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Two Utopias: A Comparison of the Republic of Plato at St. Thomas More's Utopia

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TWO UTOPIAS:
A COMPARISON OF THE REPUBLIC OF PLATO
AND ST. THOMAS MORE'S UTOPIA

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Master of
Arts in Loyola University.
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VITA AUCTORIS

Charles August Weisgerber, S.J. was born in Cincinnati on September 11, 1912. He graduated from St. Francis of Assisi Parochial School in 1926 and from St. Xavier High School in 1930. The same year he entered Milford Novitiate, Milford, Ohio; which is associated with Xavier University, Cincinnati. He transferred to West Baden College, West Baden Springs, Indiana in 1934, receiving the Bachelor of Arts degree from Loyola University in the following year. He was entered immediately in the Graduate School of Loyola. Since the completion of his philosophy course in 1937, he has been engaged in teaching, first at St. Ignatius High School, Chicago; and then at the University of Detroit High School.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

To even the most casual reader of St. Thomas More's *Utopia*, certain problems are sure to present themselves. Of these one of the most interesting to us today is why he chose communism for his ideal state. Was it merely because Plato had done so, or was there more to it than that? Another problem, rather widely discussed, is the apparent advocacy of divorce, in flat contradiction to the principles of the Saint's faith and his later actions. Cries of "inconsistency" have been raised on all sides. Again, the religious toleration granted in Utopia has given rise to a stream of vilification of St. Thomas' later "intolerance" and a great threnody of regrets that he had "abandoned his ideals." The positive religion professed by all citizens of Utopia, to which has been given the erroneous and misleading tag, deism, is generally little adverted to, except in the one feature that appeals to Protestants and Anti-clericals, the fewness of priests. This feature, an evident allusion to the great number of ill-qualified men who at the time he wrote were exercising the priestly office, has aroused a chorus of glee among enemies of the Church. To offer a solution for these problems is the purpose of this thesis.

It is easy to indicate in a general way the method of solving these problems, but to attempt a detailed solution demands extreme care. The dialogue form of the *Utopia*, unlike
that of Plato's works, is a source of real difficulty. In the platonic dialogues it is evidently Socrates' opinions which have the approval of the author as against those of other characters, whereas in the Utopia it seems equally evident that St. Thomas More is using Hythloday to express sometimes his own opinions and just as often opinions with which he certainly does not agree. It is not always easy to see precisely where the line is to be drawn.

There have been several solutions proposed for the problems of the Utopia. Of all the most facile and superficial is that which makes the Utopia merely the work of an idle hour, when its author yielded to the Humanistic spirit that was in him and dashed off an entertaining Latin dialogue in imitation of Plato for his own and his friends' amusement. But this is only a part of the story. St. Thomas More derived much enjoyment from writing the Utopia in company with his friends, but the ideas he suggested are far too serious for a mere learned pastime. The Utopia is much like Chesterton's short-stories: under a light and fantastic exterior lies a wealth of sound reasoning. This explanation, though it has behind it such names as Sir James Mackintosh, the Abbé Bremond, and Erasmus, is certainly not sufficient. In the question of choice of detail, and perhaps in some of the more startling features of Utopia, of which we cannot give a satisfactory explanation in any other theory, we must have recourse to this; but the point that makes it impossible to
accept this simple theory as the adequate and only explanation of the
whole of the Utopian state is the seriousness of that pleasant
fiction's implications, which not only could be misunderstood, but
actually were. Besides, the Utopian state has a certain form,
certain institutions, a certain spirit. What, one is entitled to
ask, was the guiding idea in St. Thomas More's mind which led him
to devise this particular type of state and no other? The theory
here under examination does not answer this question.

Most students agree that the *Utopia* was meant to be a satire of political, moral, and social evils prevalent at the
time in Europe and particularly in England. And they are certainly right. In the first book the satire cannot possibly be missed
evils are condemned in so many words. Even in the more subtle
second book it is obvious enough.

Many, however, who admit the satiric character of the *Utopia* go far astray in interpreting its positive aspect, that is the structure of the Utopian state with all its laws and customs. They take it for granted that these institutions have St. Thomas More's approval and are exact indications of his opinions on matters of state, social life, and religion. But, as a consequence of this supposition, they have the whole course of his life and all his controversial writings to explain, for they cannot deny that he held very different opinions later in life and acted upon them with decision. Let us listen to their explanations.

St. Thomas More, according to Bishops Creighton and Burnet,
Frederic Seebohm, Lord Acton,⁵ and others, was a Liberal, or a free-thinker when he wrote the *Utopia*, but was afterwards forced, bought, wheedled, cowed, or bullied into orthodoxy. From a "genial philosopher" he was transformed into "a merciless bigot" says Froude.⁴ Creighton lays the blame to a policy of expediency and thirst for power; Acton, to court influence -- court influence on a man who at the very time he should have been succumbing to this influence was parting company with the court on the divorce affair. Principal Lindsay is grandiloquent: More "turned his back on the ennobling enthusiasms of his youth."⁵ Henry Osborn Taylor would not only have it that the tolerance of the *Utopia* and the "intolerance" of St. Thomas More's later life are the cropping out of different tendencies in his character, but goes so far as to say that More was insincere in his polemical writings, that he "might have found himself forced to defend what it might have amused him to ridicule."⁶ Seebohm thinks that the views seemingly approved in the *Utopia* are those which he held in common with Erasmus and Colet, whom this critic regards as reformers in the Protestant sense.⁷

The almost idyllic note that pervades the *Utopia* would lead one to regard its communism as a mere literary convention borrowed from Plato and think no more of it, but a modern Socialist, Karl Kautsky, points to St. Thomas More as a pioneer Communist.⁸ Though we ought not to say off-hand that More did not at all believe in communism, yet we can be perfectly certain
that he did not believe in Marxian communism or anything like it.

That he did approve some sort of communism is equally certain, a communism, though, very much unlike the Marxian or Platonic. But let us leave this question for further discussion in Chapter II.

The above explanations of the problems of the Utopia are either entirely wrong or partly so. It is entirely wrong to make St. Thomas More responsible for the doctrines of the Utopia and rail against his later "inconsistency"; it is entirely wrong to go further and blame this "inconsistency" on opposite tendencies in his character, on court influence, thirst for power, expediency, or the force of circumstances. To say that St. Thomas More wrote the Utopia for amusement alone or merely to bring forth an imitation of Plato on the order of Petrarch's imitations of the letters of Cicero, is to take a half-truth and make it the whole truth. It is all very well to acknowledge that the Utopia is a clever satire, but one must answer the embarrassing question: why did St. Thomas More run the risk of seeming to advocate divorce, a tolerance that must have seemed dangerous to his contemporaries, a sort of de-truncated, de-Christianized Christianity, and finally the abolition of private property? Mr. Seebohm does not answer this question, for he is able to point to only a few ideas in the Utopia that are traceable to the common fund of ideas held by the three "Oxford Reformers"; he cannot thus explain even the bare outlines of the Utopia, much less the details. To claim the Saint for the ranks of Socialism or Communism is to confess one's
ignorance of his life and character, the whole milieu in which he lived and moved.

These false or inadequate theories will not be adverted to further except in passing. No attempt will be made to refute them beyond what has been said already:

By way of caution it is well to remark that, if we are to arrive at the truth, we must remember St. Thomas More's antecedents, for they had much to do with the shaping of Utopia. We must remember that he was supremely loyal to the Church, not merely in his death, but during the whole course of his life; that he loved those institutions and foundations which the Middle Ages had seen developed to their full flower: monasticism, the great cathedrals and churches, the great hospitals and schools fostered by the Church, the organic unity of Christendom. We need hardly be reminded that More was a Humanist, an intimate friend of Erasmus, Colet, Linacre, Groceyn, and St. John Fisher; that, besides his interest in Plato and the Neo-Platonist, Pico della Mirandola, he had lectured at St. Lawrence's, Old Jewry, on St. Augustine's De Civitate Dei, that great portrait of the Christian state. And when we recall St. Thomas More's deep and penetrating mind, his acute wit, his legal and diplomatic experience, his prudence, we shall be forced to recognize his peculiar fitness for the difficult task of constructing an ideal state. Moreover, many of the details of the Utopia will thus shed their cloak of mystery and reveal to us their rime and reason.
Assigning these observations to their proper place in the background of our attention, let us formulate tentatively the theory which it is the object of this thesis to develop. Leaving aside the pleasure of writing such a Latin work in the company of congenial friends, the *Utopia* meant to More an opportunity of satirizing the evils of the Europe and particularly the England of his day. His guiding principle in shaping the Utopian state was a two-fold supposition: first, that its subjects had for their direction only reason, unaided by Divine revelation; and secondly, that they were extremely docile to the dictates of reason. Thus there is at the same time a source of weakness and error, mere reason; and a source of strength and virtue, faithfulness to reason. Whether or not this supposition is intrinsically possible, given fallen human nature, is immaterial here, since we are concerned only with a question of fact. For the foundations of his ideal state St. Thomas naturally turned to Plato's *Republic*, which served him both as a general model and as a point of departure. Thus the intent of this thesis is to set forth an adequate, and seemingly the only adequate, explanation of the existence and the nature of the *Utopia*. This explanation, as here conceived, takes for granted the satirical and humorous character of the work and the undeniable fact that the original stimulus to compose came from the pleasure such a task gave the author. There is no denying that they must be included in any explanation of the *Utopia* which pretends to be
adequate; but in such a study as this they can be passed over without further amplification. The points to be emphasized and illustrated are the question of dependence on Plato and the hypothesis that the "given" in the construction of the Utopian state was the natural man, guided only by reason and faithful to the guidance of reason. Hence only these two phases of the complete theory will be discussed at length in this thesis.

In passing it may be noted that the theory here advanced is not new. It has been proposed by Fr. Bridgett,9 Mr. Sargent,10 and in some detail by Mr. Hollis,11 none of whom, however, develops it enough to satisfy one.

A confirmation of this theory and the key to the right understanding of much of the Utopia will be found in a short passage from the second book. After a long description of the philosophy of the Utopians, Hythloday concludes:

"Thys is theire sentence and opinion of vertue and pleasure. And they beleue that by mans reason none can be fownde trewer then this, onles annye godlyer be in-spyred into man from heauen."

And he continues:

"Wherin whether they belyve well or no, nother the tyme dothe suffer us to discusse, nother it ys now necessarye. For we have taken upon us to shewe and de-clare theyr lores and ordenaunces, and not to defende them."

A note of caution that will be repeated at the end of the book in More's own person. To the overlooking or ignoring of these hints many misinterpretations of the Utopia owe their birth.

