

COMMUNISM AND THE FALL OF MAN:
THE SOCIAL THEORIES OF THOMAS MORE AND GERRARD WINSTANLEY

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SUMMARY

The thesis examines the thought of Thomas More and Gerrard Winstanley, emphasizing the concern of both theorists with the prevailing moral depravity of human nature attributable to the Fall of Man, and their proposals for the amendment of men's conduct by institutional means, especially by the establishment of a communist society. The thesis opens with a conceptual exploration of 'utopianism' and 'millenarianism' before discussing the particular forms of these concepts employed by More and Winstanley. The introductory section also includes an investigation of the context which constituted the background to the ideas of More and Winstanley.

More's theology, his conception of human nature, and his view of contemporary civil society are examined in detail. It is argued that the conclusions More derived from this aspect of his thought formed his basic conception of the situation to which the institutional amendments outlined in Utopia were directed. These proposals, regarding communism, the state, family and community life, education, religion, and ethics, are discussed. It is argued that Utopia constitutes More's model of a society designed to facilitate the salvation of man.

Winstanley's appreciation of man's nature, prevailing condition, and potential for spiritual regeneration, are outlined. The development of Winstanley's thought, and the impression his active involvement with the Diggers made upon him, is described. It is argued that Winstanley renounced millenarianism and ultimately assumed utopian social theory as a medium for the articulation of his proposals for the restoration of man to spiritual regeneracy on earth. The institutional aspects of this scheme, regarding communism, the state, patriarchalism, labour, and education, which he outlined in The Law of Freedom, are evaluated.

The thesis concludes with a brief comparative analysis before setting the ideas of More and Winstanley in the context of the changing worldview, appreciation of man's potential and progress, and the emphasis upon aspiration, which evolved in the early-modern period.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Aquinas, Summa Theologiae	T. Aquinas, <u>Summa Theologiae</u> , ed. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, (London, 1964-).
Bacon, Works	Francis Bacon, <u>Works</u> , ed. R.L. Ellis and D.D. Heath, (London, 1868-1901).
C.S.P.D.	Calender of State Papers, Domestic Series
Econ. H. R.	Economic History Review
E. E. T. S.	Early English Text Society
H. J.	The Historical Journal
H. & T.	History and Theory
Hobbes, E. W.	T. Hobbes, <u>The English Works of Thomas Hobbes</u> , ed. Sir W. Molesworth, (London, 1839-1845, 1966 edn.).
J. H. I.	Journal of the History of Ideas
J. M. H.	Journal of Modern History
Locke, Works,	J. Locke, <u>The Works of John Locke</u> , (11th edn., London 1812).
Marx and Engels, Works	Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, <u>Collected Works of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels</u> , (London, in progress).
Milton, Prose Works	J. Milton, <u>The Complete Prose Works of John Milton</u> , ed. D.M. Wolfe, (New Haven, 1953-).
More, C. W.	T. More, <u>The Yale Edition of the Complete Works of St. Thomas More</u> , (New Haven, in progress).
More, E. W.	<u>The English Works of Sir Thomas More</u> , ed. W.E. Campbell, (London, 1931).
P. & P.	Past and Present
Phil.	Philosophy
P. P. S.	<u>Philosophy, Politics and Society</u> , (series, 1-5, various editors, Oxford, 1956-1979).
P. Q.	Philosophical Quarterly
P. R.	The Philosophical Review
P. S.	Political Studies
P. T.	Political Theory
Winstanley, (Sabine)	G. Winstanley, <u>The Works of Gerrard Winstanley</u> , ed. G.H. Sabine, (Ithaca New York, 1941, repr. New York, 1965).
Winstanley, (Hill)	G. Winstanley, <u>The Law of Freedom and Other Writings</u> , ed. C. Hill, (London, 1973).

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For Moya Lloyd

The notion of sitting down and conjuring up, not only words in which to clothe thoughts but thoughts worthy of being clothed—the whole thing was absurdly beyond his desires.

F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Beautiful and Damned

People say I'm crazy doing what I'm doing
Well they give me all kinds of warnings to
save me from ruin
When I say that I'm o.k. they look at me kind
of strange
Surely you're not happy now you no longer
play the game

People say I'm lazy dreaming my life away
Well they give me all kinds of advice designed
to enlighten me
When I tell them that I'm doing fine watching
shadows on the wall
Don't you miss the big time boy you're no
longer on the ball?

I'm just sitting here watching the wheels
go round and round
I really love to watch them roll
No longer riding on the merry-go-round
I just had to let it go

People asking questions lost in confusion
Well I tell them there's no problem, only
solutions
Well they shake their heads and look at me as
if I've lost my mind
I tell them there's no hurry...
I'm just sitting here doing time

I'm just sitting here watching the wheels
go round and round
I really love to watch them roll
No longer riding on the merry-go-round
I just had to let it go

John Lennon,
Double Fantasy

FOREWORD

It is our purpose to discover why two such diverse personalities as Thomas More and Gerrard Winstanley should have regarded some form of utopian communism as, to some extent, a solution to problems facing mankind. The most obvious explanation for this similarity is that Winstanley had actually read and been influenced by More's Utopia. With this thesis in mind, numerous scholars have postulated bases of comparing Utopia with Winstanley's The Law of Freedom which, however, often prove to be somewhat superficial. Some, such as J. Max Patrick, have rather wildly claimed that

"the influence of More is so clear in The Law of Freedom that no detailed demonstration is needed to prove it."¹

G. H. George

has also confidently asserted that

"no direct evidence is needed to affirm that Winstanley was powerfully influenced by More's Utopia."²

Other scholars have discussed More and Winstanley together only to affirm that More's 'socialist' ideals can be found wanting in comparison to those of Winstanley. For example, L. H. Berens compared Utopia, claiming that it described "a society based upon slavery, and extended by wars," unfavourably with Winstanley's "simple, peaceful, rational and practical social ideal."³ By the same token, Harold Laski believed that More was

1. J. M. Patrick, 'The Literature of the Diggers', University of Toronto Quarterly Vol. XI (1942), pp. 95-110, at p. 110.

2. G. H. George, 'Gerrard Winstanley: A Critical Retrospect', in, The Dissenting Tradition, ed. R. C. Cole and M. E. Moddy, (Ohio 1975), p. 219, (following Max Patrick).

3. L. H. Berens, The Digger Movement in the Days of the Commonwealth, (London 1906, 1961 edition), p. 163.

not a genuine communist, whereas Winstanley definitely was.⁴ More recently, Christopher Hill, an ardent advocate of the opinion that Winstanley made a major contribution to the development of socialist thought, has followed suit. Hill has dismissed Utopia as "a jeu d'esprit, written in Latin, the language of the intellectual elite."⁵

Not all scholars have been so disparaging to More in comparing his ideals to Winstanley's. C.B. Macpherson complimented More and Winstanley fleetingly presenting both as proponents of classless "democratic utopias."⁶ L. Mulligan was more reserved in noting that Winstanley and More both advocated communism, but also that both emphasized the coercive function of the state.⁷

Several other critics have been less systematic and have advanced what appear to be random cross-references to the similarities between More's and Winstanley's thought. For instance, in discussing Winstanley's sources, H.N. Brailsford argued that Winstanley "never mentions Utopia, though he must have read it carefully."⁸ P. Elmen was more moderate; he restricted himself to the suggestion that possibly "Winstanley knew at least a little of More's Utopia."⁹ D.W. Petegorsky concluded

4. H.J. Laski, Communism, (New York 1927), pp.13-14.

5. C. Hill, introduction to, Winstanley: The Law of Freedom, (London 1973), p.10, see also, Reformation to Industrial Revolution, (London 1967, 1969 edition), p.288.

6. C.B. Macpherson, The Life and Times of Liberal Democracy, (Oxford 1977), p.14.

7. L. Mulligan, J.K. Graham, and J. Richards, 'Winstanley: A Case for the Man as He Said He Was', Journal of Ecclesiastical History, Vol.28 (1977), pp.57-75, at pp.62, 72.

8. H.N. Brailsford, The Levellers and the English Revolution, ed. C. Hill, (London 1961), p.659, see also, p.669.

9. P. Elmen, 'The Theological Basis of Digger Communism', Church History, Vol.23 (1954), pp.207-218, at p.214.

that Winstanley must have been "acquainted, at any rate" with

More's political philosophy, while P. Zagorin argued that

Winstanley's ideas can be illuminated by reference to More's.

G.P. Gooch believed it noteworthy that More and Winstanley were

both concerned with the plight of the poor. J.K. Fuz pointed

out that both theorists proposed the eradication of class

divisions. W.F. Murphy maintained that More and Winstanley

were equally inspired by the ideal of a return to some divinely-

ordained just society.

Clearly, there is a long tradition of comparing the social

theories of More and Winstanley. This tradition has usually

assumed that even if the influence of More upon Winstanley was

not direct, the similarities in the ideas of these two are so

markedly obvious that they might be classed together.

Unfortunately, none of those who have associated More and

Winstanley have pursued the comparison in any depth.

Nevertheless, the question of whether Winstanley had ever read

10. D.W. Petegorsky, Left-Wing Democracy in the English Civil War, (New York 1940, 1972 edition), p.122.

11. P. Zagorin, A History of Political Thought in the English Revolution, (London 1954), p.52.

12. G.P. Gooch, English Democratic Ideas in the Seventeenth Century, (Cambridge 1897, 1954 edition with H.J. Laski), p.191.

13. J.K. Fuz, Welfare Economics in English Utopias from Francis Bacon to Adam Smith, (The Hague 1952), p.46.

14. W.F. Murphy, 'The Political Philosophy of Gerrard Winstanley', Review of Politics, Vol.19 (1957), pp.214-238, at p.216.

15. This review is by no means exhaustive, see also, J. Strachey, The Theory and Practice of Socialism, (London 1936), pp.276-283; A. Cecil, A Portrait of Thomas More: Scholar, Statesman, Saint, (London 1937), p.122; T.W. Hayes, Winstanley the Digger, (Cambridge Massachusetts 1979), pp.2, 73, 98-100, 210; F. Brockway, Britain's First Socialists: The Levellers, Agitators and Diggers of the English Revolution, (London 1980), p.139. Not all critics unquestioningly accepted that Winstanley had been influenced by More. D.M. Wolfe, The Complete Prose Works of John Milton, Vol.1V, Pt.1, (New Haven 1966), p.159, said, "I find no internal evidence that Winstanley had read Plato, Campanella, More, or Comenius."

Utopia may not be so pressing as might be supposed. Indeed, the discovery of irrefutable historical evidence that More's work strongly influenced Winstanley's social theories would throw most analyses of the development of Winstanley's thought into disarray, because such interpretations presume the internal coherence of Winstanley's ideas. It seems unlikely, however, that such evidence could come to light. At no time does Winstanley actually cite More, and although he could have read the 1639 reprint of Utopia, Winstanley might equally have become acquainted with More's ideas by reading Gabriel Platte's Macaria,¹⁶ which was in turn, definitely influenced by Utopia.

The explanation of the correspondence between the social theories of More and Winstanley is unlikely to be satisfied by any attempt to discover sources of direct influence. This, in any case, would be unlikely to prove a particularly stimulating intellectual enterprise. Neither is it our intention to produce a rigidly thematic comparative analysis of the two theorists in question. Rather, the most rewarding analytical procedure would appear to involve the consideration of the writings of the two as independent entities, attempting to contribute to the existing debate on each. We shall thus discover that some of the most interesting problems posed by the similarities and differences in their work are those raised by the attraction of both More and Winstanley to a particular form of utopianism.

An immediate problem arises from the need to provide grounds for the isolation of one definition of utopianism - that which More and Winstanley found most appropriate for the articulation

16. G. Plattes, A Description of the Famous Kingdome of Macaria, (London 1641), see also, C. Webster, 'The Authorship and Significance of Macaria', P.&P., No. 56 (1972), pp. 34-48.

of their respective social theories. It thus becomes necessary to anticipate the possible objections that our conception of utopianism is an arbitrary choice, or that it is simply wrong. Such claims as these can be countered by considering the concept of utopianism and our particular definition of it in terms of recent philosophical debate concerning conceptual analysis in general. This undertaking will constitute the subject matter of part one, chapter one. The provision of an operational definition of utopianism will enable us to distinguish the concept in this sense from various eschatological states of mind, especially millenarianism. All this is to anticipate the eventual consideration of Winstanley's intellectual development from millenarian to utopian social theorist.

The respective meanings of the written statements of More and Winstanley are not immediately apparent. Such obscurity is not, of course, peculiar to either More or Winstanley. Quite naturally, both theorists often appear to us as writers from an earlier, and in many senses alien, epoch. So it is with considerable justification that, rather than proceeding directly to an analysis of their written statements, we should consider certain general questions concerning the methodology of textual analysis in the history of ideas. This will form the primary undertaking of chapter two. In this chapter we shall be particularly concerned with notions of the appropriate context in the light of which textual statements ought to be analysed. Ultimately, we shall be in a position to decide upon the nature and extent of the 'context' which reveals most clearly the intellectual and social climate in which More and Winstanley operated. This conception of the human condition will be briefly described.

Part two, comprising chapters three - six, will be devoted to

an analysis of Thomas More's social philosophy. More's writings have been the subject of a long, complicated, and often acrimonious debate. The various controversies at the centre of the debate will be outlined critically in chapter three with the intention of providing some basis for our subsequent contribution. This will commence in chapter four with an assessment of More's opinions concerning human nature, existing social institutions, and man's potential for reform. Chapters five and six will analyse More's response as elucidated in Utopia. In the course of our account we shall discover the enormous complexity of More's appreciation of man's situation; a view in which his limited confidence in man's capacity to effect institutional reform is paralleled by his conviction that such reform must inevitably be frustrated by man's innate moral shortcomings.

Part three, comprising chapters seven - ten, will be given over to the consideration of Gerrard Winstanley's social theories. Chapter seven will resemble chapter three, outlining an equally lively depth of scholarly analysis pertaining, this time, to Winstanley. Chapter eight will correspond to chapter four, assessing Winstanley's opinions concerning human nature, existing social institutions, and man's potential for reform. Somewhat less precisely, chapters nine and ten will follow chapters five and six, but with respect to Winstanley's response to his appreciation of the human condition. Chapter nine will deal with Winstanley's long and often tormented spiritual pilgrimage and intellectual progress towards the resolution of mankind's predicament by means of utopian institutionalism. Chapter ten will provide an account of Winstanley's utopian scheme for a true commonwealth - The Law of Freedom.

The thesis will conclude with a chapter intended to accomplish two tasks. The first is the provision of a brief comparative analysis of More's and Winstanley's social theories. The second is placing the emergent disparities in the context of certain shifting currents which characterized intellectual activity in the early-modern period. All this, with an eye to explaining, so far as possible, More's essential pessimism and Winstanley's fundamental optimism.

PART ONE PROLOGUE

CHAPTER ONE : THE CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS OF UTOPIANISM AND
MILLENARIANISM

A preliminary digression into the realms of conceptual analysis may at first sight appear unwarranted. However a consideration of conceptual methodology is necessary if we are to justify certain of our assumptions concerning utopianism and millenarianism. It is important to recognise from the outset that the concepts in question, particularly utopianism, are so complex that, unless they are used precisely and consistently, the interpretation of instances of them can be frustrated and prejudiced by the propensity to meander within their internal structure. The conceptual analysis of utopianism impinges directly upon the understanding of More's Utopia. For instance, the presumption that utopian thought inclines to fantasy has encouraged the view that Utopia was merely a jeu d'esprit, devoid of any serious recommendations for the conduct of man's affairs. Similarly, the distinction of various forms of utopian thought from certain aspects of millenarian expectation has a considerable bearing upon the analysis of Gerrard Winstanley's social theory. Significantly, the process by which we intend to define the concepts in question is, as much as the quality of the resultant definitions, the basis of any response to the criticism to which our use of the concepts might be thought susceptible. Because they are not available to us, the most obvious requirement of this chapter is that it should provide us with adequate definitions of utopianism and millenarianism. Nevertheless, our anticipated response to claims that our use of the concepts is untenable will emphasize the analytical method by which they are to be produced, rather than the nature of the definitions themselves.

Admittedly, utopianism and millenarianism are not amongst the

most commonly employed concepts of modern social and political discourse. However, because they deal with moral issues and with questions of value, they are examples of a particular type of concept. The problem of devising a methodology for the analysis of such 'normative' concepts is of direct consequence to our perception of them, and the use to which we might put them.

Therefore we shall use utopianism and millenarianism in relation to the conclusions produced by a preliminary discussion of conceptual analysis of the social sciences. Thus we may proceed to consider a number of existing theories on the nature of utopianism in the light of our understanding of conceptual methodology. From the main conclusions to be drawn from this exercise, it will be possible to arrive at a definition of utopianism and also to stipulate the conditions for its use.

Thereafter, we shall present a brief account of the eschatological ideas of early-modern England with a particular emphasis upon the role of social reform within this outlook. Ultimately, this will enable us to compare and distinguish forms of millenarianism from utopianism as previously defined.

i Conceptual Analysis in Social Theory

When philosophers and social scientists have examined their own vocabulary and conceptual techniques, they have often held that such discourse lacks the definitiveness usually attributed to various crucial terms employed in the natural sciences.¹ Recently this awareness has stimulated a concern to elucidate a methodology applicable to concepts used in the analysis of man and his social interaction. The moral postulates involved in such behaviour entail evaluation as an inevitable facet of conceptual elucidation. Naturally, this in turn has promoted disputes. With respect to the dichotomy of the natural and the social sciences, W.E. Connolly has recognized a distinction between the neutral or 'descriptive' concepts discernable in natural science, upon which agreement is attainable, and the controversial 'normative' concepts apparent in social science.² Such a 'descriptive - normative' division is important because to ascribe the prospect of definitive resolution to the conceptual arguments of social science, is to prejudice the overall perception of conceptual analysis. This we shall return to. Interestingly, Connolly and several others³ have recognized that normative evaluation may relate to the prevailing intellectual context.⁴ All these various considerations prompted W.B. Gallie to search for "a single method" of conceptual analysis or a "single explanatory

1. See, A. MacIntyre, 'The Essential Contestability of Some Social Concepts', Ethics, Vol. 84 (1974), pp. 1-9, at pp. 1-2.

2. W.E. Connolly, The Terms of Political Discourse, (Lexington Massachusetts, 1974), pp. 22-35.

3. ibid., p. 31; E. Gellner, Contemporary Thought and Politics, (London, 1974), p. 97; J.N. Gray, 'On the Contestability of Social and Political Concepts', P. T., Vol. 5 (1977), pp. 331-348, at p. 345.

4. See below, pp. 20-29, for 'historical' perspectives on utopianism.

hypothesis"⁵ of disagreements.

Gallie attempted to describe the concepts with which we are concerned as,

"concepts the proper use of which inevitably involves endless disputes about their proper use on the part of their users."⁶

According to Gallie, such concepts are by nature incapable of yielding a general or correct or standard definition.⁷ Further, because no principle can be formed by which to determine a universally accepted use, these concepts will be the subject of controversy. Again, according to Gallie, such disputation should ideally be characterized by the competitive promotion of rational arguments in which opponents will admit the cogency of each others' views and yet will continue to advance their own claims.⁸ Gallie termed these concepts 'essentially contested concepts'. His definition of essentially contested concepts has been subject to subsequent refinement, most notably by Connolly, who has concluded that,

"The internal complexity of the concept, combined with the relative openness of each of its unit criteria, provides the space within which these disputes take place, and because of these very features, operational tests and formal modes of analysis do not provide sufficient leverage to settle such disputes."⁹

E. Gellner has also argued that dispute will be centred upon the multiplicity of evaluative unit criteria within one consensually identified concept.¹⁰ The competitive character

5. W.B. Gallie, 'Essentially Contested Concepts', Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Vol. LV1 (1956), pp. 167-198, at pp. 167-168, 179.

6. ibid., p. 169.

7. ibid., p. 168.

8. ibid., pp. 177, 188-191.

9. W.E. Connolly, op.cit., p. 20.

10. E. Gellner, op.cit., p. 95.

of essentially contested concepts has been particularly stressed by Gray :-

"the presence of intractable definitional disputes, conflict hinging not on isolated concepts but on patterns of thought associated with rival forms of social life, and contestant patterns of thought that incorporate philosophical theses and reasonings in terms of which their resolution must proceed - constitute the three facets of essential contestability."¹¹

The ideological confrontation extolled by Gray carries the implication of conflict resolution (presuming the prevalence of reason over emotion) although it is not obvious how this is to be achieved. Certainly, J. Kekes indicated a tacit awareness of such difficulties in restricting himself to the claim that, "E.C.C's...¹² .., are vague, ambiguous, and general." Yet Kekes proceeded to assume that concepts must be capable of rational resolution. J. Lively, however, is forthrightly critical of various attempts to incorporate ideological dispute as a proper element of conceptual enquiry.¹³ Again, these are questions to which we shall return.

Gallie originally stipulated a series of conditions¹⁴ the satisfaction of which he regarded as necessary for a concept to be essentially contested. Since these conditions have formed the basis of much subsequent debate, they must be briefly stated. They are (i) appraisiveness; the concept must signify or accredit a valued achievement. The achievement must be (ii) internally complex, in being multi-dimensional and unamenable to quantitative analysis. The accredited achievement will also be (iii) variously

11. J.N.Gray, op.cit., p.345, see also, p.339.

12. J.Kekes, 'Essentially Contested Concepts: A Reconsideration', Philosophy and Rhetoric, Vol.10 (1977), pp.71-89, at p.75.

13. J.Lively, 'Essentially Contested Concepts: A Reappraisal', paper presented to the University of Warwick Theory Workshop, (1979), p.2.

14. W.B.Gallie, op.cit., pp.171-172, 180.

describable, according to different permutations of the component elements of the concept. The vagueness or open nature of the concept will facilitate (iv) the unpredictable modification of the accredited achievement according to changing circumstances. Condition (v), which along with condition (i) carries considerable weight, describes what it is to be a concept of this type. This condition emphasizes the competitive nature of conceptual discourse :-

"to use an essentially contested concept means to use it against other uses and to recognize that one's own use of it has to be maintained against these other uses....to use an essentially contested concept means to use it both aggressively and defensively."¹⁵

Gallie maintained that these five conditions might support the claim that a concept had been 'radically confused' while remaining capable of resolution. Therefore, as conditions peculiar to essential contestedness, he insisted upon

"(vi) the derivation of any such concept from an original exemplar whose authority is acknowledged by all the contestant users of the concept, and (vii) the probability or plausibility, in appropriate senses of these terms, of the claim that continuous competition for acknowledgement as between the contestant users of the concept, enables the original exemplar's achievement to be sustained and/or developed in the optimum fashion."¹⁶

Gallie's conditions have
17
been the subject of considerable subsequent contention, the intricacies of which cannot concern us here. However, the main

15. ibid., p.172.

16. ibid., p.180.

17. See particularly, E.Gellner, op.cit., pp.96-98; J.Kekes, op.cit., pp.74-86; J.N.Gray, op.cit., p.334; J.Lively, op.cit., pp.14-18.

threads of this debate will emerge as our argument proceeds.

The possibility that a dispute could be occasioned by the radical confusion of a concept has already been alluded to. Obviously, radical confusion is an alternative aspect of conceptual analysis; one which Gallie found particularly useful as a juxtaposition to essential contestedness. Thus he referred to

"apparently endless contests as to the right application of some epithet or slogan, which in fact serves simply to confuse two different concepts about whose proper application no one need have contested at all."¹⁸

Accordingly,

such concepts cannot be sustained and will eventually yield to determination and resolution. Unfortunately, little else has been said about radically confused concepts. However, it appears that radical confusion is a retrospective judgement by which concepts can be identified in one of two ways. Firstly, it might be realized that two or more related but distinguishable concepts had been inappropriately used interchangeably. Secondly, one determinate definition might possess sufficient rational persuasion to convert all erstwhile contestant users of the concept into advocates of its particular meaning. Yet this takes us to the problem of how, without the gift of hindsight, we are to distinguish ongoing radically confused from essentially contested concepts. This problem has been exacerbated by doubts expressed¹⁹ over Gallie's distinguishing conditions (vi) and (vii). Kekes has attempted to solve the problem, arguing that,

"If the contestants agree about the general description of the domain they are contesting, and if they share the problem the solution of which prompts the debate, then the

18. W.B. Gallie, op.cit., p.175.

19. See, e.g., E. Gellner, op.cit., pp.96-97.

argument is an essential conquest,..."²⁰

Unfortunately, this tells us little, except that there should be a consciousness amongst all the participants of the nature of the conceptual debate in question. Presumably, those involved in a debate which turned out to be radically confused, might previously have believed themselves to be parties to an 'essential' contest. Kekes's suggestion does, however, direct us towards a central problem - the relative weight of contest and consensus within conceptual debate. This difficulty has been taken up by Lively.

In his pioneering study, Gallie recognized that initially (condition iii) a concept might be perceived as ambiguous, but argued that ambiguity would soon be dispelled by the recognition of a concept's contestedness (condition v). So, effectively, contest in the form of rational argument should dispel ambiguity. Nevertheless, it is along these lines that Lively has criticised the very notion of essentially contested concepts, expressing concern over the confusion of ambiguous concepts with those that are subject to ideological confrontation.²¹ According to Lively, the crucial characteristic of an ambiguous concept is the indeterminacy of its meaning.²² This has led him to the following definition :-

"The essential features of an ambiguous concept are then that, although a range of truth criteria is commonly accepted, the meaning of the term is nevertheless indeterminate because no particular criteria within this range are regarded as necessary and sufficient, and perhaps also because the degree to which particular criteria need

20. J. Kekes, op.cit., p.84.

21. J. Lively, op.cit., p.4.

22. ibid., p.7.

be satisfied for the terms to be validly applied is unclear, and perhaps also because there are problems about what real-world phenomena fit the criteria."²³

The notion of ambiguity re-establishes certain assumptions lost in the early stages of the exposition of essential contestedness. Lively has questioned the suggestion that "ideological contestation is a necessary and central feature of ambiguous concepts."²⁴ Thus he has maintained that participation in a contest to establish the stipulative definition of a concept stimulates a forlorn quest for resolution which necessarily involves the renunciation of the crucial aspect of ambiguity - indeterminacy. Clearly, Lively's re-appraisal highlights several issues central to conceptual analysis. In particular, he has indicated the problems of intellectual disposition facing users of concepts as they attempt an operational definition. We must now turn to certain features of the foregoing discussion of conceptual analysis which are especially relevant to our consideration of utopianism and millenarianism.

The notion of 'the exemplar' appears intriguing not least because, with respect to utopianism, More seems to have provided an example in Utopia. In his original discussion Gallie referred to

"the internally complex, and variously describable, and peculiarly "open" character of the exemplar's achievement."²⁵

He also stipulated that the attempt to follow the exemplar should require exertion to revive and sustain its method. Predictably,

23. ibid., p.8.

24. ibid., p.12.

25. W.B.Gallie, op.cit., p.178.

26. ibid., pp.176-180.

this condition has generated an adverse response, particularly from Gellner, who fears that debate might be stifled by tying a concept to one historical instance,²⁷ and Kekes, who is concerned that because the exemplar is necessarily an ideal,²⁸ all attempts to imitate its achievement will be inadequate.

The difficulties with the exemplar may go even deeper. It cannot be assumed that exemplars are readily discernible. Indeed, conceptual debate may revolve around rival claims about the identity of 'the exemplar'. This problem relates to the assumption that beliefs and actions in the real world are informed by concepts.²⁹ If concepts are perceived as ambiguous, then the identification of instances of them can hardly be expected to be easy. Although such drawbacks may be dispelled, in part, by the assumption of a partisan response to a concept which is perceived as essentially contested, this in turn, is unlikely to induce consensus regarding an exemplar. It would appear, then, that a more profitable means of establishing some basic agreement is to concentrate on the component criteria of particular concepts.

It is not insignificant that, on behalf of the notion of the exemplar, Gallie has claimed that "different features in it should be differently weighted by different appraisers."³⁰ Yet this presumes consent over the identity of the exemplar. A reversal of this procedure would pose problems, the most obvious of which would arise as various contestant hierarchical orderings of features might produce counter-claims of instances

27. E. Gellner, op.cit., p.96.

28. J. Kekes, op.cit., pp.82-83.

29. See, A. MacIntyre, op.cit., p.3, and, W.E. Connolly, op.cit., pp.35-41.

30. W.B. Gallie, op.cit., p.176.

of 'the exemplar'. Nevertheless, Gallie has identified an important feature of the type of concept with which we are concerned. Connolly has agreed with Gallie's account³¹ and has gone on to argue that, because

- "we cannot specify an invariant set of necessary and sufficient conditions for the proper application of the concept"

- we must conceive of such a notion as "a cluster³² concept to which a broad range of criteria apply." He has emphasized that each criterion is likely to be complex. Kekes³³ (elements³³), and Lively (truth criteria³⁴), agree upon the composite nature of concepts. This is important with respect to the question of conceptual operationalism, a process involving the hierarchical ordering of criteria. Yet, as Lively has emphasized,³⁵ the problem of agreement as to what are to constitute relevant criteria is crucial. Again, questions relating to contest and consensus in conceptual analysis loom large.

It should now be evident why Gallie introduced the notion of the exemplar. The emphasis of his conditions (i) to (v) was upon³⁶ contest. Yet Gallie was clearly aware that meaningful and sustained debate is impossible without some basic agreement about the scope of such contest. Thus his apprehension of the

31. W.E. Connolly, op.cit., p.10.

32. ibid., p.14.

33. J. Kekes, op.cit., pp.80-81.

34. J. Lively, op.cit., p.7.

35. ibid.

36. W.B. Gallie, op.cit., pp.170-180. It is not readily apparent from Gallie's artificial example of 'the champions' that his conditions for essential contestedness generate a consensus; note the shift in the discussion from bowling to speed bowling. For the implications of this shortcoming see, J. Lively, op.cit., pp.22-24.

possibility that a conceptual debate might be discovered to be 'radically confused' unless it be held together by a degree of consensus he presumed the exemplar would provide. It must also be apparent by now, that the balance between contest and consensus in expositions of essential contestedness is, to say the least, uncertain. For instance, Gallie has claimed that contestants who necessarily disagree upon the appropriate definition of a concept must inevitably insist that theirs'

"is the correct or proper or primary, or the only important, function which the terms in question can plainly be said to fulfil."³⁷

Yet Gallie has also recognized that contestant parties must remain constantly vigilant to ensure that they are in fact contesting the meaning of the same concept.³⁸ Similarly, Connolly has argued that although conceptual contests are integral to politics, they must be constrained in accordance with linguistic convention.³⁹ Again, this is an attempt to ensure that consensus will be sustained by the requirement that the rationality of contestant arguments is admitted by all participants. Recalling Lively's critique, the strength of Kekes's definition of essential contestedness is quite evident :-

"everybody wants to appropriate the contested concept for his own use, even though he realizes that other participants have the same ambition. Furthermore, one's own use is claimed to be the proper use and other uses are regarded as wrong."⁴⁰

Yet Kekes too mitigates such belligerency by the provision that participants should be conscious of the nature of

37. W.B.Gallie, op.cit., p.168.

38. ibid., p.176.

39. W.E.Connolly, op.cit., pp.30-33.

40. J.Kekes, op.cit., p.72.

their "genuine disagreement". And finally to Gray, who follows the now well-trodden path with two observations :-

"essentially contested concepts occur characteristically in social contexts which are recognizably those of an ideological dispute."⁴²

"Reference to definitional "contests" have a point only if there is something which is not treated as "contestable"."⁴³

The problems

of intellectual disposition facing would-be users of concepts within normative discourse are obviously substantial, but are not insurmountable. The solution to the difficulties raised by the balance between contest and consensus is to be found in the manner in which concepts are operationalised.

From our preceding discussion it is clear that resort to the doctrine of operationalism could result in deluded ambitions about the prospects for resolution and determinacy. It is therefore crucially important to be aware of the limits of operationalism - a method involving the selection and ordering of unit criteria to produce a definition for use in the analysis of an instance of the concept in question. Connolly has rather overstated the case for operationalism, reviewing the possibility that

"each concept in political enquiry must be associated with a precise and definite testing operation that specifies the conditions of its application, and seeks to adjudicate between competing definitions by asserting which proposal most adequately meets the operational requirement."⁴⁴

This suggestion

41. ibid., p.76.

42. J.N.Gray,op.cit., p.333.

43. ibid., p.342.

44. W.E.Connolly,op.cit., p.15.

immediately confronts the problem of what is to constitute the operational test. Had Gallie's condition (vii), the 'exemplar's achievement', stood up to analysis, this notion would have proved a strong candidate upon which to base an operational test. However, if the indeterminacy of a concept is accepted, its absolute operational validity will also be considered indeterminate. The hope for resolution will be thwarted. Connolly may well have been tacitly aware of such pitfalls in dispelling the mistaken assumption that to display one definition as particularly operational should establish it as the preferred definition.⁴⁵ Similarly, MacIntyre seems to have been aware that operationalism as a means to resolution is not an available option in normative discourse.⁴⁶ However, Kekes clearly disagrees, but in pressing the case for determinacy, includes a significant qualification :-

"it is possible to reach a rational decision about the merits of conflicting claims in each particular situation."⁴⁷

Here Kekes edges towards an important limitation upon the applicability of operationalism to normative concepts.

Such a limitation is also apparent in Lively's assessment of the prospects of operationalising concepts perceived as ambiguous. This exercise, he believes, will inevitably involve a narrowing of the concept in order to facilitate the stipulation of a particular meaning.⁴⁸ Further, Lively rightly contends that,

"When an investigator uses a stipulative definition, he is merely signalling his intention of using one particular

45. ibid., p.16.

46. A. MacIntyre, op.cit., p.8.

47. J. Kekes, op.cit., p.73, (my emphasis).

48. J. Lively, op.cit., p.10.

meaning exclusively. He is not, or certainly need not be, asserting that he has discovered the 'real' meaning of the concept."⁴⁹

This tends to legitimize certain procedures such as B. Goodwin's stipulation of one definition of utopianism, composed of a hierarchical ordering of criteria,⁵⁰ in order to analyse the thought of the utopian socialists Fourier, Godwin, Owen, and Saint-Simon. Goodwin's operational definition is different from that which we shall employ in our consideration of More and Winstanley. Such a difference is perfectly acceptable, and indeed necessary, providing that participant users of a concept resist the temptation to proceed from operational success in the particular, to claim discovery of the general meaning of the term. In our own case, it would be inadmissible to claim, firstly, that in evaluating Utopia we are analysing the exemplar, or secondly, that our interpretation of the work constitutes the determinate definition of utopianism. Nevertheless, it remains true that the debate about the interpretation of Utopia occasionally parallels the quite independent dispute over the nature of utopianism.

The question of the exemplar is one of the most interesting aspects of the conceptual analysis of utopianism. Although it is possible to regard utopianism as a tradition tracable to classical Greece, many commentators have understandably hailed Thomas More's Utopia as a genre-creating work. Amongst numerous instances of this argument, P. Sawada provided the most urgent. He insisted that

"no definition,....of utopia can be satisfactory, if it

49. ibid., p.11.

50. B. Goodwin, Social Science in Utopia, (Hassocks Sussex, 1978), pp.2-8.

does not accommodate More's." ⁵¹

As a corollary to this position, it would be tempting to presume that the evaluation of More's Utopia offers the means of establishing a determinate definition of the concept of utopianism. However, this is again likely to produce contention. Instead, it would appear to be beholden upon individual interpreters to maintain consistency between their respective analyses of Utopia, and operational definitions used in conjunction with those analyses.

From the preceding discussion it is clear that the requisite mental disposition of participants in normative discourse is a question of considerable importance. We have seen that Gallie and his disciples have emphasized that participants must necessarily maintain a contestant frame of mind. Thus Gallie has spoken of

"recognizing that one has, and presumably will continue to have, opponents, and recognizing that this is an essential feature of the activity one is pursuing."⁵²

Yet from Lively's point of view, to be a 'contestant' is to deny the indeterminacy of the concept. ⁵³ The central problem would appear to be whether it is ever possible to be a subjective participant in normative discourse while retaining an objective appreciation of the full ambit of the concept in question. Taken to extremes, to claim such eclecticism would be to presume the credulity of one's fellow participants. However, by continuing to recognize the limits of operationalism, a diluted form of such intellectual

51. P. Sawada, 'Towards the Definition of Utopia', Moreana, No. 31-32 (1971), pp. 135-146, at p. 137, see also, p. 135.

52. W. B. Gallie, op. cit., p. 192, see also, p. 193.

53. See, J. Lively, op. cit., p. 26.

dexterity would not be impossible. Put crudely, from a subjective viewpoint we would be unlikely to accept that any definition of utopianism other than our own could be operationalised in the cases of More and Winstanley unless powerful contradictory arguments, which we cannot presently envisage, were to be presented to us. Yet this must mark the limit of our claims. As objective observers of the concept of utopianism, we must recognize that various other operational definitions are more aptly suited to the analysis of various other utopian writers.

Much of the debate concerning the nature of utopianism has been sustained by the very indeterminacy of the concept. Various interpreters have based their particular notions of the concept upon a peculiar arrangement, or emphasis upon, the criteria of utopianism. Indeed, such a method will enable us to advance our own operational definition. This process has encouraged the contestant use of definitions in an 'ideological' fashion. We do not seek to emulate this attitude. As a consequence of the ambiguity of utopianism, millenarianism (imprecisely defined) has often been incorporated as a criterion of utopianism.⁵⁴ Hence, during the remainder of this chapter, we shall extricate the one concept from the other by means of an analysis inspired by the formula for operationalism outlined in this section.

54. See, e.g., M.J. Lasky, Utopia and Revolution, (Chicago 1976), p.353, and below, section iv.

ii Utopianism: the Concept Analysed and an Operational Definition

The indeterminacy of the concept of utopianism is implicit in Robert Nozick's statement that,

"It would be disconcerting if there were only one argument or one connected set of reasons for the adequacy of a particular conception of utopia. Utopia is the focus of so many different strands of aspiration that there must be many theoretical paths leading to it."⁵⁵

Certain other critics of utopias and utopianism have reacted similarly to their subject matter. In his reflections on the Daedalus conference on utopianism, F.E. Manuel ruefully confessed that the only point of agreement to emerge was,

"an early consensus that we had better not embark upon any attempt to achieve a common definition of the term utopia."⁵⁶

However, in a paper presented to the same conference, Bertrand de Jouvenal at once agreed and dissented by persevering with the claim that the most urgent problem confronting the analysis of the concept was the need for

"a substantive meaning, such that the extension of the term is the same for all participants."⁵⁷

As we shall see, many other analysts of utopianism, despite its almost inexhaustible range of unit criteria, have succumbed to the fallacies of resolution and determinacy.

55. R. Nozick, Anarchy, State, and Utopia, (Oxford 1974), p. 309.

56. F.E. Manuel, (ed.), Utopias and Utopian Thought, (London 1965, 1973 edition), p. xiv. More recently, Manuel has gone even further, indicating a reluctance to advance a definition even on his own behalf, see, (with F.P. Manuel), Utopian Thought in the Western World, (Oxford 1979), p. 5.

57. B. de Jouvenal, 'Utopia for practical Purposes', Daedalus, No. 94 (1965), pp. 437-453, at p. 437.

In this section it is intended to accomplish three tasks. Firstly, we shall examine several contributions to the analysis of utopianism. It will be argued that previous consideration of the concept has been dominated by two approaches. The first of these, the 'historical perspective', involves the claim that utopianism is a phenomenon which has sustained various systems of thought at various periods in the history of ideas. Thus, from the perspective of an assumed initiation into the resolution of ideas, the utility of the concept has been assessed in the light of the ideals which it purportedly recommended, rather than according to its inherent attributes. The second approach, the attempt to produce a 'grand theory', has, by implication, assumed that a determinate definition of the concept is realizable. The advocates of this method have generally aimed to assimilate as many unit criteria as possible into their definitions, inevitably with unsatisfactory consequences. Our second task will be to identify several of the most contentious issues to arise within the debate on utopianism. This will lead on to our third and ultimate objective, the production, in accordance with the conceptual methodology outlined in section i, of an operational definition of utopianism for use in our consideration of the social theories of More and Winstanley.

(a) Analysis

- The Historical Perspective: Chronological Versions of Utopia -

That More and Winstanley discovered in one particular form of utopianism a useful medium for the exposition of social ideas, might be regarded by twentieth-century opinion as at best quaint, or at worst futile and inadmissible. The influence of Huxley, Orwell, and even Swift, has obviously contributed to such 'anti-utopianism'. This disparaging appreciation of the concept in

general has also been encouraged by the reaction of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels to the utopian socialism of Fourier, Owen, and Saint-Simon in particular. Despite their initial interest in a variety of American utopian communities, which were cited specifically by Engels as proof of the practicability of communism, Marx and Engels abandoned the empirical study of socialism.⁵⁸ This prompted their derogatory view of utopian schemes. This derisory attitude was a consequence of their belief that, as opposed to scientific socialism, utopian socialism had failed to perceive and accommodate the workings of the forces of history. However, although utopianism has been attacked from a variety of directions, it is important to distinguish the anxiety of writers such as Huxley and Orwell to comment upon 'utopian' means and ends within a modern industrial society, from the doubt cast by Marx and Engels upon the very utility of the concept as a method of social enquiry and prescription.

By 1847 Marx and Engels had assumed an uncompromising attitude to utopian socialism. For instance, Marx claimed that the desire to retain former processes of distribution alongside contemporary means of production was "reactionary and Utopian."⁵⁹ So Marx maintained that the determined opposition of German socialism to all utopianism was based upon the capacity of the former to distinguish historical inevitability.⁶⁰ Marx's and Engels's most vehement and renowned critique of utopian socialism is, of course, contained in the Manifesto of the

58. See L.S. Feuer, 'The Influence of American Communist Colonies on Engels and Marx', The Western Political Quarterly, Vol. XLIX (1966), pp. 456-474.

59. K. Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy, (1847), Collected Works, Vol. 6 (1845-1848), p. 138, see also, p. 210.

60. K. Marx, The Debat Social of February 6 on the Democratic Association, (1848), Collected Works, Vol. 6, p. 538.

Communist Party. In this work they claimed that Fourier, Owen, and Saint-Simon had all written at a time when the class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie remained undeveloped. Thus Marx and Engels asserted that because the material conditions for the emancipation of the proletariat were not evident, the utopian socialists were forced to compensate for this deficiency with "a fanatical and superstitious⁶¹ belief in the miraculous effects of their social science." In general, contemporary utopian writers were accused of reactionism in the face of the political and revolutionary activism of a proletariat which was organizing itself to achieve the reconstruction of society.⁶² So Marx and Engels deemed it 'utopian' to propose social harmony and the extinction of class antagonism at the very time of the development of such forces as the instruments of social change. This led to the conclusion that

"as the modern class struggle develops and takes a definite shape, this fantastic standing apart from the contest, these fantastic attacks on it, lose all political value and all theoretical justification."⁶³

Clearly, Marx and Engels influenced the development of a pejorative view of utopianism, which emphasized the divorce of utopian thought from reality.

The obvious objection to the insistence that utopianism contradicts 'historical inevitability' is that it is incumbent upon the claimant to provide a valid alternative account. Whether Marx and Engels successfully accomplished this enterprise

61. K. Marx and F. Engels, Manifesto of the Communist Party, (1848), Collected Works, Vol. 6, p. 517. For an expanded afterthought see, F. Engels, Socialism: Utopian and Scientific, (London 1875, 1892 edition).

62. K. Marx and F. Engels, Manifesto of the Communist Party, p. 517.

63. ibid., p. 516.

has understandably occasioned considerable debate. However, the issue is further complicated by the failure of Marx and Engels to distinguish the categories of means and ends within utopianism, a fault which, although not uncommon, is especially pronounced in their case. Marx and Engels argued that the reconstruction of society was the end desired by the utopian socialists, and that those thinkers mistakenly resorted to 'social science' as the means of its achievement. Similarly, Marx and Engels supposed that the emancipation of the proletariat must also have been an ideal of the utopian socialists. However, the argument from historical inevitability regards the emancipation of the proletariat as the alternative (and actual) means of achieving the reorganization of society.⁶⁴ By assigning both the emancipation of the proletariat and social reconstruction to the category of desired ends (from the supposed utopian socialist point of view), and by asserting that, contrary to this view, the emancipation of the proletariat was the only possible means of achieving the ideal of social reconstruction, Marx and Engels attempted to emphasize the futility of institutional planning as a method of securing desired ends.

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Acceptance of the Marxist approach would seriously detract from the utility of utopianism. The contention that the development of a new mode of production and the emancipation of the proletariat would inevitably result in social reorganization, challenges the conceptual validity of utopianism by questioning its capacity for historical prediction, a facility which,

64. For all this see, ibid., pp.515-516.

65. See, e.g., A.L. Morton, 'Utopias Yesterday and Today', Science and Society, No.17 (1953), pp.258-263.

presumably, would have enabled the concept to predict its own demise. However, the persistence of doubt concerning the Marxist interpretation of history clearly justifies the continued consideration of utopianism from a conceptual rather than from an historical perspective. Although this does not resolve the question of what the concept of utopianism involves, it nevertheless indicates that if we are to attribute the label 'utopian' to a thinker, we do so because we believe there to be criteria of the concept which we regard as applicable to the thought of that theorist, and not because of his misunderstanding of history. So it should be possible to analyse pre-Marxian utopian aspirations, such as those of More and Winstanley, not as the "first instinctive yearnings"⁶⁶ of an undeveloped proletariat, but instead in terms of an admittedly ambiguous concept, which is divested of any chronological implications except for the inclusion of Gallie's condition⁶⁷ (iv).

An alternative 'historical' apprehension of utopianism has been influenced by the work of Karl Mannheim. In essence, Mannheim argued that utopianism constitutes an intellectual orientation towards social change.⁶⁸ Thus, according to Mannheim, a

"state of mind is utopian when it is incongruous with the state of reality within which it occurs."⁶⁹

By confronting what Mannheim termed the existing 'ideology', such a utopian outlook purports to undermine the existing social order. Further, by developing the comparison of 'utopian' and 'ideological' thought,

66. K. Marx and F. Engels, op.cit.

67. See, W. B. Gallie, op.cit., p.172, and above, n.3.

68. K. Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia, (London 1936, 1960 edition), pp.173-237 - 'The Utopian Mentality'.

69. ibid., p.173.

Mannheim concluded that,

"The representatives of a given order will label as utopian all comparisons of existence which from their own point of view can in principle never be realized. According to this usage, the contemporary connotation of the term 'utopian' is predominantly that of an idea which is in principle unrealizable."⁷⁰

Intuitively, this may appear to be a reasonably cogent observation; yet it is in fact the result of Mannheim's adoption of an historical rather than a conceptual analysis of utopianism.

The fundamental difference between the Marxist response to utopianism and the approach developed by Mannheim and his followers, is that while the former celebrated the expiry of utopianism and the dawning of scientific socialism, the latter regarded utopianism as a substantially dynamic phenomenon. According to Mannheim, utopianism was not by definition unrealistic, but was likely to be deemed as such by the proponents of the dominant ideology. So Mannheim contended that utopias constitute all "situationally transcendent ideas,"⁷¹ which might nevertheless transform the existing social order. Clearly, the possible corollary, that Marxism may be included in this category, could be regarded by its advocates as a considerable affront. Mannheim's definition of utopianism seems more valid than Marx's and Engels's - despite its emphasis upon the characteristic pervasiveness of utopian idealism. However, to cite anabaptism, liberalism, conservatism, and socialism-communism as successive instances of utopian theory, each of which was eventually realized,⁷² is surely to overstate the case, by

70. ibid., pp.176-177.

71. ibid., p.185.

72. ibid., pp.190-222, - 'Changes in the Configuration of the

correlating utopia with counter-ideology. Rather it seems that Utopian thought might well embody significant elements of contemporary 'ideology'.

By treating reactions against contemporary opinion as 'utopian', several writers have advanced similar notions of the concept to Mannheim's. For instance, in an exaggerated version, W.E. Moore has suggested that if men are to be at all forward-looking, they must be utopian. Further, by placing a premium on fulfilment, Moore has attempted to distinguish serious from unrealistic utopianism.⁷³ P. Zagorin has taken a similar line in arguing that,

"Utopianism is an essential ingredient in every standpoint that succeeds in transcending the reigning ideologies which a determinate social order begets."⁷⁴

J.K. Fuz has also readily acknowledged his indebtedness to Mannheim.⁷⁵ Using the assumption that utopias are distinguished by the fact that their goals transcend reality, Fuz has analysed certain forms of utopia. For instance, in considering 'Utopias of Men', which envisage the complete transformation of human nature, Fuz has maintained that such designs are hardly capable of realization. Indeed, by taking Mannheim's assumptions to extremes, Fuz has insisted that proposals not effected within fifty to two-hundred years must be so impossible as to be 'utopian'.⁷⁶ Yet such disclaimers are favoured by a concentration upon schemes which envisage the moral

Utopian Mentality: Its Stages in Modern Times'.

73. W.E. Moore, 'The Utility of Utopias', American Sociological Review, No. 31 (1968), pp. 765-772, at p. 770.

74. P. Zagorin, A History of Political Thought in the English Revolution, (London 1954), p. 56.

75. J.K. Fuz, Welfare Economics in English Utopias from Francis Bacon to Adam Smith, (The Hague 1952), p. 2.

76. ibid., p. 3.

regeneration of man. Similarly, Fuz has emphasized the least precise facet of utopianism, its idealism, rather than considering its capacity for detailed proposals for the attainment of specific ends. Not surprisingly, Fuz has been more sympathetic to what he has termed 'Utopias of Measures' - or policies of social reform - and has displayed a marked preference for what he has called 'welfare economics'. These aim

"to increase physical output, to eliminate unemployment, make for social security, promote education and utilize scientific achievements for the benefit of the community."⁷⁷

Significantly, by concentrating upon institutional reform rather than human regeneration, Fuz has identified an important criterion of utopianism without using it to elucidate the concept.

From these few instances of approaches similar to Mannheim's, it should be apparent that once utopianism is conceived as a concept capable of accommodating any position which contradicts contemporary opinion, the scope of the concept, particularly in terms of possible utopian ends, becomes unwieldy. As J.C. Davis has correctly noted, such a conception of utopianism could well be replaced by the term 'radicalism'.⁷⁸ Thus it seems incorrect to suppose that 'conservatism' and the adherence to contemporary patterns of thought, are necessarily incompatible with utopianism.

Judith Shklar has devised a variant of the historical notion of utopianism which amply illustrates the problems involved in regarding utopianism as a phenomenon assignable to specific periods, instead of regarding the concept as a medium for the

77. ibid., p.9.

78. J.C. Davis, 'Utopias and History', Historical Studies, Vol. XI (1968), pp.165-176, at p.168.

expression of ideas which has been used throughout history. Following Mannheim's distinctions, Shklar has suggested that, after the French Revolution, ideology replaced utopia.⁷⁹ According to Shklar, because the Enlightenment witnessed the highpoint of social optimism, it was concurrently the zenith of utopianism and political theorizing; all of the optimism was subsequently dissipated by Romanticism and Catholic fatalism.⁸⁰ The most significant aspect of Shklar's case is her association of utopianism with optimism concerning the improvement of the moral and social condition of man.⁸¹ Indeed, concentration upon optimism has led Shklar to conclude that utopianism must ultimately aspire to the achievement of human perfectibility. As a consequence of her equation of utopianism with optimism, Shklar has suggested

"That the faith in progress is repellent to most Christian thought is obvious, for it rests on the denial of original sin."⁸²

Such an assertion obviously restricts the scope of utopian thought. With respect to the context of Enlightenment ideas, Shklar has also argued that

"utopia was a way of rejecting the notion of "original sin" which regarded human virtue and reason as feeble and totally impaired faculties."⁸³

By what appears to be a deduction of determinacy from an operational definition, Shklar has gone on to argue that this form of utopianism is

79. J. Shklar, 'The Political Theory of Utopia: From Melancholy to Nostalgia', Daedalus, No. 94 (1965), pp. 367-381, at pp. 367-369.

80. J. Shklar, After Utopia, (Princeton 1957), passim.

81. ibid., p. 4.

82. ibid., p. 19.

83. J. Shklar, 'The Political Theory of Utopia', op. cit., p. 370.

attributable to Thomas More. Yet, as we shall see, Utopia can be understood only in terms of More's belief in original sin and his apprehension of the consequences of original sin for the human condition. Although Shklar has correctly argued that

"Utopia is always a picture and a measure of the moral heights man could attain using only his natural powers."⁸⁴

- it is

wrong to assume that all utopian theorists were optimistic as to the potential of such powers. Social harmony rendered possible by a total moral renewal of mankind is not a necessary criterion of utopianism. Particularly during the early-modern period, utopias were designed by certain Christian thinkers who often retained a pessimistic assessment of human perfectibility and progress in general. As Davis has suggested, imaginary states in which social institutions have been reformed as a consequence of the moral improvement of man, might appropriately be termed

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'Perfect Moral Commonwealths'." Thus it seems that utopianism is capable of considering institutional reforms without necessarily making prior assumptions concerning the moral renewal of mankind.

- Grand Theory -

The difficulties encountered by Shklar's definition of utopianism are usually evident, often in an exaggerated form, in analyses which might be designated as 'grand theory' approaches. These works are characterized by the conviction that a definition of the concept must entail a comprehensive catalogue of its unit criteria. This in turn has often involved an exhaustive search for writings which might in some sense be

84. ibid.

85. J.C.Davis, op.cit., p.17.

regarded as 'utopian'. However the indeterminacy of the concept has predictably promoted considerable disagreement over the identification of texts which are to be regarded as examples of utopianism. In order to illustrate this conception of utopianism a few of the many surveys of this type will be briefly considered.

One of the earliest attempts to produce a 'grand theory' account of utopianism was P. Bloomfield's Imaginary Worlds. Starting from the premise that,

"Utopia has come to mean ideal, and in this sense it is justifiable to use it."⁸⁶

- Bloomfield proceeded to attempt to conceive of the ideal. After an inevitably speculative foray among various images of perfection, Bloomfield arrived at his one conclusion, the admission that perfectibility was difficult to define. It is quite evident that the conceptual analysis of utopianism is also likely to be frustrated by concentrating exclusively upon utopian ends.

More recently, G. Kateb has produced an ambitious appraisal of utopianism based upon a procedure which again displays the difficulties encountered as a result of the failure to recognize the ambiguous nature of the concept. Weighed down as it is by an attempt to relate the analysis of utopianism to many of the major issues of moral philosophy, Kateb's notion of utopianism is necessarily cumbersome. This is primarily a consequence of his concentration upon the variety of possible ends involved in utopianism, rather than upon the means by which they might be realized. Kateb has expended substantial effort in attempting to

86. P. Bloomfield, Imaginary Worlds, (London 1932, 1974 edition), p.17.

87
 enumerate the constituents of perfection. Thus he has claimed that utopia postulates happiness, peace and plenty, stability, and 'harmony'. The idea of harmony has prompted Kateb to suppose that utopianism aspires to approximate the original condition, and to,

"desire to renew creation, restore the faded glory, cancel the Adamic curse, make the earth heaven; and to do this by political means."⁸⁸

Elsewhere, Kateb has argued that "the absence⁸⁹ of radical evil is the correct definition of utopia," and he has gone on to conclude that this can only be achieved by 'self-realization', because utopianism is the culmination of the idea of individuality.⁹⁰ Clearly, it is in the very nature of the concept that the 'grand theory' evaluation of utopianism can so easily lead the investigator into an odyssey through the humanities and the social sciences. Kateb's emphasis upon the relationship of utopianism to perfection has delivered him into similar difficulties to those encountered by Shklar. Thus he too has argued that the doctrine of original sin contradicts utopian optimism and idealism.⁹¹ In Kateb's opinion, the retention of the notion of original sin within a utopia, would produce a fantastic and unattainable scheme. In due course, however, we shall discuss Thomas More's Utopia in terms which will question such an assumption.

G. Negley and J. Max Patrick have presented a somewhat more

87. G. Kateb, Utopia and its Enemies, (London 1963), pp. 9, 129, 184-186, 207.

88. ibid., p. 14, see also, p. 10.

89. G. Kateb, 'Utopia and the Good Life', Daedalus, No. 94 (1965), pp. 454-473, at p. 455.

90. ibid., pp. 455-456.

91. G. Kateb, Utopia and its Enemies, p. 198.

disciplined attempt to analyse the long tradition of utopian thought, an undertaking which was undoubtedly aided by their awareness of the magnitude of the task, and of the ambiguity of the concept.⁹² They have attempted to rectify the vernacular debasement of the term 'utopian' by showing that, rather than being the product of limitless imagination, utopias must bear some substantial resemblance to the existing society of the utopist.⁹³ However, this pragmatic approach is imperilled by this contentious claim :-

"Utopia is not simply a planned society in the sense of contemplated changes in the existing social structure. Utopia is a society planned without restraint or handicap of existing institutions and individuals."⁹⁴

This last provision

seems to readmit the dubious question of the moral regeneration of man. Nevertheless, Negley and Max Patrick are amongst the few writers to attempt to suggest a precise set of characteristics applicable to any utopia. They regard utopia as, firstly, fictional; secondly, descriptive of a particular state or community; and thirdly, concerned with the political structure of that state or community.⁹⁵ It might seem that Negley and Max Patrick have not ventured very far, but their reticence is excused by the treacherous terrain facing all analysts of this ambiguous concept.

(b) Contested Criteria

It is evident that the debate within the conceptual analysis of utopianism has dwelt on several, often related, fundamental

92. G. Negley and J. Max Patrick, The Quest for Utopia, (Maryland 1971), p.2.

93. ibid., pp.2-4.

94. ibid., p.4.

95. See, ibid., pp.2-4, 251-260.

issues, three of which are particularly relevant to our interest in the concept. These are, firstly, the question of whether utopianism is purely 'literary', or whether the concept might embrace writings which are also designated as social or political theory. A second problem is whether utopianism is necessarily escapist, or whether it might accommodate the utopist's perception of mankind's immediate predicament. Thirdly, the relationship between the scope of utopian ideals and their various methods of achievement has also aroused considerable discussion.

The standing of utopianism vis-à-vis social theory has prompted a number of commentators to assert that because utopianism involves an attempt to escape the restraints of historical time and place, utopias are predominantly presented in the form of literary fiction. However, these writers have often been inconsistent in dealing with works such as Plato's The Republic and Harrington's Oceana.⁹⁶ Thus, the differentiation of social theory and literary utopia has often been quite arbitrary and at the discretion of the individual critic. It is perhaps, symptomatic of such bemusement that two of the most eminent authorities on More's writings, R.W. Chambers and E.L. Surtz,⁹⁷ have attempted to evaluate the literary and theoretical merits of Utopia, simultaneously. It seems that to regard utopianism as merely a literary form, especially in the fictional sense, is to limit its utility to escapism or at best to speculation. However, to acknowledge that utopianism and social theory might occasionally coalesce, is to admit a capacity for

96. See, e.g., ibid., p.3, and, H. Child, 'Some English Utopias', Transactions of the Royal Society of Literature, Vol. XI (1933), pp.31-60, at p.32.

97. See below, pp.139-142, 148-152.

the evaluation of the human condition and for resultant prescriptive recommendations.

The contention that utopia can assume the form of social theory relates to the second problem area, the extent and manner in which the concept admits of 'reality'. One implication of the view that utopianism is possibly prescriptive, is that a utopist might utilise the medium to recommend the reform of existing institutions. In turn, if such proposals are to receive serious consideration, their relation to assumptions about mankind's predicament must presumably be acknowledged. This places an obvious restraint upon the degree of abstraction or fantasy in which the utopist can indulge if he intends to advance a recognizably valid social statement. In this sense, the utopist's conception of human nature is particularly significant. For instance, the admission that men's moral faculties are impaired and will continue to be so, would preclude the production of a utopia in the form of a 'Perfect Moral Commonwealth'⁹⁸ - in which the reform of human nature rather than that of the institutional environment is regarded as the source of the amelioration of society.

One of the most intriguing and intransigent difficulties to confront analysts of utopianism concerns the third of our problem areas - ideals and methods of achieving them; or the question of utopian ends and means. In general, critics have mistakenly assumed that an overt idealism is a necessary characteristic of utopianism. It has been argued, particularly by Kateb,⁹⁹ that because utopianism is concerned with perfection, it follows that a comprehensive list of ideals must be

98. J.C.Davis, op.cit., p.171, and above, p.29.

99. Above, pp.30-31.

included in the definition of the concept. Yet, predictably, the inclusion of various ideals as independent criteria of utopianism has resulted in arguments and bitter recrimination. A more productive approach would appear to entail a concentration upon the methods by which various utopian writers have proposed to attain their respective ends. The statement of such ends must ultimately be left to the discretion of the utopist. This alternative procedure promises to keep analysis and the production of operational definitions within manageable proportions.

(c) An Operational Definition

As we have seen, the ambiguity of a concept does not preclude the possibility that one particular definition of it might be stipulated in order to put the concept into operation. Obviously, the plethora of unit criteria discernable within utopianism, and the range of their possible permutations and hierarchical orderings, suggests that the analysis of particular instances of the concept requires, and is facilitated by, the adherence to one definition of it, although the definition is likely to change with different instances. In our own case, this commits us to an exercise involving the selection of certain criteria from those included within the concept of utopianism (in the wider sense of its being an 'ambiguous' or 'cluster concept'), and their cohesive use in an operational definition.

It is possible to abstract four basic criteria from the concept of utopianism which may constitute an appropriate operational definition for use in our forthcoming discussion of the utopianism of More and Winstanley. Thus, utopianism is to be regarded as (firstly) a literary but non-fictional device which (secondly) defers to reality in the sense of the prevailing

circumstances of the human predicament, and which (thirdly) proposes to amend these conditions by institutional means, in order to (fourthly) achieve an ideal. Hence, this definition of utopianism might be regarded as an extension of that method within political theory which takes human nature (variously defined) as the basis and explanation of the transition from the state of nature to civil society. Utopianism in this sense constitutes a corollary to state of nature theories by analysing existing civil society and human nature, and then proposing a set of institutional reforms designed to create and sustain 'ideal' society. This society will be one step removed from the present and two steps beyond the state of nature or the original condition. From the vantage point of such an envisaged utopia, the writer is able to refer, often implicitly, to the 'previous' (effectively - the contemporary) civil society, and beyond it to the original condition.

By positing the first of these criteria, that utopianism is a literary device, it is not intended to imply that the concept is an inappropriate medium for the expression of social ideas. Instead, the emphasis is upon the institutional malleability made possible by utopianism, rather than its occasional inclination to fictional fantasy. Although utopias often depict a state or society by envisaging the 'perfection' of the new order, such idealism is susceptible to restraint by an appreciation of the limitations of human potential, which in turn is likely to be contextually orientated. So we shall regard utopianism as a vehicle or tool for the articulation of ideas concerning existing society, and for the proposal of often radical amendments to it.

Clearly, the suggestion that utopianism is a literary device

employed within the intellectual context of one society for the contemplation of an, as yet, imaginary society, might encourage a pejorative impression of the concept's utility. In order to confound such assumptions it is necessary to incorporate as the second criterion of our operational definition, the contention that serious utopianism in no way diminishes the pervasiveness of existing reality. Yet, as F. Bloch-Lainé has commented, such 'realistic utopianism' is often intuitively rejected as insufficiently 'utopian'.¹⁰⁰ However, such 'realism' makes it possible to differentiate our operational definition of utopianism from the indiscriminate use of the term 'utopian' as an adjective describing schemes which are apparently the product of imaginary fantasy. So, for instance, it is perfectly legitimate for utopian writers to confront problems relating to conceptions of human nature or to difficulties encountered in the regulation of an economy in which scarcity remains a factor. This would obviously encourage theorists who use the concept in the sense of our operational definition, to analyse contemporary society in detail,¹⁰¹ and to convey this concern with the particular into their prescriptive recommendations. We shall see that such detailed consideration, especially of social institutions, is often a method of distinguishing utopianism from millenarianism.

From this emphasis upon realism and detail, it is possible to proceed to the third and perhaps most consequential characteristic of our operational definition of utopianism - the concern with organizational and institutional reform. This

100. F. Bloch-Lainé; 'The Utility of Utopias for Reformers', Daedalus, No. 94 (1965), pp. 419-436, at p. 424.

101. Cf., M. J. Lasky, op. cit., p. 593, passim.

conception of utopianism emphasizes an interest in social arrangements rather than the anticipation of the moral regeneration of man, as the means of improving the human condition.¹⁰² In this light it is possible to question the view that utopianism necessarily facilitated the rejection of the notion of original sin.¹⁰³ By instead recognizing mankind's moral shortcomings, utopianism must have concentrated upon institutional reform.

According to our operational definition, utopianism is a literary device, respecting contemporary appreciations of reality, and is primarily concerned in the first instance with institutional, as opposed to moral, reformation. It is clear that a utopia so defined, despite predicting an imaginary society, need not be regarded as an end in itself. Utopianism is as much instrumental and prescriptive as it is descriptive. Hence the fourth criterion of our definition stipulates that utopianism aspires to the attainment of an ideal (or several ideals) of whatever form. Utopias are composed with ends in mind, but those ends are variables. It is therefore impractical and unnecessary to specify the precise nature of such ends within a definition of utopianism. It is, however, possible to assert that a utopia must propose the institutional means of realizing its particular ends.

In the two instances under consideration, Utopia and The Law of Freedom, we shall discover that, because the utopian element of both More's and Winstanley's thought was predominantly institutional, their utopianism was confined to the category of

102. Cf., J.C. Davis, op.cit., p.171.

103. ibid., p.170. Davis argues that utopianism can indeed accommodate the notion of original sin, a point which Shklar and Kateb would both dispute.

means towards the attainment of some ulterior end. The respective ends in mind related to an ideal of the conduct and manners of men to be induced by institutional reform. This, in More's case, was the individual whose prospects of salvation would be enhanced by societal arrangements designed to frustrate the human propensity to sin; while in Winstanley's case the end was the spiritual restoration of the individual on earth, again, by institutional means.

As we shall see, Winstanley initially expected institutional reform to occur as a consequence of the moral regeneration of mankind; only when he became dubious of this prospect did he reverse his claims, begin to consider institutional reform as a priority, and turn to utopianism. One fundamental difference between More and Winstanley is that More denied the possibility of the absolute moral regeneration of man. Winstanley, however, trusted his proposed utopian institutions to ultimately effect the spiritual restoration of human nature. This distinction does not detract from the utopian status of either thinker. Both presented comprehensive and realistic assessments of existing society. Both were pessimistic about the present and relatively optimistic about a deliberately chosen future posited by their respective utopias. The crucial difference between More and Winstanley lies in the degree of this optimism which, in Winstanley's case, extended far beyond More's limited aspirations.

iii The Eschatological Mentality of Early-Modern (1500-1700)

England, and a Prelude to Gerrard Winstanley's Position

At various levels of society, and with various degrees of sophistication, the intellectual climate of early-modern England was affected by a wide range of supernatural beliefs, one aspect of which was an increasing concern with ideas relating to the 'last days' of the world. It cannot be overemphasized that such appreciations of the climax of world history were, to contemporaries, an entirely orthodox or 'rational' facet of the consideration of mankind's predicament. In attempting to relate eschatology to utopianism, we are particularly concerned with the impression created by millenarianism, that society would be reformed by means other than by man's own exclusive endeavours.

The development and nature of English eschatology is an intricate subject which, as the province of the specialist, we cannot hope to do justice to. We can merely indicate with undeserving brevity, several themes with which such scholarship is concerned. ¹⁰⁴ The evolution of English apocalyptic and millenarian ideas was reinforced by the Protestant emphasis upon a literal approach to scripture. Thus biblical prophecy was accepted as an authoritative guide to world history, past and future. This interest in prophecy sustained strenuous attempts, often of a numerological nature, to identify or predict the precise timing of the apocalypse and/or of the millennial sequence. Such expectation was usually related to attempts to distinguish the identity and duration (past, present, or future)

104. See, e.g., B.W. Ball, A Great Expectation, (Leiden 1975); B.S. Capp, The Fifth Monarchy Men, (London 1972); P. Christianson, Reformers and Babylon, (Toronto 1978); K.R. Firth, The Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain, (Oxford 1979); C. Hill, Antichrist in Seventeenth-Century England, (London 1971); W. Lamont, Godly Rule, (London 1969), Richard Baxter and the Millennium, (London 1979).

of the human agent of the forces of evil, the presumed enemy of Protestantism - 'Antichrist'. It is perhaps typical of several of these ideas that, as Christopher Hill has contended,

"One advantage of the symbolism of Antichrist....was its vagueness, it could conceal attacks on more than one target."¹⁰⁵

A further significant feature of these systems of thought was the self-conception of the 'elect nation'. This notion united eschatological theories with nationalism, and the Calvinist belief that the predestined few would constitute an elect. Because England emerged as the only major Protestant state, it came to be assumed that she would be prominently involved in the divine scheme for the resolution of the cosmic conflict. Although most of these ideas began to attract attention in the period following the Reformation, they were intensified by the events and the intellectual atmosphere of the Civil War. Within the interplay of these complicated theories, the various attitudes to, the question of a catastrophic divine intervention in the affairs of men, with its repercussions for social arrangements, with which we are concerned, were formulated.

The analysis of the eschatological beliefs of early-modern England is susceptible to a confusion of terminology. In particular, the meaning of 'millenarian' is often unclear. However, these ambiguities might be resolved by adopting the notion of a continuum along which various eschatological beliefs can be considered. This continuum would relate particularly to the degree and intensity of eschatological expectation. Apocalyptic beliefs of a general and often vague nature were

105. C.Hill, op.cit., p.66.

popular during the period. So it is appropriate that such notions should constitute one extreme of our continuum. The other extreme will correspond to less popular and more exclusively specific millenarian ideas. From the point of view of our immediate purpose, the great advantage of conceiving of eschatological ideas in terms of a continuum is that it provides for a distinction between millenarianism in the stricter sense, and our operational definition of utopianism. This distinction facilitates the analysis of the degree to which Gerrard Winstanley was utopian or millenarian.

In order to elucidate the notion of an eschatological continuum it is profitable to consider various proposals for the differentiation of general apocalyptic notions from millenarianism, and for the categorization of forms of millenarianism. As B.W. Ball has argued, not all those who believed in the Second Coming of Christ were millenarians, and not all millenarians were as extreme as the radical group, the Fifth Monarchists.¹⁰⁶ So clearly, millenarianism, in its various degrees, was only one manifestation of a broadly defined eschatological concern. To expound this point, Ball has advanced two useful modes of classification. Firstly, he has distinguished the apocalyptic outlook -

"that type of prophetic utterance which is couched in cryptic symbolism, rather than in the wider sense of revelational."

- from millenarianism -

"the belief in the coming thousand-year reign of the church on earth prior to the last judgement."¹⁰⁷

106. B.W. Ball, *op.cit.*, p.3. For Ball's particularly disparaging view of the Fifth Monarchists, see, pp.185, 229-230.

107. *ibid.*, p.13.

Secondly, Ball has

suggested that distinctions are discernible within millenarianism. Thus 'premillenarianists' and 'postmillenarianists'¹⁰⁸ disagreed upon the timing of the Second Coming. Further, Ball has also shown that the premillenarianists were divided between the more popular and conservative notion of the spiritual reign of Christ through the agency of His Saints, and the more radical anticipation of His personal one-thousand year rule. From these divergent opinions, three possible permutations arose; literal advent - literal reign; literal advent - spiritual reign; and spiritual advent - spiritual reign. The last of the three is obviously the most conservative, and significantly, is the closest approximation to Winstanley's position.

P. Christianson has produced a similar but more precise distinction, arguing that,

" "apocalyptic" denotes the generic term and "millennial" that species which posits a future, collective, imminent transformation of life on earth through a supernatural agency. Only those who expected a literal thousand-year reign of the saints on earth....merit the term "millenarian"."¹⁰⁹

Such millenarianism is apparently inclusive of both literal and spiritual notions of Christ's intervention. The distinction between an essentially spiritual conception of the millennium and more universal apocalyptic beliefs was, obviously, rarely explicit. Not surprisingly, subsequent commentators have experienced substantial difficulty in attempting to deal with this hazy area along the eschatological

108. ibid., p.164, see also, K. Frith, op.cit., p.238.

109. P. Christianson, op.cit., p.7.

continuum. Largely because of the belief that Christ would act spiritually through human agents, rather than directly by materializing in person, these ideas were prone to a wide variety of interpretations.¹¹⁰

Such individuation was certainly practiced by Winstanley. During the short-lived phase in which he expounded an overt millenarianism, Winstanley believed that Christ (in the peculiar form in which Winstanley conceived of Him) would enter into the spirits of men, and effect their spiritual regeneration. Winstanley was confident that, as a consequence of this process, social institutions would ultimately be reformed. Thus, for Winstanley, millenarianism represented an explanation of the means by which the spiritual restoration of man would come about. Yet because his notion of the restoration was distinct from his millenarian convictions, Winstanley was eventually able to resort to utopian institutionalism as an alternative method for achieving the ideal of man's spiritual restoration.

Evidently, consensus was not a characteristic of the eschatological thought of early-modern England, nor is it an attribute of present-day analyses of the phenomenon. This is illustrated by the particularly illuminating debate between Bernard Capp and William Lamont.¹¹¹ As Capp has noted,

"The millenarian vision was by its nature flexible, appealing in different forms to different social groups."¹¹²

110. See, J. Sanders, An Iron Rod for the Naylers and Trades-men near Birmingham, (1655), and B. S. Capp, op. cit., p. 270. Sanders had no connection with the Fifth Monarchists, but looked forward to a 'fifth monarchy', in this case, to be heralded by Charles II and Cromwell.

111. See, W. Lamont, 'Puritanism as History and Historiography', P.&P., No. 44 (1969), pp. 133-146, Godly Rule, 'Richard Baxter: The Apocalypse and the Mad Major', P.&P., No. 55 (1972), pp. 68-90; B. S. Capp, 'Godly Rule and English Millenarianism', P.&P., No. 52 (1970), pp. 106-117, 'The Millennium and Eschatology in England', P.&P., No. 57 (1971), pp. 156-162, The Fifth Monarchy Men.

112. ibid., p. 45.

In terms of

our eschatological continuum, it is necessary to consider one further especially consequential method of classifying millenarian ideas. This form of categorization relates to the degree to which individuals were influenced by millenarian ideas; whether in fact millenarianism was the fundamental source of thought and action, or whether it was merely one of a number of influences.

Starting from the position that millenarian ideas enjoyed a wide adherence, and that "those activists who themselves set out to establish that messianic kingdom"¹¹³ constituted a minority,¹¹⁴ Lamont has forwarded the following subdivisions. Most millenarians held 'pre-millennial' beliefs, whereby Christ's Second Coming was expected to anticipate the millennium. This intervention could assume either a literal or a spiritual form. Further, literal approaches could be vaguely or precisely (the latter, the position of the political activists) formulated. 'Post millennial' beliefs, on the other hand, held that Christ would return only on the completion of the millennium.

Capp's distinctions are less complex but more useful. He has differentiated the 'apocalyptic' school, which was pessimistic and held no real hope of improved earthly circumstances before the end of the world, from the 'millenarian' school, which predicted the reign of the saints before the termination of all things, and hence possessed a degree of optimism.¹¹⁵ Capp has

113. W. Lamont, Godly Rule, p.7.

114. Although Lamont's classification anticipated Ball's terminology, his terms are substantially different in their meaning.

115. B.S. Capp, op.cit., p.27, see also, 'Godly Rule and English Millenarianism', op.cit., p.107, 'The Millenium and Eschatology in England', op.cit., p.157.

maintained that contemporaries had been conscious of this division, but that by the time of the Civil War, cataclysmic and gradualist conceptions of the last days had merged.¹¹⁶ This occurrence may well account for some of the confusion experienced by subsequent analysts.

With reference to our eschatological continuum, and its subdivision of an admittedly crude delineation of the degree of influence exerted by millenarian ideas, the first of these forms might be termed 'pervasive' or 'ubiquitous' millenarianism. From this perspective, Lamont has claimed that the purpose of his book Godly Rule was to trace

"the extent to which millenarian assumptions influenced many men who were too readily assumed to be outside that influence."¹¹⁷

It is not our intention to suggest that the scope of millenarian influence was more restricted than Lamont has contended, but 'influence' is an obviously vague word, conveying little in terms of detail concerning the degree of stimulation such ideas induced. This imprecision does, however, explain Lamont's condemnation of Capp and others for attempting to restrict the use of the term 'millenarian' to "clearly defined limits".¹¹⁸ This, according to Lamont, would obviously exclude such noted millenarians as Archbishop Laud.¹¹⁹ So Lamont has contended that millenarianism was reconcilable to ideological conservatism.¹²⁰ In essence Lamont has concerned himself with

116. B.S. Capp, 'Godly Rule and English Millenarianism', op.cit., p.116.

117. W. Lamont, "Richard Baxter: The Apocalypse and the Mad Major", op.cit., p.71.

118. ibid., p.89.

119. See, W. Lamont, Godly Rule, chapter 3, 'Godly Bishop'.

120. W. Lamont, 'Puritanism as History and Historiography', op.cit., p.137.

"the quieter sort of men", with "the subtler form of millenarianism", and with the implicit "tacit millenarians" who stood apart from the radical sects.¹²¹ As a corollary to this approach Lamont has admitted to having

"used terms such as Apocalypse, millenarianism and chiliasm in a non-purist sense."¹²²

Effectively, Lamont has concerned himself with "any conception of a perfect age to come."¹²³ It should be readily apparent that his ubiquitous conception of millenarianism is liable to confusion not only with more broadly-defined apocalyptic ideas, but also with certain conceptions of utopianism. Given his comprehensive view of millenarianism, it is not surprising to discover Lamont arguing that millenarians could be simultaneously utopian.¹²⁴

This pervasive view of millenarianism is amply illustrated by J.G.A. Pocock's ingenious consideration of Thomas Hobbes's eschatology, and his use of prophecy. It is significant that Pocock has described his purpose as follows :-

"to see what Hobbes was about when he made use of the rhetoric of eschatology and apocalyptic."¹²⁵

Although Pocock's enterprise naturally excited Lamont,¹²⁶ his choice of the term

121. W. Lamont, Godly Rule, p.19.

122. ibid., pp.8-9, follows, S.L. Thrupp, Millennial Dreams in Action, (The Hague 1962), especially p.12, in discussing 'the millennium' - "the term may be applied figuratively to any conception of a perfect age to come, or a perfect land to be made accessible."

123. W. Lamont, op.cit.

124. W. Lamont, 'Episcopacy and a "Godly Discipline" 1641-1646', Journal of Ecclesiastical History, Vol.X (1959), pp.74-90, and, 'Richard Baxter: The Apocalypse and the Mad Major', op.cit., p.70.

125. J.G.A. Pocock, 'Time, History and Eschatology in the Thought of Thomas Hobbes', in, Politics Language and Time, (London 1971), p.179.

126. W. Lamont, op.cit., p.72.

'rhetoric' corroborates Capp's contention that Hobbes was influenced by millenarian ideas only to the extent that, in recognizing their pervasiveness, he used them merely to emphasize his anticlericalism. Clearly, Hobbes was not convinced of the imminence of the messianic reign, and cannot therefore be regarded as a millenarian in the strictest sense.¹²⁷ The same can probably be said of the vast majority of individuals who were nevertheless influenced to some limited degree by millenarian ideas.¹²⁸

The alternative estimation of millenarianism evaluates the concept as the primary (if not absolutely exclusive) determinate of the thought and action of individuals. This was especially true of the Fifth Monarchy Men who derived their name from their belief that the rule of the saints was about to succeed the four monarchies discussed in Revelation; the usual presumption being that these were Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome. Thus the movement constituted a politico-religious sect which anticipated the imminent kingdom of Christ on earth. To attain this kingdom, the Fifth Monarchists were prepared to resort to action and even to violence.¹²⁹ According to Capp, the essential criterion of the Fifth Monarchist outlook was,

"the belief that an enduring period of supernatural perfection was dawning on earth."¹³⁰

- coupled with the

127. B.S.Capp, 'Godly Rule and English Millenarianism', op.cit., p.112, 'The Millennium and Eschatology in England', op.cit., p.161. This is confirmed by J.G.A.Pocock, op.cit., p.198.

128. See, E.P.Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class, (London 1963, 1968 edition), p.54.

129. For details, see, B.S.Capp, The Fifth Monarchy Men.

130. B.S.Capp, 'Godly Rule and English Millenarianism', op.cit., p.108.

conviction that this condition was imminent. In this view, a mere interest in eschatology is not an adequate definition of millenarianism.¹³¹ So, as Capp has argued,

"the Fifth Monarchists were unique, amongst the major groups, in that millenarianism formed the basic core of their doctrines and was indeed the *raison d'être* of the movement."¹³²

Thus the Fifth Monarchists are located at the extreme radical point of the millenarian wing of our eschatological continuum. Certain commentators, notably W.S. Hudson, and L. Mulligan, have argued that the same is true of Winstanley.¹³³ However, we shall see that any individual such as Winstanley, who resorted to utopianism as stipulated in our operational definition, could not have retained millenarianism of such vigour at the core of his social theory.

It should not be supposed that because we are positing a distinction between our operational definition of utopianism and, in particular, more extreme forms of millenarianism, that this in turn entails the further proposition that fervent millenarians were uninterested in social reform. However, the essential factor in such a differentiation is the mental attitude towards the source and instruments of reform. Those utopists adhering to our operational definition would maintain that men were capable of attaining a reformed institutional environment by their own unaided efforts. Conversely, millenarians such as the Fifth Monarchists, held that God was necessarily the ultimate source of reform, although He might act through human agents. Although the Fifth Monarchists possessed a coherent policy of

131. *ibid.*, p.107.

132. B.S. Capp, The Fifth Monarchy Men, p.14, see also, p.20.

133. See below, chapter, seven section i.

134
 social reform, this often merely constituted the expression
 of grievances alongside the confident anticipation of their
 redress on the arrival of the millennium. 135
 Clearly, this
 attitude is some way removed from utopianism as we have defined
 it. A good example of the outlook fostered by fervent
 millenarianism is provided by the contemporary pamphlet Certain
 Queries Presented by many Christian People. Especially relevant
 to the distinction between our operational definition of
 utopianism, and radical millenarianism, is the author's prediction
 that,

"This kingdom shall not be erected by human power and
 authority, but Christ by his Spirit shall call and gather
 a people....and when they are multiplied they shall rule
 the world....till Christ come in person."¹³⁶

According to our
 definition, the attitude of utopian thinkers to social reform
 would not admit of, or require, such divine intervention.

So far in this chapter, we have produced an operational
 definition of utopianism and have discussed various approaches
 of apocalyptic ideas distinguishable by their specification of
 millenarianism. With this in mind, it is possible to develop our
 discussion of the relationship between millenarianism and
 utopianism. This distinction is particularly important with
 respect to Winstanley. It is not proposed to argue that
 Winstanley's thought was isolated from millenarian ideas, but it

134. See, B.S. Capp. op.cit., chapters 6 and 7.

135. See, e.g., P. Chamberlen, The Declaration and Proclamation of
 the Army of God, (1659), p.4, Legislative Power in Problemes,
 (1659), :35; and the manifesto of the Venner Rising, A Door of
 Hope: or, A Call...unto the Standard of our Lord, King Jesus, (1661).

136. Anon., Certain Queries Presented by many Christian People,
 (1649), in, A.S.P. Woodhouse, Puritanism and Liberty, (London 1938,
 1974 edition), p.245.

is intended to be more explicit than previous commentators about the impact of millenarianism upon him. Thus we shall contend that, as Winstanley moved along the eschatological continuum towards more generally subscribed eschatological ideas, his millenarianism no longer fulfilled the criteria of the dominating form. So it became possible for him to resort to utopianism. It is essential to reiterate that for most of his intellectual career, Winstanley's millenarianism was some distance from that of the Fifth Monarchists.

Millenarianism, in the stricter sense, is not a concept that can be applied with equal justification to all phases of Winstanley's thought. The argument that he was primarily interested in the means of achieving the spiritual restoration of man, forwarded in our consideration of Winstanley, explains and accounts for the variety of approaches that Winstanley adopted. It will be argued that, with regard to millenarianism, Winstanley's attitude changed markedly between 1648 and 1652. Initially, his position was one of passive expectancy. He believed that a millennium would come about, heralded by the 'resurrection' of 'Christ' as witnessed by the spiritual transformation of the hearts of men. However, Winstanley did not persist with this belief for very long. Because he was primarily concerned with the problem of how mankind could be restored to a regenerate condition, similar to the pristine state that existed before the Fall, millenarianism was for Winstanley only one means towards the attainment of this ulterior design, which soon exhausted his patience. So Winstanley was prompted to take matters into his own hands and resort to digging. Yet, after the collapse of the Digger colony, Winstanley re-evaluated his

137. See below, pp. 346-351.

position, and finally turned towards utopianism, particularly in the sense of institutional reform, as the means of effecting the spiritual regeneration of man.

iv Conclusion:Utopianism and Millenarianism Distinguished

The respective ambiguity of utopianism and millenarianism as independent concepts has contributed to the confusion of the one with the other. It is not intended to suggest that such marginal synonymity is necessarily inadmissible, but merely to emphasize that within our forthcoming analysis of More's and particularly Winstanley's thought, clarity in stipulating the sense in which we intend to use these two concepts is essential. We could not, for instance, proceed along the lines adopted by Keith Thomas, who has said of Fifth Monarchist millenarianism that,

"The forthcoming utopia was an obvious projection of their own social ideals."¹³⁸

If we presume that Thomas did not intend to question the sincerity of Fifth Monarchist convictions, then it is clear that his use of the term 'utopia' does not correspond to our own operational definition. Similarly, a more blatant example can be drawn from W.E. Moore, who stated that,

"Utopias are almost invariably millenialist and consequently static, since where would one go from perfection?"¹³⁹

Obviously, Moore's assumptions concerning these concepts, especially the notion that utopianism postulates a specific end condition, disagree markedly with our intended use of them.

The most indiscriminate instance of the coalescent application of the concepts of utopianism and millenarianism is Charles Webster's The Great Instauration. Webster's stated purpose was to investigate the "ramifications of puritan science in the

138. K.V. Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic, (London 1971, 1973 edition), p.169.

139. W.E. Moore, op.cit., p.766.

context of the millennial idea of progress." ¹⁴⁰ So Webster contended that

"millenarianism played a considerable part in moulding the puritan conception of the Great Instauration."¹⁴¹

More precisely, Webster advanced the idea that,

"When reinforced by the philosophical doctrines of Bacon and Comenius, millennial eschatology, already exploited to lend weight to the cause of ecclesiastical and political reform, could emerge as an inducement to total reformation."¹⁴²

As his account proceeds, Webster displays a propensity to use 'utopia' as an adjective describing that condition posited by millenarian aspirations. In this sense, Webster emphasizes the idealism and ramifications of perfection often associated with utopia as an end condition. As he has said,

"The millennial context was important because it carried the guarantee of utopian rewards in the near future."¹⁴³

Effectively,

Webster has argued that most Puritans who displayed a concern with science, the advancement of learning, and social planning, were simultaneously millenarian and utopian. The millennium could therefore be a utopia. Clearly, Webster's conception of millenarianism closely parallels the non-dominant form discussed by Lamont. Although thoroughgoing millenarians were seldom preoccupied with the institutional particulars of the

140. C. Webster, The Great Instauration, (London 1975), p. 517, cf., K.R. Firth, op.cit., chapter VII, especially pp. 206, 240.

141. C. Webster, op.cit., p. 30.

142. ibid., p. 27.

143. ibid., p. 507, see also, pp. 1, 4, 12, 16, 30, 506, 509, *passim*.

regime to be heralded at some future date, the type of millenarianism with which Webster has been concerned apparently left "endless room for divergence over points of detail"¹⁴⁴ and so consequently stimulated various utopian plans for social reform.

The tendency to refer to the millennium as a utopian condition has often been accompanied by a reluctance to define either term precisely. However, this omission has not applied universally. For instance, Davis has categorically asserted that,

"The distinctions between the millenarian and the utopian are both clear and necessary. The millenarian scarcely concerns himself with the details of a society which is coming. Since it is inevitable such a concern would be irrelevant."¹⁴⁵

Similarly, Capp has defined millenarianism as the "belief in a perfect society to be established through divine intervention."¹⁴⁶

Thus Capp has distinguished this specific form of millenarianism from utopianism, which, he claims, envisages,

"a perfect society to be created by man's unaided efforts."¹⁴⁷

By implication Capp defers to the institutional aspect of utopianism, a criterion also emphasized by Davis :-

"Institutional perfection is to be won by men's efforts and decisions not by the action of a deus ex machina."¹⁴⁸

144. ibid., p.4, see also, pp.4-8.

145. J.C.Davis, op.cit., p.172.

146. B.S.Capp, 'Godly Rule and English Millenarianism', op.cit., p.107, see also, 'The Millennium and Eschatology in England', op.cit., p.156.

147. B.S.Capp, 'Godly Rule and English Millenarianism', op.cit., p.107.

148. J.C.Davis, op.cit., p.174.

Although these uses of the concepts obviously corroborate our operational definition of utopianism and its relationship to various mental predispositions along the eschatological continuum, it is necessary to stress the disparate analytical procedures by which such agreement has been achieved. This returns us to our initial consideration of conceptual analysis which concluded that although verification of a particular operational definition of an ambiguous concept does not constitute an adequate claim for the establishment of a determinate definition, participants in a conceptual debate have often been induced by such success to assume a contestant position. Therefore the limits of operationalism require that we stifle any claims to conceptual authority, and concentrate only upon matters pertaining to our immediate use of the concepts in question. Utopianism, as we have defined it, is certainly reconcilable, to a limited extent, to apocalyptic ideas and to millenarianism of the more ubiquitous spiritual form. In this sense millenarianism is necessarily merely one of a number of similarly substantial influences within the individual's system of thought. Once millenarianism becomes predominant, utopianism, as defined in section ii, is necessarily excluded from the system of thought. It is incorrect to assume that all millenarians were prone to utopianism of whatever form, but the ambiguity of the concepts in question means that only by advancing stipulative definitions of each, can the confusion of the two be avoided.

CHAPTER TWO : THE CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND TO THE THOUGHT OF MORE
AND WINSTANLEY

In the previous chapter we examined a number of issues central to the conceptual aspects of the analysis of More's and Winstanley's ideas. In this chapter we shall turn our attention to the contextual facet of this analysis. One advantage of considering the work of theorists who have not generally been regarded as occupying a position in the forefront of the history of social and political thought is the opportunity afforded to examine recent methodological discussion relating to the analysis of political ideas in general. In the previous chapter we discovered a number of difficulties affecting conceptual discourse. In this chapter we shall extend our enquiry to the contextual element of political thought, before developing the discussion into a consideration of the context which formed the background to the thought of More and Winstanley.

The chapter will be divided into four sections. The first will be devoted to an examination of the nature of the 'context' of thought. Several alternatives will be discussed. Particular attention will be paid to the recent application of conclusions drawn from the philosophy of language to the questions of 'meaning' and 'understanding' of texts in the history of ideas. Other possible notions of the 'context' will also be considered. These include the socio-economic context, the intellectual and epistemological context, and the theological context. It will be argued that written statements forming the body of the history of ideas are the product of, and are addressed with respect to, conceptions of the human condition as a predicament. It is therefore apparent that the 'context' cannot be narrowly defined.

In section two the discussion will be developed to consider relevant aspects of the context which must have affected social theorists in the early-modern period. The section will deal with four specific aspects of contemporary English life which were evidently of major concern to both More and Winstanley. These are the theory and practice of work and labour, poverty and vagrancy, the theory and practice of patriarchalism, and education. It will become apparent that all four issues evinced both a 'social' and an 'intellectual' aspect.

As social theorists both More and Winstanley were concerned with the possibility of amending human conduct by institutional means. In section three we shall examine a vital element of the contemporary worldview, which, as interpreted by each theorist, formed the basis of both More's and Winstanley's description of mankind's current predicament and the extent of his potential to amend it. This was the notion of the Fall of Man, an orthodoxy which, for much of the early-modern period, remained a cornerstone of the contemporary worldview. Nevertheless, particularly as the seventeenth century developed, the theory of the Fall and arguments associated with it, came under increasing attack. We shall examine this amendment of the theory and the ultimate decline of its validity. During the course of the thesis it will become apparent that their respective apprehensions of the Fall accounts for much of the disparity between the social theories of More and Winstanley.

The chapter will close with a short section intended to highlight a few details from the lives of More and Winstanley. Both biographies have been well documented elsewhere. However, we shall portray both More and Winstanley as men insecure in

their personal circumstances and aware that their own spiritual crises were symptomatic of the more general hazards of the human condition. Thus they were impelled to concentrate their thoughts upon the possible improvement of that condition.

i Methodological Problems of Textual Analysis: Enquiry into the Human Condition

Students of political thought must endeavour to understand the written statements of theorists, many of whom have been long dead. Methodological explanations of understanding in the history of political thought often incorporate some account of why the activity is undertaken. Our interest in a particular thinker may be at the same time stimulated and constrained by what we expect to be able to comprehend about his ideas. Our interest in political theory in general is often inspired by the belief, shared by J.B. Plamenatz, that "its purpose is to help us to decide what to do and how to go about doing it."¹ The undeniable complexity of political theory as an intellectual pursuit was evaluated by Isaiah Berlin who argued that although political thought is an activity detachable from any contextual basis, the study of its history requires the adoption of discarded states of mind and enquiry into "the models, paradigms, conceptual structures that govern various outlooks whether consciously or not."² It is perhaps this dual affinity to past and present which prompted A.O. Lovejoy to posit the concept of the 'unit idea' as appearing in successive ages and spheres of thought.³ Thus Lovejoy argued that enduring elements were rearranged within various philosophical systems. More recently, Quentin Skinner has highlighted the tendency of interpreters to discriminate between the study of the 'context' and that of

1. J.B. Plamenatz, 'The Use of Political Theory', in, Political Philosophy, ed. A. Quinton, (Oxford 1967), p.29.

2. I. Berlin, 'Does Political Theory Still Exist?', in, P.P.S. (Second Series), ed. P. Laslett and W.G. Runciman, (Oxford 1962), p.28, see also, pp.16, 29-31.

3. A.O. Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being, (Cambridge Massachusetts 1936, 1964 edition), p.15, and passim.

the 'autonomy of the text'. In effect, we appear to face the dilemma of whether to study the history of political thought purely from the point of view of the contextual stimulation of a theoretical response, or as a debate involving the successive reconsideration of various ongoing concepts, or as a combination of the two.

In the study of the history of political and social theory, any methodology must confront several pressing questions. We might briefly consider a number of possible arguments which could influence our approach to our subject matter. For instance, we might wonder whether the use of 'classical texts' ought to be limited to a search for merely formal or even apparent arguments to elucidate our own, in the sense that we would largely ignore the contextual background to previous conceptual analyses. Further, because in ordering our own activities we are particularly concerned with certain social, political, and moral concepts, we might feel justified in examining what we may regard as foregoing analyses of them. In doing so we would probably hold some opinion on whether to regard conceptual analysis undertaken in the past purely in terms of its 'rationality' or 'coherence'; or whether we should expect to discover something more.

From a different perspective we might analyse the process by which thought is stimulated, and possibly view it as a response to received ideas, or to the theorist's immediate circumstances. Perhaps we would hope to be aware of the possible pitfalls and distortions that may result from textual criticism conducted purely in terms of the conceptual milieu of our own intellectual context. The danger that our own preoccupations

4. Q. Skinner, 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas', H.&T., Vol. VI (1969), pp. 3-53, at p. 3.

could induce us to impute a hierarchy of imperatives (relating directly to our own concerns) to past thinkers, might, as a means of verifying our assumptions, cause us to look to the 'context' in which the thought was framed. The notion of the contextual basis of conceptual debate might also prompt the question of whether the context (variously defined) determines thought to the extent that a thinker's ideas and use of concepts could be understood by analysing that context, or whether theorists participate in a discussion, guided by historical tradition, to which they inject their own creative and imaginative contribution. Hence we might wish to distinguish, where appropriate, the meaning of the text in relation to its context, from its value as a coherent whole, dissociated from the context. The latter would appear to be the more superficial option.

It seems likely that the student of the history of ideas must be capable of some process of emulative creativity. He must acquire the ability to conceptualize in the same manner as the theorist he is studying, by piecing together the relevant textual evidence, both internal and external, in an endeavour to think as the thinker did. Perhaps most fundamentally, we would explain our concern with the history of thought in terms of the conviction that some aspects of the human condition transcend time. Thus we might conceive of ourselves as interested parties who should consider it worthwhile to attempt to understand statements which could still be pertinent to the ordering of our own affairs.

The notion that political discourse might in some sense be contextually orientated has prompted the view that each period in the history of political thought was influenced by a controlling intellectual paradigm. Indeed, the concept of the

the paradigm has been attractive not only as a means of explaining what might appear to be alien cultures, but also, less overtly, as a distinguishing characteristic of successive methodological orthodoxies within the discipline. Berlin has captured the essence of this approach in the claim that,

"The first step to the understanding of men is the bringing to consciousness of the model or models that dominate or penetrate their thought and action."⁵

In recent years this procedure has gravitated to the work of T.S.Kuhn on the history of science. In his stimulating book The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, Kuhn criticized the assumption that advances in the natural sciences are necessarily incremental or cumulative. Instead Kuhn posited the periodization of scientific progress into a series of paradigms, which he defined as,

"universally recognized scientific achievements that for a time provide model problems and solutions for a community of practitioners."⁶

According to Kuhn, each paradigm, as long as it endures, possesses an authority sanctioned by institutional and sociological means of imposing it as the rule. Each paradigm is characterized by a settled period of 'normal science' in which practitioners devote their attention to 'puzzle solving'. However, in the normal course of events such activity will be disrupted by the discovery of anomalies inexplicable in terms of the existing paradigm. Such discrepancies ultimately discredit the paradigm to the extent that a revolutionary transition to a newly-accredited paradigm

5. I. Berlin, op.cit., p.19.

6. T.S.Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, (Chicago 1962, 1970 edition), p.viii. The definition used here is the first, and standard, but not Kuhn's only definition of a paradigm.

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occurs. Kuhn's thesis has been deemed appropriate to the history of ideas in general, and by S.S. Wolin, amongst others, to political thought in particular.

Applying Kuhn's ideas to his own conception of the history of political thought as both phenomenon and discipline, Wolin concluded that,

"political theories can best be understood as paradigms... the scientific study of politics is a special form of paradigm-inspired research."⁸

Accordingly, Wolin posited an analogy between the great political theorists and the great scientists. He pointed out that these two sets of thinkers are nevertheless distinguished by the inclination of political theorists to seek to amend society (their subject matter). Wolin argued that scientists did not presume to alter the universe. Similarly he extended these analogies with Kuhn's thesis in arguing that political crises (very often revolutionary) stimulated the new theoretical paradigms advanced by the great thinkers. Thus Wolin conceived of all stable polities as societies guided by paradigms in such a manner that politics was ordinarily a process of puzzle-solving reminiscent of Kuhnian 'normal science'. As we shall shortly discover, such a preoccupation with paradigms has prompted much of the recent debate on contextual method in the history of ideas.

Within the history of ideas the obvious affinity of paradigms to the notion of successive 'worldviews' has not gone

7. ibid., p.12.

8. S.S. Wolin, 'Paradigms and Political Theories', in, Politics and Experience: Essays Presented to Michael Oakeshott, ed. P. King and B.C. Parekh, (Cambridge 1968), p.139.

9. ibid., pp.148-151.

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unnoticed. This leads us to the complicated problem of isolating the constituent elements of a worldview. Clearly, an analysis formed in a few sentences must be in many respects deficient. Nevertheless it seems reasonable to suppose that the prevalent conception of human nature must form the fundamental aspect of any worldview. This, in many instances, has involved some consideration of man's relationship to God, the general view of human potential, and the relative prospect of the amelioration of the human condition - stated crudely, the concept of 'progress'. If we accept that for most of the time in which he has conceived of himself as a political animal, man's conception of his nature has been influenced by his understanding of his position in relation to a deity, then we must also accept that man's analysis of social and political activity cannot be entirely divorced from such an outlook. Yet the worldview can also incorporate an appreciation of the social and intellectual environment to the extent that it influences, and is susceptible to influence by, the seemingly mundane. Science and technology, political events, economics, social intercourse at all levels from the state to the family, and man's educability, are all variables in the framing of worldviews. Despite the lure of the paradigm as an analytical device for the imposition of some parcelled order upon the fluidity of successive worldviews, or as a verifiable account of their transition, the transposition of interpretative sensitivity from one worldview to another has proved notoriously difficult. Modern commentators still encounter problems in penetrating earlier thought. As Lovejoy has observed, the student of the history of ideas is concerned with,

10. See, I. Berlin, op.cit., pp.13-14. This impression is confirmed by, T.S.Kuhn, op.cit., chapter X.

"implicit or incompletely explicit assumptions, or more or less unconscious mental habits, operating in the thought of an individual or a generation."¹¹

Admission to the intellectual contexts of the past is not readily obtained. However, certain of those who seek entry believe themselves to have discovered the key in the philosophy of language.

In an influential series of lectures on speech acts, J.L. Austin expounded the view that an utterance constitutes an action, maintaining that,

"to say something is to do something, or in saying something we do something, or even by saying something we do something."¹²

The key to Austin's position is that the illocutionary force and intention of an action (statement) are often distinct from, and may impart more information than, its formal or apparent meaning. Austin posited a distinction between "the locutionary act...which has a meaning", "the illocutionary act which has a certain force in saying something" which is conventional, and "the perlocutionary act which is the achieving of certain effects by saying something", but not necessarily by some conventional means and response.¹³ Crucially, Austin contended that the successful performance of an illocutionary act requires a respondent uptake on the part of the recipient of the statement.¹⁴ Further, this whole process will be consummated by the mutual recognition of certain conventions.¹⁵

11. A.O. Lovejoy, op.cit., p.7.

12. J.L. Austin, How To Do Things With Words, ed. J.O. Urmson, (Oxford 1962, 1975 edition), p.94.

13. ibid., p.121.

14. ibid., pp.115-117.

15. ibid., p.121 ff.

By presenting a critique and development of Austin's theories, P.F.Strawson has advanced our understanding of the conventionality of illocutionary acts. Strawson's major qualification is the contention that the doctrine of the conventional nature of illocutionary acts does not hold so generally as Austin suggested.¹⁶ For instance, Strawson makes the valid point that the very absence of convention could provide the illocutionary force of certain utterances. Further, with regard to the question of intentions and the securing of uptake, Strawson argues that although intentions are the prerogative of the individual, the results (the securing of uptake) depend upon the cognitive faculties of others. So Strawson elucidates the concept of illocutionary acts by asserting that intentions are not merely directed to the production of responses but, because a response always depends upon the recognition of the very intention to provoke it, intentions are part of the reason for responses.¹⁷ Thus Strawson summarizes his major conclusion as follows :-

"An essential feature of the intentions which make up the illocutionary complex is their overtness. They have, one might say, essential avowability."¹⁸

H.P.Grice's work on meaning¹⁹ has complemented the contributions of Austin and Strawson. Grice argues that, in general, meanings are explicable in terms of the utterer's intentions. By regarding utterances as actions, Grice stipulates

16. P.F.Strawson, 'Intention and Convention in Speech Acts', P.R., Vol.73 (1964), pp.439-460, at pp.443-445.

17. ibid., pp.450-453.

