

but this cannot be the sole explanation of the predominance given to the family by More to the extent of practically absorbing the individual in it. What we know of More's life shows his great respect for the human person, even that of his own children. Donner believes the main influence to be St. Augustine's contention that the family is the first, the basic cell of society.[1] This view was not new in Augustine's time, since it had been held by both Plato and Aristotle and, will prevail after More in Jean Bodin and Neo-Scholasticism.

Neither can we wholly subscribe to the opinion that More fell a victim to Platonic principles.[2] The difference of attitude between the pagan Plato and the Christian More appears--rather painfully for Plato-- in the "Republic". There, the family is seen as the natural enemy of the state, because its private interests are liable to destroy the unity of the City.[3] To prevent the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of the ruling families and thus preserve unity and social harmony, he abolished the institution itself as well as its right to property, at least for the governing body. More, too, was conscious that the feeling of economic insecurity made families hoard more than they ever would need,

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[1]Donner, op. cit. p. 33.

[2]Turner, op. cit., p. 442.

[3]Hertzler, op. cit., p. 107.

inflicting considerable harm to the common good.[1] But if his solution is compared with Plato's, the latter appears to be a crude barbarian who performs a delicate operation with a giant axe. More adopts exactly the opposite method: Instead of abolishing the family, he conceives that "the whole island is as it were one family or household".[2] He elevates the family to the level of the body politic. By this he removes the need of, and the desire for private property, since within a family property usually is kept in common. He also realizes unity as an automatic consequence of mutual love and confidence.

The most, then, that can be said is that More accepted from Plato the principle that the family, being the primary cell of the state, cannot be left unregulated[3]; but he introduces in this regulation the principle of Christian charity that he lived by or, at least, that of Stoic humanitarianism. More, of course, was a Catholic, staunchly attached to the Church, her teaching and her laws, but he wrote his great work before the Lutheran religious revolution--before Christians

[1] Berneri, op. cit., p. 77.

[2] Utopia, p. 76.

[3] Campbell, Erasmus, Tyndale and More, p. 83. cites the letter to Ulrich von Hutten in which Erasmus says that More, "while still a youth, .. attempted a dialogue in which he carried the defence of Plato's community even to the matter of wives". Probably a tongue-in-cheek debate in which a young man readily engages and which only shows his familiarity with Plato's work. At all events he did not follow the master in his "Utopia".

were faced with making a decision for or against these laws. When, therefore, the author of "Utopia" expounds a social system based solely on the principles of what he believes to be a sound natural philosophy, we must not expect a most strict adherence to the laws of the Church.

A case in point is the recognition of divorce in Utopia. Assuredly, More knew that the Church rejects divorce under all conditions because it is contrary to natural law, but he also knew that it is only opposed to the secondary end of marriage, and that--for that reason--God, Himself, had condoned it in His chosen Jewish people under certain extreme conditions.[1] It is only under such conditions of adultery or "intolerable wayward manners of either party"[2] that More accepts divorce and, like Plato in the "Laws", endeavours to prevent their development. At the same time he was grappling with the creeping individualism of his own age.

The beginning of the sixteenth century was marked by great social upheavals consequent on the end of the War of the Roses. Notable among them was the deterioration of family life. More's acute sense of observation could not but grasp that, at the root of the evil, there lay the prevalent disorder of vagabondism. Nothing better than these actual conditions can

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[1] Matt. 19: 8.

[2] Utopia, p. 100.

explain his insistence on domestic life and the radical measures which he proposes to safeguard it. If bachelorhood is not countenanced in Utopia, it is not for the sake of a Hitlerian type of population increase, but because of the danger to homes; for the members of a family are to be kept below a maximum number.[1] Thus, the family is not unwieldy, nor will it breed discontent. And it must remain together. To this purpose, travelling is prohibited except under special license.[2] In these ideal conditions presumed effective to preserve family unity, should either party wander into the path of infidelity, adultery will be punished with bondage and, in case of relapse, with death.[3] Even Plato's "Laws" had been less severe for the transgressor.

The regulation of family relationships is another means that More adopts for the preservation of domestic peace. Here again he humanizes the principles of order expounded in antiquity. He does not depart from the Christian doctrine taught from Augustine's "City of God"[4] through the Middle Ages and to his own time. In the Utopian family, the husband rules,

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[1] Utopia, p. 69.

[2] Ibid., p. 75.

[3] Ibid., p. 101.

[4] St. Augustine, City of God, Bk. XIX, Chap. xii, vol. ii p. 249, "the peace of a family is an orderly rule and subjection amongst the parts thereof."

the children obey their parents and the younger the older.[1] The family is not, however, a legal possession of the father as was the case in antiquity, but the father holds only a directive power.[2] The position of women, also, corresponds to that which they held in the Middle Ages and--although More generally gives them a quite 'emancipated' status--he does not remove the stigma of their inferiority.[3] It is the old precept of St. Paul which was consistently taught by the Fathers of the Church[4] and throughout the Middle Ages.[5] More even went as far as to permit the Utopians to chastise their wives[6] which represents also a common medieval custom.[7]

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[1] Utopia, p. 70.

[2] cf. Jarrett, op. cit., p. 73.

[3] Utopia, p. 70.

[4] The City of God, Bk. XV, Chap. vii, vol. ii, p. 68. "The man must govern the woman, as the soul should govern the body". Also: Bk. XIX, Chap. xiv, vol. ii, p. 252.

[5] Jarrett, (op. cit., pp. 70 - 71) gives the reasoning of that age: "When the Apostle had said that man is the 'image and glory of God but woman is the glory of man'(1Cor. xi. 7) he (Aquinas) adds his reason for saying this: 'for man is not of woman but woman of man; and man was not created for woman but woman for man'(Summa Theologica, 93, 4. ad 1 m)."

[6] Utopia, p. 101.

[7] G. G. Coulton, Life in the Middle Ages (Cambridge: University Press, 1929), vol. iii, p. 119. Also:

Jarrett, op. cit., p. 70, refers to H. S. Bennett, "The Pastons and their England" (Cambridge, 1922, p. 80.)

The Community

The uniformity of social activity in Utopia has led not a few to maintain that the individual, there, leads a wholly inhuman life.[1] Every Utopian always acts like a wise man; he conforms to a rigid fashion in dress[2] and an exact schedule of activity,[3] going out to, and returning from the fields in strict obedience.[4] All this seems quite true; but it must not be forgotten that "Utopia" was More's attempt to react against the growing individualism, the hollowness of the idea of freedom and the triviality of personal honour and esteem. What better way of showing the value of what was being lost than by showing the vanity of what the Renaissance acclaimed as its greatest achievement and preventing the "unique" man from displacing the "standard" man.[5] This explains perfectly well the hyper-social type of community in which the Utopian is born and lives. There is no contradiction, however, in acknowledging that it also expresses More's predilection for just that kind of life[6]--a life to which his own experience at Charterhouse had accustomed him.[7]

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[1] Berneri, op. cit., p. 60. "It smelt too much of the monastery."

[2] Utopia, p. 63.

[3] Ibid., p. 64.

[4] Ibid., p. 59.

[5] Berneri, op. cit., p. 56.

[6] Allen, Sir Thomas More, p. 53.

[7] Chambers, op. cit., p. 77.

To the accusation that his Utopian leads an inhuman life, More would have replied that, on the contrary, the communal life is the only human one for it is founded on human nature as known by reason. Righteousness or virtue is the end of man on earth, say the Utopians. It is acquired through education, but it does not remain a personal affair, nor is it limited to the family circle. Had not Plato shown that it was the duty of the Polis to foster virtue and thereby provide happiness? And did not Aristotle see in the common good the source of all individual good? This preoccupation with social life had even led them to a practical totalitarianism.

Well aware that St. Augustine had adopted the principles of ancient philosophy as the substratum of his "City of God",[1] Thomas More follows a similar path. But, once again he stands midway between the Founder of the Academy and the Bishop of Hippo. True, man is social by nature but he must not be absorbed or dominated by society. On the other hand, the non-Christian Utopians could not strive towards that supernatural justice in which Augustine perceived the only true righteousness. Social life is nonetheless natural to man and, therefore, a source as well as a condition of the righteousness to which all Utopians, materialists and religious, aspire. This righteousness resides in the faithful performance of

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[1]Reynolds, op. cit., p. 45.

one's prescribed function--a Platonic idea. Unlike Plato,[1] however, More does not see that these will require to be imposed from above by a superior authority, except in very rare cases, for the Utopians are imbued with a natural sense of solidarity and a spontaneity to act in harmony with reason. In this respect, Plato showed himself to be more of a realist, but the creator of the Utopians would not have been a man of the Renaissance if he had not felt an excessive optimism in the capacity of man for goodness. More is convinced that every man will live like a saint, if he is only given the right education and environment. Since the Utopians received that education and lived in that environment, they had no use for such a claim as "my home is my castle": the doors of their houses were constantly open,[2] as a symbol of the communal character of their whole life.

In such a community that is more like one big family, where private ownership is unnecessary and honours are despised, social differenciation lacks the most fundamental requirements. Thus, there exists no difference between rulers and ruled[3] nor between town and countryside.[4] The very ideal conditions in Utopia certainly received a great impetus from

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[1]Sabine, op. cit., p. 73.

[2]Utopia, p. 60.

[3]Ibid. p. 73.

[4]Ibid., p. 55.

More's aversion for the contemporaneous social structure. It was contrary to his idea of righteousness that one human being should be counted higher than another, because the one is a king and the other a serf. He transfered the Christian idea of the equality of all men before God to his society, making it a duty for those in higher social positions to stoop down to serve the lower.[1] Without the benefit of Christian Revelation, Plato is led to a different conclusion and divides the population of the ideal Polis into well-defined classes[2]--another indication of the transformation of the concept of righteousness from Plato to More.

The absence of class distinctions represents one point on account of which More was called a socialist and the "Utopia" a landmark along the road towards scientific socialism, connecting ancient social theories with those of the presence.[3] But More penetrates deeper than vulgar equalitarianism: The Utopians are equal as a consequence of their basic principles and not because they consider it an aim that must be achieved to make people happy. There is also a considerable difference between the "highest phase of communist society" and the

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[1]Hertzler, op. cit., p. 80.

[2]Donner, op. cit., p. 29.

[3]Morton, op. cit., p. 42.

Utopian society.[1] While the former lacks any reason why people should work at all, the latter derives a duty to work from the idea of righteousness as well as from the family aspect of this community.

In the more practical aspects of labour, More reacted against the grave conditions of his time. He turns to the application of the classical principle of '<u>mens sana in corpore sano</u>'. Thus, the Utopians enjoy excellent working conditions with a six-hour working day.[2] simple but good meals[3] and they all alternately work in the country and in the city.[4] The last point, however, is derived from another idea: In More's time, the tillers of the soil served in the armies of the princes. After a war, many of them refused to return to their previous occupation,[5] although very few had acquired any skill in some craft. This led to the conditions which Hythloday criticizes in the first book of "<u>Utopia</u>".[6] As a remedy More prescribes

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[1]Morton, <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 46, points to a similarity between the two as demonstrated by the slogan "from every one according to his capacities, to every one according to his needs".