Since the first book is only preliminary to the descrip
tion of the ideal state, it will not be discussed in this thesis. However, we may note that it is sufficient proof of the satiric character of the Utopia, since its spirit, though in a subdued way, is carried over into the second book. The obviousness of the satire, together with the number of recent biographies in which this characteristic is dwelt on, renders superfluous any attempt at proof. The positive work of this thesis will begin with the unfolding and explanation of the second book.
NOTES TO CHAPTER I


5. Ib., p. 355.


12. Collins, J. C., Sir Thomas More's Utopia, (London: Oxford University Press) p. 94, 11. 20 - 27. This translation from the original Latin was made by Ralph Robynson and was first published in 1551.
CHAPTER II

THE POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS OF THE TWO UTOPIAS

The first subject of our consideration will be the political institutions of the two ideal states. Let us begin with that of Plato.

The system of government proposed by Plato is aristocracy, that is, government by a special ruling-class. This ruling-class, however, is not a landed, a military, or a moneyed aristocracy, but an aristocracy of the perfect man mentally, morally, and physically. The qualities that must distinguish the members of this class will be described later when we discuss the education of the "guardians." In the hands of this ruling-class all governing power is placed. Under them are the "auxiliaries," who form the military-class, and the "artisans" or common people. About the manner in which the functions of government are to be carried on Plato says nothing, although he seems to take monarchy for granted. This we are led to conclude by his insistence that his ideal state can be realized only when philosophers become kings. Yet when he is explicitly discussing the guardian-class, he writes rather vaguely of an equality in which each of the guardians will in turn assume the functions of government. He says:

ἄναγκαστέον... καὶ πόλεις ἴκας εἰς ἐκάστους καὶ ἐκαστὸς ὀσμεῖν τὸν ἐπίλογον βίον ἐν μέρει ἐκάστους, τὸ μὲν πολὺ ψυχοσφός ἀτριβάντως, ὅταν δὲ τὸ μέρος ἡ ἡ ἂν πρὸς πολιτικός ἐπιτωλαι παροιτάντας καὶ ἀρχοταὐς ἐκάστους τῆς πόλεως ἐνεκα. 4
Still, it must be admitted that everything that Plato says of the guardians is perfectly compatible with monarchy. Besides, the supposition seems to be that, when the individual takes his turn in office, he is to have absolute power. To work out a detailed constitution for his state was not Plato's intention. This was to be left to the good judgment of the guardians, who were to be instructed, however, to avoid endless law-making.

Though the equality of the women will engage our attention more especially later, yet because of its political import it may appropriately be mentioned here. This equality, at least within the guardian and auxiliary classes, admits of practically no limitation. Women are admitted to all government positions. Let us hear Plato:

καὶ τὸς ἀρχόντας ἕκ, ἢ δ' ἐγώ, καὶ γλαυκών· μὴ δὲν γὰρ τι
οἷον μὲ περὶ ἐνεργῶν εἰρήνης ἐναλλοὶ καὶ εἰρήνη ἡ περὶ
γυναικῶν, ὅσοι ἢν αὐτῶν ἵκουσι τὰς ψυχές ἐξ ἑγώντως.
ἀρθὼς, ἵνα, εἰπερί οὐκ ἔτεντα τοῖς ἀνδραῖς καὶ κοινω-
νόσουσιν, ὡς καὶ λῆγαις.

Another general stipulation that has political import is the warning against any innovation in the ideal state. The guardians must not permit the least change to be made in education, in the manner of life, or in any of the fundamental institutions of the state.

We may note here a point that in Plato's eyes had an importance which we moderns, who are accustomed to think in terms of large nations, do not recognize -- that is, the provision that
in the interest of unity the size of the state be limited. In Plato's words:

"οἱ δὲ μὲν ἂν ἰἄμμα, τοῦτο μήριον χρὴν ἐν ἑκατέρα αὐτοῦν ἐνυπίπτει, μήριον γούθου αὐτοῦν, πέρι δὲ μήριον... οὕτων καὶ τοῦτο ἀν ξαλλῷ πρόστρεμεν τοῖς φυλακτές προσ-τάθητεν, φυλάττοντες πινακὶ πρόστρεμον ὅπως μήτε ὅμερας ὑπό τις ἄλλης ἀποθήκης, ἔτοι μήτε μήτε μεγάλη σοκόδων, ἐκάλη τὸς ἐκατόρθων καὶ μίαν."

The degree of unity desired is evidently very great and the size of the state would be correspondingly diminished. Yet at the same time it must not be so small that it is inadequate to meet the material needs of the citizens. Attica, one would imagine, was the model uppermost in Plato's mind.

The policy of a nation in war-time meant just as much to Plato as it does to the statesman of today, and consequently it required a fair amount of his attention. First of all, he finds that his prohibition of private property leaves him a powerful weapon of diplomacy, so he astutely resolves to lean heavily on his allies, who will be urged on by the bright prospect of taking all the spoils for themselves. In a war against Greeks (towards foreigners Plato apparently has neither charity nor mercy) the state will consider as its enemies only those who are the cause of the war, and show clemency to the rest. In regard to the army, which is fully a citizen-army, women are to fight alongside the men.

So much for the rather sketchy political system of the Republic. In the Utopia More has given us a complete and detail-
ed system of government. It is democratic. Every thirty families choose for themselves yearly an officer whom they call the Syphogrant. Every ten Syphogrants are under another magistrate called the Tranibor, who also is chosen yearly. The Syphogrants, in number two hundred, elect, out of four men nominated each by the inhabitants of one quarter of the capital city, the Prince, who rules for life, unless he is deposed for suspicion of tyranny. The Tranibors meet with the Prince in council every third day, or oftener in an emergency. No proposed legislation may be ratified until it has been debated three days in the council. Upon occasion, matters of great weight are laid before the Syphogranty and through them before the various families which go to make up their constituency.14

Such is the political organization of the cities of Utopia. For every city there is a country district or shire with magistrates of its own. The district is divided into farms manned by no fewer than forty persons, who are under the command of "the good man and the good wife of the house." Every thirty farms have over them a magistrate called the Phylarch, a sort of head bailif.15

At Amaurot, the capital city, sits the council of the whole island, to which three men are sent annually by each city. Its chief duty is to balance the budget and to handle matters of importance to the entire state.16

About the political equality of women nothing is said
explicitly, though we may conclude from other indications that it is limited. Whether or not women would be admitted to the magistracy is doubtful. The ballot, however, seems to be assured them.\(^{17}\)

Legislation is to be kept within the bounds of reason. The laws are to be few and clear so that all may be able to understand them and defend themselves before the courts if need be without the aid of a lawyer.\(^ {18}\)

War is detested as brutal and beneath the dignity of human nature. Consequently the armies of Utopia are manned by mercenaries recruited from less civilized and less fortunate neighbors.\(^{19}\) Citizens fight only when necessary, and in this event the wife and relatives of a man accompany him into the field.\(^ {20}\)

Despite their hatred of war, the Utopians maintain a rather belligerent foreign policy. They will declare war in order to avenge any injustice committed against the merchants of their allies or any personal injury to their own citizens, unless satisfaction is promptly given. Another cause for which they will fight is the liberation of other nations from tyranny or their protection against an aggressor.\(^ {21}\) Nor are they loath to drag into war other nations, upon whom they promptly throw the burden of the fighting.\(^ {22}\) Immediately after the declaration of war, they cause to be set up at one time in several frequented places within the enemy country proclamations announcing a rich
reward to anyone who will assassinate the prince or his aids. By this means or by fanning the hopes of some pretender to the crown, or otherwise stirring up civil war, they frequently bring about a speedy victory. Never, after a battle, do they wreak their vengeance upon the unarmed, for they realize that the war was none of their making.

Outside of war-time, the Utopians conclude no leagues or treaties, for they think it unnecessary, since there is no reason why men who are separated by a mere hill or river should look upon one another as enemies. Furthermore, they think that

"the fellowshyppe of nature is a stronge league, and that men be better and more surely knitte together by love and benevolence, then by covenantes of leagues; by heartie affection of minde, then by wordes."25

The colonial policy of Utopia is interesting to modern readers. When the population of the island becomes too great, the magistrates send out a colony to some neighboring country where there is unoccupied land. Here they set up cities after the pattern of Amaurot. If their efforts at colonization are resisted, they resort to war, appealing to the natural law, which demands for all the right to the land and possessions necessary for a secure living. If, on the other hand, they find the natives friendly, they readily admit them to citizenship.

With the description of the political institutions of the two Utopias completed, let us make a comparison. There are several points of similarity, but the importance of them is negligible. Both Plato and More take precaution to prevent
innovations which would endanger or destroy their ideal commonwealths. Again, Plato condemns endless lawmaking, while More tells us that the laws of Utopia are few and clear. Plato grants women full equality, to such an extent that he makes them the equals of men in politics and places them in the front ranks of the army beside the men; More grants them political equality, but to a limited degree. Another rather important point of similarity is to be found in the method of gaining allies in war-time, for both Plato and More describe a state which has no use for money, and hence can make generous and lavish promises to any country that will fight its battles.

We are startled at first to find that the Utopians prefer to smite the opposing forces from behind, by proscribing their princes and leaders. But upon reflection we shall find that Plato's guardians, when given the victory, are to punish only the leaders, leaving the common people to go free. Such an act of clemency and wisdom, which the Utopians also perform, seems to have courted enlargement. But the extent of the enlargement is appalling. It can scarcely be that More thought the policy of the Utopians justified, forgetting that it is never permissible to use illegitimate means to attain an end however good, and that it is equally as much against the moral law to incite others to acts of perfidy and rebellion as it is to commit them oneself. A person might argue, but hardly with conviction, that he did not want to paint too roseate a picture.
of the virtue and wisdom of the Utopians for fear of seeming to minimize the need of revelation and grace. But the simplest and best explanation is that he gave vent to his sense of humor and his genius for the art of feigning. The mock-serious vein, most precious gift of the satirist, was especially rich in St. Thomas More, so much so that even the members of his family often could not tell whether he was joking or not. At any rate, to admit an exception is not fatal to the hypothesis defended in this thesis, since it enunciates a general or guiding norm, not an absolutely binding law. The reason for such a daring flight of the imagination on the part of the author of the Utopia is evidently its biting satiric import in the light of the political machinations and intrigues so frequent in the Europe that he knew.

As to the other points of similarity that have just been mentioned, it is sufficiently clear that both Plato and More are in accord with reason, except in the question of the equality of women, where Plato is too extreme. Nature has not destined women to a position of absolute equality with men, for she has not endowed them as a class with the necessary qualities. An objection that might be raised against More's even permitting women to fight may best be answered by replying that this permission is restricted only to cases of emergency, and is then purely voluntary.