18. ibid., p.454.

19. See, H.P.Grice, 'Meaning', P.R., Vol.66 (1957), pp.377-388, and more particularly, his revised account, 'Utterers Meanings and Intentions', P.R., Vol.78 (1969), pp.147-177.

that meaning is embodied in the recognition of an intention to produce a response. Such a process must, in principle, be possible, and being so, is governed by a convention, or what Grice terms an 'inference element'. In effect, Grice regards it as imperative that,

"the success of intentions of the kind involved in communication requires those to whom communications or near-communications are addressed to be capable in the circumstances of having thoughts and drawing certain conclusions."²⁰

Both the theory and operation of paradigms in the history of ideas, and enquiry into the philosophy of language, have stimulated a revisionary approach to textual analysis in political thought. It may be noticed that Kuhn drew certain parallels between his own conception of the paradigm and Wittgenstein's theory of language.²¹ Several scholars, including John Dunn, J.G.A. Pocock, and Quentin Skinner, have been so conscious of their mutual indebtedness to these ideas as to constitute a 'school'. We shall now consider the contribution of the Cambridge school²² to methodology for understanding in the history of ideas.

In recent years Quentin Skinner has been the most ardent advocate of a revised method for the study of the history of ideas.²³ Skinner has advanced his own theories by launching a

20. H.P. Grice, op.cit., p.158.

21. T.S. Kuhn, op.cit., p.45, cites L. Wittgenstein Philosophical Investigations, (New York 1953).

22. Because of their especial interest in the exposition of the theoretical basis of this methodology, we shall concentrate upon the work of Q. Skinner and J.G.A. Pocock.

23. For Skinner's own use of this method see, 'Hobbes on Sovereignty: An Unknown Discussion', P.S., Vol. XI (1965), pp.213-218; 'History and Ideology in the English Revolution', H.J., Vol.8 (1965), pp.151-178; 'The Ideological Context of Hobbes's Political Thought', H.J., Vol.9 (1966), pp.286-317; 'Conquest and Consent: Thomas Hobbes and the Engagement Controversy', in, The Interregnum: The Quest for a Settlement, ed. G.E. Aylmer, (London 1972); 'The Context of Hobbes's Theory of Political Obligation', in, Hobbes and Rousseau, ed. M. Cranston

vigorous critique of previously conventional modes of enquiry. In particular Skinner has regarded it inexpedient to concentrate exclusively upon either a 'textual' or a 'contextual' approach.²⁴ With regard to textual analysis, Skinner has attempted to invalidate the assumption that certain universal ideas are self-sufficient and recurrent in various 'classical texts'. Indeed, Skinner has sought to discredit the very notion of the 'history of an idea' by displaying the difficulty of tracing the thread of 'influence' and evidence of intellectual affinities through time. Thus Skinner has sponsored the development of sensitivity to changes of meaning in the language of political discourse. This in turn has prompted his interest in the problem of intentions, (or what authors meant to say) and a commensurate awareness of the perils of misinterpretation by analysis conducted from within a subsequent and therefore alien paradigm. All these doubts concerning existing methodology have caused Skinner to emphasize that,

"the need to recover an author's intentions in writing commits us to focusing above all on the appropriate context of conventions and assumptions from which his intentions can be decoded."²⁵

This requirement forms the basis of Skinner's proposed method, an approach which presumes that the writing of political theory is an action the impetus of which we must discern if we are to understand a statement correctly.

and R.S.Peters, (New York 1972); The Foundations of Modern Political Thought, (2 vols.), (Cambridge 1978).

24. See, Q. Skinner, 'The Limits of Historical Explanation', Phil., Vol. XLI (1966), pp. 199-215; 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas', op.cit.; 'Motives, Intentions and the Interpretation of Texts', New Literary History, Vol. III (1972), pp. 393-408; 'Some Problems in the Analysis of Political Thought and Action', P.T., Vol. 2 (1974) pp. 277-303.

25. Q Skinner, 'Hermeneutics and the Role of History', New Literary History, Vol. VI (1975), pp. 209-232, at p. 217.

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Following Wittgenstein, Skinner has argued for an understanding of the status of ideas and the point of certain expressions to their users by evaluating the use rather than the immediate meaning of language. Skinner's indebtedness to Austin is evident in his claim that the concept of intention is fundamental to the argument that the making of a statement is the performance of an action. Hence Skinner's interest in the meaning, or intended illocutionary force, of linguistic actions, and his insistence upon the predominance of the linguistic context in textual analysis. In discussing intentions, Skinner has stressed a distinction between to do and in doing - particularly with reference to the relation of motives to intentions. So Skinner has differentiated the motive for writing from the intention in writing, contending that intention is integral to, but not necessarily prior to, meaning. Such meaning-as-intention prompts understanding because the illocutionary force of a statement (speech act) evokes a particular response. So intentions as acts of communication must be recognized as such.

It is apparent to Skinner that the validity of this account of speech acts holds profound implications for methodology in the history of ideas. Essentially, Skinner has concluded that interpretation must constitute a process of illocutionary

26. Q. Skinner, 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas', op.cit., pp.37-38.

27. ibid., pp.43-49.

28. ibid., p.51.

29. Q. Skinner, 'On Performing and Explaining Linguistic Actions', P.Q., Vol.21 (1971), pp.1-21, at pp.14-16, and, 'Motives, Intentions and the Interpretation of Texts', op.cit., pp.398-403.

30. Q. Skinner, 'Conventions and the Understanding of Speech Acts', P.Q., Vol.20 (1970), pp.118-138, at pp.125-126.

redescription, or explanation by the recovery of the point and intention of such statements-as-actions.³¹ Thus Skinner's approach to the study of the history of ideas is founded on arguments such as the following :-

"To identify....the illocutionary force co-ordinate on a given occasion with the ordinary meaning of the given utterance is equivalent to understanding that nature of the (linguistic) action performed by the speaker in uttering his given utterance."³²

This, then, is the task demanded of the student of political theory. For the analyst, as for the immediate contemporary utterer and recipient of a particular statement, understanding is dependent upon the securing of uptake.³³

It should be apparent that Skinner's method is a form of contextual analysis especially concerned with the conventions necessary for the understanding of speech acts, or in effect, the actions of writers within traditional discourse.³⁴ Skinner has argued that the prior existence of mutually recognized communicable conventions is a prerequisite for comprehension,³⁵ through the uptake of intentions. Yet he has been anxious to assert that the conditions imposed by conventions do not preclude innovatory thought. However, Skinner has also seen that creative thought is possible only if it relates, often critically, to established modes of thought and discourse.³⁶

31. Q. Skinner, 'On Performing and Explaining Linguistic Actions', op.cit., p.13.

32. ibid., p.3.

33. Q. Skinner, 'Conventions and the Understanding of Speech Acts', op.cit., p.121.

34. See especially, Q. Skinner, 'Some Problems in the Analysis of Political Thought and Action', op.cit.

35. Q. Skinner, 'Conventions and the Understanding of Speech Acts', op.cit., pp.131-133.

36. For Skinner's response to the criticism that he neglected

Skinner has connected conventional understanding in speech acts to the acceptance of certain paradigmatic beliefs.³⁷ This view has prompted him to speak of the 'context of conventions' as

"a context which serves to endow its constituent parts with meaning while attaining its own meaning from the combination of its constituent parts."³⁸

So, according to Skinner, the object of contextual analysis conducted along these lines is,

"to grasp the nature and range of things that could recognizably have been done by using that particular concept, in the treatment of that particular theme, at that that particular time."³⁹

Skinner's methodology for the history of ideas is based on his view of linguistic contextualism, which supposes that the understanding of the meaning of a text is ultimately dependent upon a knowledge of the assumptions and conventions determining its illocutionary force.

Skinner correctly presumes that interest in a text should be inspired by a desire to understand its meaning. Thus he reiterated the claim that,

"the recovery of a conventional (illocutionary) redescription, by pointing to the intentions of an agent in the performance of a given action, still possesses in itself a measure of explanatory force."⁴⁰

this consideration see, 'Some Problems in the Analysis of Political Thought and Action', op.cit., passim.

37. Q. Skinner, 'Social Meaning' and the Explanation of Social Action', in, P.P.S., (Fourth Series), ed. P. Laslett, W.G. Runciman, and Q. Skinner, (Oxford 1972), p.152.

38. Q. Skinner, 'Hermeneutics and the Role of History', op.cit., p.216.

39. Q. Skinner, 'Motives, Intentions and the Interpretation of Texts', op.cit., p.406.

40. Q. Skinner, 'On Performing and Explaining Linguistic Actions', op.cit., p.14, see also, 'Social Meaning' and the Explanation of

As a corollary, Skinner has insisted that no meaning should be attributed to a writer unless he would accept a play-back version as the correct account of his intentions.⁴¹ Given the impossibility of reincarnation as a means of verification, Skinner's method thus requires the knowledge and sensitivity of the interpreter in recovering the meaning of the text,⁴² by understanding the often implicit conventions which determine that meaning.⁴³ Skinner has summarized his argument as follows :-

"to understand the illocutionary force of an utterance is to recover what the agent saw himself as doing in issuing it, since this process is clearly equivalent to recovering the primary intentions with which the given utterance was issued.to understand what the agent saw himself as doing, and so to grasp the intended illocutionary force of his utterance, is equivalent to understanding what he must have meant by what he said."⁴⁴

Although Skinner's method has carried him this far, he has been reluctant to develop a sociology of language in the manner advocated by the nevertheless broadly similar methodology espoused by J.G.A. Pocock.⁴⁵

Central to Pocock's view of method in the history of political

Social Action', op.cit., p.145; 'Motives, Intentions and the Interpretation of Texts', op.cit., p.404.

41. Q. Skinner, 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas', op.cit., pp.28-29.

42. Q. Skinner, 'Hermeneutics and the Role of History', op.cit., p.211.

43. Q. Skinner, 'Conventions and the Understanding of Speech Acts', op.cit., p.135.

44. Q. Skinner, 'Hermeneutics and the Role of History', op.cit., p.212.

45. For Skinner's critical appreciation of Pocock, see, Q. Skinner, 'Some Problems in the Analysis of Political Thought and Action', op.cit., pp.280,288.

ideas is his conviction that political thought can be defined as "the exploration and sophistication of political language."⁴⁶ Thus Pocock regards the production of statements about politics as an activity regulated by linguistic rules⁴⁷ which are in turn the product of history. With this in mind he argued that,

"historians of thought are increasingly seeing their business as the study of the changing function, content and application of conceptual languages of political discussion found in particular societies at particular times."⁴⁸

Adapting Kuhn's concept of the paradigm has enabled Pocock to portray thought encapsulated in a linguistic system as an authoritative contextual structure uniting the conceptual and social spheres. For Pocock, the history of political thought is periodized by a series of linguistic paradigms. At this juncture Pocock has sought to extend Skinner's method by assuming the priority of paradigms over the intentions and the illocutionary force of statements. Thus Pocock has contended that real understanding will ultimately depend upon knowledge⁴⁹ of the available means for the making of statements. Therefore, according to Pocock, language as the sedimentation and institutionalization of speech acts constitutes a "structure of givens" which necessarily defines and constrains the scope

46. J.G.A.Pocock, Politics, Language and Time, (New York 1971, London 1972 edition), p.15.

47. ibid., p.12.

48. J.G.A.Pocock, "'The Only Politician: Machiavelli, Harrington and Felix Raab', Historical Studies: Australia and New Zealand, Vol.12 (1966), pp.265-296, at p.268.

49. J.G.A.Pocock, Politics, Language and Time, pp.23-25; for Skinner's reply see, 'Some Problems in the Analysis of Political Thought and Action', op.cit., p.288. Skinner argues that Pocock's method could develop difficulties in encountering irony and obliquity.

of possible intentions. ⁵⁰ This indicates the method to which Pocock has adhered in recent years. ⁵¹ In his view,

"The historian's first problem, . . . , is to identify the 'language' or 'vocabulary' with and within which the author operated, and to show how it functioned paradigmatically to prescribe what he might say and how he might say it."⁵²

Effectively, Pocock's method proposes the empirical study of language rather than the immediate analysis ⁵³ of the theory expressed by it.

The views of the Cambridge school have provoked a lively response, several aspects of which deserve consideration because they highlight some of the major areas of contention within methodological discussion of the history of thought. One of the most obvious difficulties concerns the nature and extent of contextual analysis. With this in mind, the Cambridge school has been criticized for excessive context narrowing, especially in concentrating upon ranges of possible intentions. Instead, scholars such as L. Mulligan have recommended that greater attention be afforded to the social context while the reliance upon 'inference', as opposed to traditional textual scholarship, ⁵⁴ should be diminished. R. E. Goodin has argued along similar lines, doubting whether political thought and action is

50. J. G. A. Pocock, 'Verbalizing a Political Act: Towards a Politics of Speech', P. T., Vol. 1 (1973), pp. 27-45, at p. 31, see also, Politics, Language and Time, pp. 27-29.

51. See, e.g., J. G. A. Pocock, The Machiavellian Moment, (Princeton 1975).

52. J. G. A. Pocock, Politics, Language and Time, p. 25.

53. ibid., p. 28.

54. L. Mulligan, J. K. Richards, and J. Graham, 'Intentions and Conventions: A Critique of Quentin Skinner's Method for the Study of the History of Ideas', P. S., Vol. XXVII (1979), pp. 82-98, at pp. 85-88.

necessarily constrained by a linguistic paradigm. In Goodin's opinion, the most that the Cambridge method can achieve is the facility to exclude certain interpretations, rather than the capacity to identify precisely what an author meant to say.⁵⁵ Goodin too regards a more substantial consideration of the social context, of which he takes language to be a reflection, as a solution to these shortcomings.

The insistence upon the constraints of conventions and of linguistic paradigms has also prompted questions concerning the operation of the creative process in political theory.⁵⁶ Hence, C.D. Tarlton has contended that,

"Language might better be considered as tool or instrument for inventiveness of thought and action than as limitation, conventional or other." (sic)⁵⁷

Similarly, B. Parekh and R.N. Berki have accused Skinner of "the denial of the possibility of new insights and new experiences,"⁵⁸ and of the failure to realize that in communicating ideas, theorists often utilize the dynamism as well as the predeterminacy of language.

A further facet of the response to the Cambridge school has involved a renewed championship of 'continuity' in the history of ideas. Thus Tarlton has questioned the assumption that past ages constitute alien cultures characterized by historically specific statements.⁵⁹ In the same manner, G.J. Schochet has

55. R.E. Goodin, 'Laying Linguistic Traps', P.T., Vol. 5 (1977), pp. 491-504, at p. 491 and passim.

56. See above, pp. 36-37, on utopianism and realism.

57. C.D. Tarlton, 'Historicity, Meaning and Revisionism in the Study of Political Thought', H.&T., Vol. 12 (1973), pp. 307-328, at p. 326.

58. B. Parekh and R.N. Berki, 'History of Political Ideas: A Critique of Q. Skinner's Methodology', J.H.I., Vol. XXXIV (1973), pp. 163-184, at p. 168.

59. C.D. Tarlton, op.cit., p. 323.

presented a case for the cumulative tradition of political thought and for the creative reconsideration of perennial problems.⁶⁰ Although they allow the propriety of the paradigmatic analysis of the history of ideas, Parekh and Berki have also contended that thought occasionally transcends the immediate context because of the nature of

"problems springing from the human predicament and consequently relevant to every situation where there were human beings."⁶¹

Clearly, we have returned to the problem of the relationship between the concepts employed in political discourse and the contextual location of their use. One important consideration which requires greater emphasis in this respect is the likelihood that conceptual debate, even between contemporaries, will be the subject of considerable ambiguity and contested opinions.⁶² Two basic conclusions can be drawn from this. Firstly, the inevitable indeterminacy of much conceptual discourse must cast some doubt upon the application of theories drawn from the philosophy of language, (particularly concerning intentions, conventions, and uptake) to the conceptual debates of the past. Effectively, our suspicions should be aroused if evidence of at least some ambiguity between contemporaries is not recovered. Secondly, conceptual ambiguity possibly affords some licence for our continuing participation in the conceptual debates of the past, and in the limited use of 'classic texts' to illuminate our own discourse. We should not assume that we are necessarily precluded from the political discourse of ages past if, as seems likely, such

60. G.J. Schochet, 'Quentin Skinner's Method', P.T., Vol. 2 (1973), pp. 261-276, at pp. 270-272.

61. B. Parekh and R.N. Berkhi, op.cit., p. 171, see also, pp. 127-124.

62. See above, chapter 2, section i.

debates are permeated by a degree of conceptual indeterminacy which might frustrate the assumption of understanding derived from linguistic contextualism. In attempting to identify the conventions employed by contemporaries we must be aware that the securing of uptake may have been as much required for rational conceptual dispute, as for consensus. In essence, on occasions we may have to be satisfied that we cannot fully understand individuals, because, given the inherent ambiguity of the concepts they employed they must have contested their contemporaries' use of concepts or even have misunderstood each other.

The relationship between a text as a statement and the context in which it was formulated is obviously an unsettled consideration in the history of ideas. J. Dunn appears to speak for the Cambridge school when he insists, with every justification, that a risk of distortion will always attend the abstraction of any argument for its "context of truth
⁶³ criteria." Hence Dunn's conclusion that "the problem of
⁶⁴ interpretation is always the problem of closing the context." Clearly, the real point of contention concerns the requisite degree of contextual narrowing. Parekh and Berki made a sound, but obviously to some minds unsatisfactory, point, in maintaining that,

"As the way in which the degree to which a context illuminates a text naturally varies according to the nature of the text and the context, it is a mistake to advance a general a priori thesis about their

63. J. Dunn, 'The Identity of the History of Ideas', Phil., Vol. XLIII (1968), pp. 85-116, at p. 96. For Dunn's practice of this method see, The Political Thought of John Locke, (Cambridge 1969).

64. J. Dunn, 'The Identity of the History of Ideas', op.cit., pp. 98-99.

relationship."⁶⁵

As Parekh and Berki imply, the analysis of the work of any theorist cannot but be enhanced by reference to all relevant aspects of the 'context' in the wider sense. It is this attitude which apparently prompted J. Higham to analyse two basic forms of context, neither of which is exclusive of the other - the 'context of events', that of external behaviour; and the 'context of ideas', the internal relations between what men write and say.⁶⁶ Yet Higham also insisted that although thought is often related to contextually orientated action, it is also capable of transcending the context. With these considerations in mind it is worthwhile recalling Alan Ryan's sobering prognosis concerning the intellectual constraints associated with paradigm theory.⁶⁷ Ryan feared that an attempt to establish a more thoroughgoing political science by creating paradigm-orientated methods, might in fact stifle scholarship and imaginative 'tolerant' debate. So Ryan's warnings were applied equally to the creation of a methodology as to the nature of the subject matter itself. In endeavouring to reconstruct the context which influenced the production of a statement (the text), the perceptions of the writer are clearly paramount.⁶⁸ It is his worldview which we must discern. Only a sensitivity to the complexity of this context, and to the textual evidence of its nature, will permit us to reach a more substantial understanding of the theorist in whom we are

65. B. Parekh and R.N. Berki, op.cit., p.184.

66. J. Higham, 'Intellectual History and its Neighbours', J.H.I., Vol. XV (1954), pp.339-347, at p.341.

67. A. Ryan, '"Normal' Science or Political Ideology?', in P.P.S., (Fourth Series), ed. P. Laslett, W.G. Runciman, and Q. Skinner, (Oxford 1972), pp.86-100.

68. C.D. Tarlton, op.cit., p.319.

interested. As Michael Oakeshott maintained,

"the meaning lies, as it always must lie, in a unity in which the separate existence of the text and the context is resolved."⁶⁹

The contextual foundations of a theorist's ideas will align with his worldview and his evaluation of the human condition; a situation which Hannah Arendt elegantly appraised as follows :-

"Whatever touches or enters into a sustained relationship with human life immediately assumes the character of a condition of human existence. This is why men, no matter what they do, are always conditioned beings"⁷⁰

For the social or political theorist, a response to the context, to the perception of the human condition, or to the worldview, must carry one profound implication. Celebration of the human condition is not endemic to the history of ideas. Recommendation for the amelioration of the human condition is as intrinsic to social theory as the perception of the human condition as some form of predicament. Although Oakeshott, with consummate style and connotative resonance, applied these ideas to the analysis of Hobbes's thought, his observations are almost universally valid. Political philosophy, according to Oakeshott, is a process of reflection involving,

"the relation of political life, and the values and purposes pertaining to it, to the entire conception of the world that belongs to a civilization."⁷¹

Inevitably, this conception presents the predicament which political theorists must confront. Again, in Oakeshott's words, "the human predicament is

69. M. Oakeshott, introduction to, T. Hobbes, Leviathan, (Oxford 1946), p. ix.

70. H. Arendt, The Human Condition, (Chicago 1958), p. 9.

71. M. Oakeshott, op. cit., p. ix.

a universal appearing everywhere as a particular." ⁷² The
 conception of human nature provides the fundamental constituent
 of mankind's predicament, whilst the artifice of civil society
 is fundamental to the amelioration of that condition. ⁷³

Our analysis of the social theories of Thomas More and
 Gerrard Winstanley will be conducted in accordance with the
 methodological implications of the foregoing discussion.
 Particular emphasis will be assigned to the perceived
 predicament to which each theorist addressed himself. This
 condition is discernable through both the textual testimony
 of the thinkers in question, and through what is known of the
 relevant context and worldview. A brief outline of this
 context-as-predicament is therefore opportune.

72. ibid., p.xi.

73. ibid., pp.xxx-xxxvi.

ii Some Aspects of the Predicament

This section is devoted to several social questions, each of which powerfully influenced the contemporary mentality. Quite obviously, it would be over-ambitious to attempt a definitive analysis of the social and intellectual context of early-modern England. Instead, we shall restrict ourselves to four issues which particularly influenced the work of More and Winstanley alike. Firstly, the question of work and labour; a problem to which proponents of economic reform, such as More and Winstanley, were obliged to refer. Secondly, we shall examine a most pressing contemporary problem, poverty and vagrancy; the eradication of which More and Winstanley both sought. Thirdly, we shall preview some of the reasons why More and Winstanley, in common with most contemporaries, found patriarchalism so important to the organization of society. Fourthly and finally, More and Winstanley were both concerned with the moral calibre of the citizen; a factor which contemporary developments in education necessarily influenced. It should become apparent during the course of this section that social theorists operating within the worldview of early-modern England, were likely to construe a predicament demanding institutional solutions. As we shall discover in due course, both More and Winstanley responded accordingly.

a) Work and Labour

More and Winstanley both recognized the reorganization of contemporary modes of employment as an important means towards the improvement of the human condition. Expressions of consternation about the possibility that utopian theorists would even be inclined to provide for work and labour in their

ideal commonwealths⁷⁴ apparently disregard their attitudes. It is a mistake to suppose that either More or Winstanley was typically 'utopian'⁷⁵ by advocating a reduction in labour as compared to contemporary circumstances. Indeed, their proposals were intended to achieve an increase in labour. Winstanley's in particular is an exception to the suggestion that all lower-class utopias⁷⁶ proposed a reduction in the working day.

Evidence relating to the amount of labour performed in early-modern England can occasionally be misleading. Although it was possible, especially in the summer, to labour for twelve or thirteen hours a day,⁷⁷ the notion of the seventy-hour week,⁷⁸ was surely, due to a variety of mitigating circumstances, an ideal rarely attained. The slow pace of work, the lack of incentive, the climate, the underemployment typical of an underdeveloped economy, and numerous holidays, could together reduce the average working week to one of 2½-3 days, or between 25-35 hours.⁷⁹

One reason for supposing that the utopian schemes of both More and Winstanley aimed for productivity, is that both sought to amend contemporary patterns of employment. Apart from all those individuals who, for various reasons, performed no work

74. As discernible in, e.g., P.D. Anthony, The Ideology of Work, (London 1977) p.48.

75. As does K.V. Thomas, 'Work and Leisure in pre-Industrial England', P.&P., No.29 (1964), pp.50-62, at p.57. Thomas discusses the 6-hour working day of Utopia and Winstanley's proposals for retirement at the age of 40.

76. For this suggestion, see, C.Hill, 'Pottage for Freeborn Englishmen: Attitudes to Wage Labour in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', in, Socialism, Capitalism and Economic Growth: Essays Presented to Maurice Dobb, ed. C.H. Feinstein, (Cambridge 1967), p.348.

77. Considerable variations occurred, according to occupation, see, W.G.Hoskins, The Age of Plunder, (London 1976), p.108.

78. ibid., p.111.

79. ibid., pp.109-111. Yet in Utopia, citizens regularly worked what effectively amounted to a 40-hour week.

whatsoever, D.C. Coleman has described 'visible underemployment' as,

"the difference between the amount of working time which the labour force could theoretically supply and that which it in fact does contribute to the economy in the existing methods of production."⁸⁰

In the case of early-modern England, agricultural labourers were, for various reasons, idle for about half the days of the year.⁸¹ The interference of natural phenomena in an essentially food-producing economy, and the coincidence of the agricultural and liturgical calendars, meant that labour was conducted on a sporadic basis.⁸²

The development of a crudely perceived labour theory of value meant that during the seventeenth century, labour was regarded as the most important element in production.⁸³ Given the technological limitations of the period, the injection of additional labour rather than of capital, was regarded as the only means of increasing production. However, because demand peaked only spasmodically, the potential labour force was rarely fully utilized. These considerations were not lost on either More or Winstanley. Both theorists supposed that by regulating distribution, and consequently by absorbing fluctuations in demand, productive capacity could be sustained, and underemployment eradicated. Furthermore, both writers were anxious to maintain full employment as the ultimate response to the scarcity factor. Just as domestic industries, especially textiles, might occasionally compensate for agricultural

80. D.C. Coleman, 'Labour in the English Economy of the Seventeenth Century', Econ.H.R., 2nd series, Vol.VIII (1956), pp.280-295, at p.288.

81. ibid., pp.288-289.

82. K.V. Thomas, op.cit., p.52.

83. D.C. Coleman, op.cit., p.287.

84

underemployment in contemporary England, so they did in Utopia, but on a more organized and regular basis. The doctrine that the prosperity of the nation depended upon the contribution of the labourer,⁸⁵ was certainly comprehensible to both More and Winstanley.

The role of work and labour in early-modern English society is perhaps epitomized by contemporary attitudes. However, the causal relationship between thought and action is often unclear. People could not determine to work harder if employment was unavailable. Yet, often, the inclination to labour was manifestly lacking. Upper-class contempt of manual labour was socially requisite, yet the attitudes and habits of the lower-classes also encouraged underemployment. Given the basic inelasticity of peak demand, the absence of consumer goods to provide an incentive, and the habitual expenditure of the bulk of labourers' income on necessities,⁸⁶ the labouring class invariably preferred leisure to higher earnings. To a certain extent, More deferred to this outlook; although in Utopia he radically amended the manner in which leisure time was absorbed. Winstanley, on the other hand, regarded the prospect of greater material prosperity, and a retirement scheme, as suitable incentives for greater exertions.

In the early-modern period both labour and attitudes to it were often casual. As Coleman has remarked,

"The regularity of hours of work and of conditions of employment which the Statute of Artificers attempted to lay down in 1563 was a tribute to the non-existence of that regularity."⁸⁷

84. ibid., p.289.

85. For a discussion of the development of this doctrine, see, E.S.Furniss, The Position of Labour in a System of Nationalism, (New York 1965), chapter 11.

86. D.C.Coleman, op.cit., pp.288-291.

87. ibid., p.291.

Typically, holidays were frequent and irregular. Regular holidays correspond to a settled rhythm of labour, an ideal which both More and Winstanley championed. Regularity of this order is also stimulated by the clear delineation of work and leisure, a distinction which was absent from the prevalent mental attitude of the day.⁸⁸ In a society in which labour was geared to 'task-orientation', whereby intensive bouts of work were interspersed with periods of idleness, labour was unlikely to be rigidly demarked from other activities.⁸⁹ The notion of the 'task' also related to attitudes involving the collective responsibility for work, especially for the gathering of the harvest.⁹⁰ Yet the obvious necessity attending this sphere of labour, rarely extended to the oft-neglected corvée. In both Utopia, and The Law of Freedom, the virtues of communal labour were encouraged by its more methodical organization.

Such lackadaisical attitudes to work and labour were those with which the 'protestant work ethic' and its associated concept of sabbatarianism,⁹¹ and ultimately the factory discipline of the industrial revolution, had to contend. As E.P. Thompson noted in this respect,

"Puritanism, in its marriage of convenience with industrial capitalism, was the agent which converted men to new valuations of time."⁹²

However, as we shall discover, the utopian social theories of both More and Winstanley had earlier envisaged just such a stringent work discipline.

88. K.V. Thomas, op.cit., pp. 52-53.

89. E.P. Thompson, 'Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism', P.&P., No. 38 (1967), pp. 56-97, at p. 60.

90. K.V. Thomas, op.cit.

91. See, C. Hill, Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England, (London 1964), chapters IV and V.

92. E.P. Thompson, op.cit., p. 95.

b) Social Problems - Poverty and Vagrancy

More and Winstanley were both acutely aware of the various social problems of their times. Indeed, More's tirade against the enclosure of erstwhile arable land for conversion to pastoralism,⁹³ may well have contributed to the exaggeration by scholars of this admittedly disturbing problem. Enclosure has been described by J. Thirsk as "a method of increasing the productivity or profitability of land."⁹⁴ On many occasions responsiveness to market demands for pastoral produce involved eviction, and exacerbated unemployment. The process was sternly resisted where traditional rights were abrogated, but the impact of enclosures was usually localized, and the general conversion of the English countryside took a number of centuries to effect.⁹⁵ So although enclosure was not without consequence, it would be a fallacy to regard it as the ultimate cause of contemporary social ills. Rather, enclosure was one of a number of factors which contributed towards a calamitous proliferation of poverty and vagrancy.

More and Winstanley both proffered the view that communism could be justified in terms of its capacity to eliminate the social ailment that most troubled contemporaries, virulent poverty and the vagrancy parasitic upon it. More attributed the increase in the crime rate to the growth of unemployment; anticipating by nearly a century the eventual rationale behind the Tudor poor law.⁹⁶ The causes of increased poverty

93. Utopia, pp.67-69.

94. J. Thirsk, 'Tudor Enclosures', Historical Association Pamphlet, G.41 (1959), p.4.

95. ibid., pp.6-7.

96. Utopia, p.61.

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and vagrancy were numerous and daunting, but unfortunately, were not readily apparent to contemporaries. The interaction of a quite substantial population increase,⁹⁸ and a marked price rise manifested most acutely in the cost of subsistence commodities,⁹⁹ was fundamental to the entire problem. The intensified demand for food tended to increase the strain upon agricultural production so that the economy became even more sensitive to the success of the harvest. Harvest fluctuations carried in their wake not only years of dearth, but also a slump¹⁰⁰ in all other sectors of the economy. Enclosure and urbanization both compounded the problems. A visitation of the plague or other pestilence invariably dislocated the entire economy of the afflicted locality. Contemporary attitudes to work, and endemic semi-employment, added to the distress of the poor. Certain changes in mental attitudes, particularly with regard to the giving of alms, may have exacerbated matters. The dissolution of the monasteries and the spread of Protestantism encouraged a philosophy of self-help which may, in certain circumstances, have discouraged charitable giving. In all, one thing became obvious to contemporaries; institutional arrangements were required to cope with the results of a steadfastly increasing problem. Meanwhile, More and Winstanley analysed the

97. See, E.M. Leonard, An Early History of English Poor Relief, (Cambridge 1900); P. Ramsey, Tudor Economic Problems, (London 1972); J.F. Pound, Poverty and Vagrancy in Tudor England, (London 1971).

98. For population growth, see, P. Ramsey, op.cit., pp.14-16, 22-23; W.G. Hoskins, op.cit., p.220, suggests a 46% increase between 1520-1603; J.F. Pound, op.cit., p.5, suggests an overall increase of 40% between 1500-1600.

99. For the impact of the price rise upon rents, see, E. Kerridge, 'The Movement of the Rent', Econ.H.R., 2nd series, Vol.VI (1953), pp.16-34.

100. See, W.G. Hoskins, 'Harvest Fluctuations and English Economic History, 1480-1619', Agricultural History Review, Vol.XII (1964), pp.28-46.

problem in such depth that they advocated fundamental changes to the economic system as the only means of confronting the problem at its source.

Poverty was undoubtedly extensive. Possibly a quarter to a half of the population might at any time have been officially regarded as poor.¹⁰¹ The development of the Tudor legislative response to the situation was slow and ponderous but eventually reflected a more positive attitude towards the amelioration of mankind's predicament. The harsh punitive provisions of official legislation sought to counteract the problem merely by instigating a deterrent. Just such an attitude was castigated by More. In 1563 Parliament passed the Statute of Artificers, a piece of legislation described by S.T.Bindoff as "a microcosm of the social thought of its age," because it postulated "the universal obligation to work as a social and moral duty."¹⁰² Yet even legislation of this nature, which was intended to regulate the conditions of work comprehensively, assumed such work to be readily available. However, by perceiving that the impotent poor were not necessarily vicious, nor idle by choice, local governments pioneered an alternative response to the problem of poverty and vagrancy.¹⁰³ London and Norwich were the first towns to adopt this more positive stance by exacting compulsory contributions from eligible citizens for the support of the

101. See, J.F.Pound, op.cit., pp.25-36, argues that between $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{3}$ of the population was considered poor; D.C.Coleman, op.cit., pp.283-284, follows the contemporary demographer Gregory King and suggests $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$; J.F.Pound, 'The Social and Trade Structure of Norwich', P.&P., No.34 (1966), pp.49-69, examines the social composition of Norwich in 1570. Of a population of 13,000 - 2,343 received poor relief (504 men, 831 women, and 1,007 children).

102. S.T.Bindoff, 'The Making of the Act of Apprentices', in his, Elizabethan Government and Society, (London 1961), p.58.

103. See, J.F.Pound, op.cit.

poor, or more significantly, for the provision of work.

We shall shortly note in greater detail that contemporaries lived in constant trepidation lest the chaos introduced into the cosmos by the Fall of Man should at any time be unleashed on a massive scale. In this light, vagrancy came to be regarded as a symptom of universal evil, and as a potentially subversive threat to social order and to political authority. Consequently, More and Winstanley both recommended their communist systems not only because they were designed to counter poverty, but also, by accomplishing this end, on the grounds that vagrancy and disorder would thus be quelled.

c) Patriarchalism

The theory and practice of patriarchalism profoundly impressed both More and Winstanley. Perhaps surprisingly, despite his unstable lifestyle and radical tendencies, Winstanley adhered to the patriarchal principle in The Law of Freedom even more thoroughly than More had done in Utopia. Nevertheless, as P. Laslett has noted, and parity between Plato's The Republic and Utopia stops short at More's reluctance to relinquish

¹⁰⁴ patriarchalism. In early-modern England patriarchalism constituted not only a societal arrangement, but also an intellectual outlook which sustained the view that political order and the basis of obligation were entirely natural. However, although contemporaries may have subscribed to a patriarchal ideal, evidence of household 'rebellions' and the mobility of servants ¹⁰⁵ suggests that family life was unlikely

104. P. Laslett, The World We Have Lost, (London 1965, 1973 edition), pp. 4-5.

105. For evidence of the fluid mobility of servants, see the implications of the findings in, P. Laslett, 'Clayworth and Cogenhoe', in, Historical Essays 1600-1750: Presented to David Ogg,

to have been so universally authoritarian as might have been hoped. Yet the family was regarded as the foundation of an hierarchical institutional system, and efforts were made to ensure that every individual should be in some manner attached to a household.

The patriarchal household included both the biological (nuclear) family and the servants and apprentices attached to that family. The nature of the master-servant relationship is the matter of some dispute in which the distinction between living-in servants and day-labourers is of considerable importance. Christopher Hill and C.B. Macpherson have seen in the advance of capitalism and the spread of wage labour some indication of a developing market relationship within modes of employment.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, Macpherson has even cited the dependence¹⁰⁷ of the servant upon his master as a market relationship. By implication, such employment assumes the character of a contractual arrangement. However, the existence of substantial evidence to the contrary - of the institutionalization of the patriarchal mentality to the degree that each individual member of society was instilled with it¹⁰⁸ - suggests that its pervasiveness must have sustained a counter-ideology to market tendencies. Thus apprentices and in-servants were expected to emulate the filial duties of members of the biological family.

The powers of the father of the family, described by L. Stone¹⁰⁹ as "the despotic authority of husband and father," were, in

ed. H.E. Bell and R.L. Ollard, (London 1965).

106. See, C. Hill, 'A Pottage for Freeborn Englishmen', op.cit., pp. 340-347, and, C.B. Macpherson, The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism, (Oxford 1962), passim, and, Democratic Theory: Essays in Retrieval, (Oxford 1973).

107. C.B. Macpherson, op.cit., p. 217.

108. See especially, L. Stone, The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800, (London 1977), chapter 5.

109. ibid., p. 151.

principle, extensive. They included the right to demand complete obedience for the household, especially from the children. The father's permission was, for example, essential to his children's choice of career or marriage partner. Further, the patriarch controlled the right of disposal over the family's property,¹¹⁰ while usually only heads of households were eligible to hold public office. After the Reformation, the Protestant householder acquired certain 'priestly' functions by assuming even greater responsibility for the spiritual welfare and moral conduct of the family.¹¹¹

Patriarchalism was fundamental to the organization of contemporary society for a number of reasons. As G.J. Schochet has remarked,

"It was in the family that an individual acquired his rudimentary discipline and education, learned a trade, and received his basic education as a Christian."¹¹²

In the pre-industrial society of early-modern England, the family represented the basic unit of production.¹¹³ The prevalence of domestic manufacture often extended to the virtual self-sufficiency of many rural households.¹¹⁴ For the artisan, marriage was a union with economic implications, and there was no notion of the husband supporting his wife. The workshop occupied the precincts of the home. Earning a living was a mutual affair. Thus girl servants were often employed so that the wife

110. ibid., chapter 5, and A. Macfarlane, The Origins of English Individualism, (Oxford 1978), pp.80-122.

111. See, C. Hill, Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England, chapter XIII.

112. G.J. Schochet, Patriarchalism in Political Thought, (Oxford 1975), p.65.

113. For an idealized instance see, P. Laslett, op.cit., chapter 1.

114. W.E. Hoskins, The Midland Peasant, (London 1957), p.192, discusses the economical use of parish resources.

might be released from her domestic duties to assist her husband at his trade.¹¹⁵ Although Laslett has argued that patriarchalism always presupposed capitalism,¹¹⁶ we shall discover that the household was retained as the basis of production in the communist utopias of More and Winstanley.

The state regarded the patriarchal principle as an important foundation of political obligation. The impact upon seventeenth-century political thought of apologia for this view, particularly as articulated by Sir Robert Filmer, was undoubtedly considerable, and formed the 'orthodoxy' which Locke saw fit to refute.¹¹⁷ Even theorists who contested the patriarchal basis of obligation usually regarded familial society as the probable origin of the state.¹¹⁸ Those who argued that patriarchal authority constituted the determinate of continuing obligation to the sovereign went further, positing political authority as a derivative of the Fifth Commandment. Both the Biblical sanction, and the immediate influence of the parent-child relationship, made government along these lines intelligible. As Schochet has argued,

"A consciousness that already knew and understood the family and fatherhood was extended to include the political order and magistracy."¹¹⁹

115. See, A. Clark, The Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century, (London 1919, 1968 edition), p.17.

116. P. Laslett, introduction to, R. Filmer, Patriarcha, (Oxford 1949), p.23.

117. ibid., pp.20 ff., 30 ff., and P. Laslett, introduction to, J. Locke, Two Treatises of Government, (Cambridge 1960), especially sections III and IV.

118. See, G.J. Schochet, op.cit., chapters XII and XIII, on Hobbes and Locke respectively.

119. ibid., chapter IV, especially pp.64-84, and, 'Patriarchalism, Politics and Mass Attitudes in Stuart England', H.J., Vol. XII (1969), pp.413-441, especially at pp.421, 440.

Even in instances where this attitude was not developed into a fully-fledged theory of obligation, the utility of familial relationships in contributing to good order was seldom disregarded.

It will become evident that, because of the attribute that was perhaps most warmly approved by contemporaries, the role of the household in inculcating discipline in its members, neither More nor Winstanley was prepared to dispense with patriarchalism. Stone has recently advanced an interesting theory which throws some light on the situation. He refers to,

"the siege mentality of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, which saw everywhere a conspiracy of evil, planning the satanic capture of the world."¹²⁰

As Stone has also suggested, to minds so disposed, patriarchalism attracted adherents because,

"The authoritarian family and authoritarian state were solutions to an intolerable sense of anxiety, and a deep yearning for order."¹²¹

Such apprehension was relaxed only after 1660 with the development of the new worldview and greater optimism concerning human potential, to which, significantly, John Locke contributed so markedly.

The authoritarian implications of patriarchalism were obviously attractive; yet the accommodation of the principle within a communist utopia was not altogether straightforward. When applied to a communist system, certain aspects of patriarchal theory created tension, but unfortunately, neither More nor Winstanley explored these incongruities in any depth. For instance, patriarchalism assumed the natural inequality of man

120. L. Stone, op. cit., p. 262.

121. ibid., p. 217.

and the private ownership of all property. Further, patriarchal theory, by emphasizing strong social control, also posited that,¹²² because the eradication of private property supposedly¹²³ constituted a threat to the continuity of political society, communism was in principle unworkable. So, by retaining patriarchalism within utopian schemes which advocated far greater social equality than the contemporary norm, and by proposing the replacement of private property with communal ownership, More and Winstanley were faced with certain unavoidable contradictions. Yet they both insisted upon the preservation of the structure of authority, to avert the anarchy which these radical principles might be thought to threaten. In this light, the discipline of patriarchalism proved powerfully persuasive.

d) Education

The period dividing More and Winstanley was straddled by what has been termed the 'Educational Revolution'.¹²⁴ The developing conviction as to the educability of man is indicative of a changing evaluation of human nature and potential. The growth of a concern to educate the young, and questions concerning the form such education should assume, deeply influenced both More and Winstanley. Formerly, 'education' had been marked by a division of skills which resulted in the sons of the upper-classes being placed with great households in order to acquire courtly virtues by a process of emulation. Literacy was generally confined to clerics of lowly origin.¹²⁵ However,

122. See, P. Laslett, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-13.

123. See below, pp. 102-106.

124. See, L. Stone, 'The Educational Revolution in England', *P.&P.*, No. 28 (1964), pp. 41-80.

125. J. H. Hexter, 'The Education of the Aristocracy in the

aristocratic disdain of scholarship was dissipated by a new ethic. As a child Thomas More was educated along broadly traditional lines by being placed in the household of Cardinal Morton;¹²⁶ but was also introduced to the world of letters. By the turn of the sixteenth century, educational attitudes were already under revision. There are a number of reasons for this. Humanists, as the intellectual elite, encouraged a literary-based education and actively promoted educational reform. Thus John Colet founded St. Paul's school, and Thomas More introduced humanist ideals into the educational curriculum of his own household.¹²⁷ Crucially, this period witnessed a revision of outlook to the extent that, as P. Aries has argued, the

"evolution of the educational institution is bound up with a parallel evolution of the concepts of age and childhood."¹²⁸

This developing sensitivity to the very notion of childhood, and to the theory of age differentiation, occurred firstly amongst the aristocracy.¹²⁹ Educational innovation, as exemplified in schools, the universities, and the Inns of Court, was a response to a demand which gained impetus as the gentry imitated the example of their betters.¹³⁰ The new educational outlook embodied an anxious concern to discipline and protect the young from the evils of the world.¹³¹ Ultimately,

Renaissance', J.M.H., Vol. XXII (1950), pp. 1-20, at pp. 2-4.

126. Utopia, p. 87.

127. T. More, 'To William Gonnell', (1518?), in, St. Thomas More: Selected Letters, ed. E.F. Rogers, (New Haven 1961).

128. P. Aries, Centuries of Childhood, (London 1961, 1973 edition), p. 169.

129. ibid., pp. 150-159.

130. L. Stone, op.cit., pp. 58, 67.

131. P. Aries, op.cit., p. 320.

as Keith Thomas puts it, "the argument for formal education was not unlike that for the criminal code."¹³² We shall discover that this view also profoundly affected More and Winstanley.

By the mid-seventeenth century, this 'revolutionary' change had reverberated through society. As Stone has shown,

"what made this society different was that basic literacy was common even among the poor."¹³³

During the Civil War, for instance, it is possible that 40% of adult males were to some extent literate.¹³⁴ In seventeenth-century London, the same could probably be said of the majority of males,¹³⁵ while even the rural population had the albeit patchy opportunity to acquire at least some formal learning.¹³⁶ Equally, the printing and ownership of books was increasing. The ubiquity of the Bible and the dominantly theological content of reading matter reflect the impulse to literacy provided by Protestantism,¹³⁷ a factor which seems particularly relevant to Winstanley's education.

132. K.V. Thomas, 'Age and Authority in Early Modern England', Proceedings of the British Academy, Vol. LXI (1976) p.18.

133. L. Stone, op.cit., p.79.

134. L. Stone, 'Literacy and Education in England 1640-1900', P.&P., No.42 (1969), pp.69-139.

135. L. Stone, 'The Educational Revolution in England', op.cit., p.43.

136. See, M. Spufford, 'The Schooling of the Cambridgeshire Peasantry', Agricultural History Review, Vol. XVIII (1970) pp.112-147.

137. P. Clark, 'The Ownership of Books in England', in, Schooling and Society, ed. L. Stone, (Baltimore 1976), pp.103,108.

iii The Fall as an Explanation of the Predicament

As G.H.Greenleaf demonstrated,

"During the early modern period it was of course axiomatic that humanity had been corrupted by the Fall."¹³⁸

To anyone thinking about the human condition, this aspect of the worldview was undoubtedly appreciable. Most obviously, the doctrine of the Fall served to account for many aspects of the human condition which were deemed undesirable. Indeed, such was the success of this explanation in reconciling men to their circumstances, that helplessness and despair were often commonplace.¹³⁹ The belief that the consequences of the Fall were ineradicable also encouraged the conviction that a significant improvement in mankind's earthly condition was unlikely. Contemporary analyses of human nature were particularly tempered by a view of mankind's moral degeneracy which was ultimately attributed to the original sin. Further, mankind's relationship to the external environment, and especially his susceptibility to the arbitrary fortunes dispensed by the seemingly hostile natural realm, were perceived as inevitable consequences of the Fall. These conceptions of mankind's depravity and fallibility naturally influenced estimates of the extent to which the human condition could be ameliorated. So long as such assumptions were generally accepted, man's self-confidence remained understandably restrained. Thus it was usually assumed that paradise on earth was forfeit, and that the condition could be regained only in

138. W.H.Greenleaf, Order, Empiricism and Politics, (London 1964), p.30.

139. For an analysis of such perceptions and of the resort to supernatural means of countering the situation, see, K.V.Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic, (London 1971).

in heaven. Man was left to strive towards his salvation in a world in which his immediate circumstances were unlikely to be significantly improved.

By contributing so much to conceptions of the predicament, the ideas associated with the notion of the Fall of Man presented a stimulating challenge to social and political theorists. In this respect, the characteristics of the 'original condition', and the problem of the relationship between the prelapsian state of affairs and the 'state of nature', are particularly interesting. For instance, the conditions pertaining before the Fall were often regarded as 'natural', but were not necessarily equated with the state of nature. The conception of the state of nature, in the sense of the conditions prevailing before or without the institutional constraints of civil society, could assume an historical or a deductionist form.¹⁴⁰ Either way, discussion of the state of nature usually took as given, certain characteristics of human nature, which might in turn be attributed to the Fall. Thus Thomas Hobbes cited original sin¹⁴¹ as the point at which man was afflicted by mortality. Hobbes regarded the insecurity caused by the fear of death as a major consideration in explaining the transition from the state of nature to civil society. So, in general, analysis of various accounts of the original condition from which civil society arose, requires some discrimination between prelapsian circumstances and the 'state of nature'. In either the historical or the deductionist sense, the state of nature usually

140. See, e.g., G.J. Schochet, Patriarchalism in Political Thought, especially pp. 226-228, and *passim*.

141. T. Hobbes, Leviathan, (1651), E.W., Vol. 111, chapter XXXVIII, especially pp. 437-439.

referred to certain deficiencies of the human condition which might be equated with the consequences of the Fall, and with which the institutions of civil society might be intended to contend.

In characterizing their predicament, contemporaries often alluded to their circumstances as consequences of the Fall. As might be expected, such beliefs were often responsible for an abjectly pessimistic appreciation of the human condition and any promise of its emendment. As Charles Webster has noted,

"Meditation on the Fall and the corruption of human nature had come to preclude any thought of regeneration, which seemed too distant to bear thinking about."¹⁴²

Christopher Hill

reached a similar conclusion :-

"The Fall of Man not only testifies to the existence of a happier condition before the introduction of private property and the state, but also shows that man is too sinful ever to maintain such a condition on earth."¹⁴³

So despite

their conception of certain sacramental means of reconciling man to God, contemporaries usually assumed that man was too sinful ever to complete his redemption on earth.

Of the various supposed consequences of the Fall, the requirement that man had henceforth to labour for his subsistence, and beliefs concerning knowledge of and the dominion over nature, are particularly relevant to the social thought of More and Winstanley. It was generally assumed that since the Fall mankind had been cursed by work and labour, whereas in Paradise, Adam had performed the relatively pleasant

142. C. Webster, The Great Instauration, (London 1975), p.19.

143. C. Hill, 'The Norman Yoke', in his, Puritanism and Revolution, (London 1958), p.51.

task of maintaining the Garden of Eden. However, at the Fall, mankind lost not only the dominion over nature, but also the ready provision of his subsistence. As Genesis 3:19 specified,

"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return into the ground."

This outlook may well have affected attitudes and incentives to labour by implying that men could not aspire to attain anything beyond their bare subsistence. Significantly, as Webster has argued,¹⁴⁴ the interplay of ideas on the consequences of the Fall, suggests that the Puritan work ethic might also have contributed to belief in the possibility that man might recover his former dominion over nature. Such notions also related to the experimental knowledge of nature.

Eve's quest for knowledge of a specifically prohibited kind was regarded as one cause of the Fall. Consequently, there developed the concept of 'forbidden knowledge' which has been defined by B. Willey as,

"that which presents itself as a distraction or seducement from what is then considered the main purpose of living."¹⁴⁵

Because it was assumed that, "to study nature meant to repeat the original sin of Adam,"¹⁴⁶ this prohibition pertained especially to natural science. The study of the natural order retained certain Satanic implications. Interest and intrigue in the natural world was regarded as an inducement away from the proper purpose of life - redemption. Nevertheless, this outlook sustained that latent assumption that the discovery of the secrets of nature might alleviate the human condition

144. C. Webster, op.cit., chapter V.i., 'Dominion Over Nature'.

145. B. Willey, The Seventeenth-Century Background, (London 1934, 1972 edition) p.35.

146. ibid., pp.36-37.

by ultimately liberating men from the consequences of the Fall. Thus, Francis Bacon endeavoured to legitimize the notion that the experimental observation of nature was not necessarily sinful. This conviction, as we shall discover, profoundly influenced Winstanley.

The doctrine of the Fall of Man also inspired the belief that whatever order still pervaded the universe was at best fragile and continually susceptible to dissolution. It was generally agreed that man's sinfulness introduced and perpetuated chaos in the cosmic order.¹⁴⁷ This perspective was set against the ideal of an ordered universe regulated by the 'great chain of being'¹⁴⁸ in which various elements, both spiritual and temporal, existed in a balanced correspondence within a hierarchical ordering of plains. Hence it was deduced that man's sinfulness must have disrupted the orderly functioning of this system.¹⁴⁹ Social and political unrest constituted the most dreaded manifestation of the disarray thus precipitated. Consequently, the constraint of man's sinfulness was regarded as absolutely essential for the preservation of order in society. As Greenleaf has contended, the conviction that prelapsian paradise could be regained only in heaven meant that contemporaries often subscribed to a view in which,

"a premium was put on the maintenance of the existing social order and....any attempt to change it, in the name, for instance, of individual rights and equality, was false, unnatural and sinful."¹⁵⁰

Hence, institutions such as the state

147. E.M. Tillyard, The Elizabethan World Picture, (London 1943, 1963 edition), p.29.

148. See, A.O. Lovejoy, op.cit.

149. See, W.H. Greenleaf, op.cit., chapter 11, especially pp.26-27.

150. ibid., p.55.

and private property were generally revered for their efficacy in restraining human sinfulness.

The most consequential facet of the social theories of Thomas More and Gerrard Winstanley are their respective proposals regarding institutions commonly associated with the regulation of the conduct of sinful man. Undoubtedly, contemporaries derived considerable consolation from the supposition that, despite his degeneracy, man had nevertheless developed a series of social institutions capable of mitigating, if not eradicating, the situation initiated at the Fall. This institutional structure often posited a correlation between the state or political authority, and private property. There existed a strong tradition of belief that the prelapsian condition had been communist and that only after the Fall was the personal appropriation of private property necessarily introduced. It was commonly assumed that previously man had enjoyed a universal right to the fruits of the earth, and that consumption had been restrained by reason with reference to needs.¹⁵¹

Despite recognizing the necessity for private property, subject to certain limitations,¹⁵² thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas nevertheless continued to adhere to an ideal of pristine (and Apostolic) communism. The nearest approximation to this ideal¹⁵³ was believed to persist with the religious orders. However, it was assumed that for the less virtuous majority of men, alternative means of regulating the distribution of property

151. For these themes, see, W.J. MacDonald, 'Communism in Eden', The New Scholasticism, Vol. XX (1946), pp. 101-125.

152. See, A. Parel, 'Aquinas' Theory of Property', in, Theories of Property: Aristotle to the Present, (Ontario 1979).

153. T. Aquinas, Summa Theologiæ, Secunda Secundæ, Qu. 66, - on the accordance of the community of goods with natural law.

were required. It was agreed that not only did man exhibit a propensity to sin, but also that reason and the will had been so detrimentally impaired by the Fall,¹⁵⁴ that man was incapable of self-discipline in restraining his own sinful inclinations. Consequently, institutional control was regarded as just and necessary. Thus, for instance, the church courts were specifically intended to punish 'sin'.¹⁵⁵ But further, as Hill has noted,

"The doctrine of the Fall of Man was central to seventeenth-century explanations of the origin of private property, social inequality, the state, and the monogamous family."¹⁵⁶

As the Fall of Man was cited in justifying social inequality and various forms of subordination, so too, coercion by the state was also accepted and explained in these terms.¹⁵⁷ The institution of private property was regarded as one consequence of the original sin. Since it inevitably existed, its preservation was seen as commensurate with, and dependent upon, that of political authority. Hence the mutual dependence of political authority and private property was represented as a necessary constraint upon the supposedly covetous and ambitious propertyless classes.¹⁵⁸

Clearly, the ancestry of these ideas was long and complicated. According to R.B. Schlatter, Stoic philosophy and Roman Law advanced the conception of private property as a non-natural institution. Further, Schlatter has argued that,

154. See E.M. Tillyard, op.cit., p.81 ff.

155. C.Hill, Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England, chapter VIII, 'The Bawdy Courts'.

156. C.Hill, Milton and the English Revolution, (London 1977), pp.345-346.

157. M.Walzer, The Revolution of the Saints, (London 1965, 1966 edition), p.268.

158. C.Hill, The World Turned Upside Down, (London 1972, 1975 edition), p.155, and passim.

"The Fall of Man provided the social and political theorists of Christendom with a conservative argument more persuasive and subtle than Aristotle's theory of natural inequality and natural slavery."¹⁵⁹

Because Protestantism placed a particularly heavy emphasis upon the social consequences of the Fall, the Reformation only served to reinforce traditional conceptions of the restraining influence of private property and the state. Indeed, M. Walzer has persuasively attributed the dissemination and popularity of Puritan views on social discipline, to the presence in England of an acute apprehension of disorder and wickedness.¹⁶⁰ Hill also has cited this consideration as a reason why many Presbyterians anticipated Hobbes in regarding civil government as the necessary restraint for the depravity of man.¹⁶¹

It is of the utmost consequence that in analysing the human condition, both More and Winstanley questioned, and therefore confronted, certain commonly held assumptions concerning the correct institutional response to fallen human nature. As a preliminary to the advocacy of utopian communism, both theorists were scathingly critical of the efficacy of private property in circumventing man's propensity to sin. Nevertheless, in relinquishing private property and replacing it with communism, both thinkers perhaps recognized a need to compensate popular prejudice by emphasizing the role of other institutions, such as the state and the family, in regulating the conduct of the citizen. As we argued in the previous chapter, rather than necessarily presuming the moral regeneration of man, utopianism

159. R.B. Schlatter, Private Property: The History of an Idea, (London 1951), p.35, and chapter 2 in general.

160. M. Walzer, op.cit., passim, see also, 'Puritanism as a Revolutionary Ideology', H.&T., Vol.3 (1963-1964), pp.59-60, at p.65.

161. C. Hill, op.cit., p.157.

may incline towards institutional means of improving the human condition, and for this reason, the concept obviously proved an attractive medium to both More and Winstanley, for the expression of such ideas.

During the early-modern period, numerous intellectuals devoted considerable attention to the analysis of the nature and consequences of the Fall. However, as time progressed, thought on the Fall did not remain static. This evolution can be illustrated by briefly examining the ideas on the Fall advanced by three thinkers, Richard Hooker, John Milton, and John Locke.

Hooker's attitude elucidates a view which received substantial contemporary endorsement - the abject acceptance that man's own ambition and pride had not only contributed to the Fall, but as an innate and ineradicable characteristic of human nature, also perpetuated mankind's woeful condition. In a lengthy sermon devoted to this subject, Hooker described pride as,

"a vice which cleaveth so fast unto the hearts of men, that if we were to strip ourselves of all faults one by one, we should undoubtedly find it the very last and hardest to put off."¹⁶²

Pride was so maligned for a variety of reasons. It was regarded as the ultimate source of all sinfulness. Through pride Lucifer had fallen and through it he had induced man to fall. The manifestation of pride indicates man's reluctance to reconcile himself to his rightful position in an ordered universe. While humility was constantly counselled, pride seemed central to the human constitution; political ambition and ultimate social chaos were its consequence.

162. R. Hooker, 'A Learned Sermon on the Nature of Pride', (1612), in, The Works of Mr. Richard Hooker, (3 vols.), ed. J. Keble, (Oxford 1888), Vol. 111, p. 602.

Few minds were so profoundly stimulated by the imagery of the Fall than Milton's. Clearly, much of his epic poetry was devoted to the theme of man's fall and redemption, but concern with the cosmic drama also penetrated Milton's social theory. The course of human history, the immediate events of the Civil War, and his own traumatic personal life, were all regarded by Milton as typical of the predicament he described as "the misery that hath bin since Adam."¹⁶³ Milton argued that God had bestowed both reason, and the free will with which to exercise it, upon Adam.¹⁶⁴ God then confronted Adam with temptation. So long as Adam exercised his reason and controlled his will to subdue his passions, he derived great merit from his virtuous abstemious conduct. Yet, in using these same faculties to freely commit the original sin, all such merit was lost. Consequently, contended Milton, it was obvious that man had only himself to blame for the condition in which, since Adam's time, he found himself.

Milton discussed the legacy of the Fall in terms typical of the assumptions of the age. For instance, he insisted that having been born with the innate consequences of original sin,¹⁶⁵ all men inevitably lived out their lives committing sin. Escape from this situation was impossible, and men must be reconciled to it. Milton's assessment of knowledge was similarly pessimistic. He described it as,

"that doom which Adam fell into of knowing good and evill, that is to say of knowing good by evill."¹⁶⁶

163. J. Milton, 'The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce', (1643), Prose Writings, Vol. 11, p. 228.

164. J. Milton, 'Areopagitica', (1644), Prose Writings, Vol. 11, p. 527.

165. J. Milton, 'An Apology Against a Pamphlet', (1642), Prose Writings, Vol. 1, p. 909.

166. J. Milton, 'Areopagitica', Prose Writings, Vol. 11, p. 514.

Perhaps most significantly, in discussing contract theory, Milton argued that men subjected themselves to the authority of government because they recognized that in their fallen condition, the restraints such an arrangement provided were the only available means of averting chaos.¹⁶⁷ Ultimately, however, Milton tempered this sobering appreciation of the human condition with the usual expression of hope :-

"All which, being lost in Adam, was recover'd with gain by the merits of Christ."¹⁶⁸

John Locke's evaluation of the Fall of Man indicates certain changes in the worldview, to which he contributed so much. In particular, Locke questioned an assumption which had traditionally sustained man's self-depreciation - the notion that the responsibility for the original sin was innately transmitted to all men.¹⁶⁹ Locke accepted that Adam had fallen from a pristine condition of considerable advantage, and had forfeited bliss and immortality on behalf of all men. Yet Locke could not accept that the guilt for Adam's original sin was to be borne by all subsequent generations. Locke's was a just and good God whose righteousness was not commensurate with the view that men were necessarily sinful. Thus Locke concluded that, "though all die in Adam, yet non are truly punished, but for their own deeds."¹⁷⁰ By implication, Locke refrained from the presumption that, this being the case, men would nevertheless

167. J. Milton, 'The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates', (1649), Prose Writings, Vol. 111, pp. 198-199.

168. J. Milton, 'Tetrachordon', (1645), Prose Writings, Vol. 11, p. 587.

169. J. Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, (1690), Works, Vols. 1 and 11, Book 1 'Of Innate Notions'.

170. J. Locke, The Reasonableness of Christianity, (1695), Works, Vol. VII, p. 8; cf., Essays on the Law of Nature, ed. W. von Leyden, (Oxford 1954), n. 2, p. 139.

sin profusely. Such an opinion, quite obviously, contributed to a growing optimism concerning the human condition which was some distance from the abjectness of either Thomas More or Richard Hooker.

The period which separated More and Winstanley witnessed a revision, albeit gradual, of the worldview and the manner in which mankind's predicament was apprehended. Slowly, the early-modern period fostered the dissipation of the feeling of helplessness that was generated in part by subscribing to an essentially pessimistic doctrine of the Fall. As E.M.W. Tillyard has maintained, it had been traditionally assumed that,

"the Fall... was primarily responsible for the tyranny of fortune, and, this being so, man could not shift the blame but must bear his punishment as he can."¹⁷¹

Because man was conscious of and admitted to, his own sinfulness, he was naturally discouraged from actively attempting to take determined measures to change the situation.¹⁷² The spirit of the age in the early sixteenth century was still very much one of passive acceptance of the predicament. However, the impact of a variety of factors, including the Reformation, the discovery of the new cosmology and the 'scientific revolution', Baconianism, Cartesianism, and ultimately Locke's denial of the innate transmission of sin, all contributed to, and illustrated, profound changes in mental attitudes and the worldview, which eventually brought about a more optimistic perception of the human condition. For Thomas More, such an outlook would have been incomprehensible. Winstanley, however, seems to have been

171. E.M.W. Tillyard, op.cit., p.62.

172. C.Hill, op.cit., p.152.

influenced by the transition of ideas. With far greater optimism than More could have envisaged, Winstanley was convinced that man possessed sufficient potential to devise the institutional means of radically amending the human condition. Yet, significantly, he advanced this scheme with reference to a restoration from an erstwhile fallen condition.

iv A Biographical Footnote

It is not intended to suggest that social theory is necessarily the embodiment of personal anxiety. Nevertheless, should a theorist be particularly perturbed by his impression of mankind's predicament, or should he be markedly sympathetic to the preoccupations of the age, his writings are likely to manifest this reaction. The available biographical details of the lives of More and Winstanley are well documented.¹⁷³ and it is unnecessary to explore this avenue at all comprehensively here. However, one aspect of the life of each seems pertinent to their contemplation of the human condition, - before producing a social theory both More and Winstanley had experienced a spiritual crisis.

The question of More's vocational inclinations has been the subject of considerable dispute. His Catholic apologists¹⁷⁴ especially, have claimed that he relinquished the monastic ideal with great reluctance. Undoubtedly, during the period in which he faced this vocational decision, (around 1504), More experienced a deep religious trauma provoked by his concern

173. Thomas More has been the subject of a vast number of biographies, the most reliable of which is probably still, R.W. Chambers, Thomas More, (London 1935). (For a critique of Chambers' interpretation of 'Utopia', see below, pp. 142-143.) For details of Gerrard Winstanley's life, see, G.H. Sabine, introduction to, The Works of Gerrard Winstanley, (New York 1941), pp.4-21; D.W. Petegorsky, Left-Wing Democracy in the English Civil War, (New York 1940, 1972 edition), pp.122-125; C.Hill, introduction to, Winstanley: The Law of Freedom, (London 1973), pp.11-12, 18-20, 31-35; J. Alsop, 'Winstanley's Later Life', P.&P., No.82 (1979), pp.73-81; and for a particularly detailed account, O. Lutaud, Winstanley: Socialisme et Christianisme sous Cromwell, (Paris 1976).

174. See below, pp.136-156. The views of More's more recent Catholic apologists often conflict with the explanation proffered by his close friend Erasmus who argued that More could not face the prospect of a celibate life but instead desired to marry, see, Desiderius Erasmus, 'To Ulrich Hutten', (1519), Opus Epistolarum, ed. P.S. and H.M. Allen, (Oxford 1922), Vol.1V, especially p.18.

for his spiritual state. Although studying law at the time, More spent a considerable period living with the monks of the Charterhouse, apparently indecisively testing his vocation.¹⁷⁵ In a letter to his mentor, John Colet, More expressed doubts concerning his confidence in the prospects of his leading a virtuous life :-

"By following your footsteps I had escaped almost from the very gates of hell, and now, driven by some force and necessity, I am falling back again into gruesome darkness."¹⁷⁶

It seems that this conviction of his own inadequacy, coupled with certain institutional shortcomings evident in life at the Charterhouse, contributed to More's faltering regard for the clerical life.¹⁷⁷ Furthermore, it appeared to More that the contemplative life would prove difficult to reconcile with his developing humanist commitment to the active service of society.¹⁷⁸ Nevertheless, More eventually developed a lifestyle which accommodated both his active involvement in public life, and his profound spirituality.

175. For this impression, see, N. Harpsfield, The Life and Death of Sir Thomas Moore, (1557), ed. E.V. Hitchcock, E.E.T.S., O.S. CLXXXVI, (1932, Oxford 1963 edition), p.17. (M.S. to 1932).

176. T. More, 'Thomas More to his John Colet', Selected Letters, p.4.

177. T. More, 'To a Monk', (1519-1520), Selected Letters, passim.

178. See, e.g., A.B. Ferguson, The Articulate Citizen and the English Renaissance, (Durham N.C. 1965), p.182. Undoubtedly, More regarded the decision to enter royal service as a considerable dilemma, see, J.H. Hexter, More's Utopia: The Biography of an Idea, (Princeton 1952), pp.146-155. However, recently several historians have supported the thesis that, with respect to his career, More was not immune to natural ambition, see, G.R. Elton, 'Thomas More, Councillor', in, St. Thomas More: Action and Contemplation, ed. R.S. Sylvester, (New Haven 1972), reproduced in, G.R. Elton, Studies in Tudor and Stuart Politics and Government, (2 vols.), Vol.1, (Cambridge 1974); J.J. Scarisbrick, 'Thomas More: The King's Good Servant', Thought, Fordham University Quarterly, Vol.LII (1977), pp.249-268; J.A. Guy, The Public Career of St. Thomas More, (London 1980).

He embarked upon a successful legal and political career, married, and yet satisfied his religious inclinations by constructing at his Chelsea home the 'new building', in which he housed a chapel and his library, and where he devoted each Friday to study and spiritual exercises. Throughout his adult life More wore a hair shirt and regularly practiced other forms of mortification. ¹⁷⁹ So we have here a man privy to the social and political problems of his age, yet acutely sensitive to the spiritual insecurity of human life. As we shall discover, this awareness of the impact of both the worldly and the other-worldly upon mankind's predicament characterized Thomas More's social philosophy.

The details of Winstanley's life suggest that his resort to radical social theory was partly inspired by a concern for spiritual salvation which, for the age, was not uncommon. Born in Wigan in 1609, the son of a mercer, Winstanley received a grammar school education. Evidence of his family's sectarianism may explain Winstanley's failure to attend university and subsequent disparaging appreciation of formal higher ¹⁸⁰ education. Instead, Winstanley was sent to London to be apprenticed to the Merchant Taylor's Company; an experience ¹⁸¹ which may well have introduced him to political radicalism. During the 1640's, a decidedly unpropitious time for cloth merchants, Winstanley suffered a business failure which possibly

179. For these details, see, W. Roper, The Lyfe and Death of Sir Sir Thomas Moore, knighte, (1555-1557), ed. E. V. Hitchcock, E. E. T. S., O. S. CXCVII, (1935), pp. 17-30. (M. S. to 1626).

180. C. Hill, op. cit., p. 11.

181. See, S. R. Smith, 'London Apprentices as Seventeenth-Century Adolescents', P. & P., No. 61 (1973), pp. 149-161.

prompted repulsion from and disillusion with commerce.¹⁸² At the same time, his faith was apparently undermined. He abandoned 'conventional' Puritanism for Baptism,¹⁸³ and finally Seekerism. It is possible that he became a lay preacher. After becoming a freeman in 1637, Winstanley married in 1640.¹⁸⁴ This union might well have proved a further source of emotional stress upon his troubled soul.

After a long period spent herding cattle at Cobham in Surrey, Winstanley entered into print by publishing a series of essentially mystical pamphlets which explored the causes of his own and mankind's lamentable circumstances. The seeds of social radicalism having already been sown, Winstanley formed an association with the notorious radical William Everard, and together these two founded the Digger colony with the intention of instigating the communal cultivation of common and waste land. The period following the collapse of the venture found Winstanley in the hire of the mad prophetess Lady Eleanor Douglas (Davis), whom he heartily chastised for her pride.¹⁸⁵ His last work, the utopian The Law of Freedom, was published in 1652 and thenceforth, apart from being named in a lawsuit in 1660,¹⁸⁶ Winstanley faded into obscurity.

182. G.H.Sabine, op.cit., p.4.

183. G.Winstanley, Truth Lifting Up its Head Above Scandals, (Sabine), p.141.

184. To Susan King; evidence for the existence of this marriage is available for the periods before and after Winstanley's radicalism. However, his wife's name does not appear amongst the signatories to the various Digger tracts. Perhaps Winstanley's radicalism, tempered by patriarchal sexism, coincided with a period of estrangement.

185. See, P.Hardacre, 'Gerrard Winstanley in 1650', Huntington Library Quarterly, Vol.XXII (1959), pp.345-349. J.Alsop, op.cit., argues that friction probably arose as a consequence of Winstanley's mismanagement of the estates finances.

186. J.Alsop, op.cit., has displayed that this does not imply that Winstanley achieved considerable prosperity. Previous commentators had usually presumed this to be the case.

From the initial assumption that Winstanley's religious ideas closely approximated those of the Quakers, commentators such as R.T.Vann and A.Brink have argued that eventually Winstanley became a Friend.¹⁸⁷ Vann has suggested that the Gerrard Winstanley whose death was registered by the Friends on 10th September 1676, aged 62, was indeed the social radical.¹⁸⁸ This, plus evidence that Winstanley became, of all things, a corn chandler whose developing conservatism seems to be verified by the accusation of the intractable Lawrence Clarkson, that Winstanley had developed into "a real Tithe-gatherer of propriety",¹⁸⁹ all apparently confirms that Winstanley must have renounced important aspects of his former ideals.¹⁹⁰ Thus, in a number of respects, Winstanley's life turned full circle. His phase of fervent radicalism undoubtedly accorded with the consummation of a series of events which stimulated such spiritual insecurity that Winstanley was provoked into serious contemplation of the human condition, whereas otherwise it seems unlikely that he would have done so.

187. R.T.Vann, 'From Radicalism to Quakerism: Gerrard Winstanley and Friends', Journal of the Friends' Historical Society, Vol.49 (1959), pp.41-46; 'Diggers and Quakers: a Further Note', Journal of the Friends' Historical Society, Vol.50 (1962), pp.65-68; 'The Later Life of Gerrard Winstanley', J.H.I., Vol.XXVI (1965), pp.133-136; A.Brink, 'Gerrard Winstanley', Journal of the Friends Historical Society, Vol.49 (1960), pp.179-180. See also, E.Bernstein, Cromwell and Communism, trans.H.J.Stenning (New York 1895, 1963 edition) p.190; L.H.Berens, The Digger Movement in the Days of the Commonwealth, (London 1906, 1961 edition), chapter 4; R.M.Jones, Studies in Mystical Religion, (London 1909), p.494; W.S.Hudson, 'Gerrard Winstanley and the Early Quakers', Church History, Vol.XII (1943), pp.177-194.

188. The apparent incongruity between Winstanley's birthdate (1609) and his supposed age (62) at death (1676) is noted by C.Hill, op.cit., pp.32-33, 70. J.Alsop, op.cit., p.76, argues that the disparity is of no consequence.

189. L.Clarkson, The Lost Sheep Found, (1660), p.27.

190. This general thesis is developed by J.Alsop, op.cit.

During the 1640's Winstanley was tested by a number of misfortunes which were likely to inspire any contemporary to think seriously about his spiritual condition. Winstanley's 'Puritan' family background, his financial insolvency, and the hint of marital upheavals, are typical of the type of occurrence which was likely to contribute to spiritual despair.¹⁹¹ As Keith Thomas has noted, a widespread belief in providence meant that individuals were often inclined to interpret local disaster as implying their own imminent damnation. So, in Thomas's words,

"The correct reaction on the part of a believer stricken by ill fortune was therefore to search himself in order to discover the moral defect which had provoked God's wrath."¹⁹²

Contemporaries were aware that, as Calvin had argued, religious despair was symptomatic of the fallen individual. The requisite response was the achievement of personal rejuvenation in the midst of chaos.¹⁹³ As R.M. Jones maintained, it seems probable that Winstanley underwent social and spiritual experiences similar to those of other radicals such as George Fox, John Saltmarsh, and William Dell. According to Jones, such individuals were,

"the subjects of extraordinary psychic experiences, and they were peculiarly responsive to the suggestions with which they were furnished by the small mystical sects of the time and the current mystical literature."¹⁹⁴

As we shall see, in Winstanley's case, personal crises prompted introspection

191. See, e.g., B.S. Capp, The Fifth Monarchy Men, (London 1972) pp. 97-98, and, M. Walzer, op.cit., p. 78.

192. K.V. Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic, p. 96, and in general, pp. 90-103, 'The Divine Origin of Misfortune'.

193. M. Walzer, op.cit., pp. 81-84.

194. R.M. Jones, op.cit., p. 495, see also, pp. 467, 493-499.

and spiritual despair, the resolution of which he interpreted as the means of solving the current national crisis, and the general malaise of the human condition.

PART TWO THOMAS MORE

CHAPTER THREE : INTERPRETATIONS OF THOMAS MORE'S IDEAS:A
CRITIQUE

The ideological cleavage apparent in the critical evaluation of Utopia (for example, More has been seen variously as a medieval Catholic and an incipient Marxist) indicates the perplexity produced by the work. The atmosphere of Utopia is occasionally disconcerting, and all but the most audacious reader would be forced to confess that he is but a lesser mind attempting to penetrate a deeper intellect. Although Utopia is a short book, it is nevertheless a concentrated discussion of many perennial issues of political thought, moral philosophy, and theology. The very vitality of Utopia derives from an awareness that no man can fully comprehend its meaning. However, far from discouraging aspirant interpreters, the profundity of More's creation has stimulated the conviction that the attempt to understand it is all the more worthwhile.

The analysis of Utopia has been concentrated on two levels, and it has been necessary to penetrate the superficial strata in order to participate in the more complex discourse taking place at the deeper level. The initial difficulty with Utopia concerns various literary devices, the dialogic form and the internal structure of the work. The most obvious question to arise from this level of analysis has been whether More intended the prescriptive content of Utopia to be taken seriously. Once this problem has been considered it is possible to confront the major issues of the Utopian discourse. Of these, four predominate. Firstly, Utopian communism and More's conception of private property have obviously attracted considerable interest. Hence debate has centred on the problem of which of the two More regarded as the most appropriate institution for the restraint

of men and for the sustenance of civil society. The second major sphere of contention has been the analysis of the position of reason relative to revelation in Utopian theology. More's interest in the capacity of reason to perceive divine truths has led to considerable discussion of the standing of his Catholicism and moral philosophy in the light of the views advanced in Utopia. Thirdly, Utopia has fostered various evaluations of More's appreciation of the state and political authority, and particularly of the ideals which he believed the state ought to promote. Fourthly, various social issues came under More's purview. Consequently, his advocacy of social reform, and more especially, the reasons for it, have prompted widespread debate.

Much of the controversy attending the meaning of Utopia has been stimulated by More's construction of the work in the form of a dialogue. The two principal protagonists in this debate are the persona 'More' and the character 'Raphael Hythlodæus'. The name of the latter is an insight into the conundrum that Utopia presents to its interpreters, because in the Greek sense his name means 'nonsense', while in the biblical sense Raphael¹ was a salvation bringer.

The dialogue in Utopia is structured around, firstly,² the 'Dialogue of Counsel', which occupies a large portion of Book I, and secondly, the 'Discourse on Utopia', which constitutes all but the last three paragraphs of Book II. In the Dialogue of Counsel, Hythlodæus presents a series of objections to persona³ More's contention that a philosopher ought to enter royal

1. See, Utopia, pp.301-302.

2. After J.H.Hexter, 'The Composition of Utopia', his introduction to, Utopia, (hereafter cited as 'Introduction'). See below, pp.179-188.

3. This discussion purportedly took place at the home of Peter

service. Hythlodæus replies in a manner which suggests his complete disillusion with the entire fabric of contemporary society. Towards the end of Book I he suggests that communism is the only substantial remedy to the social problems of contemporary Christendom. This proposition receives a hearty rebuff from persona More, who advances the standard Aristotelian objections that communism can only result in an insufficient supply of goods, idleness, and the dissolution of established political authority.⁴ In response, Hythlodæus proceeds to challenge persona More's claims by describing life in the ideal commonwealth of Utopia, as an instance of the efficacy of communism. At the very end of the entire work, persona More responds with two crucial speeches which are worth quoting in full :-

"When Raphael had finished his story, many things came into my mind which seemed very absurdly established in the customs and laws of the people described - not only their method of waging war, their ceremonies and religion, as well as their other institutions, but most of all that feature which is the principal foundation of the whole structure. I mean their common life and subsistence - without any exchange of money. This latter alone utterly overthrows all the nobility, magnificence, splendor, and majesty which are the true glories and ornaments of the commonwealth."⁵

"Meanwhile, though in other respects he is a man of the most undoubted learning as well as of the greatest knowledge of human affairs, I cannot agree with all that he said. But I readily admit that there are very many features of the Utopian commonwealth which it is easier for me to wish for in our countries than to have any hope of seeing realized."⁶

Giles, the eminent Humanist. Giles plays a minor role in the conversation.

4. Utopia, p.107.

5. ibid., p.245.

6. ibid., pp.245-247.

Clearly, here we confront the fundamental question that so many critics of Utopia have attempted to answer. Why did More write a book that was so critical of the practices and institutions of his own society, and which presented a detailed account of the virtues of communism, and then insert a retraction of this advocacy into the mouth of the character who supposedly voiced More's own viewpoint? Did More seriously propose that the bulk of the institutions outlined in the Discourse on Utopia ought to be established in contemporary Europe? As we shall see during the course of this chapter, interpreters have been divided on this crucial issue. Four 'schools', those of the jeu d'esprit, the Catholic, the Humanist Social Reformer, and the Emergent Bourgeois Democrat, are agreed, although for different reasons, that More did not seriously advocate the adoption of Utopian institutions. Two other schools, the Anticipatory Socialist, and J.H. Hexter's 'New Orthodoxy', disagree, and contend that More spoke through the character Hythlodæus, rather than through the persona More.

In discussing the sequence according to which Utopia was composed, Hexter has presented evidence that proffers a solution to this dilemma. Hexter's analysis is based upon both circumstantial and internal evidence. He suggests that Utopia is divisible into four sections. The first is the introduction to Book I, in which More describes the circumstances of his visit to the Netherlands, his stay with Peter Giles, and his meeting with Hythlodæus. The second section is the bulk of Book II, the 'Discourse on Utopia'. Both these sections were written during 1515 while More was in the Netherlands. On

7. J.H. Hexter, Introduction.

8. See, E.J. Surtz, 'St. Thomas More and His Utopian Embassy of 1515', Catholic Historical Journal, Vol. 39 (1953), pp. 272-298.

Returning to London More stole whatever time he could from his other responsibilities to complete the work by inserting the third section, the 'Dialogue of Counsel', and the fourth, the conclusion to Book II. So the work was hastily completed in 1516. The significant point to emerge from all this is that in its original form, the Discourse on Utopia was not attributed to Hythlodæus, and the work as a whole ended on a note of praise for communism. The objections to communism, attributed to persona More, were therefore a later amendment. As Hexter suggests, it appears that More included a character who went by his own name to act as his own 'advocatus diaboli'. Thus Hexter concludes that More

"did not tailor the answer to fit the objections. In Through-the-Looking-Glass fashion he tailored the objections to fit the answers he had already given."¹⁰

This evidence adds considerable substance to the view that More did genuinely intend to propose most of the institutional reforms suggested in the Discourse on Utopia.

As we have already suggested, the significance of the dialogic form adopted by More has been explained in a number of ways. P.A. Duhamel, for instance, has been critical of those who regard Utopia as an anticipation of modern liberal thought. Instead, he has claimed that More's employment of the dialogic form confirms the medievalism of the work. In a thoroughgoing analysis, Duhamel discusses a number of themes that, as we shall discover, are pertinent to the Catholic interpretation of Utopia. Duhamel contends that More used the Scholastic Method in his construction of the Utopian dialogue. By this means, and

9. See, 'Thomas More to Peter Giles, Greetings', Utopia, pp. 39-41.

10. J.H. Hexter, More's Utopia: The Biography of an Idea, (Princeton 1952), p. 42.

in particular via the irony that it afforded, More demonstrated the inadequacies of his own society.¹¹ Duhamel claims that More's major concern was to embark upon the essentially speculative exercise of investigating how closely a community ruled by reason could approximate the ideal of a state guided by Christian revelation.¹² Hence Duhamel registers concern that Utopia has been repeatedly misunderstood by modern-day readers who have failed to comprehend the lines upon which it was constructed. He argues that, conversely,

"The learned reader of More's day understood that More was actually demonstrating the limits of reason in its attempts to define an ideal state, and that he was not actually defining an ideal, which for him certainly, would have required the consideration of material available through revelation."¹³

This conclusion accords closely with the impression advanced by More's Catholic apologists.

The problem which Duhamel ultimately fails to resolve concerns the degree to which More believed that a society constructed upon the principles of reason could approximate a state upon which Christian revelation had been bestowed. The extent to which the Utopians were prepared for the reception of Christianity¹⁴ seems to suggest that More believed this approximation to be far more substantial than many commentators, including Duhamel, are able to admit.

An alternative view of the dialogue has been advanced by D.M. Bevington.¹⁵ Had Bevington's analysis commanded a wider

11. P.A. Duhamel, 'Medievalism in More's Utopia', Studies in Philology, Vol. L11 (1955), pp. 99-126, at pp. 99, 105.

12. ibid., p. 103.

13. ibid., p. 105.

14. This is acknowledged by Duhamel, ibid., p. 111.

15. D.M. Bevington, 'The Dialogue in Utopia: Two Sides to the

following it might well have stifled much of the vigorous discussion of More's own attitude to the Utopian discourse. Bevington contends that the dialogue constitutes More's impartial presentation of two contradictory positions. By using the dialogic form, More could therefore analyse both cases without committing himself to either. Thus Bevington states that,

"What we hear in Utopia is the dispassionate voice of the author, laying before the world his view of the facts and of the philosophical basis for a decision."¹⁶

While this is probably a tenable view of the Dialogue of Counsel, in which More gave witness to his own indecision concerning the moral considerations attending the question of whether to enter the service of Henry VIII,¹⁷ it may not be so appropriate to the interpretation of the contents of Book II. If Utopia is accepted as an impassive intellectual exercise of the kind suggested by Bevington, there follows an obvious temptation to go further, by dismissing the work as a jeu d'esprit.

The dialogic structure is one reason for the complexity of Utopia; another is More's style. For instance, E. McCutcheon has commented upon More's consistent use of 'litotes'. Thus she argues that More continually affirmed points by denying their
¹⁸contrary. Irony is integral to the ambiguity of Utopia, and

Question', Studies in Philology, Vol. LVIII (1961), pp. 496-509. Cf., E. J. Surtz, The Praise of Pleasure, (Cambridge Massachusetts 1957), pp. 182-184, and, 'Utopia as a Work of Literary Art', his introduction to, Utopia, (hereafter cited as 'Introduction'), pp. cxxxiv-cxlvii.

16. D. M. Bevington, op. cit., p. 508.

17. See, J. H. Hexter, More's Utopia: The Biography of an Idea, pp. 146-155, and Introduction, pp. lxxxix-cxii, and below, pp

18. E. McCutcheon, 'Denying the Contrary: More's Use of Litotes' in the Utopia', Moreana, Vols. 31-32 (1971), pp. 107-121, especially at p. 109.

this is obviously an obstacle to ready comprehension.

The task of analysing Utopia is further complicated by the recognition that More incorporated a compound of irony, satire, and rhetoric into the dialogue. This, of course, is something of a two-edged sword which might be regarded as providing either a clue or an obstacle to the understanding of the text. Further, if this feature of More's style is accepted as a clue to interpretation, it can be cited as either an indication of either the seriousness or the jocular¹⁹ of the work. Whatever line is adopted, it cannot be denied that More's style adds considerably to the complexity of the²⁰ interpretation of Utopia.

Those who have analysed in depth More's use of irony and satire have usually concluded that More employed such a style in order to stimulate his readers into a critical reappraisal of contemporary morals and institutions. For example, A.R. Heiserman argued that,

"All of More's ideas and inventions were determined by a formal principle - to teach virtue by an attack on vice through a *via diversa*."²¹

Similarly, T.I. White has recently²² described Utopia as "a *jeu d'esprit sérieux*", because of More's use of fiction and satire in his attempt to reform contemporary morality.

19. A.R. Heiserman, 'Satire in Utopia', Publications of the Modern Language Association of America, Vol. 78 (1963), pp. 163-174, at p. 163. Heiserman argues that satire applies to both instances.

20. See, e.g., ibid., p. 168, and, I.N. Stevens, 'Aesthetic Distance in the Utopia', Moreana, Vol. XI (1974), pp. 13-14, at pp. 16-17.

21. A.R. Heiserman, op.cit., p. 174.

22. T.I. White, 'Festivitas, Utilitas, et Opes: The Concluding Irony and Philosophical Purpose of Thomas More's Utopia', in, Quincentennial Essays on St. Thomas More, ed. M.J. Moore, (North Carolina 1978), p. 144.

The consequence of contemplating Utopia from a stylistic point of view has been an inclination to concentrate upon Book II. Here, of course the relevance of the dialogic structure is much to the fore, and the question again arises as to how seriously More advocated the proposals outlined in this section of the discourse. While it has been agreed that More's use of satire, irony, and rhetoric was an integral part of the critique of his own society outlined in Book I, it has also been argued, especially by I.N. Stevens, that these literary devices enabled More to detach himself from the ameliorative propositions advanced in Book II.²³ Stevens, like many critics who have concentrated upon the style and structure of Utopia, does not commit himself to a solution to the problem, namely, whether More seriously intended to propose the adoption of institutions such as communism. To claim that Utopia was a satire upon contemporary society is quite correct; but to persevere only so far with the analysis is too limited an approach because it fails to prompt an investigation into More's view of the causes of contemporary social ills, and therefore does not recognize the comprehensive solution to these problems outlined in Utopia. To argue, as Heiserman does, that

"Utopia is not an 'ideal commonwealth' but one invented to serve a satiric function."²⁴

25

- leaves unresolved the

question of what More identified as the virtuous alternative to the lifestyle which he so clearly castigated.

One possible means of gauging More's intention in writing

23. I.N. Stevens, op.cit., p.24, and passim.

24. A.R. Heiserman, op.cit., p.171.

25. Cf., R.C. Elliot, 'The Shape of Utopia', English Literary History, Vol. XXX (1963), pp.317-334, at p.333.

Utopia is to examine the parerga - the prefatory letters and verses submitted by More's Humanist admirers for inclusion in the early editions of the work. As P.R.Allen has correctly argued, these pieces served both to recommend the work to a wider readership, and to identify Utopia with the Humanist commitment to social reform.²⁶ However, the resort to irony, satire, and rhetoric that is so evident in Utopia, is also present within the prefatory letters. Thus the process of discerning More's true position would also seem to entail the further process of attempting to discern whether his fellow Humanists truly believed that More seriously advocated the proposals contained in the Utopian discourse! According to one view, Allen's, the letters do indeed suggest that Utopia was regarded by More's peers as a work of practical philosophy. Conversely, R.S.Sylvester has argued that although More's friends may have recognized the validity of his proposals, they also shared with him the belief that Utopian institutions could never be implemented in contemporary Europe.²⁷ An examination of the letters in question seems to corroborate Allen's case rather than Sylvester's.

In general the Humanists who contributed to the prefatory letters did not deny the humorous elements in Utopia. For instance, More and Giles indulged in a joke concerning the recent whereabouts of Hythlodæus.²⁸ Nevertheless, More's

26. P.R.Allen, 'Utopia and European Humanism: The Function of the Prefatory Letters and Verses', Studies in the Renaissance, Vol.10 (1963), pp.91-107.

27. R.S.Sylvester, 'Si Hythlodæo Credimas: Vision and Revision in Thomas More's Utopia', Soundings, Vol.51 (1968), pp.272-289, at pp.277-279.

28. 'Thomas More to Peter Giles, Greetings', in, Utopia, p.43, and, 'Thomas More to Peter Giles, His Friend, Greetings', pp.251-253.

response seems to confirm the impression that although Utopia contained a number of absurdities, he was prepared to defend²⁹ the core of his proposals for an ideal commonwealth.

The Humanist community was not only prepared to acclaim More's³⁰ personal attributes of learning and piety, but also to testify to the sagacity of his proposals. For instance, William Budé commented that the communism, love of peace, and contempt of materialism which was so characteristic of the Utopians, all accorded with their ready acceptance of Christianity. Budé went on to say :-

"Would that the inhabitants of heaven for their own name's sake would cause these..... principles of Utopian legislation to be fixed in the minds of all mortals.... You would immediately see pride, avarice, mad strife, and almost all the wound-inflicting darts of the Stygian adversary fall to the ground and lie inert."³¹

Budé was in no doubt that the Utopians must indeed have merited heavenly³² grace. Jerome Busleyden also praised Utopia. He described the island as,

"that ideal of a commonwealth, the pattern and perfect model, whose equal has never been seen anywhere in the world for the soundness of its constitution, for its perfection, and for its desirability."³³

Busleyden too went on to recommend Utopia as a pattern for the reform of European society.

The circumstantial evidence of the process by which More

29. ibid., pp.249-251.

30. See the letters of Budé, Desmarais, and Busleyden.

31. 'William Budé to Thomas Lupset, Englishmen, Greetings', p.11.

32. ibid., pp.13-15.

33. 'Jerome Busleyden to Thomas More, Greetings', p.35.

wrote Utopia, coupled with the reception of the work by his fellow Humanists, therefore suggests that More was indeed committed to the notion that the human predicament could be improved only by the adoption of those institutions decribed in Utopia. This is the view of Utopia that we shall advance, with certain refinements, during the next three chapters.

However, before proceeding with our own analysis of Utopia, it is necessary to give some impression of the present state of a very substantial debate concerning the meaning of the work. For the purposes of clarity and organization, individual contributors to this debate will be assigned to one of six 'schools'.³⁴ These schools have not merely been chosen as a device for imposing some sort of order upon the existing argument. Within the debate, the battle lines have often been fairly clearly drawn. Individual critics have been as conscious of their own allies as they have of their antagonists. So it has often been usual for individuals to subscribe to a number of general principles, which, for the purposes of the present exercise, we shall assume to be characteristic of particular schools.

34. See above, pp.119-120.

i "Utopia" as a jeu d'esprit

The notion that More did not intend Utopia to be taken seriously is hardly novel. During More's polemical confrontation with a number of Protestant Reformers, Tyndale and Frith both believed that they had a sound case when they presented More with the accusation that his religious works were as frivolous as his 'poetic' Utopia.³⁵ Some 450 years later, this view of Utopia is still much in evidence.

To suggest that Utopia is a jeu d'esprit can mean one of several things. For instance, the work may be regarded as a witty and intellectual exercise in evaluating a series of often speculative philosophical propositions. Alternatively, it may be assumed that Utopia was written entirely in jest, that it was not taken seriously by its author, and that it was not intended to be taken seriously by its readers. Finally, Utopia may be dismissed as a flight of fancy which is ultimately meaningless and incomprehensible. All these views have been advanced by this school of critics of Utopia. Their one point of agreement is, however, the contention that More must be detached from Utopia because it is impossible to ascertain whether or not he seriously advocated the views expressed there.

The paradigmatic instance of the interpretation which regards Utopia as a jeu d'esprit is that advanced by C.S. Lewis. The basis of Lewis's case is his belief that Utopia ought to be perceived as a piece of 'literature' as opposed to a "consistently serious philosophical treatise."³⁶ Hence, in a famous passage, Lewis describes Utopia as,

35. See, R. Pineas, Thomas More and Tudor Polemics, (Bloomington 1968), pp. 92, 186. For Tyndale's vitriolic appraisal, see, An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue, (1531), ed. H. Walter, Parker Society, Vol. 38, (Cambridge 1850), p. 263.

36. C.S. Lewis, English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, (Oxford 1954), p. 168.

"a holiday work, a spontaneous overflow of intellectual high spirits, a revel of debate, paradox, comedy and (above all) of invention,..."³⁷

Consequently, Lewis argues that its dialogic form and inconsistency will ultimately thwart any attempt to interpret the work as political theory.

The temptation to regard Utopia as an incomprehensible work has, in certain cases, proved overwhelming. For example, R.S. Johnson seems to have structured an entire book around this theme.³⁸ Similarly, C. Jenkins has accounted for the difficulties encountered in interpreting Utopia by classing it as "a phantasy after the ancient model."³⁹ J.W. Allen advanced another variation upon this theme. He argued that More was so sceptical of achieving reforms, that his book failed to propose any remedial measures whatsoever.⁴⁰

In 1945 H.W. Donner provided a rather more reasoned case for regarding Utopia as a jeu d'esprit. Donner's contention that the seriousness of Utopia had previously been overplayed was directed against two views of the work, which at the time of his writing, profoundly disturbed him. One was an interpretation advanced during the inter-war years by a group of German historians⁴¹ who had charged More with writing a manifesto for English imperialism. The other was Karl Kautsky's socialist analysis of Utopia.⁴² Although Donner admitted that Utopia

37. ibid., p.169.

38. R.S. Johnson, More's Utopia: Ideal and Illusion, (New Haven 1969).

39. C. Jenkins, Sir Thomas More, (Canterbury 1935), pp.19-20.

40. J.W. Allen, A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century, (1928, London 1961 edition), pp.153-154.

41. H.W. Donner, Introduction to Utopia, (London 1945), and, see below, p.329.

42. K. Kautsky, Thomas More and His Utopia, trans. H.J. Stenning, (1927, New York 1959 edition), first published as, Thomas More

contained an element of serious recommendation which is attributable to More's humanistic optimism, he preferred to emphasize the phantasy and entertainment value of Utopia. Within this outline, Donner argued that Utopia is divided in its purpose. On the one hand, Book I is seen as a serious commentary by a Humanist reformer upon a number of pressing social problems. On the other hand, Donner believed Book II to have been written in sport.

Despite this initial analysis, Donner appeared a little confused as to the exact lines of division between prescription and jest in Utopia. Thus he argued that

"With characteristic optimism he left it to his readers to decide which parts of the book were seriously intended and which were spoken in sport."⁴³

This, however, seems an unduly careless practice for More to have adopted, particularly as the dialogic form in which he wrote might obviously confuse his readers. Nevertheless, with respect to two crucial aspects of Utopia, Donner felt confident enough to commit himself quite categorically. The first of these is communism, on this matter Donner said (paraphrasing More),

"Raphael Hythloday's argument in favour of 'cure' is allowed to get the better of More's own, which is that we should so continue that 'what you cannot turn to good, so to order it that it be not very bad', and which is dismissed by Raphael as effecting at the very best no more than a 'mitigation' of all evil. Without this deception there would have been no Utopia, or if there had, it must be taken to be More's own ideal."⁴⁴

und sein Utopie, (Stuttgart 1887).

43. H.W. Donner, op. cit., pp. 17-18.

44. ibid., p. 71, see also, pp. 66-74.

The second of these controversial issues is the natural religion of Utopia. Here Donner argued that Christian revelation must necessarily surpass the religion of Utopia. So according to Donner, More did not seriously propose either communism or a religion based upon reason.

As we shall presently discover, the two issues of communism and natural religion in Utopia have been of considerable consequence to the Catholic interpretation. In general, Catholic interpreters of Utopia have been anxious to assert that More did not seriously advocate the adoption of either of these two institutions in contemporary Christendom. So the argument that More had merely written a jeu d'esprit has held an obvious attraction to Catholic opinion. Equally, Donner's citation of four Catholic analyses of Utopia,⁴⁵ to sustain his claim that the model of Utopian natural religion was far from More's ideal, confirms the proximity of the jeu d'esprit and Catholic schools.

The notion that Utopia is merely a jeu d'esprit is not intuitively attractive. Certainly More was a man capable of immense humour, and this is much in evidence in Utopia, but it would not have become the man to have practiced a hoax on this scale. The circumstances of its composition suggest that Utopia was intended to purvey a deliberate moral message. To perceive Utopia as a jeu d'esprit is, by implication, to hold a markedly different conception of utopianism to the operational definition arrived at in chapter one of this thesis. This corollary is most apparent in Johnson's analysis of Utopia, and particularly in his discussion of

45. Chambers, Hollis, Cecil, and Sargent, see below, pp. 139-142, 145-148.

"More's desire to plumb the subtle regions of utopianism where ideals shade off into illusions."⁴⁶

We shall argue to the contrary and will show that Utopia was a practical philosophical treatise. More never ventured into such peripheral regions.

46. R.S.Johnson,op.cit., pp.viii-ix.

ii The 'Catholic' or 'Dialogic' Apology

The Catholic interpretation of Utopia has obviously played a significant part in the historiography of Moreana. Particularly during the course of the last century, Catholics, and indeed some non-Catholics, have produced a series of hagiographical accounts of More's life and works. These biographies assumed originally a petitionary, and eventually a celebratory character. Two events account for this. The first is the beatification of John Fisher and Thomas More which took place on 29 December 1886. The second is the canonisation of Fisher and More which was confirmed on 19 May 1935; the year marking the four-hundredth anniversary of the martyrdom of the two. Undoubtedly, Utopia, which at first sight smacks of heterodox opinions, was a considerable embarrassment to More's apologists. Thus there arose the need to account for Utopia within the overall framework of More's saintly life and works. To prove the consistency of More's position, Catholic interpreters have pointed to the dialogic structure of Utopia, contending that persona More's objections to Utopian institutions did in fact represent More's real position. Hence the alternative name by which the Catholic interpretation is known.

It is possible to divide Catholic opinion on More into two basic phases. The first straddles the lengthy period between More's execution and his canonisation. The second is the period of re-evaluation following the triumph of 1935. During this development, the exclusivity of the Catholic interpretation was abandoned for the more realistic view that account ought also to be taken of More's involvement in the Humanist campaign for social reform. This second phase will be considered in due course.

To coincide with More's canonisation, the Early English Text Society published a number of near-contemporary, Marian, and recusant biographies of More. These included those of More's son-in-law William Roper, and of Nicholas Harpsfield.⁴⁷ Similarly, in 1928 Barnes, Oates and Washbourne published Thomas Stapleton's Life of Thomas More.⁴⁸ These biographies, taken together with those of Rastell⁴⁹ and Cresacre More⁵⁰ constitute the first Catholic interpretation of More's life and works.

The publications of the late-1920's and early-1930's were opportune. As M. Delcourt argued just after the publication of these biographies,⁵¹ More's sixteenth-century apologists were concerned to emphasize his saintly qualities. They therefore deliberately distorted certain important aspects of More's life in order to further this impression. R.S. Sylvester has taken a similar view with particular reference to William Roper.⁵² Roper apparently omitted a number of salient facts from his account because of his intention to present a symbolic image of More's life. Even more telling is J.K. McConica's

47. W. Roper, The Lyfe and Death of Sir Thomas Moore, knighte, (1555-1557), ed. E.V. Hitchcock, E.E.T.S., O.S. CXVII, (1935), (M.S. to 1626); N. Harpsfield, The Life and Death of Sir Thomas Moore, (1557), ed. E.V. Hitchcock, E.E.T.S., O.S. CLXXXVI, (1932), (M.S. to 1932).

48. T. Stapleton, The Lyfe and Illustrious Maryrdom of Sir Thomas More, trans. P.E. Hallet from, Vita Thomae Mori, (Douai 1588), (London 1928, reprinted as, Life of Thomas More, ed. E.E. Reynolds, London 1966).

49. W. Rastell, Life of Thomas More.

50. C. More, The Life of Sir Thomas More, ed. J. Hunter, (London 1828), (Douai 1631).

51. M. Delcourt, 'Recherches Sir Thomas More', Humanisme et Renaissance, (1936), pp. 22-42; 'L'amitie d'Erasmus et de More entre 1520 et 1535', Bulletin de l'Association Guillaume Budé, (1936), pp. 7-29.

52. R.S. Sylvester, 'Roper's Life of More', Moreana, Vol. 36 (1972), pp. 47-59.

analysis of More's recusant reputation, which McConica⁵³ attributed to the "sectarian scholarship" of More's posthumous circle. McConica stressed the significance of the recusant response to More's relationship with Erasmus. The post-Tridentine reaction of the Catholic Church against Erasmianism, and the decision to index his works, was regarded as a threat to More's own reputation. Thus More's close association with Erasmus was played down, particularly by Harpsfield.⁵⁴ The desire of the English recusant community to minimize More's reputation for radicalism, presents an interesting parallel to twentieth-century Catholic appraisals of Utopia. In both cases, More's apologists have been anxious to absolve him from the taint of heterodoxy.

During the nineteenth century More did not enjoy a particularly savoury reputation amongst English historians, many of whom regarded Henry VIII as the champion of English religious liberty.⁵⁵ More, on the other hand was portrayed as an intolerant bigot who had been responsible for the ruthless persecution of Protestants. The rehabilitation of More to his deserved place in English history has been one of the most substantial achievements of his Catholic apologists. This process was initiated in 1891 with the publication of Father T.E. Bridgett's The Life of Blessed Thomas More.

A number of themes which Bridgett explored have subsequently become commonplace to the Catholic interpretation. For instance,

53. J.K. McConica, 'The Recusant Reputation of Thomas More', Reports of the Catholic Historical Association, Vol. 30 (1964), pp. 47-61, at p. 60.

54. ibid., p. 54.

55. For all this see, R.W. Chambers, Thomas More, (London 1935, 1963 edition), p. 36; W.A.G. Doyle-Davidson, 'The Earlier English Works of St. Thomas More', English Studies, Vol. 17 (1935), pp. 49-70, at p. 50.