[2]<u>Utopia</u>, p. 64.

[3]<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 72.

[4]<u>Ibid.</u>, pp. 57 - 58.

[5]Jarrett, <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 116.

[6]<u>Utopia</u>, pp. 23 - 38: poverty, idleness, beggary, rising number of crimes, etc.

that all Utopians are to be experts in husbandry.[1] To this end, he introduces the measure that the country population be exchanged periodically with the city dwellers. This idea might have been inspired by a similar usage of the Suebi,[2] as described by Julius Caesar. But his great preference for agriculture as the main industry[3] represents the general opinion of the Middle Ages which stresses the greatness of manual labour and especially agriculture,[4] as it had been done in antiquity.[5]

The social life of the Utopians takes an eminent place in the entire work. More apparently was convinced that the best political structure could not succeed in establishing social harmony as long as the social life was not ordered.

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[1] Ibid., p. 63.

[2] Gallic Wars IV. i.: "It is said that they (the Suebi) have a hundred cantons, from each of which they draw one thousand armed men yearly for the purpose of war outside their borders. The remainder who have stayed at home support themselves and the absent warriors; and again in turn are under arms the following year, while the others remain at home. By this means neither husbandry nor the theory and practice of war is interrupted", Quoted by M. Beer, Social Struggles in the Middle Ages, trans. H. J. Stenning (London: Leonard Parsons, 1924), p. 53.

[3] Campbell, Erasmus, Tyndale and More, p. 84.

[4] Lewis H. Haney, History of Economic Thought (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1947), p. 96.

[5] Ibid., p. 67, refers to: Aristotle, Politics Bk. I, Chap. x. and xi; Plato, Laws Bk. V; Cicero, De Officiis, Bk. i.

CHAPTER III

GUARANTEES OF SOCIAL HARMONY

The principles of social harmony outlined above in relation to the individual, the family and the community do not imply that social life in Utopia flows gracefully and evenly on the strength of this inspiration alone. A stream is moved by the force of gravity but will calmly wind its way through the plain to the sea and reach its destination peacefully only if it is properly channelled between solid embankments. Thus, social life, though impelled by sound principles, requires that it be ordered in its flow by the firm restraint of law and sanctions. Utopia has its laws and imposes sanctions to their transgression. It is but natural that More, the lawyer, should afford great attention to this point. Indeed, some commentators believe that the problem of law and, especially, of penal reform in England was More's secondary concern in the writing of his work.[1]

Law

As was previously shown, the central principle of the Utopian social life is righteousness, that basically Platonic complex of virtues which bears also the name of justice. But, while Plato had this justice discovered by reason alone, the

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[1]cf. Berneri, Journey through Utopia, p. 62.

legal mind of the Romans had given the term a connotation of conformity with law.[1] The Middle Ages held the same conviction and ascribed to justice the same eminent position among the social virtues as Rome had done.[2] However, if this conformity could apply to man-made law, it was only because--according to the traditional philosophy of Stoicism confirmed by the New Testament--positive law was conceived solely as a determination of natural law. More was not of a different mind. "Justice," says Hythloday, "is the strongest and surest bond of a commonwealth."[3] There is still present in this idea of justice the primary meaning of righteousness as we observed it in his discussion of individual values--the relationship of man to God and to his fellow-man; but these relationships must be ordered by and be subject to universal rules which are either the principles of natural law or the more definite expressions of this law in positive enactments. So that More, like the Romans and the men of the Middle Ages, accepts natural law as the highest law that governs all human actions.[4]

Assuredly, this represents More's own convictions, but it was expressed so consistently as a reaction against

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[1]cf. The City of God, vol. i, p. xv.

[2]cf. Jarrett, op. cit., p. 94.

[3]Utopia, p. 105.

[4]Ibid., p. 85.

the, then, spreading opinion that law received its power from the will of the absolute ruler or the will of the people in their parliamentary legislation. He stands in conflict with these two growing tendencies of his time, a fight which continues until the end of his life. It sounds almost like a prophetic vision of his own defeat[1] when More asks, through the mouth of Hythloday, whether a man-made law giving permission to slaughter other men can justify a man's conscience before God.[2] Like Christ[3], he wars also against the importance given to the letter of the law and to empty conventions, and against lawyers who are so satisfied that few offenders escape punishment and yet, are so surprised to find that there is such a great number of criminals.[4] He knows that true justice leads to the destruction of crime and does not destroy man.[5]

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[1] O'Sullivan, The King's Good Servant, p. 60. The paper "The limits of Law and Legislation" by Ivo Thomas refers to the incident when the Solicitor-General Richard Rich asked More in the Tower "if Parliament decreed .. that he, Rich, was to be king, would More be bound to give consent? The prisoner answered that he would, but added, with a hint of caution, 'according as he could give consent to that act'. However, he dismisses the case as trivial, and in return asked whether it would be treason to refuse consent to an enactment of Parliament that God should not be God..."

[2] Utopia, p. 30.

[3] O'Sullivan, Under God and The Law, p. 39. "Jesus and the Lawyers" by Most Rev. Alban Goodier S.J.

[4] Utopia, p. 22.

[5] Campbell, More's Utopia and His Social Teachings, p. 74.

He is not heir to his father's idolatry of law. More Junior or "Young More"[1] rather joins with all other humanists to satirize the legal profession.[2] He banishes all lawyers from Utopia where everybody acts as his own advocate.[3] Like Socrates with whom he is frequently compared, especially on this point,[4] he subjects his Utopians to only a few laws which everybody can easily read and understand[5]. The belief that such a system would function smoothly in his commonwealth, is based upon the good education and righteousness he ascribed to the Utopians and is consistent with the growing optimism of his age. The paucity of laws is assumed from the great examples of antiquity where a wholesome society usually evinces this peculiar characteristic, and from the Hebrew or Roman tables of law. Plato similarly eliminated all laws from his ideal state and made of the wisdom of the philosopher-kings a substitute to written laws.[6]

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[1] O'Sullivan, Under God and The Law, p. 1. "Young More" by Prof. A. W. Reed: "The by-name 'Young More' .. was used commonly in his own day to distinguish him from his father."

[2] Daniel Sargent, Thomas More (London: Sheed and Ward, 1936), p. 21.

[3] Utopia, p. 104.

[4] Chambers, Thomas More, pp. 16 - 19.

[5] Utopia, p. 103.

[6] Adam, Moral and Political Ideals, p. 150.

Such a conception of law postulates a high sense of justice. This, the Utopians had and they thought it "against all right and justice" that man should be obliged to obey to a confusing multipilicity of laws. They remove all crafty twisting of the law together with the lawyers: everybody states his case and the judges are guided by facts and the intent of the law.[1] These ideas reflect the influence of the Roman conception based upon Stoic philosophy, for the Romans also stressed the spirit rather than the letter of the law.[2]

For the Utopians,[3] as well as for Cicero[4] and the Middle Ages,[5] law represents an "ordinatio rationis" which leads people on the only right way. It is not a pretext for punishment but a guide. Out of this consideration comes the opinion of the Utopians who maintain, like Cicero,[6] that law

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[1] Utopia, p. 103.

[2] cf. Rudolf Stammler, "The Theory of Justice", Engl. trans. p. 127: "This .. is the universal significance of the classical Roman jurists; this their permanent worth. They had the courage to raise their glance from the ordinary questions of the day to the whole. And in reflecting on the narrow status of the particular case, they directed their thoughts to the guiding star of all law, namely the realization of justice in life". Quoted by Sabine, op. cit., p. 171.

[3] Utopia, p. 55.

[4] cf. Carlyle, op. cit., vol. 1., p. 55.

[5] Jarrett, op. cit., p. 17.

[6] McIlwain, op. cit., p. 111, refers to De Re Publica, III, 22.

only summons people to duty.[1] As a consequence, they hold to it that freedom can only come from justice or the obedience to law. This paradox, that man is really free only if he really obeys,[2] makes "Utopia" difficult to understand for so many readers whose concept of freedom is identical with lawlessness or, at least, licence. But it is exactly against this very individualism, with its longing for liberty and independence,[3] that Thomas More reacts. He reaffirms the traditional opinion that man exceeds the brute not in a freedom to gratify his very wish but because of his reason which frees him from the yoke of instinct and enables him to obey laws freely.[4] Obedience, therefore, assumes a predominant position in Utopia, and common laws as well as private agreements have to be faithfully observed and fulfilled.[5] St. Augustine had no less emphasized obedience in his "City of God". He calls it "the mother and guardian of all other virtues of the soul", and points to the fall of man as the first offence against obedience.[6]

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[1] Utopia, p. 104.

[2] Campbell, More's Utopia and His Social Teachings, p. 45.

[3] Jarrett, op. cit., p. 120.

[4] Ibid., p. 97.

[5] Utopia, p. 86.

[6] The City of God, Bk. XIV, chap. xii, vol. ii, p. 42.

Thus did Thomas More understand freedom under law. It is a far cry from the "freedom under law" of our own age, where freedom means the ability unreservedly to seek one's self-interest in every way which is not expressly forbidden by law, and where law is defined as the will of the legislator sanctioned by force. In the latter sense, the antithesis of freedom is slavery and an abuse of self-evident, inherent, human rights. There is slavery, also, in Utopia, and it repels modern readers, but it was justified by the great Renaissance humanist--as it had been justified by the Church and the medieval philosophers--as a proper sanction for transgressions.

Sanctions

In our days, when a perhaps excessive sentimentalism endeavours to bring about the abolition of capital punishment for offences against society, it is difficult to grasp the situation against which Thomas More rose in indignation and castigated in no uncertain terms in "Utopia". Hythloday is emphatic in condemning "the stupid brutality" of English criminal law[1] which imposed the death penalty for theft with, not rarely, as many as twenty offenders being hanged simultaneously on one gallows.[2] Although his concern for society

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[1] J. W. Allen, A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1951), p. 154.

[2] Utopia, p. 22.

required that transgressions be punished, his high sense of justice could not countenance such extreme severity. He, therefore, turns against the excessive use of the death penalty.[1] It is unlawful and contrary to justice because, says Hythloday, "all the goods in the world are not able to countervail man's life", more especially as, in these particular cases, the law forbidding theft is overridden by the law commanding the preservation of one's own life; for, through the evil conditions of the times and the avarice of the possessors of goods, some men are made thieves and, then, are punished for it. In the name of man's dignity, the humanist More demands greater restraint in sanctions and punishments.

Three principles guide the Utopian jurisdiction: First, like St. Augustine,[2] they hold that the lawmaker is justified in imposing sanctions only when the deeds are intrinsically evil. Second, the punishment should be of the same order as the harm done, as Aquinas had taught that, according to natural equity, a man should be deprived of the good in which he has offended, since his action proves his unworthiness to enjoy it.[3] Third, the medieval principle

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[1] Utopia, p. 29.

[2] cf. Rommen, op. cit., p. 38.