It is in the machinery of government, about which Plato is silent, that we can see how independent More was of what some
call his original. The democratic system of government, which is described in Utopia is certainly, to the American mind, an improvement over the aristocratic system of the Republic, though it is debatable whether it can be proved that either system is universally the better. At any rate, we may take it as easily conceivable that More, enriched by the Medieval heritage of democracy, considered that this was the best form of government that the human mind could devise.

In the matter of the political equality of women with men, there is little that can be said with certainty, for one thing because More does not even mention it, and for another because it is not easy to delimit accurately the degree to which women may be permitted to exercise a voice in public affairs. The discussion of it would add little to the development of the thesis. Yet this much we may say confidently, that in the Utopia women gain in the real dignity becoming their position as mothers what they lose in equality. To More certainly, and also to us, the position of women in the Platonic state was not justifiable by reason, since it meant the ignoring of the physiological and psychological weakness of women as a class. Consequently he made the proper correction, a correction which all will admit did not transcend the bounds of unaided reason.

The precise relation of the rights of the individual and the family to those of the state is not developed in the Utopia; yet that More does not intend to submerge the individual is apparent from the general character of the Utopian state, and
especially from the fact that he makes the family the prime unit of his representative system. Thus the priority of the family over the state is clearly recognized, and any shadow of Totalitarianism is dispelled. The theory which seems to underlie the Utopian state might be described as authoritarian democracy in contradistinction to the individualistic democracy of the United States. The recognition of the double nature of the individual as a person and as a member of society is, it is needless to say, in perfect accord with our hypothesis, for it is certainly true that with the light of unaided reason we can arrive at a sufficiently clear and compelling knowledge of the personality of man to appreciate the priority of certain fundamental personal rights over those of the state, and, at the same time, man's social nature.

In conclusion we may say that we find comparatively slight dependence on Plato in the political institutions of the Utopia; we find that More, rather than using the Republic as a model to be followed closely, has taken it as a point of departure, as a source of suggestions which invited amplification. And further, from the position of women in the political scheme, from the democratic form of government, and finally from the fundamental principle of the Utopian state, the priority of the fundamental personal rights of the individual over those of the state, we conclude that it is tenable at least that More intended to portray what he considered the best to which unaided human reason could attain.
NOTES TO CHAPTER II

1. Republic, III, 412c,d,e; VII, 535a,e; 536a,b.

2. Ib., 540d,e.

3. Ib., V, 473c,d; VII, 540d,e.

4. Ib., VII, 540a,b.

5. Ib., IV, 425 passim, especially d, line 7 (Oxford edit.).

6. Ib., IV, 425e; 426e.

7. We read (Ib., IV, 424b):
   "...τούτου ἄνθρωπον τοῖς ἐπὶ μελετῶν τῆς τῆλεως, ἰδίως ἐν ᾧ τοῖς κἂν λέγῃ διδαχῇ ἀλλὰ πρὸς πάντα ἀπὸθεμίττωσε, τοῖς νεωτέροις πρὸς γυμνωστικὴν τῆς καὶ μουσικῆν πρὸς τὴν τέχνην ὡς οἶον τε μὲν ἑλέστιν ἀλλ' ὡς οἶον τε μελετῆσθαι...

It is true that here only music and gymnastic are mentioned explicitly, but the caution obviously is to be applied to all institutions whose corruption would mean the downfall of the ideal state.


10. Ib., IV, 422d.

11. Ib., V, 470c; 471c.

12. Ib., V, 471a,b; cf. 470 passim. The following passage (V, 471a,b) deserves quotation:
   "οὐδ' ἦσαν τὰς Ἑλλῆνας Ἑλλήνες ἄντες κερδοθεὶς, οὐδὲ ἄλλος ἐμπιστοῦσα, οὐδὲ ἐμπιστοῦσας ἐν ἐκάστῳ πᾶλιν πάντας ἐξάκουσας ἐκπαίδευσας εἰς ἐκπαίδευσιν, καὶ ἀλλὰς καὶ μουσικὰς καὶ παραστάσεις, καὶ ἀλλὰς ἐν τοῖς τούτοις τῆς διάφορας. καὶ διὰ τῶν πάντων οὔτε τὴν ἐκπαίδευσιν κερδοθείν ὡς σκέψως τῶν πολλῶν, οὔτε αἰκίας ἄναρτετες ἀλλὰ μέχρι τοῦτου πεποιημένη τῆς δικαιοσύνης. μέχρι οὗ ἂν ἄξιος ἄναγκαιοθείν υπὸ τῶν ἑωμενίων οὐκ ἔχειν.


15. Ib., pp. 50, 51.

16. Ib., p. 74; p. 50.

17. Ib., p. 59.


24. Ib., p. 121.


27. Ib., p. 112.
CHAPTER III

THE ECONOMIC INSTITUTIONS OF THE TWO UTOPIAS

The economic system of Plato's ideal state is twofold. For the artisans, who form the lowest class in the community, the ordinary system of private initiative and private property is in force; but among the guardians and auxiliaries a communistic regime prevails. Thus, while one class is to engage in the business of providing for their own sustenance and for the needs of the two upper classes, these latter are to be employed wholly in the task of defending and governing the commonwealth, save for the time necessarily given to study and recreation. A rigid specialization of effort is demanded not only of each class in regard to its general function, but especially of the various artisans, who must confine themselves, each to his own trade.

The economic life of the artisans receives comparatively little attention and does not interest us here, except to the extent that the idyllic picture of the peaceful and happy existence of these tillers of the soil and hewers of wood probably served as a suggestion to St. Thomas More when he was working out a similar phase of his Utopian state. But the communism of the guardians and auxiliaries demands attention. Its description is best left to Plato himself:

... πρῶτον μὲν οὖσαν κεκτημένοις μηδὲνι μηδὲν ἡδέν, ἀν καὶ παρὰ ἄνθρωποι ἔχετε οἴκησιν καὶ τὰ μείζονα μηδὲν εἶναι μηδὲν τοιοῦτον εἰς δὲ οὖ πᾶσα ὑπολογίμενος ἐξορκοτεῖρα ὑπὲρ εἰς ἐπιτήδεια, ὅπως δέονται ἄνδρες ἀδηταὶ πολέμου σώφρονες τῷ καὶ ἄνδροις, τὰς ἴχνειας πρὸς τὸν...
Further details of this common life will be described in a later chapter. Here it must be noted that this communism is far more radical than that of Soviet Russia today, where successive modifications have been admitted; yet at the same time less fundamentally opposed to right reason, for it is of its very nature supramaterialistic, and, if anything, theistic. And further, instead of professing to abolish classes, it relies for its existence on the possibility of maintaining a specially trained class of men, who are meant to embody all that is noble and unselfish in human nature. Thus one can more readily see why it appeared so suitable to St. Thomas More for imitation in his ideal state.

The communism of the Utopia is similar to that of the Republic. There are common store-houses and common markets. Meals are usually taken in the halls of the various Syphogants; yet the citizens may, if they choose, dine at home, in which case they are generously supplied from the common markets.
so thorough is the Utopian communism that all wear the same fashion of clothes, saving distinctions between men and women, married and unmarried. 9

All work, even the magistrates, who usually do not avail themselves of the exemption granted by law.10 The women are put to the lighter tasks, such as spinning, weaving, and sewing. The men, though they usually follow one trade, may learn another also if they wish. In agriculture all engage by turns.11

As is necessary in a communistic society, there is state control of industry and agriculture. In fact More says explicitly that it is the chief purpose of the commonwealth so to regulate the production of goods that the burden of labor may be equitably distributed.12 Accordingly the hours of labor are regulated. At most only three hours in the morning and three in the afternoon are given to work, but often there is such a surplus of produce that even these hours are curtailed.13 It is the duty of the council yearly to balance the budget, in which provision is always made for two years so that the danger of famine may be obviated. After the whole island has been sufficiently provided for, the surplus is exported to other lands, where one-seventh is given to the poor and the rest sold cheaply.15

The Utopians are easy, though wary, creditors, requiring the payment of debts only in the case of need; that is, usually in time of war or when they are making a loan to other nations.16 They themselves have no use for gold or silver, save
to make chamber-pots and such vessels, as well as fetters and chains for their slaves. Gold rings and necklaces they use as badges of infamy, while pearls and other jewels they consider the trinkets of children.17

Of great economic importance is the restriction of population, which is taken care of by the magistrates. Families which have failed to meet their normal quota are augmented by the adoption of children from other families. When the number of children in one city becomes too great, some are transferred to other cities. In the reckoning of these quotas, account is taken only of children over thirteen years of age, obviously because of the high rate of infant mortality. Occasionally it happens that the population of the whole island becomes excessive, and a colony is sent out to the mainland, with the understanding that the colonists are always subject to recall should the island itself become underpopulated.18

With the description of the economic institutions of the two Utopias completed, let us undertake now a comparison of the two. Since Plato does not go so much into detail about these matters, there is great divergence to be found between the two systems. They are alike in that they are fundamentally communistic (we are concerned here only with the regulations for the guardians and auxiliaries); that they have no need of a monetary system, of gold or silver; and also in that specialization of occupation is the rule, though in this regard More's system is more liberal. A further similarity is seen in that both recog-
nize the problem of the control of population, though the method provided by the Utopian constitution is not paralleled by anything in the Republic. However, even here one might conjecture that the provisions for the correct mating of the guardian class and a casual remark that out of a prudent fear of poverty and want the artisans will not beget children beyond their means, challenged More to propose a better answer to this problem so important to the statesman.

The improvement St. Thomas More has made on Plato in outlining his communistic economic system is apparent. The equality of women, as has already been noted, is limited; hence we find -- as in every society -- women engaged in work, but work consonant with their weakness. In this he is following better than Plato the dictates of experience and reason. Again, he is more thorough in providing machinery for the balancing of output and consumption, the provision of a margin of safety, and the export of the surplus. His Utopians are more provident than Plato's guardians in that they store up gold and silver, for which they have no use, to serve for acquiring allies, hiring troops, and bribing traitors in the enemies' ranks.

So far we have considered the similarities that exist between the two ideal states; let us now draw our conclusions. First of all, we have seen that there are only three things that are common to both states: communism, regulation of population, and specialization. But even in these there is great divergence. Our conclusion, then, is that in economic matters the Platonic
commonwealth was to More what a new invention is to one who sets about to develop it -- a rough model and an indication of the difficulties to which special attention must be given.

At this point we are faced with a problem the solution of which is vital to the maintenance of our thesis. The problem is: why communism in the Utopia? Communism means the abolition of private property and the holding in common of all the necessities and commodities of life, together with the means of producing them. What was More's reason for putting himself in a position in which he might be accused of advocating a system so revolutionary?