Bridgett portrayed More as an admirer of clericalism and especially of the religious orders. Thus Bridgett claimed that the only form of communism which More condoned was the voluntary version practiced by the monasteries. With respect to Utopia Bridgett argued that,

"The Utopians use no money, and have no private property. Such a supposition gave him scope to show the evils that come from avarice and attend property; but no one can argue that More seriously taught communism or the injustice of private property."⁵⁶

Such a statement is typical of the Catholic interpretation in general. It is the basis of Bridgett's explanation of the natural religion practiced in Utopia. Hence Bridgett claimed that More

"so extols the natural piety of his Utopians as to put Christians to the blush."⁵⁷

Bridgett's ultimate conclusion was that Utopia ought to be regarded as a jeu d'esprit. Those who wish to discover More's real beliefs were advised to consult his polemical and contemplative works. Not until the mid-1920's, as the process of canonisation gathered momentum, did other writers begin to develop Bridgett's themes with something of a vengeance.

It is perhaps paradoxical that the archetypal 'Catholic' interpretation of Utopia was produced by a non-Catholic, R.W. Chambers, whose work represents both a campaign for, and celebration of, More's canonization. Throughout Chamber's interpretation there occurs an underlying and often strained desire to establish a consistency of purpose in More's life and writings.

56. T.E. Bridgett, The Life of Blessed Thomas More, (1891, London 1924 edition), p.103.

57. ibid., p.104.

Thus everything More ever wrote or did is regarded as a preliminary to the manner of his martyrdom. Chambers therefore eagerly refuted suggestions that More persecuted heretics, and claimed that the principles of religious toleration outlined in Utopia were in complete accordance with More's subsequent conduct as an official of the state.⁵⁸ Chambers' More was motivated by just one concern, the preservation of the unity of Christendom :-

"From Utopia to the scaffold, More stands for the common cause, as against the private commodity of the single man, or even of the single kingdom."⁵⁹

So it was with considerable alarm that Chambers discovered that Utopia was being used as socialist propaganda.

In these circumstances, Chambers fervently asserted that Utopia was an essentially medieval, and even a reactionary, statement. He confessed that,

"More's theoretical Utopia, looking back to Plato's "Republic" and to corporate life in the Middle Ages, probably seemed to some contemporaries the reverse of 'progressive'."⁶⁰

Hence More was portrayed as the champion of medievalism against such developments as the 'Machiavellian statecraft' of Thomas Cromwell, and the rise of a new commercialism. Within this analysis, Chambers interpreted the communism of Utopia as a reinstatement of medieval corporatism,⁶¹ and in particular, as a reflection of the monastic ideal.

58. R.W. Chambers, 'The Saga and Myth of Sir Thomas More', Proceedings of the British Academy, Vol. Xll (1926), pp. 1-52, at pp. 15-21, and, Thomas More, chapter 4, section 19. See below, pp. 324-327.

59. R.W. Chambers, 'The Saga and Myth...', op.cit., p. 40.

60. R.W. Chambers, Thomas More, pp. 124-125.

Despite the apparent identification of More's own views with the principles outlined in Utopia, Chambers proceeded to abstract More from the religious beliefs of the Utopians particularly, in a fashion that eloquently represents the Catholic case. The crucial point of this analysis is Chambers' insistence upon the distinction between reason and revelation. He contended that,

"to a man educated in that century, the distinction was obvious between the virtues which might be taught by human reason alone, and the further virtues taught by Catholic orthodoxy."⁶²

Accordingly, the four cardinal virtues of wisdom, fortitude, temperance, and justice, were attainable by a heathen, whereas a Christian could also achieve faith, hope, and charity. Chambers pointed out that all seven virtues were necessary for the salvation of a Christian, while only the four cardinal virtues were manifested in Utopia. From all this, Chambers deduced that the only possible conclusion regarding More's purpose in writing Utopia was that he intended to shock European Christians out of their complacency. In a famous passage he said,

"When a sixteenth-century Catholic depicts a pagan state founded on reason and philosophy, he is not depicting his ultimate ideal.... The underlying thought of Utopia always is, 'With nothing save Reason to guide them, the Utopians do this; and yet we Christian Englishmen, we Christian Europeans.....!'" (sic)⁶³

By adopting the four heathen virtues as a basis of the state of Utopia, More was apparently following medieval tradition in order to satirize contemporary Europe.

62. R.W. Chambers, Thomas More, p. 119, and, 'The Saga and Myth....', op.cit., p.22, ff.

63. R.W. Chambers, Thomas More, p.121.

Ultimately, argues Chambers, and again this is typical of the 'Catholic' reaction to Utopia, More produced a satirical work aimed at the European conscience, the point of which has since been misconstrued by modern scholars who regard Utopia as a design for an ideal commonwealth.⁶⁴

During the course of the next three chapters it will become apparent that our own interpretation of Utopia is some distance away from Chambers'. However, at this juncture it will suffice to identify a number of points upon which Chambers' analysis has been criticized. J.H. Hexter, for instance, questioned Chambers' attempt to use the circumstances of More's death in order to expound the meaning of More's work.⁶⁵ Hexter was on firm ground in pointing out that, given the changing political, religious, and intellectual climates through which More lived, it is extremely unlikely that he could have maintained so consistent a position as Chambers supposed. C. Thompson has succinctly captured the mood of this aspect of Catholic scholarship, and the problems raised by More's changing personality, in maintaining that,

"Utopia itself seems in some measure irrelevant, for those to whom More's fascination lies in the conflicts of his last years."⁶⁶

Chambers' critics have been most anxious to challenge the distinction between reason and revelation which is so integral to his case. In his review of Chambers' biography of More, G.G. Coulton made the obvious, but none the less telling, comment concerning the ethical standards of Utopia. These appear to be

64. ibid., p.120.

65. J.H. Hexter, 'Thomas More - On the Margins of Modernity', Journal of British Studies, Vol.1 (1961), pp.20-37, at p.24.

66. C.R. Thompson, introduction to, Translations of Lucian, (1506), C.W., Vol.3, p.xxiii.

so high, that if Chambers was correct in claiming that Utopia was founded entirely upon the natural virtues, then, by implication, the influence of orthodoxy upon moral behaviour would appear to be minimal.⁶⁷ In essence, the standards of the Utopians seem far closer to the Christian ideal than Chambers was prepared to admit. This theme was taken up by Hexter, who believed Utopia to have been established as an example of the Christian way of life.⁶⁸ These are issues to which we shall return.

Over a number of years, from the period immediately preceding More's canonization until after World War Two, W.E. Campbell remained the most truculent of More's advocates. As such, Campbell advanced what is probably the most pronounced statement of the Catholic interpretation of Utopia. For instance, with respect to the problem of More's role within the dialogue, Campbell vigorously asserted that,

"we are left in no manner and doubt (sic) as to the social doctrines and principles which he himself held to be the most true and important, since throughout the whole Utopian dialogue he is as careful to express them under his own name and so, to distinguish them from others from which he disagreed, coming for the most part from the mouth of Raphael Hythloday."⁶⁹

The troublesome question of why More, in writing Utopia, had Hythloday express the case for communism so forcefully and persuasively, at such length, does not seem to have occurred to Campbell.

67. G.G. Coulton, 'The Faith of St. Thomas More', Quarterly Review, Vol. CCLXV (1935), pp. 327-343, at pp. 335-336.

68. J.H. Hexter, Introduction, pp. lxxvii-lxxiv.

69. W.E. Campbell, More's Utopia and His Social Teaching, (London 1930), pp. 28-29, see also, pp. 95-100.

The dissociation of More from communism, and especially from the taint of twentieth-century state socialism, was clearly the guiding principle of Campbell's interpretation. The spectre of totalitarianism in Europe prompted Campbell to attempt to dispel any impression its readers might gain of totalitarianism in Utopia.⁷⁰ Thus Campbell categorically denied that Utopia⁷¹ was proposed by More as a model society. While recognizing that human nature requires restraint and guidance, Campbell was adamant that the institutions of Utopia were not designed to fulfil this purpose.⁷² Instead, Campbell argued that although the Catholic Church applauds the communism of the religious orders, this is a voluntary lifestyle which only a minority of men can sustain.⁷³ Thus, concluded Campbell, More's true position advocated

"Catholic Social Philosophy - a philosophy of human desires, disciplined, supernaturalized, re-directed and re-energized by the grace of God."⁷⁴

In 1932, as the lobby for canonisation gathered an increasing number of adherents, M. Carmichael wrote an article that obviously aimed to clear More of any suspicion of such heterodox opinions which a reading of Utopia might suggest that he held. In the event, Carmichael inadvertently handed out a number of bouquets to critics whom he intended to refute. For instance, it is apparent that Carmichael identified the Marxist Karl Kautsky as the 'enfant terrible' of Morean studies. Yet Carmichael portrayed Hythlodæus as a communist in the modern sense and rather hysterically stated that,

70. ibid., p.47, and passim.

71. ibid., p.53.

72. ibid., pp.75-76.

73. ibid., pp.147-149.

74. W.E.Campbell, Erasmus, Tyndale and More, (London 1949), p.94.

"No book, surely, can have had so singular a fate, so unlooked for an influence, as the Utopia. It is hardly too much to say that it is responsible for the existence of modern socialism and communism."⁷⁵

In his discussion of the natural religion of Utopia, Carmichael was more restrained. Utopia is not a model Christian kingdom he argued, but rather an attempt to arouse shame among thinking Christians, by comparing them unfavourably with 'mere Gentiles'.⁷⁶ However, Carmichael's last pronouncement on More's real attitude is far from convincing.

"There is no need for alarm. More is dealing with theory only. He posits as self-evident that the common life is the best form of government, and the sanest, happiest, and most equitable form of life, and the proposition admits of demonstration. There is no talk of its application."⁷⁷

Such

statements stretch the Catholic contention that More was only truly interested in communism within monasticism to breaking point.

In 1934 C. Hollis interpreted Utopia in a manner which typifies what might be regarded as the last line of defence open to More's apologists. This is to reduce the debate on the meaning of Utopia to the claim that the work ought to be disregarded because it is merely a jeu d'esprit. Thus Hollis dismissed Utopia as a "felicitous trifle"⁷⁸ written to alleviate More's boredom. However, Hollis tacitly recognized that there was a case to be answered by supplementing his major contention with

75. M. Carmichael, 'Utopia: Its Doctrine of the Common Life', Dublin Review, Vol. CXC1 (1932), pp. 173-187, at p. 174.

76. ibid., p. 177.

77. ibid., p. 181.

78. C. Hollis, Thomas More, (Milwaukee 1934), p. 112.

several standard Catholic arguments. So he pointed to the distinction between reason and revelation, and the notion that More embodied reason within Utopia in order to castigate the standards of fallen Christianity.⁷⁹ Similarly, he argued that evidence drawn from More's own life, and from his other works, absolved him from any commitment to the major institutions of Utopian life.⁸⁰ Again, all this is indicative of the mood of Catholic opinion during the 1930's.

In 1936 D. Sargent's book on More assumed a position which was very close to that of Hollis. Of Utopia Sargent said

"It is not perfectly certain that it was not a fairy tale."⁸¹

According to Sargent, the fantasy was especially noticeable in Book II. On the odd occasion when he did drift into seriousness, More was obviously speculating upon the notion that men might be governed by reason alone, without grace and revelation. The object of this intellectual diversion was to disturb the complacency of Christians.⁸²

In the same year, R. O'Sullivan wrote an article which suggests that during the 1930's the Catholic interpretation of Utopia had developed into something of a format. Thus O'Sullivan confidently asserted that,

"In Utopia, moreover, he puts in his own name the argument against Communism which is defended by Hythlodaye. And it is an invariable rule of interpretation of his writings, that the opinions he advanced in his own name are always his own opinions."⁸³

79. ibid., p.83.

80. ibid., p.70.

81. D. Sargent, Thomas More, (London 1936), p.63.

82. ibid., pp.65-69.

83. R. O'Sullivan, 'Social Theories of St. Thomas More', Dublin Review, Vol. CXCLX (1936), pp.46-62, at p.54.

Given this, O'Sullivan felt able to argue that More did not conceive of Utopia as a Christian state.⁸⁴ Instead, More used the image of a state founded upon natural reason to illuminate his own social philosophy. In O'Sullivan's opinion, this philosophy emphasized the essentially virtuous character of man and it was thus that More recognized private property⁸⁵ as an institution befitting the dignity of man.

By 1937 the preoccupations of the Catholic school led one commentator, to advance a preposterous account of the Utopian dialogue. It was evident to A.Cecil that the saintly More, although obviously disagreeing with Hythloday's advocacy of Utopian institutions, was far too courteous to interrupt his adversary.⁸⁶ It seems that Cecil divorced More so completely from the contents of Utopia that he almost convinced himself that More was not responsible for writing it. As he said,

"it is not possible to say that More is Hythloday, for More is there beside Hythloday to speak for himself."⁸⁷

In his

more sober moments Cecil remarked upon the elements of jeu d'esprit in Utopia, and upon More's juxtaposition of reason and revelation,⁸⁸ to effect an implicit, but nevertheless caustic, criticism of the contemporary neglect of Christianity. In his soberest moments, Cecil revealed his inmost fears by commenting that the Russian experience proved Hythloday wrong in supposing⁸⁹ that communism would effect the perfectibility of man.

84. ibid., p.49.

85. ibid., pp.49-54.

86. A.Cecil, A Portrait of Thomas More: Scholar, Statesman, Saint, (London 1937), pp.115-116.

87. ibid., p.119.

88. ibid., pp.118-119.

89. ibid., pp.125-128.

Undoubtedly, Cecil's contribution marks the nadir of Catholic interpretation of Utopia, but it was not until after World War Two that Catholic opinion assumed a more analytical and less dogmatic approach to Utopia.

In a number of respects the work of E.E.Reynolds represents an after-thought that did not entirely synchronise with the general trend of Catholic scholarship. Although Reynolds accepted that in Book I of Utopia, More dealt with 'immediate problems',⁹⁰ he could not accept that Book II constituted a prescriptive and systematic response to the social ills discussed in Book I.⁹¹ Not surprisingly, Reynolds was anxious to warn of the dangers of taking Utopia too seriously, and he too cited the Marxist Kautsky as having succumbed to this temptation.⁹² Although Reynolds claimed that Utopia is not susceptible to methodical analysis, he tacitly accepted, without any acknowledgement, Hexter's contention that the purpose of communism in Utopia was to restrain the inclination of men to sin.⁹³ In all, Reynolds appeared to look back to the halcyon days of the 1930's, and, consequently, his understanding of Utopia is bereft of the greater sophistication of post-war Catholic opinion.

The appreciation of More and his works advanced over a number of years by E.L.Surtz, S.J., was indicative of a more tempered approach by Catholic scholars who have recognized the need to incorporate into their analyses some consideration of More's

90. E.E.Reynolds, Thomas More and Erasmus, (London 1965), pp.117-118.

91. E.E.Reynolds, The Field is Won: The Life and Death of St. Thomas More, (London 1968), p.106.

92. ibid., p.105.

93. ibid., p.90; for Hexter, see below, section vi.

Humanism. Hence, Surtz wrestled, not always successfully, to reconcile More the doctrinal conservative, with More the social reformer. Surtz's More is a 'zealous Catholic Reformer'.⁹⁴ The essential feature of Surtz's interpretation is his contention that Utopia was distanced from More's own time and experience,⁹⁵ and that through the work More sought to teach by example; both as a Catholic who chastised Christians for neglecting their faith, and as a social reformer. According to Surtz,

"Utopia is essentially a humanistic document aimed at the reformation of Christendom."⁹⁶

To his credit, Surtz criticised other Catholic interpreters who sympathized with the jeu d'esprit argument purely in order to exonerate More from charges of heterodoxy.⁹⁷

On the question of the relationship between reason and revelation in Utopia, Surtz was quite categorical. He regarded Utopia as a state founded upon reason, nature, and philosophy, as opposed to revelation, grace, and theology. Hence, on this issue, Surtz agreed with other Catholic critics and his account of the purpose of Utopia is close to a verbatim rendition of Chambers' argument :-

"It seems futile to remark that Utopia, the ideal republic of paganism, is far from being the goal set by More for Christian Europe. The Christian state should surpass the pagan commonwealth....."⁹⁸

94. E.L.Surtz, The Praise of Pleasure, p.2.

95. E.L.Surtz, Introduction, p.clii.

96. E.L.Surtz, The Praise of Wisdom, (Chicago 1957), p.13, see also, 'Interpretations of Utopia', Catholic Historical Review, Vol.XXXV111 (1952), pp.156-174, at p.174.

97. E.L.Surtz, The Praise of Wisdom, p.5.

98. E.L.Surtz, 'Interpretations of Utopia', op.cit. p.169.

"If reason alone can reach such heights of morality and happiness, what shame and confusion should fill the hearts of Christians who, in spite of the countless treasures of the revelation and grace of Christ, fall far below Utopian standards of conduct!"⁹⁹

However, Surtz contended that while Utopia was not an exemplar, it was nevertheless intended to provoke and shock men into serious examination of their own conduct.¹⁰⁰ Unfortunately, the intractable problem of precisely how Utopia could achieve this end without constituting an exemplar in some sense, was not rigorously pursued by Surtz.

Surtz was realistic enough to recognize the centrality of communism to More's argument, and correctly stressed the significance of communism not only to the economy of Utopia, but also to education, philosophy, and religion there.¹⁰¹ It is also refreshing to discover that Surtz did not summarily dismiss the possibility that communism might actually have appealed to More. However, Surtz qualified his position by pressing the point that whatever its theoretical attraction, More could not have regarded communism as an ideal attainable in contemporary society.¹⁰² Surtz's argument is not unfamiliar to the Catholic school. Briefly, he contended that God originally intended a communistic existence for men, but man fell, and began to appropriate private property. Although Christ attempted to recall his followers to a life of communal poverty, He did so

99. E.L.Surtz, The Praise of Wisdom, p.7.

100. E.L.Surtz, 'The Defence of Pleasure in More's Utopia', Studies in Philology, Vol.XLVI (1949), pp.99-112, at p.105, and, The Praise of Wisdom, pp.5-6, 12.

101. E.L.Surtz, Introduction, p.cxxv ff.

102. E.L.Surtz, The Praise of Pleasure, chapter XLV, pp.161-174, and, 'Thomas More and Communism', Publications of the Modern Language Association of America, Vol.64, (1949), pp.549-564, at pp.550-558.

by way of counsel rather than in the form of a commandment. This communism was a voluntary calling which found a response only amongst the religious orders. While (as various Schoolmen argued) private property was best suited to the disposition of the mass of fallen men, only a select few possessed the necessary virtue to sustain communism. So Humanists such as Colet, Erasmus and More, may well have toyed with the idea of communism, but, according to Surtz, they had no intention that it should be enforced in Christian countries. Thus Surtz presented a succinct account of the traditional Catholic position, and concluded by saying

"More's position is that neither the natural law nor the divine positive law.....is the basis of private property. But human reason sees readily that private property, and not common possession, is the system best adapted to man's nature."¹⁰³

So Surtz ultimately refuted the suggestion that communism might replace private property as an institution for the restraint of man's inclination to sin.

Of all the Catholic critics, Surtz has advanced the most detailed analysis of various Utopian practices such as voluntary euthanasia (often referred to by the Catholic school as 'suicide'), the derogation of strict asceticism, divorce, and the absence of clerical celibacy, all of which are obviously repugnant to orthodox opinion. While arguing that it is impossible to make a blanket statement concerning the ethical standing of Utopian institutions, and that "absence of

103. E.L.Surtz, The Praise of Pleasure, p.186, and 'Thomas More and Communism', op.cit., p.560.

104. E.L.Surtz, The Praise of Wisdom, passim.

105. ibid., p.2.

disapproval is not to be identified with positive approbation,"¹⁰⁶ Surtz clearly believed that the differentiation of reason and revelation is the ultimate explanation of More's apparent heterodoxy. So, according to Surtz, More's Catholicism was always a sanction upon his proposals for social reform.

More recently, J.K. McConica has confirmed the trend initiated by Surtz, by which essentially Catholic interpretations of Utopia regard More as a humanist social reformer as well. McConica expressed this attitude very precisely in describing Utopia as

"the most extended attempt made by any of the Erasmian community to set forth one of their favourite themes, the contrast of Christian faith and pagan virtue."¹⁰⁷

Nevertheless, although McConica allowed the humanist More to surface, he remained insistent that Utopia was not More's ideal state. Instead, Utopia was a rationally constructed parable to stir the conscience of its readers. More's analysis of English society was ethical rather than economical; the inspiration of his communism was the Gospels. More was not of the socialist tradition.¹⁰⁸ In stating all this, McConica remained true to his own Catholic tradition.

Finally, within the Catholic school, the work of R.J. Schoeck merits consideration. Indeed such is the extent to which Schoeck has been prepared to regard More from the perspective of Humanism that he has effectively straddled two schools of

106. ibid., p.18.

107. J.K. McConica, English Humanists and Reformation Politics, (Oxford 1965), p.41.

108. J.K. McConica, Thomas More: A Short Biography, pp.31-33.

interpretation. Schoeck has repeatedly called for a contextual analysis of Utopia,¹⁰⁹ and has been critical of the polarity of opinion within the debate on the work.¹¹⁰ He has stressed the complexity of More's message and has emphasized the difficulties posed for interpreters by the irony and satire so evident in the text. Schoeck summarized his view of Utopia thus :-

"a humanistic work that manages to subsume interests that in lesser minds might have been compartmentalized; its larger meaning is best appreciated when considered in relation to humanistic grapplings not only with philological concerns but also with the pressing problems of political theory and government."¹¹¹

For all his humanistic promptings towards social reform, Schoeck's More is occasionally reticent, and it is on such occasions that Schoeck's Catholic influences emerge. Recently, Schoeck has argued that More intended Utopia to be perceived as a 'mirror' rather than as a 'pattern and perfect model'.¹¹² Such an opinion is explained by Schoeck's consistent view that the dialogic form enabled More to advance a message of reform without necessarily identifying himself with all the institutions and practices of Utopia.¹¹³ Hence Schoeck has emphasized the balance between the declamatory content and the jeu d'esprit in Utopia. The great advantage of Schoeck's

109. See, e.g., R.J.Schoeck, 'The Place of Sir Thomas More', Revue l'Université d'Ottawa, Vol. XXXIV (1964), pp.176-190.

110. R.J.Schoeck, 'A Nursery of Correct and Useful Institutions: On Reading More's Utopia as Dialogue', Moreana, Vol.22 (1969), pp.19-32.

111. R.J.Schoeck, 'More', New Catholic Encyclopedia, (New York 1967), pp.1140-1141, see also, 'The Place of Sir Thomas More', op.cit., p.185.

112. R.J.Schoeck, 'The Ironic and the Prophetic: Towards Reading More's Utopia as a Multidisciplinary Work', in, Quincentennial Essays on St. Thomas More, ed. M.J. Moore, p.127.

113. R.J.Schoeck, 'A Nursery of Correct and Useful Institutions', op.cit., pp.25-27.

approach is that it enables him to evade any precise commitments on the point at which this balance is struck.

The basic propositions of the Catholic interpretation of Utopia can be stated quite briefly. The school has regarded the manner of More's death, and his polemical confrontation with the Protestant reformers, as evidence of an underlying consistency of purpose in More's life and works. From this point of view it has become necessary to disarm Utopia's dangerous potential to impugn More's saintly character. Catholic interpreters have attempted to effect this absolution in several ways. Their primary argument has emphasized the dialogic nature of the Utopian discourse, and within this, the correspondence of More's own position to the objections raised by persona More. However, the impression conveyed by Utopia, that More was clearly dissatisfied with the condition of contemporary Christendom, is so salient that Catholic interpreters have felt obliged to expand upon their argument. Firstly, they have stressed More's use of the distinction between reason and revelation as a means of discrediting, and thereby of attempting to reform, the religious and ethical standards of his own society. Secondly, by developing their belief in More's admiration for monasticism, Catholic interpreters have argued that the only form of communism which More could possibly have condoned was the voluntary corporate life of the religious orders. Finally, the last resort of a considerable number of Catholic commentators has been to claim that Utopia was little more than a fanciful jeu d'esprit.

The Catholic case lacks coherence. If More did object to Hythlodæus's exposition and approval of Utopian institutions,

it is difficult to understand, short of accrediting More with some unaccountable perversity, why he assigned the bulk of the work to the opposition case without making a more substantial reply. More, who was not unintelligent, must have been aware of the dangers involved in publishing a treatise of this sort. If, on the other hand, the Utopian discourse was designed to teach by example in the form of contradistinction as opposed to prescription, then one might expect More's purpose to be a little more transparent. Again, More was playing with dangerous and radical ideas. The insertion of persona More's refutation carried with it the possibility that More might have thwarted his own ends. The further point, that Utopia was a jeu d'esprit, is even more difficult to accommodate within the overall case. The Catholic interpretation attempts to sustain all these positions simultaneously, yet the inherent tensions and contradictions of this argument lead ultimately to the problem of why More could have condoned the publication of a work which, from the Catholic point of view, has been misconstrued as a prescriptive treatise.

It is not our intention to suggest that More could have been entirely happy with the recommendations of the Utopian discourse. Such was his apprehension of the human predicament that he remained constantly aware of the fallibility of man's spiritual and intellectual resources. He is as unlikely to have appreciated the doctrinaire assessment of certain of his twentieth-century Catholic apologists, as he is to have condoned all of 'Hythlodacus's project'. Our task is therefore to ascertain precisely how much of the Utopian discourse More advocated. It is perhaps ironical that many of More's Catholic apologists have failed to come to terms with the extreme subtleties of

the social philosophy of a man dubious of much human thought and action.

iii More the Christian-Humanist Social Reformer

Not until the jubilation of Catholic interpreters, which monopolized Morean analysis during the 1930's, began to subside, was a reappraisal of Utopia initiated. This revision was partly a response to the major propositions of the Catholic interpretation. As an alternative to regarding More primarily as a Catholic martyr, it was suggested that an examination of his association with the Humanist movement might bear fruit with respect to the analysis of Utopia. Thus the critics included in the present section have in common the belief that Utopia was fundamentally a manifesto of social reform.

This development was not without precedent. Particularly in the mid-nineteenth century, several scholars explored the apparent affinity of certain of More's ideas to recent contemporary developments in utilitarian thought. One of this number, F. Seebohm, pioneered the study of the Humanist group with which More was associated. His work set the tone for many themes articulated by commentators who have since regarded More as a Humanist Social Reformer. Seebohm argued that,

"the moral philosophy of the Utopians was both Utilitarian and Christian."¹¹⁴

More, Seebohm contended, had reconciled a faith in religion with the view that reform could be effected by the application of reasoned analysis to social problems. Seebohm's conclusion, that Utopia was intended as a radical solution to England's social problems ¹¹⁵ was, not surprisingly,

114. F. Seebohm, The Oxford Reformers, (London 1867), p.222, cf., H. Taylor, 'Sir Thomas More on the Politics of Today', Fortnightly Review, Vol. XLIV (1870), pp.125-137; J. Rickaby, 'Sir Thomas More's Utopia', The Month and Catholic Review, Vol. 2 (1874), pp.14-27, 151-169.

115. F. Seebohm, op. cit., pp.217-220.

subsequently dismissed by More's Catholic apologists.

Only after 1940 did the notion that More ought to be regarded primarily as a social reformer begin to attract considerable support. In certain instances the reaction against the Catholic interpretation was quite overt. In an article published in 1943, W. Nelson was scathingly critical of Catholic opinion and, in an attempt to redress the balance of Morean studies, instead stressed the "typically humanist character of his early career."¹¹⁷ In the post-war era a number of critics have expanded upon this.

R.P. Adams has been the most persevering of those commentators who have interpreted Utopia as a statement of Humanist social reform. In his work, Adams directed particular attention to the criticism of contemporary militarism by Humanists such as Erasmus, Colet, Vives, and More. With some justification Adams contended that, for the moment at least, the intellectual climate of which Utopia was a product, evinced a certain optimism about the prospect of social reform and peace in Christendom. This optimism was fired by the almost simultaneous succession of the 'Christian princes' - Henry VIII, Francis I, and Charles V. However, such optimism was soon dissipated when these three proved to be as pugnacious as their forefathers.

Adams' discussion of More was based upon three themes, each of which is characteristic of the school presently under consideration. Firstly, Adams argued that More, in common with other Humanists, propounded the notion that the application of reason to contemporary problems could produce a systematic

116. See, e.g., T.E. Bridgett, op.cit., p.104.

117. W. Nelson, 'Thomas More: Grammarian and Orator', Publications of the Modern Language Association of America, Vol. LVII (1943), pp.337-352, at p.337.

analysis of society. Thus Adams contended that because he possessed "an intense admiration for the latent power of reason in man,"¹¹⁸ and because he believed social evils to be man-made, More naturally concluded that men might use their own discretion in directing their reasoning faculties towards the reform of society. According to Adams, this is what More achieved in writing Utopia. Adams' second theme follows from the first. He proceeded to argue that Utopia was an image aimed at the promotion of an alternative social order. Hence Adams adopted a position peculiarly close to the Catholic interpretation in contending that Utopia was founded upon reason alone, as an example to Europeans who possessed the additional advantage of Christian revelation.¹¹⁹ Similarly, Adams argued that it is misleading to assume that More attributed social ills to the holding of private property. Instead, Adams believed that in Utopia More intended to do little more than stir the conscience of the capitalist.¹²⁰

Adams' third and most contentious theme is a corollary of his first. He argued that as More was inspired by a pronounced confidence in human potential, he projected into Utopia an optimistic belief in sustained human progress. This conclusion is based upon what we shall ultimately argue to be a misfounded appreciation of More's conception of human nature. For instance, Adams asserted that,

"More has rejected the idea that agonizing social evils

118. R.P. Adams, 'Designs by More and Erasmus for a New Social Order', Studies in Philology, Vol. XLII (1945), pp. 131-145, at p. 135.

119. R.P. Adams, 'The Philosophic Unity of More's Utopia', Studies in Philology, Vol. XXXVIII (1941), pp. 45-65, at p. 65.

120. R.P. Adams, The Better Part of Valour, (Washington. 1962) p. 126.

resulted from congenital sinfulness or corruption in human nature itself."¹²¹

Certainly, Adams correctly stressed More's recognition of the potential accomplishments of human reason, but he failed to appreciate that More believed this faculty to have been seriously impaired by the Fall of Man. As a consequence of this miscalculation Adams overstated the extent of More's optimism, arguing that,

"More set forward one of the great shaping ideas of modern free societies which aim at peace - the ideal of utopian progress. This is the concept that communities are capable of advancing slowly in a positive and desirable direction, that this change can continue indefinitely in time and is within the control of man rather than simply dependent upon Providence,..."¹²²

We shall ultimately argue to the contrary and, by accounting for More's pessimistic view of the human condition, will contend that Utopia was essentially a static society.

In his account of Utopia, C. Morris also raised two points previously discussed by Adams. The first was that, in Morris's words,

"The halcyon period of Humanism was tragically short. The Reformation and the outbreak of successive wars between the the Kings of Europe put the Humanists into a difficult position."¹²³

Thus, argued Morris, More was diverted away from his

121. ibid., p.144.

122. ibid., p.141, see also, R.P. Adams, 'The Social Responsibilities of Science in Utopia, New Atlantis and After', J.H.I., Vol.X (1949), pp.374-398, for Adams' contention that More believed that advances in the natural sciences would result in human progress.

123. C. Morris, Political Thought in Britain: Lyndale to Hooker, (Oxford 1952) p.22.

Humanist concerns towards the polemical defence of his faith. Morris's second point related to More's actual beliefs vis-a-vis the proposals advanced in Utopia. Like Adams, Morris tacitly accepted the Catholic interpretation of the dialogue. According to Morris, Utopia, because it was guided by reason and the traditional pagan virtues, could not have been More's ideal commonwealth. Thus, Morris argued,

"That More thought Utopia could be improved upon cannot possibly be doubted "¹²⁴

because Europe possessed Christian revelation. Hence, Utopia was not an attack upon existing institutions, it was intended only as a critique of their abuse.

F. Caspari integrated a number of the prominent themes of the Humanist Social Reformer school. Caspari argued that More combined his concern for educational reform with the belief that such a policy could provide the means by which the existing aristocracy might also become the 'best' men in the commonwealth.¹²⁵ Implicit in this argument is the belief that in Utopia More was not proposing any radical alternative to contemporary hierarchical institutions. Obviously, the Platonic ideal of a just society governed by philosopher guardians was much to the fore in Caspari's analysis. Caspari undoubtedly neglected the significance of More's vehement attack upon the contemporary nobility in Book I of Utopia. At the same time, Caspari failed to give sufficient prominence to various instances of social mobility outlined in Utopia. More's sombre conception of human nature meant that he retained little

124. ibid., p.18.

125. F. Caspari, Humanism and the Social Order in England, (1954, New York 1968 edition), p.27, and passim.

confidence in the capacity of the hereditary principle to provide a virtuous governing elite. Hence, in Utopia, access to the elite was open to those who proved themselves adequately talented and righteous.

E.M.G. Routh's survey of the lives and writings of More and his Humanist associates provides a good example of the fatal flaw in the broader interpretation of More advanced by the school presently under discussion. Routh contended that,

"Utopia, like other ideal states, was based on an idealized human nature...."¹²⁶

Yet Routh also tacitly deferred to the
¹²⁷ Hexter thesis, by arguing that More attributed all social
¹²⁸ ills to their source in human pride. In order to escape the obvious contradiction established by this argument, Routh was forced to contend that More anticipated the achievement of his reforming ideals by means of a change in the spirit of
¹²⁹ men. So yet again, More was accredited with an extremely optimistic view of human nature.

By combining the view that More ought to be regarded primarily as a Humanist reformer with several themes drawn from the work
¹³⁰ of J.H. Hexter, A.B. Ferguson achieved a more balanced appreciation of Utopia. Thus he resisted any temptation to overemphasize More's optimism. So although Ferguson argued that the Humanists were confident of their own ability to analyse society in order to identify and remedy faults in the body

126. E.M.G. Routh, Sir Thomas More and his Friends, (New York 1963), p.69. For a critique of this view of utopianism as applied to More, see above, chapter one.

127. Below, section vi.

128. E.M.G. Routh, op.cit., p.71.

129. ibid., p.72.

130. A.B. Ferguson, The Articulate Citizen in the English Renaissance, (North Carolina 1965), p.217.

politic, he also contended that More's

"diagnosis of public ills was therefore conducted on a moral or theological basis. Their causes he traced either to the fatal flaws in man's moral nature or to the inscrutable workings of Providence."¹³¹

The advantage of this mode of analysis is that it enabled Ferguson to identify the tension within More's thought, and this he has expressed succinctly in arguing that,

"He could entertain the vision of a world remade on humane and rational lines, yet accept with disconcerting frankness the constant factor of human frailty."¹³²

Nevertheless,

Ferguson was occasionally unclear as to the exact extent to which More regarded human sinfulness as a barrier to social reform,¹³³ and at such points Ferguson's More inclined towards undue optimism.

According to M. Fleisher, More's fundamental contention in Utopia was that,

"The revitalization of human life through the reform of society is an absolutely necessary concomitant to the full spiritual revival of the Christian commonwealth."¹³⁴

Thus, along with Erasmus, More was concerned to draw European society closer to the Christian ideal by means of institutional reform. So More proposed, as an alternative to corrupted European morality and dynastic politics, a society founded upon an alternative

131. ibid., p.200.

132. ibid., p.209.

133. ibid., pp.179, 200-210.

134. M. Fleisher, Radical Reform and Political Persuasion: The Life and Writings of St. Thomas More, (Geneva 1973), p.172.

set of values, including the promotion of industry and education, and the elevation of virtue. In contrast to several other advocates of this interpretation of Utopia, Fleisher was quite adamant that More actually proposed the abolition of private property. He said :-

"It is of the greatest significance that Erasmus and, of course, More are not criticizing private property with the alternative of a monastic community in mind. Instead, they envision the perfection of a mundane society."¹³⁵

By recognizing that More advanced Book II of Utopia as a prescription for the problems of his own society, as outlined in Book I, Fleisher broke completely from the influence of the Catholic view of the Utopian dialogue. However, in arguing that More regarded private property as the ultimate cause of all other social ills,¹³⁶ and that,

"social ills are the product of social institutions, and not of individual vices."¹³⁷

- Fleisher retained the view that More held an essentially optimistic view of the human condition. Again, this is entirely characteristic of the school presently under discussion.

Those who have claimed that Utopia is enduringly important as an insight into More's concerns as a Humanist Social Reformer, have tended to structure their argument in the following way. Book I is regarded as a critique of contemporary society and the key to the interpretation of the entire work. Book II is thus a response to this situation in which More indicates the

135. ibid., p.43.

136. ibid., p.40.

137. ibid., p.35.

general themes of his reform programme. These proposals are the result of the Humanist practice of applying reason, to both the analysis of contemporary social ills and the design of ameliorative institutions. However, most commentators agree that More regarded Book II as merely an image of a reformed society, rather than as a prescriptive political treatise. Nevertheless, according to this interpretation, More was essentially optimistic, and believed that, given a favourable institutional environment, men could realize their full potential. Social reform is therefore the means towards the regeneration of human nature.

In common with the Catholic school, most of the commentators who concentrate upon More's humanism have been reluctant to associate More too closely with the proposals advanced by Hythlodæus. However, these critics have been on even weaker ground than More's Catholic apologists. They have claimed that Book I, with its scathing attack upon contemporary institutions, is the most consequential section of Utopia. Thus, while Book II might suggest certain avenues for reform to take, it is by no means intended as a detailed prescription for the ills of More's society. The difficulty with this analysis arises out of the sequence in which the parts of Utopia were composed. The fact that Book II was written first, suggests that it was intended to play something more than an ancillary role within the entire structure of the piece. Indeed, this consideration adds weight to the case that More advanced the Discourse on Utopia as a serious political philosophy.

While it correct to argue that More strenuously advocated social reform, those critics who have pursued this line have generally misconstrued the purpose of More's proposals. There are two closely connected reasons for this. The first is a

a misconception of More's view of human nature. More has been portrayed as an optimist who believed that the full worth of mankind was stifled by existing institutions. The second reason is an incorrect evaluation of More's utopianism whereby it has been assumed that More believed that institutional reform could actually effect the regeneration of human nature of which he was supposedly so confident. In time we too shall argue that More's utopianism was a vehicle for his advocacy of institutional reform. However, we shall contend that by this means More sought only an improvement in human conduct. More's conception of the innate fallibility of human nature excluded the prospect of total regeneration. Thus More was a pessimist seeking out the optimum condition in which men could live.

iv More the Anticipatory Socialist

One legacy of More's renown as a Catholic martyr is the relative paucity, particularly in comparison to Winstanley's social philosophy of 'secular' interpretations of Utopia. However, a few writers have been prepared to restrict their analysis to the claim that Utopia is an antecedent of modern socialist thought. It is with these few instances that this section is concerned.

The Marxist historian Karl Kautsky argued that More's political thought was the outcome of his astute appreciation of the socio-economic trends of Tudor England. To sustain this claim Kautsky advanced an extremely dubious account of the period. He emphasized the emergence of an embryonic capitalism where once there was a "communist Merry England,"¹³⁸ which, according to Kautsky, had survived under the guise of feudalism. Similarly, Kautsky contended that More's opposition to the Reformation was not primarily the consequence of a doctrinal dispute. Instead, Kautsky contended that More opposed the Reformation because of the threat it posed to the monasteries, which More apparently regarded solely as benign institutions concerned to promote the welfare of the peasantry. So Kautsky identified the emergence of new productive processes rather than theology, as the fundamental stimulus to More's thought. More's own personality, his active involvement in public life, and above all his philosophical preparation through his involvement in the Humanist movement, all enabled him to produce a 'scientific' analysis of society. Thus it became apparent to Kautsky that More had realized that man was a

138. K. Kautsky, op.cit., p.163.

product of his material conditions. Crucially, More was able to look beyond the immediate predicament and envisage an alternative mode of production. As Kautsky stated,

"Thomas More was one of the few who have been capable of this bold intellectual leap; at a time when the capitalist mode of production was in its infancy, he mastered its essential features so thoroughly that the alternative mode of production which he elaborated and contrasted with it as a remedy for its evils, contained several of the most important ingredients of Modern Socialism."¹³⁹

Further,

"none of those who put forward remedies had a wider outlook, to none of them came the conviction that the sufferings incidental to the new mode of production could only be ended by a transition to another and higher mode of production; none of them, save More, was a Socialist."¹⁴⁰

So according to this analysis, the real significance of Utopia is More's anticipation of the socialist mode of production.

Given the effusive welcome to the socialist fold afforded to More, Kautsky was left to excuse certain incongruous aspects of life in Utopia by arguing that,

"More's communism is modern in most of its tendencies, and unmodern in most of its expedients."¹⁴¹

However, it is apparent that Kautsky experienced considerable difficulty in accommodating several characteristics of Utopia within the socialist grand design. For instance, because there had not, as yet, been an industrial revolution, More was constrained to base his 'anti-capitalist' commonwealth upon a combination of

139. ibid., p.161.

140. ibid., pp.169-170.

141. ibid., p.214.

cottage industry and peasant agriculture. His was obviously not fully developed scientific socialism.¹⁴² Similarly, the frugality of the lifestyle depicted in Utopia caused Kautsky considerable consternation. The restriction of wants in order to facilitate equitable distribution was dismissed by Kautsky as uncharacteristic of, and 'contradictory' to modern socialism.¹⁴³ Kautsky was also confused by More's insistence upon the retention of patriarchalism as a basic institution of Utopia.¹⁴⁴ But most significantly, Kautsky claimed that the philosophy and religion of the Utopians were superfluous to their communism. While commenting upon all these disturbing features of Utopia, Kautsky was unable to explain them in terms other than his conviction that in the prevailing circumstances, More had little choice but to be a Utopian Socialist.

A more recent assessment than Kautsky's, but one in like vein, is that of A.L. Morton. He too argued that More reacted against the impact of capitalism and enclosure upon an initially free peasantry. Even more contentious is Morton's analysis of More's intellectual background. In particular, Morton claimed that the Humanists discarded the notion of original sin, and that they regarded existing institutions as a check upon the proper development of human potential.¹⁴⁵ All this, of course, prompted More to look beyond the immediate class interests of the bourgeoisie.¹⁴⁶ Thus, with a little help from Plato, More produced, in Utopia, a work which, according to Morton, constitutes, "a landmark along the road towards scientific socialism..

142. ibid., pp.191-214.

143. ibid., pp.209-210.

144. ibid., pp.215-228.

145. A.L. Morton, The English Utopia, (London 1952), p.39.

146. ibid., p.40.

...the link between the social theory of the ancient world and that of the present day."¹⁴⁷

However, in the process of elucidating this theory by outlining the institutional proposals made by More in Utopia, Morton discovered a number of intractable problems similar to those that confounded Kautsky.

Morton was primarily bemused by evidence suggesting that More was distrustful of human nature. Hence Morton somewhat reluctantly accepted that More wrote in Latin in order, Morton supposed, to avoid the danger of precipitating a people's revolution.¹⁴⁸ Equally, Morton confessed that although More proposed the abolition of private property,

"Rather illogically, he anticipated that crime would continue to exist on a considerable scale in Utopia."¹⁴⁹

Morton also found it almost inexplicable that within More's political philosophy,

"Man, in fact, is changed much less than his surroundings, and it is clear that this aspect of Utopia reflects More's own lack of confidence in the common man."¹⁵⁰

The only reason that Morton could see for this attitude was More's retention of a class-orientated fear of disorder amongst the lower orders.¹⁵¹ Although he contradicted an earlier statement, Morton eventually followed Kautsky by expressing surprise at the frugality of life in Utopia.¹⁵² This is not, Morton reassured

147. ibid., p.42.

148. ibid., p.45.

149. ibid., p.55.

150. ibid., p.48.

151. ibid., p.46.

152. ibid., p.52.

his readers, a feature of modern socialism. Finally, Morton took no account of religion in Utopia; indeed, in his epitaph to More, he asserted that,

"it is as a pioneer of socialism rather than as a saint or as a philosopher that More is enduringly important."¹⁵³

The Soviet historian Vyacheslav Volgin provided an additional and more orthodox perspective within the socialist interpretation.¹⁵⁴ Volgin contended that Utopia was the source of the genre of utopian socialism. Although "More was a man of exceptionally wide intellectual vision,"¹⁵⁵ the fact that he lived in the sixteenth century meant that "he could not go beyond the mental projection of the imaginary world."¹⁵⁶ Predictably, Volgin followed Marx in assuming that More was primarily concerned in Book I of Utopia, with the dispossession of the English peasantry. However, in claiming that through the economical use of labour, More envisaged a non-capitalist system of production which would actually achieve an abundance of goods, Volgin obviously placed himself at odds with Kautsky's and Morton's observations on the frugal aspects of life in Utopia. It is typical of the socialist interpretation of Utopia, and Volgin is no exception, that private property, rather than any defect of human nature, is assumed to be the ultimate cause to which More attributed contemporary social ills. Similarly, the family is perceived purely as an economic unit upon which Utopian production was based. Thus, to Volgin, the theological significance of communism or patriarchalism in Utopia was of minimal consequence.

153. ibid., p.58.

154. For Marx and Engels on Utopian Socialism, see above, pp. 21-23.

155. V. Volgin, 'Sir Thomas More', News, Vol. XXXIX (Feb. 15 1953), pp. 14-15, at p. 15.

156. ibid., p. 14.

The most telling deficiency of the Socialist interpretation of Utopia is an adamant refusal to contemplate the work from a theological perspective. Thus the difficulties encountered by Kautsky and Morton are largely of their own making. The negation of More's theology has led to a misreading of his conception of human nature. According to the socialist analysis, human nature ought to have been profoundly affected and intrinsically improved by the impact of communism. However, a scrutiny of Utopia suggests that although More believed that men's conduct might be improved by means of institutional reorganization, he did not anticipate a fundamental change in basic human nature. For socialist critics this is an unpalatable conclusion. Hence their rather embarrassed proposition that More's own naivety resulted in his failure to realize the potential for the regeneration of human nature which ought to have played an integral role in his proposals for a communist means of production.

A more tempered analysis of More's view of the human predicament explains a number of points that have caused difficulty to these socialist critics. For instance, both Kautsky¹⁵⁷ and Morton¹⁵⁸ presumed that More proposed a reduction in the amount of work performed by the average labourer. However, it will be argued in chapter five that for both economic and moral reasons, this was far from the case. Similarly the frugality of Utopia confounded Kautsky and Morton, while Volgin was unable even to recognize it. Yet the Utopian economy was not directed towards the maximization of utilities as determined by the wants of its inhabitants. More believed that such wants

157. K.Kautsky, op.cit., p.198.

158. A.L.Morton, op.cit., p.53.

would often be misguided. Thus he intended his communist economy to remain unresponsive to 'unnatural' material desires. Finally, the various social sanctions, the scrutiny of morals, and the harsh punitive measures, all characteristic of daily life in Utopia, which have bemused socialist interpreters, are evidence of More's dismal view of human nature, which is, in turn, derived from his theology. If socialist interpreters have been confounded by More's failure to envisage the eventual withering away of the state, this is because More would have found such a prospect abhorrent. To More, that state was a necessary restriction upon man's degenerate nature. Hence Morton would have done well to acknowledge, as indeed he was prepared to do when it suited his purposes elsewhere,¹⁵⁹ the substantial differences between More's communism and that of Marx.

159. A.L. Morton, 'Utopia: Yesterday and Today', Science and Society, Vol. 17 (1953), pp. 258-263, at pp. 259-260.

v More as the Emergent Bourgeois Democrat

The circumstantial evidence attending the interpretation we are about to examine suggests that it constituted a reaction by certain American academics against the socialist analysis of Utopia advanced by Kautsky. This reaction did not take the form of a direct confrontation. Instead, the position that More had effected a class-orientated, socio-economic analysis of society was re-evaluated. The view that More anticipated the evolution of an alternative productive process, socialism, was therefore replaced by the contention that More actually condoned the existing mode of production, capitalism. It may not be coincidental that this revision occurred at the time of the Korean War. It therefore appears that More was drawn into Cold War polemics.

R. Ames produced what is in many respects the most bizarre analysis of More's purpose in writing Utopia. At times it is a little difficult to know precisely what Ames attempted to achieve. For instance, he was prepared to write an apparently laudatory foreword to the 1959 edition of Karl Kautsky's Thomas More and his Utopia,¹⁶⁰ although he must have disagreed quite fundamentally with much of Kautsky's case. Whereas Ames agreed with Kautsky that the basis for the analysis of Utopia was More's comprehension of changing social forces and class alignments, Ames surely questioned Kautsky's belief that More was an anticipatory socialist. Indeed, Ames saw More as a champion of the middle class. Ames took More's repudiation of chivalry as an indication of his willingness to articulate the

160. R. Ames, 'Foreword' to K. Kautsky, op. cit., pp. i-iii. Ames fails to allude to Kautsky's socialist analysis; perhaps he intended to divert the reader's attention from the core of Kautsky's argument.

the aspirations of the emergent middle class. Utopia, Ames claimed,

"portrays aristocratic culture, with its poetic romances, in the hard light of bourgeois prose."¹⁶¹

Ames went on to say :-

"Though it true that the Utopia is somewhat anti-capitalist, both from the idealist-medieval and an embryonic-socialist point of view, the core of the book is republican, bourgeois, and democratic - the result of More's experience as a man of business, as a politician, and as an Erasmian reformer."¹⁶²

Hence, Ames argued that whatever the impression classical and medieval influences made upon More, at heart he was an antecedent of Diderot and Jefferson.

The lynchpin of Ames's interpretation is his belief that More and other Humanists expressed the ideological opinions of the merchants and the wider middle class who strove against feudalism in the struggle for economic power. Thus Ames criticized Kautsky for confusing the conflict of workers and capital, for the real fight of capitalism against feudalism.¹⁶³ Ames believed More to be a bourgeois contemplating the immediate situation, rather than, as Kautsky would have it, a farsighted socialist. Naturally More's apparent advocacy of communism in Utopia represented a considerable setback for Ames's argument. Unfortunately, he failed to parry this blow at all convincingly and merely claimed that,

"It is improbable, though possible, that More was a practical advocate of communism in England, however much he may have

161. R. Ames, Citizen Thomas More and his Utopia, (Princeton 1949), p.4.

162. ibid., p.6.

163. ibid., pp.14-18.

been drawn to the theory of it."¹⁶⁴

Clearly, a susceptibility to even the theory of communism is not a particularly strong recommendation for a supposed bourgeois ideologue. It should be apparent that Ames's appreciation of Utopia is somewhat suspect; an impression confirmed by his claim that More

"does not find the causes of human misery in the mind or soul, in Fate, in fallible and unchanging 'human nature', or in the mental and moral weakness of the workers. Instead, More finds the causes of human misery in material conditions."¹⁶⁵

The implication of Ames interpretation is that only greater material prosperity would ameliorate such a situation. However, as we shall see in our own analysis of Utopia, More proposed an alternative solution which preferred equality and essential frugality.

In an article published in 1952 J.K. Sowards also presented the view that More was an exponent of the emergent bourgeois ethic. Sowards' manner was, if anything, even more overt than Ames's.¹⁶⁶ According to Sowards' analysis, the guiding principle of More's life and writings was his 'background'; not primarily as a Catholic, nor as a Humanist, but rather as a representative of the commercial aspirations of the middle class. Sowards' was a dialogic interpretation of Utopia with the variant that persona More represented a defendant of the socio-economic position of the middle classes¹⁶⁷ against the proposals of Hythlodæus, whose "speculative mind" was "steeped in the

164. ibid., p.10.

165. ibid., p.176.

166. J.K. Sowards, 'Some Factors in the Re-evaluation of Thomas More's Utopia', Northwest Missouri State College Studies, Vol.16 (1952), pp.31-58, at pp.35,57, - Sowards cites Ames.

167. ibid., pp.39-40.

un-capitalist thought of antiquity." ¹⁶⁸ Sowards went on to argue that,

"It is ridiculous and absurd to contend that More could possibly be in agreement with the view set forth by Hythloday! It is not true to the Catholic faith for which he was willing to die, nor the practical nature of his mind, nor to his position in society as a member of the rising, capitalist English middle class. Community of goods was something that could not have appealed to More. Much of his public life had already been spent in the service of the economic interests of his class."¹⁶⁹

In this light, More was depicted as a hard-headed lawyer devoted to the protection of London's merchants. The commercial success of contemporary Antwerp was apparently More's ideal.¹⁷⁰

Sowards' view of More is of an intensely pragmatic individual readily prepared to compromise his idealism to the harsh economic reality of the times. Thus Sowards said of More :-

"His heart went out to the wretched peasantry, but the solution to their plight could not be sought by closing one's eyes to economic reality."¹⁷¹

Instead, "the basic counsel ¹⁷² of courage and Morean good cheer" was to confront the real world rather than opting for escapism such as the communism of Utopia. In essence, Sowards regarded More's purpose in constructing Utopia, especially Book II, as the specific intention of displaying the extremity and absurdity of communism. Hence More really preferred to live with capital and

168. ibid., p.42.

169. ibid., p.46.

170. ibid., p.35.

171. ibid., p.43.

172. ibid., p.45.

the market, while at the same time applying the Christian ethic to social problems.¹⁷³ It therefore appears that the core of Sowards argument has certain affinities to the Catholic interpretation.

The case for More as a bourgeois democrat rests on a number of tenuous assumptions. More's connection with the legal profession and with the merchant community of the City of London are regarded as the most important facets of his life. There is no hint here of his earlier doubts over whether to commit himself to the 'vita activa', nor of the alienation he occasionally felt with regard to his own profession. Ames and Sowards have also assumed that More regarded increased material prosperity, to be attained by the free operation of market forces, as the means of improving the human predicament. Again, here there is no conception that More might have viewed private property and wealth as vehicles for the manifestation of human sinfulness. More has also been portrayed as a champion of the emergent middle class. Exactly which groups constituted this class during the sixteenth century, is open to question. Yet the obvious candidates, the gentry, the merchants, and the lawyers, all received short shrift in Utopia. It should be apparent that our basic criticism of both Ames and Sowards concerns their portrayal of More as a pragmatist who was prepared to compromise whatever ideals he may have had to the trend of contemporary socio-economic forces. This scenario negates the ethical considerations which were clearly of considerable consequence to the author of Utopia.

173. ibid., p.47.

vi J.H.Hexter:a New Orthodoxy ?

During the course of the last three decades, J.H.Hexter has established himself as the most respected commentator on Utopia. Hexter's views have regularly been cited and applauded by other academics working in the field. Such an enviable reception is partly explained by Hexter's appreciation of the development of Morean analysis. Thus Hexter's More is an eclectic More, a complex yet balanced individual who is at once a Catholic, a Humanist, a Statesman, and a Prophet. Consequently, it is unlikely that any scholar could discover comprehensive reasons for wholeheartedly rejecting Hexter's appreciation of More and of Utopia. For this reason his thesis has become something of an orthodoxy.

Hexter's is very much a contextual analysis which emphasizes that an understanding of the 'historical milieu' of which it was a product, is a necessary precondition to the correct interpretation of Utopia.¹⁷⁴ Christian-Humanism is one aspect of this milieu which, according to Hexter, deserves particular attention. He argues that Utopia reflects the Christian-Humanists' preoccupation with the advocacy of an active and practicing Christianity,¹⁷⁵ which might in turn be recommended as an ideal to be aspired to by the laity. Even so, Hexter is forced to concede that, as More confronted a number of contemporary opinions and prejudices, his Utopia represents a fleeting zenith of intellectual prowess.¹⁷⁶ The march of events therefore ensured that More could never again achieve the

174. J.H.Hexter, 'Intentions, Words and Meaning: The Case of More's Utopia', New Literary History, Vol.6 (1975), pp.529-541, at p.530.

175. J.H.Hexter, Introduction, p.lxxvi.

176. See particularly, J.H.Hexter, 'Thomas More - On the Margins of Modernity', op.cit., passim.

perceptive insights of Utopia.

Within this context, Hexter believes that in Utopia More initially analysed the shortcomings of men and of society before proceeding to prescribe the means of rectifying this situation. In the most succinct statement of his position Hexter contended that,

"The Utopian Discourse then is based on a diagnosis of the ills of sixteenth-century Christendom; it ascribes those ills to sin, and primarily to pride, and it prescribes remedies for that last most disastrous infection of man's soul designed to inhibit if not to eradicate it."¹⁷⁷

The starting point of Hexter's analysis is his telling proposition that More's appreciation of contemporary society was integrally related to his conception of human nature. Equally, More's view of man ultimately determined the character of Utopia. Thus he regarded social evils as a direct consequence of man's sinfulness.¹⁷⁸ Obviously, More was aware of all the deadly sins, but he was concerned particularly with sloth and greed, and above all with pride. Because pride was the dominant facet of man's nature, it inevitably manifested itself in the corruption of society.¹⁷⁹ Hexter has correctly observed that More's most radical conclusion was that all the available empirical evidence suggested that many of the existing institutions of Christian societies were faulty because they merely encouraged the sinfulness of man.¹⁸⁰

Up to this point, Hexter's analysis has much to recommend it. However, he placed More in a slightly extreme position by

177. J.H. Hexter, More's Utopia: The Biography of an Idea, p.76. The first commentator to note More's preoccupation with pride was J. Rickaby, op.cit., p.167.

178. J.H. Hexter, Introduction, p.ci, and passim.

179. ibid., and, More's Utopia: The Biography of an Idea, p.75.

180. J.H. Hexter, Introduction, p.cii.

stating that,

"in his view of men and their affairs there was a strong and ineradicable streak of pessimism. More's pessimism was ineradicable because it was part and parcel of his Christian faith."¹⁸¹

Similarly, Hexter has also said of More that, "he was both too good a Christian and too widely experienced a man to suffer delusions about human perfectibility."¹⁸²

By asserting his position so categorically, Hexter has been constrained to present an essentially negative version of the Utopian achievement.

Implicit in Hexter's interpretation is the postulate that, because More regarded man's inclination to sin as a constant, it necessarily followed that in the construction of Utopia the only variables to hand were the institutions upon which that society was to be founded. As Hexter eloquently put it,

"Utopia implies that the nature of man is such that to rely on individual conscience to supply the deficiencies of public law is to embark in a sieve on the bottomless sea of human sinfulness. The Utopians brace conscience with legal sanctions."¹⁸³

So Utopia represents an alternative
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'fabric of imperatives'. At this juncture, according to Hexter, More's capacity for lateral thought was at its most potent. So More proceeded to subject existing institutions to

181. J.H.Hexter, More's Utopia: The Biography of an Idea, p.72.

182. J.H.Hexter, Introduction, p.cxx.

183. ibid., p.cxi, see also, 'Thomas More - On the Margins of Modernity', op.cit., p.31.

184. J.H.Hexter, 'The Loom of Language and the Fabric of Imperative', American Historical Review, Vol.LXIX (1964), pp.945-968, passim.

'rational' criticism in order to reconstruct society along
 'rational' lines.¹⁸⁵ Thus, the most astounding conclusion to
 which More arrived by this process was the inversion of the
 traditional assumption that private property was a necessary
 institution for the restraint of human sinfulness.¹⁸⁶ Hence,
 Hexter has observed that in Utopia,

"the human propensity to sin, instead of being fattened
 by the very rules of the commonwealth, is starved and
 weakened by those rules."¹⁸⁷

Further, the most significant of
 such rules is communism.

The fulcrum of Hexter's interpretation of Utopia is the
 accommodation of his avowed belief that More sincerely advocated
 communism within an essentially theological context. With
 considerable justification Hexter has assumed that More
 correlated the best ordering of civil society with the
 conditions for righteous living.¹⁸⁸ This 'optimo republicae
 statu' was to be achieved by institutional means, and accordingly
 communism was the basis of all Utopian institutions. Hexter has
 regarded this, rather than any indebtedness to Plato, or an overt
 desire to defuse the monastic lifestyle, as the key to the
 interpretation of Utopia. Consequently, Hexter has concluded
 that in Utopia communism is all-pervading, because

"Of all the measures to crush the monster Pride it is the
 most important and the most effective, because it goes to
 the root of all evil, which is man's chronic sense of
 insecurity, insufficiency and anxiety."¹⁸⁹

185. J.H.Hexter, Introduction, pp. cxviii-cxix.

186. ibid., p. cxiii, and, 'Thomas More - On the Margins of
 Modernity', op.cit., p. 33.

187. J.H.Hexter, Introduction, p. cii.

188. ibid., pp. cviii-cx.

189. ibid., p. cii.

With communism as its guiding principle Utopia became,

"an austere laic commonwealth whose ordinances struck at the roots of sin, a commonwealth where Christ's teaching of equality, righteousness, and love towards God through love towards one's neighbor was the custom of the land and its law."¹⁹⁰

So, in Hexter's view, if a man is able to live righteously, as he must in Utopia, he has fulfilled his potential.¹⁹¹ The institutions of Utopia have facilitated the limited degree of improvement of which mankind is capable. Yet, Hexter has remained anxious to assert that "Utopia does not end in an eschatological dream."¹⁹² Indeed, the harsh legal code, the vigilant scrutiny of the conduct of the individual, and the restraint of morals, which are all features of Utopia, have led Hexter to conclude that "Calvin's Geneva looks a bit frivolous and frisky by comparison."¹⁹³ This position is indicative of Hexter's general impression of More's beliefs concerning the potential of man, and of the achievement of Utopia itself. While optimism is hardly the keynote, this is not to suggest that Hexter's More is steeped in medievalism. Indeed with respect to More's position in the history of ideas, Hexter has said that,

"In its intense perception and presentation of community of goods as a conceivably viable alternative to private property and in its insistence that communism, not private property, is prophylactic against human wickedness, Utopia stands on the margins of modernity."¹⁹⁴

While it would be misleading to suggest that Hexter

190. ibid., p.civ.

191. ibid., p.cviii.

192. J.H.Hexter, More's Utopia: The Biography of an Idea, p.71.

193. ibid., pp.91-92, and, Introduction, p.cxii.

194. J.H.Hexter, Introduction, pp.cxiv-cxv.

has been responsible for the foundation of a 'school' in the strictest sense of the term, it is certainly the case that his interpretation has been widely appreciated by other academics. Among these is Quentin Skinner who has readily admitted his indebtedness to Hexter.¹⁹⁵ Skinner has agreed with Hexter that Utopia can only be correctly understood in terms of its context, and, in particular, the political thought of Northern Humanism. Herein, Skinner has emphasized the Humanists' belief that the stability and virtue of the polity could only be assured by producing an educated citizenry. Even so, Skinner has followed Hexter by contending that More was not entirely constrained by the context in which he wrote, and indeed became critical of it.¹⁹⁶ For instance, Skinner has correctly pointed out that More challenged the assumption that the existing hierarchy could sustain the Humanists' ideals and reform programme. Instead, More held that the existing structure of society merely encouraged the sin of pride. So More took his social analysis to its full logical conclusion, and by his advocacy of communism, proposed a far more radical solution than did any of his Humanist associates.

Not all commentators have been so convinced as Skinner. Although E. Brann has not acknowledged Hexter, her interpretation of Utopia is an implicit critique of his views. The basis of Brann's case is an analysis of utopianism which is markedly different to the operational definition outlined in chapter one of this thesis. Brann emphasized the role of imagination,

195. Q. Skinner, 'More's Utopia', P.&P., No. 38 (1967), pp. 153-168, at p. 158, and passim, see also, The Foundations of Modern Political Thought, (" vols), (Cambridge 1978), Vol. 1, p. 259, and passim.

196. Q. Skinner, The Foundations of Modern Political Thought, Vol. 1, pp. 255-262.

travellers' tales, the transcendence of time, and the negation of existing conceptions of human nature, within utopianism. From this standpoint, Brann has argued that More used the dialogic form in order to distance himself from the institutions of life in Utopia, with which he could not possibly have agreed. The crux of Brann's case,¹⁹⁷ is that the Utopians were isolated from the consequences of the Fall of Man, that they were consequently without pride, and as a result of this, that they pursued an Epicurean ethic with pleasure as the sole end of life. This view of Utopia is diagonally opposed to both Hexter's and our own. Brann's appreciation of the work is a direct consequence of her conception of utopianism, which has led her to deny the extent to which More's conception of human nature is relevant to the understanding of Utopia.

A More direct assault upon Hexter's thesis has been attempted by W. Allen who has revived a well-worn argument in the process. Allen has cited the last three paragraphs of Utopia as evidence that More did not condone the views expressed by Hythlodæus. Allen has also taken Hythlodæus to be arguing that money was the sole source of avarice. In doing this, Allen has failed to recognize that the Discourse on Utopia does not merely elucidate the purely economic manifestations of pride. Thus he has concluded that,

"it is difficult to prove that More shared Hythlodæus's abandonment of hope that men can make good their use of riches."¹⁹⁸

Persona More's final speech has therefore been cited

197. E. Brann, 'An Exquisite Platform: Utopia', Interpretation, Vol. 3 (1972), pp. 1-26, at pp. 10-20.

198. W. Allen, 'Hythlodæus and the Root of all Evil', Moreana, Vols. 31-32 (1971), pp. 51-60, at p. 53.

by Allen as More's own avowal of confidence in his fellow man. Hexter has refuted this criticism quite neatly. By conducting an exercise in content analysis,¹⁹⁹ Hexter has shown that the 'ideals' exalted by persona More in his final speech, nobility, magnificence, splendour, and majesty, were generally employed in an ironical and derogatory sense elsewhere in the text. Thus Hexter has concluded with every justification, that far from being a testament to the human achievement, More's concluding words accorded with the acutely sardonic message conveyed by much of Utopia.

By achieving the twin virtues of an unparalleled degree of sophistication and a welcome freedom from dogmatism, J.H. Hexter's appreciation of Utopia has secured an enduring credibility. Subsequent studies of Utopia have been and will continue to be, indebted to Hexter's work. Indeed, the influence of Hexter's work will be apparent, particularly in chapter five, of this thesis. However, in a number of respects, Hexter's position is susceptible to criticism. This is largely a consequence of Hexter's failure to pursue his argument to its logical conclusion. Thus, although Hexter's interpretation remains difficult to dispute, the full approbation which ought to follow may nevertheless be withheld.

On the question of More's conception of human nature, Hexter adopts one quite defensible alternative. According to Hexter, More adopted a decidedly pessimistic stance. This might be termed 'Augustinian'. Man is regarded as an essentially fallen

199. J.H. Hexter, 'Intentions, Words and Meaning', op.cit. For Allen's unconvincing response, see, 'The Tone of More's Farewell to Utopia: A Reply to J.H. Hexter', Moreana, Vol. 51 (1976), pp. 108-118.

entity. In chapter four it will be shown that while it is not inadmissible to advance such an impression of More's view of man, neither is it the complete picture. More's was an ambivalent conception of human nature which was not so decisive as Hexter has suggested. At once More was constrained to stress the sinfulness of man; but he had also to acknowledge that men had retained certain reasoning faculties, which, if exercised correctly, could at least result in the achievement of his full if albeit limited potential. It is this aspect of More's view of human nature which is negated in Hexter's analysis, and this in turn is of considerable consequence to Hexter's interpretation of Utopia.

This same general criticism can be applied to Hexter's emphasis upon the role of pride within More's view of man and of his predicament. Although Hexter has been justified in stressing the significance of pride, he has failed to identify the roots of More's belief in man's latter-day sinfulness - his account of the Fall of Man. This omission means that Hexter has not pursued his own argument to its logical conclusion. Certainly, Hexter has correctly suggested that pride was contained by institutional means, but this was not the ultimate or entire achievement of Utopia. To attain their full potential, fallen men must secure their salvation. So it follows that because the institutions of Utopia restrained man's sinfulness, they must also have been conducive to his salvation. Thus it appears that Hexter has not realized the full implications of his own thesis. Such an impression is confirmed by Hexter's reluctance to confront the problem of Utopian religion, which obviously bears some relation to the question of man's salvation. While admitting that More conducted an exercise in

approximating a natural religion, based upon reason, to the Christian faith, Hexter has refused to be drawn on the question²⁰⁰ of precisely how successful More was in this enterprise. Instead, possibly as a result of his own eclecticism, Hexter has argued that Utopia was designed to teach by example. Thus, as a result of his failure to consider the full implications of his own case, Hexter's Utopia is not prescriptive in the fullest sense.

200. See, e.g., J.H. Hexter, More's Utopia the Biography of an Idea, pp. 48-56.

CHAPTER FOUR : THOMAS MORE'S CONCEPTION OF THE HUMAN CONDITION

Thomas More's evaluation of the human condition was dominated by essentially theological considerations. During the course of our analysis of More's thought it will become apparent that his political recommendations cannot be isolated from his theology and moral philosophy. Indeed, the nature of More's political analysis was determined by theological and moral precepts. More explained both the prevailing circumstances of human existence, and the ends of life, in such terms. To this extent, his political proposals were for the amelioration of the former and for the realization of the latter. So our evaluation of More's political thought must be preceded by an account of his view of man and of man's predicament.

This chapter will deal with four major themes. We shall firstly be concerned with the fundamental tenets of More's theology. This will lead to the second area; More's account of the Fall of Man. It will be argued that More regarded the Fall as the most important influence upon both human nature, and mankind's predicament. Thirdly, More's analysis of contemporary society will be explained in the light of the conclusions of the previous two sections. Fourthly and finally, we shall consider a number of intellectual precedents and sources which apparently influenced More's thought. It will be argued that both Augustinianism and Thomism profoundly affected More's conception of man and society. Ultimately, we shall conclude that the attempt to reconcile elements of these two systems accounts for certain inherent tensions within More's political philosophy.

i More's Theology

In attempting to analyse More's theology it is necessary to be aware that his writings fall into three major periods. The first of these was an essentially speculative phase in which More mused upon the nature of the human predicament and allowed himself a certain degree of latitude in proposing a solution to it. It was in this period that Utopia was composed. The second phase was More's polemical confrontation with various Protestant Reformers. The third and final period was constituted by the 'Tower Works'. These are contemplative studies written at the end of More's life in which he explored many questions concerning man and man's redemption that were particularly pertinent to More's own immediate circumstances. They are a telling testament of More's perception of the human condition. However, in terms of methodology, the works produced by More during the second period of his thought pose a number of difficulties and therefore must be treated with care.

Undoubtedly More's polemical writings constitute a substantial source for ascertaining his theological opinions. Although he was a layman, More had established a reputation as an accomplished theologian. Such was the extent of More's esteemed knowledge that he was singled out both by Henry VIII and later by Cuthbert Tunstal, to reply to the Protestant position.¹ The arguments proffered by the Reformers on such issues as justification by faith alone, the salvation of a predestined

1. For the circumstances leading to the composition of Henry VIII's Assertio Septem Sacramentorum, and for the details of More's confrontation with Luther, see, J.H. Headley, 'Introduction', Responsio ad Lutherum, (1523), C.W., Vol. 5, Pt. 11; R. Pineas, Thomas More and Tudor Polemics, (Bloomington 1968), passim; J.J. Scarisbrick, Henry VIII, (London 1968), passim, especially p. 153. For More's reputation as a theologian, see, G. Kernan, 'St. Thomas More Theologian', Thought, Vol. XVII (1942), pp. 281-302.

elect, and the reform of religious practices to reduce their ceremonial and sacramental content, by emphasizing lay participation and scripturalism, all prompted More to produce, in reply, a vehement defence of Catholicism.

Although More's polemical response to Protestantism caused him to express certain long-held tenets of his faith, whereas otherwise he might not have done so, it is also important to remember that More was constrained in the terms of the debate by his opponents. As he was forced on to the defensive, More resorted to devices such as rhetoric and the dialogic form to advance what were often unmitigated and extreme assertions of his views.² The weight of the responsibility More had assumed took its toll. More's polemical writings were often extremely lengthy expositions of his case, and consequently may have been less effective than a more pithy rejoinder might have been.³ However, if all these factors are borne in mind, More's debates with Luther, Tyndale, Barnes, Fish, Frith, and Saint-German, may be profitably utilized in the reconstruction of his theological position. We shall now proceed with this task.

More believed that although God could be known to men by faith and reason,⁴ He was ultimately inscrutable in his wisdom.⁵ Thus God was not constrained to act in accordance with the limitations of human wisdom, and could therefore perform

2. See, R. Pineas, *op. cit.*, passim, and, L. A. Schuster 'Reformation Polemic and Renaissance Values', *Moreana*, Vol. XI (1974), pp. 47-54, at pp. 50-52.

3. See, A. I. Taft, 'Introduction', The Apologye of Syr Thomas More, Knyght, E. E. T. S., O. S. CLXXX, (Oxford 1930), pp. liii-ixiii, and, J. B. Trapp, 'Introduction', Apology, C. W., Vol. 9, p. lxxxviii. For More's reply to contemporary criticism of his method see, Apology, pp. 5-10.

4. T. More, The Four Last Things, (1522), E. W., Vol. I, p. 467.

5. T. More, De Tristitia Christi, (1534), C. W., Vol. 14, p. 213.

miracles.⁶ Most significantly, God was implacable in his justice and mercy.⁷ More argued that these characteristics were evident in God's judgement of Adam, and would take effect in the judgement of all men.⁸ That all men should suffer the temporal consequences of Adam's maleficence was in accordance with God's justice. However, in his mercy, God had provided man with the prospect of redemption. Ultimately More regarded this as an inexplicable mystery. God's mercy was confirmed by the cleansing of men's sinfulness through Christ's Passion.⁹ Consequently, God would punish men for their sinful conduct rather than for their inheritance of original sin.¹⁰ So because God would save all men, damnation was the result of choices freely made by men themselves.¹¹ As our analysis progresses it will become apparent that the prescriptive facet of Utopia was a consequence of More's concern to recommend a lifestyle which would enable men to take advantage of God's mercy.

More recognized that sin was not only one expression of the relationship between man and God, but that it also pervaded human interaction.¹² The prevalence of both reason and faith as elements of More's theology is confirmed by his assertion that sin results when men lose "the natural light of reason

6. T. More, Dialogue Concerning Heresies, (1529), E.W., Vol. II, pp. 42-43.

7. For this theme see, A Prayer of Picus Mirandula Unto God, translated by More, (1505), E.W., Vol. I, p. 395.

8. T. More, Treatise on the Passion, (1534), C.W., Vol. 13, pp. 6, 18.

9. T. More, The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer, (1532-1533), C.W., Vol. 8, p. 839.

10. T. More, Treatise on the Passion, p. 41.

11. T. More, The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer, pp. 433, 487-489.

12. ibid., p. 40.

and the spiritual light of faith."¹³ In order to appreciate the complex juxtaposition of optimism and pessimism in More's view of the human condition, it is necessary to be clear about his differentiation of original sin from the act of sinning. More stated his position quite explicitly. In the Treatise on the Passion he spoke first of,

"the fylth of original synne (with whych euerye manne borne into this world, by natural propagacion, is infected in the vicious sinfull stocke, in that we wer all in of Adam..."¹⁴

Subsequently More argued that

"no man to be perpetually dampned by sensible feeling of the fyre of hel, for originall synne contracted withoute his witting but onely for actuall synne freely committed by hys owne vicious wyl."¹⁵

Here there are certain parallels to the position formerly advanced by Aquinas,¹⁶ although, as we shall discover, More was less convinced of man's natural virtue than Aquinas had been.

More's initial position was pessimistic. He argued that all men are tainted by original sin. This is a condition into which they are born; it is innate and ineradicable. However, in believing that, in His mercy, God would not punish men for original sin, More's theology admitted a glimmer of optimism. Yet More offset this with the pessimistic contention that God acted in accordance with retributive justice by punishing men for their actual sins. Further, More's conception of human nature assumed that men would sin prolifically. But yet again, from this pessimistic assessment of mankind's predicament, More

13. T. More, The Four Last Things, p. 462.

14. T. More, Treatise on the Passion, p. 29.

15. ibid., p. 40.

16. T. Aquinas, Summa Theologicae, Prima Secunda, Qu's 71-89.

outlined in Utopia plans for a society that would eradicate a number of the means by which men could express their propensity for sinfulness. So ultimately, More's social theory was characterized by a tempered optimism.

More's categorization of a hierarchy of the various forms of sinfulness was an important aspect of his perception of the human condition. He regularly analysed the seven deadly sins of "pryde, enuy, wrath, and couetice, glotony, slothe and lechyrye..¹⁷ .." On such occasions More's prose was invariably graphic. For instance, he described envy as

"the first begotten daughter of pride, begotten in bastardy and incest by the devil, father of them both."¹⁸

Further, More¹⁹ identified covetousness as the fear of irrational want. Thus in Utopia he argued that the sin of covetousness could be stifled if the grounds for such insecurity were removed. More was quick to point out that covetousness impelled Judas to betray Christ.²⁰ Similarly, he cited the appetite which drove Eve to partake of the forbidden fruit as the most notorious instance of gluttony.²¹ Indeed, such was the extent of More's preoccupation with human sinfulness, that he regarded sleep as a form of sloth.²²

Within the hierarchy of sin, pride predominated. Not surprisingly, digressions upon the subject were common in all

17. T. More, Treatise on the Passion, p.63.

18. T. More, The Four Last Things, p.481. This work in general contains More's most detailed analysis of sin.

19. ibid., p.488, and below, pp.256-257.

20. T. More, Treatise on the Passion, p.66.

21. T. More, The Four Last Things, p.493.

22. This is a persistent theme of De Tristitia Christi.

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More's writings. In Utopia itself, More's discussion of pride was quite typical. He stated that,

"This serpent from hell entwines itself around the hearts of men and acts like a suckfish preventing and hindering them from entering on a better way of life."²⁴

More regarded pride as the source of all other sinfulness. He verified this conclusion both historically, pride being "the first of all synes, begon among the angels in heauen,"²⁵ and empirically, in his analysis of

"the very head and root of all sins, that is to wit, pride, the mischievous mother of all manner of vice."²⁶

Pride assumed such consequence in More's theology because he conceived of this sin as the forsaking of God which had led man to succumb to both initial temptation and to the multifarious sinfulness that followed.²⁷ Given this, More confidently predicted that,

"the person of them that in pride & vanite passid the tyme of this present life, & after that so spent passed hens into hell."²⁸

It is interesting, in this context, that in the Middle Ages humility was emphasized as the basic countervailing Christian virtue.²⁹ However, it is clear that More doubted whether most men could achieve the degree of

23. Even in his earlier writings More warned against trusting in fortune, because it would nourish men's pride only to inflict a sudden reversal, see, meters for the boke of Fortune, E.W., Vol. I.

24. Utopia, pp. 243-245.

25. T. More, Treatise on the Passion, p. 9, see also, p. 7.

26. For More's impression of the forms which pride might assume, see, The Four Last Things, p. 477, see also, pp. 476-480.

27. T. More, Treatise on the Passion, p. 7.

28. T. More, Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulation, (1534), C.W., Vol. 12, p. 158.

29. H. Oberman, The Harvest of Medieval Philosophy, (Cambridge Massachussetts 1963), p. 222.

humility necessary for their salvation. Hence in Utopia, he proposed a number of institutional bolsters to the humility of men by providing for the subjugation of pride.³⁰

More's perception of the human condition was also influenced by his acute awareness of the immediate danger to each individual posed by the cosmic battle between good and evil. More believed that,

"our enemy the devil constantly prowls like a roaring lion looking everywhere for someone who is ready to fall because of the weakness of the flesh..."³¹

The immanence of the Devil, "the prince of this world, nor is there any power on earth like him,"³² was obviously pertinent to More's conception of sin and temptation. According to More, to sin was to offend God by succumbing to temptation, and therefore wilfully breaking His command to resist such temptation. More also conceived of sin as a condition of bondage into which men might fall.³³ However, although Christians could fall into sin, More argued that choices were still available to them. Men could either repent and return to God, or continue to sin and be damned.³⁴

These views are of considerable relevance to More's social theory. Not only did More recognize human sinfulness as the basis of all social evils, but he also believed that existing social institutions presented a continuing temptation which most men were incapable of resisting.³⁵ In effect, sinful men

30. This obviously owes a good deal to J.H. Hexter's general thesis, see above, chapter three, section vi.

31. T. More, De Tristitia Christi, pp. 169-171.

32. ibid., p. 641.

33. T. More, Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulation, p. 253.

34. T. More, The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer, pp. 427-435.

35. J.H. Hexter, 'The Composition of Utopia', his introduction to Utopia, p. ci.

had established institutions which could only perpetuate the corruption of men's morals. Therefore the bulk of mankind remained in a state of sin. Further, it seemed unlikely to More that men would extricate themselves from the bondage of sin by repenting of their own volition. As a corollary, it appeared that men would attain their salvation only if temptation were first removed. Given this, it became evident to More that social institutions would have to change radically. Consequently, in Utopia, More proposed a series of alternative arrangements, such as communism, which, he believed, would remove the temptation to sinfulness presented by existing institutions such as private property.

The role of faith in the process of salvation was a central issue in the polemical confrontation between More and his Protestant adversaries. In general, the Reformers were heavily imbued with the teachings of St. Augustine, and contended that faith had a pre-eminent role to play. For More, faith was necessary but not sufficient.³⁶ The ultimate point at issue is the question of man's free will. The Protestants regarded the notion that degenerate man could influence the destiny of his soul as inadmissible. Thus they pointed to the insufficiency of mere works to appease God. So the Reformers argued that men must reconcile themselves to the fact that the selection of the few who, through no merit of their own, would be saved, had been predetermined arbitrarily by an omnipotent God.

Ultimately the Protestants concluded that the performance of works was symptomatic of election. However, it appears that More was unaware of this fully developed position. He assumed that the doctrine of justification by faith was a form

36. T. More, The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer, p.229 ff.

of antinomianism which constituted a prescription for anarchy. By retracing what he took to be the logic of the Protestant case, More accused Tyndale of arguing that God was the author of sin, by blaming,

"our sin to the necessity and constraint of God's ordinance, affirming that we do not sin for ourself by any power of our own will but by the compulsion and handiwork of God. And that we do not the sin ourself, but that God doth the sin in us Himself."³⁸

More was equally alarmed by Luther's apparent proposition that the elect could never sin. In confronting Tyndale for his "frantyeke heresyys agaynst free wyll,"³⁹ More also expressed concern over the apparent political implications of Protestant doctrines.⁴⁰ Thus he contended that Protestantism threatened the established relation between religious ideas and social conduct. More believed that men's actions should always be guided by the assumption that their conduct would influence God's eventual judgement of them. So in an age that dreaded the unleashing of chaos and disorder, More argued that the doctrine of predestination not only presumed upon God's mercy,⁴¹ but also posed the threat of

37. See, R. Marius, 'Thomas More and the Early Church Fathers', Traditio, Vol. 24 (1968), pp. 379-407, at p. 384, and, J. Headley, 'More Against Luther', Moreana, Vol. 15 (1967), pp. 211-223. passim.

38. T. More, Dialogue Concerning Heresies, p. 277, see also, pp. 279-280.

39. T. More, The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer, p. 799.

40. By the mid-1520's Luther had advanced an essentially authoritarian view of political obligation, see, e.g., Temporal Authority: To What Extent it Should be Obeyed, (1523), trans. J. J. Shindal, in, Luther's Works, Vol. 45, ed. W. I. Brandt, (Philadelphia 1962). This and later works such as Tyndale's, The Obedience of a Christian Man, (1527-1528), in, Tyndale's Doctrinal Treatises &c., ed. H. Walter, Parker Society Vol. 32, (Cambridge 1848), failed to dissuade More from the opinion that Protestant doctrines were politically subversive.

41. T. More, The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer, p. 513.

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libertinism and anarchy.

For More, faith was certainly prerequisite to works, but could not itself determine an individual's conduct. Faith was merely the first stage in a progression towards salvation.⁴³ Indeed, it was an article of faith for More that men, with their limited powers of comprehension, must accept the seemingly illogical doctrine that God's grace and man's free will were necessary for salvation.⁴⁴ More also believed that Protestant opinions struck at the dignity of man by derogating his free will and the performance of good works. Rather typically, by regarding predestination as a trap set to lure men to their damnation, More ascribed the concept to the Devil.⁴⁵ Instead, More believed that men could choose to love God,⁴⁶ and that

"man may by his free wyl by good endeuoure of hym selfe, be a worker wyth god toward the atteynyng of fayth."⁴⁷

Faith

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could be a product of the will which, once attained, brought with it God's comfort of a quiet conscience.⁴⁹

Reason was of considerable importance to More's theology and thus to his overall conception of the human condition as expressed in Utopia. On this issue More's thought was occasionally ambiguous, especially in his evaluation of the relationship between reason and the will. More contended that

42. ibid., p.495.

43. T. More, Treatise on the Passion, p.115.

44. See, B. Byron, Loyalty in the Spirituality of St. Thomas More, (Nieuwkoop 1972), p.83.

45. T. More, The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer, p.502.

46. ibid., pp.507-512.

47. T. More, The Apology, p.33, see also, p.37.

48. T. More, The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer, p.547.

49. T. More, Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulation, pp.12-13.

man possessed a two-fold nature consisting of the earthly body and the "reasonable soule".⁵⁰ Thus he regarded reason as an antidote to the sensuality and sinful inclinations of the fleshly body. However, More also suggested that reason corresponded to an absolute standard according to which men's conduct, the result of their exercising free will, could be assessed. At this point More's thought appears to have been influenced by natural law theory. More maintained that when a man turned away from God by sinning, he was aware of what he did,

"his wyll fallynge from the followynge of his reason, to the fulfylling of his fleshely desyre & beestly luste and deuelysshe appetite, accomplyssheth his detestable dede nat from any lacke of wyt and reason, but thorowe a faute of the frowarde wyll wyttyngly workynge for pleasure agaynste reason."⁵¹

Yet, conversely, More contended that the exercise of reason alone was not sufficient for men to attain their salvation. In order to fulfil their potential, men also required God's grace, and the gift of revelation.⁵² Nevertheless, the suggestion that man could cooperate with God accredited a certain dignity to human nature.

Much of More's analysis of the human condition is attributable to his ambivalent conception of reason. On the one hand, More conceived of reason as a faculty which ultimately might enable men to realize their full potential. On the other hand, More was aware that because this faculty had been weakened, it was unlikely that men would use reason to their advantage. More agreed with traditional opinion in believing that men's reasoning faculties had been impaired at the Fall. Thus he

50. T. More, Treatise on the Passion, p.36.

51. T. More, The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer, p.513.

52. T. More, Treatise on the Passion, pp.37-38.

contended that in the original condition man's soul had possessed "three great gyftes, memory, vnderstanding, and wyl." 53 Originally these elements functioned in unison, but as a consequence of the Fall, the balance was disturbed in favour of the will. So actions, determined by the will, no longer accorded to the dictates of reason, whereas before the Fall men's

"bodies wer far from al filthi tokens of sin. Their sensual partes conformable vnto reason." 54

Afterwards reason was hard-pressed to restrain the evil inclinations of men which originated in the sensuality of their bodies. 55 However, More believed that although it was certainly detrimental, this impediment did not leave men without responsibility for their conduct. Indeed, he argued that reason taught men to provide for their self-preservation once they had been cast out of Paradise. 56 Yet More was always aware of the frailty of reason as manifested by its inability to prevail over the will, and through it, to control action.

It has already been suggested that the relationship of reason to revelation is an important question with respect to the interpretation of Utopia. With this in mind it is of the utmost consequence to recognize that More maintained an ideal conception of the balance between reason, the will, and faith, to the effect that,

"if reason be suffered to run out at riot, and wax over high-hearted and proud, she will not fail to fall in rebellion towards her master's faith. But on the other

53. ibid., p.12.

54. ibid., p.13.

55. See, More's translation of Giafrancesco Pico's, The Life of Pico, (1505), E.W., Vol.I, p.377.

56. T. More, Dialogue Concerning Heresies, pp.92-93.

side, if she be well brought up and well-guided and kept in good temper, she shall never disobey faith, being in her right mind. And therefore let reason be well guided, for surely faith goeth never without her."⁵⁷

Given this, it is possible to explain More's position concerning reason and revelation. Throughout The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer More contended that it was impossible to reach God through reason alone.⁵⁸ Thus he believed that the Reformers had allowed their will to promote their reasoning faculties to the extent that they presumed to advance doctrines which went beyond the revelation embodied in the teachings of the Catholic Church. This position has been mistakenly attributed to the Utopians. Yet, as we shall see, the Utopians exercised reason largely in accordance with More's ideal. Not only did they use reason to ascertain three articles of faith which conformed to revelation,⁵⁹ but their reason also prompted them to accept the teachings of Catholicism, once these were made known in Utopia.

Free will was obviously a pivotal aspect of More's theology. For instance, More claimed that man's will had been responsible for both the horrible sins that had brought about his fall,⁶⁰ and for the descent into sinfulness of successive individuals.⁶¹ According to More, all human conduct, whether it be sinning and falling from grace, or resisting the Devil and turning to God, was the result of voluntary choices, "for there is no such man

57. ibid., p.86.

58. R. Marius, 'Thomas More's View of the Church', his introductory essay to, The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer, Pt. III, p.1274.

59. Utopia, pp.161-163, 217.

60. T. More, The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer, p.457.

61. ibid., p.526.

y doth any suche dede agaynste hys will."⁶² More argued that man would necessarily face the trial of temptation and must resist it by the strength of his own will. Conversely, in assessing man's predicament, More categorically placed "the⁶³ fawte of hys fall in the frowardnesse of hys owne wyll." Hence More contended that it was man's own responsibility to seek pardon for, and the remission of, his sins.⁶⁴ More's notion of the spiritual autonomy of the individual was exemplified by his assertion that men defied God through their own wilful malice. Although God desired the salvation of all men, He would not impose redemption upon unwilling malefactors.⁶⁵ When More said,

"he that wyll be conformable and walke with goddes grace, may fynde good cause inoughe to captyue his reason to the belefe and yet nat so great and vrgent causes, but that he whiche wyll be yll wyllled and frowarde, may let grace go, and fynde his selfe cauellacyons proudely to rest upon his owne reason agaynste the worde of god."⁶⁶

- he effectively summarized his assessment of the workings of faith, reason and free will.

As R. Marius has pointed out, More's emphasis upon free will suggests an optimism which was limited in its extent by his impressions of the manner in which contemporary man exercised his will. Thus Marius regarded More's position as one of

62. ibid., p.458, see also, p.513, and, Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulation, pp.24-25.

63. T. More, The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer, p.526.

64. ibid., pp.839-840.

65. T. More, De Tristitia Christi, pp.199-201.

66. T. More, The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer, p.509.

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"moderation, skepticism, and grudging hope." More's understanding of free will is relevant to the interpretation of Utopia. Having concluded that, if left to their own devices, men were unlikely to exercise their will judiciously, (that is, by using it to turn to God, and thereby to attain salvation,) More posited in Utopia a set of social institutions which were designed to reduce temptation, limit the available choices, and channel men's will in the requisite direction. The question of whether, by living under such constraining institutions, men could still exercise free will, was not developed by More. Clearly, these issues raise difficulties similar to those posed by Rousseau in The Social Contract, when he suggested that men might be forced to be free. ⁶⁸ However, the essence of More's utopianism was his belief that institutional arrangements could regulate human conduct. Presumably More believed that to exercise the will in the desired manner, albeit under the constraint of the institutional environment, was a greater good than to allow the will a free reign, with all the inherent perils of man's inclination to sin. It is significant that both More and Rousseau relied upon the literary device of the lawgiver-legislator to impose certain rules which otherwise may not have been voluntarily invented or assumed.

More's insistence that men must exercise free will was based upon his claim that salvation could be earned only by merit. - With regard to the issue of works, More believed that by emphasizing the sufficiency of faith for salvation, the Reformers had made a fundamental error. Again this prompted

67. R. Marius, op. cit., p. 1329.

68. J. J. Rousseau, The Social Contract and Discourses, ed. G. D. H. Cole, (London 1913, 1973 edition), pp. 177, 250.

More to advance his opinions on the manner in which men must
 conduct themselves.⁶⁹ He discerned that by subscribing to the
 doctrine of justification by faith alone, an individual might
 be tempted to complacency and inactivity. Thus More argued that
 the mere avoidance of sin was an insufficient basis for
 salvation. Instead, men were also required actively to do
 good.⁷⁰ Faith and works were both requisite.⁷¹ More counselled
 that it would be careless for men to trust in God's goodness
 in order to attain redemption. Man's main hope of salvation
 rested with his own endeavours to co-operate with God.⁷²

To perform good works required the correct disposition of the
 will. More asserted that in order to avoid pride and the
 temptings of the Devil, works must be carried out in a condition
 of humility. Hence he regarded pride and humility as
 antithetical concepts. More argued that because pride had
 caused the Devil to be cast out of heaven, humility was the
 only means of gaining access thereto.⁷³ Similarly, because man's
 reason was impaired, he was prone to the proud attitude of
 trusting in his own works. So More affirmed that men could
 never know the value of works, and again recommended humility as
 the necessary neutralizing factor.⁷⁴ The individual's
 perception of his own works has been an enduring problem

69. See, e.g., T. More, The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer, p.958.

70. T. More, The Four Last Things, pp.465,493.

71. T. More, Dialogue Concerning Heresies, p.283, and, Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulation, p.39.

72. T. More, Treatise of the Blessed Body, (1534), C.W., Vol.13, p.198.

73. T. More, Treatise on the Passion, pp.116-117.

74. T. More, Dialogue Concerning Heresies, p.282.

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for Christian thought. More seems to have dealt with this question by contending that although an individual should never presume to attribute value to his own works, his deeds would make it manifestly obvious to others whether he was a child of

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God or of the Devil. More concluded that,

"good wurkes wrought in fayth, hope, and cheryte, be very profytable towarde obtaynyng of forgyuenesse and getyng reward in heuyn"⁷⁷

More's view of good works is important to his social thought. As our argument progresses it will become apparent that in Utopia More constructed a social order in which it was easier to perform works than it was in contemporary Christendom.

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With respect to ecclesiastical matters, More's cardinal idea was that the Church was invested with the Holy Spirit.⁷⁹ Thus he argued that Christ's Church was the known Catholic Church as exemplified by its historical continuity.⁸⁰ Particularly in confronting the Protestant Reformers, More was anxious to prove that the Catholic Church was the one unerring depository of truth in man's uncertain predicament. As a corollary, More attempted to demonstrate that,

"If the spirit of truth shall dwell in the church for ever, how can the church err in perceiving of the truth..."⁸¹

75. For a particularly interesting exploration of this issue, see, H. Arendt, The Human Condition, (Chicago 1957), pp. 73-78.

76. T. More, The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer, pp. 442-443.

77. ibid., p. 402, see also, pp. 581, 849-851.

78. For More's most detailed discussion of ecclesiology, see, Dialogue Concerning Heresies. By far the most reliable and exhaustive study of this aspect of More's thought is, R. Marius, op. cit.

79. J. Headley, Introduction, Responsio ad Lutherum, pp. 736-740.

80. T. More, The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer, pp. 119-133.

81. T. More, Dialogue Concerning Heresies, p. 122.

Further, More

maintained that through the Church, God bestowed a continuing
 revelation upon man.⁸² Similarly he argued that the workings
 of the Holy Ghost within the Church stimulated a consensus
 amongst Christians.⁸³ So it was difficult for More to conceive
 of anything but a universal institution because he believed
 that the congregation of the Church constituted the whole body
 of the faithful who had, through time, acknowledged Christ.⁸⁴ By
 insisting that sinners might repent and return to God, More also
 contended that sinners were, nevertheless, members of the Church.
 This, of course, militated against the Protestant conception of
 a church composed only of the company of the elect.⁸⁵ Indeed,
 More was certain that only heretics stood outside the Church.

The most difficult problem encountered in attempting to
 relate More's theology to Utopia arises from his attitude to the
 Church. As we saw in chapter three, the absence from Utopia of
 fully-fledged Catholicism has led many commentators to doubt
 whether More intended the work as a serious philosophical
 treatise. However, as our argument develops we shall demonstrate
 that the tenets of Utopian theology, along with aspects of their
 ceremonial worship, indicate an affinity between the religion of
 Utopia and More's genuine convictions. Indeed, much of what More
 said on ecclesiastical matters in Utopia can be interpreted as
 an advocacy of the internal reform of contemporary Catholicism,
 and particularly of clerical conduct. However, the coming of
 Protestantism caused More's discussion of the Catholic Church

82. T. More, The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer, pp. 339-389.

83. T. More, Dialogue Concerning Heresies, p. 97.

84. ibid., pp. 143-144, and, Resposio ad Lutherum, pp. 173, 623-625.

85. T. More, The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer, pp. 419-420, 428, 448, 452-453, 565, 777.

to take something of a conservative turn. This was not an untypical reaction amongst Humanists, many of whom had contributed to the first seeds of the Counter Reformation. When he wrote Utopia, More could not have anticipated the dissolution of the universal Church. Consequently, his desire for internal reform caused him to include in Utopia a satirical commentary on the contemporary clergy.⁸⁶ Such a critique was considerably more vehement than anything More said on clerical matters once his polemical confrontation with Protestantism had commenced.

More experienced great difficulty in isolating the precise location of sovereignty within the Church. His inability to clarify the nature of the internal constitution of the Church was, however, not unique in the early sixteenth century. In More's case, this was partly a consequence of his more immediate concern with the nature and role of the Catholic Church as a whole than with the locus of authority within that body. More's position on the question of Papal primacy might have remained even less definite had not the issue erupted as a matter of major importance during the course of his political career. The⁸⁷ turn of events certainly caused More to clarify his ideas, although his own perilous position necessitated considerable

86. Utopia, pp.67,83-85.

87. More's changing position is discussed at length in the following :- J.Headley, 'Thomas Murner, Thomas More, and the First Expression of More's Ecclesiology', Studies in the Renaissance, Vol.XIV (1967), pp.73-92, especially at pp.81-89, and, Introduction, Responsio ad Lutherum, argues for More's developing support of Papal primacy. This is contested by R.Marius, op.cit., pp.1294-1315, who claims that More's English polemical works point towards the alternative thesis that he advocated the restraint of Papal authority through some consensually-orientated form of conciliarism. See also, D.Hay, 'A Note on More and the General Council', Moreana, Vols.15-16 (1967), pp.249-251; D.B.Fenlon, 'England and Europe:Utopia and its Aftermath', Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, Vol.25 (1975), pp.115-135, at p.134.

caution in the wording of whatever public pronouncements he was prepared to make concerning what he seems to have regarded as the undecided question of the Pope's role within the Church. Undoubtedly, as the Reformation developed, More inclined, at least in the Responsio ad Lutherum, to the defence of a restrained Papal authority.⁸⁸ Some years later, in a carefully drafted letter to Cromwell, More admitted that his position had shifted during the period of controversy.⁸⁹ However, although More's position on the question of Papal primacy was not unimportant, it seems that in considering the overall question of the authority of the Catholic Church, he attached far less significance to this one particular issue than did many within the contemporary political elite.

More's irresolution on issues such as the constitution of the Church should dispel assumptions that his was an absolutely dogmatic theology. Pre-Tridentine Catholicism was often more speculative than is sometimes supposed.⁹⁰ The very universality of the Church meant that intellectual disputation was normally internalized. Particularly in the period preceding the Reformation, More was a party to this mood. This was the spirit in which Erasmus advanced his telling critique of the Church and its role in society, and in which More wrote Utopia. In 1516 More was prepared to speculate upon an ideal of the Christian way of life. However, such latitude could not be afforded during the confrontation with Protestantism. In looking back upon the last days of doctrinal unity, More spoke of Erasmus's The Praise

88. See, e.g., T. More, Responsio ad Lutherum, pp.133-135.

89. T. More, 'To Thomas Cromwell', (1534), in, St. Thomas More: Selected Letters, ed. E.F. Rogers, (New Haven 1961), pp.205-215.

90. For a recent evaluation, see, e.g., R. Mandrou, From Humanism to Science 1480-1700, (London 1978), chapters 1-3.

of Folly and his own Utopia with considerable contrition. In view of the events of the intervening period More felt compelled to reply that,

"I wolde not onely my derlynges bokes but myne owne also, helpe to burne them both wyth myne owne handes, rather then folke sholde (though thorow theyr own faute) take any harme of them, seyng that I se them lykely in these days so to do."⁹¹

This is a statement by a man who, having written an extremely subtle book, came to realize that it had become an anachronism in an age of polemicism. Yet it is also a warning that More's response to Protestantism should not be construed the sum total of his theology.

The conjectural element of More's pre-Reformation theology is amply illustrated by his discussion in Utopia of sacramental worship. By simply comparing Utopian practices to More's avowed views on the sacraments, it might be supposed that the two positions are disparate. According to More, a fundamental property of the Church was its monopoly of the administration of sacraments.⁹² Thus, in contending that, except in cases of deadly sin, repentance could restore the prospect of salvation, More often spoke of the sacraments as media for the expression of contrition,⁹³ or as instruments of faith. So one object of sacraments was to,

"purge and clense our soules by confession, contricion, and penance, with full purpose of forsakyng from thenseforth, y proude desyres of the deuyll, the greedy couetise of wretched worldly welthe, & the foule affection

91. T. More, The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer, p.179.

92. ibid., pp.956-961.

93. ibid., pp.97-101.

of the fylthy fleshe,..."⁹⁴

From all this it might be supposed that More regarded communion with the Catholic Church as a necessary condition for salvation. Ultimately, of course, this was indeed the case, but it should not be assumed that this entails the exclusion of Utopia from serious discourse concerning More's preoccupation with man's redemption. It can be argued that 'sacraments' are evident in Utopia. For instance, Utopians are 'shriven' by confessing their sins to the patriarchal head of their household,⁹⁵ who is responsible for the general spiritual welfare of his family. In 1516 this could safely be interpreted as an instance of humanistic concern for lay religiousity, as expressed, for instance, in the conduct of More's own household. However, a decade later, the same practice might have been cited to substantiate Protestant claims for a priesthood of all believers. This reiterates not only the mutual ancestry of Protestantism and the Counter Reformation, but also the need to distinguish carefully between what More could freely discuss in 1516, and what, as an ardent champion of Catholicism, he dared to publish in the 1520's and the 1530's.

One of the great points at issue between More and the Protestant Reformers concerned the correct use of scripture. For instance, More's rejection of the principle of solifidianism was one reason for his emphasis upon the continuing revelation of the oral tradition within the Catholic Church, and particularly the necessity of recourse to the Fathers as a source for scriptural interpretation.⁹⁶ In effect, the use to

94. T. More, Treatise on the Blessed Body, p.193.

95. Utopia, p.233.

96. See, R. Marius, 'Thomas More and the Early Church Fathers', op.cit.

which Winstanley would one day put the Bible epitomizes More's worst fears concerning the consequences of the Protestant emphasis upon 'sola scriptura' and individual interpretation by the laity. Hence More affirmed that scripture and the teachings of the Catholic Church could never be contradictory. More accounted for this concord by arguing not only that the Church was the repository of the written word,⁹⁷ but also that the Church was the only infallible interpretative authority on scriptural matters.⁹⁸ Consequently, More believed that private interpretation was potentially dangerous, and recommended that the unlearned required the help and guidance of the Church if they were to understand scripture correctly. Towards the end of his life, More assumed a decidedly authoritarian stance on this matter arguing that,

"the people may haue euery necessary trewth of scrypture, and euery thyng necessary for them to know, concernynge the saluacyon of theyr soules, trewly taught and preached unto theym, though the corps and bodye of the scrypture be not translated vnto them in theyr mother tonge."⁹⁹

More had not in principle been opposed to vernacular translations of the Bible, but was adamant that these must be overseen by the Church.¹⁰⁰ Even for learned men such as himself, More insisted that the Bible could only be comprehended with the interpretative assistance of the Fathers. In essence, More concluded that a concentration upon scripture alone would be

97. T. More, The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer, pp. 151-157, 397, 647, and, The Apology, pp. 18-28.