[3] O'Sullivan, The King's Good Servant, pp. 96 - 97, "Punishment and Moral Responsibility" by Rev. D. J. B. Hawkins.

that any law must cede before a higher law.[1]

What, then of the actual legal sanctions in Utopia? If capital punishment is not completely abolished, it is applied only in a very few, extreme instances. The spirit of this application of the extreme penalty is shown in the particular instance among the Polylerites where a slave is put to death if he should have cast away the badge that distinguishes him from a free man. Our individualistic times shudder at the thought that such a deed should be considered as more serious a crime than an attack on property, but More sees in theft a break directed against only one man, while the casting away of the badge is an attempt against the community as a whole; for, indeed, slavery is a debt which is being paid to society.

That, in this respect, More was inspired by the example of Rome makes little doubt. As he had followed Roman institutions in his sparing use of capital punishment,[2] so Hythloday points to the Romans in his advocacy of penal slavery.[3] Not, of course, that all slaves in Rome were bonded as

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[1] cf. Jarrett, op. cit., p. 95.

[2] The City of God, p. 414, Commentaries of Vives, More's friend, state: "There were very few crimes, which the old Romans punished with death, and far fewer in the times which followed, for the Porcian law forbad the death of any condemned citizen, allowing only his banishment...But here let the reader observe the meaning of this law, out of Festus, who speaking of this 'capitis diminutio', ..writeth thus: 'He is said to be "capite diminutus", capitally punished, that is banished, that a free man is made a bondslave to another'."

[3] Utopia, p. 32.

punishment for crimes, but in the sense that bondage was extensively used for that purpose. As was to be expected, however, humanitarian preoccupations, quite alian to Roman practice, if not to Roman thought, are introduced in Utopia. More's slaves lead a fairly decent life, in contrast to both Roman slaves, who were used as gladiators for the base entertainment of the mob, and to the serfs of More's own time who were subject to many hardships.[1] Faithful to the teaching of Cicero and Seneca, whose works, incidentally, were the only Roman writings in Utopia,[2] and who counsel that slaves be looked upon rather like hired workers,[3] the Utopian institution provides the bondsman with a life that differs little from that of the free man, although--for punishment's sake--they are required to work more[4] and at meaner toils.[5] The slave's guarantee of good treatment is not only the humanitarian principles of the Utopians, but also the fact that, in conformity with their ideas on property, no one is bonded to an individual but all bondmen are the property of the commonwealth.[6] Thereby, they preserve some form of personal freedom,

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[1]Jarrett, op. cit., pp. 105 - 108.

[3]Carlyle, op. cit., vol. i., p. 11.

[2]Utopia, p. 15.

[4]Ibid., p. 98. (Utopia)

[5]Ibid., p. 73.

[6]Ibid., p. 33.

notably in religious and spiritual affairs, and manumission is not bound with a man's goodness or self-interest, but it is the prerogative of the prince and is dependent on the good conduct of the bondsman himself.[1]

Utopian slavery is, thus, a personal affair. a personal punishment for a personal crime against society. Its burden rests on individual shoulders and is voluntarily assumed through an act of disobedience to established laws. No one is born to slavery either because of natural inferiority, as was claimed by Aristotle,[2] nor because of the sin of his father.[3] It has not even the negative character of a life sentence in our own modern times when a murderer is simply segregated from the society of whom he has become the enemy; but it has a constructive purpose: the amendment of the culprit, his removal from unrighteousness into a system of righteousness.

In this the future martyr for the Faith was not a traitor to the Church nor was he inconsistent with her teaching, for slavery had not been condemned as unchristian by Holy Writ, or the Fathers of the Church or medieval philosophy

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[1] Utopia, p. 101.

[2] Aristotle, Politics, trans. Benjamin Jowett (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1908), p. 32.

[3] Utopia, p. 97.

and theology. At most did he apply to the individual the principle of justification which Christian teaching had seen in slavery as a chastisement of society. Sin, indeed, introduced slavery into the world. Is not the sinner, himself, being punished by becoming a slave to his passions and his vices? Thus, also, sinful humanity is punished with the blight of slavery and the individual himself who is reduced to servitude has nothing but what he deserves.[1] As for the just, he is sufficiently free in the spiritual possession of truth and grace; the human bondage is but a temporary condition of life to be used by the Christian for the salvation of his soul. This explains why the Apostle Paul does not command his disciple, Philemon, to set his other disciple, Onesimus, free but only to surround him with love as a brother in Christ. It is this relationship between offence and punishment that More transposes to Utopian slavery. There can be no question of supernatural atonement for sin, since the Utopians are deprived of supernatural Revelation; but, transposed to the natural order, bondage is an atonement for offences against the civil laws which are but determinations of a natural morality.

This analysis of More's theory of law and sanctions leads directly to the conclusion that, as in Stoic and medieval teaching, the leit-motiv of his whole social thought

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[1] Jarrett, op. cit., p. 97.

is the requirements of justice. In the first book of "Utopia", he describes the low level to which this lofty idea can be degraded in a community in which the order of values stands on its head. Justice is intimately connected with judging. But how can a person or a community judge what justice demands without an objective, real order of values? Hence, the concern of the author of Utopia with the establishment of this ideal order and, especially, the place occupied therein by material goods.

CHAPTER IV

THE ORDER OF VALUES

Two conceptions of human life and the world in which it evolves divide men's minds and, more particularly, their behaviour. They have received the names of materialism and spiritualism, either as philosophies or as attitudes expressing themselves in actions.

> The judgement of him that respects the worth, says St. Augustine, is different from that of him that respects his own need or pleasure: the former estimating all things by their place in nature, the latter by the degree to which they satisfy his needs; the one valuing them by the light of the mind, the other by the pleasure or use of the sense.[1]

A philosophy of materialism had not yet been elaborated in the Christian society in which More grew, although it had been expounded in antiquity as Epicurianism and had enjoyed a great popularity in Greece and Rome. As an attitude, however, and an ever-expanding way of life, it characterizes the Renaissance,[2] and, despite the efforts at reaction of the spirituals in the Church and of the humanists, it will continue to expand to the extreme of the present-day, capitalistic money--society.

If--as seems certain--More's purpose in writing Utopia

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[1] The City of God, Bk. XI, Chap. xvi, vol. i, p. 326.

[2] cf. Jarrett, op. cit., p. 147.

was to arrest the progress of what he deemed to be evil trends, it should be expected that he will give the greatest attention to the economic question, and that he will seek enlightenment in every place where--at the same time--are respected the principles of a spiritualist philosophy.[1] Certainly, material goods are not to be despised as such, but the good society cannot be one in which "money beareth all the stroke".[2] Basically, the problem revolves around property, so that, in order to grasp the economic life of the Utopians, an understanding is required of their ideas on property.

Property

The problem of property is a complex one. Before all else, there has to be determined whether the universally observed ownership in material goods is justified by sound principles of morality and, if so, how those principles lead to a right either of individual or of collective man. If it is found that such a right exists, a question arises as to whether it is absolute or relative to a certain object or a certain exercise. Furthermore, whether or no it be a right, there remains the problem of the necessary use of material goods.

Failure to distinguish these various aspects of this central problem of social life is responsible for much

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[1] cf. "Law and Political Power" by Rev. J. F. Rogers S.J. in: Under God and the Law, ed. by O'Sullivan. p. 121.

[2] Utopia, p. 14.

confusion of thought in social philosophers and many misunderstandings in their commentators. To lump together, as enemies of private property, all those who apply restrictions to private ownership--from Plato, through Catholic religious orders, Rousseau, Marx and Henry Gorge, to present-day communists and nationalizers of industry--is an over-simplification. But More did not escape this fate. He was called a Platonist, a communist and a socialist.[1]

Such a confusion can only happen in a society founded on a liberal, individualistic capitalism which is jealous of its Lockian principle of the inalienable right of property, and which has developed a conviction that democracy is the most perfect form of government and that private enterprise--the absolute freedom to own and to use material goods for the sole motive of self-interest--is a requisite of democracy. In this society, any attempt to restrict the ownership or the use of owned goods logically assumes the aspect of an attack on property itself. Authentic socialists and Marxian communists do look upon property itself as an evil, but not so Plato, the Christian doctrine and Thomas More.

No one can doubt of the generally predominant position of economic pursuit in the life of the individual and of the body politic, or doubt of the danger that this holds for

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[1]W. E. Campbell, "The Utopia of Sir Thomas More" in The King's Good Servant by O'Sullivan (ed.), p. 28

higher, intellectual and moral, human values. Plato saw it as a well-nigh insurmountable obstacle to good government.[1] The Stoics, Cicero and Seneca, strongly condemned the desire for luxury and riches.[2] The teaching of Christ emphatically warned the rich of the risk involved in their wealth for their eternal salvation.[3] Erasmus himself, the great Renaissance humanist and friend of Thomas More, stated, in his biblical interpretations, that Christians, at least, ought not to possess any property.[4]

Indeed, it is not fantastic to imagine More and Erasmus and other humanists discussing the materialist trend of their time and deploring the "ugly brutality of the earliest period of commercialism",[5] which destroyed all love and charity among men in their search after gold and culminated in the despoiling of tenants and the enclosure of lands.

More, at any rate, will raise his voice against this abuse of material goods and private property[6] and will become

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[1] Sabine, op. cit., p. 57.

[2] Haney, op. cit., p. 77.

[3] Matt. 19, 24. "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven."

[4] Beer, Social Struggles and Socialist Forerunners, pp. 102 - lo3, refers to "Opera", Leyden 1705 - 1706, vol. ix p. 1070.

[5] Chambers, op. cit., p. 257.

[6] Donner, op. cit., p. 80.

one of the first humanists to espouse the cause of the poor.[1] To that end he does not condemn as evil--no more than Plato, the Stoics and the Gospel--the institution of private property itself. He even admits its necessity for as long as mere animal instincts predominate in man. The essential point in the problem of evil in relation to property lies not in its being privately owned, but in the over-emphasis on its being an absolute right and unlimited in its private use. Now, the Utopians are a highly cultured people. Their interests lie in righteousness above all else. This quality must be preserved but not at the expense of right itself. Is there not a different institution of property that would conform with human nature while, at the same time, it would better safeguard their virtue? More thinks that common property and common use is the answer.

He does not arrive at this conclusion lightly nor from a mere emotional approach as is the case of most modern protagonists of collectivism. But he submits the idea of common property to a full debate which precisely leads Hythloday "to give the detailed description of Utopia that forms the second part of the book".[2] He considers Aristotle's objections to Plato's system of common property and finds that they lack

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[1] Donner, op. cit., p. 12.

[2] Reynolds, Saint Thomas More, p. 123.

universal validity.[1]

On the other hand, besides the arguments of Plato, More could rely on Ciceró's contention that "private property is unknown to nature".[2] He had the teaching of St. Augustine that, according to natural law, no property distinction is made, and that private property has its origin in sinful appetite.[3] Thereby, if it is a right, it finds its sanction in positive law as would have been accepted by the Roman jurists.[4] It is true that Thomas Aquinas held that property is a natural right, but it is a right vested in the human race and no argument can be given to uphold the opinion that makes it mandatory for the individual.[5]

Common property, therefore, can not be opposed on philosophic or religious grounds, although--when sanctioned by law-- private property becomes inviolable, and this is required by both the natural order of society and Revelation.[6]

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[1] Donner, op. cit., pp. 68 - 69. "The arguments are chiefly two. One is that no improvement would result if one man's goods were taken away from him and given to other people. The second is that it would be against law."