Apart from the philosophical foundations of Marxist communism, which are contrary to reason and faith, the argument against communism is not absolute; by which statement is meant that its ultimate basis is the practical impossibility of a communistic regime at the present stage of material development, and the inherent weakness and selfishness of the general run of men when they are not driven by a very personal aim. Certainly it cannot be proved that, given a simpler state, a simpler form of society, higher and more effective motives, the aid of grace, and a moral authority based on the principle of submission to God in the person of a superior, a communistic economy is unnatural. Now, the supposition is not merely that the Utopians are guided by reason, but also that they are as a class faithful to the guidance of reason. What does this mean? It means
that, if the state is small enough, its needs and the conditions of production simple enough, then the only other source of objection to a communistic system is eliminated, since the weakness and selfishness of men is supplanted by the subordination of the will and the appetites to the intellect, and the reason, unobscured by disorderly passions, perceives the advantages to be gained by the individual in common endeavor. What can be and has been done in Monasticism and in early Christianity through the influence of the supernatural might conceivably be done in a natural system, with of course the help vouchsafed by God to those who pay homage to Him faithfully in a natural religion, and granted the supposition outlined above. Hence communism, which is not wrong per se but only because of its consequences in the present state of material civilization and taken together with man's weakness of character and selfishness, may be admissible in a different civilization and under the necessary supposition. In this way we can see how St. Thomas More could paint so favorable a picture of communistic life without in any way sanctioning such a system, for it was clear to him, and very likely to his readers (the Utopia was not written for the general public, but only for Humanistic circles), that this inviting superstructure had been reared entirely on a foundation of sand, upon a supposition that could not be realized. Thus he cannot be accused of communistic leanings, since he has no intention of proposing this system either as possible or as desirable in the real order, taking man as he is.

It may be objected that this lengthy explanation is
unnecessary and even dangerous to the Catholic position in the face of modern Communism, that the description of a communistic state is attributable to More's sense of humor or his natural bent for spinning a good yarn. Certainly it must be admitted that many of the details are ascribable to this source, and also to the fact that they were suggested by the Republic, but this love of fun could have been exercised equally as well in a system of private property, and the very fact that he imitated Plato's communism seems to convey the impression of approval. St. Thomas More was a consummate humorist, but he was also the most prudent of men. His humor in the **Utopia** has evidently a very serious satiric import, and it is difficult enough to distinguish that which is merely funny from that which is meant as a castigation of the evils of the times. To run the risk of seeming to approve of communism, while it was not then as serious matter as it is today, would hardly have been flattering to More's good sense. Thus there must have been some further reason for the communism of the **Utopia**, a reason which is to be sought in something more fundamental. This reason we have found in the initial supposition of the **Utopia**, the postulate that the Utopians are as well faithful to the guidance of reason, as they are dependent on it as their only guide. Consequently the Utopian state's communism has in itself a warning to any who might want to transfer it to the realm of fact. It has within itself its own refutation, a supposition in the ideal order that can never be verified in the real order, unless God creates a new race of men who participate
more in the angelic nature than in the human.

The details of the Utopian economic system were in the main necessitated by the admission of communism, and the ultimate determination of customs and methods was largely a matter of fancy and taste. Hence these details, though they do not require it, fit in with our hypothesis and need not be discussed here.

The proper distribution of the population, which is a problem in all states, is solved in a way entirely conformable to reason. The possibility of a better solution need not concern us here, since we are not arguing that every single detail of the Utopian state represents the best that could be attained by reason alone, but only that this is the general norm More set himself. Of many things the most that can be said is that it is conceivable that More thought them best. Thus, also, we may explain the specialization of occupation. For the general run of men limitation to one or, at most, a few fields of endeavor is necessary if good results with a minimum of effort are desired.

The provision for the disposal of surplus produce gives us an instance in support of our thesis. For it is most reasonable, when we abound beyond our needs in the goods of this world, to sell the surplus to those who need them. The giving of a part to the poor is a beautiful touch worthy of More's generous charity, and certainly very much in accord with reason.

Thus we find in the economic institutions of the Utopia a partial dependence on Plato's Republic. Beyond this, we find
these institutions fit our hypothesis that More's general norm in constructing his ideal state was the portrayal of what he considered the best unaided reason could attain. This hypothesis, we have seem, must be taken in its entirety so as to include the naturally related supposition that men are faithful to the dictates of reason, that is, that they are of almost angelic virtue.
NOTES TO CHAPTER III

1. Republic, III, 416d,e; 417a,b; II, 369e, 370 sqq.
2. Ib., III, 416d,e.
3. Ib., II, 370b; 374a,b,e.
5. Ib., II, 372b-e.
8. Ib., pp. 68-70.
10. Ib., p. 63.
11. Ib., p. 75.
12. Ib., p. 66.
15. Ib., p. 75.
16. Ib., pp. 75 & 76.
17. Ib., pp. 77 & 78.
20. By way of caution it is well to note that Plato says nothing about the equality of women among the artisan-class. However, for the artisans the status quo is to be maintained unless otherwise specified.
The most fundamental social institution of the Republic is the division of the state into classes. The establishment of two great classes -- the further subdivision of the upper class into guardians and auxiliaries we may well ignore -- is in Plato's mind the only basis on which his state can possibly exist. Thus the whole tenor of social life is twofold. Class meets class in the economic and political functions of the commonwealth, but in social life they are as far apart as capitalist and proletarian in the social life of today. Only the higher class receives much attention in the Republic; and hence we must perforce restrict our description to it. About the working class one can gather little save that its members live a happy, idyllic life, secure in the knowledge that they are protected and capably governed by the guardians and auxiliaries.

We have seen already that women have perfect equality with men. This equality is insisted on to such an extent that women are not only made to share the education and barracks life of the men, but are also forced to go with them into the palaestra and the battlefield. They are soldiers all, and lead a soldier's life, with barracks for homes, rigid discipline, constant drilling, close surveillance, a common mess, and all the hardships of soldiering.

To say that the guardians and auxiliaries do not marry would be a quibble, for they are to be bred like prize animals.
The best men and women must be brought together the oft-nest; and the less fit, as little as possible. The offspring of such unions are to be reared by the state, while their mothers, who are to be kept from recognizing their own children, serve only as nurses. The children of the unfit are to be exposed, and abortion is prescribed in the case of men and women of advanced age.

Thus Plato pushes his theories to a point where they become, if not absurd, then at least shocking and revolting. So thoroughly is communism to be practiced that there is to be no "mine" or "thine" whatsoever, not even a wife and children.

The proper education of the auxiliaries and guardians, Plato realizes, is the only means of insuring the permanence of the ideal state. Hence an elaborate and lengthy educational system is worked out for them. It begins at a very early age with "music," which embraces folk-lore, mythology, literature, and music strictly so-called. All these subjects are to be purged of everything that might possibly endanger the piety, morality, temperance, and courage of the pupil. The ultimate aim of this "musical" education is to instill a love of beauty and to create a "harmonious" soul, a soul that can recognize the "essential forms" of temperance, courage, liberality, magnificence, and kindred virtues, together with their contrary vices.

After "music" the future auxiliary enters upon a course which may appropriately be called a propaideutic for dialectics. It consists of arithmetic, which leads one to the
problem of unity, trains the mind, and is useful in war; plane geometry, which is concerned with the eternally existing and draws the mind to truth, besides being useful in war and conducive to quickness of mind; solid geometry, which, dealing with the third dimension, is one step higher; astronomy, the study of three dimensions in motion; and harmonics, the study of harmonious motion.

Upon the completion of this course, at about the age of seventeen, the youth is subjected to a rigorous gymnastic training lasting two or three years. This has as its purpose to make the body a graceful and facile instrument of the soul, to produce the proper balance between a harmonious soul and a physically perfect body. Life during this period is to be a barracks-life, like that of the auxiliaries and equally as arduous.

Gymnastic is followed by a survey of all that has hitherto been learned, with a view to unification. Upon the completion of this course, there is apparently to be a period of trial, the purpose of which is to discern whether or not the pupil is fit for dialectic. Not until the age of thirty is he admitted to this study.

Dialectic is the coping-stone of education. It has as its object the essence of things and especially the essence of the Good, which gives the power of knowing to the knowing subject and intelligibility to the object of knowledge. In answer to the question, "What is the greatest study and what is its proper object?" Socrates says:
Its method is deductive rather than inductive, to go back to first principles and from them to evolve without error or obscurity one's conclusions. Dialectic makes no assumption whatever; it is founded on unshakable principles.

After the youth has scaled the heights of dialectic to the pinnacle, the contemplation of the essential form of the Good, he is dragged ruthlessly down to a more terrestrial occupation, that of a soldier and minor office-holder. For fifteen years he is thus trained and tried in order that he may be fitted for the office of guardian, or else, if he cannot meet the requirements, that this may be discovered. Only after such a long and severe probation is he admitted, at the age of fifty or over, to the guardian or magistrate class.

In the Utopia the gentler hand of More is noticeable.
at once. The hours of the day are so ordered that much time is left for meals, which are something of a social event, and for leisure. The leisure time is spent in the pursuit of literature, in voluntary work, and at evening in the enjoyment of music, mutual conversation, and games much resembling chess. The Utopians are never idle. Dice and similar games; alehouses, taverns, all possible haunts of loiterers are forbidden.

In the common dining halls strict order is preserved, the young showing their elders the respect and precedence due their age, and the old diligently striving to watch over the young and in general to be pleasantly edifying. The children either serve at table or attend like pages upon their elders. Both dinner and supper, it is interesting to note, are begun with the reading of something pertaining to good manners and virtue, which the elders promptly follow up with conversation along the lines thus suggested.

In the domain of the family, the wife is subject to her husband; and the children, to their parents; the eldest is master of all in his household. His subjects are numerous, since it is the custom for married men to remain in the house of their father, there to rear their families. No attempt is made to interfere with the rights of the family and regulate either marriage or the number of offspring. The proper distribution of population, we have seen, is taken care of otherwise.

Marriage laws are stringent. Anyone found guilty of fornication is sharply punished and prohibited from marrying.
unless pardoned by the prince. Adultery is punished by slavery and also by obligatory divorce, unless the offended party prefers to share the slavery of the other, in which case the chance of winning a pardon is very great. A relapse is punished by death.