98. T. More, Dialogue Concerning Heresies, pp. 76-77, The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer, pp. 63, 255-274, and, The Apology, p. 32.

99. ibid., p. 13.

100. T. More, Dialogue Concerning Heresies, pp. 230-232, 234, 243, 252-253.

insufficient for salvation. An individual must look to prayer,
 natural reason, the writings of the Fathers, and the ministrations
 of the Church.¹⁰¹

One of the most profound aspects of More's view of the human predicament was his sensitivity to the transience of life itself. To More, the imminent prospect of death was a pervasive facet of the human experience.¹⁰² Hence he believed that the choice between heaven and hell could not fail to impinge upon man's choice of social arrangements. The imagery and stark frankness with which More discussed death would be unpalatable to modern tastes. For instance, in his poem A ruful lamentacion, More had Elizabeth, the recently deceased wife of Henry VII, address the world from the grave on the themes of death the leveller,¹⁰³ and the futility of worldly affairs. In The Four Last Things More developed the theme of the inevitability of death, and also his view that the condition of the soul ought to be the primary concern of mortal man. More's was no counsel of comfort; "thou mayest look upon death, not as a stranger, but as a nigh neighbour."¹⁰⁴ Preoccupation with the Dance of Death not only led More to bemoan the possible plight of the soul, but also to dwell upon the physical decomposition of the body.¹⁰⁵ The unpredictability and the suddenness of the time of death prompted More to reiterate the dangers of being caught in deadly sin at the moment of death.¹⁰⁶ With regard to the human

101. ibid., pp.79-83. R.Marius, 'Thomas More's View of the Church', op.cit., p.1349, argues that More's wariness of independent scriptural interpretation is the reason why the Bible was not immediately introduced into Utopia.

102. See, A.W.Reed, 'Introduction', E.W., Vol.I, pp.21-23.

103. T.More, A ruful lamentacion, E.W., Vol.I.

104. T.More, The Four Last Things, p.474.

105. ibid., pp.469,480.

106. T.More, Treatise on the Passion, p.67.

condition, More was never more evocative than when he said,

"Mark this well, for of this thing be very sure, that old and young, man and woman, rich and poor, prince and page, all the while we live in this world we be but prisoners, and be within a sure prison, out of which there can no man escape."¹⁰⁷

Pondering on the insecurity of life, More infused his discussion of heaven and hell with a sense of immediacy. It was perhaps in accordance with the spirit of the age that, although More often contrasted the joys of heaven with the pains of hell,¹⁰⁸ he tended to dwell upon the latter. More was resolute in repeatedly warning that judgement awaited all men. While hell would be the lot of those who lived out their lives in sin,¹⁰⁹ grace was nevertheless available to all. So More was certain that "there is no dampnacyon vnto them that be in Chryste Iesu."¹¹⁰ The fate of the individual soul was a direct result of how that individual chose to conduct himself during his lifetime. Hence More ruefully pointed out that,

"They that now lye in hell for their wrechid livyng here do now perceve their foly in the more payne that they toke here for the lesse pleasure."¹¹¹

(Accordingly, More was confident that¹¹² the Protestant reformers would be damned for their heresy.)

Within More's theological system, the fine calculations that balanced sin against eternal reward or punishment, along with his conception of the justice and mercy of God, led him to

107. T. More, The Four Last Things, p. 479.

108. T. More, Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulation, pp. 303-306.

109. See, e.g., T. More, The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer, p. 557.

110. ibid., p. 957.

111. T. More, Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulation, p. 169.

112. T. More, The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer, pp. 445-453, 673.

fervently defend the belief in the existence of purgatory.

This was also an indication of More's concern with the problem of attaining salvation. More contended that because God was

just, He was committed to the punishment of sin, either in this

life, in the form of tribulation,¹¹⁴ or after death in purgatory

or hell. However, because God was also merciful, purgatory

represented a means of punishing sin without resorting to

eternal damnation.¹¹⁵ He described the purpose of purgatory as,

"abiding and enduring the grievous pains and hot cleansing fire that fretteth and burneth out the rusty spots of our sin, till the mercy of Almighty God... vouchsafe to deliver us hence."¹¹⁶

Purgatory, argued More, should make an impression upon the living, as the righteous might pray, and celebrate masses, so that the dead could be relieved of their torment.

Further, More defended the doctrine of purgatory on the grounds that it supplemented the prospect of hell as a sanction upon sin, and thus upon social conduct.¹¹⁷

In the period during which More wrote Utopia, we know that he had cause to meditate upon "whatever is necessary for salvation." He concluded that whatever had

"been handed down to us in abundance, first of all by Sacred Scripture itself, then by their ancient interpreters, furthermore, by the common practice handed down from the

113. This was particularly in response to the attack upon the doctrine by Simon Fish, in, A supplicacyon for the beggars, (1529), ed. F. J. Furnivall, E. E. T. S., E. S. 13, (Oxford 1871).

114. This is obviously the major theme of Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulation.

115. T. More, The Supplication of Souls, (1529), in, The Thought and Culture of the English Renaissance, ed. E. M. Nugent, (Cambridge 1956), pp. 232-233.

116. ibid., p. 225.

117. ibid., p. 233.

Early Fathers, and finally by the sacred decrees of the Church."¹¹⁸

- constituted an authoritative pronouncement on this most important of human concerns. More conceived of salvation as the end to which all human effort ought to be directed. For the individual, the question of his own salvation was the great intangible; it was as perilous to presume that one was saved as it was to despair that one ever would be.¹¹⁹ Salvation, More asserted, was attainable only through obedience¹²⁰ to God, but this also required an individual to work with¹²¹ God. During the course of a lifetime, a man might have to contend with many tribulations. However, More assured himself that God, in His mercy, tried men, so that they might reflect¹²² upon their sins and seek pardon for them. Thus More concluded that,

"suche as were good men receyued theyr grace by the fayth and bylyefe of oure savyour that after sholde come, and were by vertue thereof made able to resyste the relyques of orygynall synne and inclynacyons of the flesshe towarde actuall synnes, & ther by were after Crystes passyon saued,....."¹²³

The question of man's salvation pervaded More's life and writings. In regulating his own affairs, he endeavoured to ensure that every other consideration was subservient to salvation. Similarly, in his consideration of the human

118. T. More, 'To Martin Dorp', in, Sir Thomas More: Selected Letters, p. 36.

119. T. More, The Four Last Things, pp. 470-471.

120. T. More, The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer, p. 465.

121. ibid., p. 487.

122. T. More, Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulation, pp. 59-60.

123. T. More, The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer, p. 755.

condition, More was necessarily concerned with the redemption of man. More maintained that the predicament incurred as a consequence of the Fall was essentially permanent. In directing his political thought to the problems posed by such a situation, More arrived at two conclusions. Firstly, that institutions should be arranged in such a manner as to ease the burden imposed on men by their predicament. Secondly, More believed that the organization of the polity, and the regulation of man's earthly conduct, had a direct effect on the salvation of souls. Thus we shall see in the following two chapters that Utopia is of greater relevance than is often supposed to questions raised by the analysis of More's theology.

ii The Fall of Man and the Prospect of Redemption

More's view of the original condition is an interesting facsimile of what he understood men to have forever forsaken at the Fall. More clearly believed that man had enjoyed a position of considerable privilege in Paradise. As he pointed out, in the pristine condition, man was not afflicted with death, he enjoyed authority over beasts and his own offspring, and perhaps most importantly, by controlling the will, his reason restrained sensuality.¹²⁴ All this was a prerogative granted on the condition that man should not break God's commandment. Because God had created man to compensate for the loss of the proud and fallen angels, He placed man in the Garden of Eden, in an attempt to prevent his succumbing to the same sin of pride which had caused Lucifer's downfall. As a safeguard, God exacted some gesture of obedience from Adam and Eve. Consequently, He ordered that they "be occupied and worke in the keeping of that pleasant garden..."¹²⁵ Such work was also designed to counter any disposition to sloth.¹²⁶ Just as there had been work in paradise through which man's pride had been controlled, so More insisted on the obligation to work in Utopia. Yet, as a result of the Fall, the nature of work had changed irrevocably. Like all men, Utopians were cursed in having to labour to provide for their subsistence. This had not been the case before the Fall.

In comparison to Winstanley's ideas, More's account of the Fall was, not surprisingly, orthodox. More argued that, in creating the angels, God had endowed them with free will so that they

124. T. More, Treatise on the Passion, pp. 13, 39.

125. ibid., p. 12.

126. T. More, Answer to a Poisoned Book, in, Selection from the English Works, eds. P. S. & H. M. Allen, (Oxford 1934), p. 11

might accept or reject his grace. ¹²⁷ More attributed the fall from heaven of the rebellious Lucifer to the fact that his "pryde made hym so frantyke, that he boasted that he would be goddes felow in dede." ¹²⁸ Looking back on this event More commented that,

"Thus Lucifer, created by God as the most eminent among the angels in heaven, became the worst of the demons after he yielded to the pride which brought his downfall." ¹²⁹

God's

banishment of Lucifer, and the casting of him down to earth, was followed by his creation of man and placing of him in the Garden of Eden. These events marked the inception of the cosmic battle between good and evil, in which the Devil was eventually prompted to use the cause of his own ruination, pride, to tempt man away from God. Astute in his cunning, Lucifer,

"would not begyn at the man, whom he perceiued to be wiser and more hard to begyle." ¹³⁰

Instead, recognizing that the natural weaknesses of woman, even in the original condition, made her more susceptible ¹³¹ to his wily machinations, the Devil utilized Eve's pride to initiate the Fall of Man. Eve's pride was manifested ¹³² by her desire to be aware of the knowledge of good and evil. After succumbing to temptation, Eve proceeded to entice Adam to do likewise. ¹³³ In keeping with his overall theological convictions, More emphasized that Adam freely exercised his own

127. T. More, Treatise on the Passion, p.4.

128. ibid., p.5.

129. T. More, De Tristitia Christi, p.371.

130. T. More, Treatise on the Passion, p.14.

131. ibid., p.21.

132. ibid., p.16.

133. ibid., p.17.

will in committing the original sin.¹³⁴ Further still, Adam compounded his injudicious conduct by failing to confess to,¹³⁵ and ask forgiveness of, God. As a result of Adam's transgression of God's commandment, and in accordance with His just nature, God's judgement settled on all men. There can be little doubt that More regarded the Fall as a most momentous event in the history of mankind. In his opinion, it was superseded only by Christ's Passion.

As the punishments meted out to man following Adam's original sin were in keeping with the just aspect of God's nature,¹³⁶ Christ's Passion was in accordance with God's mercy. The language employed by More to describe the Passion befitted his heartfelt awe at the inestimable magnanimity of this gesture. More was anxious to stress that not only had God offered His son for man's salvation, but also that Christ withstood the enormous tribulations of the Passion, despite the frailties of the human element of His nature. More believed that it was important to be clear that Christ as a man had atoned for the sins of all men, and in particular, the original sin of Adam.¹³⁷ Crucially, More maintained (especially in De Tristitia Christi) that Christ had resisted all temptations to the contrary, and as an act of free will,

"wyth hys bytter passion paye the price of our redempcion, and restore the kinde of man vnto thenheritaunce of the kingdom of heauen."¹³⁸

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- Christ payed man's ransom. More

134. ibid., p.40.

135. ibid., p.22.

136. ibid., pp.25-26.

137. ibid., p.31, and, De Tristitia Christi, p.341.

138. T. More, Treatise on the Passion, p.120.

139. ibid., p.54.

expressed continuing amazement at the consequences of this act for the vistas of man's potential. He was quite certain that "the redempcion of man after his fall, was a greater benefite vnto him, then was his creacion."¹⁴⁰ Man had not been restored to the original condition. Instead, the possibility of salvation offered the prospect of a condition above and beyond anything previously known to the human experience. This was eternal life in heaven.¹⁴¹ The underlying purpose of More's thought was the consideration of the precise means by which men could attain this end.

With respect to our overall interpretation of More's thought it is profitable to examine his analysis of the consequences of the Fall in the light of the ameliorative achievement of Utopia. More recognized that, as a result of the Fall, mankind had subsequently to endure a series of inescapable obstacles to his happiness on earth. It seems clear that More conceived of these hindrances as, at the same time, obligations which men were required to fulfil if they were to obtain the best possible earthly condition. An important underlying presupposition of More's thought was the notion that the punishment for original sin should be to some extent remedial. This can be illustrated with reference to a number of examples.

We have already noted More's belief that, because of the Fall, men were cursed with labour of a less pleasant nature than the work undertaken in Eden. As a consequence of his indiscretion, man had been cast "oute of that pleasaunt paradyse, into the wretched earthe."¹⁴² The cost of being excluded from Eden was that man had henceforth to provide for his own subsistence.

140. ibid., p.26.

141. ibid., pp.45,48.

142. ibid., p.19.

Thus More cited Genesis 3:19,

"In the sweate of thy face shalt thou eate thy breade, tyll thou returne agayne into the earth,..."¹⁴³

As we shall see, More designed the economy of Utopia with the intention of minimizing this form of work, while at the same time guaranteeing the subsistence of each individual. Similarly, Utopian pastimes often involved what More's contemporaries might have regarded as an element of labour, but he argued that this type of work was conducive to pleasure. Here there is also a striking parallel between the work performed in paradise, and the Utopian penchant for horticulture.¹⁴⁴

As a result of Eve's part in the Fall, More maintained that it was in accordance with divine justice that women in general should endure not only the pains and sorrows of childbirth, but must also "be vnder the power of the man, and he shalbe the Lord ouer thee."¹⁴⁵ Again, without ever attempting to disavow this inevitable situation, or to mitigate man's punishment, particularly in its remedial facet, More attempted to make the curse more bearable by effecting a degree of emancipation in Utopia, especially in the spheres of education and sexual morality.¹⁴⁶ Nevertheless, More remained convinced of the inherent inferiority of the weaker sex.

More believed that as the flesh was loosed from the control of reason, sensual concupiscence had been introduced at the Fall. Thus Adam and Eve felt obliged to hide their nakedness

143. ibid., p18.

144. Utopia, pp.125-135.

145. T. More, Treatise on the Passion, p.18.

146. See, e.g., Utopia, p.159, on the involvement of women in education.

because

"they felt such filthy sensual motions of concupiscence, ryse and rebell againste reason in theyr fleshe,..."¹⁴⁷

Hence, men

became exposed to the prospect of temptation and deadly sin.

However, in Utopia, More responded to this situation by positing a strict moral code¹⁴⁸ which, although probably doing little to relieve frustration, undoubtedly reduced the opportunities for men to transgress God's will by succumbing to temptation.

More was also aware that fallen men had become exposed to the knowledge of good and evil, as a consequence of which "they lost alas the good that they had, & got but euill alone."¹⁴⁹ Man's awakened consciousness of evil in particular again prompted More to offer a response in Utopia. He designed the religion, the philosophy of pleasure, and the educational system of Utopia with the intention of inculcating men with a comprehension of virtue.

Finally, More asserted that as a further result of the Fall, men were not only doomed to die, but had also become impressed¹⁵⁰ with the constant awareness of their mortality. Again, More was concerned to ameliorate, as far as possible, this fate. The diligent standards of medical care in Utopia¹⁵¹ were intended to minimize the pain which man was forced to endure during his lifetime. However, More had to admit, that in all probability, because death had been introduced at the Fall, most men would

147. T. More, Treatise on the Passion, p.17, see also, p.22.

148. See below, chapter five, section iv.

149. T. More, Treatise on the Passion, p.24.

150. This view was widely accepted in the early-modern period. See, C. Webster, The Great Instauration, (London 1975), section IV.

151. Utopia, pp.139-141.

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suffer the wretchedness of anticipating hell. This attitude prevailed in contemporary Europe, yet in startling contrast, the Utopians faced death with equanimity, and were confident in the prospect of their redemption.¹⁵³

In keeping with the concerns of the present chapter, it is gratifying to discover that More also believed that "it is worthwhile to pay close attention to the constant revolutions and vicissitudes of the human condition."¹⁵⁴ More was fully aware that man's predicament was conditioned in part by his own nature, but he argued that most elements of the human predicament could ultimately be attributed to the Fall. Hence, More was able to describe the predicament succinctly in the following terms :-

"They lost their innocency, and became sinneful: Gods fauour thei lost and fell in his displeasure, his visitacion thei reioysed not, but were afeard to come nere him: eche of them ashamed to behold the other or them selfe either: al beastes wer at warre with theym, and eche of theym with them selfe, their owne bodies in rebellion and battaile against their soules, thrust out of pleasaunt paradise into the wretched earth, theyr liuing gotten with sore sweate, their chyldren borne wyth paine. Then hunger, thurst, heate, cold, syckenes sundry and sore. Sure sory looking, for the vnsure time of deathe: and dread after al this, of the feareful fire of hel, with like paine and wretchednes to al theyr ofspring for euer."¹⁵⁵

It was to this lamentable situation that the institutions of Utopia were addressed. Utopia was not intended to effect a restoration. Given his appreciation of Christ's Passion, and his belief that redemption could only be attained

152. T. More, Treatise on the Passion, pp. 18, 24.

153. Utopia, pp. 223-225.

154. T. More, De Tristitia Christi, p. 367.

155. T. More, Treatise on the Passion, p. 24, see also, pp. 53-54.

by means of God's mercy, More regarded a restoration on earth as an impossibility. So Utopia was merely intended to achieve an improvement in human behaviour, by stifling the sinfulness, and particularly the fatal trait of pride, that had led not only to the Fall, but also to so much subsequent human misery.

iii Tudor England as the Fallen Condition

A few months before he was executed More stated that

"no Christian especially, as one who hopes for heaven, should pursue the contemptible glory of this world."¹⁵⁶

There is

no reason to believe that More felt any differently nearly two decades earlier when he wrote Utopia. Indeed, in commenting in Utopia on the enormous disparity between the teachings of Christ and the prevalent morality of men, More reflected that,

"if all the things which by the perverse morals of men have come to seem odd are to be dropped as unusual and absurd, we must dissemble almost all the doctrines of Christ."¹⁵⁷

There are obviously implications here of More's fear that contemporary prejudices would be stacked against his institutional proposals and particularly against his advocacy of communism. Yet More went on to argue that,

"The greater part of His teaching is far more different from the morals of mankind than was my discourse. But preachers, crafty men that they are, finding that men grievously disliked to have their morals adjusted to the rule of Christ....., accommodated His teaching to men's morals as if it were a rule of soft lead that at least in some way or other the two might be made to correspond. By this method I cannot see that they have gained, except that men may be bad in greater comfort."¹⁵⁸

In referring to these matters, More indicated that his conception of contemporary society was of an order founded upon corrupt morals. Thus, as would be the case with Winstanley, More's social critique was also a description of the condition of fallen men. As we have

156. T. More, De Tristitia Christi, p.369.

157. Utopia, p.101.

158. ibid.

seen, More believed that in his own society, men were capable of corrupting the teachings which had been bestowed upon them as the means of their redemption.¹⁵⁹ It is to More's evaluation of this existing civil society that we now turn.

The features of European society which More criticized were often of an integrated form. For instance, according to More, the contemporary nobility not only coveted private property, but was also the class which devoted itself to warfare.¹⁶⁰ As More noted, the pride of the nobility impelled them to pursue material gain, and on achieving their desires, to flaunt their affluence and compare it to the wretchedness of others.¹⁶¹ More gave an early indication of the method by which distribution in Utopia would eradicate scarcity, when he said of the contemporary nobility,

"these evil men with insatiable greed have divided up among themselves all the goods which would have been enough for all the people."¹⁶²

More anticipated Winstanley by contending¹⁶³ that even during periods of famine, the granaries of the rich were invariably well plenished. Similarly More and Winstanley both taunted the rich by asserting that the acquisition of material goods was not the means to a sound conscience.¹⁶⁴ Thus the Utopian distributive system was proffered by contradistinction to that of Christendom.

In his professional capacity as a lawyer and statesman More gained a first-hand insight into the chicanery which was often

159. ibid., pp.97-105.

160. ibid., p.63.

161. ibid., p.243.

162. ibid., p.241.

163. ibid., pp.239-243; G. Winstanley, The New Law of Righteousnes, in, The Works of Gerrard Winstanley, ed. G.H. Sabine, (New York 1940, 1965 edition), p.200.

164. Utopia, p.243.

the recourse of the nobility. Thus More claimed that nobles used the law to their own advantage to appropriate property,¹⁶⁵ and to ensure a constant supply of cheap labour. More stated that he could

"see nothing else than a kind of conspiracy of the rich, who were aiming at their own interests under the name and title of the commonwealth."¹⁶⁶

One of More's fundamental complaints was that the nobility were idle. This he ultimately rectified in the work ethic of Utopia. More argued that in contemporary society the nobility and gentry failed to perform any productive labour, yet lived a life of luxury and grandeur, as did their disorderly retinue, who also posed a threat to good order.¹⁶⁷ Further, More also condemned the pastimes of the rich, hunting, gaming, and whoring, as false pleasures. Hence he argued that much needed land was often squandered in the form of game parks.¹⁶⁸ So, in his ideal commonwealth, More ensured that pleasure was intellectually rather than materially based, and therefore did not absorb valuable resources.

More's invective against war was an indictment against both the warrior class and their chivalrous ethic. His critique of war articulated many Humanist ideals as expressed in such works as Erasmus's The Education of a Christian Prince. More was adamant in his description of

"War as an activity fit only for beasts and yet practiced by no kind of beast so constantly as by man."¹⁶⁹

So More

165. ibid., pp.239-241.

166. ibid., p.241.

167. ibid., pp.61-63,239.

168. ibid., p.67.

169. ibid., p.199.

advanced a penetrating analysis of martial society. He warned of the harmful repercussions of war upon the general standard of morality. More feared that if a state regularly went to war, its people would become accustomed to violence and disdain the rule of law.¹⁷⁰ He was also aware of the impoverishment brought upon the people of those commonwealths which attempted to support standing armies. Hence More maintained that should war become a major item of national expenditure, it would lead to illicit revenue raising activities and corruption of the judiciary, because the state would attempt to supplement its income through fines.¹⁷¹ By way of contrast, Utopia had no standing army and consequently enjoyed a contentedness that More attributed, in part, to the Utopian distaste of militarism.

In Utopia More satirized not only the contemporary state, but also the Church.¹⁷² However, More's criticism of the clergy was advanced in the light of an ideal which prompted him to indict those occupants of clerical offices who manifested the human propensity to sinfulness, rather than the actual institutions of the Church. More's was an age in which pious laymen felt compelled to criticize members of the clergy who failed to fulfil the standards expected of them. Thus, in the decade in which Utopia was written, More was prepared to draw attention to clerical misdemeanours. Yet, once Protestantism began to pose a threat to the unity of Christendom, More became a wholehearted apologist for the clergy. Nevertheless, More remained consistent in maintaining that,

"as for vyce, I hold yt myche more dampnable in a spyrytuall

170. ibid., pp.65,91.

171. ibid., pp.91-93.

172. See, G.G.Coulton, 'The Faith of St. Thomas More', Quarterly Review, Vol. CCLXV (1935), pp.327-343.

person then in a temporall man."¹⁷³

In 1519 More wrote with disillusion of the corruption of the clerical ideal, by referring to the infiltration of "the cunning enemy" (the Devil) into the cloister, which, according to More, had resulted in many instances of clerical impiety. Hence he warned the clergy to beware of the Devil, who, "being God's adversary in all things, he endeavors to make evil of our good works."¹⁷⁴ More also displayed a typically humanistic impatience with clerical educational standards.¹⁷⁵ by claiming that many clerics were ignorant even of scripture, yet were prompted by pride to pretentiously profess their great learning.¹⁷⁶ He also claimed that the religious orders were often guilty of pursuing material gain by enclosing pasture as rapidly as any layman.¹⁷⁷ Given his poor opinion of clerical standards, it is not surprising to discover that More portrayed the Friar in Utopia as a vain and ignorant buffoon.¹⁷⁸

The extent to which More was capable, on occasions, of abstracting himself from his own immediate predicament, and thereby facilitating a critical appraisal of it, is exemplified by his view of the legal system. As a lawyer, and subsequently as Under-Sheriff of the City of London, and eventually Lord Chancellor, More was an outstanding legal practitioner. Yet his reaction to many aspects of the legal system was every bit as

173. T. More, The Apology, p. 48, and passim, for More's defence of the clerical prosecution of heretics; see also, Dialogue Concerning Heresies, Bk. 111.

174. T. More, 'To a Monk', (1519), in, Sir Thomas More: Selected Letters, p. 129.

175. T. More, 'To Martin Dorp', op. cit., pp. 28-31.

176. T. More, 'To a Monk', op. cit., p. 121.

177. Utopia, p. 67.

178. ibid., pp. 83-85.

virulent as Winstanley's would be. In his professional capacity, More witnessed the onset of the phenomenal expansion in litigation¹⁷⁹ which was later diagnosed by Winstanley as a major social ailment.¹⁸⁰ More was readily prepared to admit that lawyers, "who cleverly manipulate cases and cunningly argue legal points,"¹⁸¹ held an interest in opposing proposals for law reform.

It may be that the impact of enclosure upon Tudor society has been exaggerated,¹⁸² but this, if true, suggests in turn that More was acutely sensitive to the social issues attending the tendency to switch to pastoral farming. Possibly the most famous section of Utopia deals with the problem of enclosure, which More must have regarded as a prime manifestation of covetousness. So More was prompted to argue, somewhat sardonically, that,

"Your sheep, which are usually so tame and so cheaply fed, begin now, according to report, to be so greedy and wild. that they devour human beings themselves and devastate and depopulate fields, houses and towns."¹⁸³

'Similarly, More was aware of the first indications of a food price rise, the responsibility for which he attributed to the greed of a few.¹⁸⁴ He further argued that increased prices were forcing people to reduce the size of their households and to consequently swell

179. See, L. Stone, The Crisis of the Aristocracy, (London 1965), p.240. J.H. Hexter, op.cit., pp.xxxv-xxxvii, argues that More's entry into royal service was prompted in part by his disillusion with the legal profession.

180. For More, see, Utopia, p.105, for Winstanley, see below, pp.438-440.

181. Utopia, p.195.

182. This is certainly implied by, J. Thirsk, 'Tudor Enclosures' Historical Association Pamphlet, G.41, (1959), and see above, p.87.

183. Utopia, pp.65-67.

184. ibid., p.69.

the number of vagrants.¹⁸⁵ So in his analysis of contemporary social ills, More expressed concern over what appeared to be an almost inevitable logical progression from eviction, through unemployment, vagrancy, theft, and ultimately to the gallows. Conversely, in Utopia, communism successfully eradicated all these problems.

More's insight into the workings of the law profoundly affected his conception of crime and punishment. More noted that because even the death penalty had proved an inadequate deterrent, there had to be some fundamental reason for the increasing number of thieves.¹⁸⁶ This raises an interesting point concerning More's analysis of the human condition and his proposals for its improvement. Clearly, the most fundamental reason for the increased number of convictions was human sinfulness. However, More was also aware that the evil predisposition of man was becoming increasingly manifest because of shortcomings in the institutional structure which was supposed to regulate human conduct. Thus More could identify both idleness and the failure to educate youth correctly as causes of crime.¹⁸⁷ Again, More's utopianism enabled him to remedy the punitive practices of contemporary society. He perceived that it was both unjust, and detrimental to the public good, to administer

"grievous and terrible punishments for a thief when it would have been much better to provide some means of getting a living."¹⁸⁸

So More later argued that contemporary

185. ibid.

186. ibid., p.61.

187. ibid., p.71.

188. ibid., p.61.

punishments outweighed the crimes which had invoked them, because by this means, the accumulative wrath of society could be assuaged.¹⁸⁹

More anticipated by almost a century the institutional reforms towards which Tudor poor law groped.¹⁹⁰ He suggested that in many cases, a system of bondage ought to replace capital punishment. This, he argued, would be more equitable and humane by facilitating the restoration of goods, and by providing the opportunity for the reform of offenders.¹⁹¹ Predictably, this system prevailed in Utopia. More was particularly critical of the failure to differentiate between human life and private property implicit in the administration of the death penalty. As More pointed out, the fear of death merely encouraged thieves to kill their victims or witnesses to avoid detection. As the law stood, thieves had nothing to lose by compounding their crimes and turning to murder.¹⁹² However, it is significant that More did not regard the common people as mere creatures of the institutional environment. They too were fallen. Hence More asserted that pride was as abominable a sin in the penniless as it was in persons of great estate.¹⁹³ Thus More castigated the poor for their improvidence because, when the occasional opportunity arose, they were "given to ostentatious sumptuousness of dress and to excessive indulgence at table."¹⁹⁴ So More distinguished the moral standing of the poor from that of the

189. T. More, The Four Last Things, p.484.

190. For an interesting account of More's view that although charity was undoubtedly important in a Christian commonwealth, the poor should nevertheless be required to labour, see, The Apology, p.105.

191. Utopia, pp.75-79.

192. ibid., pp.73-75.

193. T. More, Treatise on the Passion, p.7.

194. Utopia, p.69.

rich only by maintaining that the latter had the means of expressing the propensity to sin more readily at their disposal.

Much of the fame of Utopia is obviously attributable to More's exposition of communism.¹⁹⁵ More's analysis of private property provides a significant insight into the purpose of the Utopian discourse. More's conception of private property was based on two fundamental propositions. Firstly, he argued that the institution could be justified only in terms of its basis in positive law :-

"For the law of the gospel does not apportion possessions, nor does reason alone prescribe the forms of determining property, unless reason is attended by an agreement, and this is a public agreement in the common form of mutual commerce, which agreement, either taking root in usage or expressed in writing, is public law."¹⁹⁶

Secondly, it seems that although More believed that private property had no basis in natural law, he did not necessarily assume that it was contrary to natural law. However, despite the apparent moral neutrality of the institution, More was certain that private property was inadmissible on the grounds that it represented an institutional expression of corrupt human nature.

In due course we shall have cause to return to More's contention that private property was founded upon positive law and that, under certain conditions, it could be replaced by communal ownership. However, at this juncture it is necessary to note that More's belief that private property was sustained only by human law encouraged him to criticise the contemporary

195. See, e.g., J.H. Hexter, 'Thomas More - On the Margins of Modernity', Journal of British Studies, Vol.1 (1961), pp.20-37, at pp.29-36.

196. T. More, Responsio ad Lutherum, p.277, and pp.276-280.

prejudice in favour of private property. It is certainly the case that More asserted the obligation of Christians to obey the laws upon which private property was founded. But this assertion was inspired by More's apprehension of the anarchical disregard for private property (such as that which was soon to appear in the German Peasants' Revolt). Nevertheless, almost a decade earlier, More's views on the relationship of private property to positive law were conducive to a regulated form of communism. More contended that there was neither a basis in the gospels for the existing distribution of private property, nor any foundation in reason for such a system. So the identification of private property and positive law was in complete accord with More's utopianism. Thus More was in a position to argue that the institution of a society founded on communism was within the scope of human contrivance, and that such a system would conform to individual and divine law.

More's account of the detrimental impact of private property on morality suggests that he believed communism to be firmly located in natural law. In pointing to the folly of acquisition in the transitory world, More regularly complained of proud and misguided individuals who had made "their goods their God."¹⁹⁸ He stated quite clearly that,

"worldly goods are either downright harmful, or else, by comparison to that one benefit, the merest trifles."¹⁹⁹

Equally,

by further arguing that,

"wherever you have private property and all men measure

197. Utopia, p.107.

198. T. More, The Four Last Things, p.490.

199. T. More, De Tristitia Christi, p.173, the 'one benefit' in question is presumably salvation.

all things by cash values, there it is scarcely possible for a commonwealth to have justice or prosperity..."²⁰⁰

- More

implied that the abolition of the exchange market was not only conducive to higher standards of morality, but could also be justified in a more straightforward utilitarian sense. He argued that the general welfare could only be promoted if there first existed an absolute equality of goods. More was certain that individual appropriation not only established a juxtaposition of wealth and poverty, in which few could prosper, but also that the holding of private property also damaged the overall prosperity of society.²⁰¹ As he ironically commented,

"poverty, which money alone seemed to make poor, forthwith would itself dwindle and disappear if money were entirely done away with everywhere."²⁰²

More was sure that scarcity and need were consequences of inefficient distribution, and to this extent were avoidable. Hence we shall see in chapter five that the distributive system of *Utopia* was a response to More's earlier assertion that,

"I am fully persuaded that no just and even distribution of goods can be made and that no happiness can be found in human affairs unless private property is utterly abolished."²⁰³

We have already had cause to refer to the dialogic structure of *Utopia* and have concluded that many of More's own opinions were expressed through the character Hythlodæus.²⁰⁴ This has an

200. *Utopia*, p.103.

201. *ibid.*, p.105.

202. *ibid.*, p.243.

203. *ibid.*, p.105.

204. Above, pp.120-130.

important bearing upon the overall structure of the work. It is clear that the economic system outlined in the Discourse on Utopia was an answer to the objections to communism voiced by persona More. These objections are ultimately attributable to Aristotle and include the belief that the introduction of a system of communism would have a detrimental effect upon economic productivity and political obligation. The fact that More included firstly, a resounding invective against private property (Hythlodæus), secondly, a series of objections to communism (persona More), and thirdly, a systematic exposition of the efficacy of communism (the Discourse on Utopia), is strong evidence of the sincerity of his proposals for the adoption of communism. More regarded private property as an institution capable only of sustaining the type of society in which the temptations to sin were manifold. This had obvious implications for the sins of pride and covetousness, but More also believed that the regulation of morality by reference to private property, distorted the conception of pleasure to the extent that lechery, wrath, and gluttony would also be fostered. As we shall see in the next two chapters, More regarded communism as both an efficient distributive system, and a moral imperative.

iv Augustinianism, Thomism, and the Conundrum in More's System of Thought

It is difficult to categorize More's thought. He was, of course, a Christian-Humanist but there was also some semblance of the philosopher-theologian about him. More was sensitive to a number of contentious elements of Christian thought. His own pronounced eclecticism was symptomatic of a wider contemporary tendency to review and restate certain long-standing theological and philosophical positions. ²⁰⁵ Considerable attention was therefore afforded to two systematic statements of Christian thought, Augustinianism and Thomism. From his numerous citations of both Augustine and Aquinas, it is clear that More was conversant with both. However, it is also apparent that he did not regard Augustinianism and Thomism as distinct systems. To a certain extent, this is valid. Nevertheless, although Aquinas agreed with Augustine on many issues, the two systems often differ markedly in their assessment of various fundamental concerns of the Christian faith, particularly on questions relating to human nature and mankind's predicament. More drew deeply from the ideas of both these thinkers. However, while More's conception of human nature tended to the Augustinian view, his socio-political thought inclined towards Thomism. Yet in both systems, the evaluation of human nature provided the basis for moral philosophy, social analysis and political thought. Even if Augustinianism and Thomism were, independently, internally consistent, attempts to reconcile elements of the two were always likely to produce tensions, inconsistencies, and

205. See, P.O. Kristeller, Renaissance Concepts of Man, (New York 1972), p.45, this is also the general theme of his, Renaissance Philosophy and the Medieval Tradition, (Latrobe Pennsylvania 1966); see also, Q. Skinner, The Foundations of Modern Political Thought, (2 vols.), (Cambridge 1978), Vol.11, pp.4,23.

contradictions. It appears that More was not conscious of these difficulties, but his political thought can be understood only in the light of his incorporation of elements of Augustinianism and Thomism into the one system.

It is not intended to suggest that Augustinianism and Thomism were exclusive influences upon More. Indeed, More numerous citations from classical sources ²⁰⁶ are evidence of his profound eclecticism. However, the constraints of space and the general direction of our interpretation dictate against a detailed study of More's use of classical writings. This would be an extremely complicated exercise, far beyond the scope of the present work. For instance, the impact of Platonism on Augustinianism, and Aristotelianism on Thomism, probably influenced More as profoundly as any direct reference to the original sources. It is possibly a forlorn task to attempt to disentangle such influences. Therefore we shall confine our analysis to a necessarily brief and impressionistic account of the impact of Augustinianism and Thomism upon More's thought.

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St. Augustine's conception of the human condition was

206. See, e.g., W.S. Allen, 'Speculations on St. Thomas More's Use of Hesychius', Philological Quarterly, Vol. 46 (1967), pp. 156-166; J. Crossett, 'More and Seneca', Philological Quarterly, Vol. 40 (1961), pp. 577-580; L. Miles, 'The Platonic Sources of Utopia's Minimum Religion', Renaissance News, Vol. 1X (1956), pp. 83-89; R. J. Schoeck, 'More, Plutarch and King Agis: Spartan History and the Meaning of Utopia', Philological Quarterly, Vol. XXXV (1956), pp. 366-375; J. K. Sowards, 'Thomas More, Erasmus and Julius II', Moreana, Vol. 24 (1969), pp. 81-99; J. Steintrager, 'Plato and More's Utopia', Social Research, Vol. 36 (1969), pp. 357-372; E. L. Surtz, 'Epicurus in Utopia', Journal of English Literary History, Vol. XVI (1949), pp. 89-103; 'Thomas More and the Great Books', Philological Quarterly, Vol. XXXI (1953), pp. 43-57; T. White, 'Aristotle in Utopia', Renaissance Quarterly, Vol. XXXIX (1976), pp. 635-675.

207. There are numerous works on St. Augustine. This summary is drawn primarily from the following :- St. Augustine, Confessions, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin, (London 1961), The City of God, trans. H. Bettenson, intro. D. Knowles, (London 1972); F. C. Copleston, A History of Philosophy, Vol. 2, 'Medieval Philosophy', Pt. 1, (London 1950), A History of Medieval Philosophy, (London 1972); H. A. Deane, The

pervaded by his belief in the absolute depravity of human nature. Augustine was preoccupied with the Fall of Man and original sin. He believed that pride was the root of all sin, and that men sinned of their own free will. Mortality, crime and sensuality were amongst the many evils to have infected fallen man. Thus Augustine perceived that fallen men exhibited a perverted interest in earthly concerns, and that men's materialism had resulted in their subjugation to worldly goods. Covetousness, lust and an unrestrained appetite for power, had produced a situation of perpetual conflict between men. Ultimately Augustine concluded that under no circumstances could men merit redemption, and that the minority who were of the City of God had been elected to it predeterminately and arbitrarily. It is important to note that although More subscribed to much of the Augustinian view of man, unlike the Protestant Reformers, he did not elaborate upon the doctrine of election.

Augustine founded his social and political thought upon his pessimistic view of human nature. He believed that in a state of ignorance, and with a faltering will, men would always encounter difficulty in calculating the optimal social arrangements. Although Augustine regarded God's eternal law as an exemplar, and believed that natural law could be discerned by the innate reasoning faculties of the rational conscience, he argued that because of the corruption of human nature, positive law was not required to emulate either divine or

Political and Social Ideas of St. Augustine, (New York 1963); J.N. Figgis, The Political Aspects of St. Augustine's 'City of God', (London 1921); D. Knowles, The Evolution of Medieval Thought, (London 1962); R.A. Markus, Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine, (Cambridge 1970); T.E. Mommsen, 'St. Augustine and the Christian Idea of Progress', J.H.I., Vol. Xll (1951), pp. 346-374; W. Ullmann, Medieval Political Thought, (London 1970, originally published as, 'A History of Political Thought: The Middle Ages', 1965).

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 natural law. As we shall see, Aquinas, with his more benign conception of human nature, modified Augustine's arguments considerably.

The major proposition of Augustine's socio-political thought was that the state and its associated institutions performed the essentially negative function of restraining corrupted human nature. In effect, Augustine dismissed the possibility that society could prove a medium for the perfection and salvation of man.²⁰⁹ His essential pessimism prompted Augustine to conclude that the institutions of political authority, property, slavery, and the family, could all be attributed to the psychology of fallen men, and had been divinely ordained for the restraint of sin. In particular, Augustine regarded the state as both a punishment and a remedy for sin. He argued that coercion was a necessary alternative to anarchy. So the state was intended to restrain conduct rather than to instil virtue in its inhabitants. Similarly, Augustine contended that because private property was also a punishment and a remedy for sin, it constituted an institution worthy of the approval of the inhabitants of the state. Augustine believed that because it was sustained by positive law, private property was not immutable, but he also maintained that this justified only the reapportionment and redistribution of private property (often as a punitive measure) rather than its abolition. We shall see in chapter five that More was deeply sceptical of this line of argument. Understandably, Augustine was scathingly critical of the idea of progress.²¹⁰ Instead, his belief in the static nature

208. See, H. A. Deane, op.cit., chapter 111.

209. See, e.g., R. A. Markus, op.cit., pp. 90-95.

210. See, T. E. Mommsen, op.cit.

of social institutions accorded with his generally pessimistic apprehension of man's predicament. Although some aspects of Augustine's thought were assimilated into the Thomist-Aristotelian synthesis, his purely negative view of the state was wholeheartedly rejected. This revision eventually permeated Thomas More's political thought.

F.C.Copleston has described Thomas Aquinas as

"a believing Christian who tried to give a unified interpretation of the world and human life and experience, using the methods of both theology (in his sense) and of philosophy."²¹²

Aquinas's thought was structured around his exposition of the harmony of faith and reason, of Christian revelation and philosophical truths. One of the major philosophical propositions of all time was Aquinas's argument that,

"there is nothing to stop the same things from being treated by the philosophical sciences when they can be looked at in the light of natural reason and by another science when they are looked at in the light of divine revelation."²¹⁴

Although Aquinas believed that the bestowal of grace would perfect man's nature by instilling the key virtues of faith, hope, and charity, and also that revelation was a

211. This contests the view advanced by M. Ratiere, 'More's Utopia and the City of God', Studies in the Renaissance, Vol. 20 (1973), pp. 144-168, at pp. 152-164. Ratiere has argued that More followed Augustine in the belief that the state could be efficient, but never a 'holy commonwealth'.

212. F.C.Copleston, Aquinas, (London 1955), p. 59.

213. Again, the bibliography of secondary sources for Aquinas is enormous. The following are particularly useful and more readily available. F.C.Copleston, op.cit., A History of Philosophy, Vol. 2, Pt. 11, A History of Medieval Philosophy; A.P.d'Entrèves, Natural Law, (London 1951); A.Kenny, Aquinas, (Oxford 1980); D.Knowles, op.cit.; W.Ullmann, op.cit.

214. T.Aquinas, Summa Theologicæ, Prima Pars, Qu. 1, Arts. 1, 2, 3.

necessary supplement to the moral precepts apprehended by reason, his affirmation of the dignity of human reason promoted a substantially optimistic conception of man's predicament. Thus a central feature of Aquinas's thought was his theory of natural law.

Aquinas conceived of a four-fold gradation of laws; eternal, divine, natural, and positive law. According to this analysis, all forms were derived, either directly or indirectly, from eternal law, which constituted a perfectly consistent ideal of divine wisdom directing all things to the attainment of their respective ends. Divine law, in the form of revelation, made elements of the eternal law known to man. Thus divine law was a standard by which the conscience could assess intentions. Because human judgement was capable of error, revelation was necessary to direct human life. More, it will be noted, was fully aware of this. Natural law was the fulcrum of Aquinas's system of thought. According to Aquinas, natural law was a universal standard of truth and righteousness. These universal precepts of reason could be discerned by all men in their endeavour to pursue the good. Hence the human conscience was obliged to obey the dictates of natural law.

At the lowest level of this system, Aquinas dealt with action and human conduct in terms of positive law. He argued that positive law was derived from natural law which was both discernible by reason and reconcilable to divine law. Aquinas based his justification of positive law on the argument that man's natural inclination to virtue would nevertheless require external guidance if he was to achieve his end of attaining the good. Thus only the wicked would perceive the constraints of positive law thus formulated. One of Aquinas's major

disagreements with the Augustinian position was his view that, because politics was an aspect of morality, social institutions should promote virtue and the common good. So Thomism differed markedly from Augustinianism by insisting upon the moral content of positive law. Hence Aquinas argued that because of the varying degrees of perception of natural law in different societies, positive laws were not universally applicable in contemporary states. In the following two chapters it will be argued that More accounted for the disparity between the positive law of England and that of Utopia in just such terms. Further, Aquinas's proposition that,

"The divine law, however, which is a law of grace, does not abolish human law which is founded upon natural reason."²¹⁵

- was similarly prescient of the role of positive law in Utopia.

Aquinas's understanding of human nature was substantially more optimistic than the abjection evinced by Augustine, or indeed, the theme of suspicion which typified More's view of man. Aquinas went so far as to state that,

"The order of the precepts of the natural law corresponds to our natural inclinations. For there is in man a natural inclination to good...."²¹⁶

Although Aquinas held that all creatures and substances were directed towards a specific end, he also maintained that the good towards which man ought to aspire, possessed a uniquely virtuous moral content. So Aquinas believed that although original sin had impaired men's

215. ibid., Secunda Secundæ, Qu.10, Art.10. This is included in Aquinas: Selected Political Writings, ed. A.P.d'Entrèves, (Oxford 1959), p.155.

216. T.Aquinas, Summa Theologicæ, Prima Secunda, Qu.94, Art.2, and Selected Political Writings, p.123.

faculties, they could at least aspire to perfection. By the interaction of reason and the will, men could choose how to act. Intention was therefore the essential criterion of morality.²¹⁷ Thus, by the exercise of right reason, men could achieve the objectively defined good. Aquinas went on to argue that actions gave rise to habits, and that good habits constituted virtue, and bad habits, vice. Again, we shall see that More appears to have assimilated some of these ideas, although he did not wholeheartedly share Aquinas's confidence in the attributes of human reason. Nevertheless, More believed that because men possessed freedom of choice, they could determine to act virtuously. This notion, that original sin had not totally impaired rationality, was an important basis of Aquinas's political thought.

Aquinas maintained that political life was natural to man. Thus he conceived of the state and the family as natural communities conducive to the perfectibility of man.²¹⁸ Therefore Aquinas contradicted Augustine's view, by arguing that although the state was sanctioned by the will of God, it was not merely a consequence of the Fall, but was also intended for the promotion of the common good. Hence the Thomist state was expected to perform a series of positive functions by providing defence, internal peace, material necessities, and moral welfare. So because of his optimistic conception of human nature, Aquinas was able to argue that the state was not merely the product of corruption, but the expression of man's virtue. This, of course, marked the great Thomist synthesis of Christian and Aristotelian

217. This was to be assessed according to divine law.

218. This analysis is drawn from, T. Aquinas, Summa Theologicæ, Prima Secundæ, Qu's. 90-97, 100, and Selected Political Writings, pp. 109-147. See also, A. P. d'Entreves, Natural Law, chapter 3.

thought. Aquinas had reintroduced the notion of man as citizen. Significantly, More referred to the inhabitants of Utopia as citizens.

The general intellectual mood of the Renaissance must also have impinged upon More's thought. One aspect of the Renaissance worldview is of particular relevance to the analysis of Utopia, and that is the notion of the dignity of man. This upsurge in self-confidence was inspired by a renewed emphasis upon the belief that man had been created in the image of God, and that his soul was unique in its facility for immortality. As a corollary, it was assumed that man could impose his personality upon his predicament, and express himself through morally significant actions. These views were obviously propitious for the developing concepts of the state and of the citizen. Further, confidence grew over the prospect of perfecting man in society. Such optimism was a counterpoise to the pessimism of the Augustinian worldview. The problem with Thomas More is that he was drawn in both directions. Indeed, it seems that despite these developing expectations, many Humanists preserved a pessimistic view of man. Thus, although they occasionally exalted man's achievements, they had also to admit man's essential powerlessness amidst his predicament.

More's eclecticism and his assimilation of ideas from different currents led to his ambivalent appreciation of the human condition. Our analysis of his view of man suggests that More was sympathetic to the Augustinian conception of human nature. Nevertheless, although he maintained that worldly affairs were of secondary importance to the condition of the soul, More did not subscribe to Augustine's total derogation of the former. Neither did he succumb to the conclusions derived by Luther from

Augustine's view of the depravity of man. Instead, More modified his Augustinianism by incorporating several Thomist tenets. The essential theme of Utopia is that men should conduct their worldly affairs in accordance with the harmony of faith and reason. So by pointing to the inadequacies of positive law in his own society, More highlighted the ineffectual exercise of reason by his own contemporaries. While this fault was rectified in Utopia, where the substance of positive law accorded with natural law, More was also anxious to assert that without reference to the sanction of revelation, fallen men could never be confident that they had exercised their reason correctly. Grace and revelation were necessary supplements to reason if the will was to choose the good. Ultimately, More's belief that men should use their reason to discern the best form of life in the fallen predicament was clouded by his awareness of the corruption of human nature. More never successfully resolved this dilemma. His own utopianism was an instance of the application of reason by one man to the problems arising from the human predicament. As a result, the institutional recommendations of Utopia were designed to direct men away from sin and towards virtue. Nevertheless, More's conception of human nature caused him to view the prospect of the adoption of these ideas by the mass of unregenerate men with profound pessimism.

CHAPTER FIVE : UTOPIA:THE OPTIMUM COMMONWEALTH

The following two chapters will present a detailed evaluation of the political and ethical ideas outlined by More in Utopia. While chapter six will be devoted to an analysis of the more positive achievements of Utopian society, attention in the present chapter will be focused upon More's institutional proposals for the restraint of sin. The extent of the antithesis between Utopian and sixteenth-century institutions is largely attributable to More's vehement arraignment of the organization of contemporary society. It will be recalled that such a concentration upon the inhibitory aspect of Utopian institutionalism was the pervading feature of J.H.Hexter's¹ interpretation of More's political thought.

Our analysis of Utopia will commence with a consideration of the economic organization of More's ideal commonwealth. The particular issues of communism, attitudes to work and labour, the relationship between scarcity, production, and distribution, and the significance of the absolute prohibition of private property, will all receive close attention. Subsequently, the political institutions of Utopia will be analysed, particularly with regard to More's insistence that the state was an imperative institution for the guidance of fallen men. This will be followed by a similar evaluation of the functions of the family and More's adaptation of patriarchalism. The fourth section of this chapter will deal with the impact of communal life upon the individual Utopian citizen. Finally, it will be shown that the Utopian educational system was intended to train men towards the realization of virtue.

1. J.H.Hexter, More's Utopia: The Biography of an Idea, (Princeton 1952), 'The Composition of Utopia', his introduction to, Utopia, The Vision of Politics on the Eve of the Reformation, (London 1973), and above, chapter three, section vi.

i Communism and the Utopian Economy

Communism was the fundamental institution of Utopia. Nevertheless, Catholic interpreters, in particular, have utilized what might be termed the 'traditional' or 'orthodox' view of communism to contend that More did not advocate the abolition of private property. The argument that it was in the very nature of fallen men that they necessarily required the restraining influence of private property,² led to to elevation of communism as an ideal sustainable only by those few individuals who voluntarily entered religious orders. Thus the traditional Catholic analysis contends that the mass of men are simply not virtuous enough to maintain such a system. However, it was at this point that More's utopian institutionalism interceded. As we have seen, More argued that private property was founded upon positive law.³ This is of enormous consequence because, although More did not deny that men should be regulated in their conduct, he regarded communism, rather than private property, as the more appropriate institution for the achievement of this end. Further, communism had the additional advantage of being recommended by natural law and by the gospels.

The traditional and Catholic views hold that the establishment of a communist ideal must depend upon the initial voluntary impetus given to such a regime by virtuous individuals. This argument is similar to the analysis of the concept of utopianism which assumes that the good society can be established only by regenerate men. However, More was prepared

2. For this view, see, e.g., E.L. Surtz, 'Thomas More and Communism', Publications of the Modern Language Association of America, Vol. 64 (1949), pp. 549-564; P.A. Duhamel, 'Medievalism in More's Utopia', Studies in Philology, Vol. L11 (1955), pp. 99-126, especially at p. 119.

3. T. More, Responsio ad Lutherum, C.W., Vol. 5, p. 277, and above, p. 234.

to accept degenerate human nature as a constant, yet still propose an alternative institutional fabric based upon communism. More agreed that only a small minority of extremely upright individuals could voluntarily renounce private property. This explains his pessimism about the prospect of a voluntary assumption of communism in Christendom.⁴ That communism was imposed upon the Utopians is not in dispute. The institution was established in Utopia following the conquest of the island by the lawgiver, Utopus. Neither can it be argued that More conceived of communism as the ideal way of life for Christians. What is at issue is the means by which he believed that such a system could be supported. The Catholic case has concluded that More believed communism to be sustainable only by a minority of naturally virtuous individuals. However, we shall show that More believed that, once established, communism was necessarily self-perpetuating, because of its capacity to produce virtuous men who would in turn sustain the system.

There is an obvious tension between 'traditional' interpretations of the regulatory function of private property, and the view that, as a means of establishing social harmony and human felicity,⁵ God had commanded the abolition of private property. Apostolic communism was the most renowned enactment of this decree. In the light of this, it can be argued that, after assessing the failure of private property to achieve the ends required of it, More dismissed the traditional view, and concluded that, contrary to expectations, private property merely

4. Utopia, p.247.

5. M. Fleisher, Radical Reform and Political Persuasion: The Life and Writings of St. Thomas More, (Geneva 1973), p.63.

encourage human sinfulness.⁶ More did not regard communism as the lost prize of a golden age, nor merely as a political device designed to correct malfunctions. Instead he conceived of communism as an agent for the regeneration of a moral and righteous social order.⁷ Thus it is quite admissible to suggest that Utopia was a 'holy' community because it embodied primary Christian virtues such as charity.⁸ Indeed, the Christian way of life has been described by Quentin Skinner as,

"the ideological context which explains More's educative, humanistic, and satirical book."⁹

The great paradox of Utopia is that this exemplary social order had been achieved without the formal guidance of Christian revelation. This matter will be developed in chapter six. Not all commenators have regarded the Utopian commonwealth in this light. S. Avineri has even gone so far as to claim that Utopia was 'totalitarian' - because it sought the perfection of the state and its subsequent insulation from all forms of corruption.¹⁰ However, as we shall see, this is not only a misinterpretation of More's utopianism, but also misconstrues that nature of an admittedly austere polity.

Much of the meaning of Utopia can be determined from an analysis of the economic system the work describes. For instance, it is a mistake to argue, as K. Kautsky did,¹¹ that by exploring

6. See J.H. Hexter, 'Thomas More: On the Margins of Modernity', Journal of British Studies, Vol. 1 (1961), pp. 20-37, at p. 33.

7. J.H. Hexter, Introduction, pp. lxxxvii-cxxiii.

8. ibid., pp. lxxv-lxxvi.

9. Q. Skinner, 'More's Utopia', P.&P., No. 38 (1967), pp. 153-168, at p. 158.

10. S. Avineri, 'War and Slavery in More's Utopia', International Review of Politics, Vol. VII (1962), pp. 260-290, at pp. 287-290.

11. K. Kautsky, Thomas More and His Utopia, trans. H.J. Stenning, (1927, New York 1959 edition), first published as, Thomas More und sein Utopie, (Stuttgart 1887).

the possibilities of employing labour more economically within a communist system, More anticipated the Marxist ambition of curtailing working hours. This is to miss the stand which More took against contemporary attitudes to work. Indeed, as we have noted, More felt obliged to respond to the traditional Aristotelian objections to communism.¹² So he was at pains to assert that, in the communist economy of Utopia, production would be adequate enough to eradicate scarcity as he defined it. It was at this juncture that the Utopian work ethic played such an important part in More's argument. A few years after writing Utopia, More reiterated his attitude to work and labour by arguing that,

"surely the things coming of the earth for the necessary sustenance of man, requireth rather the labour of the body than the care of the mind."¹³

This is not to suggest that More excluded mental activity from the sphere of work and labour, but he certainly emphasized man's almost universal obligation to obtain his subsistence by performing manual labour. In effect, as an alternative to private property and the frenzied delineation of fortune associated with it, More advocated a system of communism founded on the obligation to work.¹⁴

In his account of Utopian history, More had the lawgiver Utopus come upon natives who were blighted by a pronounced distaste for hard work. It is unnecessary to stress that this outlook is reminiscent of More's account of attitudes to work in his own society. Similarly, More affirmed that Utopia did not

12. Utopia, p.107, and above, pp.120-121.

13. T. More, The Four Last Things, E.W., Vol.1, p.488.

14. Utopia, p.113.

possess an idealized environment but, like England in this respect too, was poorly endowed geographically.¹⁵ We are told that in Utopia, neither the climate nor the land were particularly conducive to agricultural production. In view of these adversities More was able to argue that, in order to sustain the economy, a fairly intensive injection of labour was required to compensate for the unpropitious natural circumstances of the island. So because More resisted the temptation to create an ideal environment for Utopia, the problems of man's struggle for subsistence, and the scarcity of both resources and goods, were as pressing there as in contemporary society. More did not envisage an environmental panacea in which competition between men could be eradicated by abundance. Instead, he concentrated upon proposing a series of institutional reforms which were designed to improve man's position. For example, More believed that much of the drudgery could be removed from labour, by insisting on the universal obligation to work, and therefore by reducing the hours assigned to any one individual. Thus, argued More, the Utopians did not regard work as a disgrace. Significantly, although More appears to have accepted that work was an inevitable curse visited upon fallen men,¹⁶ he nevertheless attempted to avert its worst consequences.

The equitable distribution of labour was a crucial aspect of the Utopian economy. The economic system of Utopia was based primarily upon domestic industry, a factor that was possibly intended to compensate for the agricultural underemployment

15. Utopia, p.179.

16. See, H. Arendt, The Human Condition, (Chicago 1958), p.317. Arendt argues that there has been little mention in Christian thought of the idea that labour is a punishment for original sin. So More is apparently an exception to this rule. It is possible that his communism enabled him to face up to the unpalatable aspects of this notion.

More probably witnessed in Tudor England. More emphasized that
 all citizens would be taught a craft, but that this should be
 orientated towards the natural needs of the community, rather
 than towards conspicuous consumption.¹⁷
 In marked contrast to
 the situation outlined by Winstanley in The Law of Freedom,¹⁸
 women in Utopia were to learn a trade; albeit performing the
 lighter tasks. Women were also expected to work by rota in the
 communal dining halls.¹⁹ All Utopian citizens were required to
 fulfil a minimum two year period of agricultural labour, in
 order that none be continually burdened with what More
 identified as the hardest form of labour.²⁰ Similarly, at harvest
 time, Utopian townsfolk, who after such an initiation would
 presumably be adequately experienced, provided supplementary
 agricultural labour. In contrast to the more ad hoc practices
 of contemporary society, the Utopian system was so efficiently
 organized that crops were usually gathered in one day.²¹

More shared with Winstanley a concern to eradicate idleness
 from the human condition. Thus in Utopia there was no place for
 such elements of contemporary society as the clergy, the rich
 nobility and gentry, their retainers, "lusty and sturdy beggars,"²²
 and members of the legal profession, who must have constituted a
 substantial proportion of Europeans performing little or no
 productive labour. In Utopia only five hundred officials and
 clergy per city were officially excused manual labour.

17. See above, pp.221-222.

18. Utopia, pp.125-127.

19. ibid., p.141.

20. ibid., p.115. J.H.Hexter, Introduction, p.xli, argues that
 this was a biennial rotation involving the entire population,
 but there is little textual support for this claim.

21. Utopia, p.117.

22. ibid., pp.129-131.

Nevertheless, in order to set an example, the members of this intellectual and administrative elite invariably laboured voluntarily.²³ This universal obligation to contribute to the common good by labouring in some capacity, whether it be manual or intellectual, was one means by which More responded to potential difficulties concerning communism and the resolution of scarcity.

Given the equitable distribution of work and labour effected in Utopia, it seems that there, the working day was shorter than the norm for contemporary England. However, a number of factors,²⁴ particularly the universal obligation to work,²⁴ suggests that in Utopia, the average number of man-hours per annum was greater than that of More's own society. In Utopia, the maximum duration of the working day was six hours, although if production quotas²⁵ were satisfied it could often be less than this. The day was divided into short bursts of intensive labour. Holidays, which were held on the first and last days of every lunar month,²⁶ amounted to twenty-six per annum, a vast reduction from the days 'lost' in contemporary society. From all this it seems reasonable to conclude that More intended the average Utopian to work harder and to greater effect than the average, or even the harder-working, English labourer. It is equally significant that despite the fact that all Utopians were compelled to labour, they were not forced to endure the privations of those who shouldered the burden in Tudor England, where, according to More,

23. ibid., p.131.

24. This was first emphasized by F. Seebohm, The Oxford Reformers, (London 1867), p.220. However, Seebohm nevertheless presumed that the application of this stipulation to the contemporary situation would result in a reduction of working hours for the average labourer.

25. Utopia, pp.127,135.

26. ibid., p.231.

"such wretchedness is worse than the lot of slaves."

Because Utopia did not possess a money economy, goods were distributed according to natural needs.²⁸ As a result, it appears that conspicuous consumption was eradicated, and that this in turn reduced the demand on labour. Thus labour-time could be devoted to the production of goods which satisfied the needs rather than the unnatural wants of the community. More's analysis of needs and wants was closely related to his views²⁹ on the operation of the Utopian economy. As we noted above, More maintained that as a consequence of the Fall, men were forced to provide for their own subsistence, a condition which would presumably be fulfilled once needs were satisfied. However, More must have believed that whereas in the pristine condition man's needs and wants were identical, this fortunate correlation had since been forsaken. Thus as a consequence of the Fall, and their subsequent inclination to sins such as pride, covetousness, and gluttony, men were thereafter likely to articulate wants above and beyond their needs. In chapter six we shall see that the Utopian philosophy of pleasure is a product of More's conception of needs which exceeded wants as 'unnatural', because of their manifestation of human sinfulness. The disparity between needs and wants which existed in More's own society was not evident in Utopia. The Utopians despised³⁰ the gold and jewellery which Europeans coveted. As a consequence, it seems that by restricting the distribution of goods to the satisfaction of needs as opposed to wants, More believed that an economic system such as that advocated in

27. ibid., p.127.

28. ibid., p.131.

29. See above, pp.218,221-222.

30. Utopia, pp.153-155.

Utopia would contribute to the neutralization of man's propensity to sin.

More did not press the distinction between work and labour, although he was implicitly aware of its existence. The fact that all Utopian citizens contributed to the common good by performing productive labour, meant that More was not constrained to digress at any length on the relative utility of work and labour. Certainly, in Utopia there was no discrimination between the dignity attending manual and mental work. Both were appreciated as making an equally valuable contribution to the common good.³¹ This ethic might well have been inspired in part by the ideal of the Christian-Humanist serving society by becoming a member of the governing class, yet doing so within the division of labour.³² Although mental activity was regarded as a fundamental form of pleasure in Utopia, it also constituted work, if it was undertaken for the benefit of the community, as in the cases of government officials fulfilling their duties,³³ or scholars who delivered public lectures. M. Fleisher has argued that More solved the problem of providing an incentive to work, without provision for personal acquisition,³⁴ by eradicating the drudgery from labour. Although this is correct, we shall see in chapter six, that it is only part of the picture. More provided an alternative incentive to personal gain in the form of Utopian pleasure, the prospect of which reconciled the individual to the necessity for hard work.

31. See, M. Fleisher, op. cit., p.48, on More's repudiation of the contemporary rigid differentiation of labour.

32. J.H. Hexter, op. cit., p. ciii.

33. See, T. More, Nyne Pageauntes, 'Age', in, E.W., Vol.1 p.333. In this section of the poem More cites government as a form of labour befitting mature men.

34. M. Fleisher, op. cit., pp.49-50.

There may appear to be a degree of contradiction in that, although More believed men to be irrevocably fallen and hence cursed by labour, he nevertheless attempted to amend attitudes to labour in Utopia. This is typical of the theme of optimality which pervades the work. In Utopia More sought to make the best of an ineradicable situation.³⁵ Thus work was regarded as necessary, and on occasions even distasteful. So the chief function of local officials such as the 'syphogrants' was to remain vigilant against idleness.³⁶ Hence More affirmed that in Utopia,

"nowhere is there any license to waste time, nowhere any pretext to evade work."³⁷

In their annotation to the text of Utopia, Erasmus and Budé commented on the contrast between this situation and that current in Europe. Christians were implored to emulate the Utopian work ethic. Indeed, More was later to comment that in Europe sloth had become so commonplace that it was rarely recognized as a sin at all.³⁸

The moral implications of the Utopian work ethic are self-evident. In his account of the Utopian attitude to work, and its distinction from leisure, More gave a crucial insight into the Utopian achievement. He stated that,

"The people in general are easy-going, good tempered, ingenious, and leisure-loving. They patiently do their share of manual labor when occasion demands, though otherwise they are by no means fond of it. In their devotion to mental study they are unwearied."³⁹

35. Utopia, p.135.

36. ibid., p.127.

37. ibid., p.147.

38. T. More, The Four Last Things, p.498.

39. Utopia, pp.179-181.

This outlook did not prevail in contemporary Europe, where, despite a changing intellectual climate, many noblemen and gentlemen would have regarded the Utopian pleasure of pursuing a humanistic education as a distasteful form of work.

In order to resolve the problem of scarcity and reply to those who might have doubted whether a communist system could supply sufficient goods, More effected a balance by regulating Utopian attitudes to both production and demand. Again, in doing this, More radically amended contemporary values. However, this certainly was not an achievement which brought about (as Baumann⁴⁰ has suggested that it did) "a mercantilist paradise." Nor is there evidence in Utopia of such abundance that More was brought close to "the higher phase of communist society."⁴¹ Indeed, as we have noted, Marxists such as Kautsky and Morton have been forced to comment upon the unusual frugality of life in Utopia.⁴² This contradicts their assumptions that the work presaged many elements of modern socialist thought. More defended his advocacy of communism by arguing that private property militated against general prosperity, and by contending that within the Utopian economy, "though no man has anything, yet all are rich."⁴³ Thus Utopia was capable of producing a surplus of agricultural produce, which could be used to compensate for a harvest failure, or be sent for export.⁴⁴

It has already been suggested that More created a work ethic

40. F. Baumann, 'Sir Thomas More', J.M.H., Vol. 1V (1932), pp. 604-615, at p. 607.

41. A. L. Morton, The English Utopia, (London 1952), p. 46.

42. See above, chapter three, section iv.

43. Utopia, p. 239.

44. ibid., pp. 117, 149.

which ensured an adequate supply of labour, and that this went part of the way towards meeting the demands upon the commonwealth's productive capacity. Other means by which More intended to resolve the scarcity problem, were the distributive system, and, in particular, the frugal nature of Utopian consumption. Thus in Utopia,

"they are all busied with useful trades and are satisfied with fewer products from them."⁴⁵

This often resulted in an abundance of commodities; more, that is, than were required to satisfy needs. More maintained that communism, by guaranteeing the satisfaction of demand arising from needs, would eradicate the fear of want which was responsible for unreasonable accumulation. So, by concentrating upon the community rather than the individual, More forwarded a radically different conception of prosperity to that current in his own society of private property owners. Thus More cited the physical health of the Utopian people as testimony to their prosperity.⁴⁶ Similarly, More was able to contend that Utopian buildings were sturdy, and that glass was commonplace,⁴⁷ yet relate all this to the needs of shelter and warmth. Significantly, More regarded avarice and greed as consequences of the fear of want, but he also believed that this, in turn, was more substantially rooted in man's innate pride. Realizing that this trait might ultimately express itself in conspicuous consumption, More remained resolute :-

"This latter vice can have no place at all in the Utopian scheme of things."⁴⁸

It was one purpose of Utopian institutions

45. ibid., p.135.

46. ibid., p.179.

47. ibid., p.123.

48. ibid., p.139.

to stifle such tendencies. So by concentrating directly upon the prosperity of the 'common weal', rather than upon that of the individual citizen independent of civil society as a whole, More hoped to emphasize that an economy which benefited society in general, would nevertheless protect the interests of its individual members.

More contended that the laws of distribution in Utopia accorded with the dictates of reason.⁴⁹ He assumed that if distribution responded to needs, there would be no poverty, no fear of want, and no greed or excessive demands.⁵⁰ This, of course, all presupposed that need would be clearly discernible and, presumably, that it could be assessed according to some reasonable, equitable, and universally applicable standard. The expression of demand in Utopia was not left entirely to the discretion of the individual. Thus the opportunities for an individual to be tempted into covetousness, or to express unnatural wants, were reduced. Instead much of the responsibility for the expression of wants shifted to the local community. This was typical of the underlying fabric of Utopian society. In Utopia, it was a general principle that mutual surveillance should prevail. The vigilant scrutiny of the individual by the community was intended to divest him of the occasion for sin.⁵¹ Consequently, there was no buying and selling in Utopia. Food was carried from centralized markets for preparation in communal dining halls. Each quarter of a Utopian city possessed such a market, where a series of storehouses were arranged to accommodate particular types of goods. To these depositories

49. ibid., p.165.

50. ibid., p.139.

51. ibid., p.117.

each family conveyed the produce of its own trade, and from them, the head of each household collected whatever the family required for the pursuit of its trade and daily life in general.⁵²

The thoroughness of More's communism and principle of equitable distribution, is amply illustrated by the convention that houses, which were essentially uniform, were nevertheless exchanged according to a decennial lottery.⁵³ More would presumably have justified this process by arguing that, despite all the precautions taken in *Utopia*, some additional safeguard was required to cater for the contingency that families might assume a private property in their abode. It will become apparent in due course that a major distinction exists between More's conception of communism in *Utopia*, and Winstanley's in *The Law of Freedom*. Winstanley encouraged the form of private property centred upon the family which More sought to exclude. The extent of the precautions evident in *Utopia* indicates More's belief that, whatever the institutional environment, fallen man would always possess an innate tendency towards the assumption of the private ownership of property. Further, More appears to have believed that should this be condoned, it would be to the detriment of both the individual's soul and the social fabric. Thus More specified that an absolute form of communism was maintained in *Utopia*. This is the point at which Winstanley was most at variance with More. Because Winstanley understood that men might be restored to a condition of righteousness, he was prepared to allow all those who had been redeemed to be responsible for a sphere of private property.

It is evident that labour, the distribution of goods, and

52. ibid., p.137.

53. ibid., p.121.

leisure time, were elements in More's vision of an integrated economy for Utopia. This system was designed to achieve the specific end of stifling the inclinations of fallen men towards aggrandizement. Whether More's proposals constituted a viable system is probably open to some doubt. The balance which More struck between production, and the distribution of products might be regarded as a recipe for economic stagnation. However, given his notion of the optimal economy, this is precisely what More set out to achieve. We shall discuss the static character of Utopian society in greater detail in chapter six.

A primary purpose of Utopia was to outline a scheme for the institution of a civil society in which man's sinful nature would be brought under control. Accordingly, More designed his system of communism to contain directly man's propensity to sin. The communism of Utopia eradicated private property which, in contemporary Europe, constituted a vehicle for the manifestation of sin. Further, by ensuring the satisfaction of needs, the impetus to appropriate goods was also stifled. Consequently, by orientating the problem of scarcity to needs rather than to wants, the whole question assumed less daunting dimensions in Utopia than in Europe. More argued that in Europe wants were often derived from corrupted tastes.⁵⁴ Conversely, the wants advanced and satisfied in Utopia were generated by natural desires and corresponded to needs. Thus they could be satisfied quite adequately (albeit at the risk of seeming frugal). By a considerable feat of institutional engineering, More theoretically eradicated the immoral principles of the property system from the human condition. We shall now consider More's conception of the state, and the part it ought to play

54. See, J.H. Hexter, op.cit., p.cxii.

in regulating the life of the citizen. Although he proposed the abolition of private property, More accepted that the state was indispensable. Yet he maintained that that state could promote certain moral principles.

ii The State and the Utopian Polity

The structure of the polity in More's ideal commonwealth indicated his concern to establish the legitimacy of Utopian communism. More was obviously aware that by advocating communism, he had exposed himself to the conventional retort that proposals for the eradication of private property constituted a prescription for the dissolution of political authority. Thus More might have found himself on the horns of a dilemma, particularly as he maintained that in contemporary Christendom, man's innate sinfulness was made evident by wealth and power. Because he regarded communism as the necessary medium for the dissipation of the distorted values of the property regime, More had to justify such a system by constructing a polity which would nevertheless successfully regulate society. More had to confound apprehension that Utopia was an anarchical document. Yet, in turn, More had also to be sure that, in Utopia, the exercise of political authority would not be corrupted by human sinfulness. So More regarded political authority as at once, a necessity, but also a potential threat to the achievement of Utopia. The construction of the Utopian political system was therefore an astute manipulation of institutions in order to avert the abuse of power.

More's attitude to the connection between political authority and private property was consolidated during his confrontation with Luther. There is an obvious temptation to assume, as a number of More's Catholic apologists have done, that because More became apprehensive that Luther had unleashed a prescription for disruption and anarchy, More's own social philosophy took a conservative turn. In particular it is assumed that More adhered to the traditional association of private

property with political authority, and must therefore have regretted (and consequently retracted) his earlier conception of communism. However, More's response to Luther was entirely consistent with the analysis of private property and political authority advanced in Utopia. More took Luther to believe that the Christian's first obligation was to his own conscience rather than to legitimately constituted magistrates or to civil laws.⁵⁵ In fact, More misapprehended Luther's position, but in doing so was prompted to clarify his own case. It was entirely in accordance with the Utopian achievement that More should warn Luther that

"even if we could live in common with far fewer laws, we could still not live altogether without laws. For the obligation to work would have to be prescribed for certain classes, and laws would be needed to restrain crimes which would run riot even in that kind of life."⁵⁶

That his constitutionalism was founded upon the rule of law rather than upon the will of the magistrate,⁵⁷ was typical of More's fundamental distrust of human nature.

More believed that, ideally, men should live according to both secular (positive) and divine law, and that the latter ought to be embodied in the former.⁵⁸ Thus, in a well-regulated society, civil law ought to promote a situation conducive to man's highest end - his salvation.⁵⁹ More argued that it was a

55. See above, p.198.

56. T. More, Responsio ad Lutherum, p.277.

57. This is discussed in considerable detail by J. Headley in his introduction to, Responsio ad Lutherum, and in, 'More Against Luther', Moreana, Vol.15 (1967), pp.211-223.

58. This is close to the position formerly advanced by Aquinas, see above, pp.242-246.

59. These themes are discussed in, B. Byron, Loyalty in the Spirituality of St. Thomas More, (Nieuwkoop 1972).

necessary, but not a sufficient condition of the character of a Christian jurisdiction, that it should embrace charity. But he also contended that there was a need for some form of political authority with the capacity to perform functions above and beyond the scope of the charitable disposition of individual men.⁶⁰ Implicit in this argument is the view that that state is indispensable both to prohibit vice and to promote virtue. This theme is expressed in Utopia, where More assumed that, however altruistic the actions of men might become, the disintegration of the state could never be envisaged because a well-regulated polity was necessary initially to inculcate beneficent conduct amongst men. As a corollary of this proposition, it is possible to conclude that More regarded political authority, rather than private property, as a necessary condition to avert anarchy, to subjugate human sinfulness, and to advance virtue. Consequently More attempted to endow Utopia with a degree of constitutional stability capable of defying the worst intentions of men.

The nature of the Utopian polity may be gleaned from the various sections of the discourse which deal with the state and civil society. The electoral system in Utopia was indirect,⁶¹ and was apparently based upon the principle that each family would possess a vote. Ultimately, the aim of this procedure was to elect three "old and experienced" delegates⁶² from each city, who were to meet annually in the capital. The major function of the Senate, which was composed of these elders, was to regulate and integrate the economy.⁶³ As a testimony to the worth of

60. T. More, Responsio ad Lutherum, p.197.

61. Utopia, p.123.

62. ibid., p.113.

63. ibid., p.147.

his institutional proposals, More commented on the vastly reduced amount of litigation in Utopia ⁶⁴ compared to contemporary England. Presumably More regarded the reduction in litigation as a benefit derived from the exclusion of private property. Obviously, this also dispensed with numerous legal accoutrements of the property regime. More maintained that the regulation of a society founded on communism would require far less legislation than one based on private property. Not only was the economy easier to control, but also, presumably, the improved character of human conduct facilitated by communism resulted in reduced demands on the legislative process.

While he accepted that formal governmental institutions would be necessary in Utopia, More was anxious to avert the possibility that any one individual might acquire and abuse power, or exercise it on his own behalf, rather than for the good of the community. Thus More included stipulations to ensure that only the most suitable citizens could attain positions of authority through Utopian electoral and selection procedures. Nevertheless, More maintained that given the inherent moral frailty of human nature, even the most worthy official might be susceptible to the corrupting influence of power. So any person who was so ambitious as to solicit votes became ineligible for public office. ⁶⁵ Honour was not to be sought in Utopia; rather it was conceived and conferred as an indication of a natural and spontaneous communal approbation of an individual's worth. The absence of ambition was characteristic of the virtuous Utopian. This apparently excluded from the political agenda ambitious altruism as well as the insidious ambition of self-interest.

64. *ibid.*, p.123.

65. *ibid.*, pp.193-195.

More believed that, in principle, office-holding should be restricted to a duration of one year - a proposal also advanced by Winstanley. In Utopia, the only exception to this rule were the governors who, unless they were suspected of tyranny, held office for life. Similarly, the middle ranking 'Tranibors' were elected annually, but were not replaced without good reason. By this means, More presumably intended to ensure an element of continuity and stability in government.

The Utopian legislative process, which again bore certain similarities to that employed by Winstanley in The Law of Freedom, was designed to eliminate the prospect of political corruption. In Utopia it was required that all political debate should take place entirely in the public forum. Further, three days careful deliberation was required before any proposed legislation could be ratified.⁶⁶ By these means provision was made for objections to be raised. So the possibility that legislation could be steamrollered through to the benefit of a self-interested minority was avoided.

In Utopia, private political discussion constituted a capital offence. This pertained particularly to matters affecting the common interest.⁶⁷ Such a condition reflected More's concern to avoid two quite disparate contingencies. Firstly, it placed a considerable sanction on tyrannous and oppressive practices by the officers of the commonwealth, and secondly, it betrayed the contemporary concern with political disorder and subversion. So in Utopia, no little peril attended the initiation of insurrection.

Presumably, the nature of 'democracy' in Utopia would have

66. ibid., pp.123-125.

67. ibid., p.125.

been profoundly affected by the proscription of political discourse outside the legislature, and the disqualification incurred by the soliciting of votes. Clearly, any notion of elections requiring declared candidates, meetings, and campaigning, was antithetical to the Utopian ideal. The election of officers would therefore appear to have depended upon some expression of a 'general will', or at least the mutually sympathetic consensus of a majority. The virtuous individual could not advance his own claims to public office. Nor would More have expected him to be able to do so. An aspect of his conception of good works which More was particularly keen to emphasize was that although the meritorious individual might be consensually identified, he could never be certain of his own good standing in the eyes of the community and God.⁶⁸ From all this it is obvious that More did not consider the full implications of his proposals for the elimination of political corruption. Indeed, the whole concept of politics in Utopia seems to have been submerged by the essentially static atmosphere of Utopian society. The internal affairs of the island appear to have been so well regulated that few decisions of a political nature would have been necessary. As we shall see, interaction with the outside world, and questions relating to foreign policy, might have demanded more of the decision-making machinery of Utopia. Even so, it is not unlikely that More anticipated a consensus in this sphere also.

In stark contrast to the European situation which had concerned More in the 'Dialogue of Counsel', all Utopian governors, ambassadors, and priests, were chosen as proven

68. Above, pp. 204-206.

individuals from the company of scholars.⁶⁹ This has led Hexter to the valid conclusion that More had constructed a polity in which Christian-Humanists would have been ideal⁷⁰ governors. Undoubtedly, a form of elitism was practiced in Utopia, but this was not preserved by an hereditary principle. Instead, access to the elite was determined by a combination of intellectual prowess, and moral rectitude. As More remarked,

"No official is haughty or formidable. They are called fathers and show that character."⁷¹

Only by continuously fulfilling such requirements could an individual preserve his membership of the elite.

A consideration of the institutions of the state leads rather naturally to an examination of the means by which the state might impose its will upon the individual citizen. Of the relationship between the state and the citizen in Utopia, E.L. Surtz has argued that,

"Unless the spirit of willing obedience animates the individual citizen in Utopia, the liberty of democracy becomes for him the tyranny of the many in a servile state."⁷²

This is a somewhat spurious point. Without embarking upon a long discussion of the concepts of authority, consent, and political obligation, it is worth noting that this problem⁷³ is not peculiar to Utopia. Surtz's remarks have probably been

69. Utopia, p.131-133.

70. J.H.Hexter, op.cit., p.ciii ff., and above, n.32.

71. Utopia, p.195.

72. E.L.Surtz, 'Utopia as a Work of Literary Art', his introduction to, Utopia, p.clx.

73. See, e.g., R.B.Friedman, 'On the Concept of Authority in Political Philosophy', in, Concepts in Social and Political Philosophy, ed.R.Flathman, (London 1973). Again, More's position

inspired by the unusually close proximity of the Utopian state to its individual members. However, this is an integral facet of the Utopian achievement. In general, the nature of authority must bear some relation to the perceptions of the individual citizens. If they are 'willingly obedient', it is likely that they will consent to the state's exercise of political power. If, on the other hand, they are not willingly obedient, then individuals may well regard the state's use of power as in some sense coercive, irrespective of its legitimacy. In the case of Utopia, given More's intention to construct a civil society in which the opportunities for men to sin would be reduced, the 'spirit of willing obedience' would presumably have been found only amongst those citizens whose propensity to evil had been subverted to the extent that their natural virtues found expression.

The problem of political obligation returns us to the implications of More's treatment of free will in Utopia. It is apparent that More did not regard the direction of the individual will by the state as necessarily an abrogation of the liberty of the individual citizen. Clearly, More attributed criteria of value to various forms of liberty.⁷⁴ His conception of the human predicament seems to have led More to the conclusion that it was extremely unlikely that an individual could become a truly self-determining agent, in the sense that such an individual would invariably choose the good. Because

is close to that previously forwarded by Aquinas, see, Summa Theologica, Prima Secundae, Qu. 96 Art. 5, and in, Aquinas: Selected Political Writings, ed. A.P. d'Entrèves, (Oxford 1959), pp. 137-139.

74. See, I. Berlin, 'Two Concepts of Liberty', in his, Four Essays on Liberty, (London 1969). More's position is occasionally analogous to Berlin's differentiation of negative and positive liberty.

More maintained that men's reasoning faculties had been impaired at the Fall, he also contended that their capacity to exercise their will in choosing the good, had also been damaged. Thereafter men could never be entirely 'free'. They could, of course, choose to sin as an exercise of free will; but More conceived of the condition of actual sin as a condition of bondage. Against this, More must have regarded the state's compulsion in directing an individual to 'choose' the good, as a lesser evil. Indeed, More would probably have argued that the Utopians had been 'freed' from the bondage of actual sin, to achieve the higher end of salvation,⁷⁵ and that this was the only means of redeeming the integrity of man.

It is apparent that More attributed value to two forms of liberty⁷⁶ without specifying whether he regarded them as distinct. The first form is the freedom of choice or the exercise of free will, and the second is the freedom from sin. More seems to have suggested that freedom from the bondage of sin is good, but that this is valueless unless freely chosen, and that choice is valuable because it affords the opportunity to choose good (as opposed to evil). It is interesting to speculate on whether More regarded freedom of choice as intrinsically valuable. It seems unlikely that he did. He is more likely to have argued that freedom of choice has value imputed to it because it is the means of securing ulterior objects or conditions which possess value. However, although freedom from sin is obviously intrinsically valuable, it seems

75. This is rather closer to the triadic formulation of liberty posited by G.C. MacCullum, 'Negative and Positive Freedom', P.R., Vol. 75 (1967), pp. 312-334.

76. I am grateful to Mr. A.C. Edwards for many valuable discussions about freedom of choice and the concept of liberty.

that More believed its moral value to be derived from the free manner in which it was chosen.

These points have a considerable bearing upon how we ought to regard Utopia. If the value of choice (in this case, the choice to act virtuously) depends upon the existence of a choice between real alternatives, and the consciousness of the existence of such a choice, then More may have placed the Utopian citizen in an unenviable position. As we have seen, Utopian society placed many restraints upon men's conduct, and in particular, sought to reduce the opportunity to sin. Had it not achieved this end, More would have failed in his intentions. However, paradoxically, such success in institutional design might be regarded as reducing the moral significance of choice, because of the preclusion of the opportunity to choose evil. Nevertheless, the existence of a punitive system in Utopia indicates that evil persisted and that choice must have been to some extent real. Indeed, More would probably have argued that whatever the institutional environment, the very depravity of human nature was a guarantee that the value of choice between good and evil would always be maintained. Further, More must also have agreed that the adoption of Utopian institutions in Europe would not only constitute a morally significant choice in itself, but would also secure the moral significance of all future choices. In a reformed Christendom, cognitive recollection of the possibility of the greater prospect and prevalence of the choice to do evil in the pre-reform system, would enhance the moral calibre of choice in a restraining society. Although More designed Utopian institutions to be self-perpetuating, he must also have recognized that their maintenance in Christendom would have depended to a degree on a choice to that effect. Had

he been presented with this argument, More might well have produced a pessimistic response as to the prospects of his contemporaries voluntarily choosing an alternative institutional regime. We have returned to the fundamental dilemma of More's conception of the human condition, and the social theory he advanced as a solution to that predicament.

Utopia has been regarded as a classic example of a work embodying the principle that law ought to be founded upon reason.⁷⁷ More endowed Utopia with a strict and thoroughgoing legal code which took natural law, as opposed to contemporary positive law, as its point of reference. Thus More argued that the intention to commit a crime was as grievous as the actual success of the enterprise. Throughout his life More remained a consistent advocate of this principle. In Utopia he argued that,

"To tempt another to an impure act is no less punishable than the commission of that impure act."⁷⁸

Similarly, in The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer, More contended that the crucial consideration was the will to sin rather than the perpetration of the act. He retained this emphasis upon intention when he argued that if action "be done without the wyl it is not synne."⁷⁹ So, if the Utopian state was capable of guiding the actions of men, it presumably functioned as a moral agent by instilling virtue into its citizens.

Indicatively, More, the self-critical lawyer, excluded the practitioners of his own profession from Utopia. He remarked

77. See, e.g., T.M. Parker, 'Sir Thomas More's Utopia', in, Essays in Modern English Church History in Memory of Norman Sykes, ed. G.V. Bennett and J.D. Walsh, (London 1966), p.13.

78. Utopia, p.193.

79. T. More, The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer, C.W., Vol. 8, p.457. Once again, there is some proximity here to Aquinas's conception of divine law and the regulation of intentions, see above, p.243.

that the Utopians had,

"very few laws because very few laws are needed for persons so educated - all laws are promulgated to remind every man of his duty."⁸⁰

In like manner to Winstanley, More was particularly concerned to elevate the principle of equity⁸¹ within the legal process of his ideal commonwealth. Thus he argued that as a consequence of the brevity of, and publicity afforded to, the legal code, all Utopians would be in a position to plead their own case, rather than being reliant on lawyers. Further, a repurcussion of More's critique of the contemporary punitive system was his concern, in Utopia, to ensure that the punishment of crime for which no fixed penalty existed, should⁸² be decided according to the principle of equity. Again, this provision indicates that More was prepared to appeal to natural law as the absolute standard of legal reference. Positive law was to be judged accordingly.

It was typical of the ethical foundation of Utopian jurisprudence, that excommunication was regarded as the ultimate⁸³ punishment. Whilst a substantial element of secular coercion existed in Utopia, so too did a countervailing system of honours⁸⁴ to encourage men to virtue. Such was the extent to which the operation of authority in Utopia was calculated in accordance with More's conception of human nature. Those citizens whose

80. Utopia, p.195.

81. For an analysis of More's position with regard to equity see, S.E. Prall, 'The Development of Equity in Tudor England', American Journal of Legal History, Vol.8 (1964), pp.1-19, at pp.7-8.

82. Utopia, p.191.

83. ibid., p.229.

84. ibid., p.193.

conduct was amended to the extent that they fulfilled the ends for which the commonwealth was designed would find life in Utopia reasonably felicitous; whereas those who remained recalcitrant would experience the retribution of the state, and ultimately of God. More would presumably have answered possible objections to this position by claiming that because it promoted a number of fundamental moral principles, the Utopian state was justified in punishing individuals when it found occasion to do so, because in Utopia, criminals, as defined by positive law were sinners as defined by natural law.

iii The Family and the Individual

Both More and Winstanley devised utopias which inverted numerous prevalent institutional arrangements, although neither abandoned the concept of the patriarchal family. It is interesting that More regarded patriarchal authority as a grant from God to Adam,⁸⁵ which, despite the Fall, necessarily continued. So patriarchalism constituted the non-elective facet of the Utopian authoritative hierarchy. In chapter two it was shown that in the early-modern period, the family played an integral role in the structure of authority, and in the control of the individual. More incorporated the family and patriarchal principles into the Utopian design for the restraint of human nature. As Hexter has said,

"The family provides a powerful cohesive force for the whole commonwealth both as a coercive institution and as a training place for citizens."⁸⁶

Further, Surtz, who was usually at pains to stress the disparity between Utopian religion and Christianity, has at least recognized that the family holds a traditionally honourable place within the doctrines and practices of the Christian way of life.⁸⁷ In The Republic Plato proposed the abolition of the family.⁸⁸ However, More's own love of, and devotion to family life,⁸⁹ undoubtedly found expression in the proposals advanced in Utopia. Thus More took a conscious departure from the Platonic ideal commonwealth.

85. T. More, Treatise on the Passion, C.W., Vol. 13, pp. 13, 18.

86. J. H. Hexter, op. cit., p. xlii.

87. E. J. Surtz, The Praise of Wisdom, (Chicago 1957), chapter XIV.

88. Plato, The Republic, trans. H. P. D. Lee, (London 1974), Book V, pp. 225-259.

89. See, W. Roper, The Lyfe and Death of Sir Thomas Moore, knighte, ed. E. V. Hitchcock, E. E. T. S., O. S. CXVII, (1935), p. 8.

The basic unit of the Utopian city was the household. Each household was subject to the authority of the eldest male occupant, unless he was a dotard. Such household units contained from ten to sixteen adults. The size of these extended families was adjusted by means of the transfer of individuals from one household to another, as, for instance, in the case of girls marrying and becoming members of their husband's family. In the rural areas of Utopia families were larger. Each farm was composed of forty adults and two serfs, who were subject to the authority of "a master and a mistress, serious in mind and ripe of years."⁹¹ Throughout Utopian familial relationships one principle was paramount. This is an expression of the patriarchal ideal discussed in chapter one. In Utopia,

"Wives wait on their husbands, children on their parents, and generally the younger on their elders."⁹²

Presumably, not

only was such deference intended to maintain the structure of social control, but also, if strictly applied, these practices would obviate the need for servants. We shall see in due course that Winstanley retained servants in The Law of Freedom suggesting that his attitude towards patriarchalism was considerably more orthodox than More's had been.

In adopting the family as the basic unit of production in Utopia, More merely followed the contemporary economic norm. Not only was the Utopian household expected to be to some degree self-sufficient, for example, by doing its own tailoring, but also it was required to devote itself to a craft, and produce

90. Utopia, p.135 ff.

91. ibid., p.115.

92. ibid., p.137.

commodities for the common stock.⁹³ It was assumed that sons would be naturally inclined to follow their father's craft. However, as a sop to individualism, More provided for the possibility that offspring who were not so inclined to "be assigned to a grave and honorable householder,"⁹⁴ under whose tuition they might be taught an alternative craft.

The expectation that authority would permeate downwards was common to both Utopia and Winstanley's The Law of Freedom. Thus, in both instances, the family was regarded as the basis of governmental hierarchy.⁹⁵ However, by implying that the whole family was to have some voice in political affairs (by, for instance, contributing to the decision on how the patriarch's vote ought to be cast), More added an element of progressivism later missing from Winstanley's conception of family life. As well as playing a role in political life, the family constituted the lowest unit in the structure of Utopian religion. Thus, before attending religious services, Utopians were 'shriven' by confessing their sins to, and begging the pardon of, their familial superiors, "wives fall down at the feet of their husbands, children at the feet of their parents."⁹⁶

While such spiritualization of the household is generally associated with Protestantism, it is worth recalling that domestic devotions were practiced by More's own family.⁹⁷ Although More was often quite radical in his view of patriarchalism, he nevertheless regarded the family as an inviolable institution. Apart from his obvious moral objections

93. ibid. p.127.

94. ibid.

95. For the case of Utopia, see, p.123.

96. ibid., p.233.

97. See, W. Roper, op.cit., p.17, and above, p.211.

to pre-marital sex and promiscuity, he discouraged such behaviour on the additional grounds that immoral practices undermined family life, and thereby posed a threat to the stability of the commonwealth.⁹⁸ Yet within the family unit, More was an advocate of certain progressive attitudes, which ultimately, in the centuries to come, led to considerable tension, and even to the questioning of patriarchal authority. For instance, More's objection to wetnursing⁹⁹ was symptomatic of the developing recognition of the very concept of childhood, and growing fastidiousness over educational methods.¹⁰⁰

More did not emphasize patriarchalism as an institution essential to the functioning of the family to the extent that Winstanley later would. Such a contrast is explained, in part, by Winstanley's use of patriarchalism as a component in his theory of the restoration of human nature. More's predominant concern, however, was with the subjugation of the worst characteristics of human nature. We shall see in the next section that More regarded communal activities, rather than a closeted form of family life, as a more suitable medium for the achievement of this end. Yet certain undeniable tensions arise from More's advocacy of various practices which seem inimical to strong patriarchal authority. For instance, More was an ardent advocate of marital love. However, this was in marked contrast to the system of arranged marriages often associated with the dominance of the patriarchal householder. Yet in Utopia, young couples were ceremoniously displayed, naked, to each

98. Utopia, p.187.

99. ibid., p.143.

100. See, P. Aries, Centuries of Childhood, (London 1961, 1973 edition), pp.150-199, and above, pp.95-97.

other before they were married. More was certain that this essentially pragmatic procedure would ultimately ensure compatibility, and the harmony of family life. Nevertheless, although More subscribed to the contemporary norm that a man should marry only after completing an apprenticeship, in extending the element of choice to the participants, More may have introduced a degree of strain into the structure of the patriarchal family. Arranged marriages implied a substantial degree of parental control. By challenging this practice, the Utopian principle of catering for the emotional needs of sons and daughters might well have imposed obvious limitations upon patriarchal authority. Despite all this, patriarchalism remained an important institution in More's ideal commonwealth, particularly with respect to economic activities and to the moral tenor of society.

101. Utopia, pp.187-189.

iv The Community and the Individual

The emphasis placed by More upon communal activities has prompted D.B.Fenlon to argue that,

"More was concerned to enquire whether the monastic virtues could be made to work outside the monastery"¹⁰²

Fenlon further argued that More's fascination with monasticism found expression in Utopia, and that this in turn explains the work's contemporary appeal. He concluded that

"The union of the monastery, the city and the patriarchal family lies at the heart of the fiction animating the social arrangements of Utopia."¹⁰³

Undoubtedly Fenlon has isolated several of the institutional sources of the structure of life in Utopia. However, his claim that More successfully fused patriarchal and monastic ideals, possibly underestimates the internal tensions in the institutional basis of Utopia. While More probably did regard monasticism as an exemplar, it is also apparent that his analysis of mankind's predicament led him to conclude, independently of any deference to the monastic ideal, that communal life would be to man's benefit.

The communal life of Utopia related not only to the economic system, but also to the surveillance necessary for the frustration of evil inclinations. In this context More extended the notion of community to include an additional sanction. He argued that the Utopian's belief "in the personal presence of their forefathers, keeps men from any secret dishonourable

102. D.B.Fenlon, 'England and Europe: Utopia and its Aftermath', Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, Vol.25 (1975), pp.115-135, at p.121.

103. ibid., p.122.

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deed."

It has already been indicated that a certain insoluble contradiction exists between More's concern with patriarchalism and his fervent advocacy of communalism. However, it appears that most activities, with the exception of Utopian industry, were conducted in groups larger than the family. In Utopia, all houses were completely open to access,¹⁰⁵ a practice which both militated against the assumption of private property in the dwelling place, and evinced the exemplary moral character of Utopians. By contrast, as we shall see, Winstanley's insistence upon the inviolability of the household and its material possessions, favoured the preservation of a sphere of private property.

Each street in Utopia was composed of thirty households, the members of which attended a communal dining hall. More commented that individuals were not compelled to attend communal meals, but pointed out that a powerful social sanction against abstention arose from a distrust of the motives of those who preferred privacy.¹⁰⁶ The seating arrangements at such meals are revealing. The young were constantly watched over in the hope that "the grave and reverend behaviour of the old may restrain the young people from misbehaviour."¹⁰⁷ The provision for readings "conducive to morality"¹⁰⁸ is a reflection of the practice in monasteries, the Inns of Court, and More's own household.

104. Utopia, p.225.

105. ibid., p.121.

106. ibid., pp.139-141. This contradicts the impression (that More sanctioned privacy) advanced by V.Volgin, 'Sir Thomas More', News, Vol.XXXIX (1953), pp.14-15, at p.15.

107. Utopia, p.143.

108. ibid., p.145.

In Utopia there were several other communally-based institutions. For example, nurseries were provided for the care of infants. Hospitals (to which patients went voluntarily - in stark contrast to the contemporary norm) were maintained for the benefit of the sick.¹⁰⁹ In general, More was anxious to stress that communal life generated more efficient and better services and facilities, and that participation in the activities of the community was conducive to morality.

A further pervasive motif of life in Utopia was uniformity. Uniformity was manifested in a wide variety of ways, but was essentially intended to fulfil a two-fold purpose. Firstly, it was part of the process of stifling human sinfulness, and secondly, it reduced demand for goods, and hence the labour required for the production of commodities. All this was effected by eliminating the escalating demand which often accompanied conspicuous consumption. There are numerous examples of the application of these principles in Utopia. For instance, streets and houses were substantial, hygienic and identical.¹¹⁰ This was a marked contrast to the innovatory building boom of More's own time which represented the epitome of European conspicuous consumption. Rather than standing the cost of rebuilding, the Utopians saved both time and labour by keeping their existing property in good repair.¹¹¹

More was anxious to affirm that styles in Utopia had remained static throughout the history of the commonwealth and would continue to do so. His attitude to the whims of fashion was decidedly disparaging. Some years after writing Utopia More

109. ibid., pp.139-143.

110. ibid., p.121.

111. ibid., p.133.

attempted to deflate the pride which men took in fine clothes by pointing out that

"a poore shepe ware it on her backe before it came vpon his:and al the while she ware it,wer her wull neuer so fine,yet was she pardie but a shepe."¹¹²

Not surprisingly,in Utopia,utility was the sole criterion by which clothing was judged. Thus the Utopians were "dressed unpretentiously in leather or hide,which lasts for seven years."¹¹³ Similarly,the Utopians preferred linen to wool,¹¹⁴ and therefore presumably avoided the danger of being overrun by sheep.

Given that the ownership of a horse was a considerable status symbol in early-modern England,¹¹⁵ the virtual absence of horses from Utopia¹¹⁶ is a further indication of More's purpose. Again, this is a decided contrast to The Law of Freedom in which Winstanley celebrated the relative material success of his ideal commonwealth by awarding erstwhile common-folk access to the use of a horse. Conversely,More was probably aware that had he made horses readily available in Utopia,he would have chanced providing a vehicle for the expression of pride and vainglory. This is an interesting instance in which More appears to have momentarily lapsed,by allowing the perverted mores of European society to infiltrate the socialized standards of Utopia,for

112. T.More,Treatise on the Passion, p.8. (pardie = indeed)

113. Utopia, p.133.

114. ibid., p.135.

115. See,e.g.,James Harrington,The Model of the Commonwealth of Oceana, (1656),in,The Political Works of James Harrington,ed.J.G.A.Pocock, (Cambridge 1977), p.213 - "The third order distributeth the citizens into horse and foot by the sense or valuation of their estates;they who have above one hundred pounds a year in lands,goods or monies,being obliged to be of the horse,and they who have under to be of the foot."

116. Utopia, p.115.

presumably the Utopians would have had no preconceived awareness of the social implications of horse-ownership.

More applied the principle of uniformity to demand and consumption, arguing that,

"universal behaviour must of necessity lead to an abundance of all commodities. Since the latter are distributed evenly among all, it follows, of course, that no one can be reduced to poverty and beggary."¹¹⁷

It is important to recall that More was not primarily concerned to increase the production of goods. So he used the term 'abundance' to describe the prosperity of the common weal compared to contemporary society. More feared that inequitable distribution and affluence were to man's detriment because this system of distribution stimulated conspicuous consumption and its attendant moral evils.

More's intention of averting man's inclination to sin is discernible in every detail of Utopian life. Thus he was in a position to claim that,

"nowhere is there any license to waste time, nowhere any pretext to evade work - no wineshop, no alehouse, no brothel anywhere, no opportunity for corruption, no lurking hole, no secret meeting place."¹¹⁸

Throughout the description of his ideal commonwealth, More instanced a variety of ancillary means by which the citizen was diverted away from temptation. For example, gold and silver were used in Utopia to make the most mundane utensils, and rather poignantly, as chains for slaves.¹¹⁹

117. ibid., p.147.

118. ibid., and above, n.37.

119. ibid., pp.151-153.

That the Utopians used gold to stigmatize evil-doers is an ironic articulation of More's belief that the value attributed to 'precious' metals was a product of man's corrupt nature and of his unnatural wants. In the Treatise on the Passion, More said,

"How proud be men of golde and syluer, no part of our self, but of the earth, and of nature no better then is the poore coper or tinne, nor to man's vse so profitable, as in the poore mettall that maketh vs y plough share, and horse shoone, and horse nayles."¹²⁰

More similarly deprecated precious stones.¹²¹ In order to press home this theme, More placed the Utopians in a position in which they were obliged by the geological circumstances of the island to export gold in exchange for iron¹²² - because the latter metal possessed such inherent qualities that it was necessary for the maintenance of economic activity. Once again, the natural needs of the community, and utility, determined real value. Implicit in this disapprobation of gold and jewellery was the assumption that fallen men would inevitably covet wealth, even in forms which were intrinsically worthless. Not surprisingly, when the badly-briefed Anemolian ambassadors,¹²³ "being more proud than wise," paraded through the streets bedecked in all their finery, they were ridiculed by the simply- and uniformly-dressed Utopians.

More was at pains to exclude the brutality of contemporary life, and its accompanying insensitivity, from the everyday experience of the Utopians. So it was that he included in

120. T. More, Treatise on the Passion, p.8.

121. Utopia, p.153.

122. ibid., p.151.

123. ibid., p.155.

Utopia the provision that,

"They do not allow their citizens to accustom themselves to the butchering of animals, by the practice of which they think that mercy, the finest feeling of our human nature, is gradually killed off."¹²⁴

Consequently, such work was reserved for slaves, who were considered to have sacrificed the right to
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be regarded as reasonable men.

Several other features of life in Utopia reflected More's desire to construct a society in which individuals were constantly under scrutiny. The restriction of travel in Utopia may well have been a measure of the Tudor dread of vagrancy. Utopian cities were identical. So curiosity could not possibly have constituted a motive for wanderlust. Consequently, the desire to travel required not only the provision of an adequate pretext and the securing of a permit, but also, invariably, a
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communal journey, and the performance of labour on the way. Even an apparently innocuous country walk was not free from suspicion and had to be sanctioned by a citizen's father and wife.