[2] Cicero De Officiis, i. 7.

[3] The City of God, vol. i, p. xxxiii.

[4] Haney, op. cit., p. 74.

[5] Jarrett, op. cit., p. 126. "Is private property not only lawful but obligatory? .. St. Thomas states roundly that he thinks not. He did argue, indeed, in favour of its necessity, and maintain that it was required by the race; .. but only on the ground that it was an experienced truth connected with the art of living".

[6] Ibid., p. 123.

As for its actual practice, examples of such a system were not lacking, either among the heathens or the Christians. Caesar--who was not unknown to More--cites the case of the Suebi who do not individually own a definite portion of land and who mutually exchange habitations every year, their aim being "to keep the common people in contentment when each man sees that his own wealth is equal to that of the most powerful".[1] Did not, also, the reports from the newly discovered lands support the contention that peoples closer to nature were less attached to property? More could have read Peter Martyr's De Orbe Novo, published in 1511 about the West Indies and Cuba where no property distinction exists[2] and Amerigo Vespucci's work about a similar mutual exchange of habitations.[3]

More inspiring, still, the traditional Christian attitude towards property, which--without rejecting the legitimacy of private ownership--wilfully renounced it for the sake of higher values. Thus, the early Christians "were of one heart and one soul, and not one of them said that anything was his own, but they had all things in common ... nor was there anyone among them in want".[4] This example led, in the

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[1]Caesar, Gallic Wars IV, 1 and VI. 22.

[2]Cited by Donner, op. cit., pp. 27 - 28.

[3]Cited by Morton, op. cit., p. 43.

[4]Acts. 4: 32, 34.

following centuries, to the institution of monastic orders and, especially in the Middle Ages, of the mendicant orders. For more than a century before Thomas More, the Franciscan Order had been active in an effort to arrest the trend towards materialism. Even outside the Church, material goods were considered more as an object of use than of absolute property. It is well known that usury was forbidden under pain of excommunication and that possession in land was conditional upon service.[1]

From these centuries-old discussions and the examples taken from history, More could conclude that property was not an inalienable, individual right but was subject to regulation by law for the best order of society. If property is private, it may be an obstacle to an authentic human life, but if it could be established by law as common in ownership and in use, it could become a means of education whereby the base desire for material goods could be overcome[2] and true human values be acquired and preserved. That More thought this, at least theoretically, possible is a testimony to the great optimism of the Renaissance humanists in the perfectibility of human nature.

The creator of Utopia had to accept that his people were not naturally endowed with the perfection that Hythloday

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[1]Jarrett, op. cit., p. 131.

[2]Ibid., p. 129.

witnessed during his sojourn among them. They developed progressively to that high level of culture through a system of social education precisely centered on common property. This is evident from the fact that it is the discussion of property that motivates the whole second part of the book which is a description not only of Utopian property but of the whole social life of Utopia.[1]

The Utopians, therefore, had to be taught the advantages of common ownership. So that, in the beginning, it was imposed and enforced by the state--a condition that has led some commentators to regard More as a socialist.[2] They do not appreciate the point made by the author and which rests on the benefits derived once common property and use have been instituted. Hythloday testifies that, at the time of his visit, it was a well-established custom which the Utopians accept voluntarily[3] because of the conviction that it rids them of the base desire for material goods, frees them from all worries with regard to their subsistence, and, thus, elevates them to a cultural level where they may unimpededly dedicate themselves to the attainment of righteousness.[4]

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[1] Utopia, p. 50.

[2] Campbell, Erasmus, Tyndale and More, p. 95, and More's Utopia and His Social Teaching, p. 145.

[3] George O'Brien, Essay on the Economic Effects of the Reformation, (London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne, 1923) p. 149.

[4] Hertzler, The History of Utopian Thought, p. 135.

It, now, becomes clear that any similarity with Plato is purely negative. In both is found the abolition of private property because of the effect it might have on higher values. But, while Plato sees this measure as wholly pragmatic for the sake of good government[1] without any reference to the good of the individual, More describes it as a condition of individual virtue as much as a boon to the social order. Nor is there any affinity with the abolition of a "sinful" private property by Wyclif [2] for the sake of the "Dominion of Grace", where only the just may possess privately.[3] In Utopia, the greater the justice, the less is the need or the desire to own. It is true also that, like the people of the Middle Ages, the Utopians are bound to give the community work and services in return for the security they enjoy; but the obligation does not arise from a contract. It is a generally accepted duty towards a family-like society in which they thrive.[4] No wonder, then, that the Utopians are so impressed by the similarity of their system with the early Christians' common sharing of material goods when they are made aware of the latter by Hythloday.

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[1] Sabine, op. cit., p. 57. "So firmly was Plato convinced of the pernicious effects of wealth upon government that he saw no way to abolish the evil except by abolishing wealth itself, so far as soldiers and rulers are concerned."

[2] An opinion advocated by Raymond G. Gettell, History of Political Thought (New York: Century Co., 1924), p. 198.

[3] Jarrett, op. cit., p. 145.

[4] Utopia, p. 64.

From the foregoing, it appears certain that whatever knowledge Thomas More might have had of previous writers, the ideas on property that he expresses in Utopia, are his own. They are consistent with his conception of the well-ordered society, solicitous of the truly human well-being of its members--a well-being which consists more in the human values of knowledge and righteousness. He did not believe that common property could be established in the actual countries of his time, as is shown in a posterior work, Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation[1], but he set it up as an ideal before his contemporaries, in the hope that they might be deterred from the rising materialism and engage in economic pursuits with a more detached spirit.

The Economic Life.

Unless a 20th-Century man has been intellectually formed in scholastic philosophy, it is extremely difficult for him to understand a medieval or Renaissance writer. The temptation is too great to apply to the latter the principles of liberal individualism which is the warp and woof of the modern mentality. Fundamental to our way of thinking is the motive of self-interest, the economic incentive of personal gain. This motive has always existed in individual people, but it is only in modern times that it has become a

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[1]Cited by Donner, op. cit., p. 66.

practically undebatable tenet of the social life. It is still useful as a basis of comparison, but to apply it to less recent thought as the standard of validity is to err against the first principle of sound interpretation.

In an otherwise quite remarkable work, J. W. Allen did not avoid that pit-fall.[1] To refer to the description of Utopia as "a sad and witty" answer, which is no answer at all, to the objection of an incentiveless economy, and to affirm that More is so conscious of the system's fallacy as "to let fancy loose" and become "little more than ingenious", is to have grasped neither the spirit of Renaissance humanism nor More's own aim and purpose. Allen's excuse could be, of course, that he has good company among present-day commentators.

That More was quite aware of the force of the objection, as far as a materialistic and individualistic society is concerned, is evident from his own formulation of it and the consequence he draws that the lack of material incentive would only lead to the neglect of the production of every-day necessities, causing poverty and bloodshed.[2] That he knew his Utopian system to be impracticable appears from his own rejection of its necessary foundation, a concrete community of property, as was shown above. That he only proposed it as an

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[1] Allen, _A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century_, pp. 155 - 156.

[2] _Utopia_, p. 52.

ideal to be aimed at rather than a practical possibility seems clear from the country in which it develops, Utopia, that is, "Nowhere". For More, the Utopian is man as he would be if only he believed in a hierarchy of values, as mostly all previous thought had urged him to be, and not the Englishman of his time and, still less, the man of the twentieth century.

Thomas More was too much of a humanist, he was too well versed in ancient and medieval philosophy, not to realize that human action arises out of a motive. The point he wished to make is not that man should act without one, but, rather, that material gain is the least noble of all incentives and, therefore, should not be the principle of economic activity. Nor does essential human nature require it. Theologians generally agreed that, even without original sin, man would have worked, cultivated the soil, valorized the creation.[1] Surely, in the state of original innocence, his motive would have been other than mere material gain! Sin has made labour difficult and productive of fatigue, and Christian life consists in precisely working in spite of the physical inconveniences for the sake of a higher end--for the sake of mere human life. "If any man will not work, neither let him eat," says St. Paul.[2] So that manual labour is for the sake of

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[1] cf. Gen. 1: 28.

[2] II Thess. 3: 10.

bodily subsistence which in turn is for the sake of the soul. This is what the Utopians achieved, as it had been achieved by the monks who worked strenuously and increased the material wealth of their orders but not for the sake of wealth itself.

This was also the spirit of the Middle Ages. As the Church endeavoured to spiritualize the barbaric tribes and detach them from their earthly spirit, there developed an economy that was not founded upon the incentive of material gain. Income from goods and services was regulated by the guilds which removed competition for profits and determined the just price of every commodity.[1] The worker received only the amount required for a decent livelihood, and, so, personal gain had no appeal for medieval workers. Granted that this made the medieval economy a relatively static one and that a capitalist or profit-motive economy is more efficient to raise the standard of living; but that is exactly the point. For More, man is not made for comfort, good eating and good clothing, he is made to develop his intelligence and aspire to more lofty pleasures in the company of his fellow-men.

The profit-motive which rose and began to spread at the end of the Renaissance, threatened to put the cart before the horse to reduce human values to a question of shillings and pence, and to subvert society. During the Middle Ages,

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[1] Jarrett, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

there were few landless or jobless men; but, by the sixteenth century, the desire for material goods, coupled with an unfettered competition among individuals, had made man landless and poor.[1] Greed was degrading men and breaking up society by making wealth more important than man himself.[2] This is what More perceived and against which he wanted to react. When made aware of the situation in Europe, the Utopians

> wonder much to hear that gold, which of its own nature is a thing so unprofitable, is now among all people in so high estimation, that man himself, by whom, yea, and for the use of whom, it is so much set by, is in much less estimation than the gold itself.[3]

The humanists of the Renaissance will not succeed in arresting this movement towards free competition for an economic profit--motive, so that, after three centuries, Karl Marx will have more reason to say:

> The bourgeoisie has left no other nexus between man and man than naked-self-interest, callous cash payment.[4]

Thomas More, like his brother humanists, wants a society based on reason and not on cash payments, not a society founded on a division between "the haves" and "the have-nots",

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[1] Jarrett, op. cit., p. 142.

[2] cf. The City of God, Bk. XII, Chap. vii, vol. i. p.351 Evil derives from an unorderly desire of the lower. "Covetousness is no vice in the gold, but in him that perversely leaves justice to love gold".

[3] Utopia, p. 81.

[4] Communist Manifesto.

but a brotherhood that rests on a community of true human values rather than on individual wealth. The profit-motive has no place in such a society. And thus, economics is more a social question than a personal enterprise.

If the Utopians work, however, it is not without an incentive, as in a penal colony. It derives from the whole traditional thought so familiar to More: Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics and the medieval philosophers. He works because he ought to as a human being--to 'earn' a living. It is a duty which applies to all citizens[1] who see in labour the fulfilment of life's purpose.[2] He works because of the spirit of brotherhood. His industry is not self-centered, but is centered on that large family which is the whole commonwealth.[3] It was reserved to our time to develope a system of profit-motive that would set up brother against brother, kin against kin, friend against friend. The Utopians would not have understood our modern saying, friendship and business do not mix.