Divorce and remarriage are permitted in Utopia, but only in case of adultery and the absolute impossibility of living together in peace. In the latter event the case must be tried by members of the council and their wives, who do not treat the matter lightly, realizing that the possibility of an easy divorce is the surest way to destroy the love of man and wife.25

No system of education is prescribed. We are told that all have the opportunity of attending lectures before work in the morning and that most take advantage of it.26 There is also a special group, chosen for their intellectual ability, whose duty it is to give themselves wholly to the study of literature. From their ranks are recruited the ambassadors, priests, Tranibors, and the prince himself.27

Training in agriculture, both theoretical and practical is given to all from an early age, including thus even those who later become men of letters. In the trades, apprenticeship is the instrument of training.28 A liberal education the youth receives from the priests, who look especially to morality and mental discipline. Besides this, the young receive much benefit from attendance upon their elders and from the good example of the members of their own household.29
Slavery is admitted in Utopia; in fact, it is the recognized punishment for grave crimes. Men thus condemned are treated very harshly because they ought to have known better, what with the excellent moral training they received. Slaves are also acquired through the custom of buying or obtaining gratis from other countries men condemned to death. There is a third class of slaves made up of foreigners who have left a life of poverty and drudgery in their own country and have freely offered themselves to the citizens of the happy island. These men are treated honorably and kindly, so that, saving a little more work, to which they are accustomed, their lot falls but little short of the complete felicity of the free citizens. Moreover, they are at liberty to return to their own country, in which case they do not go away empty-handed to the land of their birth.

For offences other than adultery there is no fixed penalty, but the magistrates are instructed to fit the penalty to the crime. Husbands chastise their wives; and parents, their children, unless the offence is deemed sufficiently grave to warrant a public punishment, which will contribute to the advancement of good morals. Capital punishment is rarely resorted to except in the case of relapsed adulterers or rebellious prisoners, because enslavement is found more profitable to the state and no less severe to the criminals. The possibility of pardon is open to all who take their punishment in a spirit of repentance. An attempted crime is punishable as severely as a crime actually
accomplished, for it is agreed that the man who would have violated the law had not something prevented him is equally guilty of an offence against the state.31

The care of the sick is of great concern to the Utopians. There are four hospitals, situated outside of every town, large, well-furnished, staffed by good doctors and nurses. These hospitals are served first from the common markets.32 The incurably sick are given all the comfort possible, but if they suffer great and constant pain they are advised to commit suicide or submit to euthanasia. No one, however, is put out of the way or driven to suicide against his will. The bodies of those who commit suicide without this state sanction are refused the burial rites and cast out into some "stinking" marsh.33

To complete the picture of the social life of the Utopians, let us quote directly:

But this thing I believe verily: howsoever these decrees be, that there is no place of the world better, nether a more excellent people, nether a more flourishing commonwealth. ... And though their soil be not very fruitful, nor their air very wholesome, yet against the air they so defend them with temperate diet, and so order and husband their ground with diligent travail, that in no country is greater increase and plenty of corn and cattle, nor men's bodies of longer life, or subject and apt to fewer diseases. There, therefore, one may see ... a whole wood by the hands of the people plucked up by the roots and set again in another place. ... The people be gentle, merry, quick, and fine witted delighting in quietness, and, when need requireth, able to abide and suffer much bodily labor. Else they be not greatly desirous and fond of it; but in the exercise and study of the mind they be never weary.34

In the paragraphs following this, the author goes on to tell of
the Utopians' quick-wittedness, inventiveness, and aptitude for learning. This we shall omit for brevity's sake.

Between the social institutions of the two Utopias we shall find little agreement. As we noted before, both have communism; the Platonic state, because communism tends to the preservation of unity and the prevention of tyranny; Utopia, because it divides the burden of labor and contributes to the happiness of all. Plato and More are one in painting a rosate picture of life in their states. Both, again, recognize the importance of education, though they provide for it in different ways. A further point of similarity, though certainly of no consequence, we see in the morality-games of Utopia and the provisions of the Republic for the "sanctification" of literature, myth, and music. Though the social intercourse of the guardians and auxiliaries, as will be noted presently, is necessarily hampered and limited, and hence different from the more natural intercourse of the Utopians, the life of the artisans offers another point of similarity between the two states. Their social life is hardly more than mentioned, but from all one can gather it is pleasant and agreeable. In other things, also, the condition of the artisans, to whom very few of Plato's revolutionary theories are applied, differs in no way from that of the Utopians. But in these things there is really no question of comparison. All Plato has done is to leave untouched the customs of civilized mankind, and particularly of the Greeks. More, on the other hand, has added merely a mass of detail. There is
no significance here in comparing the customs of Utopia with those of Greece. Hence, in the following paragraphs, the artisan class will be ignored. Plato, and More for that matter, can claim credit for only what is new in his ideal state.

Of divergences between the two Utopias we find a plenty. We find a social life gay and free in comparison with the barracks life of the auxiliaries and guardians. We find that there is a vast difference between the soldiers' mess of the Republic and the common meals of Utopia. We find the class system reduced to a not very rigid distinction between those who give themselves wholly to study and those who engage in manual labor also. The slaves, whom one might be inclined to look upon as a third class, are nothing but convicts, excepting of course the voluntary bondsmen from other lands.

The family replaces community of wives and the rearing of children by the state. Marriage is no concern of the state except in so far as offences against the sanctity of the marriage bond have to be punished severely, as a threat to the very foundations of the state. Women have not in Utopia the same degree of equality that they have in the Republic, but their lot is far better and their influence through the family much greater. Divorce, possible in Utopia, would have been meaningless in Platonic communism.

A further difference, of no slight importance toward upholding the morale of a communistic state, is the fine hospital system for which the Utopians provide. It has no parallel in the
Republic, for Plato does not seem disposed to give much attention to the sick and weak. But perhaps Plato's remarks must be taken as hyperbolic and purposely severe in order to castigate the excessive care of health so often met with in a decadent state like the Athens of his day.

Thus we find but little similarity in the social institutions of the two commonwealths. We are again justified in concluding that in this regard More used the Platonic state merely as a rough indication of an ideal, and not as a pattern to be followed closely.

So far we have been considering More's indebtedness to the Republic. Let us turn now to a discussion of the second and more difficult part of our task. It is immediately evident that the social life of Utopia is excellent. While it may not be absolutely the best that could possibly be excogitated, yet it is conceivable that it was what at the time More considered roughly the best human nature could devise. The theory that this was in reality his opinion receives confirmation from the fact that this social life is much like that of More's household. Furthermore, the details, such as the common meals and all the customs that go with this institution, fit in perfectly with this theory. Even the inequality of women in the patriarchal family, which modern prejudice might regard as but a remnant of enslaving tradition, is more according to reason than absolute equality, Plato's arguments to the contrary notwithstanding. Women, while they have the same human nature as men, are not usually possessed of either the
physical or intellectual strength of men. It is proper that they should be placed under the protection of their husbands, to whom they must accordingly yield obedience.

The sanctity of the family, which is so well safeguarded in Utopia, is most especially according to reason, for it follows from the vital importance of the begetting and rearing of children in the manner that will best fit them for this life and enable them to reach their final goal in the next life. The permission of divorce, which is apt to surprise us, is also what one would expect in a state where unaided reason — please note the word "unaided" — holds sway. Though natural ethics teaches us the indissolubility of the marriage bond, history seems to indicate that this tenet of the moral law was not universally recognized in its full vigor, very certainly not generally followed, before the advent of Christianity. It is, therefore, by no means rash to conjecture that More thought the clear knowledge of this principle beyond the grasp of the human reason, clouded as it is by passion and the effects of sin, before it has been aided and strengthened by the Christian revelation. In such a matter as this it is easy to find excuses for evading an unpleasant conclusion. The matter is clear to us; but our thought, though it prescinds from Revelation, is at least preserved by it from error.

The educational system of Utopia, which is scarcely more than indicated, need not delay us long. The only point upon which we are able to pass judgment is the insistence upon the inculcat-
ing of virtue and good morals. Certainly this is the primary end
of education. To insist upon it we are driven by the dictates of
right reason. Of the other methods of education, the association
of children with their elders and daily lectures, we can merely
say that there is much room for choice when one is dealing with a
highly individual problem.

Slavery creates no difficulty since the slaves of the
one type are really what we call convicts, and the others, offering
themselves voluntarily, place themselves outside the category.
The preference of slavery as a means of capital punishment to the
death penalty is a disputable matter. The gist of this part of
the Utopia is that capital punishment, as an extreme measure which
cuts off the criminal from the opportunity of amendment and de-
prives the state of a potentially useful member, ought to be re-
stricted. Whether or not the restriction is carried too far --
and this is doubly hard to determine, since the punishment of a
crime in Utopia is generally not fixed by law, but left to the
discretion of the judges -- is a matter for dispute. At any rate,
it is conceivable that More thought it best to limit the use of
capital punishment to a very few of the gravest crimes. Certain
it is that he condemned heartily excessive severity such as
maintained in English law, which punished with death the theft of
even a trifling sum.38

The permission of suicide in the case of the incurably
sick and its substitute, euthanasia, are among the features of
the Utopia which may really be called startling. How can one justify these practices? In the first use again the argument employed in the case of divorce, that history seems to indicate that the precepts of the natural law forbidding suicide and the murder of the innocent were not and are not so clearly known that doctrinaires and even serious thinkers cannot be found to defend them under such circumstances as those described in Utopia. Thus, to avoid unnecessary repetition, we might conclude that More regarded this a point in which human reason, entrammeled by passion, was not adequate to arrive at the truth without at least the negative aid of revelation, or without that excess of light which overflows from the realm of the supernatural and illumines the natural.

We may also approach the difficulty in another way; following the theory that the Utopians are guided only by reason, we may argue thus. Reason tells us that no one may take upon himself the Creator's right over life unless duly authorized by the law of the Creator. In Utopia it is lawful to do away with oneself only when so advised by the priests and Tranibors, who are the representatives of God. This precisely is how More makes them argue.39

This solution is not satisfactory. Though the priests are legitimately constituted the state's representatives before God, they have not been granted by God any such powers as those demanded in the foregoing explanation. Excepting of course the
instances in which according to the natural law one man may kill another, the power of determining man’s tenure of stewardship belongs only to God; and unless God explicitly delegates this power, no man may lay claim to it.