The only differences in styles of clothing in Utopia were those which distinguished the sexes, and married from single
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persons. This was a further condition which presumably made it easier to guard against immorality. Perhaps the most integrated example of the Utopian preoccupation with the exclusion of every opportunity to sin was the punitive

124. ibid., p.139.

125. This seems to contradict More's belief that slavery or bondage could usefully be adopted as a form of punitive system characterized by its rehabilitative potential; see below, pp.327-329.

126. Utopia, pp.145-147.

127. ibid., p.127.

reaction to pre-marital sex. Not only were those found guilty of this sin forbidden to marry, but also the father and mother of the household in which the offence was committed were punished for the dereliction of their duty - to watch over the conduct of the young.¹²⁸

128. ibid., p.187.

v. The Education of the Virtuous Citizen

It has already been suggested that to a Christian-Humanist such as More, education was of paramount importance. Utopia is a graphic example of the application of this ideal. In Utopia, More intended education to serve a dual purpose. Not only did he assume that education would encourage the requisite moral character expected of citizens in his ideal commonwealth, but also he conceived of it as a substantial form of pleasure, and therefore as an end in itself.¹²⁹ In this chapter we have been particularly concerned with More's attempt to identify various methods of containing what he regarded as essentially sinful human nature. So it is imperative to be aware of the role he expected education to play in this process. While the Utopian state possessed a coercive aspect, the instruments and procedures available for the forcible exertion of political authority were only used as a last resort. Instead, More preferred self-discipline inculcated by education.¹³⁰ Equally, in Utopia, education contributed to political socialization. As Surtz has correctly observed, education secured "the propagation and perpetuation of the ideal state."¹³¹ Even more crucially, More appears to have believed that education could provide some compensation for the ignorance and frailty of reason which he saw as inherent in the fallen condition of man. Thus in the Dialogue Concerning Heresies, More echoed the earlier thoughts of Utopia, arguing that liberal studies were conducive to the quickening of the reasoning faculties.¹³² So F. Caspari has made

129. See below, pp.337-338.

130. See, W.E. Campbell, More's Utopia and His Social Teaching, (London 1930), chapter 3.

131. E.J. Surtz, Introduction, p.cxxvi.

132. T. More, Dialogue Concerning Heresies, E.W., Vol. II, pp886-87.

a sound point in contending that "to be good through humanist knowledge is the Utopian ideal."¹³³

Given More's concern to design institutions which would profit man in his quest for salvation, his conception of education - as one means to inculcate certain indispensable moral values - affords an insight into the achievement of Utopia. Even Surtz, who consistently argued that Utopian religion was of a natural or 'pagan' form, recognized that education in Utopia encouraged an enlightened piety of a Christian form. It is also notable that More's closest friend, Erasmus, maintained that one function of education was to provide men with access to a lifestyle which might enable them to approximate Christ's example.¹³⁴ More himself expressed the view that, although education was not absolutely necessary for salvation, it could nevertheless effect beneficial results, because it trained the soul in virtue.¹³⁵

In Utopia, the learning of a craft was considered imperative for an individual to avoid the sinfulness associated with idleness.¹³⁶ This was supplemented by a form of education which was acclaimed by More because it promoted morality.¹³⁷ The Utopian concern for morality and virtue was as substantial as that for the advancement of learning. Thus More assured his audience that,

"They take the greatest pains from the very first to instill in to children's minds, while still tender and

133. F. Caspari, Humanism and the Social Order in England, (New York 1954, 1968 edition), p.123.

134. J.H. Hexter, op.cit., p.lxiii.

135. T. More, 'To the University of Oxford', (1518), in, Sir Thomas More: Selected Letters, ed. E.F. Rogers, (New Haven 1961), p.98.

136. Utopia, pp.127-129.

137. ibid., p.159.

pliable, good opinions which are also useful for the preservation of their commonwealth. When once they are firmly implanted in children, they accompany them all through their adult lives and are of great help in watching over the condition of the commonwealth. The latter never decays except through vices which arise from wrong attitudes."¹³⁸

However, the preservation of the commonwealth was the ancillary rather than the fundamental reason for More's educational programme. More's own household constituted an experiment in humanist education, and the reason for this is the same as that which inspired More to write Utopia. In a letter to his children's tutor, William Gonell, More counselled that his own children were

"to esteem most whatever may teach them piety towards God, charity to all, and modesty and Christian humility in themselves. By such means they will receive from God the reward of an innocent life, and in the assured expectation of it will view death without dread..."¹³⁹

The fundamental point at issue was articulated by More when he said,

"the more do I see the difficulty of getting rid of this pest of pride, the more do I see the necessity of getting to work at it from childhood."¹⁴⁰

Clearly, education in Utopia was intended to serve such a purpose. More saw in education the institutional means of determining the conduct of the individual. This returns us once again to the problem of the autonomy of the individual citizen in Utopia. In this case, difficulty arises over the question of whether moral education teaches virtue or

138. ibid., p.229.

139. T. More, 'To William Gonell', (1518), in, Sir Thomas More: Selected Letters, p.105.

140. ibid., p.106.

mere habit, and whether the two concepts are mutually exclusive. In dealing with this issue in Utopia, More failed to explore the problem in the same depth as Aristotle and more recent philosophers of education have done.¹⁴¹

Despite his testimony to the ameliorative potential of the institutions of his ideal commonwealth, More remained convinced of the inherent sinfulness of man. So he assumed that men were unlikely to originate the optimal society without some ulterior prompting. It appeared to More that although his institutional proposals were capable of subjugating human nature, man's own sinfulness would prejudice him against their adoption. Consequently, More expressed his political ideas in the form of a utopia, and within this, accounted for the foundation of the state by arguing that the (fallen) islanders had been conquered by the lawgiver, Utopus. Clearly, these devices were necessitated by More's awareness of the disparity between the ideal evinced in Utopia, and the reluctance to initiate reform so evident in his own society.

More was anxious to assert that even after 1760 years,¹⁴¹ Utopian institutions remained ever-vigilant, because men would always retain an innate and ineradicable propensity to sin. So although the Utopians conducted themselves in the best possible manner, this was not attributable to any superior characteristic of their nature. They were inherently the same as all men.

141. See, Aristotle's, Nicomachean Ethics, Bk. II, and more recently, R.S. Peters, 'Reason and Habit: The Paradox of Moral Education', in Moral Education in a Changing Society, ed. W.R. Niblett, (London 1963), and, A.C. Kazepides, 'What is the Paradox of Moral Education?', Proceedings of the Philosophy of Education Society, Vol. 3 (1969) pp. 177-183. I am grateful to Mr. P.E. Gardner for allowing me to see and comment upon the draft of his forthcoming article, 'On Some Paradoxes in Moral Education'.

142. Utopia, p. 121.

However, because their laws, mores, and socialization, suppressed man's tendency to sin, and encouraged his capacity for good, the Utopians conducted themselves more virtuously than their European counterparts. But presumably this would be the case only so long as they remained in Utopia. Should they be freed from the restraining influence of Utopian institutions, they would inevitably degenerate into the abyss that was typical of the sinful existence of their European contemporaries.

More's conception of the human condition was not totally despondent. Despite his tendency to emphasize the depravity of fallen human nature, he also believed that man possessed certain natural desires and affections which could lead him to the good. However More insisted that such virtues would be manifested only in a corrective social environment, and particularly in conditions of equality. Hence More arrived at the following categorical conclusion :-

"Nor does it occur to me to doubt that a man's regard for his own interests or the authority of Christ our Saviour - who in His wisdom could not fail to know what was best and who in His goodness would not fail to counsel what He knew to be best - would long ago have brought the whole world to adopt the laws of the Utopian commonwealth, had not one single monster, the chief and progenitor of all plagues, striven against it - I mean, Pride."¹⁴³

143. ibid., p.243.

CHAPTER SIX : UTOPIA: THE ENDS OF CIVIL SOCIETY

In the previous chapter it was shown that in Utopia, More proposed a series of institutions designed to neutralize the propensity to sinful conduct which he ultimately attributed to the innate and ineradicable characteristics of fallen human nature. However, although this was undoubtedly an important feature of More's thought, it would be a mistake to conclude that More held a totally abject view of the human condition. That More held a disconsolate appreciation of mankind's predicament is the dominant theme of J.H.Hexter's interpretation of Utopia.¹ Yet there is another more optimistic and positive aspect of Utopia, in which More revealed a concern to expound a societal organization conducive to the salvation of man. Thus Utopia might almost be regarded as a political theory of transcendence. Although More seemed confident in the efficacy of Utopian institutionalism, he remained decidedly taciturn on the question of whether his ideas would ever be realised. This doubt is implicit in More's statement that,

"Pride is too deeply fixed in men to be easily plucked out. For this reason, the fact that this form of commonwealth - which I would gladly desire for all - has been the good fortune of the Utopians at least, fills me with joy."²

Here

More seems to suggest that although he had been able to propose a potential means towards improving the human condition, man's own corrupt nature would probably present an insuperable obstacle to the institution of the ideal commonwealth. More never resolved this conundrum which appears as a salient

1. J.H.Hexter, More's Utopia: The Biography of an Idea, (Princeton 1952), 'The Composition of Utopia', his introduction to, Utopia, The Vision of Politics on the Eve of the Reformation, (London 1973), and above, chapter three, section vi.

2. Utopia, p.245.

feature of his social philosophy. We have already argued that,³ for these reasons, More was obliged to introduce the character of Utopus as a benign lawgiver, who in the island named after him, established by conquest a structure of institutions capable of enhancing the manners of men.

More clearly believed that the majority of men would earn their salvation only if their actions were guided by an optimal extraneous institutional environment. Such an environment was described by More in Utopia, and it furnished men with the prospect of salvation in both a negative and a positive manner. As we saw in the previous chapter, the 'negative' achievement of Utopia was the rigid control of men's conduct so that they were hindered from living in a condition of actual sin. As we shall see in this chapter, Utopia was also designed to direct men's energies towards what More regarded as the fundamental end of life - the endeavour to attain salvation through an active free will and the performance of good works.

This twofold approach was evinced by a number of Utopian principles and practices. For instance, it has already been noted that More's devotion to education was inspired partly by his belief that learning was one means towards a virtuous life. In Utopia, education was not only intended to limit sin, but also constituted an important form of pleasure. More regarded mere abstinence from sin as an insufficient warrant for salvation. Rather he believed that individuals must lead active and fulfilled lives without succumbing to temptation. Thus, the manner in which they took their pleasure was relevant to the question of salvation. So More ensured that in Utopia the pursuit of pleasure would not be to the detriment of the soul.

3. Above, pp. 204, 246-247, 294.

Most significantly, although Utopian communism and the obligation to work stifled sin, they also promoted an additional benefit. As More pointed out,

"You can easily see how small an allowance of time would be enough and to spare for the production of all that is required by necessity or comfort (or even pleasure, provided it be genuine and natural.)⁴

However, More was not concerned merely with the minimization of labour and the maximization of leisure,⁵ but with more specifically self-improving pleasure. Hence, in Utopia, More aimed to guarantee an equitable distribution of leisure in order to ensure that all individuals were provided with sufficient time to cultivate virtue.

This chapter will consider a number of themes which are germane to an assessment of the constructive achievements of Utopian society. Consequently, our first consideration must be Utopian religion, and particularly the problem of whether More's argument in Utopia was at all relevant to the question of the salvation of Christian Europeans. Secondly, attention will be focused upon the Utopian philosophy of pleasure in an attempt to discern the role that this played within More's overall scheme. Section three will outline a number of the problem areas which have arisen from various attempts to evaluate Utopia. These spheres have been regularly analysed in the existing secondary literature, and it is hoped that our general interpretation of Utopia might change the complexion of at least some of these issues. The fourth and final section of this chapter will consider

4. Utopia, p.131.

5. J.H.Hexter, More's Utopia: The Biography of an Idea, p.68.

the pervading intellectual climate of Utopia, especially in the light of More's own worldview. This discussion will anticipate our eventual comparison of More and Winstanley in the context of the changed evaluation of the human condition which occurred in the early-modern period.

i Utopian Religion

The nature of Utopian religion is such a controversial issue that an intimation of our analysis of it might anticipate, and therefore clarify, a number of the difficulties with which this section is concerned. We shall argue that, although they did not subscribe to fully-fledged sixteenth-century Catholicism, the Utopians followed a religion that, in terms of both its doctrines and its externals, made several important prescriptive recommendations which were relevant to the salvation of Christians. This conclusion is derived from the discussion in chapter four of the relationship between reason, faith, free will, and good works, in More's theology. It will become apparent that a straightforward dichotomy between 'Christian' Europeans and 'heathen' Utopians is unsatisfactory. It is important to recall that More differentiated between an ideal form of Christianity, and the adulteration of the faith in contemporary Christendom. Thus Utopia provided More with the opportunity to posit a series of practices and beliefs, the adoption of which he advocated for his own society. This method would not have been possible had More constructed Utopian religion as an exact replica of sixteenth-century Catholicism.

The present view, that in Utopia More was concerned to prescribe the optimal conditions for the salvation of man, requires some consideration of the extensive debate on the nature of Utopian religion. This controversy was outlined in chapter three. To summarize; it was argued that there exists a reasonably straightforward dichotomy between, on the one hand, the Catholic school (which contends that More could never have advocated the principles of Utopian theology and ethics for adoption by Christian Europeans) and, on the other hand, those critics who

claim that More's recommendations were intended as prescriptions for the ills of Christendom.

Within Utopia More was unnervingly consistent, and this has possibly led many commentators astray. To take one example; the Catholic case has been based on the supposed contradiction between More's thought as expressed in Utopia, and his actions and other writings. So Catholic critics have pointed to the Utopian belief that it was ludicrous

"To pursue hard and painful virtue and not only to banish the sweetness of life but even voluntarily to suffer pain from which you expect no profit...."⁶

Yet this is clearly contradicted by our knowledge of More's own asceticism; for much of his life he wore a hair shirt and devoted himself each Friday to private contemplation and mortification.⁷ Hence the Catholic school has quite correctly concluded that More could not have sincerely advocated the opinions on asceticism held by the Utopians. Yet again, the Catholic interpretation has justifiably insisted that Christian revelation had not been bestowed upon the Utopians.⁸ While both these premises hold true, it is of the utmost significance that the former is a corollary of the latter. More was quite consistent. Thus without Christian revelation the Utopians had, as yet, no surety that asceticism would profit an individual's salvation. However, it is wrong to deduce from this minor instance and others like it, the general proposition that Utopian natural religion and Christianity were wholly dissimilar.

6. Utopia., p.163.

7. See, W. Roper, The Lyfe and Death of Sir Thomas More, knyghte, ed. E.V. Hitchcock, E.E.T.S., O.S. CXV11, (1935), pp.17-30, and above, pp.112-113.

8. The best example of this argument is, E.L. Surtz, The Praise of Wisdom, (Chicago 1957).

In fact, we shall show that the two are far more congruent than such dubious reasoning allows, and that the internal consistency of the discussion of religion in Utopia is not at odds with More's thought and action elsewhere.

The fundamental principles of Utopian religion, "which is serious and strict, almost solemn and hard,"⁹ were more than a set of purely rational propositions. They would also have been accepted as defensible religious tenets by More's contemporaries, who possessed the additional reference of Christian revelation. For instance, the Utopian belief in miracles would have seemed quite orthodox to Europeans. The rationalist Utopians' derision of superstition might have been applauded rather more by contemporary Catholic theologians, than than by many European laymen.¹⁰

More expanded upon the themes that the existence of God and the nature of certain divine truths could be ascertained philosophically by arguing in Utopia that,

"reason first of all inflames men to a love and veneration of the divine majesty, to whom we owe both our existence and our capacity for happiness."¹¹

Similarly, the prevalent Utopian conception of God would have been familiar to the European mind. In Utopia, God was regarded as,

"a certain single being, unknown, eternal, immense, inexplicable, far above the reach of the human mind, diffused throughout the universe not in mass but in power. Him they call Father.

9. Utopia, p.161.

10. ibid., p.225. For a classic study of the contemporary mentality and magical beliefs see, K.V. Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic. The compromise effected between Catholicism and traditional superstitions is discussed in chapter two, 'The Magic of the Medieval Church'.

11. Utopia, p.163.

To him alone they attribute the beginnings, the growth, the increase, and the end of all things as they have perceived them. To no other do they give divine honours."¹²

This

'ontological' conception of God's existence and nature is reminiscent of More's notion of God as a perceptible, yet ultimately inscrutable, being.

Despite a degree of religious toleration in Utopia, all its citizens were expected to adhere to certain religious tenets that, significantly, were the basis of the one dominant religion which had come to surpass all others in its degree of 'reasonableness'. Yet, again, contemporary Europe would have been conversant with such doctrines. The first was that,

"The soul is immortal and by the goodness of God born for happiness."¹³

Secondly, the Utopian recognized that,

"After this life rewards are appointed for our virtues and good deeds, punishment for our crimes."¹⁴

And thirdly, the

contemporary appreciation of divine providence was reflected in the Utopian notion that

"there is one supreme being, to whom are due both the creation and providential government of the whole world."¹⁵

To

subscribe to all these precepts was deemed in Utopia to be prerequisite to human dignity.¹⁶ Further, such religious outlooks

12. ibid., p.217.

13. ibid., pp.161-163. On this issue, More was at his most distant from the Augustinian concept of election, which was soon to be developed by the Protestant Reformers.

14. ibid., p.163.

15. ibid., p.217.

16. ibid., p.221.

were regarded as necessary moral sanctions to sustain public
¹⁷ laws. It is worth recalling that in the Middle Ages the
 individual's uncertainty of his fate at judgement was valued
 because it represented an important sanction upon daily
¹⁸ conduct.

In Utopia More was not merely concerned to elucidate the
 eschatological standing of the virtuous heathen. His task was
 far more prescriptive than this view would allow. The Utopians
 clearly exceeded More's conception of the minimum requirements
 for the redemption of the virtuous heathen. In the Treatise on
the Passion More expressed the opinion that judgement would
 seem unduly harsh if individuals who were born into original
 sin, but lived out their lives ignorant of Christ and his
 message, should inevitably be damned as a consequence. He went
 on to argue that,

"it was sufficient for their saluacion to belieue those
 two pointes onelye which saynt Paule here reherseth, that is
 to wit, that there is one God, and he wyl reward them that
 seke him. And those two pointes be such, as euery man may
 attayne by natural reason,..."¹⁹

Clearly, the Utopians satisfied
 these conditions. However, it is of the utmost importance for the
 interpretation of Utopia that,

"after they had heard from us the name of Christ, His
 teaching, His character, His miracles, and the no less
 wonderful constancy of the many martyrs who blood freely
 shed had drawn so many nations far and wide into their
 fellowship, you would not believe how readily disposed they,

17. ibid., pp.221-223. The same theory was expected to apply in
 contemporary Christendom but, clearly, More was aware that divine
 law, natural law, and positive law, did not corellate in his own
 society.

18. See, H. Oberman, The Harvest of Medieval Theology, (Cambridge
 Massachusetts 1963), pp.185-248.

19. T. More, Treatise on the Passion, C.W., Vol.13, p.43.

too, were to join it, whether through the rather mysterious inspiration of God or because they thought it nearest to that belief which has widest prevalence among them. But I think that this factor, too, was of no small weight, that they had heard that His disciples' common way of life had been so pleasing to Christ and that it is still in use among the truest societies of Christians."²⁰

More's expression

of consternation at the Utopians' receptivity to Christian revelation was purely rhetorical; More described, in Utopia, a society which was, in its practices, among the truest societies of 'Christians'.

The externals of religious life were apparently a less momentous aspect of Utopian theology.²¹ There is certainly some evidence of the influence of medieval Catholicism on Utopian practices.²² However, on this issue More's position was highly speculative,²³ and one can only conclude that a certain amount of revision would be necessary to accommodate some of these practices to the introduction of Christianity. Nevertheless, such correction would not have imposed too much transitional strain.

More's account of the priesthood in Utopia is one instance of an institution which simultaneously reflected elements of Catholicism, and provided an example to the benighted standards of contemporary Europe. Hence, Utopian priests "preside over divine worship, order religious rites, and are censors of morals."²⁴

20. Utopia, pp.217-219.

21. This theme is expressed in More's translation of Giafrancesco Pico's, The Life of Pico, E.W., Vol.I, p.359.

22. J.H.Hexter, Introduction, p.xlvi.

23. J.H.Hexter, More's Utopia: The Biography of an Idea, pp.48-56, argues that More's position cannot be reconstructed from the evidence presented in 'Utopia'.

24. Utopia, p.227.

They were elected by secret ballot, were exceptionally virtuous (even by Utopian standards), and numbered only thirteen per city. All this was clearly intended to add to More's indictment of the idleness and licentiousness of many European clerics. Yet, in a number of ways, Utopian priests differed radically from their European counterparts. For instance, in Utopia there was no rule of celibacy, and priests were allowed to marry. Elderly widows were admitted to the priesthood. Most impressively, Utopian priests went to war with the intention of curtailing bloodshed. While the clergy were allowed to make recommendations where appropriate, the punishment of offenders in Utopia was the responsibility of the civil authorities. Nevertheless, the most dreaded punishment in Utopia was 'excommunication' - the exclusion of an individual from divine services. These practices concerning punishment were an obvious reflection of European procedures.

The view of asceticism advanced in Utopia is an interesting instance of the difference between, on the one hand, the pure rationalism of Utopian religion, and on the other, More's own convictions. Those Utopian ascetics who eschewed learning, a socially esteemed pleasure, were believed to have taken the principle that the rejection of an immediate pleasure could promote greater felicity in the future, (in this instance, eternal bliss) to extremes. Such Utopian ascetics pursued an

25. ibid., pp.227-231.

26. For the view that the renunciation of bodily pleasures for the practice of mortification and spiritual exercises would be conducive to a sound conscience and the prospect of eternal rewards, see, T. More, The Four Last Things, E.W., Vol. I, pp.463-464.

27. Utopia, p.225.

28. See, E.L. Surtz, op.cit., p.120.

active life and voluntarily performed the hardest labour in the hope of securing happiness after death. Thus, their 'works' involved a charitable disposition to bolster the economy and further the common good. Consequently, they provided others with additional leisure time.²⁹ More maintained the consistency of Utopian philosophy by revealing that, of the two forms of ascetics, the 'celibates', who dismissed all forms of pleasure, were regarded as the holier, while those who married and rejected pleasure only when it threatened to interfere with labour, were regarded as the saner.³⁰ Clearly, this is an instance in which the dictates of natural reason had diverged from revelation. More leaves us to suppose that the inception of Christianity in Utopia would resolve this issue by amending indigenous attitudes in favour of the dictates of revelation.

As we have already noted, in comparison to contemporary Europe, there were very few holy days in the Utopian calendar. This provision not only facilitated an increase in output, but also may have been intended as a response to the loose morality for which such events had become notorious.³¹ The primary purpose of holy days in Utopia was to enable citizens to attend religious services. Despite emphasizing a simple piety, More was obviously concerned to provide Utopia with certain external stimuli to devotion, which were often derogated by other Humanists such as Erasmus.³² Significantly, the only decorative garments ever seen in Utopia were those worn by the priesthood to divine service. More was keen to assert the mystical aspect of such

29. Utopia, pp.225-227.

30. ibid., p.227.

31. E.L.Surtz, op.cit., pp.185-186, cf., C.Hill, Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England, (London 1964), especially chapter V, 'The Uses of Sabbatarianism'.

32. See, E.L.Surtz, op.cit., chapter IX.

'vestments'.³³ Similarly, the splendidly furnished temples, and the use of petitionary prayer,³⁴ contributed to a religious aura obviously influenced by the externals of Catholicism.

Perhaps the most telling facet of religion in Utopia was the prevalent attitude to death and the prospect of eternity. We have already noted the preoccupation of More's age with these matters, usually from a decidedly apprehensive perspective. In contrast, the Utopians maintained a rudimentary outlook which was markedly different from the spirit of the age. More pointed out that,

"Almost all Utopians are absolutely certain and convinced that human bliss will be so immense that, while they lament every man's illness, they regret the death of no one but him who they see torn from life anxiously and unwillingly."³⁵

The obvious inference of this qualification is that only those who were plagued by a bad conscience would be reluctant to face their judgement, and that in Utopia, there were few such individuals. The general confident expectation of redemption was testimony to the calibre of moral life in Utopia. Indeed, the Utopians prayed to be relieved of life, and to be united with God at the earliest opportunity.³⁶ More recommended such a mode of thought as an ideal to which Christians should aspire.³⁷ Clearly, for most men, life in Utopia was the way to salvation. So it is apparent that More conceived of the institutions and philosophical principles of Utopia as a means towards the redemption of all men.

33. Utopia, p.235.

34. ibid., pp.231-237.

35. ibid., p.223. In The Life of Pico, the view is expressed that Christians should be disposed to regard death in this manner.

36. Utopia. p.237.

37. T.More, De Tristitia Christi, C.W., Vol.14, p.631.

We have already observed that much of Thomas More's thought was devoted to the problem of how fallen men might realise their salvation. It was argued in chapter four that More did not believe salvation to be entirely dependent upon faith. More contended that reason, free will, and good works, each had a significant contribution to make to the process of redemption. It has subsequently been argued that despite its emphasis on the exercise of reason, Utopian religion maintained a balance between reason and faith by retaining a number of fundamental doctrines, apprehended by reason, yet closely aligned with Christian revelation. These doctrines constituted a strong element of faith in Utopia. Further, life in Utopia was also apparently propitious for the performance of good works, particularly as Utopian communism embodied the primary virtue of charity.

It is significant that, in the finalized version, More preceded his discussion of Utopian religion by presenting, in Book I, a declamatory critique of both the internal condition of the contemporary Church, and of the general abuse of the doctrines and sacraments of the Christian faith. Thus More differentiated between an ideal of, and the contemporary practice of, Christianity. Although elements of More's ideal form of Christianity were still evident in sixteenth-century Catholicism, others, such as universal subscription to the communal way of life, were missing. Conversely, the abuses which More attributed to the contemporary Church were excluded from Utopia. It is thus apparent that More, in Utopia, insisted upon a 'Christian' way of life, as discernible by natural reason alone, because to have introduced a discussion of Christian revelation at this stage would have obscured the issue. The very substance of the

existing Utopian institutions and lifestyle meant that, on being introduced to Christianity, the Utopians would not be tempted to accommodate the rigorous demands of the faith to their own standards, as contemporary Europeans did. Rather, in Utopia the situation was inverted. Utopian ethical standards were of such quality that, with very little dislocation, they could accommodate the requirements of Christianity. Only by initially excluding Christian revelation could More press this point home. Crucially, the coming of Christianity to Utopia did not portend the demise of communism.

ii The Philosophy of Pleasure and the Ends of Life

The discovery that More had endowed Utopia with a philosophy of pleasure might, at first sight, prompt a degree of consternation. This is particularly so given that More was critical of the popular and debauched leisure-time activities of his own society. Equally, as we saw in the previous chapter, More was keenly aware of the close scrutiny men required if they were not to succumb to temptation. So it might be presumed that More was prejudiced against all forms of pleasure. However, the Utopian economy was organized in such a way that it afforded an ample and equitable distribution of leisure time. This was in accordance with More's belief that, in the fallen condition, recreation could only be justified if men had initially fulfilled their obligation to labour.³⁸ Clearly, in Utopia, citizens were constrained to comply with this condition, whereas in Tudor England, there was no such guarantee. The integration effected within the Utopian economy, whereby wants were regulated, production was satisfactory, and the demand on labour was minimized, facilitated a just and fair allotment of 'spare' time to the entire populace. More was concerned that this time should be utilized to the maximum advantage. Hence, as we shall discover, the Utopian philosophy of pleasure was a further means by which the inclinations of man's fallen nature were stifled and redirected to the good. Effectively, in Utopia, pleasure guided men towards their salvation, whereas More assumed that in contemporary Christendom it all too often sent men to their damnation. The devotion to the full and active use of leisure time which is so evident in Utopia is an expression of a

38. See, e.g., T. More, Answer to a Poisoned Book, in, Selections from the English Works, ed. P. S. and H. M. Allen, (Oxford 1924), pp. 112-113.

Christian-Humanist ideal, reflecting the decision made by More in 1504 to pursue an active as opposed to a contemplative life.

Critics of Utopia have generally agreed on what M. Fleisher has termed More's "mode of distribution of the means of pleasure"³⁹ - the equitable distribution of leisure time which More deemed necessary for the moral and intellectual development of all individuals.⁴⁰ More's analysis of the nature of pleasure is an issue of some consequence to our interpretation of Utopia. He defined the Utopian conception of pleasure as,

"every movement and state of body or mind in which, under the guidance of nature, man delights to dwell."⁴¹

It is important

to understand why More cited nature as a point of reference, because the dichotomy between 'true' and 'false' pleasures pervades Utopia. More conceived of false pleasures as produce of the perverted values of fallen men. Thus, in The Four Last Things, More argued that,

"So can our soul have no place for the good corn of spiritual pleasure as long as it is overgrown with the barren weeds of carnal delectation."⁴²

By arguing here that

spiritual pleasure constituted a higher form than the norm of "sensual and fleshly"⁴³ pleasure, More reiterated the major tenet of the Utopian philosophy of pleasure. So because he was aware that public opinion had been corrupted and consequently promoted

39. M. Fleisher, Radical Reform and Political Persuasion: The Life and Writings of St. Thomas More, (Geneva 1973), p.55.

40. See, from various perspectives, K. Kautsky, Thomas More and His Utopia, (London 1959), p.234; A. L. Morton, The English Utopia, (London 1952), p.53; E. L. Surtz, The Praise of Pleasure, (Cambridge Massachusetts 1957), p.155.

41. Utopia, p.167.

42. T. More The Four Last Things, p.462.

43. ibid., pp.461-462.

44
false values, More mistrusted popular consensus as the defining
principle of true pleasure.⁴⁵ Again, More was able to defend the
constraints upon human conduct which resulted from Utopian
institutionalism, by claiming that, because men were guided by
habit, they were unlikely to amend their misconceived notion of
pleasure.

In accordance with his conception of true pleasure, More was
anxious to assert that the abundance of leisure time in Utopia
was not to be construed as a licence for idleness.⁴⁶ Hence, much
of this time was to be devoted to intellectual pursuits; for
example, attendance at public lectures was customary.
Alternatively, in a lighter mood, communal dinners were enlivened
by music and the burning of incense because "no kind of pleasure
is forbidden, provided no harm comes of it."⁴⁷ So, in this context
also, More was critical of many European values. He described the
traditional conception of honour as a "counterfeit pleasure."⁴⁸
Conversely, in Utopia, More sanctioned the admiration of beauty,
while he disapproved of the use of cosmetics, thus distinguishing
between a true and a false pleasure.

The Utopians' conception of pleasure was central to their
overall ethical outlook. The major issue with which Utopian
ethical enquiry was concerned was the nature of happiness.⁴⁹ The
conclusion reached was that pleasure was the principal

44. See, T.I. White, 'Festivitas, Utilitas, et Opes: The Concluding Irony and Philosophical Purpose of Thomas More's Utopia', in, Quincentennial Essays on St. Thomas More, ed. M. J. Moore, (N. Carolina 1977), passim.

45. Utopia, p.167.

46. ibid. pp.127-129.

47. ibid., p.145.

48. ibid., p.169.

49. ibid., p.161.

constituent of happiness. However, this general proposition had been qualified by the assertion that happiness could be located only in those varieties of pleasure to which human nature was attracted by virtue.⁵⁰ More subsequently affirmed this opinion as his own, arguing that,

"if it be true, as it is indeed, that our sin is painful and our virtue pleasant, how much is it then a more madness to take sinful pain in this world, that shall win us eternal pain in hell, rather than pleasant virtue in this world, that shall win us eternal pleasure in heaven?"⁵¹

Clearly, the Utopian ethic was antithetical to the European habit of deriving 'pleasure' from practices to which men were enticed by their fallen nature.

More defined virtue in Utopia as living according to nature and to the dictates of reason. Thus, given Utopian religious sentiments, the ultimate form of virtue was the following of God's will.⁵² The three basic tenets of Utopian religion (the immortality of the soul, judgement in the hereafter, and the existence of divine providence⁵³), obviously imposed a strenuous sanction upon the pursuit of pleasure. So it was held that pleasure was not to be sought at a cost to one's fellow man. It is no coincidence that the laws of distribution in Utopia accorded with the belief that 'humanity', the concern for the welfare of others, was a substantial virtue.⁵⁴ Similarly, More's emphasis upon communal activities must have contributed towards the alleviation of certain tensions which might have arisen

50. ibid., p.163.

51. T. More, The Four Last Things, p.495.

52. Utopia, pp.163-165.

53. ibid., pp.161-163, 217.

54. ibid., pp.163-165.

from this provision.

The Utopians believed that a lesser pleasure should be foregone if this was likely to result in the attainment of a greater pleasure.⁵⁵ However, as yet, the Utopians questioned one Christian assumption, contending that the pursuit of virtue at a cost in terms of pain, or at the expense of pleasure, was a contradiction of the dictates of reason.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, it is significant that the pleasure to be derived from a good conscience (having served one's fellow through the performance of good works), was conceived by the Utopians as the supreme form :-

"they cling above all to mental pleasures, which they value as the first and foremost of all pleasures. Of these the principal part they hold to arise from the practice of virtues and the consciousness of a good life."⁵⁷

Thus, for

enjoying such natural pleasure, an individual might expect to be rewarded by God.

The Utopian citizens were guided towards a 'Christian' way of life by certain well-promulgated ethical principles, and in particular by More's differentiation and gradation of various forms of pleasure. For instance, the Utopian conception of true pleasures typically included music and intellectual board games such as the popular favourite 'vices versus virtues'.⁵⁸ False pleasures, as defined by the Utopians, included dicing, the delight in fine clothes, honours, jewellery, and hunting.⁵⁹ All these, of course, are peculiarly reminiscent of the preoccupations of the European nobility. In Utopia, these were concerns to which slaves,

55. ibid.

56. ibid.

57. ibid., p.175, see also, The Life of Pico, pp.365,388.

58. Utopia, p.129

59. ibid., p.167 ff.

who were deemed to be deficient in reason, were inevitably attracted. As we have seen, More condemned such occupations and concepts because they were sanctioned only by the futile consensus of fallen men. According to More, if men were left to exercise their own discretion, they would almost certainly be detrimentally influenced by their imagination⁶⁰ and defy nature, only to discover that their perverse and evil desires could not instill happiness.⁶¹

In discussing true pleasure, More provided a further subdivision. The satisfaction of the senses and ultimately the consciousness of possessing good health,⁶² although of value in their own right, were ancillary to mental pleasures "which they value as the first and foremost of all pleasures."⁶³ More regarded bodily pleasures as belonging to a lower order for the obvious reason that they were more susceptible to adulteration⁶⁴ than intellectual or spiritual pleasures. His exaltation of good health as the primary bodily pleasure is indicative of More's awareness that the body could be abused by indulgence in false and sensual pleasures. It is fair to assume that because More included the maintenance of a sound conscience alongside intelligence and the contemplation of truth, in the category of higher pleasures, he drew his principles of pleasure as much from theology as from philosophy.⁶⁵ So it was in accordance with his underlying motivation for writing Utopia that More concluded

60. ibid., p.169.

61. ibid., p.169 ff. More's views here are similar to Gerrard Winstanley's account of the Fall in which the misplaced desires of human nature also produced detrimental results, see below, pp.412-414.

62. ibid., pp.175-177.

63. ibid., p.175.

64. ibid., p.177.

65. ibid., p.161.

his consideration of Utopian philosophy in terms similar to his last words on Utopian religion, presaging his acceptance of Christian revelation :-

"This is their view of virtue and pleasure. They believe that human reason can attain no truer view, unless a heaven-sent religion inspire man with something more holy. Whether in this stand they are right or wrong, time does not permit us to examine - not is it necessary. We have taken upon ourselves only to describe their principles, and not also to defend them. But of this I am sure, that whatever you think of their ideas, there is nowhere in the world a more excellent people nor a happier commonwealth."⁶⁶

Beneath this

rather cryptic passage, it is apparent that More portrayed the Utopians as leading a 'Christian' way of life. Eventually, the evangelism of Hythlodæus's group of adventurers must have caused the Utopian lifestyle to become as perfect as any to which men could aspire.

More recognized that human nature would incline men towards the pursuit of pleasure. Therefore, it became imperative for him to argue that this need not be at the expense of the individual's salvation. It should already be apparent that within the Utopian philosophy of pleasure, the relationship between Epicurianism and Stoicism is interesting and complex. Indeed, R.P. Adams has concluded that the Utopians possessed "a Stoic ethic and an Epicurean psychology."⁶⁷ Certain aspects of Epicureanism are clearly discernible in Utopia. For instance, the principles that pleasure is the highest good, that it is a derivative of either bodily health or the tranquillity of the soul, and that superficial pleasures which are prejudicial to the achievement of higher

66. ibid., p.179.

67. R.P. Adams, The Better Part of Valour, (Washington 1962), p.134, see also, pp.134-143, and, 'The Philosophic Unity of More's Utopia' Utopia, Studies in Philology, Vol. XXXV111 (1941), pp.45-65.

forms of pleasure should be forfeited were all integral to the Utopian philosophy of pleasure. However, the Utopians did not follow Epicurus in eliminating the belief in an eventual supernatural judgement from their philosophy. Clearly, such a conviction places certain constraints upon earthly conduct and the unrestrained pursuit of pleasure. On the other hand, it is evident that the Utopians offset their Epicureanism by placing considerable emphasis upon the Stoical elevation of virtue. By this 'reconciliation' of two seemingly contradictory philosophies, the Utopians were able to enjoy pleasure and behave virtuously at one and the same time.⁶⁸

It is important to note that More admired the proximity of Stoic philosophy to the Christian ethic.⁶⁹ Yet, at the same time, Utopia is an example of the Humanists' 'rehabilitation' of Epicurus. Thus, subject to revision according to the three religious tenets of Utopia, Epicureanism emerged not as a philosophy of sensualism, but as a set of principles defining the form of pleasure which was accessible only through a good conscience.⁷⁰ Surtz agrees with this conclusion, and with the fact that, in practice, the achievement of virtue represented the highest form of pleasure in Utopia.⁷¹ Nevertheless, Surtz's Catholic predispositions have caused him to advance an analysis of Utopian philosophy which is contrary to our own.

In his loyalty to the traditional Catholic interpretation of

68. R. J. Schoeck, The Achievement of Thomas More, (Victoria, B.C. 1976), p.49, see also, R. P. Adams, op.cit., p.63, M. Fleisher, op.cit., p.57.

69. R. P. Adams, The Better Part Of Valour, p.140.

70. E. L. Surtz, 'Epicurus in Utopia', Journal of English Literary History, Vol. XVI (1949), pp.89-103, especially at pp.93-103.

71. E. L. Surtz, 'The Defence of Pleasure in More's Utopia', Studies in Philology, Vol. XLVI (1949), pp.99-112, at p.109.

Utopia, Surtz has argued that More intended Utopian philosophy to provoke contemporary Christians into serious thought on the nature of pleasure.⁷² However, in this thesis we have shown that More attempted something even more substantial and prescriptive. Surtz clearly regarded Utopia as a society in which communism and natural reason both supported hedonism.⁷³ Hence Surtz argued that More defined pleasure comprehensively, by including within the concept anything from physical gratification to the contemplation of God.⁷⁴ Further, Surtz has inclined to the conclusion that the Utopians were predisposed to bodily pleasures. He has also concluded that the Utopians practised virtue only in order to attain pleasure, and consequently that they regarded virtue as both subsidiary and ancillary to pleasure. So while Surtz has presented a case for the reconciliation of Epicureanism and Stoicism in Utopia, it is clear that he has struck the balance incorrectly. Perhaps understandably, given his intellectual origins, Surtz has allowed unappeased Epicureanism to prejudice his analysis. Thus he has concluded that More coloured the argument so that pleasure was the sole end of life in Utopia. Surtz's insistence on a gradation of virtue and pleasure in Utopian philosophy is some distance from our contention that More regarded them as synonymous.

The acceptance of Surtz's case involves the corollary, (and surely this was his intention), that certain ends to which pleasure appears to have been a means in Utopia, are negated, because pleasure itself was the predominant end of life in More's

72. ibid., p.105,112.

73. E.L.Surtz, The Praise of Pleasure, p.152.

74. E.L.Surtz, 'The Defence of Pleasure', op.cit., pp.102-103, 108-109.

fictitious commonwealth. However, Surtz himself has pointed out that the exclusion of false pleasures, such as those to be discovered in material gratification, contributed to a reduction⁷⁵ in the demand upon productivity and manual labour in Utopia. But this argument can be elaborated. As we saw in chapter five, the relationship between goods and scarcity in Utopia was profoundly affected by the omission of conspicuous consumption. This obviously contributed to the resolution of the scarcity factor. Similarly, the 'true' pleasures preferred by Utopians both facilitated the operation of the communist economy by reducing demand, and were a product of communism which effected an institutional check upon the expression of unnatural wants. Equally, we have noted in this chapter that communism provided an equitable distribution of leisure time in Utopia. Such time was, in turn, devoted to intellectual and communal activities which stimulated the recognition of the nature of 'true' pleasure.

Our analysis of Utopia has revealed that More's social philosophy was more consistent with his theology than has previously been assumed. This impression is confirmed by reviewing the relationship between the philosophy of pleasure, the Utopian practice of communism, and More's ultimate purpose. This purpose was to provide an institutional basis for the salvation of man by neutralizing the sinful elements of fallen human nature. Communism ultimately contributed to man's salvation in two ways. Firstly, communism made a direct contribution to the process of redemption by frustrating the sinfulness More associated with the desire for private property. Secondly, communism was also an indirect means towards the

75. E.L.Surtz, The Praise of Pleasure, p.62.

deliverance of the individual from sin because it facilitated an equitable distribution of leisure time. This indirect contribution was enhanced because communism allowed for the performance of good works. Further, free time in Utopia was devoted to intellectual activities and to the contemplation of truth and virtue. Effectively, communism made a sound conscience available to all. In Utopia the opportunities and facilities for salvation were equally distributed by institutional means.

More's belief that a good conscience derived from a virtuous active life as well as from a contemplative one ⁷⁶ has a considerable bearing upon the internal coherence of Utopia. More argued that an individual could derive satisfaction, and presumably a sound conscience, from the scrupulous discharge of his duties. He thus reconciled work and labour to the principle of pleasure. This obviously augured well for the vitality of the Utopian economy. ⁷⁷ But further, the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa* were the condition of all Utopian citizens. As we have seen, the Utopians conceived of the stimulation of their reasoning faculties as a higher form of pleasure. Yet reason was also the basis of Utopian religion. So because 'pleasure as reasoning' was equitably distributed, the contemplative life was effectively extended to the whole of Utopian society. In Utopia, spiritual contemplation was not the prerogative of a privileged minority who had withdrawn from the world as it was in contemporary Christendom. The combination of works and contemplation which permeated life in Utopia was a consequence of More's conception of the human predicament. It is apparent

76. See, e.g., M. Fleisher, op.cit., pp.57-58.

77. There is some analogy here to the subsequent Protestant Ethic. This is explained in, C.Hill, op.cit., chapter 4, 'The Industrious Sort of People'.

that in Utopia, More resolved certain dilemmas relating to the salvation of man. Although a degree of 'utilitarianism'⁷⁸ is evident in Utopia, More's religious philosophy, which maintained that true pleasure could be objectively defined and discerned by right reason, provided a restraint upon hedonism. This returns us to the conclusion that men who were subject to both revelation and the reason-orientated institutions outlined in Utopia would lead a truly Christian way of life.

78. See, F. Seebohm, The Oxford Reformers, (London 1867), p.222, and passim; H. Taylor, 'Sir Thomas More and the Politics of Today', Fortnightly Review, Vol. XLIV (1870), pp.125-137.

iii Reason, Revelation, and the Incongruities of "Utopia"

Utopia contains a number of problem areas or spheres of discussion in which the tenets of Utopian religion and philosophy are carried to conclusions which seem extreme in their institutional consequences. To certain commentators, these themes have appeared almost inexplicable in the light of More's 'acknowledged' position. In particular, Surtz, upholding the Catholic apology, has consistently attempted to render such controversies harmless by insisting upon the disparity between the reason-orientated religion of Utopia and Christian revelation. Further, Surtz has vehemently maintained that More's silence in not condemning these controversial proposals should not be misinterpreted as an indication of his approbation for such ideas.⁷⁹ The problems we are about to analyse are of considerable depth, and it has to be recognized that only a good deal of diligent research in the future can yield a fully convincing evaluation of each instance, if indeed this is at all possible. However, to presume, as Surtz has done, that a unilateral explanation (that More intended to display the absurdity of an unrestrained application of reason) exists to account for all these instances, may be less satisfactory than considering each independently.

More was not wholly convinced of the competence of human reason in determining morally defensible actions and procedures. His disparaging view of human nature clearly emphasized More's awareness of the fallibility of man's reason. More took the opportunity in Utopia to examine both the potential and the limitations of human reason. In the controversial areas we are

79. E.L. Surtz, The Praise of Wisdom, chapter 1, especially p.18, and above, pp.148-152.

about to discuss, More highlighted the fine distinction he believed to exist between the independent exercise of reason which could be shown to comply with revelation, and the seemingly logical conclusions of reasoning which, on examination, went beyond the bounds of Christian teaching. So in this section, we shall divide the subject matter into issues which can be explained by reference to both reason and revelation, and those which do not comply with revelation. The former will be considered first.

Possibly the most controversial problem area in Utopia has been More's inclusion of a qualified form of religious toleration.⁸⁰ Several different religions existed in Utopia, although one in particular, with its conception of a supreme being,⁸¹ predominated. However, no religion was tolerated unless it subscribed to the three fundamental tenets of Utopian theology. Further, the Utopians were not prepared to extend toleration so far as to countenance the vehement expression of religious opinions.⁸² Instead, they were confident that, guided by reason, truth would prevail by the strength of its own persuasiveness, as indeed it appeared to be doing successfully. Typically, 'heretics', who denied the religious principles of Utopia,⁸³ were confronted with reasoned arguments. Significantly, More contended that the lawgiver, Utopus, had originally introduced this limited degree of tolerance, not only to preserve the

80. In the secondary literature, this is often considered alongside such issues as the ordination of priests without a bishop, and the practice of cremation, see, Utopia, pp.219,223.

81. ibid., p.217.

82. ibid., p.221.

83. ibid., p.223. More apparently reacted in this manner to his son-in-law, William Roper's, flirtation with Protestantism, see, N. Harpsfield, The Life and Death of Sir Thomas Moore, ed. E.V. Hitchcock, E.E.T.S., O.S. CLXXXVI, (1932), p.87.

commonwealth from the disruptive effects of dissension and sectarianism, but also because he believed that God did not desire excessive dogmatism. In 1516, most Humanists would have agreed wholeheartedly with this conclusion.

Catholic interpreters have generally been at pains to claim that More's case for toleration in Utopia was consistent with his treatment of heretics during his period of public office.⁸⁴ Hence, according to Surtz, both the Utopians and contemporary English Catholics connected "belief in their obligatory truths with public morality and safety."⁸⁵ So, in both theory and practice, More reacted only against violent heretics.⁸⁶ Surtz further developed his case, concluding that because Catholicism is an ever-improving faith, a degree of toleration facilitates progress towards the discovery of infallible truths.⁸⁷

On this particular issue, the Catholic apology is often at its strongest. In the Dialogue Concerning Heresies, More based his defence of the prosecution and punishment of heretics on the grounds that,

"the violent cruelty first used by the heretics themselves against good catholic folk, driven good princes thereto, for preservation, not of faith only, but also of the peace among their people."⁸⁸

84. See, e.g., R.W. Chambers, Thomas More, (London 1935), pp.214-256, and, E.L.Surtz, op.cit., chapter 111.

85. ibid., p.77.

86. For an excellent example of the Catholic apology for More's treatment of heretics, see, R.Knox, 'The Charge of Religious Intolerance', in, The Fame of Blessed Thomas More, ed. R.W. Chambers, (London 1929), p.49, "If More condemned men to death for heresy, he was only administering the existing law,..."

87. E.L.Surtz, op.cit., pp.58,76. More would probably have added that the Church possessed a facility for the transmission of continuing revelation, see above, pp.206-207.

88. T.More, Dialogue Concerning Heresies, E.W., Vol.11, pp.302-305, passim. For More's exposition of the proper procedures for dealing with suspected heretics, and his reply to accusations

It is important to bear in mind that More was convinced that, in effect, heretics actively disseminated damnation. So, given the spread of Protestantism, a revision of his entire attitude between 1516 and 1529 would have been quite understandable.⁸⁹ However, despite the strength of More's alarm and revulsion at the spread of Protestantism, the consistency between the views he expressed in Utopia (before the outbreak of the Reformation), and the arguments he advanced in his polemical works, is impressive. Undoubtedly, More's position did harden, for reasons we have already examined.⁹⁰ It is clear that in 1516 More was not advocating the toleration of heresy, but was criticizing bigotry within Catholicism.⁹¹ It seems that, in a united Christendom, More sanctioned a degree of speculative disputation within the confines of basic Catholic doctrines. In due course he probably came to repent of his earlier liberalism.

The very admissibility of the Catholic analysis of More's conception of toleration is an indication of a quite fundamental inconsistency in the overall Catholic interpretation of Utopia. The determination of More's Catholic apologists to stress wherever possible the consistent themes of More's life and writings has led to a degree of 'selective reading' in the handling of Utopia. Thus one is prompted to wonder why it should be that, on the one hand, More's discussion of religious

that he had persecuted and acted cruelly against certain individuals, see, The Apology, C.W., Vol. 9, p. 117 ff., passim.

89. See, B. Byron, Loyalty in the Spirituality of St. Thomas More, (Nieuwkoop 1972), pp. 51-60.

90. See, L. Miles, 'Persecution and the Dialogue of Comfort', Journal of British Studies, Vol. V (1965), pp. 19-30, and above, pp. 190-191.

91. See, R. Pineas, Thomas More and Tudor Polemics, (Bloomington 1968), p. 118, and, T. More, 'To Martin Dorp', and, 'To a Monk', in, St. Thomas More: Selected Letters, ed. E. F. Rogers, (New Haven 1961).

toleration in Utopia is reconcilable to his own principles, while on the other hand, his discussion of Utopian religion in general, (of which toleration was an integral part), is dismissed by the Catholic school as largely incompatible with More's own doctrinal beliefs. Our own interpretation resolves the difficulty concerning the status of Utopian toleration by arguing that More was as sincere in advancing this principle as he was in his discussion of the core of Utopian religion. At the very least, it was expedient for More to bestow toleration upon Utopia to ease the adoption there of Christianity. But, crucially, for the Utopians to be so readily attracted to Christianity, it must have seemed compatible with their own religious tenets. Again, we return to the conclusion that, in Utopia, More often proved right reason and revelation to be essentially complementary.

The Utopian institution of slavery has also prompted considerable controversy. In Utopia slavery was the lot of captured prisoners of war and of those Utopian citizens found guilty of heinous crimes. It is important to note that the children of bondsmen were not enslaved, nor were slaves purchased by the state. ⁹² More did not intend slavery as an institution to sustain the citizens of the state in a life of leisure. Rather, individuals were only enslaved if they deliberately opposed the Utopian way of life. To do so was deemed an attitude of extreme unreasonableness. Most consequentially, slaves were deprived of that valued institution - leisure time. Thus slaves were continually pressed to manual labour, a circumstance which caused More to wryly compare their condition to that of the

92. Utopia, p.185.

contemporary English labourer. With even greater irony, More
 commented that many inhabitants of other countries who might
 otherwise have endured a life of unremitting drudgery, had
 voluntarily applied to become slaves in Utopia. While
 rebellious slaves were accounted as untameable beasts and were
 summarily put to death, More believed hard labour to possess
 certain rehabilitative qualities. Consequently, a repentant slave
 who was considered to have recovered sufficient reason might be
 freed upon the consent of the community. As we shall see,
 bondage was a form of punishment advocated by Winstanley.

Several opinions have been advanced which might account for
 More's approval of this form of slavery. In a book which
 considers the whole ambit of problem areas in Utopia, Surtz has
 advanced his unilateral solution of 'paganism' to explain
 slavery. However, Hexter has come nearer to the truth, arguing
 that More conceived of slavery primarily as a form of penal
 servitude, because he was unable to envisage the total amelioration
 of evil amongst men, even in Utopia. Although he has only been
 marginally concerned with Utopia, D.B. Davis has also thrown some
 light on More's discussion of slavery. Davis has argued that,
 because slavery was identified with original sin, and was
 regarded by Aquinas, amongst others, as a consequence of the Fall,

93. This is not entirely consistent with More's often disparaging
 appraisal of labour and productivity in Tudor England. However,
 at this juncture, More seems to exaggerate his case in order to
 reiterate his earlier critique of the inequitable distribution
 of work and labour in contemporary society.

94. Utopia, p.185.

95. ibid., pp.191-193. M.Fleisher, op.cit., p.23, argues that this
 is an instance of the Utopian application of the principle of
 equity.

96. E.L.Surtz, op.cit., p.268.

97. J.H.Hexter, More's Utopia: The Biography of an Idea, p.69.

98. See, T.Aquinas, Summa Theologicæ, Prima Pars, Qu.96, Art.4.

it was fitting that More should adopt the institution as a suitable form of ostracism for those individuals who had been found guilty of atrocious crimes.⁹⁹

According to S. Avineri, the analysis of war advanced by More in Utopia constitutes,

"one of the most detailed and abhorring (sic) expositions ever to be written in a tract on political philosophy about the technique of war, and prime facie the chapter seems to be worthy of a Machiavelli, if not a Treitschke".¹⁰⁰

Avineri has contended that such 'realpolitik' can be explained by More's desire to protect and secure the integrity of his ideal (totalitarian) state. J. Steintrager has forwarded a similar case, arguing that, because communism had made Utopia such a prosperous prize, the islanders had to be ready to repulse the onslaughts of their ambitious neighbours.¹⁰¹ However, both Avineri and Steintrager have disregarded the important consideration that More's championship of the unity of Christendom surely outweighed¹⁰² any assertion of the spirit of nationalism.

An alternative explanation has been rendered by Surtz who has, predictably, argued that More proposed the concept of the just war as a moral position befitting good pagans, rather than as a serious recommendation for the practice of contemporary

99. D.B. Davis, The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture, (New York 1966), pp. 91-107.

100. S. Avineri, 'War and Slavery in More's Utopia', International Review of Social History, Vol. VII (1962), pp. 260-290, at p. 261. Avineri also discusses the German 'power interpretation' advanced by H. Oncken, M. Freund, O. Bendemann, and G. Ritter. During the inter-war years, these critics developed the theme that More had been an early apologist for English imperialism, see, pp. 271-278.

101. J. Steintrager, 'Plato and More's Utopia', Social Research, Vol. 36 (1969), pp. 357-372, at pp. 361-362, 372.

102. See, P.A. Sawada, 'Laus Potentiae or the Praise of Realpolitik?: Hermann Oncken and More's Utopia', Moreana, Vol. 15-16 (1967), pp. 145-164, at pp. 153-155.

international relations. ¹⁰³ Hence Surtz has concluded that

"If they had been fortunate enough to have had revelation as a negative norm in their moral philosophy, the error and wickedness of their methods would have become apparent to them."¹⁰⁴.

Nevertheless, this solution leaves several questions unanswered. There is the problem of why, despite the deprecation of chivalry and martial practices by contemporary Humanists, More did not specifically condemn Utopian conduct. Similarly, Surtz has failed to resolve the dilemma as to why, after his scathing commentary upon contemporary warmongering in Book I, More should respond, in Book II, with an equally 'repugnant' ethic.

The case which More attributed to the Utopians is fairly clear.

The Utopians loath war. ¹⁰⁵ Fortunately, because they possess almost impregnable natural defences, they are not required to inconvenience themselves with the provision of a standing ¹⁰⁶ army. Their cities (unlike those of Renaissance Italy), have ¹⁰⁷ no pretensions to territorial expansion. Therefore, when necessity calls, the Utopians are forced to rely upon a citizen militia composed of both sexes. Even on the battlefield, ¹⁰⁸ patriarchalism is an inspiration. More stated explicitly that the Utopians are only prepared to go to war for certain specific reasons. These include, self-defence, the defence of the territory of a friendly neighbour from an aggressor, the emancipation of a foreign realm from the yoke of tyranny, and

103. E.L.Surtz, op.cit., pp.293,302.

104. E.L.Surtz, 'Interpretations of Utopia', Catholic Historical Review, Vol.XXXVlll (1952), pp.156-174, at p.167.

105. Utopia, p.199.

106. ibid., p.111.

107. ibid., p.113.

108. ibid., pp.201,209-211.

finally, the interests of Utopian colonization. While they are prepared to fight to avenge an injury to the person of a Utopian citizen, they are not prepared to do so to recover property. Thus they maintain the principle that life is to be cherished above material possessions. However, the Utopians do go to war to rectify the pecuniary losses of allied merchants. In such cases, individual private interests have been damaged and can not be communally borne, as they would for Utopians.¹⁰⁹

An interesting aspect of Utopian foreign policy is the question of colonial settlement. More had to ensure that Utopia remained a stable and static society in every sense. This included the notion of an optimal size for the population of the island. To regulate the population of the homeland, it was occasionally necessary for numbers of Utopians to emigrate and colonize uncultivated and unoccupied tracts of land in foreign parts.¹¹⁰ It was usually the case that this benefited the Utopians and natives alike. If they were resisted the Utopians believed themselves justified in resorting to forcible conquest. More contended that this was a legitimate response because the Utopians were acting quite reasonably and sought only to secure the subsistence of men. It will become apparent that there are certain parallels here to Winstanley's arguments for the cultivation of the wastes and commons in England. Both More and Winstanley resorted to a form of natural law argument by contending that the reclamation and cultivation of unoccupied lands may be justified on the grounds that, rather than remaining idle, land ought, where necessary, to be used to support a

109. ibid., pp.201-203,207.

110. ibid., p.137.

111
population.

It seems from the foregoing discussion that More introduced into Utopia an examination of certain moral contradictions inherent in the concept of the just war. Again, this involved a consideration of the relative standing of reason and revelation. Clearly, on the one hand, revelation countenanced no form of warfare between Christians, while on the other hand, reason provided a correct and morally defensible response to Christian aggressors who ignored the dictates of divine law as expressed in revelation. Thus, war could only be justified if it was intended to secure a good, or to avoid an evil.¹¹² However, the general feeling among Humanists was that this doctrine had been abused and diluted to excuse the aggrandizement of European princes.¹¹³ This is the point which More sought to make by commenting that the Utopians did not ratify alliances with other nations because, despite their holy sanction, treaties retained little credence in in contemporary world politics.¹¹⁴ Thus, on this matter, More was left to attempt the reconciliation, ultimately unsuccessfully, of two moral categories. Firstly, the moral absolute, that in an ideal world, wars between Christians would be unheard of. Secondly, a form of resigned pragmatism in which More accepted that in the international interaction of

111. See, T. Aquinas, Summa Theologicæ, Secunda Secundæ, Qu. 66, Arts. 1, 2, 7, and in, Aquinas: Selected Political Writings, ed. A.P. d'Entrèves, (Oxford 1959), pp. 167-171. Cf., J. Locke, Two Treatises of Government, ed. P. Laslett, (Cambridge 1960), Bk. II: 36, pp. 334-335.

112. See, M. Ratiere, 'More's Utopia and the City of God', Studies in the Renaissance, Vol. 20 (1973), pp. 144-168, at pp. 159-160. Ratiere argues that More followed Augustine on this matter. Cf., T. Aquinas, Summa Theologicæ, Secunda Secundæ, Qu. 40, and in, Aquinas: Selected Political Writings, pp. 159-161, Aquinas cites Augustine.

113. This theme is developed by R.P. Adams, The Better Part of Valour.

114. Utopia, pp. 197-199.

fallen men, wars were probably inevitable. In such a situation, the precepts of the just war should always apply.

If More did bear in mind the moral dilemmas pertaining to the notion of the just war when he wrote Utopia, it is not surprising to discover that the Utopians'

"one and only object in war is to secure that which, had it been obtained beforehand, would have prevented the declaration of war."¹¹⁵

Hence on the twin counts of justice and inconvenience, the Utopians exacted reparations from their vanquished foes.¹¹⁶ Indicatively, they aspired to victories secured with the minimum of bloodshed, not only on their own part, but also on behalf of the often innocent citizens of the enemy.¹¹⁷ To this end the Utopians were prepared to hire mercenaries, because they maintained that the expenditure of bullion was immaterial in comparison to sustaining casualties amongst their own people. Similarly, they regularly subverted the enemy cause by offering bribes or rewards for the death, or preferably the apprehension of the enemy ruler. Also in the attempt to precipitate a hasty conclusion to hostilities, they would encourage pretenders in the enemy realm.¹¹⁸ Obviously, if these tactics are considered in the light of an absolute standard, they are morally reprehensible. But on the other hand, if they are considered according to the more pragmatic doctrine of the just war, then such practices are defensible on the grounds that they were at least intended to achieve the ends for which wars might be declared, as quickly as possible, and with

115. ibid., p.203.

116. ibid., p.215.

117. ibid., p.203.

118. ibid., pp.149-151, 203-205, 207.

the minimum of suffering to innocent participants. More would obviously have been uneasy about such recommendations, but the very fact that he let them pass without reproof is perhaps indicative of his essentially pessimistic view of the human condition.

Presumably, in his consideration of foreign policy More assumed that the malevolence of fallen human nature would be given freer expression outside Utopia than in. So it was a poignant commentary upon the human condition that all the machinations of Utopian foreign policy were made possible by the unrestrained sinfulness of human nature in the outside world. The supposition that international relations would be punctuated by warfare because human nature was neither subdued nor guided towards the good, was entirely typical of More. Such a contention would involve the corollary that war could be eradicated only if all nations accepted the internal institutional arrangements of Utopia. So More contributed to the Humanist debate on warfare most significantly by prescribing in Utopia the means of neutralizing the initial evil inclinations which led men to
 119
 war.

The view that More had driven the logic of natural reason
 120
 beyond the bounds of revelation is quite credible with respect to Utopian institutions and practices such as euthenasia and divorce. However, it is inadmissible to construe the entire tone of the Utopian discourse from these, and other similar instances, such as clerical marriage, women in the priesthood, and cremation. In the case of euthanasia, More asserted that, while in the

119. See, A.B. Ferguson, The Articulate Citizen and the English Renaissance, (Durham, N.C. 1965), pp.212-213.

120. See, e.g., E.L. Surtz, The Praise of Wisdom, p.91.

circumstance of incurable and agonizing diseases, the Utopian priesthood would condone the precipitation of the termination of life, Utopian society still regarded suicide with abhorrence.¹²¹ This attitude seems to be consistent with the Utopian philosophy of pleasure. Euthanasia was only countenanced for individuals who could no longer enjoy life. Nevertheless, it must be presumed that, with the spread of Christianity, the Utopians would abandon this practice.

The inclusion of a discussion of divorce in Utopia poses similar ethical problems,¹²² particularly in view of the fact that some years later More had such obvious qualms over Henry VIII's divorce of Catherine of Aragon. This incongruity can be explained, in part, by More's evaluation of the theory of marital love at an early stage in its development.¹²³ Equally, that More cited adultery as one reason for the permissibility of divorce in Utopia, is indicative of his disapproval of the double standard of sexual morality. In Utopia, only the innocent party was allowed to remarry. The disparity between reason and revelation on this issue does account for the distinction between More's theoretical speculation and practical consideration of this issue. Had More applied Utopian reasoning to 'The King's Great Matter', the decision as to whether a divorce should take place would have been left to Catherine of Aragon - the innocent party.

If, in dealing with these controversial areas of life in Utopia, we feel uncomfortable, this is precisely what More intended. The

121. Utopia, p.187.

122. ibid., pp.189-191.

123. Cf., the fully-fledged position of John Milton, The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce, Prose Works, Vol.11.

reader of Utopia is likely to be unnerved by More's ability and tendency to abstract himself from the human condition, so far as that is possible. Thus he was aware that in a predicament of both physical and spiritual peril, mankind appeared frail. Given More's views on the determination of conduct, and his appreciation that the institutional environment profoundly influenced man's spiritual condition, his belief that human reason was subject to error assumes even greater importance. In Utopia More attempted to establish two premises. The first was that right reason, exercised with reference to revelation, could ascertain more propitious institutional means of fulfilling human potential. The second was that man should never presume that his own faculties were adequate enough to meet the demands of his predicament.

iv Towards the Utopian Worldview

The prevalent intellectual climate in Utopia was a reflection of both More's own worldview and his purpose in writing Utopia; the latter being a consequence of the former. For instance, More's discussion of education epitomized the task he had set himself. As we saw in the previous chapter, More proclaimed not only the utility of education because it contributed towards an improvement in men's conduct, but also because intellectual activities were recommended in Utopia as a higher pleasure.¹²⁴ The popularity of intellectual activity amongst the Utopians was in direct contrast to a large sector of the European elite,¹²⁵ whose disdain for literary education was still overt. That education was both a major pastime and a moral good explains More's insistence that both Utopian men and women were to actively partake of it. In this instance of sexual equality, Winstanley was at variance with More.

In contrast to many of More's contemporaries, the Utopians were endowed with an attitude to education reminiscent of the outlook of Erasmus and Colet.¹²⁶ Thus they proved receptive to that great Humanist programme, the learning of Greek.¹²⁷ However, More was forced to accept that the cerebral gifts of individuals would vary. So within the division of labour, he provided the opportunity for those who were incapable of strenuous intellectual exertion to occupy themselves, and serve the community, by performing extra manual labour. We have already

124. Utopia, p.181.

125. See, e.g., E.L.Surtz, The Praise of Pleasure, chapter VIII, especially p.80.

126. F.Caspari, Humanism and the Social Order in England, (New York 1968), p.119.

127. See, E.L.Surtz, 'Thomas More and the Great Books', Philological Quarterly, Vol. XXXI (1953), pp.43-57, at p.51. For More's advocacy of Greek as a subject, see, 'To Martin Dorp', and, 'To the University of Oxford', in, St. Thomas More: Selected Letters.

noted that the intellectual elite were granted perpetual freedom from manual labour so that they could contribute to the common good by constituting the governing class.¹²⁸ Hence, in the island of Utopia a dialogue on the sagacity of accepting public office, such as that contained in Book I of Utopia, would have been redundant. There, intellectuals and Christian-Humanists, such as More, could have taken office without any qualms.

More's analysis of science and technology in Utopia was underpinned by a series of intellectual presuppositions which provide an interesting comparison to Winstanley's evaluation of the same themes in The Law of Freedom. More believed that the Fall and its consequences had placed a severe restriction upon the degree to which the human condition could be amended. This, in turn, profoundly affected More's conception of progress. For More to have believed in an untrammelled degree of scientific advance, which might have ameliorated mankind's predicament, would have required him to abandon the basic tenets of his worldview. One crucial difference between More and Winstanley is that the Utopians were bereft of an aggressively experimental attitude towards the predicament, such as that evinced in Winstanley's true commonwealth. In essence, Winstanley's conception of progress exceeded anything More could possibly have contemplated.

Although More stated that the end of technology in Utopia¹²⁹ was to "promote the advantage and convenience of life," the Utopian attitude to scientific advance evinced a ready acceptance of innovations rather than a rigorous endeavour to discover new technology. So they were grateful to be

128. Utopia, pp.129-133.

129. ibid., p.183.

introduced to the printing press which Hythlodæus had taken
 on his journey.¹³⁰ Similarly, More appears to have questioned
 the notion of forbidden knowledge in pointing out that the
 Utopians "think that the investigation of nature, with the
 praise arising from it, is an act of worship acceptable to
 God."¹³¹ However, More also spoke of the investigation of nature
 as a source of pleasure,¹³² in a manner which suggests a non-
 progressive, almost dilettanteish approach to science.

This impression is confirmed by More's condemnation of "that
 infamous and deceitful divination by the stars"¹³³ - astrology.
 Elsewhere, in speaking of "false astrologer and devynatrice,"¹³⁴
 More had pressed the view that man's predicament was so fraught
 with perilous temptation and the prospect of an inevitable
 death, that any attempt to prophesy the future was utterly futile.
 Instead, More advised men to look to the more immediate problem
 of the condition of their soul. All this may seem rather
 inconsequential, yet it must be understood that astrology was
 an activity which attempted to counter man's sense of
 helplessness in the face of his own predicament. In a rather
 absurd distortion of logic, contemporaries often presumed that
 by divining the future, any necessary corrective or evasive
 action could be taken to amend the shape of things to come.

130. It is interesting that with regard to such a literate society, which lacked the facility for printing, More makes no mention of scribes. This suggests that in Utopia ideas were transmitted almost entirely by the medium of communal lectures, as was the custom in European universities. As yet, books were scarce, and private study a rare luxury. The emphasis on group study is typical of More's promotion of communal activities. It may also reflect his suspicion of the private study of the dominant text of Christendom - the Bible.

131. Utopia, p.225.

132. ibid., p.183.

133. ibid., p.161.

134. T. More, 'A ruful lamentacion', (c.1503), E.W., Vol.1, p.337.

This outlook enjoyed widespread support in the early-modern
 135
 period. It is also significant that astrological
 investigations prompted the ancillary astronomical observations
 and mathematical techniques which contributed to the discovery
 136
 of the new cosmology. This in turn required a considerable
 revision of the worldview, and fostered substantial scientific
 progress. Clearly, More had unwittingly closed the door to all
 of this. That he eschewed astrology indicates that he was
 resigned to the impossibility of any any dramatic improvement
 in mankind's earthly circumstances.

Surtz has argued that in Utopia, More remonstrated with his
 contemporaries for the extension of natural philosophy in
 137
 Christendom. However, an analysis of the terms More employed
 in Utopia suggests, to the contrary, that, in keeping with the
 dominant worldview of his time, More conceived of natural
 philosophy as the means to progress of a strictly limited form.
 More believed that, ultimately, man's own fallen condition would
 prohibit any substantial improvement of his predicament, and
 that whatever limited progress he could effect would be
 achieved by institutional rather than by scientific means. More's
 worldview was very much a consequence of his diminution of
 worldly affairs. By concentrating on man's spiritual redemption
 More propounded a philosophy of resignation which conceived of
 man's earthly circumstances as an essentially static condition.

135. See, K.V. Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic, chapters, 10-12; B.S. Capp, Astrology and the Popular Press, (London 1979).

136. See, e.g., T.S. Kuhn, The Copernican Revolution, (Cambridge Massachusetts 1957, 1977 edition), pp. 93-94.

137. E.L. Surtz, 'Thomas More and the Great Books', op.cit., pp. 54-55.

PART THREE GERRARD WINSTANLEY

CHAPTER SEVEN : INTERPRETATIONS OF GERRARD WINSTANLEY'S IDEAS:A CRITIQUE

Gerrard Winstanley's writings have attracted increasing attention as the twentieth century has progressed. Although it would be rash to claim that Winstanley's social philosophy is of a comparable calibre to that of his more noted seventeenth-century contemporaries, those commentators who have afforded his works detailed consideration have generally been impressed by the depth of his response to the social questions of the day. There now exists a mature debate over the significance and meaning of Winstanley's numerous pamphlets. This debate has an historical aspect, particularly in an ongoing contest between extremes of opinion concerning the question of whether Winstanley ought to be represented primarily as a secular or as a religious radical. This chapter has two related purposes. Firstly it is important to indicate the important issues facing the analyst of Winstanley's works. These questions are suggested not only by Winstanley's own writings, but also by the predisposition of various commentators. The second function of the chapter is to catalogue the state of opinion in the secondary literature on the meaning of Winstanley's texts. Only by initially considering the relative success of various approaches can we ultimately establish the merits of our own interpretation. Much of the debate with which we shall be concerned has centred upon points of considerable detail. Inevitably therefore, any comprehensive consideration of these problems must be held over to subsequent chapters. At this stage we can only anticipate the direction of the argument to follow.

Several general themes have dominated the discussion of

Winstanley's social philosophy. For instance, considerable attention has been devoted to the analysis of Winstanley's religious theories. This exercise has generally involved some attempt to evaluate the impact of theology upon other aspects of Winstanley's thought and has often been undertaken in conjunction with a consideration of the relationship between the spiritual and the secular aspects of his ideas. Most commentators have also recognized that Winstanley's writings reveal a marked evolutionary facet. The extent of the revision of Winstanley's ideas, and the direction of his intellectual development, has proved a substantial point of argument. Disagreement between those scholars seeking to establish a particular account of the trend of Winstanley's thought has focused upon the significance of Winstanley's political activism as expressed in his founding of the Digger colony, and the appraisal of his final work, the utopian The Law of Freedom.

The various attitudes assumed by commentators with respect to these aspects of Winstanley's thought, and the often quite heated disputes characteristic of the secondary literature, suggest that four basic schools of opinion have emerged since scholars first took an interest in Winstanley.¹ These 'schools' will form the basis of our analysis of the secondary literature. They are, firstly, the 'millenarian'; this claims that not only was Winstanley a religious radical, but also that his thought was inspired and dominated by the conviction that the millennium was imminent. In the second school we shall consider interpretations which focus upon Winstanley's theological

1. Not all critics have adopted a partisan attitude. J.C. Davis has made a particularly valuable contribution without doing so, see, 'Gerrard Winstanley and the Restoration of True Magistracy', P.&P., No. 70 (1977), pp. 76-93.

concerns, but which do not stress the priority of his millenarianism. Instead these analyses attempt to relate the broader range of Winstanley's theological interests to other aspects of his thought, particularly his consideration of ethical and social problems. Thirdly, we shall discuss the case forwarded by P. Zagorin, that Winstanley's ideas proceeded from mystical theology to a form of rationalism similar to that discernible in much Enlightenment thought. Fourthly and finally, we shall analyse various accounts assignable to the largest of our schools, that which regards Winstanley as a theorist who anticipated the contents and direction of much subsequent socialist thought.

During the course of this chapter we shall discover that the temptation almost to impute notions to Winstanley, in order to locate him in some developing trend, has often proved overwhelming. It has not gone unnoticed that Winstanley's pamphleteering career coincided with a particularly stimulating, often unsettled, and fluid period in the history of ideas. The most acute danger of assuming that Winstanley's ideas can be understood by reference to some form of incipient intellectual context is the misapprehension of that 'context'. Thus it has proved tempting to claim, whatever the textual evidence might be to the contrary, that Winstanley perceived man and society in a particular manner, often identifiable as in some sense 'modern'. Unfortunately, Winstanley's works have been susceptible to interpretations which impose upon him intellectual alignments which lay in the future. This appears to be what Judith Shklar complained of when she referred to 'ideology hunting', noting that,

"As for poor Winstanley and his little band of Diggers,

they have been forced to play the English Müntzer in Marxian historiography in search of precursors and paradigms"²

Although they have been the major culprits, Marxist commentators have not been unique in this offence. The response to left-wing accounts of Winstanley's thought has occasionally been so reactionary as to overemphasize his adherence to certain aspects of contemporary ideas, especially millenarianism. We shall now proceed to examine the four differing approaches to Winstanley's ideas.

2. J. Shklar, 'The Political Theory of Utopia: From Melancholy to Nostalgia', Daedalus, Vol. 94 (1965), pp. 367-380, at p. 373.

i Winstanley the Millenarian

W.S.Hudson was the first commentator to argue that Winstanley maintained a consistently millenarian position. In doing so Hudson remarked that,

"Except for the peculiarity of 'digging', there is little in Winstanley's basic philosophy to distinguish him from other religious radicals produced by the Puritan revolution..."³

In part, Hudson was motivated by a desire to redress the balance of Winstanley studies because of the impression created by the Marxist analyses of Petegorsky and the young Hill.⁴ So Hudson insisted that Winstanley writings were similar to Quaker publications, and that he was in "complete agreement"⁵ with George Fox. Similarly, Hudson contended that the Diggers, the Fifth Monarchists, and the Baptists, were "millenarians all".⁶ In an unconvincing attempt to defuse the readily apparent social radicalism of Winstanley's works, Hudson summarized the crux of his interpretation thus :-

"The Diggers represented a nonpolitical variation of this general eschatological expectation, developing simultaneously with the more widespread Fifth Monarchy movement."⁷

Hudson's failure to recognize the transition apparent within Winstanley's writings led to his insistence that Winstanley consistently adhered to a "framework of a mystical

3. W.S.Hudson, 'The Economic and Social Thought of Gerrard Winstanley: Was He a Seventeenth-Century Marxist?', J.M.H., Vol.XVII (1946), pp.1-21, at p.2.

4. ibid., pp.2-5.

5. W.S.Hudson, 'Gerrard Winstanley and the Early Quakers', Church History, Vol.XII (1943), pp.177-194, at p.184.

6. W.S.Hudson, 'The Economic and Social Thought of Gerrard Winstanley', op.cit., p.2.

7. ibid., p.5.

millenarianism."⁸ Although he saw that Winstanley's primary concern was to account for the means by which man could be restored to the pre-Fall condition, Hudson was unable to accept that Winstanley conceived of this restoration being effected other than by the millennium. Thus Hudson imputed to Winstanley the view that, "to seek blessed community by political action was, . . . , irrelevant."⁹

According to Hudson the pamphlet literature produced by Winstanley during the Digger period has been misconstrued. It has been treated as a political programme for social reconstruction when, in reality, it was an elaborate plea for toleration.¹⁰ Equally, Hudson reduced the status of digging (a seemingly radical social action), to a symbolic gesture of faith. Hudson argued that digging was intended "to test the sincerity of the Christian's professions"¹¹ by attempting to anticipate the envisaged lifestyle of the restored society. Moreover, Hudson's appreciation of The Law of Freedom was coloured by his belief that Winstanley's ideas accorded with Fifth Monarchist predilections. Thus Hudson regarded Winstanley's utopia as "a platform for an interim Holy Commonwealth."¹² Hence Winstanley supposedly hoped that the executive (Cromwell) would anticipate the work of God by founding a society to approximate that which the millennium would eventually introduce. We shall discover in due course that analyses such as Hudson's become increasingly invalid as they are applied to the successive stages of Winstanley's thought.

8. ibid.

9. ibid., p.6.

10. ibid., p.11.

11. ibid., p.10, see also, p.11.

12. ibid., p.20.

The most vehement advocate of the view that Winstanley was consistently millenarian was the study group led by L. Mulligan.¹³ Many of Mulligan's assumptions echoed Hudson's ideas,¹⁴ and it is interesting to note that Mulligan too responded to left-wing scholarship; the contributions of Juretich and the later Hill, (in this instance, what might be termed the 'second wave'). Mulligan criticized the minimization of the role of theology in Winstanley's social theory discernible within left-wing analyses. In particular, Mulligan reacted to assumptions that Winstanley's theological vocabulary must have concealed a deeper socio-political meaning. So Mulligan maintained that,

"Rather than treating the Biblical language as a barrier to understanding of Winstanley's thought...the historian might treat the language as the articulation of thought, and through it come closer to understanding what Winstanley meant to himself and his contemporaries."¹⁵ (sic)

Although

Mulligan recognized that Winstanley desired a restoration of the world to the original condition, she argued, in a manner similar to Hudson's, that Winstanley regarded the millennium as the only means of realizing this desired end.¹⁶ So according to Mulligan, Winstanley's position can be stated in the proposition that :-

"The saving of man and of his world required nothing less than the arrival of the millennium."¹⁷

Predictably, the major drawbacks of Mulligan's interpretation

13. L. Mulligan, J.K. Graham, J. Richards, 'Winstanley: A Case for the Man as He Said He Was', Journal of Ecclesiastical History, Vol. 28 (1977), pp. 57-75, (hereafter cited as Mulligan). Strangely, it appears that the thesis that Winstanley was a millenarian has been developed without reference to his first three pamphlets, which contain important insights into the exact nature of his millenarianism.

14. ibid., p. 70.

15. ibid., pp. 64-65.

16. ibid., p. 65.

17. ibid., p. 74, and below, p. 445.

arise from her emphasis upon the consistency of Winstanley's millenarianism, within an attempt to deal with the chronology of Winstanley's intellectual career. For instance, Mulligan has unquestioningly accepted Winstanley's claim that digging was undertaken in response to visionary guidance.¹⁸ Mulligan also insisted that Winstanley continued to conceive of the millennium as the means, not only to the spiritual transformation of man, but also to social reform. Indeed, Mulligan has gone so far as to claim that,

"Winstanley's belief in an inward reformation by an outward millennium was sustained beyond the time of the failure of the diggers."¹⁹

However, the overwhelming weight of evidence to contradict this overall thesis appears to have led Mulligan to temper her view when she analysed The Law of Freedom. Consequently, she succeeded in producing a substantially more persuasive assessment of Winstanley's final tract than Hudson did. Mulligan suggested that, although Winstanley still adhered to his anticipation of the millennium, he ultimately believed that the event could be related to a political transformation,²⁰ according to which external laws would shape men's behaviour. Clearly, by supposing that the millennium was the sole object of Winstanley's intellectual concerns, Mulligan effectively excluded from her own analysis (to its detriment) any notion that Winstanley could have considered alternative means to his true end, the spiritual restoration of man.

W.S.Schenk's view of Winstanley was more restrained, in the sense that he did not stress the exclusiveness of millenarianism

18. L.Mulligan, op.cit., p.66.

19. ibid., p.69.

20. ibid., pp.70-71.

within Winstanley's thought. Rather, Schenk commented upon the extent of Winstanley's spiritual experimentalism and mystical theology. Nevertheless, Schenk argued that Winstanley connected a "belief in the unlimited power of the Spirit with a²¹ Joachimite conception of the millennium."

Schenk's Winstanley is considerably more diverse in outlook than the thinker portrayed by either Hudson or Mulligan. Schenk described him as,

"a religious fanatic of the Puritan Revolution, yet anticipating something of a later intellectual atmosphere."²²

However, in criticizing Petegorsky and Hill for disseminating a "Marxist-Leninist theory" of Winstanley's thought, Schenk restricted Winstanley's eclecticism. He asserted that,

"Winstanley, so far from being an early Marxist, shared the prevailing outlook of his time"²³

It seems that Schenk conceived of this outlook as a tendency to spiritualize ideas and events to the extent that they were considered primarily²⁴ in terms of their symbolism. Schenk also seems to have imputed this perception to Winstanley's actions. So, consequently, in discussing digging, Schenk argued that,

"This picturesque episode will always remain the most easily remembered fact about Winstanley, just as most people seem to remember that the early Quakers refused to take off their hats. As in the case of the Quakers, the action of the Diggers was of a symbolical nature."²⁵

21. W. Schenk, The Concern for Social Justice, (London 1948), p.98.

22. ibid., p.110.

23. ibid., p.108.

24. ibid., p.99.

25. ibid., p.102.

Such emphasis

upon Winstanley's otherworldliness undoubtedly devalues much of the overt significance of his political actions.

Any approach which insists upon the consistency of Winstanley's position, in this case his millenarianism, must inevitably fail to appreciate the subtlety of his thought. It seems undeniable that Winstanley's ideas grew and were amended through a number of stages. It is therefore necessary to describe the nature of this development, and by implication, to isolate reasons for it. The major drawback with the contention that Winstanley was essentially a millenarian thinker, is that the argument becomes increasingly fragile as it is applied to the successive periods into which Winstanley's writings are divisible. Thus, digging is dismissed as merely symbolic, and in the case of Hudson, so too is Winstanley's utopian commonwealth. Although Winstanley was influenced by millenarian ideas during the phase in which he formed many of his premises, it should not be assumed that his thoughts were typical of other contemporary millenarians. We shall discover, particularly in the next two chapters, that Winstanley's millenarianism was in many respects peculiar to himself. As time passed it threatened to stifle the development of his social theory. In these circumstances he readily abandoned it as his principal intellectual stance.

26

26. For an argument to the contrary see, W. Coates, 'A Note on the Diggers', in, Millennial Dreams in Action, ed. S. L. Thrupp, (The Hague 1962), pp. 220-221, Coates contends that digging was inspired by millenarianism and that on the dissolution of the colony Winstanley reverted to "a pre-millennial position."

ii Theological Interpretations of Winstanley's Communism

In his introduction to his edition of Winstanley's writings, G.H.Sabine maintained that Winstanley's radicalism is comprehensible only in the context of his mystical theology.²⁷ Further, by arguing that,

"The key to Winstanley's communistic philosophy lay in his religious experiences."²⁸

- Sabine demonstrated that Winstanley's attention was focused upon a number of pressing ethical problems by his theology. Hence Winstanley developed a social theory which ultimately emphasized communism.²⁹ So Sabine's interpretation concentrated upon Winstanley's

"religious convictions which, ..., led inevitably to communism as their social corollary."³⁰

In his analysis of the nature of Winstanley's spirituality, Sabine attempted to accommodate the transitional element of Winstanley's thought and, in particular, astutely discerned Winstanley's waning interest in eschatology. Sabine also saw that even when Winstanley sustained certain millenarian expectations, these were often ill-defined, yet distinct from the Fifth Monarchist prospect of the rule of the saints. According to Sabine, a more pervasive aspect of Winstanley's spirituality was his all-embracing mysticism. Thus Sabine contended that,

"mysticism in this sense was involved in everything that Winstanley either said or did; it was for him the essence of religion and the root from which he consciously derived

27, G.H.Sabine, introduction to, The Works of Gerrard Winstanley, (New York 1941, 1965 edition), p.3.

28. ibid., pp.6-7.

29. ibid., pp.13-14, 48-51.

30. ibid., p.36, see also, p.54.

his communism."³¹

The important facet of this mysticism was Winstanley's belief that the cosmic drama was internalized as God manifested Himself to man in the form of the 'inner light', and sought to illuminate man's inner darkness.

Sabine noted a telling consequence of Winstanley's failure to distinguish ethics from religion :-

"For him true religion required the immediate creation of a society that substituted community and mutual aid for individualism and competition."³²

Because his approach admits the transitional nature of Winstanley's ideas, Sabine was able to show that, by the time Winstanley wrote The Law of Freedom, he had become less reliant upon the millenarian hope of a change in men's spirits, and instead considered the possibility of amending society itself. Almost by a matter of days, Sabine seems to have anticipated the publication of the left-wing accounts of Petegorsky and Hill, in stating that,

"Winstanley's communism belonged to the class of prophetic writing, with no delusions about a 'scientific' proof."³³

Perhaps ironically, Sabine joined with left-wing critics in commenting upon the paucity of economic foresight in Winstanley's plans for a communist society. However, Sabine obviously used the point to emphasize a different perspective on Winstanley's thought.

Finally, in considering Sabine's interpretation, it is worth noting the comparison he drew between the Diggers and the Levellers. He summarized his argument as follows :-

31. ibid., p.27.

32. ibid., p.51, see also, pp.5,39.

33. ibid., p.36.

"Leveller democracy and Winstanley's utopian socialism are companion pieces, representing as they do the earliest examples of these two rival types of modern revolutionary radicalism."³⁴

Sabine stressed that whereas the Levellers supported an aggressive, competitive, political individualism, Winstanley could not have advanced such a theory of natural rights, and instead insisted that the principle of community should regulate all spheres of life.³⁵ Although this appraisal is intuitively satisfactory to some degree, it should be treated with caution. Certainly, Winstanley advocated communalism³⁶ with respect to some sectors of societal organization, but this was with a view to the spiritual condition of man which, as we shall see, Winstanley eventually conceived to depend upon individual experience.

P. Elmen proffered an analysis of Winstanley's thought in response to the problems posed for 'economic' explanations of digging, (especially those of Bernstein and Petegorsky), by Winstanley's continuing theological considerations. Elmen contended that Winstanley analysed man and society from three points of view. Firstly, the 'anthropological' perspective which, as a "quasi-scriptural account of human history,"³⁷ formed the basis of Winstanley's ideas by considering events such as the Fall of Man. Secondly, the 'psychological' approach, by which Winstanley evaluated human personality in the light of the Fall, and concluded that, in Elmen's words, "the prelapsian state is

34. ibid., p.2.

35. ibid., pp.3,4,53.

36. The term 'communalism' is used here as an ideologically neutral description of Winstanley's actions.

37. P. Elmen, 'The Theological Basis of Digger Communism', Church History, Vol.23 (1954), pp.207-218, at p.210.

38

seen as inner contentment." Thirdly, a political element - incorporating the theory of the Norman Yoke to explain the history of the English nation. Clearly, this attempt to consider the various aspects of Winstanley's appreciation of the human condition is the principal recommendation of Elmen's interpretation.

These basic assumptions concerning Winstanley's mode of thought placed Elmen in an advantageous position to periodize Winstanley's career, and to trace the development of his ideas from passive millenarianism to the activism of digging. Elmen correctly stated that,

"Winstanley had turned his attention away from the possibility of inner peace, and had begun to examine more closely the possible changes in the outward structure of laws and institutions."³⁹

However, by describing Winstanley's transition from mystical to practical communism as "merely a change in emphasis,"⁴⁰ Elmen perhaps underestimated the full span of Winstanley's intellectual evolution. Similarly, although Elmen recognized that Winstanley regarded digging as a remedy for the fallen condition of human affairs, he also maintained that communal cultivation was merely a symbolic attempt to return to the original condition.⁴¹ Despite these misgivings, Elmen's thesis is partially redeemed by his overall admission that Winstanley's evaluation of mankind's spiritual condition determined the design of his social theory.

W.F. Murphy's contribution to the debate on Winstanley has

38. ibid., p.211.

39. ibid., p.215, follows a brief comment by W.S.Hudson, 'Gerrard Winstanley and the Early Quakers', op.cit., p.194.

40. P.Elmen, op.cit., p.216.

41. ibid., pp.212-213.

not received the acknowledgement that it warrants. Although unambitious in its scope, Murphy's interpretation raised a number of points which, at this stage in our analysis of the secondary literature, might profitably be considered. For instance, Murphy evaluated Winstanley's life and work as,

"a peculiarly theological attempt to secure social justice through political and economic planning."⁴²

In view of this it is somewhat surprising to discover Murphy's contention that Winstanley's early tracts contain no hint of his subsequent interest in social questions.⁴³ We shall see in due course that to argue thus, is to minimize the scope of Winstanley's apprehension of the human condition. Although Winstanley's early works contain few explicit references, they nevertheless develop a covert appreciation of social conditions. In one particular statement Murphy appears to have spoken for the school presently under consideration :-

"There was a definite class consciousness in all the Digger tracts, and in most a call for the propertyless to act to free themselves. But here again Winstanley was closer to the mystic religious movements of his own and earlier times than to modern socialism."⁴⁴

In general, the approach which maintains that Winstanley's social theory derived from his theology has proved more flexible when applied to the full sweep of Winstanley's intellectual development than either the millenarian or the anticipatory socialist interpretations. Nevertheless, the

42. W.F. Murphy, 'The Political Philosophy of Gerrard Winstanley', Review of Politics, Vol. 19 (1957), pp. 214-238, at p. 216.

43. ibid., p. 219.

44. ibid., p. 235.

various commentators who have analysed Winstanley's religious ideas have often failed to do so in sufficient detail. In particular, they have neglected Winstanley's conception of the Fall of Man as an explanation of the human condition, and as an inspiration for his social theory. This in turn has inhibited the attempt to produce a valid account of the relationship between the spiritual and secular elements in Winstanley's thought.

iii Winstanley as a Precursor of the Enlightenment

The most striking peculiarity of P.Zagorin's analysis of Winstanley's ideas is his readiness to concede that Winstanley's thought was transitional, while nevertheless refraining from the conclusion that Winstanley must have assumed a position which approximated and anticipated modern socialism. Rather, Zagorin interpreted Winstanley as an precursor of the Enlightenment. On occasions, Zagorin's analysis resembles a composite of various perspectives. However, Zagorin was fairly categorical in his general contention that Winstanley's social theory accorded with contemporary developments in scientific thought. Hence, Zagorin's Winstanley is essentially an optimist and a progressive :-

"More than any man of his time he refused to admit the permanent and unalterable fact of a fallen world, and looked to the reintroduction of the pristine good."⁴⁵

Although this is, ostensibly, a valid evaluation, it undoubtedly oversimplifies Winstanley's position, and is particularly misguided with respect to his eventual appreciation of mankind's predicament. This was considerably less optimistic than Zagorin suggested. This misapprehension resulted in the fatal flaw in Zagorin's argument. As we have seen,⁴⁶ Zagorin assumed that Winstanley's thought transcended the existing 'ideology'. So Zagorin confidently pronounced that,

"Before our eyes, moreover, he consummates the transition between two classic types of utopian outlook: from the blazing chiliastic expectancy of the religious radical who daily looks for Jesus' second coming to inaugurate a

45. P.Zagorin, A History of Political Thought in the English Revolution, (London 1954), p.47.

46. Above, p.26.

reign of righteousness, to the rationalistic communism, abounding in plans and projects, which appears as an aspect of the thought of the Enlightenment."⁴⁷

Clearly, Zagorin failed to appreciate the possibility of a conceptual distinction between millenarianism and utopian institutionalism. As a consequence, Zagorin's view of Winstanley's intellectual development was commensurately distorted. By following Troeltsch in assuming the close affinity of mysticism and rationalism, Zagorin described The Law of Freedom as

"a remarkable communist utopia that is impregnated with the spirit of rationalism."⁴⁸

In tracing the development of Winstanley's thought, Zagorin argued that Winstanley's "religious evolution"⁴⁹ was the source of his political theory. Further, maintaining that "Mystic,⁵⁰ pantheist, materialistic rationalist - this is his path," Zagorin advanced a tripartite periodization of Winstanley's ideas.⁵¹ Thus Zagorin argued that the first phase consisted of antinomian religion, chiliastic hope, mysticism, and experimental theology. The second was a period of "spiritualistic pantheism", in which Winstanley predicted the spreading of God-as-Reason, through man. And thirdly, Winstanley apparently settled for rationalism and materialism :-

"an uncompromising affirmation that mankind's redemption would be effected in this world....by the restoration of the absolute law of reason."⁵²

To his credit, Zagorin proceeded

47. P. Zagorin, op.cit., p.57.

48. ibid., p.43, see also, p.46.

49. ibid., p.44.

50. ibid., p.57.

51. ibid., pp.44-47.

52. ibid., p.47.

to affirm that,

"Winstanley's adoption of communism was most intimately related to his earlier ideas on the origin of evil and the redemption of man."⁵³

Yet, some doubt is cast over the validity of Zagorin's argument by his contention that Winstanley's pantheism caused him to completely negate the historical element of Christianity.⁵⁴ Similarly, Zagorin's assertion that digging was not a political tactic, but was merely a symbolic enactment of the anticipated redemption,⁵⁵ is also questionable. Finally, Zagorin was also misguided in claiming that it was but a short step from the doctrines outlined in the Digger period to the themes contained in The Law of Freedom.⁵⁶ Of all the transitional manoeuvres effected within the evolution of Winstanley's thought, this stage appears to have caused commentators considerable consternation. Some, such as Zagorin, have tended to gloss over this latter phase, and consequently, have failed to perceive its full significance.

53. ibid.

54. ibid., p.49.

55. ibid., p.50.

56. ibid., p.52.

iv Winstanley the Anticipatory Socialist

The interpretation of Gerrard Winstanley as an anticipatory socialist, has been, in the numerical sense at least, far stronger than the equivalent evaluation of Thomas More. There are several possible reasons for this. The most obvious is that More's overt spirituality reduces claims that he was an incipient Marxist to the preposterous. With Winstanley, however, the situation is not so clearcut. Because his theology was by no means 'orthodox', a number of critics have construed his final position as substantially secular and materialist. The same writers have often sought to corroborate this impression by portraying Winstanley as the most radical and disenchanted observer of a bourgeois revolution. As we shall see as this section progresses, successive proponents of the anticipatory socialist school have become increasingly vehement in their claims.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, it is noticeable that, Christopher Hill, a student of Winstanley for the past forty years, has contradicted this general trend; deliberation having mellowed his appreciation.

L. Beren's study of Winstanley's writings is difficult to categorize, partly because it was written before any substantial debate developed. However, Berens's belief that Winstanley's ideas were in some way antecedent to those of Henry George⁵⁸ provides some marginal justification for regarding his The Digger Movement in the Days of the Commonwealth, in this section. In general, Berens concentrated on the evolution of Winstanley's

57. Most recently, F. Brockway, Britain's First Socialists: The Levellers, Agitators and Diggers of the English Revolution, (London 1980), p.127 - "Two hundred years before Karl Marx's *Das Kapital*, Gerrard Winstanley defined the fundamental principles of socialism."

58. L.H. Berens, The Digger Movement in the Days of the Commonwealth, (London 1906, 1961 edition), p.40.

thought and concluded that Winstanley abandoned his 'allegorical' religion and turned to more substantial rationalism. Thus, Berens cited The New Law of Righteousnes as the pamphlet which exemplified Winstanley's shift,

"from the misty regions of cosmological, metaphysical, and theistical speculations to the somewhat firmer ground of social thought."⁵⁹

The overall impression to arise from Beren's analysis is that he considered Winstanley, even on theological questions, as a thinker centuries ahead of his times.

In 1896 Eduard Bernstein claimed to have 'rediscovered'⁶⁰ Gerrard Winstanley's writings. Bernstein's book, Cromwell and Communism, was composed of a series of carefully selected excerpts from Winstanley's pamphlets and a commentary which anticipated the general tone of much subsequent left-wing analysis. Bernstein contended that Winstanley wrote "from the standpoint of the proletarian of the period,"⁶¹ that "he was a socialist ahead of his age,"⁶² and that in The Law of Freedom,⁶³ Winstanley produced "an important and interesting document in the history of Socialism." Bernstein pioneered two arguments in particular which were to become characteristic of the left-wing approach. The first concerned Winstanley's use of the Bible. Bernstein warned his readers that,

"These pamphlets are couched in somewhat mystical phraseology, which manifestly serves as a cloak to conceal

59. ibid., pp.68-69.

60. E. Bernstein, Cromwell and Communism, (1895), trans. H. J. Stenning, (New York 1930, 1963 edition), p.129 of later editions acknowledges Beren's contribution but reasserts Bernstein's primacy. For the complicated origins of the work see, O. Lutaud, Winstanley: Socialisme et Christianisme Sous Cromwell, (Paris 1976), p.474.

61. E. Berstein, op.cit., p.109.

62. ibid., p.131.

63. ibid., pp.114-115.

the revolutionary designs of the author."

Secondly, Bernstein stressed the primitive form of Winstanley's communism by pointing out that,

"In view of the industrial conditions under which the author lived, the economic basis of the new society is mainly small scale production, each individual being at liberty to produce in his own home."⁶⁵

As these extracts show, Bernstein's attempts to prove that Winstanley's thought was fundamentally secular and socialist, led him, as it has those who have followed in this manner, to underestimate the spiritual inspiration of Winstanley's social theory.

66

During the inter-war years M. James proffered what, in all, constitutes a somewhat perturbing account of Winstanley's achievement. Initially, in 1930, James regarded the Digger movement as "a remarkable attempt at social democracy" which was "strongly influenced, if not wholly inspired, by religious motives."⁶⁷ So James conceived of digging as a form of agrarian agitation sustained by both democratic theory and religious radicalism. James went on to evaluate Winstanley as a social reformer rather than a political reformer, and maintained that he was "an idealist of a very extreme type."⁶⁸ The passing of a decade clearly caused James's view to harden somewhat. In 1940 she

64. ibid., p.107.

65. ibid., p.124.

66. During this period, J. Strachey analysed Winstanley's ideas in, The Theory and Practice of Socialism, (London 1936), see, pp.279-283. Certain of Strachey's claims are so absurd as to defy serious consideration.

67. M. James, Social Problems and Policy During the Puritan Revolution, (London 1930, 1966 edition), p.26; cf., 'Winstanley, Gerrard', Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences, Vol.XV, (New York MCMLIII), p.430.

68. M. James, Social Problems and Policy During the Puritan Revolution, p.304.

concluded that,

"the writer in whose works appear the most numerous anticipation of Marxism is Winstanley."⁶⁹

James's tentative approach was soon to be eclipsed by more affirmative left-wing approaches.

D.W.Petegorsky's analysis of Winstanley's ideas is probably the most tempered and balanced to emerge from Marxist scholarship. Even so, Petegorsky placed his account of Winstanley in the context of an unreliable narrative of the development of capitalism which attempted to relate mystical and sectarian enthusiasm to the rise of class consciousness. Thus Petegorsky reached the highly contestable conclusion that "Winstanley was definitely the spokesman of a class rather than of all humanity."⁷⁰ The tenor of Petegorsky's interpretation is illustrated by his contention that,

"The private ownership of the means of subsistence is, for Winstanley, the fundamental fact of social life."⁷¹

According to Petegorsky, Winstanley's conviction that social change could be actively effected by politically conscious individuals placed him "among the forerunners of modern socialism."⁷²

Petegorsky's conception of the transitional aspect of Winstanley's thought looms large within his analysis. Petegorsky maintained that Winstanley's early pamphlets display little social consciousness, and suggested that Winstanley progressed

69. M. James, 'Contemporary Materialist Interpretations of Society in the English Revolution', in, The English Revolution: Three Essays, ed. C. Hill, (London 1940), p.95.

70. D.W. Petegorsky, Left Wing Democracy in the English Civil War, (New York 1940, 1972 edition), p.200.

71. ibid., p.188.

72. ibid., p.197.

from chiliastic mysticism, through rationalism, to practical
 communism.⁷³ Petegorsky thus assumed the discontinuity of
 Winstanley's writings. Further, Petegorsky postulated the
 exclusiveness of these phases, thereby committing himself to a
 position which he found difficult to maintain. Petegorsky took
The New Law of Righteousnes to be the crucial point of
 disjunction in the development of Winstanley's ideas and argued
 that by the time of writing,

"Winstanley had translated his theological concepts and
 his historical interpretation into political language."⁷⁴

Superficially

this assessment has a certain amount to recommend it. However,
 by using 'translation' as the operative word, Petegorsky has
 implied that, on the assumption of a secular social theory,
 Winstanley effectively relinquished his spiritual concerns.
 Despite this misapprehension, Petegorsky has justifiably
 emphasized the deepening pessimism that pervaded Winstanley's
 assessment of the prospects of achieving the social order he
 desired.

The fundamental difficulty with Petegorsky's interpretation
 concerns his appreciation of the 'theological framework' of
 Winstanley's thought, and its relationship to its social theory.
 Petegorsky insisted that, eventually, Winstanley based his social
 ideas

"on a foundation that was wholly secular in its nature, if
 primarily spiritual in its original inspiration."⁷⁵

It seems

that Petegorsky persisted with his Marxist predilections

73. ibid., pp.124,146.

74. ibid., p.149, see also, p.138.

75. ibid., p.178.

despite his awareness of Winstanley's sustained religiosity. In an attempt to evade the inevitable contradictions that such a position would have introduced into his interpretation, Petegorsky imposed the discrepancies of his own analysis on Winstanley. Thus he contended that,

"Winstanley retained to the end his profound spirituality; he was constantly tending to explain in spiritual terms the social and material forces he was seeking to describe. The mystic and political theorist remain, if not in actual conflict, at least in uneasy partnership with each other."⁷⁶

From this

perspective, it was quite natural for Petegorsky to assume that Winstanley's 'socialism' was unsophisticated.⁷⁷ Thus, in the final analysis, Petegorsky contended that,

"There is a remarkable recognition of the role of the productive process in shaping human affairs, but an equally remarkable ability to comprehend the changing nature of these processes themselves."⁷⁸

In subsequent years, left-wing commentators have been as bemused as Petegorsky, and have reacted similarly to Winstanley's failure to comply with doctrinal orthodoxy.