Such a spirit, present in the Middle Ages, had not completely disappeared even from England. The multiplication of enclosures had not yet removed all common fields cultivated by ploughteams made up of members of individual families

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[1]Utopia, p. 66.

[2]cf. Jarrett, op. cit., p. 155. "Merely to engage in commerce for the purpose of making more money was (during the Middle Ages) not a sufficient justification, for money should be only a means to an end."

[3]Utopia, p. 86.

scattered throughout the township.[1] Commercialism had not completely emancipated the serf and severed the tenant and yeoman from the security of the soil and, thus, destroyed the spirit of the common life.[2] His startling suggestion, already alluded to, that people might alternate from urban to rural occupation, might have been an effort to preserve what was left of this medieval spirit which refused to barter economic security, social harmony and the search for higher values, for an illusory freedom, a problematical personal gain and a private property. quite elusive to the growing mass of the dispossessed.

The future chancellor of Henry VIII decides in favour of the principle of a rising mercantilism, namely, that trade, and especially international trade, is the business of society rather than of the individual and must be conducted by the state. If some commercialism is unavoidable, let it be carried on by government whose function it is,[3] while the individuals work where they are needed,[4] no one remaining idle[5] and all being supplied with a sufficiency of available material goods.[6] Did not Thomas Aquinas teach that the "sufficiency of

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[1] Morton, The English Utopia, p. 46.

[2] Chambers, Thomas More, p. 136.

[3] Pierre Mesnard, L'essor de la Philosophie Politique au XVI[e] Siecle (Paris: Boivin & Cie, 1936), p. 165.

[4] Utopia, p. 59.

[5] Ibid., p. 64.

[6] Ibid., p. 76.

corporeal goods" is one of the aims of "human confederation"?[1] In this way, the Utopians lead a thrifty life, preferring the general absence of poverty to the luxury of a few.[2]

If he also adopts the mercantilist principle that international trade is a government business and refuses a place in Utopia to those "who buy very cheap abroad and, then, sell exceedingly dear at home";[3] if, again, he evaluates the wealth of a country by the excess of its exports over its imports;[4] if he enjoins to government to stock-pile precious metals and especially iron which is scarce in Utopia,[5] and to control the numerical stability of the population through the establishment of colonies;[6] if he accepts all these mercantilist theories, it is still in a proper, humanist order of values and not for reasons of a sordid commercialism or national interest. In their dealings with neighbouring states they sell not for as much as the market can bear but for "a reasonable and mean price", nor do they ruthlessly press the debtor-countries for payment, unless, in their own emergencies,

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[1]cf. Jarrett, op. cit., p. 184.

[2]Morton, op. cit., p. 53.

[3]Utopia, p. 27.

[4]cf. Haney, op. cit., p. 122.

[5]Donner, op. cit., p. 39. attributes the lack of iron to the influence of the report of Vespucci. A similar remark is contained in Tacitus, The Agricola and Germany and the Dialogue on Oratory, trans. A. J. Church and W. J. Brodribb (London: MacMillan and Co. Ltd., 1899), Chap. VI, p. 91.

[6]Utopia, p. 70.

they need the gold, as in the case of war.[1] Four-hundred-and-fifty years ago, the Utopians had their Marshall Plan, giving one-seventh of their surplus to the poor of neighbouring countries without any strings attached, without the necessity thereby to maintain their own economy, without the expectancy of military bases or other advantages to themselves.[2]

The lessons taught the world by the Utopians have not lost any of their validity. If the world of the twentieth century is floundering in the mire of national as well as international disorder, it is because the contemporaries of Thomas More and their descendants were more and more oblivious of the principles of the spiritualist philosophies of Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics which the great Renaissance humanist recalled to their minds by means of the Utopian ideal and which modern popes, Leo XIII, Pius XI and Pius XII, ceaselessly appeal to as the only sound principles of society and government.

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[1] Utopia, p. 77.

[2] Ibid.

CHAPTER V

GOVERNMENT

That Thomas More never lost sight of the economic, social and moral conditions of the times in which he lived and, more especially, of the conditions in his own country, must have been apparent in the previous chapters. This, in fact, makes him the foremost sociologist of his time, if it be allowed to ascribe such a modern term to a scholar of more than 400 years ago. More than scholarship, however, will inspire his ideas on government; for--unlike his friend Erasmus who liked to consider political questions from a superior position and advise rulers, both popes and princes, from a distance[1]--Thomas feels by temperament inclined to mix action with study. When he writes Utopia, he already has been a member of the Commons and has been exiled for his outspoken criticisms of royal actions. Repatriated on the death of Henry VII, he resumed his functions of deputy-sheriff, and there is the prospect that he will be appointed to the king's council or, at least, that he will be entrusted with certain political missions. Thus, the problem of government is, for him, a personal one.

Like all true intellectuals before him, for instance the cynic Diogenes, the stoic Seneca and Marcus Aurelius;

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[1]cf. Donner, Introduction to Utopia, p. 24. Appointed a councillor of Prince Charles, he does not fulfil the duties of his position.

like the scholastic Thomas Aquinas and most doctors of the Middle Ages; like the humanist Erasmus; More feels loath to be burdened with exacting official duties. All the more so, as his experience has taught him--and Hythloday expresses it well at the beginning of Utopia--rulers care less for the goodness of their council than for the furtherance of their self--interest.[1] Yet, does not social obligation override personal preference? The Cynics did not think so. For them, the wise man refrained from all social intercourse--and mostly from participation in authority--unless compelled by force to do so. Epicurus advised his disciples to share in the social life only inasmuch as a personal benefit could therefrom be derived--to a great extent, the attitude that prevails in twentieth-century liberalism.

On the other hand, Stoicism's emphasis on brotherhood and service leads the competent to place their abilities at the service of society. This thought is expressed by St. Augustine, in particular:

> Because it would be worse if the bad should get all the sovereignty, and so overrule the good, therefore, in that respect, the honest men may esteem their own sovereignty a felicity.[2]

And again:

> If we be called forth unto a position, the law

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[1] Utopia, p. 20.

[2] The City of God, Bk. IV, Chap. xiii, vol. i, p. 125.

and need of charity binds us to undertake it.[1] Following upon its belief in the primacy of reason, scholastic philosophy had not held another view: it needs must be the prerogative of experts in political science to rule and politics was the crowning achievement of philosophy.[2] More, himself, subscribes to Plato's opinion that, despite the inconveniences, the true philosopher would realize his happiness in service to the community[3] and he replies to the objection of the unworthiness of rulers in a typical humanist fashion:

> If evil opinion and naughty persuasions cannot be utterly and quite plucked out of their(rulers') hearts, if you cannot even as you would remedy vices which use and custom hath confirmed, yet for this cause you must not leave and forsake the commonwealth. You must not forsake the ship in a tempest because you cannot rule and keep down the winds.[4]

Impelled by these reasons, More will--when the time comes--accept to fill the top position at court, that of Chancellor of Henry VIII, but, in Utopia, government will be so organized that no one will be placed in such a quandary. After all, the political society is not for the sake of the monarch's glory or the aggrandizement of his power by conquests which result in the fiscal exploitation of the people,

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[1] *Ibid.*, Bk. XIX, Chap. xx, vol. ii, p. 257.

[2] Jarrett, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

[3] *Utopia*, p. 39.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 20.

as can be seen in the actual situation in France.[1] It is founded in unity, based on righteousness, as was seen in the previous chapters, and especially on the virtue of justice which is so seriously threatened by the growing secular individualism. His system is intended to curb this dangerous trend.[2]

His problem is to maintain monarchy in which he believes as a principle of unity and also as a practical necessity in the strife-torn England of the turn from the 15th to the 16th century, but a monarchy which is not absolute. Necessary authority must be restrained by an equally necessary moral unity and the necessary agency to safeguard it, namely, a popularly appointed council. In this he turns away from Plato whose organization of the <u>polis</u> favours a ruling class and he establishes a society in which all benefits may be shared evenly.[3] His Utopia is the Aristotelian <u>koinonia</u> with its universal participation in and collaboration to the whole life of the community and not only a gregarious agglomeration of human beings.[4] It is the Augustinian commonwealth where justice is the main inspiration unless it is to become "a fair

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[1] <u>Utopia</u>, pp. 40 - 44. More uses the example of the France of Charles VIII to attack the still more deplorable century of England's bloody monarchy from Henry VI to Henry VII. (1422 - 1509)

[2] Campbell, <u>More's Utopia and His Social Teachings</u>, p.124

[3] Reynolds, <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 113.

[4] McIlwain, <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 73.

thievish purchase".[1] It is a replica of the early medieval monastic order--especially the Benedictine--which has "for its basis religion; for its support the honour given to work; for its crown a new intellectual and artistic culture".[2]

Most of all, Utopia is a family where fatherly autho-rity is endowed with a real power to command without implying an awesome superiority. Its end and purpose--indeed, its de-sire--is to serve and not to dominate, as St. Augustine him-self found in the ruler as well as in God a difficulty to determine whether He is more a Master than a Helper, a dis-penser of Grace.[3] The father and the ruler have in common the disinterestedness of the Good Shepherd as Hythloday points out: "the office and duty of a shepherd is in that he is a shepherd, to feed his sheep rather than himself."[4]

More, therefore, has no objection and does, indeed, rather favour the personal rule of the Tudor dynasty, as Prof. Hertzler points out;[5] provided it be bereft of princely self--interest and imbued with the spirit of social welfare. This is the pure humanist conception, and there is no need to search further afield for the origin of such ideas. That More

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[1] The City of God, Bk. IV. Chap. iv, vol. i, p. 115.

[2] Berliere, Dom Ursmer, L'ordre monastique des origines au XII[e] siecle, 2[e] edit. 1921, p. 45, quoted in Chambers, op. cit., p. 137.

[3] The City of God, vol. i, p. xxviii.

[4] Utopia, p. 45.

[5] Hertzler, op cit., p. 138.

uses rare Latin words found also in Plautus and Terence is only an indication of his familiarity with these ancient authors.[1] What More has adapted to his Utopian society is the traditional principle, constant from Plato to the end of the Middle Ages, that justice is the foundation of civil society and that the family pattern is best able to preserve justice for society itself, for the individual citizens and for the ruler.

Utopia represents such a closely knit organization that the entire island appears to be one household.[2] Already current among Greek philosophers, this idea was specially developed during the Middle Ages, for which unity constituted the essence of political organization.[3] But for More, this is not mere speculation, but he introduces in Utopia the spirit of association so noticeable in the medieval period.[4] It was their way, and it is More's way, to provide against the Gospel warning that "every kingdom divided against itself shall be brough to desolation and house upon house shall fall".[5] If he

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[1] cf. Donner, op. cit., p. 8, who quotes Marie Delcourt Thomas More, l'Utopie ou le traite de la meilleure forme de gouvernement, Texte latin, avec des notes explicatives et explicatives (Paris: Libraire E. Droz, 1936), pp. 213 - 216, an appendix with a list of rare words used in Utopia.