Unfortunately More’s words, though they do not necessarily indicate approval of the practice here described, seem to lean that way. At any rate, it is extremely difficult to defend this passage of the Utopia from possible censure. To attribute it to humor and a fanciful imagination does not seem convincing for the simple reason that euthanasia and suicide are too serious for a joke which might easily be taken too seriously. Certainly it is unthinkable that More really believed in these immoral practices or countenanced them. Probably he wanted to show how badly astray one can go when he has not even the negative guidance of Divine revelation.
NOTES TO CHAPTER IV


2. Ib., III, 414a, 415e, 416d,e, 417a,b; VII, 536b.

3. Ib., V, 459d,e; 460b.

4. Ib., 460b,c,d.

5. Ib., 459e.

6. Ib., 461c.

7. Ib., 457b,c,d.

8. Plato says (423e - 424b):

9. Ib., VII, 536d; II, 377a,b,c.

10. Ib., III, 402b,c,d; 403c. Let us quote from 402b,c:
ἀλλά τῆς ἀυτῆς δεῦμας τέχνης εἶναι καὶ μελέτης;

11. Ib., VII, 536d; 525b,c; 526d,e; 527b,c; 528b; 528a,e; 529b,c; 530d.

12. Ib., 537b; III, 411e, 412a; 403 - 412. Let us quote from 411e and 412a:

ἐπὶ δὴ δοῦτε τούτῳ ὡς ἔκαστο, δύο τέχνης δεῦμα ἐγὼ ἐν τοῖς
φύσιν δεικνύοι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, μουσικὴν τε καὶ υμνοκοσμικὴν ἐπὶ
tὸ δυνατὸν καὶ τὸ φιλόσοφον οὐκ ἐπὶ φυσών καὶ φανά, εἰμὶ εἰ
tὸ μέρος, ἢ ἐπ᾽ ἑκεῖνω, ὡς ὁ ἄλλοι συμμοσιώσων ἐπιτεινόμενῳ καὶ ἀνιεμένῳ μέχρι τῶν προσθέσεων...

tὸν καλλίστα ἄρα μουσικὴν υμνοκοσμικήν κεραυνόντα καὶ
μετριῶτα τῆς φυσῆς προσθέσεως, τὸν ὁρθότατον ὁμοίῳ εἶναι τελείᾳ
μουσικώτατον καὶ υμνοκοσμικώτατον, ὡς ὁ ἄλλοι συμμοσιώσων συνετῶν

13. Ib., VII, 537c,d.


15. Ib., VI, 505a.

16. Ib., 508e, 509b.

17. Ib., VII, 533b,c,d; 534c,d.

18. Ib., 540a,b.


23. Ib.

27. Ib., p. 63.
31. Ib., pp. 103 & 104.
32. Ib., p. 69.
33. Ib., p. 100.
34. Ib., p. 94, l. 28 - p. 95, l. 19.

38. I have it on reliable authority that a prominent Catholic penologist, who has been working for years for the spiritual welfare of convicts in one of our large prisons, is opposed to capital punishment. This opinion is the fruit of years of observation of both "lifers" and criminals whom he accompanied to the electric chair. Certainly it merits our respect and tends to strengthen More's view.

CHAPTER V

RELIGION, MORALITY, AND PHILOSOPHY IN THE TWO UTOPIAS

A detailed religious system such as that of the Utopia is not found in the Republic. Evidently Plato wishes polytheism to be retained. Though he says he will leave religious enactments to the Delphian Apollo, he nevertheless makes some general enactments of his own. The myths, he decrees, must be purged of any anecdotes or any chance expressions that may be derogatory of the dignity and sanctity of the gods. Besides this, mention is made of the deification of heroes, that is, of illustrious members of the guardian class, though even here the decision is left to the oracle. That the immortality of the soul is to be believed by the guardians and auxiliaries we may deduce from the injunction that the forbidding pictures of a dismal and shadowy after-life found in the poets be expunged, and more especially from the passage in the tenth book where Plato gives a proof of the immortality of the soul. However, the kind of immortality described in the myth of Er is disappointing. One is sorry to see Plato fall short of the goal when he has climbed so high.

The moral code of the commonwealth may largely be gathered from what has been said in the preceding chapters, especially the one immediately before this. Wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice are the virtues particularly esteemed in the ideal state. What marriage means in this ultra-communistic state we have already seen. Lying, we are told, is not to be tolerated in the guardians and auxiliaries, yet it is to be
permitted the rulers for the purposes of state.9 On the details of conduct no legislation is made.10

Of special interest in connection with the Utopia is the Platonic hierarchy of pleasure. The highest pleasures are those of knowledge and wisdom; next, of honor and love of war; and last of all, of love of gain and the satisfaction of the lower appetites. The pleasures of the body, Plato says, are not real pleasures; when placed in the balance, they prove to be no more than the absence of pain. This is also true of pleasures that belong to the "spirited" element of the soul (šumoeisēs). The pleasures proper to the "spirited" and appetitive elements of the soul are true and real only when enjoyed in conjunction with mental pleasures and in accordance with reason. In such a condition of things, one possesses the virtue of justice, which is the harmony of these three elements of the soul, each keeping to its proper functions and its proper proportionate value. Justice makes true pleasure possible; while injustice, which is the undue predominance of either of the lower elements, robs the whole soul of pleasure.11

The tripartite picture of the soul12 here indicated brings us to a consideration of the philosophy of the Platonic state. Besides teaching this doctrine, Plato legislates what we might call an official philosophy: the philosophy of the idea of the Good.13 This philosophy, about which much has been written from every viewpoint, it would be presumptuous as well as super-
religious to attempt to describe here. In the previous chapter some indication of its nature has been given. A further elaboration would not advance the present thesis in any way.

Let us pass then quickly to the religious system of the Utopia, which will demand much of our time. The people of Utopia look upon the truths of religion as completing human reason. In fact, when they discuss happiness, one of their favorite philosophical questions, they never fail to "fetch some arguments from the principles of religion." Though Divine revelation has not been vouchsafed them, they recognize the possibility of such a thing.

There are many religions in Utopia: sun-worship, moon-or star-worship, herē-worship, and monotheism. Yet among them all, tolerance reigns. However, the nature of this tolerance has been much exaggerated and obscured by Protestant critics. Permission to preach and practice their religion is given to all provided they abstain from disputing acrimoniously, reviling those of other faiths, and using violence. Any who overstep these bounds are punished either with banishment or slavery. And there is still another restriction, and one that would be rather unpleasant for many "tolerant" moderns. Any one who does not believe in the immortality of the soul and Divine providence is despised as base and sordid, and is prohibited from receiving honors, office, or any position of public trust. He may not defend his own opinion, except before the priests and men of special gravity.

The doctrines of the immortality of the soul and
Divine providence, together with the belief in reward and punishment after death, form the fundamental religious principles of Utopia and are common to all sects. Monotheism is espoused by the best men in the state, while all at least believe in one Supreme Being. As a consequence of the immortality of the soul, there is a doctrine akin to the Christian communion of saints. The souls of the dead, it is thought, are at liberty to return to their friends and be present among them as beholders and witnesses of all their words and deeds. This, while it gives them confidence, also acts to hinder them from secret sins. A further consequence of the immortality of the soul is the cheerfulness with which they look upon death, and their intense sorrow and pity at the sight of any one who meets death fearful and despondent. Such a man they bury sorrowfully. But when a man dies calmly and cheerfully, they rejoice and celebrate the funeral with gladness.

Divination and soothsaying they despise as superstition, but miracles they believe in. Indeed, such is their faith that in time of great need they confidently pray for a downright miracle.

There are two quasi-monastic orders in Utopia. Both have this in common that their members give up learning and devote themselves to hard work, gladly performing the most difficult and disagreeable of tasks for the public good, and even for private persons. But the men of the one order forego marriage, abstain from meat and all sorts of pleasure, hoping by their
watching and labor shortly to obtain the pleasures of the life to come. Those of the other order, while they labor no less diligently, embrace matrimony and accept any pleasure that does not interfere with their work. Meat they indulge in because of its strength-giving qualities. Though this order is accounted far the wiser, yet, since the other bases its preference of a harder life, not upon reason, but upon religious principles, it is deemed the holier and held in higher estimation. To its members alone is given the name of religious. 24

Here it is opportune to consider the Utopians' attitude toward fasting, though in so doing we shall be lifting it out of its context. To fast and so to enfeeble the body for the mere sake of fasting, or in pursuit of a vain shadow of virtue, or to prepare oneself for hardships that may never come, they deem the extremity of madness, the token of a man cruelly minded towards himself and unkind toward nature. Yet, if a man fasts and mortifies himself for the good of others, hoping to receive his reward from God's hands, they show him great respect. 25

In Utopia the priests are exceedingly holy and very few. In every city there are thirteen, corresponding to the number of churches, who are chosen by popular vote and consecrated by their fellow priests. To them is committed the care of religious matters, the worship of God, the manners and morals of the people. Theirs is the office of admonishing wrong-doers, the duty of correcting and punishing being left to the prince and other magistrates. However, in the case of extreme vicious-
ness they can excommunicate. Excommunication is a mark of great infamy and also a warning to the offender of greater punishment to come if he does not amend. It is also the duty of the priests to teach the young. Because of their position, they are honored above everybody else in Utopia. This is one reason why their number is restricted, for to confer such a dignity on too many would be to lower it. If a priest is guilty of a crime, he may not be punished, because it is not lawful to touch with human hands him who has been dedicated and consecrated to God. He is left to God and his conscience.

Seven priests from every city accompany the army to battle. Here they kneel not far from the front lines, praying for peace first and then victory with as little bloodshed as possible. When victory is in sight, they rush into the ranks and restrain their countrymen from cruelty, providing sanctuary for any of the enemy who are so fortunate as to get near them. For this reason they are also venerated abroad.

They marry; and women, though rarely, and only old women at that, are admitted to their numbers.

The churches to which the priests are assigned are large and very gorgeous. For the sake of greater devotion and freedom from distraction, they are kept somewhat dark. The furnishings are such as to be compatible with all the religions practiced in Utopia; for everyone, no matter what his faith, must attend the services in these churches on the stated feasts.
Therefore there is no image of God so that all may be free to conceive of Him in their own divergent ways, though they all agree that He is in nature one.31

Incense and candles, which are primarily intended as a sacrifice, serve to further devotion and lift up the mind and heart to God. The people come appareled in white, while the priests wear colored vestments of fine workmanship. Though, consistently with their contempt for gold and precious stones, they do not use these materials in adorning the vestments, yet they make such skillful use of birds' feathers that the workmanship is enough to outvalue the costliest material. The feathers are so arranged that their order and pattern serve as symbols of the Divine mysteries and the Divine goodness.32

As the furnishings, so also the religious services and prayers are calculated to be equally acceptable to all sects. The sacrifice, if indeed it is strictly a sacrifice, consists in burning candles, as well as incense. The killing of animals is thought displeasing to God, who has made animals to the intent that they should live, and can hardly delight in blood and slaughter.38 On the last day of every month and year, in the evening, the women confess to their husbands, and the children to their parents, the offences that they have committed against others by deed or omission, and beg pardon for them. Thus, if there has been any cloud of dissension in the family, it is dispelled; and the guilty are enabled to approach the religious services "with a pure and charitable mind," for with a troubled
conscience they dare not do so. Thence they repair still fasting to the churches, there to give thanks to God for the prosperity of the past month or year. The next day they go early to church to pray for good fortune and success in the coming month or year. When the priest comes out of the vestry, all prostrate themselves on the ground in silence, so that the very reverence of their attitude strikes into them a fear of God as though He were really visibly present. After this they rise and to the accompaniment of music sing praises to God. Finally the priests and the people together recite solemn prayers in which they acknowledge God as their maker, their master, and the principle cause of all goodness, thanking Him for the many benefits they have received at His hands, especially the favor of being members of the happiest commonwealth and, as they hope, of the truest religion. They beg God in His goodness to enlighten them if they are in error, declaring themselves ready to follow what way soever He will lead them; but, if they are right, to give them steadfastness and constancy and to bring all peoples to the truth, unless diversity of religions is pleasing to Him. In conclusion they pray God that after death they may come to Him, professing themselves glad rather to die a painful death at an early age than to be separated from Him throughout a long life. With this, they prostrate themselves again and so go home to dinner. The rest of the day they spend in games and exercises of chivalry.