Christopher Hill has advanced possibly the most stimulating and scholarly discussion of Winstanley's thought by analysing his ideas over a period of forty years. Hill's interpretation is distinguished by a uniquely developmental element. It is undoubtedly the case that Hill's general evaluation of certain themes and problems central to the Civil War period, has matured from his initial 'materialism' into a more 'eclectic'

76. ibid.

77. ibid., pp.186-187.

78. ibid., p.213.

appreciation.

In 1940 Hill argued that because Winstanley realized that the struggle over property was the war's major issue, he therefore founded the Digger movement as

"an attempt to proceed by direct action to a form of agrarian communism by members of the dispossessed rural proletariat."⁷⁹

More recently, Hill has discussed the Diggers in the light of their relationship to the extreme wing of the Leveller movement, the True Levellers.⁸⁰ He has distinguished the two movements (Levellers and Diggers) by noting that the Diggers intended to extend Leveller democratic theory from the political to the economic sphere. A further, recent, aspect of Hill's analysis has been his concern to locate Winstanley's position in the development of socialist thought. Hill has concluded that, although he wrote at the inception of 'modern' political thought, Winstanley's ideas were transitional, looking forward to nineteenth- and twentieth-century socialism and communism while simultaneously recalling the communalism of medieval village life.⁸¹ Despite this somewhat tempered assessment, Hill has been less restrained in maintaining that Winstanley "gave the world its first communist political programme" and was "the ultimate ancestor of the English labour and cooperative movements."⁸²

The mature Hill has responded to claims that his appreciation of Winstanley had previously been unjustifiably materialist by

79. C.Hill, The English Revolution, (London 1940), p.51, see also, pp.12, 61-62.

80. C.Hill, The World Turned Upside Down, (London 1972, 1975 edition), chapter 7, especially p.133.

81. C.Hill, introduction to, Winstanley: The Law of Freedom, (London 1973), pp.9, 34.

82. ibid., p.10.

disavowing the view that Winstanley was a seventeenth-century Marxist.⁸³ Instead, Hill has modified his analysis by arguing that the essence of Winstanley's radicalism was his fusion of political and economic theory, on the one side, with theology, on the other.⁸⁴ According to Hill, the product of Winstanley's 'compound' was a brand of "theological materialism". So Hill stated that, in the final analysis,

"Winstanley's is the most complete and successful marriage of politics to the radical theology..."⁸⁵

However, Hill conveys a sense of defensiveness and returns us to a crucial point at issue by asserting that,

"materialism in no way contradicts Winstanley's theology, rightly understood."⁸⁶

Clearly, and perhaps ironically, Hill has ultimately been constrained to stake the validity of his interpretation upon an analysis of Winstanley's religious ideas.

In terms of his impression of Winstanley's religious vocabulary, Hill's admission of the theological content of Winstanley's thought seems slightly grudging. Almost from the outset Hill insisted that "the religious vocabulary in which he wrote may be somewhat misleading."⁸⁷ Subsequently Hill has insisted that Winstanley's use of Biblical material was "astonishing", and that by his "mythological use of Biblical material" Winstanley rejected Biblical history in favour of

83. C.Hill, 'The Religion of Gerrard Winstanley', P.&P., Supplement 5, (1978), p.1.

84. C.Hill, The World Turned Upside Down, p.183, and, introduction, Winstanley: The Law of Freedom, p.39.

85. C.Hill, 'The Religion of Gerrard Winstanley', op.cit., p.52.

86. ibid., p.47.

87. C.Hill, introduction to, Gerrard Winstanley: Selections From His Works, ed.L.D.Hamilton, p.5.

allegorical interpretations. Yet Hill's most evocative position on this matter is contained in the following statement :-

"It is worth taking a little trouble to break down the barriers of Winstanley's Biblical language, just as it is worth penetrating through the mists of Hegelian jargon to understand the writings of the early Marx."⁸⁹

Clearly, by

suggesting that the substance of Winstanley's thought lies obscured beneath a morass of Biblical rhetoric, Hill has implied that Winstanley's materialist economic and political ideas are more consequential than his theology. Given this, it is not surprising to discover Hill arguing that,

"the materialist side of Winstanley's pantheism becomes more explicit in the later, more political writings."⁹⁰

It may

be that, because of his reluctance to recognize the pervasiveness of Winstanley's spirituality, Hill introduced this extremely ambiguous and seemingly contradictory choice of words as a caveat. However, Hill has moved closer to accepting the theological basis of Winstanley's thought by abstracting Winstanley's pantheism from his materialism, and by suggesting that even such pantheism was not thoroughgoing, but was related to the idea that God was discernible in humanity.

In common with other left-wing critics, Hill propounded an appreciation of Winstanley's intellectual development. According

88. C.Hill, The World Turned Upside Down, p.142, 'The Religion of Gerrard Winstanley', op.cit., p.31, Milton and the English Revolution, (London 1977), pp.75-76.

89. C.Hill, introduction, Winstanley: The Law of Freedom, p.55, see also, p.19.

90. C.Hill, The World Turned Upside Down, p.139.

to Hill, "by a remarkable imaginative feat," Winstanley transmuted an "apocalyptic vision into a theory of rationalism and democracy."⁹¹ In general, Hill treated Winstanley's thought as an evolution from theology to politics, and as the "anticipation of social materialism."⁹² Thus Hill cited The True Levellers' Standard Advanced as the occasion of Winstanley's transition - at which point his millenarian theology had begun to fade as it was superseded by a materialist social theory. However, Hill was undoubtedly on far stronger ground in charting the consequences of Winstanley's gradual acceptance that a rapid regeneration of society seemed unlikely. Thus Hill contended that,

"Winstanley's incorporation into his theological system of the myths of the Norman Yoke and of Antichrist, with correspondingly greater emphasis on external institutions and powers, reflects the experience of the Digger's struggle, the growing appreciation that Reason too must be institutionalized." (sic)⁹³

Yet to claim that his final work, The Law of Freedom, was merely

"a straightforward statement of Winstanley's ideals as modified by his experience on St. George's Hill"⁹⁴

- is to

underestimate the full sweep of Winstanley's social theory. In resolving upon the system elucidated in the form of utopian socialism, Winstanley achieved a substantially modified response to his initial premises. Essentially, despite his recent attempts to reconcile the theological and social elements of Winstanley's

91. ibid., p.148.

92. C.Hill, 'The Religion of Gerrard Winstanley', op.cit., p.29, see also, pp.28,35-36.

93. ibid., p.49, see also, pp.39,46.

94. C.Hill, The World Turned Upside Down, p.134.

thought, Hill has been unable to free himself from the preconception that Winstanley's intellectual development was from the religious to the secular. Thus he has persisted in discussing Winstanley's "conversion to communism."⁹⁵ Evidently, Hill has not accepted that, even in his earliest pamphlets, Winstanley analysed the nature of communism to the extent that a subsequent conversion to interest in the concept was unnecessary.

It is difficult to be clear about Hill's conception of digging because there is such an obvious discord between his various statements on the matter. Hill has described digging as "only the visible tip of the iceberg of True Levellerism,"⁹⁶ and has claimed that the cultivation of St. George's Hill was by no means an isolated incident. He has also spoken of digging as "a symbolic assumption of ownership of the common lands."⁹⁷ However, most recently, Hill has insisted that, "Digging was no mere symbol: it was a political act."⁹⁸ The incongruity of Hill's case is compounded by a further consideration. Hill's most recent pronouncement was contained in a piece which purported to analyse the fusion of theology and social theory in Winstanley's thought. Previously Hill had neglected the former. Given this, it is surprising to discover Hill's renunciation of his notion of the symbolism of digging. This seems to contradict the trend of Hill's developing appreciation of Winstanley's ideas. It can only be presumed that, despite the

95. C.Hill, 'The Religion of Gerrard Winstanley', op.cit., p.2, see also, p.51.

96. C.Hill, introduction, Winstanley: The Law of Freedom, p.30, see also, The World Turned Upside Down, pp.113-121.

97. ibid. p.10, see also, introduction, Winstanley: The Law of Freedom, p.26.

98. C.Hill, 'The Religion of Gerrard Winstanley', op.cit. p.29, see also, p.49.

wording of his most recent statement, the true implications of communal cultivation, as an institutional manifestation of restored human nature, have made some impression on Hill.

It is to be expected that interpretations which stress the anticipatory nature of communist theories advanced in a pre-industrial age, usually comment upon, and often apologise for, certain naïve assumptions evident in the cases in question. Hill's interpretation of Winstanley is no exception to this rule. As Hill has become less dogmatic, his conception of Winstanley's communism has changed accordingly. Originally he described it as,

"an example of the type of communist theories which have appeared with increasing maturity in all the great middle-class revolutions.." ⁹⁹

Yet, More recently, Hill has supplemented this view, arguing that Winstanley advanced "a primitive
libertarian communism." ¹⁰⁰ Generally, Hill has been constrained to classify Winstanley's role in the development of socialist thought as essentially transitional and occasionally
retrospective. ¹⁰¹ Thus he has been forced to admit that, in common with other radicals, Winstanley's "rejection of capitalism was often backward-looking, negative and
unrealistic." ¹⁰² By arguing that Winstanley looked back to the communal life of village society at a time when, according to Hill, it was disintegrating under the pressure of incipient capitalism, Hill has often surprisingly underestimated the

99. C.Hill, introduction, Gerrard Winstanley: Selections From His Works, p.4.

100. C.Hill, introduction, Winstanley: The Law of Freedom, p.36, cf. p.34.

101. C.Hill, The English Revolution, p.52.

102. C.Hill, The World Turned Upside Down, p.123.

extent of Winstanley's retrospection. As we shall see, Winstanley looked back beyond all this, to the pristine condition that prevailed before the Fall of Man and the Norman Conquest.¹⁰³

H.N. Brailsford's interest in Winstanley was ancillary to his concern with the Levellers. According to Brailsford, Winstanley's most distinctive achievement was his appreciation that human suffering was attributable to "private appropriation of the means of life,..."¹⁰⁴ Thenceforth, Winstanley's thought was transformed as,

"his interest turned to politics and he wrote the most characteristic of his books, *The New Law of Righteousness*, which is in reality a Communist Manifesto written in the dialect of its day."¹⁰⁵

Despite his recognition that Winstanley's "was a deeply religious mind,"¹⁰⁶ Brailsford concluded that,

"the long internal conflict in his mind between the tradition in which he was reared and the rationalism he won by wrestling, ends in complete victory for his new outlook." (sic)¹⁰⁷

Although his was a relatively cursory consideration of Winstanley, Brailsford's analysis fits neatly into the thematic ambit of the left-wing school.

During the last two decades, G.H. George has inspired a more radical Marxist account of Winstanley's thought. George has endorsed the approach to seventeenth-century ideas advocated by

103. This may appear surprising given that Hill emphasized the importance of 'Normanism' to contemporary radical opinion in, 'The Norman Yoke', in, Puritanism and Revolution, (London 1958).

104. H.N. Brailsford, The Levellers and the English Revolution, ed. C. Hill, (London 1961, 1976 edition), p. 661.

105. ibid., p. 659.

106. ibid., p. 665.

107. ibid., p. 669.

Hill, Brailsford, and C.B. Macpherson.¹⁰⁸ However, even these scholars might have been taken aback by George's claim that Winstanley was "the most gifted socialist intellectual next to Marx."¹⁰⁹ More recently George has developed this theme by claiming that Winstanley was "the world's first communist"¹¹⁰ and "the original socialist."¹¹¹ In contrast to certain other left-wing commentators such as Petegorsky, George has determined to challenge the view that Winstanley's social analysis originated in his religious ideas.¹¹² In George's opinion, much of the foregoing analysis of Winstanley's ideas had been distorted by an erroneous and unhealthy obsession with Puritanism.¹¹³ Predictably, this attitude to the appraisal of Winstanley's ideas has prompted George to dismiss as "biblical rhetoric",

"the almost ornamental, certainly at best tangential, relation of the Bible to Winstanley's thought."¹¹⁴

All this anticipated George's analysis of the transitional nature of Winstanley's intellectual development.

George's account is characterized by a disparaging negation of Winstanley's early works, and a laudatory commendation of the 'rationalism' effused by his later writings. Thus George has traced Winstanley's intellectual evolution from being "a

108. G.H. George, 'Gerrard Winstanley: A Critical Retrospect', in, The Dissenting Tradition, ed. R.C. Cole and M.E. Moody, (Ohio 1975), p.207.

109. G.H. George, Revolution: European Radicals from Hus to Lenin, (Glenview Illinois 1962), p.100.

110. G.H. George, 'Gerrard Winstanley: A Critical Retrospect', op.cit., p.191.

111. ibid., p.192.

112. ibid., pp.216-217.

113. ibid., p.208.

114. ibid., p.214, see also, pp.212-216.

Christian dreamer" to his emergence as "a sensationally secular thinker," by claiming that,

The intellectual distance between the Mystery of God and The Law of Freedom can scarcely be measured."¹¹⁵

By dismissing The Mysterie of God as "outright hysteria", and maintaining that The True Levellers' Standard Advanced marked the crucial transitional moment, George has sought to explain the "chronological genesis of Winstanley's secular rationalism."¹¹⁶ So effectively, George's entire appreciation rests upon his claim that Winstanley underwent,

"one of the most sensational metamorphoses in modern intellectual history."¹¹⁷

We shall see in due course that George in particular was obliged to place great weight upon the earlier dating of the substantially theological Fire in the Bush.

Undoubtedly, George passed on many of his themes to his pupil G. Juretic, the proponent of an even more extreme left-wing analysis of Winstanley's writings.¹¹⁸ Juretic's condemnation of all interpretations that have discerned elements of consistency in Winstanley's thought has been unremitting. Thus he has repudiated all theories linking the Digger to the pre-Digger Winstanley. A prevalent aspect of Juretic's approach is his premise that Winstanley's thought must be delineated into two

115. G.H. George, Revolution: European Radicals from Hus to Lenin, p.110, see also, 'Gerrard Winstanley: A Critical Retrospect', op.cit., p.217.

116. ibid., p.193.

117. ibid., p.194.

118. G. Juretic, The Mind of Gerrard Winstanley, (unpub. Ph.D. dissertation, North Illinois Univ., 1972), especially chapter IX. 'The Digger Faith: Religion is Socialism', and, 'Digger: No Millenarian', J.H.I., Vol. XXXVI (1975), pp.263-281, at p.264, follows G.H. George by placing Winstanley in the history of socialist thought.

discrete periods, the first characterized by religious millenarianism, and the second by secular communism. Further, Juretic has assumed that interpretations of Winstanley's thought can be differentiated into either of these straightforward alternatives.

Juretic has reserved a series of scathingly critical remarks for what he has termed the 'Woodhouse-Haller school'.¹¹⁹ Juretic's general complaint is that scholars who have previously analysed Winstanley's ideas and intellectual development, have usually concluded that religion was the underlying determinate of Winstanley's social theory. Thus Juretic's criticism, not only of Hudson and Schenk, but also of 'non-Puritan'¹²⁰ historians including Sabine, Petegorsky, and Zagorin. According to Juretic all these critics have mistakenly treated Winstanley's works as a monolithic whole. Hence his conclusion that

"The religiocentric emphasis of these interpretations renders them inadequate."¹²¹

This perception of the existing debate prompted Juretic to assume that only by concentrating on the transitional nature of Winstanley's thought can an adequate interpretation of it be produced. So clearly, Juretic has staked the entire validity of his analysis on his own ability to evaluate this transition correctly.

Juretic has maintained that Winstanley's thought shifted from a phase of mystical, apocalyptic, Biblical literalism, devoid of social criticism, to one of secularized rationalism, which witnessed Winstanley's transformation into "the brilliantly

119. ibid., pp.264-265.

120. ibid., p.266.

121. ibid., p.268, see also, The Mind of Gerrard Winstanley, p.17.

self-conscious captive of early 'capitalism'." ¹²² To confirm this impression of Winstanley's transition from millenarianism to secularism, Juretic has claimed that The New Law of Righteousnes and The True Levellers's Standard Advanced are ¹²³ fundamentally different in character. Thus he has criticised Petegorsky for arguing that the former constituted a 'watershed' ¹²⁴ in Winstanley's thought. According to Juretic, concentrating upon the earlier The New Law of Righteousnes obscures the actual process by which Winstanley's social consciousness developed.

After dismissing Winstanley's earlier tracts as "millenarian whimsy", ¹²⁵ Juretic has attempted to show that digging effected ¹²⁶ "the creation of this secular and socialist worldview." The crux of Juretic's entire analysis lies in his claim that, "once he began his Digging cooperative Winstanley's ideas became radically secularized."¹²⁷

The essence of Juretic's claim is the supposition that action and practical experience transformed Winstanley's thought to such an extent that two distinct periods are discernible within his writings. Hence Juretic's disparaging view of interpretations which trace the continuity of Winstanley's ideas. Yet the question of continuity is the most obvious point at which Juretic's argument is flawed. It is important to be aware that Juretic's interpretation emphasizes the revision of Winstanley's thought which, Juretic has insisted, occurred only once the communal

122. G. Juretic, 'Digger: No Millenarian', op.cit., p.270.

123. ibid., pp.270-274.

124. ibid., p.272, cites, D.W, Petegorsky, op.cit., p.138.

125. G. Juretic, The Mind of Gerrard Winstanley, p.112.

126. G. Juretic, 'Digger: No Millenarian', op.cit., p.263.

127. ibid., p.269.

cultivation of the commons had commenced. Significantly, Juretic seems to have evaded the problem of why Winstanley was initially inspired to establish the Digger colony. Clearly, all this is a consequence of Juretic's refusal to recognize not only the incipient social theory evident in Winstanley's pre-Digger tracts, but also his continuing spirituality beyond the inception of digging.

As we have noted, Juretic believes that the transition of Winstanley's intellectual outlook was first manifest in The True Levellers' Standard Advanced. Accordingly, Juretic has cited this piece as the crucial stage in the development of "Winstanley's revolutionary, political consciousness."¹²⁸ Winstanley thus changed his priorities by turning from religion to political economy. So, in a rather blatant summary of Winstanley's reformed position, Juretic argued that,

"In his own way he perceived that the masses had nothing to lose but their chains."¹²⁹

In evaluating the full import of Winstanley's social theory, Juretic has contended that Winstanley achieved "a well-rounded critique of bourgeois society."¹³⁰ In general, Juretic's insistence upon severing the spiritual from the secular within Winstanley's thought has led him to misconstrue Winstanley's view of the relationship between human nature and social institutions. So by arguing that Winstanley attributed mankind's moral wickedness to capitalism, Juretic has claimed that Winstanley abandoned his conception of the Civil War as the conflict of good and evil, and replaced it with the notion that

128. ibid., p.275.

129. ibid., p.276.

130. G. Juretic, The Mind of Gerrard Winstanley', p.21.

the propertied classes were conspiring to increase their power.¹³¹ By neglecting Winstanley's analysis of human nature, particularly mankind's spiritual condition, Juretic has failed to realize that Winstanley perceived the interaction of man and his institutional environment as a mutually determining relationship. This in turn has caused Juretic to miss the point that Winstanley's intellectual development continued beyond the phase of Digger activity. So, contrary to Juretic's suggestion, The Law of Freedom was something more than a fulfilment of Digger philosophy.¹³² Typically, and perhaps inevitably, Juretic's unmitigated materialist analysis has constrained him to maintain that,

"Despite his magnificent vision of a communist utopia, Winstanley's social structure was naive at best."¹³³

Clearly, Juretic has failed to appreciate that Winstanley's carefully contrived utopian institutionalism was designed to create a social environment in which human nature could be regenerated.

In keeping with his overall thesis, Juretic has derided the view that the Bible provided Winstanley with the source and inspiration of many of his ideas. Thus, in relation to this question, Juretic has advanced two arguments which are characteristic of left-wing approaches. Firstly, he has contended that, although Winstanley initially resorted to the Bible, he regarded its contents as an allegory, and ultimately abandoned biblical citation as a serious method of argument.¹³⁴

131. ibid., pp.104,119.

132. See, e.g., ibid., chapter XI, 'The Digger Utopia'.

133. ibid., pp.185-186.

134. ibid., pp.84,107-108, see also, 'Digger:No Millenarian', op.cit., p.278.

Secondly, in what is apparently a reserve line of defence, Juretic has claimed that,

"Winstanley presented an artificial layer of religious sentiment as camouflage for his secular political assumptions."¹³⁵

The adamant rigidity in Juretic's approach is encapsulated in his statement that,

"The Bible contained only one message for Winstanley, the superiority of socialism over capitalism."¹³⁶

Taken in isolation,

this might be an essentially valid statement, but it seems unlikely that in making it, Juretic was aware of the sophisticated reasoning that carried Winstanley from a series of theological premises to his exposition of communism.

An overall assessment of the interpretation of Winstanley as an anticipatory socialist may now be rendered, and held in mind during our own analysis of his ideas. Several features of this approach are immediately apparent. The most obvious is a consensus that Winstanley's intellectual development involved an abrupt transition from a theological to a secular perception of man and society. Yet we have seen that this conclusion is flawed by considerable disagreement over the exact point at which this change occurred. The existence of such a debate suggests that transformations in Winstanley's thought were more gradual and of a different nature than the participants allow. For instance, most advocates of this approach have assumed that Winstanley's thinking as a Digger closely approximated the arguments he later advanced in The Law of Freedom, but this is

135. G. Juretic, The Mind of Gerrard Winstanley, p.149.

136. ibid., p.147.

to misapprehend the process by which he decided upon the utopian mode of articulating his ideas. Another striking characteristic of this school is the readiness of its practitioners to negate Winstanley's use of the Bible. Although this is undoubtedly an extremely difficult aspect of his thought, we shall argue in the following chapter, that scripture provided Winstanley with a substantial source for his conception of the human condition. Finally, several of the commentators considered in this section have expressed, often in a condescending fashion, the belief that Winstanley's vision of a communist society was unsophisticated. This presumes, of course, that, had he been aware of the prospect, Winstanley would surely have welcomed an industrialized communist society. Thus it has been implied that the establishment of a communist society was the sole end posited by Winstanley's social theory. However, we shall see in due course that although Winstanley did demand the communal ownership of land, in particular, he saw this as one aspect of a far wider scheme to secure the spiritual restoration of man.

It should be apparent that none of the schools of interpretation considered in this chapter has adequately dealt with the problems posed by Winstanley's thought. For instance, critics who have emphasized Winstanley's millenarianism have too readily assumed that his ideas aligned with those of other contemporary millenarians. The failure to explore the precise nature of Winstanley's millenarianism in sufficient depth, and this insistence that Winstanley's position remained essentially consistent throughout the period in which he published his opinions, has naturally led to difficulties in attempting to explain Winstanley's political activism and his subsequent

drafting of a utopia. In our own analysis we shall avoid these shortcomings by examining in detail the impression made by millenarian ideas upon the overall structure of Winstanley's thought. Thus we shall explain why he relinquished his millenarian convictions and turned instead to activism and finally to utopianism as more suitable modes for the articulation of his ideas.

We discovered that our second school, characterized by a more pervasive appreciation of Winstanley's theology, obviously dealt more competently with Winstanley's eclecticism. This disinclination to stress any one facet of Winstanley's theology facilitated a better understanding of the relation of his religious to his secular ideas. There are clearly certain advantages to this general approach. However, although we shall emphasize the affinity of religious and secular within Winstanley's ideas, we shall explore the relationship in considerably greater detail than has erstwhile been the case. In particular, we shall show that Winstanley's religious convictions provided him with a unique understanding of the human condition. This, in turn, provided the foundation of his social philosophy.

The third and fourth schools outlined in this chapter have each advanced an account of the development of Winstanley's thought; the third arguing that his eventual position approximated Enlightenment ideas, and the fourth claiming that Winstanley became a pioneer of socialism. Both these analyses presume a disjunction at some stage within Winstanley's intellectual development to the extent that his ultimate position bears little resemblance to his initial premises. Although our analysis will explain the evolution of Winstanley's

ideas, it will do so not by reference to some abrupt change of direction, but will trace the gradual development of Winstanley's thought through a series of successive stages. In this way it will be possible to show that certain of Winstanley's premises, particularly his belief in the potential spiritual restoration of mankind, remained fundamental to his thought, and formed an integral part of his eventual social philosophy. Therefore, we shall commence our analysis of Winstanley's thought by examining his view of mankind's predicament.

CHAPTER EIGHT : GERRARD WINSTANLEY'S CONCEPTION OF THE HUMAN
CONDITION

In this chapter it will become apparent that Gerrard Winstanley's theology may be subjected to rigorous analysis of the type employed in our evaluation of Thomas More's. Therefore the chapter will be divided into four sections. The first of these will be concerned with the various elements of Winstanley's spirituality, and with the manner in which they coalesce to form a 'theological system'. It will be stressed that elucidating Winstanley's undeniably radical religious ideas is a means of ascertaining the core of his view of the human condition, and is also a necessary preliminary to the understanding of his social theory.

Section two will examine Winstanley's interpretation of the Fall of Man. Again we shall discover that, despite its idiosyncratic form, Winstanley's account of the Fall was a significant factor in his explanation of mankind's predicament, in terms of both his analysis of human nature and of social arrangements. Winstanley believed that identifying the manner in which mankind arrived at its existing condition afforded the possibility of proposing a method by which the situation could be ameliorated. Winstanley's perception of the Fall, and of the other major factor in his historical perspective, the Norman Yoke, was occasionally indistinct. The nature of this complex relationship, and the role it played within Winstanley's social philosophy will be described in detail.

In section three, interest will be centred on Winstanley's description of the fallen condition. Implicit in the notion of the Fall of Man is the corollary that those who recognize its influence should regard conditions in their own society as derivative of Adam's sin. As in More's case, Winstanley's

critique of his own society provides evidence of his conception of mankind's existence after the Fall. Within the ambit of Winstanley's interpretation of the fallen condition, his incorporation of the myth of the Norman Yoke assumed considerable significance. Accordingly, Winstanley believed that the institutions which had endured since the Norman Conquest were the worst manifestations of the corruption of human nature and of various other consequences of the Fall. Thus Winstanley's anticlericalism, anti-intellectualism, critique of the legal system, and abject appraisal of existing proprietary and commercial practices, all lend a clue to his apprehension of the predicament inaugurated by the Fall and exacerbated by the Norman Conquest.

Finally, in section four, we shall investigate Winstanley's belief that mankind's earthly existence, and in particular, its institutional environment, could be amended in conjunction with a spiritual restoration. Clearly, this was an issue upon which More and Winstanley differed markedly. More excluded the possibility of an earthly restoration by assuming that, at the very most, all fallen man could hope to achieve was the accumulation of sufficient merit to earn his salvation in heaven. Ultimately, it will become apparent that the differences in the social theories developed by More and Winstanley respectively, can be explained largely in terms of their contrasting appreciation of human potential.

It would be merely facile to attempt to distinguish More and Winstanley in terms of the former's Catholicism and the latter's radical Protestantism. We have already seen that More was an eclectic thinker, susceptible to various tendencies within Catholicism, and indeed, also to the influence of classical thought. Winstanley was equally diverse in his intellectual

scope. Undoubtedly, Winstanley was sufficiently a man of his times to reflect the all-pervasive influence of spiritual considerations. During the course of Winstanley's lifetime a substantial debate on the direction of English Protestantism was in progress. The frenzy of this discourse, and the plethora of opinions in circulation, obviously affected Winstanley to the extent that he was prompted to enter the fray. Although Winstanley's agreement with the views of several radical sects was quite pronounced, his response to 'mainstream' Puritanism is also significant. However, by assuming the existence of some core of Puritan orthodoxy we are perhaps treading on dangerous ground. Clearly, this is not the place to attempt a definition of Puritanism, nor is it the occasion to consider the notion of a Puritan 'ideology' composed of the relationship between the religious convictions and socio-economic ideas of Puritans. Yet, it may safely be assumed that an individual such as the conservative Presbyterian, Thomas Edwards, who conceived of himself as an 'orthodox' Calvinist, would have been appalled by Winstanley's ideas, many of which approximate the heresies listed by Edwards in Gangraena.¹ Nevertheless, a number of themes exemplified by Winstanley's utopia, The Law of Freedom, call to mind M. Walzer's assessment of an important Puritan concern. Walzer has said,

"Godly magistracy had been a bold effort to seize control of society, much as sainthood had been an effort to control and organize the self."²

Perhaps it is significant that, as Winstanley's thought appears to have become slightly more

1. T. Edwards, Gangraena, (in 3 parts), 1646.

2. M. Walzer, 'Puritanism as a Revolutionary Ideology', H.&T., Vol. 111 (1963-1964), pp. 59-90, at p. 86.

conservative, he recognized the need for watchful and collective discipline of the type advocated by many Puritans.³ It seems that, although he advanced a range of radical religious opinions, Winstanley maintained a somewhat ambivalent respect for certain presuppositions of more doctrinal Puritanism.

Winstanley held many ideas in common with other religious radicals. Even so, his theology as a total system was a highly original synthesis. Numerous sects flourished during the Civil War.⁴ To attempt to locate precise instances of influence on Winstanley, or to identify 'shared' ideas, would be an enormously complicated task, obviously beyond our present intentions. However, beliefs, for instance, concerning the priority of the 'spirit' over the written word of scripture, the nature of the 'inner light', the dawning of an age of universal love, and the prospect of 'perfection' on earth amongst the regenerate - held sway in various forms amongst Familists, Grindletonians, Seekers, and early Quakers. During the course of this chapter we shall discover that Winstanley had his own views on these matters. What is especially interesting about Winstanley is the degree to which he elaborated the social implications of ideas such as these.

3. See, e.g., ibid., pp. 64-68, and, M. Walzer, The Revolution of the Saints, (London 1965), pp. 307-308; C. Hill, Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England, (London 1964), especially chapter VI.

4. For the various sects and their ideas, see, e.g., C. Hill, The World Turned Upside Down, (London 1972), and, H. Barbour, The Quakers in Puritan England, (New Haven 1964).

i Winstanley's Theology

On the occasion of the collapse of the Digger colony in April 1650, Winstanley stated that,

"True Religion, and undefiled, is to let every one quietly have earth to manure, that they may live in freedome by their labours."⁵

This takes us to the very heart of the debate over the role played by religious ideas in the development of Winstanley's thought, because Winstanley's claim could be interpreted in either of two ways. Firstly, it might be presumed that at this instant and others like it, Winstanley's thoughts were essentially secular - this has been the preference of left-wing commentators. Thus it is argued that by 1650 Winstanley had virtually dismissed religious considerations and instead devoted his attention to 'worldly' affairs. Secondly, it has been contended that Winstanley's social ideas were derivative of his religious beliefs but did not supersede them. In this chapter we shall confront this debate by analysing two related problems. The first concerns whether, and in what way, religious ideas influenced Winstanley's social theory. The second of these problems involves the nature of Winstanley's theology. Clearly, only by dealing with the latter issue can the former be resolved.

The intention of this section is to provide an integrated analysis of the main principles of Winstanley's religious thought. This task is complicated by the general developmental nature of Winstanley's writing. His religious ideas were by no means as consistent as More's. However, it should not be assumed that this detracts from the importance of religion within

5. G. Winstanley, An Humble Request to the Ministers of both Universities and to all Lawyers in every Inns-a-Court, (Sabine) p.428.

the overall ambiance of Winstanley's intellectual concerns. In particular, religious notions formed the basis of Winstanley's assessment of mankind's predicament. As we shall see, Winstanley believed that experience was the only sound base for the foundation of religious truths :-

"if a particular branch of mankind desire to know what the nature of other men and women are, let him look not abroad, but into his own heart, and he shall see."⁶

This

proposition carried over into the method, blending experimentalism and introspection, which Winstanley recommended for the analysis of human nature. Winstanley's theology and view of man was distinctive, and on occasions esoteric. However, it would be difficult to understand Winstanley's appreciation of the Fall of Man, his theory of the prospect of man's restoration, and ultimately, his social analysis, without an initial grounding in his religious ideas.

The difficulties encountered in attempting to state Winstanley's religious ideas are immediately apparent in evaluating his conception of God. In his consideration of the deity, Winstanley's thought developed rapidly. Initially, Winstanley regarded God as a just but essentially merciful ruler.⁷ However, as he became more insistent that experience was the only valid foundation of religious knowledge, Winstanley argued that men who had not been enlightened by God, could not understand Him.⁸ So although Winstanley described God as "the onely one infinite being," who was distinguished by His

6. G.Winstanley, 'The Saints Paradise', in, Several Pieces Gathered Into One Volume, (Manchester Public Library), pp.48-49.

7. G.Winstanley, 'The Breaking of the Day of God', in Several Pieces Gathered Into One Volume, p.107.

8. G.Winstanly, The Saints Paradise, p.A3.

9

"incomprehensibleness", he recommended that men should,

"not look for a God now, as formerly you did, to be a place of glory beyond the Sun, Moon and Stars, nor a Divine being you know not where, by (but) you feel him ruling within you, and not onely in you, but you see and know him to be the spirit and power that dwells in every man..."¹⁰

Winstanley

was certain that individuals who had such a true perception, would be impressed by God's most essential characteristic, his reasonableness. So Winstanley eventually defined God as,

"the incomprehensible spirit, Reason; who as he willed that the Creation should flow out of him: so he governes the whole Creation in righteousness, peace and moderation: And from hence he is called, The Lord, because there is none above him: And he is called, The Father, because the whole creation came out of him,..."¹¹

An important presupposition

of Winstanley's thought was his assertion that the harmony of the creation¹² depended upon the prevalence of reason amongst men. As a corollary, Winstanley affirmed that such a condition would be fulfilled only when all men had experienced and realized the true nature of God.¹³ So, although Winstanley tended to substitute 'Reason' for 'God', he did so not because he had abandoned his belief in the deity,¹⁴ but because he

9. ibid., pp.27,64.

10. ibid., pp.55-56, see also, p.63.

11. G.Winstanley, Truth Lifting Up its Head Above Scandals, (Sabine), p.107, see also, p.105.

12. G.Winstanley, The Saints Paradise, p.69.

13. G.Winstanley, The New Law of Righteousnes, (Sabine), p.168.

14. This consideration has an important bearing upon left-wing interpretations. However, Christopher Hill appears, by inference, to admit the point in, 'Reason' and 'Reasonableness' in Seventeenth Century England, British Journal of Sociology, Vol. 20 (1969), pp.235-252, at p.245, ff., and, 'Hobbes and Winstanley: Reason and Politics', in, The World Turned Upside Down, (1975 edition), p.389.

but because he wished to declare the true nature of the controlling power of the universe.

Winstanley's contention that God could only be known through spiritual experience laid the foundation for his theory that men could be restored to a condition of righteousness. From the outset, Winstanley claimed that,

"you cannot say the spirit is your God, till you feel, and see by experience that the spirit doth govern your flesh,..."¹⁵

Even in his last, and supposedly most secular work, The Law of Freedom, Winstanley remained adamant that "God is an active Power, not an imaginary Fancy."¹⁶ Much of Winstanley's thought was devoted to the problem of how men would come to experience such righteousness within. The development of his social philosophy was partly inspired by his transition from the view that men must passively await such an awakening, to the belief that righteousness could be induced by institutional means.

Winstanley conceived of reason as existing in two senses, and argued that a correspondence of the two would render the creation harmonious by reconciling man to God. On the one hand, Winstanley discussed the 'Spirit Reason' in the sense of its synonymy to God. On the other hand, Winstanley believed that men possessed a faculty which could be identified as 'reason'. So he argued that the deeper men descended into the fallen condition, the greater was the antagonism between God-as-Reason, and mankind. However, Winstanley maintained that, ideally, men's actions ought to be guided by the Spirit Reason.¹⁷ The appeal

15. G. Winstanley, The Saints Paradise, p.79.

16. G. Winstanley, The Law of Freedom, (Sabine) p.579, (Hill) p.364.

17. G. Winstanley, Truth Lifting Up its Head..., p.105.

to right reason as a principle for the justification of social conduct was, of course, a trend which gathered momentum as the seventeenth century progressed. During the Civil War such appeals were prevalent amongst radicals, especially the Levellers. What distinguished Winstanley's resort to reason was his infusion of spiritual significance into the concept. Thus he believed that men could not act reasonably without some prior experience of the 'Spirit Reason'.

The potentially restorative effect of reason was an oft-repeated element of Winstanley's writings. On one occasion he speculated that,

"it is Reason that made all things, and it is reason that Governs the whole Creation, and if flesh were but subject thereunto, that is, to the spirit of Reason within himself, it would never act unrighteousness,..."¹⁸

Winstanley's belief that men could only perceive reason experimentally was typical of the general tenor of his religious ideas. This prompted him to the confident assertion that any man who experienced the spirit of reason "may be said to be a perfect man."¹⁹ Thus, in the sensation of reason, Winstanley saw the means to the ultimate recovery of what men had forsaken at the Fall.

An important principle of contemporary psychology was the appreciation that reason could restrain imagination and consequently prevent immoral or selfish actions.²⁰ In general, Winstanley accorded with this view, and suggested that reasonable conduct could be known by experimental means. Again

18. G.Winstanley, The Saints Paradise, p.78.

19. G.Winstanley, Truth Lifting Up its Head..., p.111.

20. See, P.Elmen, 'The Theological Basis of Digger Communism', Church History, Vol.23 (1954), pp.207-218, at pp.211-212.

Winstanley's distrust of the forwardness of human imagination will become apparent in our consideration of his account of

this particular aspect of his assessment of man's potential impinged upon Winstanley's social theory. For instance, he argued that reason bore an integral relationship to the practice of communism because,

"it hath a regard to the whole creation; and knits every creature together into a onenesse; making every creature to be an upholder of his fellow; and so every one is an assistant to preserve the whole."²¹

The contention that reason, the harmony of the creation, and communism, were connected, recurred throughout Winstanley's writings. So Winstanley used reason in a sense which indicates the spiritual implications of his social recommendations :-

"Reason makes a man to live moderately and peaceably with all; he makes a man just and righteous in all his actings; he kills frowardnesse, envy and pride in a man; and why? where lies the Reason? Because this man stands in need of him; and therefore makes a man to doe as he would be done unto."²²

Winstanley associated his analysis of reason with his concept of the spirit. The spirit was an important aspect of Winstanley's consideration of experimental religion, and he usually described it as a restorative agent. For instance, Winstanley claimed that,

"the power oi (of) the Spirit, who is the King of righteousnesse within every man, treads down the flesh, and sets the creature free from Hell, Death, and Devil."²³

the Fall of Man, see particularly, below, note 101.

21. G. Winstanley, Truth Lifting Up its Head..., p.105.

22. ibid., p.109; this ideal is repeated in Winstanley's later writings, see, e.g., The True Levellers' Standard Advanced, (Sabine) p.254, (Hill) p.80.

23. G. Winstanley, The Saints Paradice, p.77.

So, before men could become righteous, they had first to experience the spirit. Further, the spirit would bring men into communion with the guiding power of the entire creation. Winstanley confirmed that such an experience would bestow upon man the assurance of inner peace, regardless of the traumatic disruptions of the world about him.²⁴ This line of argument was a basis of Winstanley's anti-intellectualism, whereby he claimed that experience of the spirit, rather than formal learning, was the essential criterion of true religious knowledge.

Although he recognized that, historically, Christ had been a perfect man, "God manifest in the flesh,"²⁵ Winstanley was generally more concerned to stress the potential influence of the spirit of Christ upon contemporary society. Essentially, Winstanley conceived of Christ as a mediator who would remove sin from the world.²⁶ This redemption would be achieved as individual men experienced the resurrection of 'Christ within'. Thus Winstanley regarded Christ as,

"not a single man at a distance from you; but... the wisdom and power of the Father, who spirits the whole creation, dwelling and ruling King of righteousness in your very flesh."²⁷

It is perhaps not surprising that Winstanley was at greater ease in discussing the spirit of Christ, than in accounting for the corporeal presence of Christ on earth. His exposition of the historical resurrection and ascension of

24. G. Winstanley, Truth Lifting Up its Head..., p.101.

25. G. Winstanley, The Breaking of the Day..., p.3.

26. G. Winstanley, 'The Myserie of God, Concerning the whole Creation, Mankinde', in, Several Pieces Gathered Into one Volume, p.31.

27. G. Winstanley, The Saints Paradice, p.75.

Jesus is complicated and unconvincing. However, in anticipating the Second Coming, Winstanley was more confident about what to expect,

"if you look for him under the notion of one single man after the flesh, to be your saviour, you shall never, never taste salvation by him...if you expect, or look for the resurrection of Jesus Christ, you must know, that the spirit within the flesh is the Jesus Christ, and you must see, feel, and know from himself his own resurrection within you, if you expect life and peace by him."²⁹

Again, this

emphasis upon the spiritual return of Christ, which could, in principle, be experienced by all men, had a profound effect on Winstanley's social theory.

As we shall see when we consider his account of the Fall of Man, Winstanley was particularly concerned with his conception³⁰ of the conflict between the spirit and flesh within man. Winstanley believed that the more an individual succumbed to the temptings of the flesh, the more he would be inclined to seek material rather than spiritual fulfilment - by displaying an unwholesome interest in private property, commerce, and sensual gratification. However, Winstanley argued that Christ³¹ as the son of righteousness and the inner light, would come³² to dwell within man, and would destroy his inner darkness. The implications of this theory for Winstanley's social and

28. G.Winstanley, Truth Lifting Up its Head..., p.112-117.

29. G.Winstanley, The Saints Paradise, pp.53-54, see also, Truth Lifting Up its Head..., p.113.

30. There are certain parallels here to T.H.Green's discussion of St.Paul in, Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation, intro. A.D.Lindsay, (London 1941), pp.2-3.

31. G.Winstanley, The New Law of Righteousnes, p.166.

32. G.Winstanley, The Mysterie of God..., passim.

political, ideas were considerable. Not only did Winstanley use this outlook to explain the existing condition of human nature, and the social arrangements which men presently sustained, but according to it, he also posited the notion of an improvement in men's manners. Initially, Winstanley was confident that the coming of Christ within, would lead to far-reaching social reforms. Yet, after a period of deliberation, he concluded that institutions must first change before men could experience the inner light :-

"when your flesh is subject to the spirit of righteousness, as the flesh of Christ was, and this is to believe in Christ,..."³³

Christ within would act as a restraint on thought and action, so that men might recover their true liberty by renouncing materialism.³⁴

Winstanley inferred that, because God was reasonable and righteous, and was perceptible by men, His adversary, the Devil, could also be discovered within men. Winstanley identified the Devil as the unrighteous flesh and the bondage of the curse evident in sinful human nature. Consequently he stated that,

"the Devil is not the third power between God and man, but he is the curse in flesh; and the power of utter darkness in this,..."³⁵

As a result of God's dispensation of wrath, fallen men were conscious of their sinfulness to the extent that "pride of the flesh, envy, slavish fear, distrust, hypocrisie,³⁶ carnall thoughts, self love, and the like, are particular Devils."

33. G. Winstanley, The Saints Paradice, p.56.

34. G. Winstanley, Truth Lifting Up its Head..., p.135, and The New Law of Righteousnes, p.158.

35. G. Winstanley, The Saints Paradice, pp.65-66, see also, pp.29-32-33.

36. ibid., p.19, see also, pp.68,75.

Winstanley suggested that such bondage of the soul might appropriately be described as 'hell'.³⁷ His rejection of the notion of an immanent Devil was of considerable importance to his general view of man's potential, and ultimately to his social theory. Because he believed that both evil, and the illusion that the Devil existed as a separate party, were attributable to corrupted human nature, which was itself eradicable,³⁸ Winstanley was able to conceive of a degree of social progress which would not be restrained by an independent entity devoted to the destruction of man's ideals.

As a corollary to his arguments concerning the experimental basis of spirituality, Winstanley contended that internal sensations³⁹ were the only substantial forms of what men called 'heaven and hell'. In his writings, Winstanley associated the experience of God and Christ within, with the location of heaven. So, for instance, he made the following distinction :-

"And what is this Heaven? Why truly, as the Firmament is called Heaven in the history, because the created Sun, Moon, and Stars, those glorious lights are seated there; so wheresoever God dwells, who is the light of lights, that is called Heaven in the mystery."⁴⁰

Implicit here is the assumption that, by experiencing the spirit within, men could be restored to a condition of righteousness, and thus be redeemed during the course of their earthly existence.

The converse of Winstanley's conception of heaven was his view that hell constituted a condition of despair and

37. ibid., p.38.

38. ibid., p.33.

39. G.Winstanley, The New Law of Righteousnes, pp.215-217, and below, pp.591-592.

40. G.Winstanley, The Breaking of the Day..., p.119.

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unrighteousness from which men were restored by experiencing the light within. So, according to Winstanley, hell was the 'death' and sorrow which all descendents of Adam were obliged to endure until their redemption.⁴² Thus he claimed that,

"if the selfish power rule your heart; then as you live now upon uncertainties, in confusion and vexation: so this manifestation of hell, darknesse and sorrows, shall multiply within you;..."⁴³

By implication, it is apparent that Winstanley envisaged the transformation of human nature as the means by which men would experience heaven on earth. A startling feature of Winstanley's thought is that his social theory was constructed to achieve this end. Thus he assumed that, by living according to certain social institutions such as communism, men might conceive of their earthly existence as a 'heavenly' experience.

The relationship between conceptions of heaven and hell, and the organization of society, is also evident in Winstanley's appreciation that the prospect of heaven and the fear of hell, were promulgated by the contemporary clergy with the deliberate and self-interested intention of restraining men's conduct. These sanctions, Winstanley realized, were designed to reinforce the existing structure of society and, consequently, perpetuated the disadvantages of the common people. So Winstanley taunted the clergy for their reluctance to depart immediately to the attractive after-life they portrayed to the laity. Instead, Winstanley insisted that men could have no certain knowledge⁴⁴ of final causes, and rather impudently argued that,

41. G.Winstanley, The New Law of Righteousnes, p.218.

42. G.Winstanley, The Mysterie of God..., pp.51-52.

43. G.Winstanley, The New Law of Righteousnes, p.216.

44. G.Winstanley, The Law of Freedom, (Sabine) pp.565-567, (Hill) pp.348-350.

"If there be a local place of hell, as Preachers say there is, besides this I speak of, time will make it manifest but as yet none ever came back from the dead to tell men on earth, and till then, men ought to speak no more than they know; what I speak, I speak from what I have from some measure seen within me, and as I have received from the Lord in clear light within myself."⁴⁵

Once again, Winstanley confined certainty in the spiritual realm to knowledge ascertained experimentally.

Winstanley's claims for experimental religion caused him to distinguish the 'gospel' from 'scripture'.⁴⁶ He clarified this differentiation by arguing that,

"First, The Gospel is the Spirit that ruled in the Prophets and Apostles, which testified to them, that in the latter daies the same Spirit should be poured out upon all flesh. Secondly, then their writings is not the Spirit; but a report or declaration of that law and testimony which was written within them."⁴⁷

Winstanley went on to contend that the gospel, or immediate perception of the spirit, was realized as it brought peace to men's souls. Accordingly,⁴⁸ the curse was lifted and man was reconciled to his Maker.

It has been noted that a number of left-wing commentators have regarded Winstanley's citation of biblical passages as little more than a mark of deference to contemporary convention. However, by examining Winstanley's attitude to scripture, this conclusion can be invalidated. According to Winstanley, the

45. G. Winstanley, The New Law of Righteousnes, p.219.

46. G. Winstanley, The Breaking of the Day..., pp.115-116.

47. G. Winstanley, Truth Lifting Up its Head..., p.101.

48. ibid., pp.122-124.

49

scriptures were a "record of experimentall testimony." Thus he believed that the Bible constituted an exposition of individual human experience. This led Winstanley to distinguish the literal knowledge of scripture, which could be acquired at a university, from the spirit of the truth, which could only be appreciated by those who had experienced it directly. So he contended that,

"it is not the Apostles writings, but the spirit that dwelt in them that did inspire their hearts, which gives life, and peace to us all."⁵⁰

So the scriptures were a report of the gospel, which was in turn, the experience of the spirit by Christ, the Apostles, and the Prophets.⁵¹ If the same spirit infused an individual in contemporary seventeenth-century society, he would become capable of interpreting the scriptures correctly.⁵² Because Winstanley believed that most men, particularly the university-educated clergy, were fallen, and were motivated by the flesh, his anti-intellectual emphasis upon spiritual enlightenment occasionally assumed, at least as a short-term prospect, a degree of exclusivity.⁵³ Hence, Winstanley asserted that,

"if the same anointing or power and wisdom of God dwell and rule in you as did appear in the Prophets and Apostles that writ, then you can see into that mysterie of the Scripture (which is God manifest in flesh) and so can speak the minde of the Scriptures, though you should

49. ibid., p.128.

50. G.Winstanley, The Saints Paradise, p.8.

51. G.Winstanley, Truth Lifting Up its Head..., p.122, and The New Law of Righteousnes, P.165.

52. G.Winstanley, Truth Lifting Up its Head..., p.126.

53. For other instances of the problems pertaining to Winstanley's belief in universal redemption, yet occasional conception of some form of 'elect', see below, pp.454-455.

never see,hear,nor read the Scripture from men."

Indeed,

Winstanley often attributed the mistranslation and corruption of biblical texts to the scrutiny afforded the scriptures by formally educated men who lived by the flesh. Conversely, Winstanley often insisted that the lower orders of society would be the first to experience the spirit within. The radical implications of these ideas are obvious. Winstanley's attitude to the Bible inspired much of the self-confidence necessary for the advancement of a social theory which many commentators have wrongly sought to isolate from his religious ideas.

The fact that Winstanley's analysis of sin was by no means as comprehensive as More's had been is a further indication of Winstanley's more optimistic assessment of human potential. In general, Winstanley equated sin with the characteristics of fallen human nature. Thus, he often argued that the crux of human sinfulness lay in pride, hypocrisy, self-love, and covetousness.⁵⁵ Winstanley accepted that sinfulness had been introduced at the Fall :-

"When the whole earth is filled with this disobedience, so that you cannot meet with a branch of mankinde; but hee lives upon the objects of the creation, and not upon the spirit."⁵⁶

Clearly, Winstanley believed that social malaise was attributable to human sinfulness. His frequent association of sin with darkness, and with the flesh, suggests that he received certain ideas through the medium of Protestant

54. G.Winstanley, The Saints Paradise, p.10.

55. See, e.g., G.Winstanley, The New Law of Righteousnes, p.174, and Fire in the Bush, (Sabine) pp.483-484, (Hill) pp.256-257.

56. G.Winstanley, Truth Lifting Up its Head..., p.118.

preaching. In this instance, Winstanley's thought is particularly reminiscent of St. Augustine's views on concupiscence.⁵⁷ However, the fabric of Winstanley's social theory assumed the rejection of the notion of original sin. This does not merely imply that Winstanley was a religious radical who advanced an heretical view of human sinfulness, but suggests also that Winstanley was influenced by a changing conception of the human condition which seemed increasingly valid as the seventeenth century progressed.

Alongside this substantive notion of sin, Winstanley also discerned the social utility of 'sin' as a restraint upon conduct. Obviously, the rationale for this usage was very similar to the sanctional implications of contemporary notions of heaven and hell. In Winstanley's opinion, so much discourse on the nature of sin was devoid of any moral content. Indeed he maintained that the utilization of 'sin' to suggest threatened penalties was reprehensible and truly sinful, because it led, for instance, to the preservation of private property.⁵⁸ So Winstanley insisted that the real sinner was not the man who challenged assumptions concerning private property, but,

"he, that restraines the liberty of the outward man, not suffering him to have a free enjoyment of his portion in the Earth; making such actions to be a sinne, which the righteous creating Spirit made not a sinne."⁵⁹

Therefore

Winstanley concluded that actual sin constituted such

57. For this aspect of Augustine's thought, see, H.A. Deane, The Political and Social Ideas of St. Augustine, (New York 1963), chapters 1 and 2.

58. G. Winstanley, A New - yeers Gift for the Parliament and Armie, (Sabine) p.380, (Hill) p.192.

59. G. Winstanley, Fire in the Bush, (Sabine) p.468, (Hill) p.239.

covetousness that impelled men to deprive their fellows of their birthright, by using as a sanction, the idea that it was sinful to demand those very rights.

As a preliminary to our analysis of Winstanley's account of the Fall of Man and the ensuing cosmic battle between good and evil, it is necessary to clarify what he meant in his reference to 'Adam'. There are several uses of the term 'Adam' of relevance to this discussion.⁶⁰ For instance, on the one hand, Winstanley accorded with the conventional usage by calling the first man to fall, 'Adam'. However, he also used the name as a typological concept to cover all other men, who would undergo a similar fall. Thus Winstanley claimed that,

"we may see Adam every day before our eyes walking up and down the street."⁶¹

Further, Winstanley often referred to the collective of fallen individuals as the 'first Adam'. Alternatively, he also maintained that the term might appropriately be used to indicate the state of human nature that resulted as men lived according to the flesh - "Self is the first Adam that falls from the Spirit." Winstanley went on to summarize his position by stating that,

"Every particular branch of mankind, living upon the objects of the creation, and rejecting their maker, are lineage or generation of the first man: yea, being bound up all together, they make up but the one first Adam."⁶²

The time

allotted for the ascendancy of this phase of human nature was necessarily limited. Thus Winstanley confidently predicted that the first Adam would be succeeded by the 'Second Adam', and that

60. G. Winstanley, Truth Lifting Up its Head..., p.117.

61. ibid., p.120.

62. ibid., p.117.

man would be restored by living according to reason.

It will be argued in due course that Winstanley conceived of the salvation of man as a process of restoration which would take place on earth. He was anxious to juxtapose his own view of the requirements for salvation, against more orthodox opinion. Thus, in discussing the spirit of Christ he argued that,

"you are not saved by believing, there was such a man, that lived and died in Jerusalem, for though you believe there was such a man, yet it is not saving faith to you, till you feel the power of a meek spirit come into you, and reign King."⁶³

Once again, Winstanley placed the emphasis upon the mystical experiences of the individual, rather than on the subscription to preordained beliefs and practices. In this context, the process of 'anointing' was of great importance. So, for instance, he maintained that,

"when the same Anointing or Spirit that was sent downe into that body; (Christ's) is sent down into yours, changing your vile bodies and making them like that glorious body, killing all the cursed powers in the flesh; making your flesh subject to the Spirit; now you are become one with Christ and with the Father, which is your salvation."⁶⁴

As we shall see, Winstanley's thought passed through a series of stages, each of which involved a different theory of how this process would occur.

In this section we have provided a brief analysis of the core of Winstanley's religious ideas. In considering Winstanley's

63. G. Winstanley, The Saints Paradise, p. 55.

64. G. Winstanley, Truth Lifting Up its Head..., pp. 112-113.

appreciation of the Fall of Man, and subsequently, in relating this to his social theory, it will become apparent that his religious assumptions provided the foundation for the conception of mankind's predicament to which his social analysis was addressed. For instance, it has already been suggested that Winstanley saw a correspondence between living according to the dictates of the flesh, relying on formal religious practices and received ideas, and turning to material gratification, (in particular, the accumulation of private property), to satisfy the desires of fallen human nature. Alternatively, he supposed that, if men were guided by the spirit of righteousness, they would acquire such peace of mind that they would become spiritually self-sufficient. Thus they would trust in experimental knowledge, and sustain social institutions centred on communism. These, and other themes, will be examined in greater detail in the following two chapters. However, it is now necessary to turn our attention to Winstanley's account of the Fall.

ii The Fall of Man and the Myth of the Norman Yoke

Much of Winstanley's social theory was devoted to the problem of how the conditions that had existed before the Fall might be restored. Furthermore, his image of the society that might be created by institutional reform bore some semblance to his conception of the pristine condition. Hence, Winstanley's conception of the original condition was fundamental to the overall structure of his thought. As Winstanley maintained that universal love had prevailed before the Fall,⁶⁵ he also concluded that the restoration must involve the recovery of the law of righteousness. According to Winstanley, man's spiritual condition pertained to two elements of social life in particular - work and labour, and the status of property. His interpretation of the curse that resulted from the Fall, related to a degeneration in the moral calibre of these two spheres. Winstanley also advanced the impression that, originally, all men had participated in an harmonious natural environment :-

"In the beginning of time the whole Creation lived in man, and man lived in his Maker, the spirit of Righteousnesse and peace, for every creature walked evenly with man, and delighted in man, and was ruled by him; there was no opposition between him and the beast, fowls, fishes, or any creature in the earth: so that it was truely said, The whole Creation was in man,..."⁶⁶

Initially Winstanley argued in a rather 'traditional'⁶⁷ vein that,

"after God had made Adam, he put him into a Garden called Eden, which was full of Trees, Hearbs, Creatures, for pleasure and delight, that he should dresse it, and live contentedly

65. G. Winstanley, A New-years Gift..., (Sabine) p.375, (Hill) p.186.

66. G. Winstanley, The New Law of Righteousnes, p.155.

67. See, e.g., Thomas More's account, above, pp.218-220.

in the use of all things therein;..."⁶⁸

Some months later, in attempting to justify the communal cultivation of the commons to Fairfax,⁶⁹ Winstanley appears to have maintained a similar position in pointing out that,

"Before the Fall, Adam, or the Man did dresse the garden, or the earth, in love, freedome and righteousnesse,..."⁷⁰

However, by this time Winstanley had elaborated upon his theory of labour and, commensurately, had realized that the claim that man in the original condition was not constrained to provide for his own subsistence might produce certain discordant implications should it be juxtaposed to his rationale for digging. So Winstanley amended his former position by contending that,

"when he consented to that serpent covetousnesse, then he fell from righteousnesse, was cursed, and was sent into the earth to eat his bread in sorrow: And from that time began particular propriety..."⁷¹

As Winstanley assumed that the establishment of private property, particularly in land, was one aspect of the curse, he argued that hired labour was another.⁷² So he eventually distinguished hired labour from the working of land which was not privately owned :-

"To subdue the Earth. And this implies, plowing, digging, and all kind of manuring. So the obverse. That bare and simple working of the Earth, according to the freedome of

68. G. Winstanley, The Mysterie of God, p.1.

69. See below, pp.490-494.

70. G. Winstanley, To The Lord Fairfax, Generall of the English Forces, and His Councill of War, (Sabine) p.289.

71. ibid., pp.289-290.

72. For the full significance of Winstanley's differentiation of labour and hired labour, see below, pp.475-480, 577-580.

the Creation, though it be in the sweat of mans browes, is not the curse."⁷³

Such a proposition was consistent with Winstanley's claims that the strenuous activity of 'digging, and the obligation to labour detailed in The Law of Freedom, were restorative. Ultimately, Winstanley suggested that man could labour to revive his dominion over nature.

Winstanley was more consistent and explicit in discussing the nature of property before the Fall. He categorically maintained that in the original condition all objects had been held in common, and that there had been no private property. In discussing the act of creation Winstanley said,

"as he made mankinde to be the Lord of the Earth, so he made the Earth to be a common Treasury of livelihood to whole mankind without respect of persons."⁷⁴

The idea that the earth once was, and ought still to be, a 'common treasury' was, of course, an integral theme in Winstanley's writings. Similarly, Winstanley insisted that all men had a birthright to partake of the common treasury :-

"In the first entrance into the Creation, every man had an equall freedom given him of his Maker to till the earth, and to have dominion over the beasts of the field, the fowls of heaven, and fish in the Seas."⁷⁵

As his social ideas developed, Winstanley argued that this 'creation-right' had been abrogated by the introduction of private property, and continued to be withheld from men by social arrangements which were largely attributable to the Norman Conquest. So by

73. G. Winstanley, An Humble Request..., p.423.

74. G. Winstanley, A New-years Gift..., (Sabine) p.376, (Hill) p.187.

75. G. Winstanley, The New Law of Righteousnes, p.182.

maintaining that the Civil War had been fought to overthrow Normanism, Winstanley eventually asserted that the birthright to cultivate the land (or at least the common lands) ought to be immediately restored to the common people.

We have already seen that contemporary thinking on the pristine condition tended to emphasize man's former dominion over nature.⁷⁶ As Winstanley drew upon this notion, he realized the radical implications of it. He suggested what the universal application of this principle would involve by stressing that,

"mankind in all his branches is the lord over Beasts, Birds, Fishes, and the Earth, and was not made to acknowledge any of his owne kind to be his teacher and ruler."⁷⁷

Thus Winstanley

used his ideas on the 'common treasury' and the original form of labour to argue that, formerly, man's dominion had been over animals alone, and that consequently,

"not one word was spoken in the beginning, That one branch of mankind should rule over another."⁷⁸

So, according to

Winstanley, in the pristine condition of common ownership, all men enjoyed the dominion over nature; only after the Fall were men themselves subjugated to the authority of other men. Given that Winstanley regarded land as the fundamental form of property, he assumed that the reintroduction of the 'common treasury' would restore men to the original harmonious condition, and would thereby free them from the oppressing domination of their fellows. This, however, is to anticipate

76. Above pp.101-102.

77. G.Winstanley, To The Lord Fairfax, . . ., p.289.

78. G.Winstanley, The True Levellers' Standard Advanced, (Sabine) p.251, (Hill) p.77.

our argument. We must now turn our attention to Winstanley's interpretation of the Fall of Man.

Although Christopher Hill has repeatedly argued that Winstanley regarded the Fall as a myth which concealed a profound social truth,⁷⁹ Winstanley displayed such a consistent preoccupation with the Fall of Man⁸⁰ that it would seem that his consideration of it was rather more central to the overall structure of his thought than Hill allows. Despite a sophisticated use of allegory and imagery, (for instance, the tree of life - for universal love, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil - for man's imagination, and the serpent - for the role of man's imagination in introducing dominion and lordship⁸¹), Winstanley was genuinely convinced that mankind in general had fallen from a former pristine condition, and that this had distanced man from God. Further, Winstanley applied these ideas to his consideration of his own spiritual crisis, and that of his fellow man. That Winstanley's was an unorthodox view of the Fall is not disputed; it is our intention to analyse the particular connections between this aspect of his thought and his social theory.

It has already been suggested that Winstanley regarded the law of reason as the guiding principle which, by ensuring that men lived according to the spirit of righteousness, established and maintained the harmony of the creation. Winstanley regarded the Fall as the process by which men broke this law and

79. C. Hill, The World Turned Upside Down, p. 145; introduction to Winstanley: The Law of Freedom, (London 1973), p. 54, ff.; and, Milton and the English Revolution, (London 1977), pp. 341-344.

80. Cf. The Mysterie of God, p. 1, The True Levellers' Standard Advanced, (Sabine) pp. 251-252, (Hill) pp. 77-78, The Law of Freedom, (Sabine) pp. 530-532, (Hill) pp. 308-310.

81. G. Winstanley, Fire in the Bush, (Sabine) p. 452, (Hill) p. 220, and chapter 1, 'What the Garden of Eden is', (Sabine) pp. 451-455, (Hill) pp. 219-224, for Winstanley's most allegorical account of the Fall.

descended into the current desperate state of human nature. As Winstanley argued,

"if there had been no Law, there had been no transgression, if there had been no binding law of reason to require him to cleave only to his maker, and to eye and own him principally; then he had not done evill though he had placed his delight in the objects of the earth."⁸²

Similarly,

he contended that the Fall involved man's,

"revolt from the spirit, in making choyce to live upon the creation, and not upon the spirit: and hereby now the law of Reason is broke."⁸³

As we shall see, Winstanley's interpretation of the Fall involved not only a concern with man's original transgression, but also with his continuing defiance of the law of reason.

Although Winstanley believed that the most important aspect of Adam's Fall was its significance as a psychological exemplar for future generations, he initially propounded a relatively orthodox and historical account of the original sin.⁸⁴

Accordingly, Winstanley began his description of "the Garden of Eden, the History",⁸⁵ by arguing that Adam once possessed a pure nature. However, because Adam had been created as a distinct creature from God, he inevitably possessed the inclination to self-love, and the aspiration to be God's equal. Thus, the inviolability of the forbidden fruit became the crucial point at issue between the will of God and the will of man. The recognition of this sanctity was the test of man's free and wilful subjugation to God. However, Adam, being self-loving and

82. G. Winstanley, Truth Lifting Up its Head..., p.134.

83. ibid., p.119.

84. G. Winstanley, The Mysterie of God..., pp.1-9.

85. ibid., p.3.

proud, transgressed God's command and took upon himself the knowledge of good and evil. Delighting in his profanation and wickedness, Adam fell from God into a condition which Winstanley called 'death'. Despite all this, the allegorical implications of Winstanley's testimony are evident in the statement that,

"this selfishnesse in the midle of the living garden, Adam, is the forbidden fruit, and this is called the Serpent, because it windes itself into every creature,..."⁸⁶

The most

peculiar characteristic of Winstanley's rendition of the Fall was his conception of the means by which sin would be perpetuated so that men remained in the fallen condition. Instead of subscribing to more conventional accounts based on the transmission of guilt and the notion of innate and original sin, Winstanley insisted that all subsequent men would, during the course of their own lifetimes, re-enact Adam's injudicious conduct.

One of Winstanley's most radical propositions was that the Fall was not an experience confined to the first historical Adam. So although Winstanley maintained that "This Adam is within every man and woman,"⁸⁷ he sought not to emphasize the congenital transmission of sin, but instead individuated and internalized the Fall by conceiving of it as an element of the life-cycle. Thus he asserted that,

"when a man fals, let him not blame a man that died 6000 years ago, but blame himself, even the powers of his own flesh, which led him astray; for this is Adam that brings a man to misery,..."⁸⁸

86. ibid., p.4.

87. G.Winstanley, The New Law of Righteousnes, p.176, see also, p.150, cf., Fire in the Bush, (Sabine) pp.480-481, (Hill) p.254.

88. G.Winstanley, The New Law of Righteousnes, p.177.

Winstanley believed that the historic Adam was distinct only in being the first man to experience the Fall. Accordingly, Winstanley maintained that human nature remained depraved because men had subsequently and repeatedly fallen. So unlike More, Winstanley did not subscribe to the notion of innate and original sin contained in orthodox and traditional accounts of the Fall. Implicit in Winstanley's individuated version of the Fall was the assumption that men were capable of rectifying their predicament by removing the objects which tempted them to fall.

Winstanley's account of the process by which successive individuals fell is one of the most significant aspects of his thought. By arguing that "Adam's innocency is the time of child-hood,"⁸⁹ Winstanley was able to claim that as each individual attained the age of understanding, he was faced with a choice between the righteous path, or material indulgence. The essence of his decision was the conflict between the spirit and the flesh. Winstanley assumed that the flesh would inevitably triumph, and that men would seek "self-propriety, which is the curse."⁹⁰ This emphasis upon selfishness was a pivotal element in Winstanley's theory of the individuated⁹¹ fall. Thus he cited selfishness as the 'forbidden fruit', and claimed that the 'serpent' enticed men to reject the spirit and instead to gratify the flesh by living from the objects of the creation.⁹² In like manner Winstanley stated that,

"if you delight more in the objects of the earth, to please selfe, then in the spirit that made all things, then

89. ibid., p.212.

90. ibid., p.200, cf., A New-years Gift..., (Sabine) p.377, (Hill) p.188.

91. G.Winstanley, The Saints Paradise, p.45.

92. G.Winstanley, Truth Lifting Up its Head..., p.135.

you eat of the forbidden fruit, you take the Apple, and become naked and ashamed."⁹³

Winstanley explained that the
⁹⁴
 'apple' signified material objects. So he assumed that once man had forgone righteousness, "then appears pride, covetousnesse, frowardnesse, uncleanesse springing in his heart."⁹⁵ Thus it followed that in order to derive some inner peace of mind, all men emulated the historic Adam by attempting to acquire particular objects from the creation, and so private property was created and sustained. Most obviously, because Winstanley regarded the earth as a 'common treasury', he was primarily concerned with the assumption of private property in the form of land. Hence, he commented on the propensity of fallen men to enclose parcels of land and to declare a particular property therein.⁹⁶ Clearly, Winstanley believed that the social implications of all this had been quite devastating - as,

"man began to look after the objects of the earth, delighting himself to live upon or among fellow creatures more then the spirit; and so chose to himself another livelihood and protection,...

....but when he fell off, and delighted to follow the lusts of his eye, the lusts of his heart, and guidance of the flesh, then he governed al in unrighteousnesse, and so pulling death and curse upon himself, and upon the earth."⁹⁷

Undoubtedly,

Winstanley's evaluation of the results of the Fall were as central to his social theory as More's had been to Utopia.

Winstanley was often unclear as to the exact causal

93. G.Winstanley, The New Law of Righteousnes, p.211.

94. ibid., p.177.

95. G.Winstanley, The Saints Paradiice, p.38.

96. G.Winstanley, Fire in the Bush, (Sabine) p.489, (Hill) p.264.

97. G.Winstanley, Truth Lifting Up its Head..., p.133.

relationship between the Fall and the creation of private property. This is because he regularly attempted to discuss the historical and internalized versions of the Fall simultaneously. In the latter form, outward objects were often cited as the causes of the fall of particular individuals. This has tempted certain commentators into somewhat categorical assumptions. Thus T.W.Hayes has argued that,

"To Winstanley, the Fall is not an abstract, timeless generality, but a historical phenomenon originating in the creation of private property and the commodity character of the division of labour it produces."⁹⁸

Christopher Hill has presented a similar, although more cautious appraisal :-

"Winstanley reversed the order: covetousness and private property are the causes, not the consequences, of the Fall."⁹⁹

This extract highlights the difficulties Winstanley presents, because Hill has been forced to identify an attribute of fallen human nature (covetousness), and an institution sustained by such a characteristic (private property), as the joint causes of the Fall. More recently however, Hill seems to have recognized this problem and has changed the wording of his argument accordingly :-

"This reverses the orthodox view that private property, inequality, and the state which protects them, were consequences of the Fall. For Winstanley the establishment of private property was the Fall..."¹⁰⁰

In this case, Hill appears to have abandoned the question of causality and replaced it

98. T.W.Hayes, Winstanley the Digger, (Cambridge Massachusetts) p.205, see also, p.203.

99. C.Hill, introduction, op.cit., p.53.

100. C.Hill, 'The Religion of Gerrard Winstanley', P.&P., Supplement 5 (1978), p.33.

with an assertion that Winstanley correlated the institution of private property and the Fall. However, it appears more likely that Winstanley believed that, historically, the Fall had given rise to the institution of private property,¹⁰¹ and that subsequently its existence tempted successive individuals to enter the fallen condition.

Winstanley revealed a certain similarity to More in arguing that, once the detrimental step had been taken towards the institution of private property, the resultant insecurity that all men experienced as a consequence of competitive appropriation, simply perpetuated the process. Thus the Fall heralded the inception of particular interests which were subsequently maintained :-

"this is the beginner of particular interest, buying and selling the earth from one particular hand to another, saying, This is mine, upholding this particular propriety by a law of government of his own making, and thereby restraining other fellow creatures from seeking nourishment from their mother earth."¹⁰²

Further, Winstanley, like More, argued that once an individual was fallen, he would inevitably seek to appropriate property because,

"Covetousness begets Fear, lest others should cross them in their Design; or else begets a Fear of want, and this makes a man to draw the creatures to him..."¹⁰³

So Winstanley, as had More before him, regarded communism as a solution to such fear

101. G. Winstanley, The New Law of Righteousnes, p.156, for his view that private property was the curse.

102. ibid., p.158.

103. G. Winstanley, A New-years Gift..., (Sabine) p.379, (Hill) p.191, see also, Fire in the Bush, (Sabine) pp.460-461, (Hill) p.230, for the insidious role of 'imagination' - because men can imagine poverty, they fear it.

of want that was both the cause and consequence of private property. Winstanley argued that private property had stimulated such antagonism between men that the whole reprehensible system of 'buying and selling', and the multiplication of lawsuits, could be directly attributed to it. Ultimately, Winstanley denounced warfare as the most pronounced manifestation of the competitiveness initiated at the Fall.¹⁰⁴ The Diggers attempted to defy the curse through pacifism.

If we recall that his business failure may have contributed to his spiritual crisis, it seems that Winstanley was expressing his own predicament in claiming that,

"They that live upon outward objects are filled with inward trouble."¹⁰⁵

Consequently, Winstanley regarded communism as a cure for the mental turmoil of fallen man. Thus we shall see that Winstanley eventually advocated communism as the means of restoring an experimental sensation of 'heaven' to all men. Hence he assumed that for the unredeemed individual,

"this living soule is the heaven, in which the battell is fought between the curse and the blessing."¹⁰⁶

In keeping with his general theory of the human experience, Winstanley contended that the cosmic conflict between good and evil was internalized and so determined the prevailing character of human nature. So, rather allegorically, he pointed out that,

"Since uprighteousnesse was acted in humane flesh against his maker, every son and daughter of that disobedient flesh is like a man, upon whom two fierce hand dogs hath

104. G. Winstanley, A New-years Gift..., (Sabine) pp. 379-380, (Hill) pp. 190-192, and, To The Lord Fairfax..., p. 290.

105. G. Winstanley, Fire in the Bush, (Sabine) p. 458, (Hill) p. 228.

106. ibid., (Sabine) p. 476, (Hill) p. 249.

laid hold, and pulling to pieces..."¹⁰⁷

So within each individual a conflict occurred in which, on the one hand, darkness, bondage, the flesh, the serpent, and the Devil, were pitted against, on the other hand, the inner light, freedom, righteousness, and Christ.¹⁰⁸ Winstanley maintained that so long as men indulged their lusts, they attained a seeming tranquility, but as soon as they began to experience the spirit of righteousness, and question their former lifestyle, this apparent peace of mind was destroyed.¹⁰⁹ However, since the time of the historical Adam, this fleshly and materialist condition had unfortunately persisted, because the man of sin had triumphed over the man of righteousness.¹¹⁰

Winstanley's theory of the internalization of the cosmic drama had profound implications for his social philosophy. Not only did he believe that the impulse to appropriate private property was characteristic of fallen human nature, but he also suggested that, as they endeavoured to secure their interests, men would compete for power. In identifying this facet of human nature, Winstanley echoed the thought and expression of his great contemporary, Thomas Hobbes.¹¹¹ Of fallen men, Winstanley had this to say :-

"all that Adam doth is to advance himself to be, The one power; he gets riches and government into his hands, that he may lift up himself, and suppress the universall liberty"¹¹²

107. G.Winstanley, The Saints Paradise, p.70.

108. ibid., p.21 ff, and, The New Law of Righteousnes, p.173.

109. G.Winstanley, The Saints Paradise, p.20.

110. G.Winstanley, Truth Lifting Up its Head..., p.133.

111. Cf. G.Winstanley, The Saints Paradise, p.73, and T.Hobbes, Leviathan, E.W., Vol.111, chapter XI, especially, pp.85-86.

112. G.Winstanley, The New Law of Righteousnes, pp.157-158.

Winstanley insisted that, consequently, fallen men would abuse political power to advance their own self-interest.

Inevitably,

"every one that gets an authority into his hands, tyrannizes over others."¹¹³

This led Winstanley to the conclusion that "the Monarchial spirit is the power of darkness."¹¹⁴

Winstanley's correlation of fallen human nature and the existing structure of politics was a further reason for his ultimate identification of institutional reform and the spiritual regeneration of man.

Undoubtedly Winstanley regarded the Fall in both the historical and internal senses, as fundamental to the human condition. In keeping with more traditional accounts of the Fall, Winstanley recognized that man's perception of his own condition warranted lamentation. He captured this despair as follows :-

"But when Mankinde begins to look within himself, and see his pride, Envie, Covetousnesse, Lust of the flesh, anger, hypocrisie, and nothing but darknesse and discontent; and begins to say with himselfe; oh what have I done, how am I falne? all outward contents in objects flies away, and I am left naked, and want Light, life and rest within."¹¹⁵

Despite his admittedly esoteric understanding of the Fall, Winstanley's adherence to the general concept, and to aspects of more orthodox opinion on it, is evidence of his absorption in the spirit of the age. For instance, Winstanley repeatedly cited man's own pride, selfishness, and covetousness, as the causes of

113. ibid., p.158.

114. G.Winstanley, The Law of Freedom, (Sabine) p.532, (Hill) p.309.

115. G.Winstanley, Fire in the Bush, (Sabine) p.459, (Hill) p.229.

116
 his predicament. Similarly he argued that in transgressing God's ordinances, man had disrupted universal harmony :-

"he put the Creation out of order, by forsaking his Maker, and by acting according to the flesh."¹¹⁷

A significant feature of Winstanley's account of the human condition was his insistence that if men could only understand the way in which they had brought about their own predicament,¹¹⁸ a process of abstraction would begin, whereby they would eventually become capable of rectifying the situation. Winstanley's religious ideas and account of the Fall did not merely colour his view of the world. The latent assumptions within them ultimately determined his impression of a future social order. This will become more readily apparent once we have discussed Winstanley's adaptation of the myth of the Norman Yoke.

Winstanley used the theory of the Norman Yoke to exemplify the worst aspects of the human condition in such a way that, particularly as his social theory grew more sophisticated, he occasionally failed to achieve a well-defined distinction between the Fall and the Norman Conquest. Winstanley clearly regarded Normanism or 'kingly power'¹¹⁹ as the most abject social manifestation of fallen human nature. Thus he attributed the actual conquest and the resultant 'enslavement' of English commoners to the covetousness of the Normans.

In his authoritative essay 'The Norman Yoke', (which, significantly, opens with a discussion of the Fall¹²⁰),

116 G.Winstanley, The Saints Paradice, pp.29-30, and, A New-years Gift..., (Sabine) p.379, (Hill) p.191.

117. G.Winstanley, Truth Lifting Up its Head..., p.114.

118. ibid., p.110.

119. Below, p.428 ff.

120. C.Hill, 'The Norman Yoke', in, Puritanism and Revolution, (London 1958), p.51.

Christopher Hill has pointed out that the theory of the Yoke was historically inaccurate. Nevertheless, the vision of a 'classless' Anglo-Saxon society, which was destroyed at the historical watershed of 1066, yet partially recovered through the concessions made in Magna Carta, was deeply embedded in the consciousness of Englishmen up to, and beyond, the seventeenth century. As Hill has said, within the theory,

"English patriotism, Protestantism, and the defence of representative institutions all seemed closely linked."¹²¹

The

Norman Yoke, like the Bible, became a sanctuary for those who were reluctant to base their appeals solely on reason or utility.

In the earlier part of the seventeenth century, reference to the Norman Conquest was used to validate a variety of constitutional arguments. For instance, defendants of the royal prerogative argued that the monarch's power over landed property, and his arbitrary right to exact taxation, were justified by the initial conquest. But conversely, as J.G.A. Pocock has so eruditely argued,

"Since there was an increasing tendency to claim sovereignty in the full sense for the king, it was natural that those who sought to defend threatened privileges or liberties should emphasize in return that their rights were rooted in a law which no king could invade."¹²²

Thus the

status and conception of common law became the crucial issue in this debate. As Pocock has shown, many common lawyers appealed to immemorial custom in an attempt to prove the

121. ibid., p.67, see also, p.60.

122. J.G.A. Pocock, The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law, (Cambridge 1957, 1974 edition), p.16.

continuity of English law, and to deny the disruptive impact
of the Conquest.¹²³ However, the discovery that feudal law had
been introduced into England after the Conquest suggested to
some minds that the Norman regime was illegitimately
founded.¹²⁴ One proponent of this revisionary view was the
eminent legal theorist Edward Coke, who criticized the concept
of the royal prerogative by arguing that the Norman Conquest
had impaired the common law by introducing an element of
arbitrary will into the legal process.¹²⁵ Gerrard Winstanley,
who appears to have possessed a detailed knowledge of Coke's
writings,¹²⁶ went one stage further. By appealing to a pre-
Norman ideal, Winstanley claimed that the existing common law
had actually been imposed by the Normans.

It seems that Winstanley derived his ideas on the Norman Yoke
from pamphlets produced by the extreme wing of the Leveller
movement.¹²⁷ During the course of the Civil War many radicals,
but particularly the Levellers, developed the theme that the
existing common law was an instrument of enslavement. With
characteristic eclecticism, the Levellers not only used the
theory of the Norman Yoke alongside their conception of natural
rights, (by appealing to the 'reason' that had supposedly been
embodied in Anglo-Saxon law), but also fused, as Hill puts it,
"Biblical and constitutional theories."¹²⁸ It seems that
Winstanley adopted a similar position.

123. *ibid.*, pp.42, 53, 89, passim.

124. *ibid.*, chapter V, especially, pp.119-120.

125. C.Hill, *op.cit.*, p.63. Hill's position is contested by
J.G.A.Pocock, *op.cit.*, pp.42-56, 125-126. Recently, Pocock's thesis
has been questioned by, R.Tuck, Natural rights theories, (Cambridge
1979), p.149.

126. G.Winstanley, A Watch-Word to the City of London, and to the
Armie, (Sabine) p.322, (Hill) p.132.

127. See, Light Shining in Buckinghamshire, (Sabine) pp.611-623.

128. C.Hill, *op.cit.*, p.75, see also, p.78.

For radicals living under the commonwealth, the apparent retention of 'Norman' social institutions was disconcerting. S.E. Prall has captured the spirit of their frustration by stating that,

"The conclusion was that justice once had been abroad throughout the land and only had to be restored. Utopia lay not so much in the future as in the past."¹²⁹

So the Diggers

responded by advancing what Hill has termed,

"the most comprehensive and drastic restatement of the social version of the Norman Yoke theory."¹³⁰

As evidence for

this claim Hill has, quite justifiably, cited the Diggers' critique of the vestiges of feudalism, their revaluation of agrarian relations, and their proposals for the abolition of copyholding. However, Hill has failed to recognize that Winstanley's ideas on the moral regeneration of men were, in part, a corollary of his concern with Normanism.

The full significance of Winstanley's resort to both the Fall and the Norman Yoke as explanations of the human condition has not been adequately appreciated. In essence, this conjunction enabled Winstanley to formulate his theory of the spiritual restoration of man in institutional terms. Latent within Winstanley's analysis of mankind's predicament was the proposition that the restoration of man from the fallen condition would require a commensurate reform of the social institutions which had prevailed since the Norman Conquest. As the Norman Yoke had provided Winstanley with an institutional facet to his appreciation of the fallen condition, any attempt

129. S.E. Prall, The Agitation for Law Reform During the Puritan Revolution, (The Hague 1966), p.44.

130. C.Hill, op.cit., p.84.

to resolve the problem of how mankind could be redeemed was likely to direct Winstanley towards a discussion of the amendment of institutions. It has already been argued, in chapter one, that a concentration upon institutionally based reforms is a principal characteristic of utopianism. So, in our analysis of Winstanley's intellectual development, it will be argued that his social theory was derived from his concern with the spiritual restoration of man. After initially anticipating a form of millennium, (through which the regeneration of human nature would occur), Winstanley arrived at the conviction that institutional reform would provide the best means of facilitating the restoration of man. Because Winstanley had integrated the Norman Yoke into his explanation of the human condition, his practical and analytical consideration of how this predicament could be ameliorated caused him to abandon millenarianism for institutionally-orientated utopianism.

Hill has argued that Winstanley possessed an ideal of pre-Fall righteousness which transcended the institutions of the Norman Yoke.¹³¹ Similarly, Pocock has contended that appeals to the 'immemorial' encouraged myths suggesting the experience of a golden age at some time in the past.¹³² Accordingly, the radicals pressed their claims for the restoration of those liberties which had supposedly been the right of all men. Although Winstanley did not confuse the pre-Conquest era with the pristine condition, he certainly suggested that the coming of the Normans had exacerbated the effects of the Fall. So he asserted that the Norman Conquest had unleashed an

131. ibid., p.85, and, The World Turned Upside Down, pp.133-134.

132. J.G.A.Pocock, op.cit., pp.19,126.

unprecedented degree of chaos into the creation. More particularly, Winstanley maintained that the extent and evil effects of private property, especially in the ownership of land, had become more pronounced after the Norman invasion. Thus, because he believed that the Normans had based all other social institutions on private property, Winstanley eventually responded by proposing a form of utopian communism.

We have already considered the problems generated by the causal relationship within Winstanley's thought between the historical account of the Fall, the introduction of private property, and the internalized conception of the Fall. These problems were further complicated once Winstanley had introduced the Norman Yoke into his discussion of the institution of private property. For instance, he variously attributed the introduction of private property to Adam, and to the Norman Conquest. Winstanley argued that enclosures had existed before the Conquest, and that these had been appropriated by the Normans. He also suggested that the Normans had extended propriety in land by converting existing enclosures to freehold, and by introducing copyholding. Despite the occasional ambiguities of his case, it is clear that Winstanley saw a correlation between the Fall and the introduction of private property.

133. G. Winstanley, A Watch-Word..., (Sabine) p.324, (Hill) p.135.

134. G. Winstanley, A New-years Gift..., (Sabine) p.369, (Hill) p.180.

135. ibid., (Sabine) p.387, (Hill) pp.199-200.

136. L. Mulligan (et alia), 'Winstanley: A Case for the Man as He Said He Was', Journal of Ecclesiastical History, Vol.28 (1977), pp.57-75, at p.73, claims to the contrary that Winstanley did not identify the creation of private property with the moral corruption inaugurated by the Fall. It seems likely that Mulligan has taken this line because she has regarded Winstanley as a thoroughgoing millenarian. To have recognized

Winstanley's belief that private property was instrumental in the individuated process of the Fall eventually produced the commensurate belief that communism might instigate man's restoration. Winstanley regarded private property as the curse that had befallen man after Adam's historical Fall.¹³⁷

Similarly, Winstanley concluded that if private property was the curse, it was related to 'bondage' in the sense of illegitimate and coercive authority.¹³⁸ However, Winstanley also contended that while bondage constituted an illegitimate and coercive abrogation of men's freedom, it was also a condition of sinful depravity suffered by all men who had fallen. Thus Winstanley accorded with a general view of seventeenth-century psychology¹³⁹ by arguing that in fallen human nature, imagination was likely to prevail over reason. So he concluded that fallen men possessed such an insatiable craving for material objects that each individual would pursue "inclosures proper or peculiar to himselfe."¹⁴⁰

By elaborating upon the widespread view that both political authority and the preservation of private property were necessary constraints upon man's fallen nature, Winstanley advanced the revisionary proposal that the existing law,

"is the extremity of the curse, and yet this is the Law that every one now adays dotes upon; when the plaine

the significance of private property in Winstanley's conception of the Fall, might have led Mulligan towards the association of Winstanley's social theory with a conception of moral regeneration to be effected by institutional means, and this she was at pains to avoid.

137. See, G. Winstanley, The New Law of Righteousnes, p. 200, and, The True Levellers' Standard Advanced, (Sabine) pp. 253, 258, (Hill) pp. 79-80, 85.

138. G. Winstanley, A New-years Gift..., (Sabine) pp. 356-357, (Hill) pp. 164-165.

139. See, P. Elmen, op. cit., pp. 209-212, and above, p

140. G. Winstanley, Fire in the Bush, (Sabine) p. 489, (Hill) p. 264.

truth is, the Law of propriety is the shamefull nakedness of Mankinde, and as farre from the Law of Christ, as light from darknesse."¹⁴¹

Hence our contention that Winstanley's social theory was related to his conception of mankind's spiritual welfare, and was concerned with,

"the battell, which is fought between the two powers, which is propriety on the one hand, called the Devill, or covetousnesse, or community on the other hand, called Christ, or universal Love."¹⁴²

So in his social philosophy Winstanley devoted his energies to prescribing and accounting for the victory of the latter.

In this section it has been argued that Winstanley advanced a very distinctive but reasonably coherent account of the Fall of Man. In the following two chapters the relationship between Winstanley's interpretation of the Fall and his social theory will be examined in greater detail. However, in order to give our discussion some perspective, it is necessary to move now to a consideration of Winstanley's view of the fallen condition.

141. ibid., (Sabine) p.492, (Hill) p.267.

142. ibid., (Sabine) p.493, (Hill) p.268.

iii Stuart England as the Fallen Condition

Winstanley's association of the Fall with the Norman Yoke, and his persistent tirades against the continuation of Norman institutions of 'kingly power', suggest that it is important to examine what he described as,

"the present condition mankind lies under, and this is darknes or the fall."¹⁴³

Winstanley insisted that by merely observing the state of the world, men should be able to realize its faults. Of course, Winstanley's concerned reaction to the discord that prevailed between men was not unique. Similar disquiet was elegantly expressed by Hobbes. However, Winstanley's analysis of the causes of mankind's troubled predicament, and his proposals for the resolution of it, were highly original. According to Winstanley the regime of 'kingly power' was the fallen condition. Thus the "Norman Yoke, and Babylonish power,"¹⁴⁴ were synonymous. He went on to assert that,

"The Kingly power is covetousness in his branches, or the power of self-love, ruling in one or in many men over others, and enslaving those who in the Creation are their equals."¹⁴⁵

It is therefore profitable to consider the beliefs and institutions to which Winstanley attributed the sustenance of kingly power. We shall concentrate on his view of the clergy, the lords of the manors, and the lawyers.

Winstanley's evaluation of the contemporary clergy was decidedly disparaging. His anticlericalism, abhorrence of

143. G. Winstanley, A New-years Gift..., (Sabine) p.383, see also, p.376, (Hill) p.195, see also, p.187.

144. G. Winstanley, The True Levellers' Standard Advanced, (Sabine) p.259, (Hill) p.87.

145. G. Winstanley, A New-years Gift..., (Sabine) p.354, (Hill) p.163.

tithes and anti-intellectualism were pronounced. The vehemence of Winstanley's anticlericalism prompted Hill to regard him as the most extreme and systematic exponent of this view to emerge during the Civil War - "for Winstanley, the English state church was antichristian."¹⁴⁶ As we have seen, much of Winstanley's antagonism towards the clergy was inspired by the experimental basis of his own religious beliefs, and his conviction that the poor would constitute the vanguard of the redeemed.

J.F. Maclear defined popular anticlericalism as,

"the ancient folk distrust of clerical ambitions and its hatred of priestly domination, corruption and greed."¹⁴⁷

Maclear

went on to claim that the incidence of such feeling was widespread, and that Winstanley became the most thoroughgoing critic of the clergy's role in society.¹⁴⁸ According to Maclear anticlericalism could result from a number of factors, all of which Winstanley exemplified. For instance, many Puritans developed a contempt for conforming clerics who fell short of the intellectual standards attained by pious laymen.¹⁴⁹ Alternatively, the exclusive educational background of the clergy, and the enforced payment of tithes, often precipitated class-based anticlericalism. As with other popular beliefs, anticlerical feeling reached its apogee during the Civil War, and was often an essential attitude for the morale and self-

146. C.Hill, introduction, op.cit., p.43, see also, The World Turned Upside Down, p.140. For a decidedly unsympathetic appraisal of Winstanley's anticlericalism, see, F.Stripp, 'The Anticlericalism of Gerrard Winstanley', The Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopalian Church, Vol. (1954), pp.188-201.

147. J.F.Maclear, 'Popular Anticlericalism in the Puritan Revolution', J.H.I., Vol.XVII (1956), pp.443-470, at p.443.

148. ibid., p.457, see also, p.453.

149. ibid., pp.445,450.

preservation of those sectarian groups opposed to presbyterian
 150
 authoritarianism.

Anticlericalism related to anti-intellectualism by extending
 the reaction against clerical abuses to an attack upon the
 very concept of a clerical vocation. 151 This view, together with
 the impression that the clergy actively maintained the
 injustices of the 'ancien regime', found bountiful expression
 in Winstanley's writings. One instance was his contention that
 the clergy regularly sought assistance from the coercive
 instruments of secular authority to compel the people both to
 attend services, and to maintain the clergy through the payment
 of tithes. 152 Much of Winstanley's distaste for the clergy was
 inspired by his suspicion that

"it is not the zeale of God which sets them to work, but
 the desire and sweetness of a temporal living." 153

Thus, the self-
 interest of the clergy was preserved by a unified state church
 which propagated

"one outward lazie, formall, customary, and tyth-oppressing
 way of pretended Divine worship, which pleases the
 flesh." 154

So Winstanley stressed that while established forms
 of religion gratified the flesh, his own experimental version
 satisfied the spirit. 155 Ultimately Winstanley's contempt for
 the clergy led him to doubt the existence of any scriptural
 justification for their eminence. Thus he advanced a sweeping

150. ibid., pp.447,449.

151. ibid., pp.450-452.

152. G.Winstanley, Truth Lifting Up its Head..., p.129.

153. G.Winstanley, The Saints Paradice, p.1, see also, The Myserie
 of God..., pp.33-34.

154. G.Winstanley, The Breaking of the Day ..., p.117.

155. ibid., pp.83-84.

indictment of the contemporary church :-

"But the Ministers of England, and such as follows them in the practise of praying, preaching, sprinkling of children, breaking bread, sabbaths, Church societies, & Ministers maintenance, as they practise in their customary way of performances, which they call God's ordinances; had neither Reason nor Scripture to warrant them."¹⁵⁶

Addressing the clergy

Winstanley said, "you are non other but Witches and
Deceivers."¹⁵⁷

During the Civil War anticlericalism was bolstered by an intensification of the latent controversy concerning the payment of tithes. The radicals in particular incorporated this debate into their discussion of social reform. As M. James argued, proposals for the abolition of tithes were often regarded as a threat to the sanctity of private property.¹⁵⁸ Such alarm was a consequence of the post-dissolution sale of impropriations to lay owners. Thus, in many many parishes, the right to exact tithes had assumed the form of a private property dissociated from the original religious function. Further, lay impropriators often retained the right to present the local minister. This was pertinent to the whole disputed issue of clerical finances. It was generally agreed that whoever funded the Church, effectively controlled it. This consideration seemed especially significant to those who assumed, rightly or wrongly, that the Church was a vital organ of society which, via its pulpits, should provide a medium for the dissemination of government propaganda and, ideally, the

156. G. Winstanley, Truth Lifting Up its Head..., p.144.

157. G. Winstanley, The New Law of Righteousnes, p.242.

158. M. James, 'The Political Importance of the Tithes Controversy in England', History, Vol. XXVI (1941), pp.1-18, at pp.3-6.

maintenance of authority. So proposals by self-financing and independent sectarian groups for the abolition of tithes, were perceived as a challenge to both property and political authority, and naturally caused consternation amongst conservatives. Clearly, in his analysis of contemporary society as the fallen condition, the close links which the issue of tithes had forged between the clergy, landowners, and the state, were not lost upon Winstanley.

Winstanley's rejection of tithing has been cited as the most virulent expression of popular feeling on this issue.¹⁵⁹ It is interesting to speculate that Winstanley may have sensed that disputes over the payment of tithes had proliferated during the Laudian period, and had contributed to an increase in litigation.¹⁶⁰ Winstanley also wholeheartedly condemned this trend. According to his anticlerical perspective, Winstanley addressed his remarks to "You Norman-Clergy, oppressing Tith-mungers,"¹⁶¹ who, he claimed, were possessed by "the spiritual Power of Covetousness and Pride."¹⁶² By further referring to the clergy as "they that take Tythes to tell a story,"¹⁶³ Winstanley betrayed the anti-intellectual aspect of of his conviction that the clergy were purely mercenary. Perhaps Winstanley expected to accord with popular sentiment as manifest in the fear of Popery, by claiming that the retention of tithes indicated that Protestantism had not yet absolved

159. ibid., p.11.

160. For this development see, C.Hill, The Economic Problems of the Church, (Oxford 1956), chapter 5.

161. G.Winstanley, A Watch-Word..., (Sabine) p.333, (Hill) p.145, see also, Fire in the Bush, (Sabine) pp.474-475, (Hill) p.246.

162. G.Winstanley, A New-years Gift..., (Sabine) p.358, (Hill) p.166.

163. G.Winstanley, The New Law of Righteousnes, p.233.

164

itself of a typically Catholic practice. Further, Winstanley confronted the clergy with the accusation that,

"if the people refuse to give you tithes, you tell the Magistrate, it is his duty to force them, all which is not warrantable, neither from Reason nor Scripture."¹⁶⁵

Thus

Winstanley asserted his belief that the oppressive institutions of contemporary society were mutually reinforcing.

In discussing the clergy and its place in the hierarchy of 'kingly power', Winstanley's central proposition was that William the Conqueror had bestowed tithes as a gift to the clergy in return for their undertaking to preach up the regime.¹⁶⁶ Thereafter, in order to preserve this income, the clergy had been prepared to support and condone the ruling power, whatever its confession. By accusing the clergy of using the fear of hell to exact political obedience from the people, and thus to preserve their own income,¹⁶⁷ Winstanley displayed an acute awareness of one intended function of clerical preaching. In all, Winstanley regarded this practice as an instance of fallen man corrupting religion to secure his own material advantage.

Winstanley's anticlericalism was related to another popular attitude, anti-intellectualism. Anti-intellectualism involved a reaction against clerics, lawyers, and university teachers.

R.L. Greaves has also described the ancillary notion of 'anti-professionalism',¹⁶⁸ which applied particularly to

164. ibid., p.187.

165. G.Winstanley, Truth Lifting Up its Head..., p.143.

166. G.Winstanley, A New-years Gift..., (Sabine) pp.357-358, (Hill) p.166, and, The Law of Freedom, (Sabine) p.522, (Hill) pp.297-298.

167. ibid., (Sabine) p.523, (Hill) p.299.

168. R.L.Greaves, The Puritan Revolution in Educational Thought, (New Jersey 1969), pp.137-138.

lawyers. Winstanley proved especially keen in his distrust of the legal profession. In many respects, anti-intellectualism inverted the Calvinist assumption that, as Hill has it,

"Necessarily only a select group has the economic status, the education, the leisure to master this theology: only a minority can be free, only a minority are the elect."¹⁶⁹

Instead,

anti-intellectualism stressed what L.F.Solt has termed the "indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit rather than formal learning."¹⁷⁰ Yet this provision could be similarly exclusive, especially when applied to a minority group of 'saints'.

However, Solt realized that Winstanley's emphasis upon universal redemption placed him outside the antinomianism which often inspired anti-intellectualism.¹⁷¹ Consequently, it is difficult to see how Winstanley could have anticipated the rule of the saints, in the form of an exclusive and elect minority. This obviously casts considerable doubt upon the suggestion that Winstanley was a thoroughgoing millenarian. Winstanley's anti-intellectualism was genuine enough, but his association of it with universal salvation, and his egalitarian social theory, counts against the concept of 'Digger saints',¹⁷² as privileged companions for the Fifth Monarchists.

Winstanley's verbal assault on formal learning was often highly charged. For instance, he referred to the universities as "standing ponds of stinking waters,"¹⁷³ and contended that,

"the secrets of the Creation have been locked up under

169. C.Hill, The World Turned Upside Down, p.153.

170. L.F.Solt, 'Anti Intellectualism in the English Revolution' Church History, Vol.25 (1956), pp.306-316, at p.306.

171. ibid., p.308

172. ibid., p.313.

173. G.Winstanley, The New Law of Righteousnes, p.238.

the traditional Parrat-like speaking, from the Universities, and Colledges for Schollars."¹⁷⁴

Predictably, the clergy, who emanated from such institutions, were arraigned by Winstanley for their imaginary teaching power, and their "booke-studying, University, Divinity, which indeed, is Iudas Ministry."¹⁷⁵ Rather poignantly, Winstanley maintained that formal education was the 'engrossing' of experimental knowledge attained by the efforts and industry of others. As we have seen, the juxtaposition of received ideas and experimentalism was an important aspect of Winstanley's thought, which led him to claim that,

"there are so many Hypocrites amongst professors, they know much in the letter, as man teaches them; but they know nothing in spiritual power, which is the way that God teaches."¹⁷⁶

Thus Winstanley argued that,

"The Scriptures of the Bible, were written by the experimentall hand of Shepherds, Husbandmen, Fishermen, and such inferior men of the world."¹⁷⁷

Clearly, the implication that the contemporary lower orders of the seventeenth century were capable of emulating this feat was a potentially powerful form of social radicalism.

By regarding many prevailing intellectual norms as those of fallen mankind, and by relating anti-intellectualism to experimental knowledge, Winstanley identified one means of securing man's spiritual restoration. This impression is

174. G. Winstanley, A Declaration from the Poor oppressed People of England, (Sabine) p.271, (Hill) p.102, cf., The Saints Paradise, p.10, and, Fire in the Bush, (Sabine) p.463, (Hill) p.233.

175. ibid.

176. G. Winstanley, The Saints Paradise, p.4.

177. G. Winstanley, Fire in the Bush, (Sabine) p.474, (Hill) p.246.

confirmed by Winstanley's contention that the Fall was the occasion

"when a studying imagination comes into man, which is the devil, for it is the cause of all evil, and sorrows in the world; that is he that puts out the eyes of mans Knowledg, and tells him, he must beleieve what others have writ or spoke, and must not trust to his own experience."¹⁷⁸

Instead,

Winstanley categorically asserted that,

"Men must speak their own experienced words, and must not speak thoughts.

- thoughts, and studies, and imagination of flesh."¹⁷⁹

The

distinction posited by Winstanley between the potential spirituality of the common people, and the insubstantial standards set by state-endorsed religion, was phrased in terms that are reminiscent of More's discussion of Utopian religiosity :-

"Qu. Thus the heathen walked according to the light of nature, but Christians must live above nature?

Ans. The English Christians are in a lower and worser condition, then the heathens, for they doe not so much."¹⁸⁰

Eventually,

in his ideal commonwealth, The Law of Freedom, Winstanley prescribed that men should be allowed to follow experimental religion, free from the restraints of a formal state structure.

Besides the clergy and the intelligentsia, Winstanley obviously believed that the landowning classes possessed a

178. G. Winstanley, The Law of Freedom, (Sabine) pp. 565-566, (Hill) p. 349.

179. G. Winstanley, Truth Lifting Up its Head..., p. 125.

180. ibid., p. 137.

vested interest in perpetuating the fallen condition of Normanism. He assumed that the Lords of the Manors, in particular, were as culpable as the clergy of preserving 'kingly power'. In accordance with his theory of the Norman Yoke, Winstanley argued that the lords of the manors were the descendants of William the Conqueror's colonels and favourites,¹⁸¹ and that consequently, their titles to their property were illegitimately founded upon the initial conquest and the continuation of the King's arbitrary will. Similarly, Winstanley regarded freeholders as the descendants of Norman soldiers.¹⁸² Hence he concluded that, within this structure of landownership, the tenantry were nothing else but "poor enforced slaves,"¹⁸³ who were kept in a condition of perpetual bondage by the refusal of landlords to allow them to live apart, and to cultivate the wastes and commons.¹⁸⁴ Winstanley accused the landlords of overstocking the commons with their own animals, and thereby of depriving their tenants of a supplementary form of livelihood.¹⁸⁵ For such unrighteous actions, Winstanley subjected the landlords to a savage indictment. He accused them of effectively transgressing God's commandments against killing and stealing.¹⁸⁶ An interesting appendage to this facet of Winstanley's thought was his sympathetic response to the plight of younger sons, including those of landed families. Winstanley deduced a conspiratorial significance from the clerical

181. G. Winstanley, A New-years Gift..., (Sabine) p.359, (Hill) p.168.

182. ibid., (Sabine) p.387, (Hill) pp.199-200.

183. ibid., (Sabine) p.368, (Hill) p.178.