[2] Utopia, p. 76.

[3] Gierke, op. cit., pp. 9 - 10, and p. 31.

[4] Chambers, op. cit., p. 257.

[5] Luke, 11: 17.

could deplore the deterioration of justice in his own country was it not because of the divisions of the War of the Roses only just ended with the victory of Henry VII but not without having, for 60 years, plunged England in poverty, suffering and bloodshed.

This would not have happened if, instead of seeking their own self-interest, and unjustly so, the leaders had had a paternal interest in the people or if the people had been able to speak for themselves. Then, justice would still prevail in the community. It prevails in Utopia, because all members of the community are equal. There exists no basic differentiation between the ruler and the ruled. The Philarchs dine together with their group of families,[1] and thus can discuss public affairs with those over whom they rule. How different from the common meals of Plato's Republic where the rulers dine together and discuss what measures they will impose on the masses! Through these general discussions all Utopians are enabled to take an active part in government through the heads of families,[2] each of which becomes a parliamentarian as had obtained in the Teutonic tribes.[3] It was also a custom which More found in the Swiss democracy of his time.

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[1] Utopia, p. 71.

[2] Ibid., pp. 62 - 63.

[3] Tacitus, op. cit., Chap. XI. p. 95: "About minor matters the chiefs deliberate, about the more important the whole tribe."

The Utopian society, thus, becomes a kind of confederation of families according to the scholastic philosophy that the part and the whole are of the same order.[1] The father of a family is, in this manner, a member of the government while, conversely, the highest ruler turns into a paterfamilias, the father of the greater family.[2] This participation of the people in the affairs of government was quite consistent with the customs, even with the constitution of the English nation if only the latter were respected. Erasmus does not fail to notice it. He states in a letter to Ulrich von Hutten that More modelled his Utopia "on the British constitution with which he is thoroughly familiar",[3] even as to dividing the island into 54 administrative districts when England has, besides London, 53 counties or shires.[4]

In England, however, justice is not observed, despite the inherent principles of the Constitution which could favour it, because the hereditary character of the monarchy is opposed to it. Not so in Utopia. The ultimate ruler who enjoys a life time tenure, as well as the magistrates are chosen for

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[1] cf. Otto Gierke, Political Theories of the Middle Ages, trans. Fredric William Maitland (Cambridge: University Press, 1900), p. 8.

[2] Utopia, p. 103.

[3] Quoted in Allen, Sir Thomas More, p. 8.

[4] Donner, op. cit., p. 60.

their qualities by the people.[1] Thus, the Utopian magistrate holds his authority from the people, and, in this, More conforms to the theory of the Roman Law and of Cicero[2] and is not alien to the theory that grew steadily in popularity towards the end of the medieval period.[3] As it originates from the people, so is the authority of the prince limited by the constitution which exactly prescribes his powers and duties.[4] Transgression of these limitations may entail his removal from office on the grounds of tyranny.[5] While Plato's rulers would be deposed because of a deterioration in their philosophical powers, More's disposition of an unworthy ruler seems rather like an application of the Thomist argument:

> Against savage tyrants proceedings should be taken not by private presumption but by public authority, for since each group has from its beginnings a right to provide itself with a king, so it cannot be unjust for it, should he employ his power tyrannically, to destroy or restrain him. Nor can that group be justly accused of disloyalty, merely on the strength of its previous oath of perpetual fidelity to him, since he has himself deserved this by his non-observance of that fidelity to which his own kingly oath committed him, he has not observed his pact with his subjects.[6]

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[1] _Utopia_, p. 62.

[2] cf. Sabine, _op. cit._, p. 171.

[3] cf. Jarrett, _op. cit._, p. 103.

[4] Morton, _op. cit._, p. 45.

[5] _Utopia_, p. 62.

[6] _De Regimine Principum_, 1: 6.

Other magistrates who fill the position either of political officers or of councillors to the prince, hold office for only one year.[1] More, here, subscribes to the opinion of the pre-Socratic Athenians and forecasts that of modern American liberals that the exercise of power breeds a desire for more power. Hence, the limitation of tenure to one year. The same does not apply to the prince since he already enjoys supreme power only limited by the constitution and, in that respect, he is under surveillance by the council. Not so in subordinated magistrates who, through long tenure, could gradually abuse their office. This had been seen by Aristotle who supported the Athenian practice,[2] while Plato would fain have kept a man in authority as long as he possessed the requisite qualities of a philosopher. Rome had also adopted this practice until she fell in the hands of dictators to the great regret of Cicero and St. Augustine.[3] The ultimate safeguard of the principles of the Utopian constitution, however, lies in the council which acts in an honorary capacity--therefore without any immediate benefit for themselves. The <u>De Regimine Principum</u> of Thomas Aquinas had already supported St. Augustine's praise of the Roman patricians "who had advised the

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[1] <u>Utopia</u>, p. 62.

[2] Aristotle, <u>Politics</u>, p. 209, V, C. 8, 7.

[3] <u>The City of God</u>, Bk. V, C. xii, vol. i, p. 157.

state with unpaid council".[1] In Utopia, counsel is not only freely given, but is mandatory. In order to guard against rash decisions, all matters are submitted to council who must allow at least three days of deliberation before a decision is taken.[2]

In conclusion it may be said once again that More has found his inspiration with respect to government in the ancient authors with whom he was familiar. It is not, however, an eclecticism; for it remains in the line of the natural philosophy of Stoicism which has its roots in the social principles of Plato and Aristotle--if not in all their applications--and was developed by the Fathers of the Church, finding its ultimate expression in the medieval scholastic philosophy. It is not accepted, however, with servility; for, More remains constantly alert to the specific problems of his own time, and his ideas are more adaptations than outright borrowings. His Utopia, for instance, is a national state--a conception as alien to the Middle Ages as it had been to the Greeks or the Romans. This national consciousness of More leads us to a consideration of his ideas with regard to international relations, another of his personal problems.

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[1]<u>De Regimine Principum</u>, Bk. III, Chap. v.

[2]<u>Utopia</u>, p. 62.

International Relations

Thomas More would not have been a humanist worthy of literary survival had he, in the discussion of international relations, turned traitor to the principles of humanism which he evinced in the description of Utopian national life. It is, then, to be expected that, in this new field, there will appear the principles of equality based on natural law, of community property, if not of use, and of the humanitarian virtues of brotherhood and benevolence.[1] Such lessons will be given in the sixteenth-century context of national consciousness and political as well as economic situations, but always in conformity with Christian teaching.

More's conception of international relations is as much at variance with current practice as his national, social organization differed from the growing individualism or his political system from the prevalent autocracy of his time. Says More: " Men are better and more surely knit together by love and benevolence than by covenants of leagues, by hearty affection of mind than by words".[2] In consequence, his Utopians never conclude treaties or enter into leagues. They quite spontaneously protect and defend those peoples who think as they, themselves think, who respect natural law, who are

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[1] Berneri, op. cit., p. 56.

[2] Utopia, p. 106.

free and self-governing, where self-government is not opposed to colonial rule but to life under a tyrant. With such a people whose members do not enjoy equality--that basic condition of true social relations--there can be no international intercourse. It is not a nation but a group of barbarians who are sacrificed to the tyrant's self-interest and desire for power over lands that he seeks through conquest. Hythloday's example of the French king's invasion of Italy[1]--the prototype of the English king's claim to France[2]--is expressive enough of More's disgust for wars of conquest and the alliances necessary to achieve them. Neither the Utopians nor the Polylerites wish "to enlarge the bounds of their dominion".[3] The former even construct a canal to fix their boundaries,[4] thereby giving the impression of political, if not commercial, isolationist tendencies.[5]

With tyrants, therefore, there can be no alliances. They are, in a fashion, cast out of the family of nations, as the metics of ancient Greece had no part in the life of the polis and the medieval jew stood without the Christian

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[1] Utopia, p. 40.

[2] Chambers, op. cit., p. 155.

[3] Utopia, p. 32.

[4] Ibid., p. 56.

[5] Chambers, op. cit., p. 102.

community. To them will apply the bare laws of natural morality. They will go unmolested as long as they respect these laws and do not impede the smooth operation of the community of true nations who have, all, an equal right to the integrity and well-being of their own territory.[1]

As More expresses his confidence in the righteous unity of the Utopian people on the basis of the universal acceptance of natural law and equality, so does he believe in the possibility of a family of nations united in the practice of the same principles. Perhaps does he feel a Dantesque longing for the unity of Christendom--a feeling which he would share with his friend Erasmus. This opinion of Chambers cannot be lightly dismissed.[2] Not that it is in any way expressed. But, for all his national consciousness, he does contemplate a world governed according to the principles and with the aid of Utopia who would supply other peoples with magistrates for the time required to train them, usually one or five years,[3] and who would even help these peoples to rid themselves of tyrants or warring princes who were traitors to natural law and reason as Erasmus thought that they were traitors to Christianity.[4] Does he not set the scene of his discussion

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[1] cf. Mesnard, op. cit., p. 168.

[2] Chambers, op. cit., passim.

[3] Utopia, p. 104.

[4] Chambers, op. cit., p. 266.

with this idea in mind?

> As the children of one mother...Peter Giles the Fleming, Raphael Hythloday the Portuguese, and Thomas More the Englishman, meet together in the garden at Antwerp, understanding each other fully, as members of a common civilization.[1]

Does he not, in the most solemn moment of his life, at his trial, express that very idea?

> And therefore am I not bounden, my Lord, to conform my conscience to the council of one realm against the general council of Christendom.[2]

More's Utopians are humanists and, like all humanists, they are pacifists. Not fanatically so, but in the manner of St. Augustine for whom even "the justest war is a misery",[3] but who, nevertheless, accepts war as a necessary evil if it be a just war, the conditions of which are listed by Thomas Aquinas as the authority of the state, a just cause and a right intention.[4] More expresses his hatred of war in almost the same words as Erasmus does in his In Praise of Folly,[5] It is "a thing very beastly", and despicable is "the glory gotten in war".[6]

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[1] Ibid. p. 391.

[2] Quoted by Chambers, ibid., p. 341.

[3] The City of God, Bk. XIX, Chap. vi, vol. ii, p. 243.

[4] Summa Theologica, II^{a} II^{ae}, Q. 40, art. 1.

[5] Chambers, op. cit., p. 101.

[6] Utopia, p. 107.

The Utopians are ever ready to wage a just war. It is an undertaking of the whole nation in preparation of which the men and even the women exercize in peacetime. Its just cause will be the enforcement of the laws of nature, the establishment of natural equality by the removal of a tyrant ruling over a peace-loving people, the compelling of respect for the natural laws of common property. In all this, they do not consult their own interest: they seek but the good of mankind.[1]

Concretely, the Utopians consider it as a "most just cause of war" to compel a country to hand over

> a piece of ground, void and vacant to no good nor profitable use, keeping others from the use and possession of it, which, notwithstanding by the law of nature, ought thereof to be nourished and relieved,[2]

to the end that a colony be established where a free nation could send its surplus population. Considered in the light of 19th century colonialism--and it was so considered by certain German geopoliticians[3]--this would seem like a Machiavellian plot to establish an empire. Such a view is unjustified. The idea of a colonial empire was completely unknown at the beginning of the 16th century. The most that could be said is that Thomas More was impressed, as were all his contemporaries,

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[1] Utopia, pp. 107 - 108.