The philosophy of the Utopians is like their religion.
agree perfectly. In cosmogony and cosmology their opinions are partly in agreement with those of the Ancient and Medieval philosophers. On the rest they differ widely even among themselves.3

In their moral philosophy

their reasons and opinions agree with ours. They dispute of the good qualities of the soul, of the body, of fortune; and whether the name of goodness may be applied to all these, or only to the endowments and gifts of the soul.37

They discuss virtue and pleasure. However, the question that most interests them is: in what does the happiness of man consist? They seem to be too much inclined to the opinion of those who maintain that in pleasure consists either all or the greater part of man's happiness; and what is more, they support this opinion with arguments drawn from the principles of their religion. These principles, the immortality of the soul, the providence of God, punishment and reward in the next life, which they say are attainable by reason, are the only things that are sufficient to keep them from the precipice of the pursuit of pleasure at all costs. Happiness, however, is to be found, not in all pleasures, but only in those that are good and worthy of a human being. To such pleasures man is drawn by virtue. Since virtue is defined as living according to nature, and to live according to nature is to follow the dictates of reason, and reason, finally, prompts us to seek, after the love and veneration of God, a joyous and merry life and to help others to attain the same end; the logical conclusion is just what the Utopians maintain: that it is according to virtue to seek pleasure. Thus
runs their argument. By way of proof for their statement that reason prompts us to seek pleasure, they allege the universal belief that it is a point of humanity to bring health and comfort to others, arguing that if pleasure is not a good desirable in itself there is no reason why we should procure it for others. If it is consonant with human nature to accept pleasures administered to us by others, it is equally consonant with human nature to seek them for ourselves, since human nature in both instances is the same and what is true of the one is true of the other. Therefore it is wise to seek one's own pleasure, provided always one does not interfere with the pleasure of others. If it chances that a pleasure has to be foregone for the sake of another person, a greater pleasure in the form of a reward at God's hands is confidently hoped for. Whence it is argued that ultimately all our actions and all our virtues have as their end pleasure.

By pleasure is meant every "motion or state of the body or mind wherein man has naturally delectation." Any pleasure which is not prompted by nature is spurious, an obstacle to the enjoyment of true pleasure. Such are all empty honors, self-adornment, hunting, dicing, etc. The greatest pleasures are those of the mind; that is, knowledge, the contemplation of truth, and, above all, reflections on a well-spent life and the assured hope of future happiness. Below these are placed the pleasures of the body. These are divided into two classes. In the first class are put those which give the senses real delight, such as eating and
drinking, the relieving of pain and discomfiture, sexual pleasure: and the subtle titillations that music effects. In the second class is placed the joy of perfect health, which is universally accounted the foundation of all other bodily pleasures. To perfect health pertain beauty, strength, agility. The pleasure that arises from the perception of the beauty of nature is especially valued as distinctly belonging to man. As a grand finale to the Utopians' philosophy of pleasure we find enunciated the principle: that an inferior pleasure should not be sought if it is going to interfere with a greater pleasure, and that no pleasure should be admitted if it will be the cause of pain. According to these principles, unlawful pleasures are to be shunned because they will inevitably lead to pain.

With this ends the account of the philosophy of the Utopians. Let us see, then, to what extent More has followed Plato in outlining the religious, moral, and philosophical tenets that prevail in his ideal state.

There are but two points of similarity. The one is the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, which is taught by both, though with this difference that More does not let his citizens fall into the error of reincarnation. The other point of similarity consists in this, that both the Utopian philosophers and Socrates determine for themselves a hierarchy of pleasure, arranging the various classes of pleasure in the order of their dignity and genuineness. Moreover, they agree in placing the pleasures of the mind before those of the body.
In respect, then, of the religious, moral, and philosophical institutions of the Utopia we find little copying of Plato's republic. In fact, the divergences are such as to make one wonder how any one could think of calling Plato's work the original of More's.

But let us gird ourselves for the strenuous task of showing that the Utopian constitutions just described are conceivably the best that unaided human reason could attain. At the very beginning, we meet a difficulty in the attitude of the Utopians toward religion, for they draw a distinction between reason and religion, whereas we wish to hold that their religion is purely natural, that is, founded on reason alone. At first this seems an embarrassing difficulty, but upon closer scrutiny it vanishes into thin air. For, since it is possible by reason alone to come to knowledge of God, His goodness and providence, of the immortality of the soul, of the necessity of reward or punishment in the next life, it is possible also to establish a religion, true in as far as it goes, without revelation. Now, given this religion, one finds oneself in possession of a new road by which to arrive at truth, a road higher and surer than that other way of reasoning which does not take into account these principles. When the Utopians appeal to the principles of religion, they do not transcend the domain of reason; they merely prefer to take into account what their reason has told them about God and their relation to Him; they are not satisfied solely with the arguments which
prescind from this order.45

That tolerance also is according to reason is at once apparent to any one familiar with the numerous disputes that confront the student of philosophy. One who has not the absolute certainty of the word of God to fall back on will not be too ready to condemn the doctrines of those whose religious beliefs do not entirely accord with his. It is only Divine revelation that gives to a Christian absolute certainty of every dogma of his religion.

While the religious principles referred to above do not comprehend all that can possibly be known about God through reason, they involve many other truths and afford the basis of a natural religion which is as complete as we might expect. After all, we must remember that revelation, besides communicating knowledge of Divine truths, has also had the effect of so stimulating and directing the activities of the human reason that it has succeeded in transcending what before seemed the limits of its capacity.46 Thus we shall not be arbitrary in thinking that the dogmas of the Utopian religion, explicit and implicit, represent pretty well the best to which unaided human reason can attain.

About their religious rites the same may be said. In this matter all the guidance that reason affords will not lead one any further than the praise and adoration of God, a sacrifice, prayer of thanksgiving and petition. Can we expect by reason
alone to mount higher than the prayer by which the Utopians profess themselves ready to accept an early and painful death that they may the sooner be united to God? If we expect to go further, we must look to the aid of Divine revelation, which was not given to the Utopians. As to the churches and their furnishings, everything is reasonably ordained in accordance with religious principles and the tolerance that hold sway in Utopia.

The fewness of priests is also explained by our hypothesis, for such a rule was demanded in order to preserve the dignity of the office and insure the holiness of the incumbents. The Utopians had not the sacraments, which are efficacious despite the unworthiness of the minister. Nor had they holy orders by which the priest is given the grace necessary for the worthy fulfillment of the duties of his state. When a Utopian priest led the people in prayer, he remained a man; a man consecrated to God it is true, but still a man. When a Catholic priest stands before the altar, it is not he who stands there, but Jesus Christ, who uses the priest as His instrument. Hence the need of exceedingly holy priests in Utopia. If this need is to be filled without the succour of a special sacramental grace, as it must be in Utopia, the number of such priests cannot be very great. Further, a mere human dignity, as we can observe again and again today, is lowered if it is conferred on too many.

The various secondary duties of the priests, such as their surveillance over the morals of the people, their care for the education of youth, their conduct in war, we need not discuss
for they present no difficulty. However, we cannot overlook the admission of women to the priesthood and the permission of marriage. Here again our hypothesis enables us to explain what would otherwise be a rock of offence. Can we prove from reason alone that the priesthood belongs only to men? Why should not women who have given evidence of great virtue throughout their life be admitted to a post for which they are not rendered unfit by any natural impediment? The permission of marriage among the priests is equally easy to explain. Celibacy is a matter of discipline; it is not dogmatically required by revelation even, much less by unaided reason.

The Utopian "monks" give us another point in favor of our thesis. Those of one class, who marry and enjoy a certain amount of the amenities of life, are perfectly reasonable in seeing no incompatibility between a life devoted to labor for others and the moderate use of legitimate pleasures; yet they must yield to their confreres, who abstain from marriage and all sorts of pleasures. They are guided by higher principles than those of mere reason, the principles of their religion. Thus we have natural religion leading men to a life of devotion to others for the sake of God. Could reason conduct us higher without the support of revelation?

The apparently hedonistic philosophy to which the Utopians are given is also justifiable; for, while it is reason that prompts the "monks" to embrace a hard life, it is reason
also, that cautions others to think twice before taking upon themselves a mode of life that might prove too severe for them and detrimental to their eternal welfare. To such is permitted the enjoyment of pleasure, which is by no means repugnant to the designs of God as manifest in the constitution of man's nature. Yet in all this the rule of reason is to be followed. Thus the Utopians are perfectly consistent in their opinion that fasting is unnatural if undertaken without a good reason. And every reason that a Christian would assign they recognize, except the desire of strengthening the will against the onslaughts of temptation. This is probably a chance omission, for the texts render such an omission easy to make. In the section on the Utopian philosophy of pleasure we read:

But yet to despise the comeliness of beauty, to waste the body's strength, to turn nimbleness into sluggishness, to consume and make feeble the body with fasting, to do injury to health, and to reject the other pleasant motions of nature (unless a man neglect his commodities, whereas he doth with a fervent zeal procure the wealth of others, or the common profit, for the worthy pleasure forborne he is in hope of a greater pleasure at God's hand): else for a vain shadow of virtue, for the wealth and profit of no man, to punish himself, or to the intent he may be able courageously to suffer adversities, why which perchance shall never come to him: this to do they think it a point of extreme madness; and a token of a man cruelly minded towards himself, and unkind towards nature, as one so disdainful to be in her danger, that he renounced and refused all her benefices.47

The reference to a vain shadow of virtue and adversities which perchance shall never come do not present a difficulty. In the first expression, mere Stoicism is evidently condemned; and by adversities are probably meant only physical hardships. If
temptations were meant, the word "adversities" would hardly have been used.