184. G. Winstanley, A Declaration from the Poor..., (Sabine) p.273, (Hill) p.103.

185. G. Winstanley, The Law of Freedom, (Sabine) p.558, (Hill) p.340.

186. G. Winstanley, The True Levellers' Standard Advanced, (Sabine) p.258, (Hill) pp.85-86.

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endorsement of primogeniture, and claimed that the younger sons of landowners were deprived of their birthright in a manner similar to the duplicity worked on the common people.

In one of his most famous passages Winstanley said,

"England is a Prison; the variety of subtleties in the Laws preserved by the sword, are bolts, bars, and doors of the prison; the Lawyers are the Jailors, and poor men are the prisoners."¹⁸⁸

This suggests considerable ill-feeling towards a third element of kingly power, the law and its practitioners. Significantly, Winstanley perceived that the legal system was instrumental in the identification and preservation of private property.¹⁸⁹ Hence, in evaluating the plight of the poor and needy,¹⁹⁰ Winstanley produced a similar argument to More's. He condemned the legal system for its failure to react equitably, and said of the destitute,

"if they steal for maintenance, the murdering Law will hang them; when as Lawyers, Judges, and Court Officers can take Bribes by whole sale to remove one mans Propriety by that Law into another mans hands: and is not this worse the every then the poor man that steals for want?"¹⁹¹

In general,

Winstanley's account of the contemporary legal system was¹⁹² verbosely endowed with devilish connotations.

187. G. Winstanley, The Law of Freedom, (Sabine) pp. 568-569, (Hill) p. 352. See, J. Thirsk, 'Younger Sons in the Seventeenth Century', History, Vol. Llv (1969), pp. 358-377.

188. G. Winstanley, A New-years Gift..., (Sabine) p. 361, (Hill) p. 170.

189. G. Winstanley, Fire in the Bush, (Sabine) p. 491 ff., (Hill) p. 265 ff.

190. Above p. 230 ff.

191. G. Winstanley, A New-years Gift..., (Sabine) p. 388, (Hill) p. 201.

192. See, e.g., G. Winstanley, A Watch-Word..., (Sabine) p. 324, (Hill) p. 135.

Throughout his writings Winstanley displayed a considerable knowlegde of both jurisprudence and of legal institutions. So his initial complaint about the shortcomings of the law, in the contemporary fallen condition, were reflected in the proposals for law reform enumerated in his utopia, The Law of Freedom. Even a matter of months after the execution of Charles I, Winstanley asked,

"Whether all Lawes that are not grounded upon equity and reason, not giving a universal freedom to all, but respecting persons, ought not to be cut off with the King's head?"¹⁹³

Winstanley regularly listed a series of telling criticisms of current legal practice. For instance, he pointed out that juries were composed of 'Norman' freeholders rather than of the defendant's peers.¹⁹⁴ He also maintained that the law effectively confirmed its oppressive qualities by enforcing the payment of tithes.¹⁹⁵ A further grievance concerned language. In early-modern England, legal proceedings were conducted in Latin, or in Law-French (the Norman Tongue¹⁹⁶). This obviously aroused the indignation of the anti-intellectual Winstanley, who claimed that the lawyers, as a self-interested professional class, effectively excluded the common people from an understanding of the rules according to which they were expected to regulate their conduct. In a similar vein, Winstanley criticized the centralization of the legal system, and the expense of litigation, particularly in "those Nurseries of Covetousness, The Innes of Court."¹⁹⁷ In Winstanley opinion, lawyers were

193. G. Winstanley, To The Lord Fairfax, ..., p.288.

194. G. Winstanley, A Watch-Word..., (Sabine) p.327, (Hill) p.138.

195. G. Winstanley, Fire in the Bush, (Sabine) p.470, (Hill) p.241.

196. G. Winstanley, The Law of Freedom, (Sabine) p.587, (Hill) p.374.

197. G. Winstanley, A New-years Gift..., (Sabine) p.361, (Hill) p.171.

monopolists and profiteers who would not allow individuals, such as himself, to plead their own cases.¹⁹⁸ So he was forced to conclude ruefully that,

"The Law is the Fox, poore men are the geese; he pulls off their feathers, and feeds upon them."¹⁹⁹

The correlation that Winstanley assumed to exist between the Fall and the introduction of private property led him to perceive that the covetous disposition of fallen men caused them to indulge in commercial transactions. Thus he regarded 'buying and selling' as a institution peculiar to the fallen condition. So he believed that only the restoration of communism could eradicate such practices. One possible reason for Winstanley's attention to buying and selling is the fluidity of the contemporary land market, by which the commodity that he regarded as essential for man's subsistence, was subject to rapid transfer.²⁰⁰ Hill has argued that during this period, because land was regarded as the fundamental form of property, capital accumulated in economic activities other than agriculture was nevertheless diverted towards its purchase.²⁰¹ As had been the case with More, Winstanley emphasized his abhorrence of commerce by predicting that in a reformed society, gold and silver would become mere utility metals.²⁰²

It is clear that Winstanley's disparaging appraisal of

198. G. Winstanley, A Watch-Word..., (Sabine) p.320, (Hill) p.130.

199. G. Winstanley, Fire in the Bush, (Sabine) p.468, (Hill) p.239.

200. See, e.g., W.G. Hoskins, The Midland Peasant, (London 1957), pp.115-117, for land transactions involving the 'peasantry', and more recently, the thesis built upon such evidence in, A. Macfarlane, The Origins of English Individualism, (Oxford 1978), particularly, chapter 4.

201. C. Hill, 'Land in the English Revolution', Science and Society, Vol.13 (1948), pp.22-49.

202. G. Winstanley, A Declaration from the Poor..., (Sabine) p.271, (Hill) p.101.

contemporary man and society was inspired by his conviction that institutional inadequacies were largely the result of deficiencies in human nature. He argued that human nature was determined by the Fall of Man. In the next section we shall discover that Winstanley believed the human condition to be improvable, and that institutional reform could be related to the moral and spiritual regeneration of mankind.

iv The Prospect of a Restoration on Earth

Gerrard Winstanley's social thought was inextricably linked to his theory of the restoration of man. It should now be apparent that a number of fundamental issues upon which More and Winstanley differed are attributable to their respective interpretations of the Fall of Man. In particular, their social philosophies differed according to the extent to which they believed that men were capable of rectifying their existing predicament. Clearly, Winstanley's conception of the restoration indicates that his view of man's potential was more optimistic than More's had been. Because More maintained that the consequences of the Fall were ineradicable, his social philosophy was directed towards an analysis of the optimal arrangements under which men could live, while inevitably remaining in the fallen condition. The test of such optimality was the contribution of institutions towards man's salvation. Alternatively, as Winstanley dwelled upon man's corrupted nature, and the prospect of his redemption, he came to the conclusion that the Fall was a reversible process that affected each individual. Hence his social philosophy concentrated on the problem of how institutional arrangements might further the spiritual restoration of the individual.

Winstanley's indefatigable confidence in the prospect of a restoration on earth was exemplified by his consistent reiteration of the theme. From the outset, in The Mysterie of God, he insisted that the curse incurred at the Fall was only a temporary penalty to be remitted with the restoration of the entire creation. ^{203.}

Subsequently, in The Saints Paradice, Winstanley suggested that

203. G. Winstanley, The Mysterie of God..., pp. 6-8.

that the regeneration of human nature was a genuine

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possibility. In The New Law of Righteousnes he advanced, in a somewhat abstract manner, the contention that the curse which had befallen the creation might be removed by the suppression of

individual covetousness. Thus men awaited the restoration of

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righteousness. On commencing the communal cultivation of the commons, Winstanley stressed that the restoration could only be effected by the subjugation of flesh to reason. Soon afterwards

Winstanley asked Fairfax

"Whether the work of the restoration lies not in removing covetousnesse, casting the Serpent out of heaven, (mankind) and making man to live in the light of righteousnesse, not in words only, as Preachers do, but in action, whereby the Creation shines in glory? I affirm it."²⁰⁶

Clearly, Winstanley regarded digging as just such a practical attempt to anticipate and inaugurate the restoration.

Once the Digger experiment was well advanced, Winstanley assured his readers that,

"there is a promise of restoration and salvation to the whole creation, and this must be wrought by a power contrary to darkness."²⁰⁷

Perhaps it might be expected that in the more overtly theological Fire in the Bush, Winstanley should discuss man's predicament in terms of the Fall and the restoration. However, it is indicative of the extensive scope of Winstanley's mode of thought that he concluded that the power of

204. G. Winstanley, The Saints Paradice, p.60.

205. G. Winstanley, The New Law of Righteousnes, pp.157-158, 212.

206. G. Winstanley, To The Lord Fairfax, ..., p.290.

207. G. Winstanley, A New-yeers Gift..., (Sabine) p.382, (Hill) p.194.

"the restorer, Saviour, Redeemer, yea and the true and faithful Leveller,"²⁰⁸ would arise to cast out the evil consequences of the Fall. Even when admitting that digging had failed to achieve the promised restoration of all men, Winstanley took solace in his undaunted anticipation of,

"the universall restoration of Man-kind to the law of righteousness, from whence he fell."²⁰⁹

The communist implications of Winstanley's theory of the restoration were evident when he spoke of,

"the restoring of Mankind to his originall righteousnesse, and that they shall be brought to be of one heart, and of one mind; and that they shall be freely willing to let each other enjoy their Creation-rights, without restraining, or molesting one another; but every one doing as he would be done by."²¹⁰

Ultimately, this ideal was effectively realized in the utopian institutionalism of The Law of Freedom.

As his pamphleteering career progressed, Winstanley discovered that his fundamental difficulty was to explain precisely the process by which the restoration would come about. This problem was a consequence of his belief that the spiritual regeneration of man, and the reform of social institutions, would be causally linked. In attempting to ascertain the exact nature of this causal relationship, Winstanley found himself facing a dilemma. Thus he devoted considerable attention to the problem of whether human nature, or institutions, or both simultaneously, would be the cause or the effect of the restoration. As we shall see,

208. G. Winstanley, Fire in the Bush, (Sabine) p.454, (Hill) p.223.

209. G. Winstanley, An Humble Request..., p.428, see also, p.425.

210. ibid., p.426.

Winstanley initially expected that an improvement in the nature of social institutions would be the consequence of the redemption of human nature. Ultimately, however, in The Law of Freedom, Winstanley argued that institutional reform must precede the restoration of human nature, and so he prescribed the means to this effect.

Clearly, our appreciation of the part played by spiritual considerations in the formulation of Winstanley's social theory, and by implication, of the overall tenor of his thought, stands at some distance from either of the two extremes assumed by those who have previously analysed Winstanley's writings. This is not to suggest that we have formed an opinion by merely assuming the middle ground.

G. Juretic, the advocate of the most extreme left-wing interpretation of Winstanley's thought, has contended that Winstanley expressed no interest in returning to the pre-Norman condition.²¹¹ By implication, this is to suggest that Winstanley had no conception of a restoration, because, as we have seen, Winstanley incorporated a theory of the Norman Yoke into his account of the Fall. Alternatively, L. Mulligan, in believing that Winstanley was a consistent millenarian, has imputed to him the idea that man's salvation was ultimately dependent upon the coming millennium.²¹² According to Mulligan, because the abolition of institutions such as private property was an insufficient means towards the moral regeneration of man, Winstanley must have regarded the millennium as man's only hope. To attempt to impose the stringency of either the 'left-wing' or 'millenarian'

211. G. Juretic, 'Digger: No Millenarian', J.H.I., Vol. XXXVI (1975), pp. 263-281, at p. 277.

212. L. Mulligan, op.cit., p. 74.

appraisals upon The Law of Freedom, in particular, is to disregard the sophistication of Winstanley's theory of the restoration.

Although P. Zagorin has advanced the valid opinion that Winstanley associated reason and righteousness,²¹³ he has argued that,

"Winstanley's rationalism, moreover, was bound up with an uncompromising affirmation that mankind's redemption would be effected in this world...by the restoration of the absolute law of reason."²¹⁴

Thus Zagorin has regarded Winstanley's position as antecedent to the denial of the Fall that occurred during the Enlightenment. Hill also, has contended²¹⁵ that human nature would be restored by reason. Yet neither Zagorin nor Hill has paid sufficient attention to Winstanley's use of 'reason', particularly in conjunction with his conception of the deity, and with the notion that the experience of the 'inward light' was a manifestation of the recovery of pre-Fall²¹⁶ purity. Winstanley was convinced that such a cleansing spirit would enter all but the most hardened hearts, and that consequently mankind would be restored.

213. P. Zagorin, A History of Political Thought in the English Revolution, (London 1954), pp. 45-46.

214. ibid., p. 47.

215. C. Hill, The World Turned Upside Down, pp. 387-394.

216. G. H. Sabine, introduction to, The Works of Gerrard Winstanley, (New York 1941, 1965 edition), p. 28. Sabine argues that this concept was developed by the Familists.

CHAPTER NINE : THE DEVELOPMENT OF GERRARD WINSTANLEY'S THOUGHT

Between 1648 and 1652 Gerrard Winstanley's thought passed through a number of distinct stages. This impression is readily apparent from even the most superficial comparison of Winstanley's first pamphlet, The Mysterie of God..., and his last, The Law of Freedom. The former is a complex and often emotional exposition of Winstanley's mystical spirituality. The latter is a comprehensive scheme for an institutional utopia, related directly to the societal ailments of the Interregnum. Such a dissimilarity has prompted a number of commentators to suppose that at some point in the development of his thought, Winstanley crossed a great divide, to the extent that the ideas evinced in his earlier pamphlets were but tenuously linked to the concerns of his subsequent writings. This evolution, which is so consequential to the analysis of Winstanley's thought, is not evident in the case of Thomas More, partly because of More's theological consistency, and partly because he produced just one piece primarily devoted to social theory - Utopia. Hence, in our consideration of More there was no argument corresponding to the present one about Winstanley.

Although most critics have realized, to a varying extent, the importance of Winstanley's intellectual development, they have often disagreed about its characterization. The variety of opinion on this matter formed the basis of our initial survey of the several 'schools' of analysis regarding Winstanley's thought. From one extreme, critics who have regarded Winstanley as a thoroughgoing millenarian¹ have attempted to elucidate

1. W.S.Hudson, 'Gerrard Winstanley and the Early Quakers', Church History, Vol.XII (1943), pp.177-194, 'The Economic Thought of Gerrard Winstanley', J.M.H., Vol.18 (1946), pp.1-21; L.Mulligan (et alia), 'Winstanley: A Case for the Man as He Said He Was', Journal of Ecclesiastical History, Vol.28 (1977), pp.57-75, and above, chapter 7:section 1.

each successive phase of Winstanley's thought in such terms. Yet they have experienced increasing difficulty as their chronological evaluation of Winstanley's writings has proceeded. From a substantially different perspective, left-wing interpretations have concentrated upon the notion that, from a theological viewpoint, Winstanley developed his ideas into a predominantly secular philosophy. As we have seen however, according to their various shades of opinion, left-wing critics have been unable to agree upon the exact point at which the transition took place.² We shall discover that the reaction of various left-wing critics to the essentially theological Fire in the Bush³ has been similarly discordant.

It is the purpose of this chapter to analyse the development of Winstanley's ideas and to overcome the limitations of previous attempts to accomplish such an exercise. Because certain issues relevant to Winstanley's intellectual development are central to the various interpretations outlined in chapter seven, it will be necessary during the course of the present chapter to refer to these existing interpretations in order to establish the advantages of our own analysis. We shall argue that Winstanley's writings are divisible into four distinct periods - each of which can be related to the remainder by the fact that Winstanley's foremost concern was with the spiritual restoration of mankind. This periodization is based upon, on the one hand, our historical knowledge of the circumstances relating to Winstanley's life and writings, and on the other hand, internal evidence drawn from these works. The first three periods will receive detailed consideration in this chapter, while the fourth will be the subject of the

2. See above, chapter 7:section iv.

3. see below, pp.516-519.

next

Section one will be concerned with the period from Winstanley's first publication to the foundation of the Digger colony. During this formative period, Winstanley outlined his appreciation of the human condition and developed his theory of the restoration, by which he supposed that mankind's immediate predicament would be ameliorated. This perspective prompted Winstanley to afford serious consideration to various social questions. Thus, even at this early stage, his social analysis became increasingly sophisticated.

Section two will deal with the Digger period and with those pamphlets which form the apologia for the communal cultivation of the commons. This period will be evaluated from two angles. Firstly, the significance of digging will be assessed with respect to Winstanley's spiritual premises. Secondly, Winstanley's view of the immediate situation, and his conviction that the restoration would necessarily involve a confrontation with, and repudiation of, 'Norman' social institutions, will also be explained. Ultimately, the juxtaposition of these two features of the Digger experiment will enable us to trace the growth of Winstanley's disillusion with political activism.

In section three, we shall approach a most contentious aspect of Winstanley's intellectual career. This is the point at which, by undertaking a reassessment of his position, Winstanley began to move away from some of the concerns relating to digging. This revisionary frame of mind was epitomized by themes developed in Fire in the Bush. We shall discover that in the course of the re-evaluation, Winstanley became convinced that human nature would be amended only if social arrangements were first reformed.

Section four will gather together the major conclusions to

arise from the previous three sections and will also introduce several themes to be developed in the subsequent chapter. The detailed examination of Winstanley's utopianism will be postponed until that following chapter. However, the present chapter will conclude with the contention that utopianism, particularly in terms of its institutional emphasis, marked the solution to various problems which had characterized Winstanley's intellectual development.

i Period One : Premises and Propositions

Winstanley's conception of the human condition, especially his understanding of mankind's current predicament, appraised in terms of the Fall and the prospect of a restoration, were outlined in the predominantly theological writings that preceded digging. These works also illustrate the peculiar tone of Winstanley's millenarianism. Rather than constituting, as G.H. George has claimed, "undistinguished genre literature,"⁴ these tracts reveal Winstanley's sincere anticipation of the transformation of human nature and, ultimately, of the universal redemption of man. After spending a number of months in this state of passive expectation, Winstanley's patience gave way to disquiet and to a more active approach to the question of man's spiritual restoration. In the course of this transition Winstanley elucidated a developing social theory which was, nevertheless, heavily influenced by his forgoing conception of the human condition.

Winstanley's first pamphlet, The Mysterie of God Concerning the Whole Creation Mankinde (1648), was addressed to his "Beloved Countrymen in the County of Lancaster."⁵ It was characteristic of Winstanley's early pamphlets that they were, in part, spiritual autobiographies. In The Mysterie of God Winstanley anxiously assured his readers that although he had once felt himself to be under the bondage of sin, God had nevertheless rescued him from the fallen condition.⁶ Winstanley attributed this recovery to spiritual enlightenment received directly from God.⁷ Clearly,

4. G.H. George, 'Gerrard Winstanley: A Critical Retrospect', in The Dissenting Tradition, ed. R.C. Cole and M.E. Moody (Ohio, 1975), p.211.

5. G. Winstanley, 'The Mysterie of God, Concerning the Whole Creation Mankinde', in Several Pieces Gathered Into One Volume, (Manchester Public Library), p.A2.

6. ibid., pp.10-11.

7. ibid., pp.A2, 9-10.

his own sensation of personal redemption was a contributory factor in the formation of his general theory of experimental religion.

From the outset, Winstanley devoted considerable attention to an analysis of mankind's predicament. In The Myserie of God he adopted a relatively 'orthodox' account of the Fall to explain the existing state of human nature. Yet, already, Winstanley equated Adam's personality with that of all future generations, and so claimed that,

"after the fall he became envious, disobedient, full of all lusts and concupiscence of evill, even as we find by experience our bondage,..."⁸

Thus Winstanley concluded that, as a consequence of the Fall, man's inclinations were not necessarily directed to just actions.⁹

A guiding principle of Winstanley's thought was his assurance that men would not persist in the fallen condition. In this belief Winstanley remained consistent; but what did change were his assumptions concerning the means by which mankind's bondage would be terminated. In his early writings Winstanley's hopes were formulated into a degree of millenarian expectation. Thus he maintained that,

"the mystery of God is this, God will bruise this Serpent's head, and cast that murderer out of heaven, the humane nature,..."¹⁰

Winstanley explained a commonplace millenarian image, that the seed would bruise the serpent's head, by arguing that Christ in the flesh had conquered inner sinfulness, and as the spirit within all men, would produce the same effect. This

8. ibid., p.16.

9. ibid., p.7.

10. ibid., p.9.

essentially optimistic outlook prompted Winstanley to calculate when men should expect the last days of the Beast's reign. He concluded that his own troubled times were caused by "the rage of the Serpent....because his time growes short;.." ¹¹ Winstanley assured his readers that the Serpent's head was about to be bruised, and that all men would be redeemed. ¹²

The universal salvation of man was the goal which impelled Winstanley along an intellectual voyage in search of a solution to mankind's predicament. Ultimately this brought him to land with the idea of utopian communism. In the formative stages of his thought, Winstanley did little more than assert that all men would be saved, because "Christ gave himself a ransome for all,..." ¹³ According to Winstanley, the mystery of God was the means by which man's redemption from darkness and bondage would be effected. Thus he stated that human nature would be transformed to the extent that the "Spirit of truth that dwells and rules in Man, may be God himselfe,..." ¹⁴ God would take men up into Himself and in the process they would "be delivered from, Corruption, Bondage, Death, and Pain." ¹⁵ Winstanley stressed that the process of redemption had been made known to him experimentally. So he took it upon himself to inform his readers that,

"as God did dwell bodily in the Humane Nature, Jesus Christ, who was the first manifestation of this great mystery of God, so when his work is compleated, he will dwell in the whole Creation, that is, every man and woman without exception..." ¹⁶

11. ibid., p.40.

12. ibid., p.45.

13. ibid., p.A3, see also, pp.14-15,23-24,28,41,47-48.

14. ibid., p.7.

15. ibid., p.13.

16. ibid., p.7, see also, pp.23-26,32-33.

As God had once appeared in Christ, He was now returning in the Saints.

Winstanley was not unaware that by advancing the theory of universal salvation, his views might be misconceived as an apology for unrestrained lasciviousness. However, throughout his writings Winstanley remained an ardent advocate of sober conduct. Therefore, perhaps paradoxically,¹⁷ he was constrained to retain, as a sanction on men's conduct, the idea that sin would be met with divine retribution. In order to do this without abrogating the claim that all men would eventually be saved, Winstanley adapted the Calvinist concept of an elect. However, instead of maintaining that the elect were the few who had been singled out for redemption, Winstanley argued that the members of the 'City of Sion' whose names had been written in the 'Lambs Book of Life' would be taken up directly into¹⁸ God. Thus sinners might be judged and condemned to a period in the 'lake of fire'. Resting in the assurance that this prospect should dissuade the presumptuous, Winstanley went on to assert that, ultimately, God's wrath would ensure that,

"the Serpent only shall perish, and God will not loose a hair that he made, he will redeeme his whole creation from death."¹⁹

Thus sinners would eventually be delivered from²⁰ hell.

We shall discover in due course that throughout his writings Winstanley failed to explore the obvious tensions evident in

17. See above, pp.401-403., for Winstanley's views on the illegitimate use of 'sin' as a sanction upon social conduct.

18. G.Winstanley, The Mysterie of God, pp.19-20,26,35-38,42.

19. ibid., p.47, see also, pp.45-47,50.

20. ibid., p.52.

the defence of the notion of universal salvation or spiritual restoration along with an adherence to some conception of 'election', in the sense of a privileged minority who were to enjoy the rewards of redemption before the remainder of mankind. The instance just discussed is but one example of such ambivalence. There are certain parallels between this case and Winstanley's later presumption that the Diggers constituted a select minority of the spiritually restored who would soon be joined in the communal cultivation of the land by the rest of mankind. Similarly, the officer class, (and in general, individuals over the age of forty), in the utopian commonwealth Winstanley described in The Law of Freedom, were a minority. Nevertheless, Winstanley ensured that each individual citizen could aspire to eventual membership of this righteous elite. Further, we shall also note that Winstanley subscribed to the concept of the elect nation, and therefore believed that his native land would be assigned the prior position in the history of world redemption.

Many of the arguments advanced in The Myserie of God may appear to be at some distance from the eventual form of Winstanley's social theory, but it is important to consider these latter ideas in the context of Winstanley's intellectual development. Winstanley became more interested in secular concerns as he grew impatient with his earlier thinking on the redemption of man. In the initial phase of his thought, Winstanley was content to argue that in the last troubled days of the resolution of God's design, the Saints must endure oppression patiently, in the confident expectation that God was about to redeem mankind :-

"If thou lie under sorrowes for sins, now know, that it is God's dispensation to thee, wait patiently upon him, hee will work an issue in his time, but not in thy time."²¹

21. ibid., p.59, see also, pp.35.40-41.

philosophy has been enriched because Winstanley could not heed his own exhortations.

In his second pamphlet, The Breaking of the Day of God (20 May 1648), Winstanley gave a further insight into the progress of the spiritual regeneration he was experiencing. He accomplished this largely by comparing his former entanglement,

"in riches, in friends, in self-satisfaction, in my pride, covetousness, and contents of my flesh."²²

- to the encouragement

he had received from the discovery that,

"the love, the self-denial, the inward rejoicing of my heart to advance God above all things, is Christ, the Anointing in me."²³

At this stage in his intellectual development, Winstanley retained the optimistic assumption that the world would be renewed as each individual experienced a similar²⁴ metamorphosis.

The Breaking of the Day of God is Winstanley's most chiliastic pamphlet. So it is opportune to include here a brief synopsis of his millenarianism as exemplified by this tract. It is clear that Winstanley adapted a number of prevalent millenarian themes to suit his own unique theories. For instance, the general proposition of The Breaking of the Day of God is that universal redemption might be secured by millenarian means. The substance of this long and extremely involved argument is as follows.

The Beast lies within man and is manifested in his social institutions. Thus, "ignorance, pride, self-love, oppression and

22. G. Winstanley, 'The Breaking of the Day of God', in Several Pieces Gathered Into One Volume, p.71, see also, p.49.

23. ibid., p.70, see also, pp.53,79.

24. ibid., pp.105,123,130.

vain conversations acted against Christ,"²⁵ which influenced the character of Church and State. As prophesied, two witnesses were to appear to confront this Beast. According to Winstanley, these two witnesses were "the Anointed and the Anointing, Christ and his Spirit,"²⁶ or Christ and the Saints. Similarly, these witnesses were the seed of the woman that would ultimately bruise the Serpent's (Beast's) head.²⁷ As this process neared fruition, Babylon, "the multitude of fleshly inventions arising from the spirit of self-love;"²⁸ and Antichrist, would tremble and fall. In the last days of the Beast, the bottomless pit, "the corrupt heart and flesh of man,"²⁹ would open to allow the Beast to slay the two witnesses. (Hence the Saints must endure present adversity.) Naturally, all this fervour of expectancy prompted Winstanley to advance a series of involved calculations intended to predict the timing of the last days of the Beast. Accordingly, he estimated that, fortunately,

"his time, times, and dividing of a time, his 42 months, and his three dayes and a half, are upon the point of expiring."³⁰

Winstanley

hoped that England, Scotland, and Ireland would constitute the tenth-part of the City of Babylon which was to be the first to fall from the Beast.³¹ Thus he viewed the present discontents as cause for certain optimism. With all these considerations in mind Winstanley assumed that the process of anointing had

25. ibid., p.62, see also, pp.61-63,108; on pp.63,108,Winstanley applied the image of the Beast to the Papacy and to Episcopacy.

26. ibid., p.28, see also, pp.16,89.

27. ibid., pp.1,10,12,34,46.

28. ibid., p.46, see also, pp.29,37.

29. ibid., p.72, see also, p.73.

30. ibid., p.96, see also, pp.47-69,77,109.

31. ibid., pp.A4,109,126.

commenced, and that God was burning up the dross of men's flesh.

Despite his assertion of pure experimentalism, Winstanley was not insulated from all extraneous ideas. Many of these were relatively orthodox or popular notions which Winstanley incorporated into his own peculiar general theory. Three themes convey this impression. Firstly, Winstanley spoke, at considerable length and in a fairly conventional manner, of God sending His only son into the world, and of Christ freely facing death in order to absolve all men of their sins.³³ Secondly, Winstanley attributed the martyrdom of the saints in times past to men's reaction against them for their elevation of humility above pride.³⁴ Thirdly, Winstanley was clearly influenced by the contemporary fear of popery. Thus he claimed that the Papacy, "this Ecclesiastical Bastardly power,"³⁵ was Antichrist, and that the oppressive power of the Beast had been most pronounced in "Queen Maries dayes".³⁶

The contention that Winstanley's evaluation of the human condition in both a spiritual and a secular sense, determined the eventual form of his social theory, is corroborated by his claims in The Breaking of the Day of God, that fallen human nature was conspicuous in the shape of contemporary institutions.³⁷ For instance, Winstanley claimed that 'Ecclesiastical power'³⁸ continued to defy the spirit of Christ. Further, he argued that the predisposition of fallen men to follow the dictates of the flesh, caused them to misapprehend truth, and thereby to maintain

32. ibid., pp. A3, 56.

33. ibid., pp. 6-18.

34. ibid., pp. 93-99.

35. ibid., p. 88, see also, pp. 99, 108.

36. ibid., p. 133.

37. ibid., p. A3.

38. ibid., p. A4.

corrupt constitutional standards, political authority and law. In claiming that ill-founded and perverted laws encouraged rather than suppressed human wickedness, Winstanley was as doubtful as More had been of prevailing institutional values. Even at this early stage, Winstanley urged

"The reformation and preservation of Magistracy in Common-wealths....it being God's Ordinance."³⁹

The proposition that the institution of the state might in some way be instrumental in the moral regeneration of man was already evident in this pamphlet. Indeed, Winstanley went so far as to envisage a situation in which,

"the Magistrates shall love the people, and be nursing Fathers to them."⁴⁰

Despite this initial sortie into the realms of institutionalism, Winstanley retained the conviction that the poor, the oppressed, and the despised sectors of society, would be the first to experience the spirit of righteousness, and as a consequence, would enact God's will by initiating social reform. He injected considerable force into this argument by comparing the reaction against the contemporary saints "that are branded Sectaries,⁴¹ Schismatics, Anabaptists, Round-heads..", to the persecution of Christ and his immediate followers. In blatantly evocative terms, Winstanley insisted that Christ's anointing, as experienced⁴² by "Shepherds and Fishermen, or Tradesmen," was quite as apposite to the condition of the lower orders in the present day, as it had been originally. Yet as Winstanley ruefully commented, in

39. ibid.

40. ibid.

41. ibid., p.101.

42. ibid., p.64, see also, pp.14-15, 79, 116.

both eras, the true followers of God were restrained in their mission by a ministry that was authorized only by human ordination. It was apparent to Winstanley that a lesson ought to be learnt from the past, when

"the purity of the Scriptures of the Gospel was corrupted, and the practice of it quite altered, and the invention of selfe-seeking flesh set up in the room of it, and sharp punishing lawes were made to forbid Fishermen, Shepherds, Husbandmen and Tradesmen, for ever preaching of God any more, but Schollars bred up in human letters, should onely do that work."⁴³

It should be evident that Winstanley's primary concern in The Breaking of the Day of God was to elucidate his belief that the gradual restoration of human nature was commencing. So he repeated the claim that,

"The great Mystery of God is this: He will cast the Serpent out of men; subdue that corrupt flesh under his feet, & dwell in man himself."⁴⁴

Accordingly, Winstanley argued that the eventual universal salvation of man would be achieved by the dissemination of God's strength through mankind - "by the plentiful increase of the Saints," and by the destruction of the Beast of self-love.⁴⁵

Winstanley believed that the state of the nation was an indication that this process was under way.⁴⁶ For the moment, because of his millenarian expectations, Winstanley perceived no pressing need to consider societal institutions in any depth. He was merely content to claim that the current national crisis corresponded, on the cosmic scale, to the last days of the old

43. ibid., p.115.

44. ibid., p.A4.

45. ibid., pp.1,11,43,68-69,80-82,120.

46. ibid., pp.94-95.

regime, which was soon to be replaced by an unspecified new order. Thus he assumed that,

"When this sort of righteousness and love arises in Magistrates and people, one to another, then these tumultuous Nationall stormes will cease,..."⁴⁷

Effectively, men had only to await their restoration.

From this standpoint, any temptation to actively advance man's spiritual regeneration was necessarily muted. Such an attitude set the tone for the first phase of Winstanley's intellectual development. His counsel of patience was, in part, an attempt to sustain the morale of the saints during their exacting adversities. Thus Winstanley reiterated his opinion that the period of oppression was about to end.⁴⁸ This essentially encouraging apprehension of man's potential afforded the clearest indication to date of Winstanley's incipient social philosophy. His position was quite categorical. Winstanley expected the anticipated restoration of human nature to be accompanied by a similarly extensive reform of social institutions as,

"in the effecting of his great work, God shakes, and will yet shake, Kings, Parliaments, Armies, Counties, Kingdomes, Universities, humane learnings, studies, yea, shake rich men, and poore men, and throwes down every thing that stands in his way opposing him in his work."⁴⁹

Winstanley proceeded to optimistically assume that "the pure reformation of civill Magistracy would soon appear."⁵⁰ His anxiety to stress that he was not an anarchist was prescient of his ultimate appreciation

47. ibid., p.136.

48. ibid., pp.A4,40,65.

49. ibid., p.124, see also, p.125.

50. ibid., n.135.

of the validity of the state and its associated institutions. However, whereas in his final pamphlet, The Law of Freedom, he would insist that institutions were necessary for the restraint of men's conduct, in The Breaking of the Day of God, Winstanley retained a considerably more benign view of the relationship between the individual and the state. Thus he argued that once men were spiritually restored,

"we shall have Laws and Governments according to truth, and Magistrates that will tender, love and delight to be executing justice, for the good and safety of the Commonwealth."⁵¹

Crucially, in this initial phase, Winstanley believed that the achievement of these results was not at man's discretion :-

"All that I shall say in conclusion is this, Wait patiently upon the Lord."⁵²

Such a conception of divine providence obviously impeded the development of a sophisticated social theory.⁵³

In the third of his tracts, The Saints Paradise (1648), Winstanley maintained the general tenor of his previous writings while at the same time introducing a number of interesting new themes, such as the exploration of the nature of God in association with the concept of reason, and a developing interest in the moral basis of political authority. These ideas are early signs of matters which were to concern Winstanley more fully in the future. He remained convinced that an immediate experience of the spirit of righteousness was the one necessary and sufficient condition for comprehending God, and that his own

51. ibid., p.131.

52. ibid., p.136.

53. For the debate on the dating of this pamphlet see, G.H. Sabine, The Works of Gerrard Winstanley (New York, 1941, 1965 edition), p.91.

case stood as an example to the rest of mankind. So Winstanley recounted his claim that while he had relied solely upon received ideas he had "lived in the darke, being blinded by the imagination of my flesh."⁵⁴ Subsequently, the direct experience of God had fostered such spiritual enlightenment that Winstanley was able to resist the temptation to sin to which he had once succumbed so readily.⁵⁵ He seems to have regarded this privileged insight into spiritual matters as a consolation for the loss of property and companionship that he had previously undergone.

Winstanley's acute sensitivity to the nature of a spiritual crisis prompted him to advance a lengthy account of the inner conflict integral to the 'Anointing'; the process by which individuals were restored to righteousness. Winstanley suggested that while men lived according to the flesh and upon the objects of the creation, they could only sustain a somewhat bestial felicity. However, the initial sensation of righteousness was a time of spiritual trial because the individual was inevitably torn between the self and God.⁵⁶ Winstanley employed a series of images to describe this experience. For instance, he spoke of God "burning up thy drosse,"⁵⁷ and of the spirit burning up the unrighteous flesh.⁵⁸ He also used the analogy of the Sun and the Son of Righteousness, or the light that would dispel the darkness within mankind.⁵⁹ Winstanley captured the essence of the restorative theory by referring to,

54. G. Winstanley, 'The Saints Paradice', in Several Pieces Gathered Into One Volume, p. A2.

55. ibid., pp. 1, 6, 59.

56. ibid., pp. 10-12, 20, 37.

57. ibid., p. 39.

58. ibid., pp. 20-24.

59. ibid., p. A3.

"the Anointing, or that Son of God ruling, A King of righteousness and peace within you, that sets you free."⁶⁰

As

God penetrated the individual soul, so the individual became absorbed into Him.⁶¹ Once again, in The Saints Paradise, Winstanley⁶² asserted the imminence of the salvation of man by means of a restoration on earth, and stated that,

"Now the Father is beginning to work a great mysterie, and that is, to pull Adam out of the selfish-flesh again, and to plant him into the pure spirit, and to bring him into the most fruitful Garden of Eden."⁶³

Winstanley argued that by this means, man would recover his dignity by being restored to the reasonableness that distinguished him from other creatures.⁶⁴ So Winstanley was able to envisage transformed human nature as "Love, Humility, Patience, Meeknesse, Joy, and a sweet resting of heart in God."⁶⁵

It was in The Saints Paradise that Winstanley introduced the notion that God and Reason were synonymous. Winstanley seemed slightly apprehensive that this concept would meet with disapproval. So he maintained that it was imperative for men

"to know that this spirit which is called God, or Father, or Lord, is Reason: for though men esteem this word reason to be too mean a name to set forth the Father by, yet it is the highest name that can be given him."⁶⁶

The identification of God and Reason provided Winstanley with the opportunity to

60. ibid., p.4.

61. ibid., pp.3,42.

62. ibid., p.47. On this occasion Winstanley used these notions interchangeably.

63. ibid., p.30, see also, pp.17-18.

64. ibid., p.49.

65. ibid., p.77.

66. ibid., p.78.

free himself from the intellectual straightjacket in which he had previously been held by his profession of millenarianism.⁶⁷ For the first time, he suggested that as men were perfected by becoming absorbed in the spirit of God, they would be distinguished by a capacity to live according to "the light of reason."⁶⁸ By inverting this argument, Winstanley could construe reasonable conduct as evidence of spiritual regeneration. Whereas previously he had assumed that the restoration of man would be determined exclusively by the will of God, he was now in a position, if he so desired, to argue that man might be induced to act reasonably, and thereby be restored to righteousness, by means other than divine providence. Although this proposition remained latent within Winstanley's thought for some time, it eventually attained its consummation in the utopian institutionalism of The Law of Freedom.

Winstanley again devoted attention to the "Nationall hurly burlies."⁶⁹ He accounted for "the discontent that appears generally in mens spirits in England, one against another,"⁷⁰ by arguing that God was cleansing England of its sinfulness. So Winstanley sought solace in the belief that God was in complete control of the situation, and that He had chosen England as the elect nation.⁷¹ Although this highly impressionistic analysis of contemporary institutions had emerged in earlier pamphlets, Winstanley's social theory became in The Saints Paradise slightly more sophisticated, and anticipated certain of his subsequent ideas. For instance, in this tract Winstanley made his first reference to 'kingly power' by issuing the following

67. See, ibid., pp.13,26,41,64,72.

68. ibid., p.A3.

69. ibid., p.13, see also, p.27.

70. ibid., p.41.

71. ibid., pp.25,28.

challenge :-

"assure your selves, you Kingly, Parliamentarie, and Army power, and know this, that all unrighteous powers and actions must be destroyed; the Father is about this work, and his hand will not slack..."⁷²

Only in the following months did Winstanley come to the conclusion that man could remove political oppression of his own volition. Similarly, Winstanley was soon to extend the conviction that man might live in "community with him who is the Father of all things,"⁷³ by proposing that this end would be achieved only through a community of property.

Despite these incipient developments, Winstanley remained for the time being convinced that mankind's predicament could only be improved by divine intervention. However, a touch of anxiety had already begun to permeate Winstanley's exhortations for endurance amidst the persecution and oppression of the times. For instance, he cited the case of Job - who had been tested by God, according to Winstanley, in order to further his experience of righteousness.⁷⁴ So despite Winstanley's anticipation of

"the restored state which the Father hath begun to work, and which his people wait for compleatness of,"⁷⁵

- his resilience

and patience were clearly wearing thin.

As the title suggests, Truth Lifting Up Its Head Above Scandals (16 October 1648), was an apologia. In it, Winstanley wrote not only in self-defence, but also in an attempt to exonerate his new-

72. ibid., p.53.

73. ibid., p.56.

74. ibid., pp.25-27, 35-36.

75. ibid., p.48.

found associate William Everard, who had recently been incarcerated on a charge of blasphemy. Winstanley's reply was a tract intended to extol the essential religiosity of both Everard's and his own theological statements. Consequently, Winstanley attempted a coherent exposition of his spiritual ideas. In the process, Winstanley's anti-clericalism and advocacy of experimental religion were well to the fore. Similarly, he expanded upon his belief that universal harmony, which had been destroyed by the Fall of Man, might yet be restored.

Winstanley's notion that only a reassertion of the law of reason could restore the harmony of the creation received close attention in Truth Lifting Up Its Head.... The case presented in the pamphlet suggests that Digger communism was theologically based.⁷⁷ It seems that Winstanley's ideal of men living "in community with the Globe, and...with the Spirit of the Globe,"⁷⁸ was maintained throughout his intellectual career. In this formative period he argued that,

"The spirit of the Father is pure Reason: which as he made so he knits the whole creation together into a oneness of life and moderation: every creature sweetly in love lending their hands to preserve each other, and so upholds the whole fabrique."⁷⁹

Winstanley believed that he would be able to identify the means by which the human condition could be ameliorated by analysing the disruption of that unity.

In this pamphlet Winstanley advanced the interesting theory

76. G. Winstanley, Truth Lifting Up Its Head Above Scandals, (Sabine) p.103.

77. ibid., p.105.

78. See particularly, P. Elmen, 'The Theological Basis of Digger Communism', Church History, Vol.23 (1954), pp.207-218.

79. G. Winstanley, Truth Lifting Up Its Head..., pp.111-112.

80. ibid., p.108.

that, after burial, the corpses of fallen men would necessarily pollute the earth,⁸¹ because men were composed of the same four elements, ("fire, water, earth, and aire,"⁸²) as the entire creation. Winstanley also discussed the notion that,

"as the body of the first man was a representation of the whole Creation, and did corrupt it; so the body of Christ was a representation of the whole Creation, and restores it from corruption, and brings it all into a unity of the Father again?"⁸³

Winstanley's position here is a little obscure because he failed to explain why further restoration was required after the death and burial of Christ. Presumably, he supposed that the ascension terminated the restorative vigour exuded from Christ's body. Winstanley seems to have assumed that the rejuvenation of the physical world would recommence once the spirit of Christ had restored mankind to righteousness.

As yet, Winstanley remained content to assure his fellow man that the coming of the spirit would redeem human nature. So, once again,⁸⁴ he counselled them to patiently await the event. Although Winstanley confidently predicted the imminence of changing times, he limited himself to the assumption that the restoration would be effected by some form of millennium.⁸⁵ In this aspect of his thought, Winstanley was becoming increasingly esoteric. However, he confirmed that events would,

"change times and customs, & fill the earth with a new law, wherein dwells righteousness and peace."⁸⁶

81. ibid., pp.113-117.

82. ibid., p.115.

83. ibid., p.116.

84. ibid., pp.108,115,125-126,139.

85. See e.g., ibid., p.138.

86. ibid., p.121.

Within a few months

Winstanley was prepared to be a little more categorical, particularly in predicting the likely social manifestation of the new order.

The New Law of Righteousnes (26 January 1649) was a transitional piece in the sense that in it, Winstanley resumed his ongoing analysis of the human condition, while at the same time serving notice of the amelioration of that condition. The reader of this pamphlet could have little doubt that the incipient law of righteousness envisaged and proclaimed by Winstanley presumed the instigation of a communist society. Winstanley readily confided that,

"As I was in a trance not long since, divers matters were present to my sight, which here must not be related.

Likewise I here these words, Worke together. Eat bread together; declare this all abroad."⁸⁷

Despite the intimation that divine revelation was the source of all his ideas, it seems quite likely that Winstanley drew considerable inspiration in the clarification of his social thought from Light Shining in
88
Buckinghamshire, a pamphlet recently published by a nearby group of True Levellers.

Winstanley's millenarianism has already been discussed. This analysis produced two conclusions. Firstly, it seems that although initially Winstanley was a millenarian, his emphasis upon universal salvation and the transformation of human nature was exceptional, and contributed to his peculiar adaption of

87. G. Winstanley, The New Law of Righteousnes, (Sabine) p.190.

88. Light Shining in Buckinghamshire, in G.H. Sabine, op.cit., pp.611-623, was published on December 5 1648 and has many themes in common with The New Law of Righteousnes - the sinfulness of human nature, problems arising from the appropriation of private property from the commons, the illegitimacy of prevailing political authority, and most especially, communism as a solution to this situation (pp.615-616.)

millenarianism. Secondly, it is apparent that as Winstanley turned to the action of digging, and eventually to utopianism, he abandoned the core of his millenarian ideas. In The New Law of Righteousnes Winstanley still evinced an interest in the millennium.⁸⁹ For instance, he spoke in a manner reminiscent of The Breaking of the Day of God :-

"the Lord he gives this Beast a toleration to rule 42 months, or a time, times and dividing of time; and in that time to kil the two Witnesses, that is, Christ in one body, and Christ in many bodies; or Christ in the first and second coming in flesh, which is Justice and Judgement ruling in man. Rev. 11.2, 9 Rev. 12.14"⁹⁰

Even here it is apparent that, from the assumption that "the greatest combate is within a man,"⁹¹ Winstanley adapted millenarian propositions according to his own spiritual ideas, his view of human nature, and his conception of man's predicament.

Much of this pamphlet was devoted to a lengthy consideration of the Fall of Man, and to his "salvation or restauration rather."⁹² Winstanley expounded his theory that all men emulated Adam's experience, but in arguing that "perfect man shall be no other but God manifest in flesh:"⁹³ (as humility would overcome pride), he envisaged the prospect of the regeneration of human nature. Winstanley predicted the redemption of all men because the

"King of righteousnesse..shal save his people from their sins, and free them from all distemper of the unrighteous

89. G. Winstanley, The New Law of Righteousnes, pp. 149, 163-164, 186, 205-207, 222, 230.

90. ibid., pp. 204-205, see also, p. 162.

91. ibid., p. 228.

92. ibid., p. 152.

93. ibid., p. 166, see also, p. 173.

flesh. This is the only spreading power that shall remove the curse, and restore all things from the bondage every thing groans under."⁹⁴

Although The New Law of Righteousnes was transitional in that Winstanley achieved a clearer definition of the aspects of the human condition which his social theory attempted to resolve, he remained irresolute as to the precise means by which this would be accomplished. So Winstanley expressed concern over the continuing "large distance⁹⁵ between Christ and the bulke of man-kinde." As we shall see, Winstanley's social philosophy confronted the question of how this gap might be bridged.

Winstanley expected a series of reforms to transpire as a result of the regeneration of human nature. The most fundamental of these was the anticipated restoration of the 'common treasury'. Winstanley was convinced that the process of spiritual regeneration had already commenced, particularly amongst "the lowest and despised sort of people."⁹⁶ Clearly, he believed that⁹⁷ institutional reform would soon follow. As we have argued, such an assumption is dialectically opposed to a principal feature of utopianism; the propensity to emphasize institutional reform without presuming the prior moral regeneration of mankind. During the course of this present chapter we shall see that the most significant aspect of Winstanley's intellectual development was his inclination towards such institutional utopianism.

As yet, Winstanley could merely speculate upon the secular consequences of the spiritual restoration of man. He predicted

94. ibid., p.150, see also, p.156.

95. ibid., p.165.

96. ibid., p.186, see also, pp.190,194.

97. Above, pp.35-39.

that once the law of righteousness had restored all men, "none shall desire to have more then another, or to be Lord over other."⁹⁸ Winstanley also assumed that the cessation of aggrandizement inspired by man's moral rectitude would produce a more equitable society in which "the distribution of dominion in one single person over all, shall cease."⁹⁹ Winstanley was still adamant that the means to social reform would be of divine origin. Hence he contended that,

"when the spreading power of wisdome and truth, fills the earth man-kinde, hee wil take off that bondage, and give a universall liberty, and there shal be no more complainings against oppression poverty or injustice."¹⁰⁰

This optimism inspired Winstanley to believe that the existing legal system, which he condemned as corrupt and inefficient,¹⁰¹ might be relinquished because the restoration of human nature would mean that,

"There shall be no need of Lawyers, prisons, or engines of punishment one over another, for all shall walk and act righteously."¹⁰²

We shall see that by the time he wrote The Law of Freedom, Winstanley had lost this marked degree of optimism. As his thought became increasingly sophisticated, Winstanley recognized that the regeneration of human nature would not be achieved in an instant. So in the final phase into which Winstanley's writings are divisible, utopianism, he argued that individuals would be gradually restored to spiritual righteousness during the course of the life-cycle. Thus he

98. G. Winstanley, The New Law of Righteousnes, p.183.

99. ibid., p.170.

100. ibid., p.180.

101. ibid., p.188.

102. ibid., p.183.

ultimately accepted that the retention of a punitive system would be necessary to curb the actions of malefactors.

During the Digger period, Winstanley was required to dispute, in an increasingly complex manner, the claims of landlords to a private property in land. He eventually challenged the constitutional basis of this property right, by incorporating a theory of the Norman Yoke. However, in The New Law of Righteousnes Winstanley used purely ethical arguments to attack "that devil (particular interest)."¹⁰³ In this pamphlet Winstanley developed his case from the proposition that,

"the earth was made by the Lord, to be a common Treasury for all, not a particular Treasury for some."¹⁰⁴

He asserted that landlords had no right to appropriate or to assume a property in land, because to do so was a transgression of the law of reason. Thus he maintained that,

"The rich man tels the poor, that they ofend Reasons law, if they take from the rich; I am sure it is a breach in that Law in the rich to have plenty by them, and yet wil see their fellow creatures men and women to starve for want; Reason requires that every man should live upon the increase of the earth comfortably; though covetousnesse fights against Reasons law."¹⁰⁵

Clearly, Winstanley was by now quite certain that a system of communism was prerequisite for the spiritual restoration of mankind.

By early 1649, Winstanley had developed his social theory to such a degree that many of the issues which were soon to preoccupy

103. ibid., p.196.

104. ibid., p.197, see also ,p.195.

105. ibid., p.181 - rather than emphasizing charity, Winstanley advocated the right to labour as the appropriate solution to the problem of poverty.

him are discerned in The New Law of Righteousnes. For instance, by this stage in his intellectual development Winstanley had attained a fairly sophisticated conception of the equation between economic and socio-political power in contemporary society. He claimed that,

"The man of the flesh, judges it a righteous thing, That some men that are clothed in the objects of the earth, and so called rich men, whether it be got by right or wrong, should be Magistrates to rule over the poor;..."¹⁰⁶

So Winstanley

contended that the abuse of political authority would cease only when the spirit of righteousness impelled men to reinstate the common treasury. To this end he advanced several ideas relevant to the practice of communism. For instance, Winstanley introduced the idea of 'storehouses', which eventually became the focal point of the distributive system employed in his ideal commonwealth, The Law of Freedom. Winstanley predicted that should common storehouses be adopted,

"There shall be no buying nor selling, no fairs or markets, but the whole earth shall be a common treasury for every man"¹⁰⁷

Even at this early stage, Winstanley was sensitive to the type of argument that might be used against his proposals. So he attempted to dispel the notion that communism encouraged idleness and even the sharing of women.¹⁰⁸ Instead he asserted that communism would inaugurate "a new heaven, and a new earth,¹⁰⁹ wherein dwells righteousness."

106. ibid., p.179, see also, p.180.

107. ibid., p.184.

108. ibid., pp.185,197-198.

109. ibid., p.184, see also, The Law of Freedom, (Sabine) p.532, (Hill) p.310,-

"The Kingly Power is the old Heaven, and the old Earth, that must pass away, wherein unrighteousness, oppression and partiality dwells."

In The New Law of Righteousnes Winstanley disclosed an attitude to the issue of hired labour and the expropriation of land which was, potentially, extremely radical.¹¹⁰ Obviously, this deserves detailed consideration. However, commentators have generally failed to realize, or have chosen to negate, the full implications of Winstanley's propositions. Often this reaction has been a consequence of regarding The New Law of Righteousnes as a purely theological piece. For instance, G. Juretic has argued that only in the Digger tracts did Winstanley envisage any form of political activism.¹¹¹ Alternatively, in commenting upon Winstanley's final pamphlet, The Law of Freedom, G. Sabine has rather bemusedly remarked that,

"He still professes to confine the program of communist tillage to the common and nationalized land, and still rejects the idea of expropriating the landlords but it is very hard to see how he thought the two systems could have persisted side by side."¹¹²

D.W. Petegorsky was more categorical in claiming that,

"By the cultivation of the commons, Winstanley constantly emphasized, he intended no direct attack upon the existing system of property rights."¹¹³

According to Petegorsky, Winstanley believed that a system in which the people were free to cultivate the commons would guarantee to the landlords a

110. A similar case was also advanced by Winstanley's fellow Digger, Robert Coster, in, A Mite Cast Into the Common Treasury, (Sabine) pp. 655-658.

111. G. Juretic, The Mind of Gerrard Winstanley: From Millenarian to Socialist, DeKalb, North Illinois University, unpublished doctoral dissertation, p. 106.

112. G. H. Sabine, introduction, op. cit., p. 59.

113. D. W. Petegorsky, Left Wing Democracy in the English Civil War, (New York 1940, 1972 edition), pp. 200-201, see also, p. 147. Petegorsky seemed slightly confused, on p. 205 he appears to retract this opinion.

greater security in the possession of their estates. Petegorsky's assumptions are the typical result of concentrating too closely upon Winstanley's Digger pamphlets to the exclusion of his earlier writings. Yet, as we shall see, the tactical considerations pertaining to the perilous existence of the colony constrained Winstanley in the statements he dared to publish in defence of digging. However, when he wrote The New Law of Righteousness, Winstanley felt free to propose the subversion of hired labour, upon which landlords were to some degree dependent for the preservation of their estates.

Winstanley's rejection of hired labour was derived from the proposition that this institution sustained a regime of private property, which in turn had led to the establishment of illegitimate political authority, and which oppressed the common people who continued to labour under it. Winstanley expressed the cruel irony of this situation by arguing that,

"The poor people by their labours in this time of the first Adams government, have made the buyers and sellers of land, or rich men, to become tyrants and oppressours over them."¹¹⁶

The close affinity of Winstanley's spiritual concerns with his social theory was evident in his affirmation that the incipient restoration of man would involve the abolition of hired labour.

This argument placed Winstanley in a dilemma. On the one hand, he clung to the conviction that social reform would be guided

114. This has been recognized; briefly in passing by H.N. Brailsford, The Levellers and the English Revolution, (London 1961), p.662; in considerably greater detail by J.C.Davis, 'Gerrard Winstanley and the Restoration of True Magistracy', P.&P., No.70 (1977), pp.76-93, passim; and recently by C.Hill, 'The Religion of Gerrard Winstanley', P.&P. Supplement 5, (1978), p.26.

115. G.Winstanley, The New Law of Righteousnes, pp.158-159.

116. ibid., p.190.

117. ibid., pp.190-191.

by divine providence. Yet on the other hand, he was swayed by a developing supposition that man could actively determine his own social and spiritual condition. Thus in recognizing that his case might be misconstrued as an apology for the forceful dispossession of the propertied classes, and of anarchy in general, Winstanley readily maintained that,

"I do not speak that any particular man shall go and take their neighbours goods by violence, or robbery....but every one is to wait, till the Lord Christ do spread himself in multiplicities of bodies,..."¹¹⁸

Conversely, Winstanley

also warned that,

"Whosoever it is that labours in the earth, for any person or persons, that lifts up themselves as Lords & Rulers over others, and that doth not look upon themselves equal to others in Creation, The hand of the Lord shall be upon that labourer:"¹¹⁹

By arguing that both labourers and proprietors would incur God's wrath, if they persisted with the existing social relationships, Winstanley suggested that men were capable of choosing their institutional environment.

Winstanley argued that hired labour and private property were the curse which God was about to withdraw. Thereafter, men could be restored only if they obeyed God's ordinance to desist in either hiring out or employing labour. The subversive implications of Winstanley's theory are most apparent in the following statement :-

"Therefore if the rich wil stil hold fast this propriety of Mine and thine, let them labour their own Land with their own hands. And let the common-People, that are the gatherings together of Israel from under that bondage, and

118. ibid., pp.182-183.

119. ibid., p.190, see also pp.194-194.

that say the earth is ours, not mine, let them labour together, and eat bread together upon the Commons, Mountains and Hills.

For as the inclosures are called such a mans Land, and such a mans Land; so the Commons and Heath, are called the common-peoples."¹²⁰

Clearly, this was a declaration of intent.

Winstanley had begun to envisage a society in which,

"No man shal have more land, then he can labour himself, or have others to labour with him in love, working together, and eating bread together."¹²¹

It seems that Winstanley regarded the withdrawal of hired labour as an appropriate means towards the establishment of a predominantly communist system of ownership.

In an oft-quoted statement Winstanley claimed that,

"Divide England into three parts, scarce one part is manured: So that here is land enough to maintain all her children, and many die for want, or live under a heavy burden of povertie all their daies: And this miserie the poor people have brought upon themselves, by lifting up a particular interest, by their labours."¹²²

In this passage the threads of three closely-related arguments have become entangled. The first is Winstanley's thesis that hired labour contributed towards sustaining the contemporary hierarchical distribution of property and power. The second is the assertion that sufficient land was available for the common people to cultivate, should they refuse to work for the landowners. And the third is the implication that the extension of cultivation beyond its present limits would alleviate suffering and want by increasing

120. ibid., pp.195-196.

121. ibid., p.191.

122. ibid., p.200.

the general prosperity of the nation. Even if his estimate was correct, Winstanley must, presumably, have realized that the landowners would claim some form of property right to the uncultivated tracts of land. This leads to the interesting question of how Winstanley expected the landowning classes to react to the imminent spiritual restoration and accompanying social revolution.

The occasional ambiguity of Winstanley's position in The New Law of Righteousnes is illustrated in his evaluation of the manner in which the propertied classes might be expected to respond to the forthcoming restoration. We have seen that Winstanley posited a correlation between the extent of the individual's holding of private property and the depth of that same individual's descent into the fallen condition. Winstanley expected that the poor would be the first to be restored. Nevertheless, he optimistically predicted that the spirit of reason might even inspire the rich :-

"When the universall law of equity rises up in every man. ...every one shall put to their hands to till the earth"¹²³

Alternatively, in a more pragmatic and possibly deferential moment, Winstanley suggested that,

"He that is now possessour of lands and riches, and cannot labour, if he say to others, you are my fellow creatures, and the Lord is now making the earth common amongst us: therefore take my land only let me eat bread with you, that man shall be preserved by the labour of others."¹²⁴

So it

appears that Winstanley believed that the restoration might ultimately include the propertied, who, in their newly-discovered

123. ibid., p.184.

124. ibid., p.191.

righteousness, would relinquish their claims to the private ownership of land, and restore it to the common treasury. Nevertheless, we have seen that Winstanley held in reserve the more drastic suggestion that less enlightened landowners would eventually be constrained by circumstance to abandon their claims to private property. In a situation in which labour might become scarce, or even no longer available for hire, landlords could be expected to encounter considerable difficulty in maintaining the economic viability of their estates. In this light, Winstanley warned the landlords of the retribution they were liable to face :-

"if thou wouldst find mercie, then open thy barns and treasuries of the earth, which thou hast heaped together, and detains from the poor, thy fellow creatures. This is the only remedy to escape wrath."¹²⁵

Digging was an active response to the intellectual premises established during the initial period of Winstanley's thought. This call for action succeeded, and in many ways contradicted, Winstanley's confident assurances that the law of righteousness would inevitably unfold in the fulness of time :-

"the whole earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, and of his Dominion there shall be no end....it draws near to be made manifest, wait for it with patience."¹²⁶

So this initial phase of Winstanley's thought was very much one of,

"waiting for a restoration by Christ the King and law of righteousnesse, who is the restorer of all things."¹²⁷

In his conviction that "it must be the hand of the Lord alone that

125. ibid., p.200, see also, p.205.

126. ibid., p.150.

127. ibid., p.157.

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 must do it," Winstanley seemed resolute that any active attempt to effect the restoration was unnecessary, and possibly even detrimental to the divine purpose. Men could not attempt to transform the world by anticipating the coming of reason.¹²⁹ Winstanley contended that, as yet, only a few individuals had been restored. So he concluded The New Law of Righteousnes by imploring the unregenerate to wait patiently for their restoration :-

"O my dear friends in the flesh, despise not this word I speak; wait upon the Lord for teaching; you will never have rest in your souls till he speak in you."¹³⁰

Such pacificism

obviously represented a constraint upon Winstanley's thought. However, Winstanley was about to effect the fundamental change in his intellectual position which resulted in the act of digging.

128. ibid., p.187.

129. ibid., p.200.

130. ibid., p.243, see also, pp.135,178,183.

ii Period Two : The Digger Experiment

Recalling that,

"The manifestation of a righteous heart shall be known, not by his words, but in his actions;"¹³¹

- the inception of the communal cultivation of the common lands obviously marked a crucial reformulation of Winstanley's approach to the problem of achieving mankind's spiritual restoration. According to his own account, visionary guidance prompted Winstanley to commence digging on (the conveniently proximate) St. George's Hill, on 1st April 1649. As D.W. Petegorsky has noted, by tilling the land in order to institute the 'common treasury', Winstanley was by this time prepared to actively anticipate the restoration.¹³² Soon afterwards, Winstanley and his chief associate, William Everard, were twice interviewed on amicable terms by Fairfax.¹³³ These meetings coincided with Winstanley's publication of the first of what proved to be a long series of pamphlets which both defended and explained the action of digging. Despite apparently satisfying Fairfax of their innocence, the Diggers were subjected to violent attacks and legal proceedings by the local populace, and in particular by the gentry in the persons of Mr. Drake and Parson Platt.¹³⁴ The Diggers endured these onslaughts patiently. However, despite a slight change in location, financial straits brought an end to the colony after a troubled one-year existence. Nevertheless, during this period, Winstanley's thought was engrossed with the

131. ibid., p.185.

132. D.W. Petegorsky, op.cit., pp.146,178.

133. For the details of Winstanley's exploits in the spring of 1649 see, C.S.P.D. (1649-1650), April 16 1649, p.95; and Bulstrode Whitelock, Memorials of English Affairs, (1682) (Oxford 1853) Vol.111, pp.17-18.

134. See, G.H. Sabine, op.cit., p.18.

destiny of the Digger colony.

Those commentators who have examined Winstanley's writings have advanced four basic explanations of digging. These might profitably be considered before turning to our own evaluation of the Digger experiment. From the first of these viewpoints, Keith Thomas has been one of a number of critics¹³⁵ to have regarded digging as a consequence of scarcity and necessity. Thus, in Thomas's words,

"the whole Digger movement can plausibly be regarded as the culmination of a century of unauthorized encroachment upon the forests and wastes by squatters and local commoners, pushed on by land shortage and the pressure of population."¹³⁶

Clearly, there is a certain validity to this 'necessity and pressure of population' account, but, as Thomas appreciated, it is not an entirely satisfactory explanation of the cultivation of St. George's Hill. Digging was squatting of a unique nature in which the occupation of the wastes and commons was justified by arguments that were integral to a substantial social theory. It is worth noting that Winstanley did not emphasize the argument from necessity until well into the Digger period, when the colony was threatened by¹³⁷ extinction.

A second approach, which is related to the first, involves the contention that the Diggers were determined to claim the

135. For instance, M.E. James, Social Problems and Policy During the Puritan Revolution, (London 1930, 1966 edition), pp. 99-102; H.N. Brailsford, op.cit., chapter XXXIV; B. Moore, Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy, (London 1966, 1967 edition), p. 500; C. Hill, The World Turned Upside Down, (London 1972, 1975 edition), p. 130, and, introduction, Winstanley: The Law of Freedom, (London 1973), pp. 21-22; F. Brockway, Britain's First Socialists, (London 1980), pp. 125-126.

136. K.V. Thomas, 'Another Digger Broadside', P&P, No. 42 (1969), pp. 57-68, at p. 58.

137. See below, p. 501 n. 203.

commons for the poor, and thereafter, to differentiate these
 communes from the enclosed holdings of the gentry. ¹³⁸ Thus,
 it has been assumed that the Diggers envisaged a situation in
 which two ways of life, communism, and the adherence to a system
 of private property, could co-exist peacefully. The obvious
 flaw in this explanation is its failure to take into account
 Winstanley's ideas on the subversive withdrawal of hired
 labour by which he hoped to precipitate the collapse of
 landlordism. ¹³⁹

Thirdly, there is the 'millenarian' explanation. W.S.Hudson
 has argued that Digging was an anticipation of the lifestyle
 Winstanley believed the millennium would inaugurate. ¹⁴⁰
 Alternatively, L.Mulligan has contended that digging was an
 outward millennium which sought to establish the inward
 regeneration of human nature. ¹⁴¹ By accommodating some
 consideration of his spiritual concerns, these views, especially
 Mulligan's, come closer to providing a sound understanding of
 Winstanley's reasons for digging. However, they are impaired
 by the mistaken insistence that, while he tilled the commons,
 Winstanley awaited the millennium.

The fourth explanation of digging is the most satisfactory.
 This view postulates a connection between digging and
 Winstanley's conception of the restoration of man. Thus P.
 Zagorin, for instance, has related Winstanley's adoption of
 practical communism to his earlier assumptions about the origins
 of evil and the redemption of man. Yet Zagorin has contended

138. G.H.Sabine, op.cit., p.55; K.V.Thomas, 'The Date of Gerrard Winstanley's 'Fire in the Bush'', P&P, NO.42 (1969), pp.160-162, at p.162; C.Hill, op.cit., p.27.

139. See above, pp.475-480, and J.C.Davis, op.cit., pp.82-83.

140. W.S.Hudson, op.cit., p.11.

141. L.Mulligan, op.cit., p.69.

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that digging was merely a symbolic action. However, it seems more likely that with the foundation of the Digger colony, Winstanley believed that, for the participants at least, the actual process of restoration had actually begun. As G.H. Sabine has said of Winstanley,

"He believed, naively no doubt, that a life of Christian love was about to transform the whole economic and political organization of society, but he expected also a complete transformation of human nature."¹⁴³

Thus digging was

a remedy for mankind's fallen condition. So it is admissible to maintain that, by this stage in his intellectual career, Winstanley had developed a concern for, as P. Elmen puts it, "possible changes in the outward structure of laws and institutions."¹⁴⁴ Nevertheless, this developing consideration was not, as yet, at the expense of Winstanley's emphasis upon man's internal peace of mind. Rather, Winstanley's intellectual progress was characterized by his gradual recognition of the potential utility of institutional reforms in restoring mankind's spiritual esteem. Winstanley's Digger pamphlets are the depository of the seeds of his utopian institutionalism, rather than the consummation of his millenarianism.

After considering these various interpretations of Digging, we may now turn to examine the pamphlets written by Winstanley during the 'Digger' period. The first such tract, The True Levellers' Standard Advanced (20 April 1649), was concerned with three major themes. These were, firstly, an evaluation of mankind's current predicament and the prospect of his

142. P. Zagorin, A History of Political Thought in the English Revolution, (London 1954), pp. 47-50.

143. G.H. Sabine, op.cit., p. 39.

144. P. Elmen, op.cit., p. 215.

restoration, secondly, the failure of the new government to institute thoroughgoing social reforms, and thirdly, the explanation and justification of digging.

With regard to the first of these themes, the analysis of the human condition, The True Levellers' Standard Advanced contains substantial evidence to affirm that Winstanley's theology was the source of Digger communism. Winstanley's intellectual continuity was maintained by his sustained endeavour to evaluate the Fall of Man and to postulate the means of effecting a restoration. Hence he opened the first Digger tract by discussing the pristine condition, and its implications for man's existing circumstances :-

"In the beginning of Time, the great Creator Reason made the Earth to be a Common Treasury, to preserve Beasts, Birds, Fishes, and Man, the lord that was to govern this Creation; for Man had Domination given to him, over the Beasts, Birds and Fishes; but not one word was spoken in the beginning, That one branch of mankind should rule over another."¹⁴⁵

Winstanley developed this discussion into an analysis of various notions, including the bondage of mankind as Adam, the flesh and the spirit, pride and political oppression, and property as the curse. In doing so, he incorporated a degree of millenarian terminology into his exposition of the restoration. Thus he advanced the familiar claim that,

"The Seed out of whom the Creation did proceed, shall bruise this Serpents head, and restore my Creation again from this curse and bondage."¹⁴⁶

Most significantly, Winstanley retained

145. G. Winstanley, The True Levellers' Standard Advanced, (Sabine) p.251, (Hill) p.77.

146. ibid., (Sabine) p.253, (Hill) p.79.

his preoccupation with the rule of righteousness, yet adapted it to the Diggers' predicament by advising men to,

"Do, as you would have others do to you; and love your Enemies, not in words, but in actions."¹⁴⁷

The True Levellers' Standard Advanced was dedicated but three months after the execution of Charles I. This consideration stimulated the second of the pamphlet's themes. Even after so short a time, Winstanley advanced that nascent supposition that the new government was not exerting itself to restore that liberty and freedom which was every Englishman's birthright.¹⁴⁸ Thus Winstanley claimed that oppression was continuing beyond the time of the tyrant's execution. We shall see that as Winstanley became increasingly disillusioned during the course of the forthcoming year, he developed this notion into a more detailed analysis of 'kingly power'. That Winstanley reacted so critically and so swiftly to the shortcomings of the new regime indicates both the impression the execution made upon him, and his growing impatience in anticipating the restoration.

Thirdly, and finally, Winstanley's most obvious reason for publishing The True Levellers' Standard Advanced was his desire to vindicate the communal cultivation of the commons. Although Winstanley claimed to be advancing six arguments in defence of digging, he in fact presented only three. The first of these was that the Diggers were responding to visionary guidance bestowed upon himself.¹⁴⁹ That the Norman Yoke was a vestige of Babylonish power, that particular interests were the curse, and that the landlords had breached the Lord's Commandments against

147. ibid., (Sabine) p.254, (Hill) p.80, and see above, p.445, and - Truth Lifting Up its Head... p.109.

148. G.Winstanley, The True Levellers' Standard Advanced, (Sabine) pp.255-256, (Hill) p.82.

149. ibid., (Sabine) p,261, (Hill) p.89, in terms similar to those employed in The New Law of Righteousnes, p.196.

killing and stealing; all this apparently, had been revealed to Winstanley in a trance. By defining liberty in terms which implied that the poor should be free to cultivate the commons, Winstanley was able to argue that,

"this is one Reason of our digging and labouring the Earth one with another, That we might work in righteousness, and lift up the Creation from bondage."¹⁵⁰

Similarly, Winstanley

maintained that a voice in a trance had directed him to declare communism through his words, writings, and actions, and thereby to reintroduce the common treasury.¹⁵¹ He again spoke with assurance that any individual who sustained the existing social structure, by hiring out his labour, would face divine retribution. Finally, Winstanley insisted that even the precise location for digging, St. George's Hill, had been indicated to him in a dream.¹⁵²

The second argument by which Winstanley attempted to justify digging, the citation and interpretation of scriptural authority, also suggests that he believed the activity possessed a spiritual foundation. Thus, Winstanley provided a long list of biblical citations; particularly Acts 4:32.¹⁵³ Winstanley eventually developed his third reason for digging into a proposition which became (in an amended form) a central theme of The Law of Freedom. This was the notion that labour, especially the communal cultivation of the land, was integral to the spiritual restoration of the individual. Winstanley claimed that the Diggers had been invested with the spirit of

150. G. Winstanley, The True Levellers' Standard Advanced, (Sabine) p.260, (Hill) p,87, (No.1).

151. ibid., (Sabine) pp.261-262, (Hill) pp.89-90, (No.4).

152. ibid., (Sabine) p.260, (Hill) pp.87-88, (No.2).

153. ibid., (Sabine) pp.260-261, (Hill) p.88, (No.3); Acts 4:32 - apostolic communism.

righteousness,¹⁵⁴ and through their communal life, enjoyed
 considerable peace of mind.¹⁵⁵ By arguing that digging was
 fundamental to the resurrection of the spirit within,¹⁵⁶
 Winstanley suggested that his colony was laying the foundations
 for the restoration of mankind.

Their second pamphlet, A Declaration From the Poor Oppressed
 People of England, (1st June 1649), witnessed the defiant mood
 of the Diggers¹⁵⁷ during the early days of the colony. From the
 proposition that the earth had been created as a common treasury,
 Winstanley went on to emphasize the guilt and intransigence of
 the Lords of the Manors in depriving the people of their
 livelihood.¹⁵⁸ By means of a scathing anti-intellectualism,¹⁵⁹
 Winstanley reaffirmed his belief that the Diggers had become
 enlightened. Hence he contended that by perceiving that the
 land was intended for communal cultivation, the Diggers heralded
 the reinstatement of the spirit of righteousness.¹⁶⁰ Further,
 arguing that "the inward law of Love"¹⁶¹ impelled the Diggers
 to discredit private property, Winstanley again suggested that
 the colonists had already experienced a spiritual restoration.
 Winstanley supplemented this essentially theological justification
 of digging by contending that the freedom of the common people
 to cultivate the land was their birthright.¹⁶² He also deemed

154. ibid., (Sabine) p.257, (Hill) p.83.

155. ibid., (Sabine) pp.262-263, (Hill) pp.90-91, (No.5).

156. ibid., (Sabine) pp.263-264, (Hill) pp.91-92, (No.6).

157. G.H.Sabine, op.cit., p.267, suggests that others besides Winstanley may have contributed towards the writing of this pamphlet.

158. G.Winstanley, A Declaration From the Poor Oppressed People of England, (Sabine) p.269, (Hill) p.99.

159. ibid., (Sabine) pp.271-272, (Hill) p.102.

160. ibid., (Sabine) pp.269,272-273, (Hill) pp.99,103.

161. ibid., (Sabine) p.269, see also p.272, (Hill) p.100, see also, p.102.

162. ibid., (Sabine) p.276, (Hill) p.107.

it expedient to introduce at this stage his conception of the 'National Covenant' (The Solemn League and Covenant 1643).

Thus he argued that the contribution of life and property made by the poor to the cause of suppressing the King, constituted a contract which recovered the common people's lost birthright, and committed the new government to a policy of social reform.¹⁶³ So Winstanley claimed that the Diggers were simply acting within the terms of this contract.

One particularly sensitive issue which inspired Winstanley to take up his pen was the proprietorial status of woodland. Despite their theoretical abhorrence of commercial transactions, the Diggers had been forced to compromise their ideals by selling wood which they had gathered from the commons in order to sustain themselves until their crops ripened.¹⁶⁴ This enterprise had been strenuously resisted by the local landlords who maintained that their property rights had been infringed. Winstanley responded by extending the claims he advanced on behalf of the common people and stated that,

"Therefore, we require, and we resolve to take both common Land, and Common woods to be a livelihood for us, and look upon you as equal with us, not above us, knowing very well, that England, the land of our Nativity, is to be a common Treasury of livelihood to all, without respect of persons"¹⁶⁵

On 20th April 1649 Winstanley and Everard had visited Whitehall in an attempt to exonerate the Diggers' actions and to explain their philosophy to the man Winstanley regarded as the de facto head of state, Lord General Thomas Fairfax. On 26th May Fairfax actually inspected the St. George's Hill colony. This event

163. *ibid.*, (Sabine) p.274, (Hill) pp.104-105.

164. *ibid.*, (Sabine) pp.272-273, 274-275, (Hill) pp.103, 105-106.

165. *ibid.*, (Sabine) p.273, (Hill) p.104.

seems to have strengthened Winstanley's conviction that digging was immensely important to the history of both England, and the entire cosmos. Soon afterwards Winstanley wrote of his understanding that "our digging upon that Common, is the talk of the whole Land."¹⁶⁶ It appears that relations between Winstanley and Fairfax were reasonably amicable. For his part, Winstanley convinced Fairfax that the Diggers did not pose a subversive threat to the newly-established commonwealth, while Fairfax gave the Diggers a sympathetic hearing and remained tolerant of their experiment. Fairfax's rather paternal attitude inspired Winstanley to look to him for protection against the various violent attacks that the Diggers were forced to endure.

A letter written by Winstanley to Fairfax (9 June 1649) indicates that by this time Winstanley's optimistic conviction that the Digger project would be successful, and would proliferate, was at its height.¹⁶⁷ Despite certain assaults on the colony from his less endearing neighbours, Winstanley confidently reported a gradual conversion of the local populace to the Digger cause.¹⁶⁸ In this letter, Winstanley took the opportunity to clarify some of his basic ideas. Thus he explained to Fairfax that the cultivation of the commons was every Englishman's birthright,¹⁶⁹ that the Civil War had been successfully prosecuted largely as a result of the covenant between Parliament, Army, and People,¹⁷⁰ and, the corollary, that the contractors should remain united in confirming the victory

166. G. Winstanley, To The Lord Fairfax, Generall of the English Forces, and His Councill of War, (Sabine), p. 281.

167. See, A Declaration of the Bloudie and Unchristian Acting of William Star and John Taylor of Walton, (Sabine), pp. 295-298.

168. G. Winstanley, To the Lord Fairfax, . . ., p. 282.

169. ibid., pp. 282, 286-287.

170. ibid., pp. 285-286, 291.

by bestowing upon the common people a share of the spoils, in the form of free access to the common lands.¹⁷¹ Similarly, Winstanley outlined his interpretation of the Fall and of "the burthen of the Norman Yoke,"¹⁷² along with his belief that digging, by restoring the 'common treasury', was integral to the cosmic battle and to the spiritual restoration of man. The relationship which Winstanley assumed to exist between the Norman Yoke and the Fall is amply illustrated by his conclusion that,

"The Reformation that England is now to endeavour, is not to remove the Norman Yoke only, and to bring us back to be governed by those Laws that were before William the Conqueror came in, as if that were the rule or mark we aime at: No, that is not it; but the Reformation is according to the Word of God, and that is the pure Law of righteousnesse before the fall, which made all things, unto which all things are to be restored: and he that endeavours not that, is a Covenant-breaker."¹⁷³

Winstanley's suggestion that Fairfax might further this reformation, by advancing the Digger cause, marked an important new stage in his intellectual development. Ultimately, in The Law of Freedom, Winstanley would conclude that only the state could actively promote the spiritual restoration of the individual.

In view of the direction which his thought would eventually take, it is perhaps ironical that a significant feature of this letter is Winstanley's discussion of the limited circumstances in which government would be necessary and could be justified.

171. ibid., p.282.

172. ibid., p.282, see also, pp.286-291.

173. ibid., p.292.

He defended the insular anarchism of the Digger colony by maintaining that,

"we were not against any that would have Magistrates and Laws to govern, as the Nations of the world are governed, but as for our parts we shall need neither the one nor the other in that nature of Government; for as our Land is common, so our Cattell is to be common, and our corn and fruits of the earth common, and are not to be bought and sold among us, but to remaine a standing portion of livelihood to us and our children, without that cheating entanglement of buying and selling, and we shall not arrest one another...."¹⁷⁵

"we have chosen the Lord God Almighty to be our King and Protector."¹⁷⁶

These affirmations corroborate the impression that, at the time of communicating with Fairfax, Winstanley's confidence in the utility of digging had culminated in a profoundly optimistic appreciation of human potential. Hence he presumed that the moral regeneration of the Diggers enabled them to dispense with private property and to live without the restraints of any form of political authority. So by eradicating both private property and political authority, Winstanley excluded two institutions that had traditionally been regarded as prerequisite for the subjugation of the evil inclinations of fallen mankind.

As both W. Schenk and J. C. Davis have recognized, Winstanley failed to maintain his anarchical assurances.¹⁷⁷ It will be argued in due course that as Winstanley became less confident

174. *ibid.*, p.282, by calling for patience. Either this was a retrograde step, which seems unlikely, or else Winstanley wished to renounce the subversive implications of anarchism.

175. *ibid.*, pp.282-283.

176. *ibid.*, p.284.

177. W. Schenk, The Concern for Social Justice, (London 1948), p.104, J. C. Davis, op.cit., pp.91-92.

of the ease with which the moral reformation of mankind would occur, he was obliged to disavow the luxury of anarchism. Thus he eventually confronted various issues pertinent to the institutional restraint of men's conduct. Ultimately, in the most systematic exposition of his social theory, The Law of Freedom, Winstanley proposed various institutional arrangements which he deemed suitable for this end. Nevertheless, it is important to note that, whereas in the Digger period Winstanley repudiated a jurisdiction (kingly power) which he conceived as corrupt, in his latter period of utopian institutionalism, he insisted that the state must incorporate the law of righteousness.

In An Appeal to the House of Commons (11 July 1649), Winstanley brought his theory of the covenant between government and the people to maturity. Thus this tract constitutes a detailed plea for the full reformation of society through the extirpation of the institutions associated with 'kingly power'. During the course of the pamphlet Winstanley recited several of his now standard arguments. For instance, he railed against both the centralization and the obscure language employed by the Norman legal system.¹⁷⁸ The law, Winstanley insisted, should instead accord with reason and equity. In this context Winstanley claimed that the Norman Conquest, and the concessions later extracted via Magna Carta, were amongst the most important events to have occurred "since the fall of man from that righteous Law."¹⁷⁹ From this standpoint, Winstanley maintained that the Diggers were trespassing only if (as was obviously not the case) God had granted an exclusive property right in the common lands,

178. G. Winstanley, An Appeal to the House of Commons, (Sabine), pp. 311-312, (Hill) pp. 123-124.

179. ibid., (Sabine) p. 303, (Hill) p. 113.

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to the lords of the manors.

Despite his occasional bouts of repetition, Winstanley used An Appeal to the House of Commons to expand his theory of the national covenant. Accordingly, he argued that the war had been won largely as the result of an undertaking in which the common people had contributed both their blood and their money to the war effort, on the understanding that once victory was secured, their birthright of the common treasury would be

restored to them.¹⁸¹ Yet Winstanley pointed out that despite this arrangement, the selfishness and pride evident in the nature of those who had assumed control of the commonwealth, impelled them to retain 'kingly power' after their disposal of the King. So Winstanley stated that,

"it will appear to the view of all men, That you cut off the Kings head, that you might establish your selves in his Chair of Government, and that your aym was not to throw down Tyranny, but the Tyrant."¹⁸²

In recommending the House of Commons to take such measures as would be necessary to rectify the situation, Winstanley was typically forthright :-

"The maine thing that you should look upon is the Land, which calls upon her children to be free from the entanglement of the Norman Task-masters, for one third part lies waste and barren, and her children starve for want, in regard the Lords of Manors will not suffer the poor to manure it."¹⁸³

Winstanley

reminded the House that they had entered into a contract to restore the conditions that had existed before the Conquest and the Fall. He warned that failure to fulfil this undertaking

180. ibid., (Sabine) p.309, (Hill) p.120.

181. ibid., (Sabine) p.304, (Hill) p.114.

182. ibid., (Sabine) p.307, (Hill) p.119.

183. ibid., (Sabine) p.304, (Hill) p.115.

not only would confirm the suspicion that Parliament subscribed to Normanism, but also would be in defiance of the will of "Almighty God".¹⁸⁴ Further, Winstanley predicted that such a crisis of confidence would eventually prompt the poor to turn in retaliation against the House of Commons.¹⁸⁵

An Appeal to the House of Commons was also the pamphlet in which Winstanley discussed, in greater detail, the suggestion that the land might be partitioned; the enclosures remaining with the landlords, and the commons being relinquished to the people. So he included the following proposition,

"Let the Gentry have their inclosures free from all Norman enslaving intanglements whatsoever, and let the common people have their Commons and waste lands set free to them, from all Norman enslaving Lords of Mannors,..."¹⁸⁶

This

delineation assumes considerable significance in view of Winstanley's earlier discussion of the eradication of hired labour.¹⁸⁷ As we have seen, Winstanley presumed that the success of this enterprise would depend upon the willingness of the people to withhold their labour from the landowners, and instead to cultivate communally the wastes and commons. It seems unlikely that Winstanley could have forgotten these ideas during the six months that had elapsed between their exposition in The New Law of Righteousnes, and the publication of An Appeal to the House of Commons. Yet it seems considerably more likely that, in the changed situation that pertained in the summer of 1649, Winstanley thought it inexpedient to discuss his proposals for the elimination of hired labour overtly.

184. ibid., (Sabine) p.305, (Hill) p.116.

185. ibid., (Sabine) p.306, (Hill) pp.116-117.

186. ibid., (Sabine) p.305, (Hill) p.115.

187. See above, pp.475-480.

It may safely be assumed that during the Digger period, the withdrawal of hired labour was a latent assumption within Winstanley's advocacy of the partition of the land. The full significance of this was realized in Winstanley's statement that,

"we, amongst others of the common people, that have been ever friends to the Parliament, as we are assured our enemies wil witness to it, have plowed and dig'd upon Georges-Hill in Surrey, to sow corn for succour of man, offering no offence to any, but do carry our selves in love and peace towards all, having no intent to meddle with any mans inclosures, or propriety, til it be freely given to us by themselves,..."¹⁸⁸

This extract begs the question of why Winstanley expected the landlords to relinquish their property. There seem to be two possible answers. Firstly, Winstanley might have presumed that the lords of the manors would eventually undergo such moral regeneration that they would adopt a charitable disposition towards the commoners. However, we have already seen that as a result of his exasperation with passively awaiting the reform of human nature, Winstanley turned to a policy of activism. Digging, he believed, would instil spiritual righteousness; but the landlords were not digging. However, the call to action is the clue to the second, and more plausible, explanation of Winstanley's position. Digging the commons was in accordance with his theory of the subversion of hired labour. As Winstanley confidently expected digging to spread, he must also have anticipated the eventuality that the landlords would be totally deprived of hired labour. So, presumably, their estates would no longer be economically viable, and they would therefore be constrained to throw in their lot

188. G. Winstanley, op.cit., (Sabine) p.301, (Hill) pp.111-112.

with the common people.

The tone and construction of A Watch-Word to the City of London and the Armie (26 August 1649), indicates that events were beginning to catch up on the Diggers. Thus Winstanley confessed to a certain unease and to the dissolution of his fleeting tranquility in confiding that,

"I feel my self like a man in a storm, standing under shelter upon a hill in peace, waiting till the storm be over to see the end of it,.." ¹⁸⁹

Such deepening anxiety was sufficient motivation for Winstanley to again attempt to warn the nation of the perils attending the perpetuation of 'Norman' institutions. Parts of this pamphlet appear to have been hastily written; the latter section in particular being interspersed with details of the immediate situation. In this case, Winstanley expressed concern over the welfare of some cows he had been herding, and which had been confiscated in lieu of the payment of a fine. The autobiographical content of this piece is therefore substantial.

Once more, Winstanley asserted that the imperative to restore ¹⁹⁰ the common treasury had been revealed to him experimentally. A Watch-Word... deals particularly with a charge of trespass that had been brought against Winstanley, and with the details of the molestation of the Diggers by the local population. Consequently, two themes emerge. Firstly, the tract constitutes Winstanley's most thoroughgoing analysis of 'Norman' legal institutions, and, secondly, because Winstanley was clearly on the defensive, he once again attempted to justify digging.

Effectively, the legal reforms advanced in The Law of Freedom

189. G. Winstanley, A Watch-Word to the City of London and the Armie, (Sabine) p.329, (Hill) p.141.

190. ibid., (Sabine) pp.328-329, (Hill) p.140.

were a direct response to complaints such as those lodged by Winstanley during the Digger period. For instance, in A Watch-Word... Winstanley argued that the charge of trespass brought against him for cultivating the commons could be upheld only if the 'kingly' law was to be sustained.¹⁹¹ By alternative reference to the 'law of righteousness', Winstanley claimed the right to cultivate the common treasury. Hence his apprehension lest England should succumb to an even stronger form of Norman power.¹⁹² Typically, Winstanley asserted that the law ought to be founded upon equity and reason,¹⁹³ and expressed his blatant distrust of lawyers (whom he dismissed as supporters of Normanism), by arguing for the right of each individual to plead his own case.¹⁹⁴ In the same vein, Winstanley protested that under the existing system, juries were packed with freeholders (the descendants of William the Conqueror's soldiers), who also had an interest in upholding the Norman law.¹⁹⁵

The second major theme of A Watch-Word..., the vindication of digging, possessed two aspects. Firstly, Winstanley reiterated his notion that the earth was to be restored as a 'common treasury', and utilized his concepts of the Fall, of mankind as Adam, of the power of darkness, and of the Norman Yoke, to support his claim. He contended that 'kingly power' was not necessarily peculiar to one individual, tyranny could continue beyond the duration of the monarchy because,

"the Prerogative Lawes is Belzebub, for they are the strength of covetousnesse and bondage in the creation, lifting up one, and casting down another: the Attorneys,

191. ibid., (Sabine) p.322, (Hill) p.133.

192. ibid., (Sabine) p.336, (Hill) p.148.

193. ibid., (Sabine) pp,321-322, (Hill) p.132.

194. ibid., (Sabine) pp.319-320, (Hill) p.130.

195. ibid., (Sabine) p.327, (Hill) p.138.

and Priests, and Lawyers, and Bayliffs are servants to Belzebub, and are Devils, their Prisons, Whips, and Gallows are the torments of this Hell, or government of darknesse;..."¹⁹⁶

Winstanley's second justification of digging rested upon his representation of the contract that had furnished victory in the Civil War. He argued that the people should henceforth be permitted to cultivate the commons because,

"all sorts, poor as well as rich, Tenant as well as Landlord, have paid Taxes, Free-quarter, Excise, or adventured their lives, to cast out that Kingly Office."¹⁹⁷

"therefore those from whom money and blood was received, ought to obtain freedom in the Land to themselves and Posterity, by the Law of contract between Parliament and People."¹⁹⁸

Yet again, this supposition prompted Winstanley to advocate a division of the spoils :-

"as the Free-holders claime a quietnesse and freedom in their inclosures, as it is fit they should have, so we that are younger brothers, or the poore oppressed, we claime our freedome in the Commons, that so elder and younger brother may live quietly in peace..."¹⁹⁹

Still Winstanley discreetly omitted any reference to his earlier evaluation of the likely consequences of the withdrawal of hired labour.

In December 1649 Winstanley renewed his correspondence with Fairfax,²⁰⁰ but now wrote with less optimism and assurance than

196. ibid., (Sabine) p.324, (Hill) p.136.

197. ibid.

198. ibid., (Sabine) p.325, (Hill) p.136.

199. ibid., (Sabine) p.326, (Hill) p.137.

200. G.Winstanley, To His Excellency the Lord Fairfax and the Councell of Warre the Brotherly Request of those that are Called Diggers Sheweth, (Sabine), pp.343-345; To My Lord Generall and His Councell of Warr, (Sabine), pp.346-349.

he had done previously. The hostility of the local population²⁰¹ was obviously having its intended effect on the Diggers.

Hence, following the destruction of a number of Diggers' houses by some soldiers, Winstanley pleaded with Fairfax to intervene on the colonists' behalf. Winstanley was particularly anxious to impress upon Fairfax the case that the covenant undertaken to eject Charles I was a matter of "ioynt consent" which "by the law of contract"²⁰² entitled the people to the liberty to cultivate the commons. Winstanley confirmed that the Diggers had fallen on hard times, supplementing his usual ideological apology for digging with claims based on the more mundane motive of necessity.²⁰³ Thus he maintained that the Diggers cultivated the commons because of their need to provide for their own subsistence. Similarly, he suggested to Fairfax that only large-scale cultivation of the commons would reduce the poverty which was endemic throughout the land. Thus Winstanley claimed that, rather than accepting charity, the poor preferred to labour, and fortunately there existed "wast land enough and to spare to supply all our wants."²⁰⁴ Ultimately Winstanley incorporated the notion that the nation should utilize all of its available labour as a solution to the problem of scarcity, in his communist utopia The Law of Freedom.

Winstanley's lengthiest apology for the Diggers' cause was A New-years Gift for the Parliament and Armie (1 January 1650), in which he pursued the claim that the authorities to whom the pamphlet was addressed had formerly agreed to oust 'kingly

201. In the Preface to Several Pieces Gathered Into One Volume, p.A3, Winstanley spoke of his tiring exertions in the polemical defence of the colony, (Hill), pp.155-156. The very fact that Winstanley sanctioned the reprinting of his five earliest and essentially theological tracts at this time, suggests that he conceived of digging within the context of these initial premises.

202. G.Winstanley, To My Lord General..., p.347, see also, p.348.

203. G.Winstanley, To His Excellency the Lord Fairfax..., p.344.

204. G.Winstanley, To My Lord Generall..., p.348.

power', but were now reluctant to perform this duty because of
 the moral defects of their constituent members. ²⁰⁵ Hence
 Winstanley contended that the failure of Parliament and the
 Army to consent to digging, ²⁰⁶ was tantamount to their sanction
 for kingly power of the 'prerogative' rather than the 'righteous'
 form. ²⁰⁷

Once again, Winstanley founded his arguments upon propositions
 central to his conception of the Fall and the Norman Yoke. ²⁰⁸
 Indeed, this pamphlet contains Winstanley's most coherent
 analysis of the structure of Norman power. Thus he scrutinized
 the respective functions of the lords of the manors, the clergy,
 and the lawyers, in considerable detail. Similarly, he accounted
 for institutions such as 'buying and selling', freeholding, and
 copyholding, in the light of the Norman Conquest. ²⁰⁹

From this reconstruction, Winstanley advanced his analysis of
 the significance of the Civil War. ²¹⁰ Again, he insisted that
 the removal of the King had been undertaken as a mutual
 enterprise by Parliament, the Army, and the People. ²¹¹ So on
 behalf of the common people, Winstanley reminded the other
 partners in the contract that,

"Kingly power is like a great spread tree, if you lop the
 head or top-bow, and let the other Branches and root stand,
 it will grow again and recover fresher strength." ²¹²

205. G. Winstanley, A New-years Gift for the Parliament and Armie,
 (Sabine) pp. 358-359, (Hill) p. 167.

206. ibid., (Sabine) pp. 356-357, (Hill) p. 164-165.

207. ibid., (Sabine) pp. 353-355, (Hill) pp. 162-163, for this
 differentiation.

208. ibid., (Sabine) pp. 357-364, 380-381, (Hill) pp. 166-174, 192-
 193.

209. ibid., (Sabine) p. 387, (Hill) pp. 199-200.

210. ibid., (Sabine) pp. 369-371, (Hill) pp. 180-182.

211. ibid., (Sabine) p. 353, (Hill) p. 161.

212. ibid., (Sabine) p. 353, (Hill) pp. 161-162.

In effect,

although Charles I had been executed, the institutions that had sustained his prerogative still survived.

Winstanley clearly felt that he could strengthen his case by citing two recent acts of Parliament.²¹³ This legislation provided for the abolition of the Monarchy and the House of Lords (17 March 1649), and for the establishment of the Commonwealth (19 May 1649). According to Winstanley, the same Parliament that had passed these laws obviously possessed the power to proceed further, and was therefore obliged to eradicate the institutional remnants of the Norman Yoke. He even resorted to a well-worn argument by maintaining that the failure of Parliament to act accordingly would constitute a transgression of the commandments against killing and stealing pronounced in the Decalogue.²¹⁴ So Winstanley contended that although Parliament possessed the power, it quite manifestly lacked the will to transform society. That he was prepared to appeal to such an essentially conservative body is indicative of two developing tendencies in Winstanley's thought. The first was his growing despair that digging might not achieve the success he had once anticipated in reforming man and society, and the second was the acceptance that the institutions of the state could be instrumental in effecting these ends.

In A New-year's Gift... Winstanley again repeated his suggestion that in the post-war settlement, land ought to be partitioned :-

"we want nothing but possession of the spoyl, which is free use of the Land for our livelihood."²¹⁵

However, on this

213. ibid., (Sabine) pp.355,357,366,372-373, (Hill) pp.163,166, 174,183-184.

214. ibid., (Sabine) p.364, (Hill) p.174.

215. ibid., (Sabine) p.370, (Hill) p.181. (above, p.437).

occasion, by utilizing his account of the Civil War, Winstanley produced a more integrated argument to support his claim :-

"from hence we the common people, or younger brothers, plead our propriety in the Common land, as truly our own by vertue of this victory over the King; as our elder brothers can plead proprietie in their Inclosures; and that for three reasons in Englands law."²¹⁶

The substantiating reasons in question were, the contract between Parliament and the people, the right of conquest over the King, and the recent legislation abolishing the monarchy and establishing the commonwealth. With regard to the covenant, Winstanley went so far to contend not only that the people had effectively purchased their freedom to cultivate the commons, but also that the leaders of Parliament and the Army had become "Servants to the commons of England."²¹⁷ Yet, once more, Winstanley evaded the issue of how the beleaguered landowners would cultivate their portion without the assistance of hired labour.²¹⁸

The signs that Winstanley was beginning to doubt the restorative qualities of an anarchical form of digging are supported by his recourse to a proposition which, in terms of his general position, is quite extraordinary. This argument relates to Winstanley's proposals for the partition of land, which he had apparently begun to regard as a form of apportionment. In defence of digging, Winstanley advanced the somewhat negative argument that,

"no man yet hath bestowed any labour upon the Commons that lies waste; therefore the Diggers doth take no mans proper

216. ibid.

217. ibid., (Sabine) p.363, see also, p.371, (Hill) p.173, see also, pp.182-183.

218. ibid., (Sabine) p.363, (Hill) p.172 - at which point, however, Winstanley offered a unique insinuation to this effect.

goods from them in so doing, but those that by force spoils their labours, takes their proper goods from them, which is the fruit of their own labours."²¹⁹

By suggesting that land remains in the pristine condition or state of nature until it is cultivated and becomes the property of the labourer, Winstanley appears to have advanced an almost Lockean justification of appropriation. Paradoxically, he evidently entered the realms of more conservative political theory to discover an argument capable of vindicating the establishment of the communal cultivation of the commons. Presumably, Winstanley sought to propose that the authorities should regard the Diggers' labours as an act of appropriation which established the land in question as the property of the colony. Clearly, Winstanley would not have condoned the practice of such a principle of appropriation by individuals within the Digger colony. All this suggests that as the hostile reaction to their activities brought home an awareness that digging had not spread in the desired manner, the Diggers felt increasingly isolated, and were becoming introverted.

From the foregoing analysis of A New-years Gift..., it may appear that Winstanley had forsaken his spiritual convictions. However, this was far from the case. ²²⁰ For instance, he defiantly asserted that by their actions, the Diggers were fulfilling biblical prophecy :-

"I tell you, and your Preachers, that Scriptures which saith, The poor shall inherit the earth, is really and materially to be fulfilled, for the Earth is to be restored from the bondage of sword proprietie, and it is to become a common Treasure in reallitie to whole mankind, for this is the

219. ibid., (Sabine) p.384, (Hill) p.196.

220. See, ibid., (Sabine) pp.375-391, (Hill) pp.186-204, - 'The Curse and Blessing that is Mankinde'.

work of the true Saviour to doe, who is the true and faithfull Leveller,"221

Similarly, in evaluating landlordism as an aspect of the Norman institutional fabric, Winstanley concluded that,

"If any sort of people hold the earth to themselves by the dark Kingly power, and shut out others from that freedom, they deny God, Christ, and Scriptures, . . ."222

With these two statements Winstanley confirmed - the former directly, and the latter by implication - that even as he entered a period of intellectual uncertainty, his social theory remained closely aligned to his theology. Still, Winstanley maintained his belief in universal salvation, and insisted that as the elect nation, England must discover the means of effecting reform by destroying private property.²²³

During the course of A New-year's Gift... Winstanley raised a number of issues that anticipated his subsequent concerns. For example, Winstanley denied that the common people wished to repudiate all forms of government, and instead he petitioned for righteous government.²²⁴ Hence it seems that Winstanley was moving away from his earlier conviction that men might become sufficiently regenerate to live without the restraining influence of the state. Anarchy, for Winstanley, had assumed a more insidious meaning. This re-appraisal might well have been related to his abhorrence of, and desire to repudiate, Ranterism.²²⁵ The popular association of the Diggers with the

221. ibid., (Sabine) p.389, (Hill) p.203.

222. ibid., (Sabine) p.365, (Hill) p.175.

223. ibid., (Sabine) pp.381, 385-386, (Hill) pp.193, 198.

224. ibid., (Sabine) p.361, (Hill) p.170.

225. ibid., (Sabine) pp.364-367, (Hill) pp.174-177; for an account

Ranters inspired an anxiety which became manifest in Winstanley's subsequent writings.²²⁶ Hence he denied that the Diggers stole goods as the Ranters were reputed to do. Similarly, he disclaimed suggestions that the Diggers' economic ethic extended to the communal use of women. Instead, Winstanley responded to "such an unrationall excesse of female communitie,"²²⁷ by affirming his belief in monogamy. Ultimately, Winstanley rebutted accusations that the Diggers had questioned the existence of God. Indeed, Winstanley took to the offensive by describing the adversarrious Parson Platt, who seems to have been the source of such slanderous charges, as a fallen man - "for covetousness, pride, and envie hath blinded his eyes."²²⁸ This impression would shortly be confirmed to Winstanley, as Platt organized the ostracism of the Diggers.

The four months following the publication of A New-yeer Gift... were the most hectic of Winstanley's troubled career. During this period the Digger colony moved from St. George's Hill to Cobham,²²⁹ but nevertheless collapsed. Such traumatic events were reflected in the diverse nature of Winstanley's writings. This might be regarded as a hindrance to any attempt to analyse Winstanley's intellectual development by means of its periodization. However, this apparent discontinuity is dispelled if we consider that Winstanley began to anticipate the direction of his thoughts, before the dissolution of the

of the Ranters and their beliefs, see, A.L. Morton, The World of the Ranters, (London 1970).

226. See below, pp. 508, 519.

227. G. Winstanley, A New-yeer's Gift..., (Sabine) p. 367, (Hill) p. 177.

228. ibid., (Sabine) p. 366, (Hill) p. 167.

229. Effectively from the domain of Mr. Francis Drake, who owned the manor of Walton, to that of Parson John Platt, rector of West Horsely, and by marriage, the owner of the manor of Cobham, see, G.H. Sabine, op.cit., p. 18.

Digger colony actually occurred. During the early months of 1650, Winstanley was forlornly defending the Diggers, while he reconsidered his overall position. Therefore the publications pertaining to digging ²³⁰ which Winstanley produced during these few months, will be analysed in this section, while the remainder will be held over to the next section. ²³¹

The brief pamphlet, A Vindication of Those, Whose Endeavors is Only to Make the Earth a Common Treasury, Called Diggers (4 March 1650), was devoted entirely to the task of refuting accusations that to dig was tantamount to becoming a Ranter. So, by portraying the Diggers as regenerate, and the Ranters as fallen, Winstanley maintained that the Digger ethic and Ranterism were antithetical. Winstanley obviously regarded Ranterism as the epitome of that human sinfulness which ²³² precluded the restoration of righteousness. Hence he described the Ranters as covetous, unwholesome, idle, and deceitful. In summarizing the degenerate nature of the Ranters, Winstanley said :-

"It is a Kingdome that lies in objects; As in the outward enjoyment of meat, drinke, pleasures, and women; so that the man within can have no quiet rest, unlesse he enjoy those outward objects in excesse; all which are vanishable. Therefore it is the Devills Kingdome of darknesse, and not the Kingdome of heaven or true peace within."²³³

230. G. Winstanley, A Vindication of those, whose Endeavors is only to make the Earth a Common Treasury, Called Diggers, (Sabine); An Appeale to All Englishmen, (Sabine); An Humble Request, to the Ministers of both Universities, and to all Lawyers in every Inns-a-court, (Sabine).