[2] Ibid., p. 70.

[3] cf. Herman Onken in Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie, Phil.-Hist. Klasse, 1922, cited by Chambers, op. cit., p. 140.

by the vast, newly-discovered lands of the New World--lands that were insufficiently exploited by the indigenous populations. Were these apparently limitless regions to be left "void and vacant"; were others to be kept "from the use and possession of it" under the specious pretext of private national ownership? Or does not the medieval principle apply here also that material goods are common in ownership though they may be private in use? More does not advocate the dispossession of useful lands but only the occupation, by force of arms if necessary, of vacant lands.

Otherwise, how can a country like Utopia realize its economic population policy. A given land-area can only support a maximum of population. Where will the surplus go if the vast unexploited lands cannot be thus occupied? The very survival of the nation is at stake, as Plato had already shown in the Laws.[1] Hence, such establishment of colonies was sanctioned by the law of nature.

Whatever its cause, however, a war waged by the Utopians always complies with humanitarian principles. Certainly they will use mercenaries, the Zapoletes,[2]--the Swiss mercenaries of the time--people who lack the proper outlook on human life and whose death would be less of a loss to mankind

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[1]Donner, op. cit., p. 61.

[2]Utopia, p. 111.

than that of the wise Utopians. But all useless violence is avoided. War is waged for a good; it must cause as little evil as possible, a truly scholastic principle, also expressed by a contemporary of More, Vittoria.[1] Logically, therefore, their treatment of the enemy is human and magnanimous.[2] It is truly a war for the sake of universal peace.

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[1]Jarrett, op. cit., p. 187.

[2]Hertzler, op. cit., p. 143.

CHAPTER VI

RELIGION

Reference has constantly been made in this work to the conditions of More's time--the change that is taking place from the eschatological conception of earthly life to a naturally eudaemonistic outlook, which is the Renaissance, and which could not but lead to the naturalism and materialism of our own age. In the limited compass of this study, it is impossible to describe the situation in any detail and it must be taken for granted that the reader is aware of the 15th century's transformation in man's thinking--of individualism rising against the hyper-socialization of life, of secularism in revolt against the over-emphasis on the spiritual, and of the budding capitalism consequent on this secular individualism. Another inevitable result was anti-clericalism; for, if the churchmen were not immune from the secular spirit of the times, the Church, herself, did not give in to that spirit in her teaching, nor did she forsake her claim to the direction of men's life in temporal affairs.

Thomas More, as was seen in previous chapters, endeavoured to react against the growing materialism for the sake of a rational humanism which--in itself--required righteousness as the basis of social harmony. The creator of Utopia, however, was a Christian who gave the Church, through his

acceptance of martyrdom, the greatest possible proof of his attachment. Not that he approves of all she does; but he believes in the necessity of her teaching and her direction. The Church cannot simply be an ordinary part of the body politic, nor can she be subject to the state. Without being segregated, she is socially set apart in the singularity of her role for the promotion of righteousness. This lesson is not for the layman alone, but the churchman, also, must understand that if he holds a special place in society, he does not hold the whole place. Another great humanist, Erasmus, will attempt to impress both princes and popes with their respective responsibilities by means of frequent, direct, epistolary communications. Thomas More, the humanist, will satirize the conflict of his time by means of the religious reasonableness of the Utopians. The appeal of both will be lost, within a year of the publication of Utopia, in the din of a hammer nailing 95 theses to the church door at Wittemberg.

Rational Religion

The conciliation of scientific and religious truth is one of the most difficult problems that has occupied the minds of men. It does not come up in an age of simple faith, neither has it any great importance in a naturally agnostic society. But, when men of faith develop a bent for rationality and scientific investigation, there usually arise among them more superficial minds to opine the disastrous conclusion of the

contradictory truth, i. e. a necessary conclusion of philosophy may be false according to Revelation and vice versa. This conclusion was expressed by Siger de Brabant in the 13th century for the same reason that Averroes had held it in the twelfth, namely, the seeming impossibility of conciliating Divine Revelation with the rational philosophy of Aristotle. In the new Renaissance enthusiasm for rational investigation, it was inevitable that such a dichotomy should reappear. It is a matter of record that it did.[1]

In this context, to make Christians of the Utopians would have been a re-affirmation of the truths of Revelation as they were generally held to be a matter of belief; but the main tenets of the Christian faith--the existence of God as creator and remunerator,[2] the immortality of the soul, the communion of saints, the stupidity and evil of divination--appear all the more compelling as they are discovered by reason alone. Of course, there are essential differences, since mysteries like the Trinity, Incarnation, Redemption and sacraments, can not be arrived at without Revelation; but the basic similarities are greater than the differences.

As a result and because the Utopians live by reason, their behaviour conforms more with Christian teaching than

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[1] Five days after the publication of <u>Utopia</u> the <u>Tractus de Immortalitate Animae</u> was published in Bologna, in which Pomponazzi accepts the soul's immortality as a Christian but denies the doctrine as a philosopher, cited by Chambers <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 134.

[2] Hebr. 11: 6.

that of a great many Christians of More's time. It is, therefore, not surprising that--as Hythloday relates--they readily agree with the Christian teaching not only on account of a Divine inspiration but because "they thought it nighest unto that opinion which among them is counted as the chiefest".[1] Certainly we have here an expression of the humanist confidence in the power of human reasoning, but it is also an example of the medieval conviction that grace does not destroy nature, that the supernatural rests on the natural, that the rationabile obsequium demanded by the Apostle[2] is possible, or, as was said in the Middle Ages, that God is found teste David cum Sibylla.[3]

The Utopians believe in "a godly power, unknown, everlasting, incomprehensible, inexplicable, far above the capacity and reach of man's wit, dispersed throughout all the world, not in bigness but in virtue and power,"[4] creator of and provider for all things. More could find this conception in the Greek and Roman philosophers of the past. He could find it in St. Augustine who describes the Socratic notion of God as "an incorporeal and unchangeable and incomprehensible light, which

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[1] Utopia, p. 118.

[2] Rom. 12: 1.

[3] This remark is made by Maynard, op. cit., p. 81.

[4] Utopia, p. 117.

contains the causes of creation",[1] and gives the definition of Plato--who is so close to Christian doctrine[2]--"God is the uncreated Creator of all existence".[3] It is not mere coincidence that the Utopians' name for God is Mithra, as the name of the Iranic god whose cult had spread over the Roman Empire during the second century, B.C.--a religion with very high moral standards and a ritual showing great similarities to the Christian rites of baptism, sacred banquets, weekly observance of the God's day, etc. It would show, at least, More's concern to bind the Utopian religion to that highest form of heathenism which so readily adopted Christianity.

The absence of images in the religion of Utopia is not to be interpreted as forecasting the iconoclasm which would soon break out with Protestantism. God is unrepresentable and no picture or likeness could symbolize Him to the satisfaction and benefit of everyone. There are, therefore, no images of Him in Utopia.[4] And this is logical. Sacred representations become admissable only with reference to a God, incarnate in the flesh of man and living among men. Otherwise, one must agree with the praise given by St. Augustine to the poet Varro who

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[1] The City of God, Bk. VIII, Chap. iii, vol. i, p. 227.

[2] Ibid., Bk. VIII, Chap. VI, vol. i. p. 231.

[3] Ibid., Bk. VIII, Chap. x, vol. i, p. 235.

[4] Utopia, p. 127.

said that "the gods' honour would have been purer without images"; for this idea brought him quite close to Christianity's conception of God.[1] The Utopians' concern for righteousness through constant education made them grasp the truth of what Newman will express more than three centuries later: "The apprehension of the Unseen is the only known principle capable of subduing moral evil, educating the multitude and organizing society."[2] Besides, as far as More was concerned, this concurred with the first commandment given by God to the incompletely Christian Jewish people.

Three years before the publication of Utopia, the Fifth Lateran Council had to take a stand on the question of the rationality of the soul's immortality.[3] It had been, and still was, a much discussed question. Without Revelation, the Utopians arrive at the conclusion that the human soul is destined to an everlasting after-life. This is another of the awsome "Unseen" which is necessary to "the organizing of society". This conviction of the Utopians is so strong that they even exclude from public offices those who do not share in this belief.[4] What most primitive and heathen people adhered

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[1] The City of God, Bk. IV, C. xxxii, vol. i, p. 141.

[2] Newman, I. H., Discussions and Arguments, p. 304, quoted by Campbell, More's Utopia and His Social Teachings, p. 164.

[3] Session viii of Dec. 19th 1513.

[4] Utopia, p. 121.

to as a belief, the Utopians assent to, because it is reasonable. It follows, also, rationally that the souls of the humanly dead are worthy of the remembrance of the living if they lived a righteous life. Similar to the ritual of the manes and penates of the Greeks and Romans, the cult is closer to the Christian communion of saints in that the ancestors are venerated rather than worshipped as gods; for, in Utopia, there is no belief in vain divinations and irrational superstitions, no trust in the flight or voices of birds which "in other countries are in great observation".[1] They believe, indeed, in miracles as interventions of God outside of the laws of nature.

This rational discussion, in 1516, of a natural religion founded on the medieval idea of an unchanging nature will supply Thomas More with a prop to lean on, nineteen years later, when he will have to defend the unchangeableness of the universal Christian Faith.

The Clergy

Mention has frequently been made in the foregoing discussion of cult and ritual; for--as it is also apparent--religion in Utopia is not only the affair of the individual but, also, concerns the community. It has social implications and a social as well as an eternal end. This necessarily implies

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[1] Utopia, p. 122.

a consecrated clergy whose function is to teach, to direct and to preside at the ritual ceremonies. However, to determine the nature of these functions and the extent of the clerical powers in relation to political authority is a most difficult problem. It had occupied Christian minds from the time that the Roman Empire was converted under Constantine. The principle of its solution was defined by Pope Gelasius at the end of the fifth century: There is neither regnum nor sacerdotium merged in one hand; there is no temporal subordination of one to the other, but only the spiritual subjection of princes, as Christians, to the clergy. This Gelasian theory of the two swords belongs so intimately to More's thought, explains Chambers, that he introduces it in the heathen society of Utopia as a natural social phenomenon.[1] But if the principle was clear, its application, throughout the Middle Ages, was an object of contention between the spiritual and the temporal powers, with the ecclesiastical power waxing in times of deep faith and waning as the religious spirit declined. At the beginning of the 16th century, the Church had been waging a losing battle for two hundred years against, now, the secular anti-clericalism typified by Marsiglio of Padua, then the spiritual anti-clericalism expressed by such men as William of Ockam and the Franciscan Spirituals. Throughout Christendom

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[1] Chambers, op. cit., pp. 262 - 263.

the local clergy was sorely lacking in strong personalities and was, itself, gnawed by the insedious worms of secularism and individualism. In England itself, gone were the days of an Augustine of Canterbury or a Thomas a Beckett! Under the specious pretext that a strong monarchy was needed to put an end to the fratricidal strife of the War of the Roses, the clergy were gradually submitting to an unavowed caesaro-papism.