The belief of the Utopians that the happiness of man consists ultimately in pleasure and that pleasure is the ultimate goal of all man's actions is startling to say the least. An it is a real difficulty to our thesis. Surely one cannot believe that St. Thomas More thought this the best human reason could accomplish in so important a point as the proper happiness and the ultimate end of man. It is true certainly that individual thinkers have propounded this doctrine even when they had Christian revelation to help them if they were willing to accept its aid. But the Utopia supposes ideal circumstances and ideal men. To place them in this erroneous position is another matter. It could be maintained with some satisfaction that St. Thomas More was using the term "pleasure" a bit loosely. However, in the last analysis one must admit that the simplest answer to the difficulty is a frank admission that this was a nod on the part of the Saint. And we need not omit the first part of the dictum of Horace: "Et idem indignor quandoque bonus dormitat Homerus."

Though the hypothesis with which we started out has not been without serious objections, we can at least maintain that, by and large, it meets the test of the facts, that it explains the general outlines of the Utopia, that it renders intelligible ideas that otherwise would be complete anomalies. Certainty in such a matter we cannot hope to attain except through direct historical evidence of More's intentions when he wrote the book.
Reliable evidence of this kind is not forthcoming. In its absence, we feel that the only ultimate explanation of certain features of the Utopia, otherwise highly objectionable, is the supposition that the purpose of the composition is the portrayal of the best unaided human reason is capable of attaining.
NOTES TO CHAPTER V

4. Ib., IV, 427,b,c; VII, 540c.
5. Ib., III, 386b, sq.
9. Ib., III, 389d.
10. Ib., IV, 425b,c.
11. Ib., IX, 583, 586, 587.
12. In place of a lengthy description, let us content ourselves with a quotation:

This is the state of the question. The skeleton of the proof:

13. Ib., VI, 505, sqq. Only one of many passages.

17. *Ib.* , p. 123.
18. *Ib.* , pp. 125 & 127.
22. *Ib.* , p. 128.
23. *Ib.* , p. 129.
25. *Ib.* , p. 94; with which confer p. 130.
27. *Ib.* , p. 132.
30. *Ib.* , p. 132.
33. *Loc. cit.*
36. *Ib.* , pp. 82 & 83.
37. *Ib.* , p. 83, lines 83 & 84.
38. *Ib.* , pp. 83 & 84.
39. *Ib.* , pp. 84 & 85.
40. *Ib.*, p. 86.
41. *Loc. cit.*
43. *Ib.*, pp. 87 - 94.
44. *Ib.*, pp. 93 & 94.
45. *Ib.*, p. 83.


47. *Ib.*, p. 94.
CHAPTER VI
CONCLUSION

In the course of this thesis we have discussed in turn the political, economic, and social institutions, the religion, morality, and philosophy of the two Utopias. Let us now gather together into one conspectus the conclusions we have successively reached.

We have seen that in its political organization Utopia bears slight resemblance to the Platonic state; that there are only three things in which there is close agreement: the caution against innovation, the prohibition of endless lawmaking, and the method of gaining allies in war. On the question of the equality of women we find agreement only to the extent that women are allowed to fight in Utopia, while they are compelled to do so in the Republic. We find divergence in the system of government, in the position of women politically, in the type of army. We encounter, besides, several things in each state which have no real parallel in the other. For instance, in the Republic the rulers must be philosophers, and the geographical extent of the state must be limited; in Utopia these provisions do not occur. And, on the other hand, there are the practice of founding colonies and the policy of bribery and assassination in time of war, which are peculiar to Utopia. We are justified, then, in concluding that for the political institutions of the Utopia More owed little to Plato's Republic.

In the economic institutions of the two ideal states
there are three points of similarity: specialization of occupation, communism, and contempt for gold and silver. Genuine divergences are to be found in the non-rigidity of specialization in Utopia; in the admission that, as a class, women are not fitted to perform the duties naturally incumbent on men; in the means of regulating the distribution of population. As developments we may cite the regulation of the hours of work, the exportation of the surplus, the easy terms given to foreign buyers. From this we conclude that in the economic institutions of the Utopia More borrowed one thing only of importance from Plato, and that is communism; that beyond this his indebtedness is very little.

The social institutions of the two utopias have very little in common. The provisions of Utopia for a special class of full-time students, from whom are to be drawn the priests and magistrates, may have been suggested by the guardian-class, the philosopher-kings of the Platonic state. In both commonwealths, moreover, the importance of education is recognized, and social life is rather roseate, as is of course to be expected in an ideal state. But the points of difference far outweigh these similarities. In Utopia the social life is free and inviting, whereas in the Republic the life of the artisans alone is inviting, while the guardians and auxiliaries are subjected to a rigid barracks-like existence. The Platonic breeding-system gives way to the patriarchal family, and the rearing of children is left to their parents. The population is regulated without the practice of abortion or exposure. Women have their proper place in the
family instead of so-called equality. The method of education differs widely in the two states. The rigid class-system of the Republic is abandoned for a rather flexible distinction between the lettered, who are the future servants of the state, and the common people, who are not unknown to the muses. Slavery, of which there is no mention in the Republic, is admitted in Utopia as a means of punishment. And finally, instead of Plato's lack of concern for the sick, there is a fine hospital system. Therefore the conclusion that we again reach is that More depended little on Plato's Republic, that he took the communism of the Republic as a starting-point in the development of his Utopian state.

In the religious systems of the two utopias we have found no similarity at all, save belief in the immortality of the soul. On the manner of immortality that the soul will enjoy, there is wide divergence. Of religious rites there is hardly more than a mention in the Republic, whereas in the Utopia religious service is described in detail. We are advised also of the principal tenets of the Utopian religion. The long description of the priests and "monks" is altogether peculiar to the Utopia. Nor is tolerance to be found in the Republic.

In the morality of the two states there is no similarity, save in so far as the natural moral code is followed, at least in the main, by both. Marriage we have treated of among the social institutions.
In philosophy there is agreement in as far as both authors establish a hierarchy of pleasure, placing the pleasures of the mind at the top of the scale. But when they proceed further, they no longer agree. Fasting, which is recognized as an act of virtue in Utopia, is not so much as hinted of by Plato. Again, therefore, we are led to conclude that in religion, morality, and philosophy More’s Utopia has little in common with Plato’s Republic.

There is only one important institution which is to be found in both ideal states, and that is communism. The other similarities are not only few, but also relatively unimportant. So numerous and so fundamental are the differences that we cannot help concluding that More’s dependance upon Plato is not very great.

But let us now consider the other side of our task: the explanation of the various institutions of Utopia in accordance with the theory that More intended to portray what he considered the best human reason was capable of attaining without the aid of Divine revelation. With this theory we have succeeded in explaining satisfactorily the more important institutions of Utopia. Many insignificant details have, of course, been omitted entirely or passed over hurriedly. For the most part they must be attributed to More’s inventive genius, although they fall within the general scope of the work.

The political institutions of Utopia give us some confirmation of our thesis. It is at least conceivable that More
thought the democratic system the best unaided human reason could devise. The method in which the democratic system is applied was evidently dictated by common sense and the practice of democratic countries of the past. This formed the main point of our argument from the nature of the political institutions of the Utopia. The apparent sanctioning of political assassination was recognized as an exception and was explained as a humorous interlude of great satiric force. That there is, however, a certain degree of plausibility about the Utopians' defense of this practice cannot be denied. Hence, even in this case the theme is departed from but little. It is still the reasonable man in the reasonable state, though somewhat distorted by an error that would never have been committed had not discursive reason been followed rather blindly, to the exclusion of conscience, which often acts intuitively and more surely than reason.

In the economic structure of Utopia, communism is the main point in support of our thesis. The Utopians are more angels than men in following the guidance of reason; they see and avoid the pitfalls of communism; their economic life is simpler; hence in their society communism is according to reason. Almost all of the educational, religious, and moral institutions of Utopia contribute to make communism feasible and even desirable. Besides, though originally imposed on them by force, it is at the time of narration entirely voluntary. Most of the other economic institutions of Utopia are necessitated by communism, and hence fall in
with our hypothesis.

Of the social institutions of Utopia, the patriarchal family, the position of women in the family, the sanctity of marriage, the easy yet restrained social life, the insistence on education in morals and virtue, the preference of slavery to capital punishment were the primary source of our argument. The permission of divorce, which at first seemed a difficulty, turned out to be inexplicable, coming from the pen of St. Thomas More, except in our hypothesis; and it was therefore a confirmation of it. This was found also of the suicide of the incurably sick.

The religion of the Utopians offers further confirmation of our thesis. The toleration of other religions, which has provoked so much meaningless comment, was explained by the application of our hypothesis, since by reason alone no man can attain such certainty in religious matters as to justify him in condemning as utterly false the beliefs of others. The fundamental religious principles of Utopia: the immortality of the soul, Divine providence, reward or punishment in the next life, afford a strong argument for our hypothesis. The rather jejune rites of the Utopian religion also lend confirmation to our thesis, for it is hard to see how reason alone could attain anything higher without Divine revelation or else purely arbitrary invention. As to the Utopian priests, here again our hypothesis fits perfectly; in fact, it is required to explain their fewness, the permission of marriage, and the admission of women to their ranks. The
"monks," finally, give us another point in favor of our thesis, since they are guided either by reason alone or by natural religion, which comes to the same thing.

Passing over the morality of the Utopians, we consider next their philosophy. Here we found that the apparently hedonistic philosophy of the Utopians was capable of explanation if one supposed a loose use of terms. This suggestion we looked on as unsatisfactory. We granted finally that probably the simplest explanation was to admit that More nodded. Really here one might say that he played a joke on reason by showing how it can, in all its seriousness and confidence, go vastly astray. However, we have been forced to admit that this philosophy is something of a Gordian knot; we have been forced to admit that it is a real difficulty to our hypothesis.

In the course, then, of our discussion, we have examined the various features of the Utopia that are important and have attracted the attention of all who have read the book. We have found that we can explain the main outlines of the Utopian state, except for a few instances where our explanation has not been satisfying. We are at least justified in holding our theory as highly probable.

To prove the theory conclusively, one would have to show that it is the only theory that explains the peculiarities of the Utopia. To do this completely and satisfactorily is not possible here. Suffice it to remind ourselves that in the Introduction the other theories, which seem to exhaust the
sense out of the work. If this interpretation is rejected, there remains an ever-present why. However much of the details of the Utopia one attributes to imagination, ingenuity, satiric purpose, imitation of Plato, Medieval background, he must have recourse to something further, unless of course he prefers to leave the Utopia a disturbing mystery. The theory defended in this thesis supplements what is valid in other theories and gives the last and most necessary element of the solution.
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The thesis, "Two Utopias: A Comparison of the Republic of Plato and St. Thomas More's Utopia", written by Charles August Weisgerber, S.J., has been accepted by the Graduate School with reference to form, and by the readers whose names appear below, with reference to content. It is, therefore, accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Father Brickel
December 10, 1939

Father Farrell
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