The revolt brewing against the Church would soon break out in a general revolution that would inflame Europe for nearly one and a half century. It is uncertain that More saw it coming, but what he saw and tried to react against was the growing disrespect for the clergy. In Utopia, the clergy is on a par with the rulers. They and their wives sit together with the Syphogrants at that table which is set aside for the specially honoured men of the community.[1] Since the piest is a holy person dedicated and consecrated to God, he enjoys the privilege of immunity and, even when guilty of an offence, is not subject to temporal sanctions but is left to God's judgment and his own.[2] This is never encountered in heathen societies--it was countenanced neither in Greece nor in Rome--unless, as happens in primitive peoples, it be on account of the fear of supernatural reprisals with which the authorities

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[1] Utopia, pp. 73 - 74.

[2] Ibid., p. 125.

are as much impressed as the people. But to grant the clergy such immunity out of pure reverence for their sacred position could have no other than a Christian inspiration. Indeed, it exceeded the claims of the Catholic Church; for, if the Fifth Lateran Council--already mentioned--had declared the clergy immune from lay jurisdiction, it was not that they might escape all punishment but that they be judged by the Church, herself. Since there could not be any divinely established Church in Utopia, neither could there be any extra-political jurisdiction to pass judgment on people who, though in the social order, were considered as being above society.

In this same absence of a God-granted "power of the keys" lies the explanation of the popular election of priests by secret ballot. There is no indication that More favoured this form of appointment for the Christian Church and, thus, vindicated in advance the appointment of ministers by the Protestant congregations. Thomas More had to be logical with himself. There was, in Utopia, no authority, but the people, from which the spiritual authority could be held. And, besides, in the early Catholic Church appointments to subordinated ecclesiastical positions, even to that of bishop, had been secured by popular choice.

Once elected, however, and consecrated by their fellow-priests, the clergy exercises real spiritual power. They may excommunicate the unworthy or the criminal but

without further punishment. The unrepentent is delivered to the secular Council for correction.[1] In brief, it is the principle of the Gelasian theory and the practice of the medieval Inquisition,[2] and More, thereby, stresses against all shades of anti-clericals that there can be no separation of church and state, as we should say in our days, but that the two powers must work harmoniously, one in a spiritual, the other in a temporal manner, for the good of the community.

As a general rule, the Utopian priests are, of course, married. No reasoning on natural law can lead to a recognition of the necessity for a celibate priesthood. Chastity for anyone is a matter of Divine Counsel for a superior motive and cannot be imposed upon anyone. The unnatural was the case of the Roman vestals who were, from childhood, dedicated without choice to a life of chastity, at least for a period of thirty years from adolescence. The Christian Church intoduced celibacy for priests only gradually as More himself points out in his Dialogues where he defends the Catholic celibacy of the priesthood.[3]

Holiness, however, is not forgotten. It is for his holiness that the reasonable Utopians chose a priest and, as

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[1] Utopia, pp. 124 - 125.

[2] cf. Jarrett, op. cit., p. 147.

[3] Works, 1557, p. 228 sq., cited in Chambers, op. cit., p. 256.

a class, the priests are "of exceeding holiness and therefore very few".[1] What a contrast remarks Hythloday in the first book of Utopia with the clergy of their own England as he reports the dialogue of the jester and the friar![2] Holy, also, are the societies of men whom More introduces in support of monasticism.[3] One group, like the regular orders, lead a life of chastity, while others, more like the Third Orders, are married; but all are dedicated to work in excess even of the bondmen.

Like his friend Erasmus,[4] Thomas More is quite aware of the deficiencies in the clergy of his time, and, like him, he reproves them effectively. But to describe them as forerunners of the Reformation is equally unjust.[5] Certainly, More longs for a moral reform of the clergy as individuals, but he does not want a radical change in the institution itself, as it has developed during the whole of medieval times. Above all, in true humanist fashion, he wants the reform to be operated in a spirit of tolerance.

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[1] Utopia, p. 124.

[2] Ibid., p. 37.

[3] cf. Chambers, op. cit., p. 133.

[4] Berneri, op. cit., p. 61.

[5] With reference to Erasmus, see Mesnard, L'Essor de la philosophie politique au XVIe siecle, Chap. II.

Toleration

Many accusations and counter-accusations of intolerance are made in our day because of a confusion in ideas--a lack of understanding of what religious toleration involves. A rapid survey of our modern world will show that total toleration is found only where indifferentism reigns. A simple analysis of the concept of toleration should reveal that the human mind cannot be tolerant of error in religion as well as in other fields. There can only be toleration of sincere persons sincerely attached to error or what is thought to be erroneous. Such a simple distinction, if properly understood, would not have allowed Sir Sidney Lee to make against Sir Thomas More the unjustified accusation of "an inexcusable discrepancy" between his Utopia and his own conduct.[1] History shows, in fact, that, if More was intolerant of error unto death, if he attacked the ideas of the so-called Reformation in his writings and his defence at the trial, he was always most respectful of persons.

He was too much of a humanist not to realize that compulsion can only affect the outward actions of men but is altogether ineffective on their minds and, consequently, on the essential acts of the will. Whatever the conduct of the men of the Middle Ages--even of some churchmen--for the sake

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[1] Sir Sidney Lee, Great Englishmen of the 16th Century (London:1904), p. 33.

of political or social ends, medieval philosophy had been constant in stating that no one can be coerced in accepting a religion against his will,[1] but, as More expresses it, "truth of its own power would, at the last, issue out and come to light."[2] It is all a question of respect for the integrity of the human person.

As he sat down, therefore, to describe the religious position of the Utopians, toleration came easily to More and he disapproved in no uncertain terms of the principle that would issue from the Reformation, the eruption of authoritarianism and the German wars of religion as cujus regio, ejus religio.[3]

The Utopians show their respect for religious truth and their fear of the social consequences of error in that they do not tolerate the latter in the exercise of political authority. They venerate with special honours the holiness of the priests of the Creator and grant them special powers, while they exclude the materialists from public offices. But they, in no way, persecute the individual unbeliever, provided --as was seen previously--he practises righteousness or social justice. If, like Zeno of Citium, he acknowledges a natural

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[1] cf. Jarrett, op. cit., p. 218.

[2] Utopia, p. 120.

[3] cf. Allen, A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century, pp. 24 - 25.

virtue, stopping short of virtue's ultimate justification in a personal God, creator and rewarder, he will be tolerated and even respected; or, if his feeble mind harbours a wrong conception of God, he will go unmolested. And, thus, there is a diversity of religions in Utopia.[1]

There is, however, a condition. It cannot be over--emphasized that More would not have approved of making individual rights absolute as 19th century Liberalism has tended to make them. As in other fields of activity, one must admit in the religious field, a primacy of the social over the individual, of obedience to the state as well as to God over personal freedom.[2] The freedom to individual belief and individual worship must not hinder the peace of society--it does not go so far as to admit of agitation in order to make one's convictions prevail.[3] Religious ambition, especially, has no place in a community where social harmony reigns.

In this, More was consistent with the traditional practice of the medieval Church. Jews, for instance, were generally tolerated.[4] Not only because they were not considered as members of the community, but mostly because they

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[1] Utopia, p. 117.

[2] cf. Campbell, More's Utopia and His Social Teachings, p. 44.

[3] Utopia, p. 119.

[4] Jarrett, op. cit., p. 190.

refrained from active proselytizing.[1] On the other hand--as St. Augustine already had pointed out[2]--heretics are usually most vehement agitators. Aware of this tendency, More therefore prohibits the propagation of religious ideas under pain of severe punishment,[3] for the social unity of Utopia must be preserved. It is really the unity of Christendom that More is thinking of--an idea which permeates his whole thought and for whose sake he will even offer the supreme sacrifice of his life.

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[1] Ibid., p. 216.

[2] The City of God, Bk. XVIII, Chap. li, vol. ii, p. 225.

[3] Utopia, p. 119.

CONCLUSION

If Western social thought could be measured in space instead of time, it would appear as three interconnecting rooms, each filled with a variety of objects, but progressing in a homogeneous communication without sudden real changes or unexpected corners. The first room would be antiquity, the second the Christian era to the Protestant Reformation, and the third the modern age from the end of the religious wars to the present. The door opening from the Middle Ages into the present era is the 16th century without an understanding of which there can be no understanding of our mid-twentieth century thought. And Thomas More is the hinge which holds the secret to a full knowledge of the 16th century's operation.

More is firmly attached to the past. His spiritual and intellectual background is the Christian thought of the Middle Ages and the spiritual unity of Christendom. To quote a commentator, that background is "nothing less than Catholic Christendom with its steadfast mountains and eternal hills, towards which he never failed to look for help".[1] Always, as he writes of the life of the individual, of the community, and of the entire commonwealth with its strict obedience and respect for law, with its community of property and its immunity for the clergy, he remains faithful to the Faith for the

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[1]Campbell, Erasmus, Tyndale and More, p. 85.

sake of which he will ultimately forsake his earthly life.

Attached to the past, he is not immersed in the past, nor is he already of the future; but he is a man of the Renaissance, less aware of the moral debility of human nature than of the power for good that lies in nature's reason. He does not deify reason above faith as the Enlightenement will do but still looks upon it as the foundation or, rather, the servant of faith; for, like faith, it lives. He clings to the spiritual unity of Christendom, but unlike Dante or certain theologians, he is quite reconciled to the development of political national states. In his major work, he uses Latin to address his warnings to the universal Christendom; yet, at times, he speaks in the vernacular and is one of the foremost masters of English prose.[1]

However, if he is a man of his particular time, More opens the door to an understanding of the future. By the restraining action which he attempts to exert on the trends of his time, he allows us a glimpse into a future that his contemporaries could not perceive. He insists on religion as he observes that confidence in human reason is evolving into the cult of rationalism. He stresses rational law over personal because the incipient individualism which is becoming too secular threatens to lead to the anarchical, rugged

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[1] Routh, op. cit., p. 24.

individualism of a materialist capitalism which will not be held in check unless it be by a system of arbitrary laws.

Such is the position of More in the development of Western social thought, and such is his main inspiration. On particular points, however, his vast scholarship will allow him to select from a variety of sources practical applications of his speculative principles. For this purpose, he specially turns to Plato--but to a Plato whose absolutism is tempered by a Stoicism of which St. Augustine is the reasonable interpreter.

There are passages in the Utopia which could have been written by Socrates or St. Augustine, and others which sound like a reply to the famous, as yet unwritten, work of Machiavelli. It is this universality of More's ideas which strikes the reader. And his thought has universal validity, because he sees all problems in the mirror of the truth which ever lives and never changes, the truth about human life. Thomas More is great because his thought is neither confined to the past nor already contained in the future, but because it bathes in the vivid light of the Eternal Order of Truth.

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