231. G. Winstanley, England's Spirit Unfolded, or An Incouragement to Take the Engagement, Introduced by G. E. Aylmer, P. & P., No. 40. (1968), pp. 3-15; Fire in the Bush.

232. G. Winstanley, A Vindication..., p. 402, see also, England's Spirit Unfolded, pp. 14-15.

233. G. Winstanley, A Vindication..., p. 399.

Clearly,

the Digger ethic inverted these mistaken values.

The pamphlets that Winstanley had published in the early months of 1650 betray a considerable worsening of Digger fortunes. As a result of their intense economic plight, and of hostility from the local population, the Diggers had been forced to move from St. George's Hill to nearby Cobham Heath. However, as the covert enmity of the local tenantry increased, so too did Winstanley's disillusion with the failure of digging to spread. Such disenchantment was particularly apparent in An Appeale to All Englishmen (26 March 1650). In this tract, Winstanley attributed failure to the reluctance, caused by fear and intimidation, of the poor to become Diggers.

Once again, Winstanley held that victory in the Civil War had destroyed the Norman Yoke. On this occasion Winstanley was prompted to incite the common people to act accordingly, by cultivating the wastes and commons. So he claimed that the time was ripe for the law of righteousness to be actively inaugurated, rather than allowing,

"slavish fear, possesse the hearts of the poor, to stand in awe of the Norman Yoake any longer, seeing it is broke."²³⁴

In order to tempt the commoners into action, and to stimulate morale, Winstanley contended that both the scriptures and recent parliamentary legislation effectively authorized
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the communal cultivation of the commons. So he assessed the immediate situation by presenting the common people with the view that,

234. G. Winstanley, An Appeale to All Englishmen, p.407.

235. ibid., pp.412-413, Winstanley also discussed the Engagement, a theme corresponding to the subject matter of England's Spirit Unfolded, see below, pp.527-528.

"nothing is wanting on your part, but courage and faithfulness, to put those Lawes in execution, and to take possession of your own Land, Which the Norman Power took from you..."²³⁶

Whereas previously, Winstanley had sought to extend communal cultivation by means of the exemplar provided by the Digger colony, now, in a last desperate bid, he was apparently inciting his fellow countrymen to take direct action. Such a recourse assumes added significance if it is recalled that Winstanley had once argued that the withdrawal of hired labour would ultimately eradicate the private ownership of land and thereby restore the common treasury.

Winstanley realized that by arguing in this manner, he was challenging a series of assumptions instilled in the popular mentality by the clergy. He therefore questioned the belief that the poor ought to refrain from disputing the existing distribution of property for fear that this might impair their prospects of salvation. Hence, Winstanley elucidated his views on the subject of tithes. He goaded the ministry by censuring their failure to perform manual labour and, on behalf of the people, asked,

"why may we not have our Heaven here (that is, a comfortable livelihood in the Earth) And Heaven hereafter too, as well as you, God is no respecter of Persons?"²³⁷

However, despite such defiance An Appeale to All Englishmen signified the dissipation of Winstanley's confidence that digging could effect the restoration.

In a last desperate attempt to preserve the colony at Cobham, emissaries were despatched through the home counties in an

236. G. Winstanley, An Appeale to All Englishmen, p.413.

237. ibid., p.409.

endeavour to raise money. Would-be subscribers were encouraged to make donations so that the Diggers might continue in their vital work of restoring freedom to the land. The urgency of the situation was reflected in Winstanley's appeal for benefactors to alleviate the Diggers' plight before it became too late to do so, because, "in regard of poverty their work is like to flagge and droppe."²³⁸

An Humble Request to the Ministers of Both Universities and to All Lawyers in Every Inns-a-court (9 April 1650), was the last of Winstanley's 'Digger pamphlets'. The piece arose from a confrontation between Winstanley and his persecutor, Parson Platt. It appears that Platt had challenged Winstanley to provide scriptural authorization for digging, and had promised that if Winstanley could successfully accomplish this task, he would abstain from harassing the Diggers further. Hence, not only did Winstanley's published response provide an insight into his substantial knowledge of the Bible, but it also confirmed how readily he conceived of digging in terms of its spiritual basis.

An Humble Request... contains a concise exposition of Winstanley's view of the Creation, the Fall, and the prospect of the restoration. The pamphlet also confirms the manner in which Winstanley drew upon a theory of the Norman Yoke to illuminate his conception of the fallen condition. Thus he stated that,

"The whole Earth: By the Law of Creation, is the Common treasury of free Livelyhood, to whole Mankind. And those Lords of Manors, and others, that deny any part of mankind, this creation-freedom in the earth, are sinners in the highest degree, and are upholders of the fall & curse of Mankind."²³⁹

238. See, A Letter Taken at Wellingborough, (Sabine), p.439.

239. G. Winstanley, An Humble Request..., p.423.

Even towards the end of the period in which Winstanley had attempted to implement his communist ideal, the consistency of his theological convictions remained undiminished. Similarly, the tract amply illustrated another feature of the Digger period, Winstanley's allegorical use of millenarian images, particularly in the contention that,

"Mankind, in their Actings each to other, is become a Beast: And this Beastly Power was to reigne for a time, times, and dividing of times. Rev 12.14 Dan 7.25"²⁴⁰

It is apparent from An Humble Request..., that Winstanley had resigned himself to the failure, and the inevitable dissolution of the Digger colony. Although he continued to maintain that recent legislation to oust the King and to establish the Commonwealth must simultaneously have restored the ancient and fundamental laws of the land²⁴¹ in his mood of disillusioned resignation, he at last admitted that Parliament and the Army, alongside the clergy, landlords, and lawyers, were antagonistic to the Diggers. The pamphlet thus culminates with a detailed account of the destruction of the Digger commune at Cobham; a catastrophe which Winstanley attributed to a conspiracy instigated by Parson Platt, and involving the local tenantry. Winstanley's last words on the matter again indicate the theological basis of digging. An Humble Request... constituted an epitaph for,

"This work of digging, being freedom, or the appearance of Christ in the earth,..."²⁴²

During the Digger period, Winstanley's association of communism with the restoration was not so precisely formulated as in the subsequent utopia, The Law of Freedom. Partly because he was

240. ibid., p.425.

241. ibid., pp.430-431.

242. ibid., p.437.

often on the defensive, and partly because digging had eased his own spiritual crisis, Winstanley insisted that the Diggers were themselves restored - "we rejoyce in the uprightness of our hearts."²⁴³ That, at the outset Winstanley expected digging to spread as individuals voluntarily joined in the activity, suggests that, initially, he supposed that the restoration of human nature would precede the restored communist society. However, during this period, Winstanley also advanced the related, but slightly contradictory, notion that participation in the communal tillage of the land was conducive to the spiritual restoration of the individual. As the gradualist theory gained a predominant position within Winstanley's thought, his former emphasis upon spontaneous voluntarism diminished. He therefore assumed that, rather than experiencing a relatively prompt restoration of reason, individuals might be directed towards their redemption by extraneous influences. This departure came to fruition with the compulsory aspects of life in Winstanley's utopia, The Law of Freedom. Nevertheless, Winstanley regarded the Digger experiment as a direct confrontation with the fallen condition of Normanism. His explanation of the foundation of the existing social hierarchy was therefore used to lend a rationale to his defiance of it. As his hopes of success began to wane, Winstanley noted that,

"the Norman Camp is grown very numerous and big."²⁴⁴

- as the
opposition to the Diggers eventually included every element

243. G. Winstanley, A New-years Gift..., (Sabine) p.367, (Hill) p.177, see also, The True Levellers' Standard Advanced, (Sabine) pp.255,262, (Hill) pp.81,90; A Declaration From the Poor..., (Sabine) p.269, (Hill) p.99; A Watch-Word..., (Sabine) pp.328, 336, (Hill) pp.139,148.

244. ibid., (Sabine) p.334, (Hill) p.146.

245
of contemporary society. Therefore, Winstanley responded to
the situation by claiming that,

"we endeavour to dig up their Tythes, their Lawyers, Fees,
their Prisons, and all that Art and Trade of
darknesse."²⁴⁶

245. See, e.g., G. Winstanley, A New-years Gift..., (Sabine) p.370,
(Hill) p.181.

246. G. Winstanley, A Watch-Word..., (Sabine) p.335, (Hill) p.147.

iii Period Three : The Interim Phase of Re-evaluation.

The third period into which Winstanley's writings are divisible, is the interim in which he accepted the collapse of the Digger experiment as inevitable both as an economically viable proposition, and as a catalyst for the spiritual restoration of mankind from the fallen condition. This period preceded the publication of Winstanley's last work, the utopian The Law of Freedom, by almost two years. Although this phase coincided with the last stages of Winstanley's vindication of the Diggers, he nevertheless achieved a clear delineation within his thought between, on the one hand, his remaining loyalties to the Digger cause and on the other hand, his attempt to redetermine his position in anticipation of the likely disintegration of the Digger commune.

In analysing Fire in the Bush, the work which dominated this phase, T.W. Hayes has argued that Winstanley did not admit defeat, nor return to his pre-Digger position, but instead achieved the culmination of his "visionary, which is to say poetic experience."²⁴⁷ To accept this view would be to negate the intense disappointment Winstanley faced in the spring of 1650; a sensation which prompted him to voice his disgust in the new regime's failure to redress numerous long-standing grievances. Nevertheless, this was also a time for Winstanley to reconsider his own position, and to gradually reassure himself that, despite the recent turn of events, his hopes of a restoration could still be realized. Although Winstanley was about to relinquish his attempt to practice communism, this did not cause him to renounce the ideal of a lifestyle based

247. T.W. Hayes, Winstanley the Digger, (Cambridge Massachusetts 1979) p.175.

upon communal cultivation. Consequently, there are indications in this interim period of the shifting emphasis within Winstanley's thought towards its final position. Ultimately, Winstanley became convinced that prior institutional reforms might bring about the restoration of human nature. Thus he anticipated that,

"the Kingdome without shall fall, that so the Kingdome within may be established."²⁴⁹

Hence, L. Mulligan's contention that Winstanley was not thinking in terms of establishing the millennium by external means²⁵⁰ is without foundation on two counts. Firstly, because by the spring of 1650, Winstanley was contemplating an institutional design, and secondly, because he did so in the hope of accomplishing the restoration, rather than in an attempt to inaugurate the millennium.

It is little wonder that a substantial debate has been generated by Fire in the Bush, the controversial pamphlet that will occupy most of our attention in the present section. Fire in the Bush is considerably more theological than Winstanley's Digger tracts, although the extent of this reorientation has occasionally been overemphasized.²⁵¹ However, the tenor of the piece has provoked considerable embarrassment amongst those left-wing interpreters who have maintained that Winstanley's ideas became increasingly secularized as time went on. Hence, G.H. George has claimed that Winstanley developed from "a

248. See, W.F. Murphy, 'The Political Philosophy of Gerrard Winstanley', Review of Politics, Vol. 19. (1957), pp. 214-238, p. 218

249. G. Winstanley, Fire in the Bush, (Sabine) p. 445, see also, p. 454, (Hill) p. 214, see also, p. 223.

250. L. Mulligan, op.cit., p. 68.

251. The themes expounded in Fire in the Bush stand comparison to 'The Curse and Blessing that is Mankind' in the Digger tract A New-years Gift..., (Sabine) pp. 375-391, (Hill) pp. 186-204.

religious mystic into the first rational, analytic socialist."

So George has viewed Winstanley as,

"a major and very nearly unique representative of the change from religious to secular perceptions in terms of social analysis."²⁵³

Consequently, in assessing Fire in the Bush, George has asserted that,

"the pamphlet is substantially almost impossible to reconcile with a post-Digger date."²⁵⁴

In effect, George has argued that the irrefutable spiritual bias of Fire in the Bush suggests that it must have been written before digging effected the secularization of Winstanley's thought. To have accepted that the pamphlet was written shortly before its publication in the spring of 1650, would have constrained George to admit that his account of the development of Winstanley's thought was erroneous.

G. Juretic has advanced a similar argument by claiming that Winstanley's experiences with the Diggers caused him to become politically orientated to the extent that his thought became radically secularized.²⁵⁵ Thus Juretic has maintained that,

"To associate this transcendental, apocalyptic tract with his politically sophisticated Digger writings, denies absolutely the sociological insights Winstanley discovered atop St George's and Cobham Commons."²⁵⁶

Again, this interpretation obviously requires some revision given that in

252. G.H. George, op.cit., p.194.

253. ibid., p.208.

254. ibid., p.193,- George argues that Fire in the Bush was written in 1649, citing L.H. Berens, The Digger Movement in the Days of the Commonwealth, (London, 1906, 1961 edition), pp.78, 255.

255. G.H. George, op.cit., pp.268-269.

256. G. Juretic, op.cit., p.170, and chapter X.

Fire in the Bush, Winstanley appears to have been preoccupied with spiritual matters even after a year of digging.

D.W. Petegorsky's more moderate left-wing analysis of Winstanley's writings has led him to a degree of unresolved contradiction. On the one hand, Petegorsky has argued that The New Law of Righteounes marked the point of transition from religious to secular within Winstanley's thought,²⁵⁷ yet on the other hand, Petegorsky has also accepted that the essentially theological Fire in the Bush was written in the spring of 1650,²⁵⁸ some fifteen months after the supposed point of secularization.

Christopher Hill has become more acutely aware of the problem of such a contradictory position for left-wing commentators, particularly as his own appreciation of Winstanley has matured. Thus, in discussing Keith Thomas's successful dating of Fire in the Bush, Hill has noted that,

"This date has proved embarrassing for those who wish to play down the theological element in Winstanley's thought."²⁵⁹

However, although Hill has not questioned the dating of the pamphlet's publication, he has mounted a rearguard action by suggesting that it was written at an earlier date, and then subsequently redrafted. Similarly, by comparing the tract's "high flown metaphorical style"²⁶⁰ to a Blakean prophecy, Hill has implied that Fire in the Bush merely played an ancillary role in Winstanley's intellectual development. However, the organization, intellectual calibre, and indeed length of the pamphlet, suggest that it was more important to Winstanley than

257. D.W. Petegorsky, op.cit., pp.138-142.

258. ibid., pp.148,156.

259. C.Hill, 'The Religion of Gerrard Winstanley', op.cit., p.24.

260. C.Hill, introduction, Winstanley: The Law of Freedom, p.55.

Hill allows.

Keith Thomas has not only established the date of publication of Fire in the Bush, (19 March 1650), but has also correctly assessed its significance.²⁶¹ Thomas has maintained that the arguments developed in Fire in the Bush are consistent with the concerns Winstanley had recently outlined in the Digger pamphlets. Hence Winstanley's, by now, established regard for political authority, and his belief that digging would engender an era of universal love, were also communicated in Fire in the Bush. We might add that lesser matters, such as Winstanley's indignant repudiation of Ranterism, also found expression in Fire in the Bush. It will become apparent that our interpretation of Winstanley's intellectual development is not subject to the difficulties posed by the contents and dating of Fire in the Bush to left-wing critics. We shall argue that, faced with the probable collapse of the Digger community, it was quite natural for Winstanley's thoughts to return to his analysis of the human condition, and to the spiritual basis on which this was framed.

Fire in the Bush is interspersed with a number of millenarian phrases and references. It is obviously tempting to conclude from this, as W.S.Hudson²⁶² and L.Mulligan²⁶³ have done, that Winstanley was a consistently millenarian thinker. However, the situation is considerably more complicated than such an interpretation admits. Fire in the Bush confirms that Winstanley was preoccupied with the condition produced by the Fall, and with the means of amending such a predicament. Although Winstanley had initially considered that a millennium (of a

261. K.V.Thomas, op.cit., pp.161-162.

262. W.S.Hudson, op.cit., pp.15-16.

263. L.Mulligan, op.cit., pp.67-68

somewhat peculiar form) would initiate such a restoration, he soon deduced that the actual establishment of a communist lifestyle might prove more propitious. Thus he founded the Diggers. Because Fire in the Bush was written while digging was still in progress, it seems unlikely that Winstanley could have abandoned the conception of the cosmic drama which had provided a rationale for communal cultivation, in favour of an abrupt return to millenarianism. Yet it seems more probable that Winstanley was musing over, and speculating upon, the question of the human condition. Hence Fire in the Bush is characterized by a restatement of his appreciation of human nature, and of the social institutions preferred by degenerate men, along with a tentative, and ultimately, unavailing re-appraisal of the mode of restoration and reform. In these circumstances, Winstanley often expressed his analysis of the Fall and restoration, in millenarian terms. Yet it is important to recall that the extent to which Winstanley related these notions to his burgeoning social theory was markedly absent from his earlier and more pronounced millenarian pieces. Clearly, however plausible it may be, this conclusion is at best conjectural. Fire in the Bush is undoubtedly one of Winstanley's most obscure and esoteric works.

Fire in the Bush contains numerous instances of Winstanley's incorporation of millenarian terminology to illustrate his theories of the Fall and restoration. Thus, for instance, he predicted that the restoration would come in "the fulness of the Beasts time." Similarly, he used the millenarian notion of the Beast as an allegorical device to emphasize the evil nature of

264. For instance, the subtitle of Fire in the Bush reads, 'The Spirit Burning, not Consuming, but Purging Mankind. OR, The great Battle of God Almighty, between Michael the Seed of Life, and the great red Dragon, the Curse, fought within the Spirit of Man.'

265 G. Winstanley, Fire in the Bush, (Sabine) p.453, (Hill) p.221.

Norman social institutions. Consequently, in relating the restoration to the subversion of the Norman Yoke, Winstanley stipulated that,

"when the time comes for Christ to reigne, this Beast shall deliver up his Crowne, Scepter, Authority, and government unto Christ, and lay all downe at his feet. Rev 4.9 &c."²⁶⁶

Possibly

the most graphic example of Winstanley's resort to millenarian imagery occurred in connection with his assertion that digging might stimulate the restoration :-

"the Seed of life that lies under the clods of Earth, which in his time is now rising up to bruise the Serpents head, and to cast that imaginary murderer out of the Creation."²⁶⁷

In the same sense that Winstanley used the Bible as a textbook of human psychology, he came to employ its millenarian element as a typology of human interaction.

In contrast to the apparently hasty construction of the Digger pamphlets, Fire in the Bush was more orderly, although Winstanley completed only seven of the projected thirteen chapters. The obvious method of analysing the pamphlet's contents is to follow Winstanley's chapter headings. Chapter one, 'What the Garden of Eden is',²⁶⁸ deals with the notion that paradise was synonymous with the free enjoyment of the commons. From this, Winstanley elucidated his interpretation of the Fall, and particularly, in the individuated form, the role of human imagination in cultivating the desire to appropriate the objects of the creation. Hence, as a corollary, Winstanley assumed that the restoration would imply the renunciation of private

266. ibid., (Sabine) p.465, (Hill) p.235.

267. ibid., (Sabine) p.453, (Hill) p.222.

268. ibid., (Sabine) pp.451-455, (Hill) pp.219-224.

property. Winstanley proceeded to affirm another of his enduring themes; that the kingdom of heaven existed within each individual, and that this promised a form of universal salvation. Thus he reiterated his view that the 'spirit' would spread
269
throughout the creation.

In chapter two, 'What the Tree of Knowledge of Good and evil is',
270 Winstanley examined the nature of the curse and of the fallen condition. In this context he drew upon his ideas
271 concerning the internalized fall and restoration of man. With a hint of disillusionment, Winstanley commented that his own times were characterized by a superfluity of preaching and a commensurate deficiency in the experimental knowledge of Christ,
272 all of which was expressed in the prevalence of materialism. On an autobiographical note, Winstanley spoke of the ostracism he had incurred as a consequence of attempting to live righteously :-

"While I had no care of doing rightly, I could live, I had friends, I had peace; But since I began to do as I would be done by: friends now stands a farre off; every body hates me, and I am open to all misery; does righteousness bring thee to this, oh miserable wretch?"
273

The subsequent chapter, 'What the Tree of Life is',
274 demonstrates Winstanley's amalgamated interpretation of the cosmic drama and of the Norman Yoke. So Winstanley predicted that the resurrection of the spirit of Christ would restore man's spiritual tranquility, and would coincide with the collapse

269. ibid., (Sabine) p.455, (Hill) p.224.

270. ibid., (Sabine) pp.455-463, (Hill) pp.224-233.

271. ibid., (Sabine) pp.462-463, (Hill) pp.232-233.

272. ibid., (Sabine) p.458, (Hill) p.227.

273. ibid., (Sabine) p.461, (Hill) p.231.

274. ibid., (Sabine) pp.463-471, (Hill) pp.233-242.

of the type of government based on imaginary power :-

"The kingly Power, he tooke the sword to kill and conquer; and to lift up selfe, to be the Ruler; for all Lawes of the Nations are Lawes made by the will of this murderer, kingly power."²⁷⁵

This prompted Winstanley to describe the clergy, 'kingly power', the judiciary, and the institution of buying and selling, as the four beasts described in the Book of Daniel. On a more optimistic note than that sounded in the previous chapter, Winstanley confidently affirmed that the spirit of Christ would ultimately enlighten all men - because He was the True Leveller.

276

The fourth chapter, 'What the Serpent is', provided an opportunity for Winstanley to vent his spleen. He fervently questioned the assumption that all forms of government were ordained by God.²⁷⁷ Thus he argued that the existing form of government was the serpent and was therefore devoid of true magistracy. Instead, he asserted that,

"If you would finde true Majestie indeed, goe among the poore despised ones of the Earth."²⁷⁸

Clearly, this statement implied a good deal about the quality of life within the Digger community, but it was also prescient of the social ideals embodied in Winstanley's utopia, The Law of Freedom.

Chapter five, 'What the living Soule (Man) is, that is called very good',²⁷⁹ again verifies certain aspects of the foregoing analysis of Winstanley's thought. For instance, Winstanley

275. ibid., (Sabine) p.467, (Hill) p.237.

276. ibid., (Sabine) pp.471-476, (Hill) pp.243-248.

277. ibid., (Sabine) p.472, (Hill) p.244.

278. ibid., (Sabine) p.473, (Hill) p.245.

279. ibid., (Sabine) pp.476-484, (Hill) pp.248-257.

revealed the radical and often allegorical nature of his religious concepts, by referring to death (a condition commonly associated by contemporaries with the curse resulting as a consequence of the Fall), as a 'life' that contradicted righteousness.²⁸⁰ Similarly, he defined Judas as the paradigm instance of a devil who "was defiled and Falne by temptation."²⁸¹ Perhaps more significantly, Winstanley provided a lucid account of the internalization of the cosmic battle in terms which suggest that he conceived of it as aligned to a life cycle :-

"this Innocencie, or plaine heartedness in man, was not an estate 6000. yeare ago onely; But every branche of mankinde passes through it, & first is defiled by imaginary covetousnesse, and thereby is made a Devill; and then he is delivered from that darknesse, by Christ the restorer, and by him made one with the Father and the Son."²⁸²

Again, in one of his most piquant passages, Winstanley implied that whatever calamities might befall the Diggers, communal cultivation was nevertheless, surely efficacious with respect to the restoration. So he stated :-

"the life of the Spirit in sound reason lives not yet in the Sences; for pure Reason lives like a corne or wheate, under the clods of Earth, or Beast, and is not yet risen up to rule as King."²⁸³

In the sixth and penultimate chapter of Fire in the Bush,²⁸⁴ 'What the Curse is, that doth defile the Man', Winstanley

280. ibid., (Sabine) pp.477-478, (Hill) pp.249-251.

281. ibid., (Sabine) p.479, (Hill) p.252.

282. ibid., (Sabine) pp.480-481, see also, pp.484, 488-489, 493-494, (Hill) p.254, see also, pp.257, 261, 269.

283. ibid., (Sabine) p.478, (Hill) p.251.

284. ibid., (Sabine) pp.484-488, (Hill) pp.257-263.

predictably concluded that the curse was the bondage that had befallen mankind during the ascendance of the power of darkness. More specifically, men acquired a sentient appetite for material possessions; "the pleasure of sinne enters."²⁸⁵ It therefore seems that Winstanley regarded the satisfaction men derived from holding private property as a corrupted pleasure.

The final chapter, 'What the blessing is that restores him againe',²⁸⁶ suggests that, despite the disappointments of the Digger period, Winstanley retained his assurance that a restoration would eventually occur. However, Fire in the Bush is characterized by Winstanley's failure to propose an alternative to digging, to resolve the difficulty of how the restoration was to be achieved. One instance of this deficiency was Winstanley's conviction that early childhood constituted a time of innocence :-

"Looke upon a childe that is new borne, or till he growes up to some few yeares, he is innocent, harmlesse, humble, patient, gentle, easie to be entreated, not envious."²⁸⁷

Thus, it

was only with developing maturity that, impelled by their imagination, individuals fell - by appropriating property from the objects of the creation, and by succumbing to the temptations proffered by "the beauty of the female sex."²⁸⁸ In an intellectual atmosphere which still did much to preserve the belief in original and innate sin, this opinion was radically optimistic.²⁸⁹ Furthermore, it contributed nothing towards the

285. ibid., (Sabine) p.485, (Hill) p.259. Here Winstanley provides some semblance of More's differentiation of true and false pleasures, see above, pp.314-317.

286. ibid., (Sabine) pp.489-497, (Hill) pp.263-272.

287. ibid., (Sabine) p.493, (Hill) p.269.

288. ibid., (Sabine) p.494, (Hill) p.269.

289. See above, p.98 ff.

solution of Winstanley's fundamental problem, that of discovering the method by which the restoration could be instigated. Significantly, once Winstanley adopted a slightly more disparaging view of human nature, his difficulties diminished. Thus, eventually, in The Law of Freedom,²⁹⁰ he portrayed youth as anything but an age of innocence. Hence he prescribed education, apprenticeship, strict paternal supervision, and even legal penalties, as curbs to the evil inclinations of adolescence. All this required a degree of institutional organization. So Winstanley decided upon the utopian institutionalism which he regarded as capable of restoring the individual, partly as a result of moving towards a more pessimistic assessment of human nature.

During the course of the final chapter of Fire in the Bush,²⁹¹ Winstanley made an interesting reference to Mosaic Law, and in the process commented upon the traditional association of private property with man's fallen nature. Winstanley argued that although the Decalogue constituted a reasonably equitable code, which regulated the distribution of private property quite effectively, it was merely an interim arrangement capable only of preserving the peace between fallen men. What particularly concerned Winstanley was Moses's apparent admission that,

"though this be a Law, settling peace for present; yet I am not he that shall restore you to your first singleness and Innocencie."²⁹²

Winstanley believed that the question of precisely how Christ would effect the restoration still remained to be

290. Below, p. 575.

291. G. Winstanley, Fire in the Bush, (Sabine) pp. 490-492, (Hill) pp. 265-266.

292. ibid., (Sabine) p. 491, (Hill) p. 265.

answered. Consequently, Winstanley confronted an inherent dilemma of the traditional conception of private property - as both the curse, and as a necessary restraint on the actions of fallen men. Winstanley inverted this argument by contending that the curse might be physically removed, and that consequently, the need to curb men's actions would be reduced. Therefore, on both counts, (as an instance of the curse, and as a palliative), private property could be dismissed as redundant. Nevertheless, in Fire in the Bush, Winstanley left his central problem unresolved; he could only state it :-

"So then kill Covetousnesse, or that imaginary darknesse within; And the Devill is kill'd when the Tempter comes, he shall finde nothing in you; he that is free within, is moved to excesse, or unrationall action, by no outward object; but he that is not free within, is moved by every object."²⁹³

Both the Digger pamphlets and Fire in the Bush reveal Winstanley's deference to authoritative institutions, providing, of course, that they were properly constituted. He afforded such respect to the House of Commons, the authorities of the City of London, and the Army. This even extended to personalities; both Fairfax and Cromwell were at various times the objects of Winstanley's representations and entreaties. Significantly, as G.E. Aylmer has shown,²⁹⁴ the decline of the Digger movement coincided with a particularly good example of Winstanley's assertion that the maintenance of the republican regime was prerequisite for the cause of social reform. This view prompted Winstanley to participate in the 'Engagement' controversy by²⁹⁵ summoning support for the commonwealth. This recommendation

293. ibid., (Sabine) p.495, (Hill) pp.270-271.

294. See his introduction to, G. Winstanley, England's Spirit Unfolded.

295. For the background to the Engagement controversy see, J.M. Wallace, 'The Engagement Controversy 1649-1652: An Annotated

was contained in England's Spirit Unfolded which was presumably published at about the same time as Fire in the Bush. As Aylmer has noted,²⁹⁶ Winstanley attributed the prevalent lethargic attitude to social reform, not to the inadequacy of state institutions, but to the continuing corruption of human nature :-

"that enslaving covetous Kingly power, is corrupt bloud, that runs in every man, and womans vaines, more or lesse, till reason the spirit of burning casts him out."²⁹⁷

The whole

inference of England's Spirit Unfolded, that institutional reform might promote the spiritual regeneration of mankind, is in keeping with the trend of Winstanley's thoughts. Again, all this was prescient of the final stage of Winstanley's intellectual evolution, the utopianism of The Law of Freedom.

List of Pamphlets', Bulletin of the New York Public Library, Vol. 68 (1964), pp. 384-405, and, Q. Skinner, 'Conquest and Consent: Thomas Hobbes and the Engagement Controversy', in, The Interregnum: The Quest for a Settlement, ed. G.E. Aylmer, (London 1972).

296. G. Winstanley, England's Spirit Unfolded, pp. 7-8.

297. ibid., p. 13.

iv Period Four : The Resort to Utopian Communism

Gerrard Winstanley's social theory was consistently orientated towards the fundamental difficulty posed by his consideration of the human condition - the problem of man's redemption from his fallen predicament. Because he rejected the more orthodox doctrine that man ought to limit his aspirations to the endeavour for salvation in the hereafter, Winstanley eventually turned to an examination of the social and political factors pertinent to the restoration of man. These considerations were influential in each of the successive phases through which Winstanley's thought developed. In retrospect Winstanley recognized that both his millenarian expectations, and his confidence in the efficacy of an anarchical form of communal cultivation, had been misplaced. However, the utility of these preliminary speculations was confirmed when, as a consequence of re-evaluating his earlier ideas, Winstanley adopted the medium of utopian communism in which to advance a prescription for the spiritual restoration of man.

This interpretation is some distance from that recently advanced by T.W.Hayes. The difference between Hayes's view and our own, is partly attributable to Hayes's appreciation of the concept of utopianism. Although Hayes has recognized Winstanley's belief in universal salvation, he has assumed that, by implication,²⁹⁸ Winstanley was 'utopian' from the outset. Further, by following Mannheim's conception of utopianism, Hayes has assumed²⁹⁹ that Winstanley rejected the dominant ethos of the day. Thus, according to Hayes,

"He coolly examines the life of the middle-class tradesman, casts a cold eye on it, and passes by. This raised consciousness, this lucid objectification of middle-class

298. T.W.Hayes, op.cit., pp.20, 172, passim.

ideology is his chief intellectual accomplishment."

This

misapprehension has been compounded by Hayes's assertion that,

"Like all Utopians he looks back obliquely to a lost Golden Age and simultaneously projects that age into the near future."³⁰¹

Not only has Hayes failed to understand that Winstanley's 'chief intellectual accomplishment' was his evolution towards utopianism, but he has neglected the extent to which Winstanley confronted mankind's immediate predicament with an alternative arrangement of institutions.

In his anxiety to sustain the argument that Winstanley was consistently millenarian, W.S. Hudson contended that The Law of Freedom was a millenarian pamphlet. Hudson argued that Winstanley wrote little after the collapse of the Digger colony, and dismissed the possibility that Winstanley's thought developed away from millenarianism. Accordingly, Hudson maintained that The Law of Freedom was contemporaneous to A New-years Gift...³⁰² This case is fallible on a number of counts. Firstly, Hudson assumed a correlation between digging and millenarianism; but as we have seen, this is inadmissible. Secondly, if Hudson correctly estimated the time at which Winstanley composed The Law of Freedom, then presumably, it must also have been written at the same time as Fire in the Bush. However, it seems extremely unlikely that Winstanley could have written these two highly dissimilar tracts simultaneously. The characteristic uncertainty, and paucity of specific recommendations, evident in Fire in the Bush is incommensurate

300. ibid., p.57.

301. ibid., p.130.

302. W.S.Hudson, op.cit., p.18.

with the utopian institutionalism of The Law of Freedom.

Thirdly, such institutionalism mitigates against the notion that The Law of Freedom was written during a period in which Winstanley still professed a lingering affinity to anarchism.

The exact time at which Winstanley wrote his utopia, The Law of Freedom, has been the subject of some disagreement. Obviously, any attempt to evaluate Winstanley's intellectual development must endeavour to establish the chronological location of this crucially important piece. Much of the confusion over the dating of The Law of Freedom has arisen from Winstanley's statement, in his prefatory dedication to Cromwell (November 1651), to the effect that,

"It was intended for your view above two years ago, but the disorder of the Times caused me to lay it aside, with a thought never to bring it to light."³⁰³

Clearly, some doubt must attend this assertion if it is recalled that, at the time to which Winstanley refers, he enjoyed a regular communication with Fairfax,³⁰⁴ but not with Cromwell. However, Winstanley has complicated the issue by proceeding to maintain that in the process of composing The Law of Freedom, he was,

"stirred up to give it a resurrection, and to pick together as many of my scattered papers as I could finde, and to compile them into this method, which I do present to you you."³⁰⁵

Although Winstanley's reference to his earlier writings accounts for an element of continuity in his ideas, it does not

303. G. Winstanley, The Law of Freedom, (Sabine) p. 509, (Hill) p. 285.

304. G. H. Sabine, op. cit., p. 58, has suggested in this context that Winstanley may have been anxious to dissociate his utopian proposals from the Digger disaster.

305. G. Winstanley, op. cit., (Sabine) p. 510, (Hill) p. 285.

exclude the possibility that, at a later date, he reformulated certain of his theories. The internal evidence of the text suggests that if any part of the work was drawn up from earlier drafts, the most likely section is the first two-thirds of the introductory address to Cromwell. Indeed, at one point, the argument seems to draw to a conclusion, only to recommence on an abrupt new note. ³⁰⁶ Up until this apparent disjunction, the text concentrates upon the constitutional issues with which which Winstanley had been concerned during the Digger ³⁰⁷ period. Thus Winstanley discussed, once again, questions relating to the breaking of the Norman Yoke, the people's contribution to the war effort, parliamentary legislation for the establishment of the commonwealth, and the Engagement.

Nearly two years after the cessation of the Digger experiment, Winstanley published his utopia, The Law of Freedom; the tract which represents his final pronouncement on the themes which dominated his career as a thinker. As such, The Law of Freedom constitutes the intellectual, (although obviously not the practical), solution to the question of the spiritual restoration of human nature as Winstanley saw it. By coming to terms with the probability that moral regeneration was by no means inevitable, Winstanley devoted his attention to discovering a method by which reason could be gradually restored to each individual. Such a scheme is described in The Law of Freedom, the work which appears to have fulfilled Winstanley's evangelical motivation, particularly as it seems to have resolved his own spiritual dilemmas :-

"For my own part, my spirit hath waded deep to finde the

306. ibid., (Sabine) p.510, (Hill) p.286 -
 'for under that you may see beauty.
 / It may be you will say,....'

307. ibid., (Sabine) pp.501-508, (Hill) pp.275-283.

bottom of this divining spiritual Doctrine:and the more I searched,the more I was at a loss;and I never came to quiet rest,and to know God in my spirit,till I came to the knowledg of the things in this Book"³⁰⁸

The details of this project will be discussed in the next chapter.

308. ibid., (Sabine) p.568,(Hill) p.352.

CHAPTER TEN : "THE LAW OF FREEDOM" - THE RESTORATION OF THE
INDIVIDUAL

We have seen that Thomas More's theology, and his general worldview, sustained his essentially pessimistic notion of the condition of human nature and of man's capacity to rectify his predicament. By contrast, Winstanley remained far more optimistic as to the extent of human potential. Winstanley was convinced of the possibility that mankind might be restored to a condition of spiritual righteousness; his major deliberations were therefore concentrated upon the means by which this end could be realized. More, however, believed that given man's lowly place in the universe, and his relationship to God, the hope of eventual salvation marked the limits of man's earthly aspirations. The full extent to which More and Winstanley differed in their respective evaluations of human potential will become apparent as we conclude our analysis of Winstanley's social theory.

This chapter will be divided into two major sections, each of which approximately corresponds to one of the two chapters devoted to our analysis of Utopia. Section i, corresponding to chapter five, will outline Winstanley's proposals in The Law of Freedom for the operation of a communist economy, and will examine the form of communism Winstanley advocated. The section will conclude by considering Winstanley's reasons for retaining a sphere of private property. Section ii, corresponding to chapter six, will consider Winstanley's analysis of utopian institutionalism as the means of realizing man's potential. We shall conclude that the end of Winstanley's design for a utopian commonwealth was the spiritual restoration of man.

After adopting utopianism as a medium for the statement of

social theory, Winstanley was obliged to consider societal institutions in greater detail than he had done previously. In The Law of Freedom, Winstanley provided the most complete exposition of how his proposed communist economy would operate. Winstanley's belated concern for institutionalism developed as his evaluation of human nature became less optimistic, and as he grew sceptical of man's capacity to improve his condition with relative ease. So Winstanley eventually maintained that institutions represented the most effective means of providing for the reform of human nature. This consideration applied particularly to his view of the state and to his eventual position on questions relating to the distribution and ownership of property.

It is difficult to estimate the extent of Winstanley's conviction that his utopian proposals might be realized. However, some evidence can be gleaned from the prefatory dedication of The Law of Freedom to 'His Excellency Oliver Cromwell'. This dedication was not a matter of mere expediency nor of convention on Winstanley's part. The Law of Freedom was written in the somewhat euphoric atmosphere stimulated by the execution of Charles I and the institution of the Commonwealth, which was ultimately deflated by the dissolution of 'Barebone's Parliament' in 1653. In the meantime the aspirations of social reformers had been heightened by Cromwell's almost messianic victory over the old order. Although in 1649 Winstanley became sceptical that 'kingly power' had been completely vanquished, he seems to have recovered his trust in the nation's political leadership. The confidence placed by radicals in Cromwell was by no means illusory.¹ Oliver's role in history was accommodated neatly

1. For an instance of Cromwell's genuine emotional excitement

2
 into millenarian expectations. Although Winstanley's millenarian hopes had abated, this was not primarily, as G.H. Sabine has suggested, because of his increased reliance upon statesmanship. 3
 Winstanley published The Law of Freedom because he claimed to be responding to contemporary calls for a 'healing government'. 4
 Hence he contended that the crisis could be resolved only if Cromwell instituted radical measures rather than opting for a 'via media'.

Winstanley's reaction to Cromwell was consistent with his previous deference to authority. Yet he continued to observe with anxiety the maintenance of the fallen condition of 'kingly power'. 5
 Because his utopian scheme was designed to accomplish the spiritual restoration of mankind, he posited his utopia as the solution to the current predicament. Naturally Winstanley was particularly keen to convince Cromwell of the viability of his proposals. To this end Winstanley included the occasional commendatory, (and to that end, possibly misplaced), embellishment. So, for instance, he exaggerated his estimates of the potential productivity of the land, should it be cultivated according to

at and confidence in, the prospect of the Saints' Parliament, see, Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell, edited T.W. Carlyle, Vol. 11, speech 1, 4 July 1653, delivered at the opening of Barebone's Parliament.

2. See, B.S. Capp, The Fifth Monarchy Men, (London 1972), pp. 62-63, for a discussion of the millenarian assumption that Cromwell was the 'Second Moses'.

3. G.H. Sabine, introduction to, The Works of Gerrard Winstanley, (New York 1941, 1965 edition), p. 36.

4. G. Winstanley, The Law of Freedom in a Platform or True Magistracy Restored, (Sabine) p. 509, (Hill) p. 285.

5. ibid., (Sabine) pp. 521-522, 529-532, 559, (Hill) pp. 297, 306-310, 343.

6. Although the bases of his various calculations differ, it is worth comparing, The New Law of Righteousnes, (Sabine) p. 200, - "Divide England into three parts, scarce one part is manured,";

the institutional arrangements outlined in The Law of Freedom. None of this was to any avail, and we are left to consider a work which, although it failed to secure practical application, nevertheless satisfied Winstanley's intellectual quest for the means of achieving mankind's full potential.

An Appeal to the House of Commons, (Sabine) p.304, (Hill) p.115, - "one third part lies waste and barren,"; A New-years Gift for the Parliament and Armie, (Sabine) p.356, (Hill) p.165, - "seing there is Land enough, and more by half then is made use of," ($\frac{3}{5}$?); and, The Law of Freedom, (Sabine) p.507, (Hill) p.282, - "there be Land enough in England, to maintain ten times as many people as are in it."

i The Communist Economy of Winstanley's Utopian Commonwealth

Just as left-wing commentators have often experienced considerable difficulty in accounting for Winstanley's spiritual concerns, so certain theologically-orientated critics have been perplexed by the secular aspects of Winstanley's thought, and especially by the system of communism outlined in The Law of Freedom. While left-wing critics have tended to play down the significance of Winstanley's theology, the 'millenarian school', in particular, has questioned the importance of his utopian institutional ideas. One virtue of our own analysis is that it not only recognizes the relationship between the religious and secular spheres of Winstanley's thought, but also explains the nature of that relationship. By considering Winstanley's intellectual development in the light both of his concentration upon the human condition and of various methods he proposed to achieve the spiritual restoration of man, we are not constrained to attempt to prove that Winstanley was primarily a secular or theological thinker.

From the perspective which sees Winstanley as fundamentally millenarian, W. S. Hudson contended⁷ that Winstanley's design for a utopian society envisaged an interim holy commonwealth. This commonwealth would suffice as the best circumstance under which men could live while awaiting divine intervention and the millennium. Similarly, L. Mulligan claimed⁸ that Winstanley wrote The Law of Freedom in anticipation of the millennium. Nevertheless, Mulligan was forced to concede that this millennium assumed a somewhat peculiar form since it relied on external

7. W. S. Hudson, 'The Economic and Social Thought of Gerrard Winstanley', J.M.H., Vol. 18 (1946), pp. 1-21, at p. 20.

8. L. Mulligan, (et alia), 'Winstanley: A Case For the Man as He Said He Was', Journal of Ecclesiastical History, Vol. 28 (1977), pp. 57-75, at pp. 70-71.

laws to shape men's manners. As we have seen, although such assessments of the purpose of Winstanley's utopian commonwealth are quite admissible, they are irreconcilable to thoroughgoing millenarianism.⁹

Both P. Elmen¹⁰ and W. F. Murphy¹¹ concentrated upon Winstanley's theology without emphasizing his millenarianism and, consequently, each advanced a more balanced appreciation of The Law of Freedom. Elmen and Murphy both appreciated that by the time he wrote his utopia, Winstanley was prepared to acknowledge that man's own exertions could be as consequential as the work of God in effecting the improvement of the human condition. Similarly, G. H. Sabine provided a lucid account of the revised outlook :-

"Though the general purpose is the same, there is a change of emphasis in The Law of Freedom, Winstanley seems to rely less upon a millenarian hope that the spirit will move men to bring in a true commonwealth, and more upon the possibility that changing the organization of society will affect their motives and conduct."¹²

The particular areas of societal organization with which Winstanley was concerned were the state, the family, the economy, and education. Winstanley's fundamental purpose was to propose the means by which fallen men could be regenerated. He concluded that the institution of communism, by radically amending the structure of existing society, would ultimately effect the moral redemption of man.

9. Above, pp. 35-56.

10. P. Elmen, 'The Theological Basis of Digger Communism', Church History, Vol. 23 (1954), pp. 207-218, at p. 216.

11. W. F. Murphy, 'The Political Philosophy of Gerrard Winstanley', Review of Politics, Vol. 19 (1957), pp. 214-238, at p. 216.

12. G. H. Sabine, op.cit., p. 59.

Winstanley clearly believed that his proposed communist system was ethically necessary. He defended his ideas in the following evocative terms :-

"This Platform of Government which I offer, is the Original Righteousness and Peace in the Earth, though he hath been buried under the clods of Kingly Covetousness, Pride and Oppression a long time."¹³

His ethical conception of communism is also apparent in the following definition :-

"That which true Righteousness in my Judgement calls Community, is this, To have the Earth set free from all Kingly Bondage of Lords of Manors, and oppressing Landlords, which came in by Conquest; as a Thief takes a true mans purse on the high-way, being stronger than he."¹⁴

All this suggests that Winstanley regarded communism not merely as an economic system, but also as a method of sustaining the alternative organization of society which would further the improvement of human nature. Like Thomas More, Winstanley felt obliged to reply in anticipation to certain stock objections to communism. (Winstanley called these 'prejudices'.) He was wary that,

"Some hearing of the Common Freedom, think there must be a Community of all the fruits of the Earth whether they work or no, therefore strive to live idle upon other men's labours."¹⁵

Thus he asserted that the communism outlined in The Law of Freedom should not be construed as a recipe for idleness, because it required that all individuals must work.

13. G. Winstanley, The Law of Freedom, (Sabine) p. 515, (Hill) p. 291, cf., Fire in the Bush, (Sabine) p. 478, (Hill) p. 251.

14. G. Winstanley, The Law of Freedom, (Sabine) p. 526, (Hill) p. 302-303.

15. ibid., (Sabine) p. 526, (Hill) p. 302.

Further, Winstanley confronted the proposition that the eradication of private property would necessarily subjugate political authority :-

"Others think there will be no Law, but that every thing will run into confusion for want of Government; but this Platform proves the contrary."¹⁶

Hence Winstanley advocated the stringent institutional supervision of the individual. Finally, probably as a result of his desire to refute suggestions that his communist society might degenerate into the type of moral licentiousness popularly associated with Ranterism, Winstanley denied that his scheme would lead to the communal use of women.¹⁷

In noting that "exploitation, not labour, is the curse,"¹⁸ Christopher Hill has isolated a crucial aspect of Winstanley's attitude to work and labour. Similarly, within an essentially materialist interpretation, M. James has accepted that, in Winstanley's opinion, one reason for labour was the good that might be done to the individual soul.¹⁹ Although Winstanley was clearly impressed by ideals such as those employed in the Protestant work ethic, he nevertheless feared that many of his contemporaries might fail to appreciate his advocacy of hard work.

In analysing contemporary society, Winstanley recognized the importance of labour in the productive process. For instance, in his discussion of the means by which wealth was accumulated,

16. ibid.

17. ibid.

18. C. Hill, introduction to, Winstanley: The Law of Freedom, (London 1973), p. 53.

19. M. James, 'Contemporary Materialist Interpretations of the English Revolution', in, The English Revolution: Three Essays, ed. C. Hill, (London 1949), p. 96.

he concluded that,

"No man can be rich, but he must be rich, either by his own labors, or by the labors of other men helping him: If a man have no help from his neighbour, he shall never gather an Estate of hundreds and thousands a year: If other men help him to work, then are those Riches his Neighbours, as well as his; for they be the fruit of other mens labors as well as his own.

But all rich men live at ease, feeding and clothing themselves by the labors of other men, not by their own."²⁰

From

this observation Winstanley deduced that labour ought to be utilized to sustain the welfare of the community as opposed to the prosperity of a select minority. We have already seen that, in relation to contemporary norms, Thomas More's utopian communism did not involve any proposals for a reduction in the amount of labour citizens were expected to perform.²¹ It is possible that Winstanley applied this principle even more strictly. In the second section of this chapter it will be argued that work and labour were important elements in the restorative process postulated in Winstanley's utopia.

In defending his proposals Winstanley insisted that,

"If any say, This will nurse Idleness; I answer, This Platform proves the contrary, for the idle persons and beggars will be made to work."²²

Similarly, Winstanley's

attitude in The Law of Freedom was characterized by an invective²³ against "that now lazie generation" - youth. It seems that

20. G. Winstanley, The Law of Freedom, (Sabine) p. 511, (Hill) p. 287.

21. Above, pp. 252-261.

22. G. Winstanley, The Law of Freedom, (Sabine) pp. 526-527, see also, p. 593, (Hill) p. 303, see also, p. 381.

23. ibid., (Sabine) p. 579, (Hill) p. 365.

Winstanley was no longer convinced that man's early years constituted an age of innocence, as he had been formerly in Fire in the Bush.²⁴ He stipulated that every young person reared in his ideal commonwealth would be instructed in a trade or artifice. Such an obligation to work was designed not only to profit the commonwealth, but also to improve individual morality. Thus Winstanley retained the standard seven-year apprenticeship of early-modern England. One function of the 'overseers' in Winstanley's utopian society was to supervise the training of young people, so that none could be idle.²⁵

As we shall see, Winstanley advocated retirement from work at the age of forty. It was therefore essential to compensate for the loss of the labour services of mature citizens²⁶ by ensuring that all the young should labour. Patriarchal masters were expected to keep the entire household hard at work. The 'non-productive' elements of contemporary society, such as lawyers, were excluded from The Law of Freedom. After arraignment the clergy of seventeenth-century England for their reluctance to labour, Winstanley ensured that in his utopia, although 'ministers' were not expected to labour, individuals should reach retirement age before being appointed to that office. In the context of Winstanley's concern to ensure that all eligible members of his utopian society should labour, it is interesting to note that a number of Winstanley's contemporaries were

24. G. Winstanley, Fire in the Bush, (Sabine) p.493, (Hill) p.269. Christopher Hill, op.cit., p.59, argues that "Winstanley too saw childhood as innocence," and goes on to discuss his "Idealization of childhood as a state of innocence." Although this is a correct impression of Winstanley's initial position, it becomes misleading if applied to 'The Law of Freedom'.

25. G. Winstanley, The Law of Freedom, (Sabine) pp.548, 579, (Hill) pp.329, 365.

26. Given that, by today's standards, relatively few men lived to the age of forty, Winstanley's provision did not impose such

an economic asset,"²⁷ by proposing schemes for the compulsory and full employment of the poor. Thus it was intended to utilize an underdeveloped resource. This provision was undoubtedly included in Winstanley's plans to guarantee a sound basis for his communist economy by ensuring an adequate supply of labour.

Winstanley integrated into his communist economy the household basis of production typical of early-modern England. Although each family was expected to be as self-sufficient as possible, provision was made for families to draw goods which they were unable to produce for themselves, from the common stock. Winstanley envisaged that the family would work both for itself, and by contributing the surplus produce of its particular trade, for the community. Again Winstanley reflected contemporary circumstances, just as More had done, by assuming that all families would assist in gathering the harvest and conveying it to storehouses. However, Winstanley went further, legislating that,

"Every family shall come into the field,....at seed time to plow,dig,and plant."²⁸

This element of communal cultivation, while obviously stimulating agricultural production, was also intended to promote the spiritual restoration of the individual.

The division of labour in The Law of Freedom was determined according to the physical attributes and gender of the individual. For instance, Winstanley assumed that individuals

a burden upon his utopian economy as might be supposed, see below, pp.580-581, on the age structure of contemporary society.

27. C.Webster, The Great Instauration, (London 1975), p.362.

28. G.Winstanley, The Law of Freedom, (Sabine) p.592, (Hill) p.381.

who were afflicted with some form of incapacitating physical weakness, to the extent that they were unable to perform a strenuous trade, might nevertheless be gainfully employed as keepers of storehouses.²⁹ Further, Winstanley believed that while all boys should be taught a trade, girls should be allocated 'easier' domestic tasks.³⁰ By these various methods of apportioning labour, Winstanley hoped to secure the maximum output from the available labour force. His attitude to the allocation of holidays was similarly motivated. By restricting holidays in his utopian commonwealth to one per week, he seems to have been influenced by an assumption of Puritan sabbatarianism; that a day of rest would facilitate and inspire greater exertions on the days of labour. (Although he doubled More's provision for holiday's,³¹ it is possible that, as a compensating measure, Winstanley envisaged a longer working day.)

According to D.W. Petegorsky, Winstanley realized that "poverty³² was purely an artificial product of the property system." However, Petegorsky has failed to specify his use of the term 'poverty'. Poverty is a comparative concept used to analyse relative degrees of wealth. As such, it is used in a number of ways. For instance, poverty may be applied on an aggregative-distributive dimension in assessing who gets what in terms of shares from a total amount of goods. Alternatively, the concept may be used as a reference point to differentiate individuals, groups, or indeed, societies. If 'poverty' is used in the first sense, as an index according to which the relative prosperity

29. ibid., (Sabine) p.550, (Hill) p.331.

30. ibid., (Sabine) p.579, (Hill) p.365.

31. See above, p.255.

32. D.W. Petegorsky, Left-Wing Democracy in the English Civil War, (New York 1940, 1972 edition), p.207.

of one individual to another can be assessed, then any inegalitarian distributive system will ensure that some individuals are 'poorer' than others. Clearly, on this account, by merely eradicating the institution of private property, and effecting an equal distribution of goods, Winstanley's communism successfully removed poverty. In the second sense, however, an egalitarian society could nevertheless be regarded as 'poor' because poverty is constituted by the failure to achieve some minimum standard of abundance. So, in essence, Petegorsky has failed to distinguish these two senses of poverty; that which is concerned with distribution, and that which is concerned with the eradication of scarcity. Obviously, it is impossible to prove whether Winstanley's (or for that matter More's) communist utopia eradicated the poverty, in the absolute sense, of early-modern England. It cannot be assumed that by merely effecting the redistribution of the existing supply of goods, scarcity would necessarily be removed. Yet the emphasis both writers placed upon the provision of labour suggests, by implication, that productive capacity would be increased, and that Utopia, and Winstanley's true commonwealth, were intended to be both egalitarian, and more prosperous in absolute terms, than contemporary society.

It is revealing to discover the means by which Winstanley intended communism to relieve scarcity. We have seen that because Winstanley was conscious that communism was liable to censure for its supposed inability to ensure a sufficient supply of goods, he fervently defended his proposed mode of production. Winstanley accounted for the removal of scarcity in several ways. For instance, his insistence on the universal obligation to labour suggests that productive output would be

adequate to satisfy demand. Even Winstanley's education programme was partly intended to stimulate production.³³ He also assumed that true magistracy would achieve such a reduction in wants, that demand would be restrained. In this context he commented upon the insatiable demands of certain elements of his own society :-

"Indeed, covetous, proud, and beastly-minded men desire more, either to be by them to look upon, or else to waste and spoil it upon their lusts."³⁴

Clearly, Winstanley was not prepared to countenance such habits of consumption in his utopian society. To a certain extent all this is reminiscent of the ideas forwarded by More in Utopia, although, as we shall see, Winstanley did not intend to limit consumption in the manner advocated by More. Winstanley did agree with one of More's principles, arguing that the long-term demand for labour could be minimized in part by maintaining buildings in good repair.³⁵ In keeping with his general appreciation of the possible benefits to be accrued from experimental knowledge, Winstanley was optimistic that the discovery of the secrets of nature might eventually yield more substantial crops.³⁶ Winstanley sought to resolve scarcity by facilitating an equitable distributive system: this is the most important aspect of his proposals for a communist economy. Thus he envisaged a situation in which it would no longer be possible for one class to live idly by requisitioning the produce of the labour of another.

33. See, J.K. Fuz, Welfare Economics in English Utopias from Francis Bacon to Adam Smith, (The Hague 1952), p.51.

34. G. Winstanley, The Law of Freedom, (Sabine) p.583, (Hill) p.369.

35. ibid., (Sabine) p.551, (Hill) p.332.

36. ibid., (Sabine) p.578, (Hill) p.364.

The distributive facet of Winstanley's utopia was not only intended to counter scarcity and individual privation, but also, from its basis in reason, was recommended as the essence of the equity sustained by the communist system.³⁷ Winstanley ensured that by contrast to what happened in fallen contemporary society, each individual in the true commonwealth would be obliged, and if necessary forced, to work; but he would also be guaranteed the just deserts of his labours. Distribution in The Law of Freedom was based on a system of storehouses of³⁸ which there were two kinds. Firstly, 'general storehouses' such as barns, held commodities in gross. From these each family collected the requisite raw materials to pursue its trade. The surplus manufactured produce of such trades was subsequently deposited in the second kind - 'particular³⁹ storehouses'. Families were entitled to collect from these latter depositories those commodities that they required of necessity but were unable to produce for themselves. Just as Winstanley conceived of the institution of 'buying and selling' as a significant stage in the Fall of Man, so his omission of the reprehensible procedure from his communist utopia implied⁴⁰ a certain restorative potential. As Winstanley said of his proposed system of distribution,

"Now this same free practice, will kill covetousness, pride, and oppression: for when men have a Law to buy and sell, then, . . . cunning cheaters get great estates by other mens labors; and being rich thereby, become oppressing Lords over their brethren; which occasions all our

37. ibid., (Sabine) pp.582-583, (Hill) p.370.

38. ibid., (Sabine) p.583, (Hill) pp.369-370.

39. ibid., (Sabine) pp.583-585, (Hill) pp.370-372.

40. ibid., (Sabine) pp.526 ff., 580, (Hill) pp.302 ff., 366.

trouble and wars in all Nations."⁴¹

Clearly, Winstanley

anticipated that the eradication of commerce would stimulate the moral regeneration of mankind and would further harmonious social interaction.

The fundamental difference between Thomas More's communism and that postulated by Gerrard Winstanley is that in Utopia, communism was absolute, whereas in The Law of Freedom there existed a sphere of private property. This crucial variable provides a significant indication of the role that More and Winstanley expected their respective utopian systems to play in amending fallen human nature. As we have seen, More insisted that communism should be complete because he regarded salvation on earth as an impossibility. So More believed that man's innate and ineradicable sinful characteristics must constantly be frustrated. Thus the form of communism elucidated in Utopia was More's primary proposal for achieving the subjugation of the evil predispositions of mankind. However, in Winstanley's case, communism was intended to effect the restoration of human nature. So ultimately, as we shall see in the second section of this chapter, he maintained that one criterion of the 'saved' or restored individual, was his capacity to be entrusted with an element of private property (the possessions of his family), without displaying the attributes of fallen human nature (by succumbing to covetousness and pride).

Even on the rare occasions when commentators have mentioned the sphere of private property evident in The Law of Freedom,⁴² they have generally failed to devote much attention to it.

41. ibid., (Sabine) pp.584-585, (Hill) p.371.

42. See, e.g., D.W. Petegorsky, op.cit., p.217.

Only Murphy has given this issue any substantial consideration and has quite usefully suggested that the private sphere was constituted by non-productive property.⁴³ However, although this delineation is the point upon which Winstanley is most specific, the status of materials and tools (which are obviously pertinent to production) while in the care of the family betwixt storehouses, remains unclear. For instance, Winstanley states that once farm buildings have been allocated to a family, they would become the property of that family. Yet he also stipulates that each family should,

"keep sufficient working tools for common use, as Plows, Carts, and furniture, according as every Family is furnished with men to work therewith; likewise Pickaxes, Spades, Pruning-hooks, and any such like necessary instrument."⁴⁴

The provision that households should maintain tools and instruments 'for common use' suggests that Winstanley intended such objects to be held as a trust, rather than as a private property. This understanding is implicit in the regulation that,

"Every household shall keep all Instruments and Tools fit for the tillage of the Earth,..."⁴⁵

Again, trusteeship, as opposed to exclusive rights, appears to have been the regulating feature of such property. So it seems that each family was required to engage in the productive process (which could be privately or communally orientated) by using tools, the ownership of which was indeterminate.

It is clear that in The Law of Freedom the sphere of private

43. W.F. Murphy, op.cit., pp.227, 229.

44. G.Winstanley, The Law of Freedom, (Sabine) p.550, (Hill) pp.330-331.

45. ibid., (Sabine) p.592, (Hill) p.380.

property is closely related to the household, and to patriarchal authority. With regard to these considerations Winstanley was far more precise. Thus he attempted to dispel the potential fears of his readers in the following terms :-

"Shall every man count his Neighbours house as his own, and live together as one Family?

No: Though the Earth and the Storehouses be common to every Family, yet every Family shall live apart as they do; and every mans house, wife, children, and furniture for ornament of his house, or anything which he hath fetched in from Storehouses, or provided for the necessary use of his Family, is all a propriety to that Family,..."⁴⁶

Similarly :-

"every mans house is proper to himself, and all the furniture therein, and provision which he hath fetched from the Storehouses is proper to himself; every mans wife and every womans husband proper to themselves, and so are their children at their dispose till they come of age."⁴⁷

Further :-

"every house, and all the furniture for ornament therein, is a propriety to the Indwellers; and when any family hath fetched in from the Store-houses or shops either Clothes, food, or any ornament necessary for their use, it is all propriety of that family."⁴⁸

This principle was extended to include one final provision, which typified Winstanley's definition of the public and private spheres of property. He maintained that although,

"all Publike Dayries are Store-houses for Butter and Cheese: yet every Family may have Cows for their own use, about their own house."⁴⁹

46. ibid., (Sabine) p.512, see also, p.527, (Hill) p.288, see also, p.304.

47. ibid., (Sabine) p.527, (Hill) pp.303-304.

48. ibid., (Sabine) pp.546-547, (Hill) p.327

49. ibid., (Sabine) p.583, (Hill) p.370.

In The Law of Freedom Winstanley asserted that one of the major functions of the state and of its legal system, was to be the protection of the sanctity of this sphere of private property. Thus, in the light of his reconciliation to that fact that not all individuals could be expected to act reasonably, he inserted the following clause :-

"if any other man endeavour to take away his house, furniture, food, wife, or children, saying, every thing is common, and so abusing the Law of Peace, such a one is a Transgressor, and shall suffer punishment."⁵⁰

Thus Winstanley believed that if any one individual (invariably a patriarchal householder) laid a rightful claim to an article, it should become his own property :-

"One man shall not take away that Commodity which another man hath first layd hands on, for any Commodity for use belongs to him that first layd hands on it for his own use; and if another come and say, I will have it, and so offences do arise,..."⁵¹

The underlying purpose of Winstanley's insistence on the preservation of a sphere of private property in The Law of Freedom will be explored in the second section of this chapter.

In The Law of Freedom Winstanley advanced a rather exotic⁵² description of "the abundance of peace and plenty" that he expected to prevail should his utopian commonwealth be instituted. He anticipated a level of economic achievement capable of ensuring,

"food and rayment, ease and pleasure plentiful, both for you and your brethren; so that none shall beg or starve,

50. ibid., (Sabine) p.527, see also, p.547, (Hill) p.304, see also, p.327.

51. ibid., (Sabine) pp.547-548, (Hill) p.328.

52. ibid., (Sabine) p.534, (Hill) p.313.

or live in the straits of poverty."⁵³

Occasionally Winstanley's

euphoria got the better of him, as in the following extract :-

"If any say, This will bring poverty; surely they mistake: for there will be plenty of all Earthly Commodities, with less labor and trouble than now is under Monarchy. There will be no want, for every man may keep as plentiful a house as he will, and never run into debt, for common stock pays for all."⁵⁴

The reference here to a reduction in labor time was possibly a careless error. However, if it was seriously intended, Winstanley probably implied that contemporary labourers could hope to work fewer hours, and because labour would be distributed more equitably, each individual would have to endure less really hard work. It seems unlikely that Winstanley envisaged a reduction in the average per capita commitment to labour.

There are two possible reasons for Winstanley's emphasis on material abundance. Firstly, he may have wished to suggest that the restoration posited by the institutional fabric of The Law of Freedom would recapture the pristine plenty of the original condition. Secondly, because he felt constrained to defend his ideas, Winstanley may have succumbed to the temptation to present a somewhat exaggerated picture of the prosperity his plans were designed to attain. This is more likely. For instance, he promised that his communist system would provide every citizen with free access to the use of a horse⁵⁵ - the possession of which would have indicated, to contemporaries, the owner's substantial prosperity. It will be recalled that

53. ibid., (Sabine) p.585, (Hill) p.371.

54. ibid., (Sabine) p.513, (Hill) p.289.

55. ibid., (Sabine) p.581, (Hill) p.367.

in the more frugal circumstances of Utopia, horses were rare. Nevertheless the general tone of Winstanley's discussion suggests that, although he intended the standard of living in his true commonwealth to be more comfortable than the contemporary situation, it would hardly be ostentatious.

Despite these suggestions of abundance, material improvement was not Winstanley's priority, although some left-wing interpreters such as Petegorsky have implied that it was.⁵⁷ It seems probable that Winstanley would have been wary of any semblance of luxury. In this context it is interesting to note a point made by M. Walzer in his critique of Weber's discussion of the Puritan association of unlimited accumulation with beneficial providence and election. As Walzer has argued, in reality,

"The anxiety of the Puritans led to a fearful demand for economic restriction."⁵⁸

Thus it was deemed inadvisable and inauspicious for an individual to seek wealth surplus to his requirements. Winstanley was apparently susceptible to such arguments. Hence the emphasis of his utopian economic system was upon sufficiency alone. Clearly, he assumed that by placing certain limits upon the demand for goods, his scheme would simultaneously ease the scarcity problem, and favour the spiritual restoration of the individual.

In the next section we shall discuss more precisely the means by which the socio-economic system of Winstanley's utopia was

56. Above, p.286.

57. D.W. Petegorsky, *op.cit.*, p.203, - "the cultivation of the commons, Winstanley was convinced, would confer vast economic and social benefits on the country. It would inaugurate a period of unparalleled prosperity in which every person of the populace would share."

58. M. Walzer, 'Puritanism as a Revolutionary Ideology', *H.&T.*, Vol.111 (1963-1964), pp.59-90, at p.67.

expected to facilitate the restoration of human nature. Winstanley hoped that this final stage of his thought, utopian institutionalism, would fulfil the same ends that he had once ascribed to millenarianism, and subsequently, to digging. Hence, in The Law of Freedom, Winstanley provided constant reminders that pride and covetousness, characteristic of fallen human nature, might henceforth be eradicated by institutional means. We might recall that Thomas More's theological presuppositions caused him to dismiss such an eventuality.

ii The Spiritual Restoration of the Individual

While Thomas More advocated a communist utopia as the means of averting the worst consequences of the Fall of Man, Gerrard Winstanley believed that the same medium could actually accomplish the restoration of human nature. It is the purpose of this section to examine the process which Winstanley believed to be capable of achieving such moral regeneration. We have already demonstrated that Winstanley's thought was permeated by a consistent conviction that such a restoration was possible,⁵⁹ and that both his religious and social ideas, and his experience as a Digger, finally prompted him to conclude that the restoration could only be initiated by means of the thoroughgoing reform of social institutions. His proposals for such reform were outlined in their most coherent form in The Law of Freedom. Such 'true magistracy' Winstanley asserted, was⁶⁰ the only viable alternative to monarchy, the form of government he regarded as appropriate for fallen men. Consequently, Winstanley earnestly recommended his conception of true magistracy as,

"the True Restorer of all long lost Freedoms,....the joy of all Nations, and the Blessing of the whole Earth: for this takes off the Kingly Curse, and makes Jerusalem a praise in the Earth."⁶¹

Winstanley dismissed the political situation prevailing since the execution of the King as a futile attempt to construct a 'via media'. So as an alternative, he claimed that his system would fulfil the righteous law of⁶² Christ by re-establishing the conditions which had been lost

59. Above, pp.442-446.

60. G.Winstanley, The Law of Freedom, (Sabine) p.587, (Hill) p.374.

61. ibid., (Sabine) p.533, (Hill) p.311.

62. ibid., (Sabine) p.585, (Hill) p.371.

at the Fall. Hence he contended that,

"This Commonwealths Government may well be called the antient of days; for it is before any other oppressing government crept in."⁶³

Whereas previously there has been a tendency to present 'exclusive' interpretations of Winstanley's writings, by concentrating upon either his millenarianism or his unfolding 'materialism', our own analysis, by recognizing the primacy of Winstanley's preoccupation with the restoration of man, has established the nature of the relationship between the spiritual and secular elements of his thought. Ultimately, this involves the contention that Winstanley's utopia, as outlined in The Law of Freedom, was a society in which an individual could acquire sufficient reason and righteousness to rectify the spiritual damage incurred at the Fall. Thomas More designed the communist economy of Utopia to ensure an equitable distribution of leisure time, education, and virtuous pleasure, all of which he regarded as contributions to man's salvation. In The Law of Freedom Winstanley was concerned to uphold a concept of retirement, the attainment of which was to indicate the spiritual restoration of the individual in terms of Winstanley's conception of mankind's predicament.

In The Law of Freedom Winstanley developed a theory of the several ages of man, which suggests that he believed in some form of life cycle. These ideas appear to have been stimulated, in part, by Winstanley's conception of the individuated Fall⁶⁴ Hence he divided the life of a man into four ages, "his childhood, youth, manhood, and old age."⁶⁵ Winstanley's notion of

63. ibid., (Sabine), p.534, (Hill) p.312.

64. Above. pp.412-419.

65. G.Winstanley, The Law of Freedom, (Sabine) p.576, (Hill) p.361.

'youth' was decidedly protracted; he argued that this prolonged adolescence lasted until the age of forty. Thereafter,

"from forty years of age till fourscore, if he live so long, which is the degree of manhood and old age; they shall be freed from all labour and work, unless they will themselves."⁶⁶

Not only did Winstanley maintain that on attaining the age of majority, at the age of forty, men should no longer be obliged to work, but he also contended that it could generally be assumed that individuals reaching this age in his ideal commonwealth would possess sufficient reason to become officers of the commonwealth :-

"for by this time Man hath learned experience to govern himself and others: for when young wits are set to govern, they wax wanton, &c."⁶⁷

From this initial position, it becomes apparent that Winstanley conceived of the restorative process outlined in The Law of Freedom as a gradual progression through life involving education, apprenticeship, labour, patriarchal mastership, and ultimately the holding of public office. Thus he regarded the state and the household as the two essential institutions for the provision of the facilities for spiritual restoration.

a) The State

If we recall that in his first letter to Fairfax, Winstanley claimed that the Diggers were perfectly capable of maintaining order amongst themselves without adopting any governmental institutions,⁶⁸ then the emphasis he placed on the formal

66. ibid., (Sabine) p.577, (Hill) p.362.

67. ibid.

68. G.Winstanley, To The Lord Fairfax, Generall of the English

structure of the state and role of officialdom, in The Law of Freedom, might be regarded as an abrupt reversal of his position. Certainly, by 1652 he was prepared to recognize that,

"A Soldier is a Magistrate as well as any other Officer, and indeed all State Officers are Souldiers for they represent power, and if there were not power in the hand of Officers, the spirit of rudeness would not be obedient to any Law or Government, but their own wils."⁶⁹

This contention

provides a clear indication of the extent to which Winstanley⁷⁰ had amended his conception of the human condition. In his earlier pronouncement, Winstanley believed that he was speaking on behalf of the regenerate, whereas in constructing his ideal commonwealth, he had to assume that not all members of society would possess the moral rectitude he had previously attributed to the Diggers.

G. Woodcock has argued that, initially, Winstanley and the Diggers constituted the anarchist wing of the English Revolution. Thus Woodcock has claimed that the cultivation of St. George's Hill corresponded to the inception of the anarchist tradition of direct action. Yet even Woodcock has been obliged to concede that Winstanley's position in The Law of Freedom represents a decided moderation of his views on this issue.⁷¹ Implicit in Woodcock's analysis is the assumption that anarchism was the primary inspiration and achievement of Winstanley's earlier thought and action. Hence his latter phase

Forces, and His Councill of War, (Sabine) pp.282-284, and above pp.492-494.

69. G. Winstanley, The Law of Freedom, (Sabine) p.552, (Hill) p.333.

70. see, J.C. Davis, 'Gerrard Winstanley and the Restoration of True Magistracy', P.&P., No. 70 (1977), pp.76-93, passim, for an account of Winstanley's utopianism, acceptance of state institutions, and resort to political authority.

71. G. Woodcock, Anarchism, (London 1963, 1965 edition), pp.42-46.

appears as 'moderation'. However, this ignores Winstanley's concern with mankind's spiritual regeneration. From this alternative perspective, it is clear that Winstanley's initial propositions concerning the method by which moral regeneration might be expected to occur, involved the corollary that any formal governmental structure would be unnecessary. Thus anarchism was ancillary to Winstanley's anticipation of the radical and prompt reformation of human nature. Subsequently, once Winstanley had revised his evaluation of the process by which men might be restored, he was prepared to argue that the governmental element of his utopian institutionalism might contribute to man's moral regeneration. Although by this stage in his intellectual development, Winstanley had renounced anarchism, he did so not as a result of any immediate reconsideration of the concept, but rather as an appendage to his revised appreciation of the restoration of man.

In considering Winstanley's analysis of the formal institutions of the state and of political authority, Christopher Hill has arrived at a similar conclusion to Woodcock's. Hill has correctly argued that,

"By 1652, Winstanley too had realized that his ideal society would need defending against the rudeness of the people."⁷²

However, Hill is wrong to suggest, as he has done elsewhere, that Winstanley's disillusion with an anarchic form of communist society was symptomatic of the dissipation of his optimism and confidence.⁷³ Certainly Winstanley developed a slightly depreciating view of existing human nature, and turned to more draconian means of realizing its amendment, but he

72. C.Hill, Milton and the English Revolution, (London 1977), p.161.

73. C.Hill, introduction, Winstanley: The Law of Freedom, p.41.

remained optimistic in his conviction that mankind could still be spiritually restored.

In The Law of Freedom Winstanley for the first time provided a general analysis of the state, along with detailed proposals for the structure of government. In keeping with his revised position, Winstanley contended that the primary concerns of government were the regulation of the economy and of men's conduct :-

"Government is a wise and free ordering of the Earth, and the Manners of Mankind by observation of particular Laws or Rules, so that all the Inhabitants may live peaceably in plenty and freedom in the Land where they are born and bred."⁷⁴

Winstanley's account of the origins of civil society and the foundations of political authority constitutes a valuable insight into his conception of 'true magistracy' as he believed it ought to function in contemporary society.

According to Winstanley, the general principle of 'true magistracy' was the recognition that political authority was necessary for common preservation. Thus, authority was legitimate only if it was exercised in the interest of common preservation. This condition enabled Winstanley to introduce an element of consent into his theory of the state. He argued that the legitimacy of government could be determined by the people's willing subjection to it, as they perceived its actions as conducive to the common good.

Winstanley framed these ideas in a manner that was clearly intended to confute theories which countenanced the prerogative rights of kingship. Hence his concern with the origins of political authority. Winstanley contended that,

74. G. Winstanley, The Law of Freedom, (Sabine) p.528, (Hill) p.305.

"The Original Root of Magistracy is common Preservation, and it rose up first in a private Family."⁷⁵

So Winstanley

assumed that Adam was responsible for the control of his children, because they were physically weak and too inexperienced to provide for their own subsistence. Winstanley went on to argue that the principle of common preservation legitimized the authority of the original ruler and stimulated the consent of the ruled :-

"the Law of Necessity, that the Earth should be planted for the common preservation and peace of his household, was the righteous Rule and Law to Adam, and this Law was so clearly written in the hearts of his people, that they all consented quietly to any counsel he gave them for that end."⁷⁶

From this position, Winstanley advanced the view that the observation of the law of necessity (by both rulers and the ruled) constituted the only possible basis for political obligation :-

"as the necessity for common preservation moves the people to frame a Law, and to chuse Officers to see the Law Obeyed, that they may live in peace."⁷⁷

So whereas Winstanley

observed that the promotion of particular interests effectively resulted in the bondage of the people (kingly power), he deduced that only the promotion of the common good would advance equity and justice and result in the establishment of a true commonwealth.

Winstanley's description of the legislative body in his true

75. ibid., (Sabine) p.536, (Hill) p.314.

76. ibid., (Sabine) p.536, (Hill) p.315.

77. ibid., (Sabine) p.540, (Hill) p.320.

commonwealth was an implied criticism of its contemporary equivalent, the Rump Parliament.⁷⁸ In Winstanley's scheme, parliament,⁷⁹ "the highest Court of Equity in the Land," was to be responsible for supervising the cultivation of the land, for the restoration of all land which had previously been the subject of commercial transaction to the common treasury, and for raising the armed forces. Clearly, the utopian medium enabled Winstanley to envisage the removal of all remaining vestiges of 'kingly power'. In his account of the legislative process, Winstanley expressed his concern to eliminate political corruption and intrigue, to accommodate the consent of the people, and to promote the public interest. Thus he stipulated that all legislative proposals were to be declared publicly, and could be enacted only after one month had elapsed,⁸⁰ during which time objections and amendments might be lodged.

In his utopian scheme Winstanley also maintained that the election of officials such as 'overseers', (who were particularly concerned with the regulation of the economy),⁸¹ and of 'ministers', should occur annually. In The Law of Freedom Winstanley specified that all men of twenty years or over should be entitled to vote, and all those over forty years were to be considered eligible to be elected to public office,⁸² although none could campaign on his own behalf. Winstanley made these provisions with two ends in mind. Firstly, he apparently shared More's suspicion that a long period in office might result in a degeneration of the incumbent's moral

78. See, B. Worden, The Rump Parliament, (Cambridge 1974).

79. G. Winstanley, The Law of Freedom, (Sabine) p.556, (Hill) p.338.

80. ibid., (Sabine) p.559, (Hill) p.341.

81. ibid., (Sabine) p.540 ff., (Hill) p.319 ff.

82. ibid., (Sabine) p.596, (Hill) p.385.

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character. Winstanley assumed that exercising power might induce corruption from humility to pride and covetousness. Winstanley's second reason for limiting the duration of office-holding was particularly prescient of the overall purpose of The Law of Freedom. He regarded office-holding as a good to be bestowed upon all eligible individuals in turn. So he contended that,

"It is good to remove Officers every year, that whereas many have their portions to obey, so many have their turns to rule, and this will encourage all men to advance Righteousness and good Manners in hopes of Honor."⁸⁴

In Winstanley's

utopia, office-holding confirmed the successful conclusion of the restorative process.

It has already been established that, ultimately, Winstanley became convinced that institutional circumstances determined the prospects of mankind's regeneration. This conclusion was definitively expressed in the legalism of The Law of Freedom, and in Winstanley's discussion of the coercive facet of the state. All this casts considerable doubt upon Hudson's contention that Winstanley regarded coercion as an essential bolster to an 'interim holy commonwealth' in which the unregenerate were to be restrained until the millennium

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occured. This interpretation obviously requires considerable revision given that, by this stage, Winstanley was concerned with the institutional means of effecting the restoration of man, and not with the millennium. Thus any coercive interim applied

83. We must presume that this provision is a loose end, or that Winstanley believed that even the spiritually restored would not be immune from the corrupting influence of power exercised over a long duration.

84. G. Winstanley, The Law of Freedom, (Sabine) p.541, (Hill) p.321.

85. W.S. Hudson, op.cit., p.19, and above, p.347.

to those individuals who had not, as yet, attained the age of reason. Davis has come nearer to the point in arguing that,

"in Winstanley's last and utopian work are shifts of fundamental importance which arise from Winstanley's original confrontation with the problem of guaranteeing social justice in a world where men cannot be changed overnight."⁸⁶

However, Davis had earlier contended that education and social discipline in Winstanley's utopia were both designed to confine the innate and original sin that manifested itself as men pursued their own self-interest.⁸⁷ This evaluation seems more appropriate to More's position than to Winstanley's. If we recall Winstanley's account of the Fall of Man, and particularly the individuated version of this theory, then it follows that he did not believe in innate and original sin. In any case, Davis's interpretation fails to accommodate Winstanley's admission that the citizens of his utopian society might be differentiated into the reasonable and the unreasonable, the regenerate and the unregenerate. An extreme version of the view that Winstanley's conception of human nature became disparaging was forwarded by Murphy, who argued that,

"It is hard to imagine a better example of a primitive police state than the True Commonwealth."⁸⁸

As we shall see, such an abrupt and unconditional conclusion misses the sophistication of Winstanley's purpose.

In the final analysis, Winstanley concluded that the moral regeneration of the individual would be a lengthy process. It

86. J.C.Davis, op.cit., p.19, cf. above, p.55.

87. ibid., pp.84-85.

88. W.F.Murphy, op.cit., p.237, see also, p.227.

became obvious to him that in the meantime men would be susceptible to moral transgressions.⁸⁹ So, in introducing The Law of Freedom he explained that

"because offences may arise from the spirit of unreasonable ignorance, therefore was the Law added."⁹⁰

Such was the extent to which Winstanley had tempered his confidence in human potential. He was now prepared to confess that,

"There must be suitable Laws for every occasion and almost for every action that men do;..."⁹¹

Winstanley extended this distrust of human nature by insisting that in a system of true magistracy, the rule of law should prevail to the exclusion of the discretion and prerogative of the individual legislator or executive.⁹²

Winstanley's concluding pronouncement on the human predicament was pervaded by the fear that unless the state guarded against the infringements perpetrated by the very individuals that the commonwealth was designed to restore, the institutional achievements of his utopia might be disrupted. So Winstanley recognized that, in general, men were not of the moral calibre characteristic of the Diggers, and indeed, that some might have been prone to the excesses of Ranterism! Therefore, in his utopia, he provided for the enforcement of the law by a soldiery, the members of which were responsible to the superior officers of the commonwealth. Further, the army was to be a citizen militia, and would be raised either to protect the commonwealth from invasion, or alternatively,

89. G. Winstanley, The Law of Freedom, (Sabine) pp. 535-536, (Hill) p. 314; Winstanley follows St. Paul.

90. ibid., (Sabine) p. 515, (Hill) p. 292.

91. ibid., (Sabine) p. 528, (Hill) p. 305.

92. ibid., (Sabine) pp. 528-529, (Hill) p. 306.

"to beat down the turbulency of any foolish or self-ended spirit that endeavors to break their common Peace."⁹³

Winstanley maintained that in a system of true magistracy, those unreasonable and unrighteous persons who committed crimes, should be offered the opportunity to repent and accept mercy before the full force of the legal system was brought to bear.⁹⁴ However, for those malcontents who failed to take advantage of such leniency, Winstanley believed that the punishment meted out should be necessarily harsh. Thus he stated that,

"if they prove desperate, wanton, or idle, and will not quietly submit to the Law, the Task-master is to feed them with short dyet, and to whip them, for a rod is prepared for the fools back, till such a time as their proud hearts do bend to the Law."⁹⁵

Winstanley insisted that the principle of retributive justice and punishment should apply to serious crimes. Thus he stipulated that all individuals who entered any arrangement involving the hiring of labour, should forfeit their freedom. Further, he regarded the death penalty as an appropriate sentence for those who sought to reintroduce private property into the commonwealth, and particularly for individuals who dealt in the sale of "the Earth or fruits thereof."⁹⁶ Significantly, Winstanley regarded work as a corrective for the ill-disposed or unreasonable spirit. So he believed that, in an ideal commonwealth, bondage

93. ibid., (Sabine) p.539, see also, pp.571-572, (Hill) p.318, see also, pp.356-357.

94. ibid., (Sabine) p.546, (Hill) pp.326-327.

95. ibid., (Sabine) p.553, (Hill) p.335.

96. ibid., (Sabine) pp.594-595, (Hill) p.383.

should imply hard labour rather than imprisonment, and that the criminal should be aware that his freedom might be restored should his character be adequately reformed. In essence, in The Law of Freedom, the purpose of "Laws of moderate diligence, and purity of Manners" was not only to "punish such ignorant and unrational practices" but also to protect more reasonable citizens from the unrighteous disposition of their less-enlightened fellows. Hence Winstanley asserted that,

"the Commonwealths Laws are to preserve a mans peace in his person, and in his private dwelling, against the rudeness and ignorance that may arise in Mankind."⁹⁹

While Winstanley maintained that governmental institutions should be ever-vigilant in their concern to preserve law and order, he clearly regarded this facet of life as the somewhat negative achievement of his ideal commonwealth. Yet he was prepared to acknowledge that legal restraints were necessary because certain individuals would be too unreasonable to conduct themselves in a satisfactory and uprighteous manner. It has already been intimated that Winstanley's recognition of the flawed character of sectors of mankind derived from the development of his thought on man's restoration. Initially Winstanley had supposed that the resoration of an individual would be a cataclysmic occurance. However, particularly as a consequence of the failure of the Digger experiment, Winstanley resolved that the spiritual restoration of an individual, and that person's commensurate acquisition of reason, would be a gradual and cumulative process. Winstanley realized that during the course of this restorative period, an individual might be

97. ibid., (Sabine) pp.598-599, (Hill) p.387.

98. ibid., (Sabine) p.527, (Hill) p.304.

99. ibid.

prone to occasional lapses of conduct, which could be dealt with by the legal system. In the meantime, however, he intended other institutions to contribute towards the restoration of the individual. One of these was patriarchalism.

b) The Household

Christopher Hill's claim that "everything Winstanley touched he radicalized"¹⁰⁰ is clearly untenable when applied to Winstanley's treatment of patriarchalism. Indeed, as G.J.Schochet has noted, Winstanley's conservatism with respect to the family might well have been typical of sectarians in general.¹⁰¹

Schochet has also contended that,

"Fatherhood for Winstanley had not been altered since the time of Adam; the responsibilities of the office continued to outweigh its powers by far."¹⁰²

Elsewhere, in a discussion not directly related to Winstanley, Hill has argued, to greater effect, that "the theology of Protestantism was patriarchal."¹⁰³ M.Walzer has maintained a similar position, confirming that Protestants "saw the family as a voluntary community dominated by the godly father."¹⁰⁴ Clearly, Winstanley articulated this predisposition in The Law of Freedom. So, as Schochet has established,

"Winstanley certainly did not derive his arguments from Filmer. Rather, his theories exemplify the genetic

100. C.Hill, op.cit., p.55.

101. G.J.Schochet, 'Patriarchalism, Politics and Mass Attitudes in Stuart England', H.J., Vol.XII (1969), pp.413-441, at p. 424.

102. G.J.Schochet, Patriarchalism in Political Thought, (Oxford 1965), p.16.

103. C.Hill, Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England, (London 1964, 1969 edition) p.436.

104. M.Walzer, The Revolution of the Saints, (London 1965), p.307.

preoccupations of Stuart political thinkers and demonstrate the presence of patriarchal assumptions in populist doctrines."¹⁰⁵

The emphasis Winstanley placed upon patriarchalism in The Law of Freedom was much greater than More's had been in Utopia. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, the family carried a greater responsibility as a vehicle for the control of the individual's conduct in Winstanley's utopian commonwealth, particularly as his ideal state was devoid of many of the communal spheres of activity that were so evident in Utopia. Secondly, Winstanley used the status associated with becoming a patriarchal householder as a standard to indicate that particular individuals had attained the necessary degree of reasonableness to fulfil their spiritual restoration. Thus Winstanley integrated his views on moral regeneration, the eligibility for office-holding, and the principle of common preservation, explaining that,

"A Father in a Family is a Commonwealths Officer, because the Necessity of the young children choose him by joynt consent, and not otherwise."¹⁰⁶

Winstanley realized that it would be both possible, and in some cases necessary, for younger men who had not reached the age of forty, to nevertheless display an advanced maturity and reasonableness by assuming the responsibilities associated with the patriarchal control of a family. So he included a provision by which such individuals, who had presumably proved themselves to be adequately regenerate, might become officers of the commonwealth.

Winstanley's conception of the family involved certain

105. G.J.Schochet, op.cit., pp.162-163.

106. G.Winstanley, The Law of Freedom, (Sabine) p.538, (Hill) p.317.

important moral conditions such as his insistence upon monogamous marriage. In this sense the family was expected to perform a supervisory and restraining function. Winstanley's deference to the concepts of age and authority will be fully elucidated in due course, but at this stage it is worth noting that, within the context of patriarchalism, he rendered this principle in its ultimate form. Winstanley held that in a true commonwealth, the 'ancients' should become 'general overseers' for the simple reason that they qualified as,

"men of the highest experience in the Laws, for the keeping of Peace in the Commonwealth."¹⁰⁷

So Winstanley insisted that old men should be revered by all citizens as father-figures, with all that such a provision implied for the structure of authority.

By ensuring that all children whose families had been dissolved, would immediately be placed in the care of another family,¹⁰⁸ Winstanley affirmed his esteem for the family as an essential environment in which all members of society ought to be included. Obviously, by such means the dangers of poverty and vagrancy would be averted. Further, all children would be assured of the guiding influence of a father,

"to command them their work and see they do it, and not suffer them to live idle;..."¹⁰⁹

In this manner, children were to be set on the road to their spiritual regeneration.

We have seen that in his design for a true commonwealth, Winstanley retained the contemporary norm of a seven-year apprenticeship for the instruction of youth in a trade. Yet

107. *ibid.*, (Sabine) p.552, (Hill) p.333.

108. *ibid.*, (Sabine) p.549, (Hill) p.329.

109. *ibid.*, (Sabine) p.545, (Hill) p.325.

apprenticeship also constituted an important element in Winstanley's outline of the restorative process. Thus he anticipated

"that by the experience of the Elders, the young people may learn the inward knowledg of the things which are, and find out the secrets of Nature."¹¹⁰

Not only did Winstanley believe that a strictly supervised apprenticeship would curb the inclinations of mischevious youth, but he also regarded such training as necessary if the individual was to be equipped with sufficient reason to one day become the master of servants. Hence Winstanley was anxious to ensure

"that every Family may be governed by stayd and experienced Masters, and not by wanton youth."¹¹¹

What Winstanley meant in his reference to servants is unclear. It is possible that he included male apprentices in this category. However, given that Winstanley differentiated education (to be discussed shortly) according to sex, it is probable that he might also have intended the term 'servant' to apply to female domestics incorporated into the patriarchal household. That Winstanley envisaged the retention of household servants seems to confirm ¹¹² that his patriarchalism was essentially conservative.

Winstanley's evaluation of the place of women in his utopian society is something of a problem. Despite his generally favourable apprehension of the human condition, Winstanley's utopian efforts to secure the emancipation of women were considerably less progressive than Thomas More's had been.

110. *ibid.*, (Sabine) p.548, (Hill) p.329.

111. *ibid.*, (Sabine) p.550, (Hill) p.331.

112. Cf., More's proposals for the exclusion of household servants, above, p.279.

Although Winstanley was undoubtedly radical in his religious opinions, his theologically conservative attitude to women is slightly disconcerting. For instance, at one point, Winstanley had argued that women were objects that enticed men to their
 113
 Fall. However, it would be a mistake to assume that this distrust was the sole reason for the role assigned by Winstanley to women in the true commonwealth. It is interesting to call to mind Keith Thomas's suggestion that, although separatists regularly emphasized the spiritual equality of women, and that although the claims made by sectarian women for liberty of conscience contributed to a momentary degree of emancipation from patriarchal command,

"It was completely in accordance with their stated principles that as soon as they took on institutional form even the most radical sects became conservative as regards the organization and discipline of the family."¹¹⁴

We have

already noted the extent of Winstanley's commitment to patriarchalism, but with respect to Thomas's case, it seems significant that, by the time he wrote The Law of Freedom, Winstanley's thought had taken a perceptible institutional turn. Clearly, this might explain his philosophical treatment of women. However, one ameliorative consequence of Winstanley's position was his articulation of the Puritan attack upon the
 115
 double standard of sexual morality. So Winstanley's patriarchalism, and his indignant reaction to the loose-living Ranters, all contributed to his sensitive appreciation of marital

113. G. Winstanley, Fire in the Bush, (Sabine) p.494, (Hill) p.269, and above, p.525.

114. K.V. Thomas, 'Women in the Civil War Sects', P.&P., No.13 (1958). pp.42-57, at p.53.

115. K.V. Thomas, 'The Double Standard', J.H.I., Vol.XX (1959), pp.195-216.

love.

c) Education

With exception of his deprecatory attitude to the place of women in society, which applied especially to the sphere of education, learning was as significant to Winstanley in The Law of Freedom, as it had been to More in Utopia. There are both similarities and differences between More's and Winstanley's treatment of education, and these are indicative of the different purposes each utopia was intended to fulfil. In general, Winstanley's educational scheme was not only instructive in a utilitarian sense, but also, because he conceived of the possibility of education bestowing rationality upon men,¹¹⁶ it related to his optimism concerning the spiritual reformation of human nature. In More's Utopia, the priesthood was made responsible for education: in Winstanley's utopian commonwealth, the 'ministers' were charged with the same function.¹¹⁷ Winstanley obviously wished to distance his utopian ministry from the contemporary clergy, whom he accused of unashamedly perpetuating and cultivating the ignorance of the common people.¹¹⁸ By implication, Winstanley assumed that men were educable to improved standards of experience and reasonableness. So as a significant aspect of his appreciation of the potential of education, he intended these ministers to imbue the young with a sound knowledge of the laws of the commonwealth. By the time he wrote The Law of Freedom, Winstanley

116. See, G. Rosen, 'Left-Wing Puritanism and Science', Bulletin of the Institute of the History of Medicine, Vol. XV (1944), pp. 375-380, passim; W. Schenk, The Concern for Social Justice, (London 1948), p. 110; R. L. Greaves, 'Gerrard Winstanley and Education Reform in Puritan England', British Journal of Educational Studies, Vol. XV11 (1969), pp. 166-176, at pp. 169-176.

117. Above, pp. 307-308, 337-338.

118. G. Winstanley, The Law of Freedom, (Sabine) p. 544 (Hill) p. 324.

had settled on a decidedly disparaging opinion of youth :-

"Mankinde in the days of his youth, is like a young Colt, wanton and foolish, till he be broke by Education and correction, and the neglect of this care, or the want of wisdom in the performance of it hath been, and is, the cause of much division and trouble in the world."¹¹⁹

Nevertheless,

whereas Thomas More intended education to contribute to the subjugation of ineradicably fallen human nature, Gerrard Winstanley believed that education possessed certain restorative properties.

The educational facilities provided for women in Winstanley's ideal commonwealth were by no means as extensive as those recommended by More in Utopia. Christopher Hill has been quite mistaken to claim, with regard to education in The Law of Freedom, that

"Quite exceptionally for the seventeenth century, it was to be universal (for both sexes) and equal."¹²⁰

Such a

conclusion does not appear to accord with Winstanley's specification that,

"as boyes are trained up in Learning and in Trades, so all Maides shall be trained up in reading, sewing, knitting, spinning of Linnen and Woollen, Musique, and all other easie neat works."¹²¹

Winstanley appears to have commissioned quite an explicit differentiation of educational curricula, according to sex. Such a position, especially when compared to

119. ibid., (Sabine) p.576, (Hill) p.361.

120. C.Hill, The World Turned Upside Down, (London 1972, 1975 edition), p.137, see also, introduction, Winstanley: The Law of Freedom, p.47.

121. G.Winstanley, The Law of Freedom, (Sabine) p.579, (Hill) p.365.

More's insistence that women ought to receive a humanist education, seems to confirm L. Stone's contention that the spread of Protestantism coincided with a decline in the educational advancement of women, even amongst the elite.¹²² According to Stone, this reversal set in after the brief interlude of humanist influence upon learning. So without this ideal to aspire to, Winstanley's utopian women appear to correspond to the daughters of the contemporary yeomanry, who possessed only such bare literacy as was deemed necessary for religious use, and who were instructed primarily in the management of domestic affairs.¹²³ In his authoritative analysis of the various proposals for educational reform advanced during the Interregnum, C. Webster has concluded that "very little reference was made to the education of women."¹²⁴ To this extent, Winstanley was unexceptional.

In the chronology of an individual lifespan, it is usually assumed that the period devoted to education will be succeeded by a commitment to some form of work. Within this context, apprenticeship might be regarded as a transition incorporating the two ideals of education and work, and it certainly seems that Winstanley conceived of the instruction of youth in a trade in just such a manner. These considerations were important aspects of Winstanley's scheme for the restoration of the individual. So he maintained that, as education could facilitate the spiritual regeneration of the individual, so too could work and labour.

122. L. Stone, The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800, (London 1977), p.204.

123. ibid., pp.204-206.

124. C. Webster, op.cit., p.219.

d) Labour

In his earlier writings Winstanley had expressed the conviction that, by recreating the 'common treasury', communal labour and cultivation of the land would be spiritually restorative. For instance, in An Appeale to all Englishmen, Winstanley contested more orthodox accounts of the Fall of Man, ¹²⁵ arguing that the cultivation of the earth was not symptomatic of mankind's fallen condition, but had been undertaken before the Fall, albeit in circumstances which promoted men's liberty. Similarly, in An Humble Request..., Winstanley asserted that, providing the universal obligation to work prevailed, strenuous labour, conducted in conditions of liberty, ¹²⁶ should not be associated with the curse. Conversely, in A Vindication..., Winstanley suggested that because the ¹²⁷ Ranters were idle, they were necessarily irrational. Therefore, by implication, it seems admissible to deduce that Winstanley conceived of labour as a righteous action, and that since he associated it with the acquisition of reason, he regarded it as an aspect of the spiritual restoration of man. So Winstanley appears to have amended the rationale behind the Protestant work ethic. By stipulating that work (which according to this ethic was a manifestation of election), should be obligatory, Winstanley extended the work ethic to accommodate the notion of universal salvation. In The Law of Freedom,

125. G. Winstanley, An Appeale to All Englishmen, (Sabine) p.409, passim.

126. G. Winstanley, An Humble Request to the Ministers of both Universities, and to All Lawyers in Every Inns-a-Court, (Sabine) p.423, and above, pp.407-408.

127. G. Winstanley, A Vindication of Those Whose Endeavours is Only to Make the Earth a Common Treasury, Called Diggers, (Sabine), p.401.

Winstanley finally brought to fruition his thoughts on the relationship of labour to man's spiritual condition.

In a fairly comprehensive statement of his attitude to labour Winstanley said,

"the reason why every young man shall be trained up in some work or other, is to prevent pride and contention; it is for the health of their bodies, it is a pleasure to the minde, to be free in labors one with another; it provides plenty of food and all neccesaries for the Common-wealth."¹²⁸

So, not only did Winstanley regard labour as essential for the maintenance of his utopian communist economy, but also he believed it to possess certain moral attributes. Although Winstanley conceived of labour in general as a virtuous activity, he discerned that communal labour might be particularly conducive to the spiritual regeneration of the participants. He seems to have been especially concerned with the inculcation of those other-regarding faculties that would be required for individuals to complete communal enterprises successfully. By this means Winstanley supposed that self-interest, which was instrumental to the Fall of Man, might be neutralized. Unfortunately, Winstanley failed to provide a detailed discussion of the manner in which he expected the cultivation of the land to be organized. Nevertheless, it is significant that he insisted that all families, including those who might ordinarily be occupied in a trade, should participate in the communal tasks of tilling and planting the land (digging), and subsequently, of gathering
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the harvest.

128. G. Winstanley, The Law of Freedom, (Sabine) p. 593, (Hill) p. 381.

129. ibid., (Sabine) pp. 592-593, (Hill) pp. 380-381, and above, p. 544.

We shall shortly turn to a more detailed discussion of Winstanley's concern with experimental knowledge, but at this stage it is important to note an interesting corollary between his thought on this matter, and his conception of labour. Winstanley equated experimental knowledge with labour, and therefore argued that the professional classes, such as the clergy and the lawyers, profited by retailing received ideas obtained from the experimental knowledge and labour of other men. Consequently, "to prevent the dangerous events of idleness in Scholars,"¹³⁰ Winstanley incorporated the learning of a trade into the sphere of education. Thus he argued that labour could enable an individual to defy his fallen nature by furthering his accumulation of experimental knowledge. It has been noted that men in Winstanley's utopia, on reaching the age of forty, were absolved from the obligation to labour. Hence, in The Law of Freedom, a condition which contemporaries might have regarded as a traditional facet of the curse incurred at the Fall, was lifted. This 'redemption' was achieved, in part, by individuals undertaking the labour Winstanley regarded as necessary to the acquisition of experimental knowledge and, eventually, to the restoration of man to reasonableness.

Winstanley's assumptions concerning the relationship of labour to mankind's spiritual restoration were particularly exemplified by the purpose he expected apprenticeship to fulfil. This, in turn, was inspired by his attitude to 'youth' (in the case of The Law of Freedom, the under-forty age group). It is revealing that he framed his arguments in the following terms :-

130. ibid., (Sabine) p.577, (Hill) p.362.

"all the work of the Earth, or in Trades, is to be managed by youth, and by such as have lost their Freedoms."¹³¹

Obviously,

Winstanley did not ascribe young men to a condition of bondage, but he appears to suggest that the less rational and younger members of society should not be regarded as free and morally responsible agents. Hence, Winstanley insisted that young people were to be especially closely supervised by their patriarchal masters, so that even as children they might,

"live in Peace, like rational men, experienced in yielding obedience to the Laws and Officers of the Commonwealth, every one doing to another as he would have another do to him."¹³²

e) The Coherence of Winstanley's Utopian Institutionalism

The full significance of Winstanley's preoccupation with the ages of man may be highlighted with reference to Keith Thomas's discussion of attitudes to age and authority in the contemporary period.¹³³ Thomas has cited Winstanley, "whose distrust of the young went unusually deep,"¹³⁴ as a vehement exponent of certain well-subscribed beliefs. These include the contention that youth was a morally dangerous period of life, and the view that apprenticeship was an essential preliminary to the acquisition of a sufficient degree of reason to eventually allow an individual to become the master of a family.¹³⁵ According to Thomas, the age profile of the

131. ibid.

132. ibid., (Sabine) p.545, (Hill) p.325.

133. K.V.Thomas, 'Age and Authority in Early Modern England', Proceedings of the British Academy, Vol.LXII (1976), pp.1-46.

134. ibid., p.26.

135. ibid., p.15.

contemporary ruling group displayed a preponderance of quadragenarians and quinquagenarians. However, due to a more limited life expectancy,¹³⁶ the over-forties represented a far smaller proportion of the total population in the early-modern period, than they do today. Further, persons who were over sixty years of age were so scarce as to be regarded as the custodians¹³⁷ of experimental knowledge, of wisdom, and indeed of history. As we have noted, this group of 'ancients' was commensurately revered by Winstanley. Nevertheless, Winstanley seems to have¹³⁸ been at odds with contemporary norms in proposing the concept of retirement for men who might remain physically capable of performing manual labour. This, as we have suggested, was possibly because Winstanley wished to show that, in his ideal commonwealth, once an individual had been spiritually restored, he would have the burden of manual labour (which to contemporaries, if not to Winstanley, represented a powerful image of the curse) lifted from him. Yet in The Law of Freedom, such a person could continue to 'work', but do so in the capacity of an office-holder. So the age structure of Winstanley's ruling group reproduced the existing situation.

The prevalent institutions of apprenticeship and patriarchalism, and the almost neurotic contemporary concern for the preservation of good order, have all prompted Thomas to conclude that,

"the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were conspicuous for a sustained drive to subordinate persons in their

136. See, D.C. Coleman, 'Labour in the English Economy of the Seventeenth Century', Econ.H.R., 2nd series, Vol.VIII (1956), pp.280-295, at p.285, - "in seventeenth-century England, average expectation of life at birth was probably in the neighbourhood of 35 or less.

137. K.V. Thomas, op.cit., pp.9-10, 31.

138. ibid., pp.34-35; however, although Winstanley would have citizens retire from manual labour he assumed that they would continue to lead an active life.

teens and early twenties and to delay their equal participation in the adult world."¹³⁹

Thomas has also pointed out that justification for this attitude to youth,

"was found in the law of nature, in the fifth commandment, and in the proverbial wisdom of ages."¹⁴⁰

Given all this, it becomes clear that, by the time he wrote The Law of Freedom, Winstanley did not approach the question of age and authority from a radical standpoint. His conservatism in this area was entirely in keeping with his ultimate conclusion that the spiritual restoration of the individual would be a gradual process to be accomplished by institutional means. So it appears that Winstanley might even have subscribed to the prevalent belief that the soul grew with the body.¹⁴¹

From the various institutional elements of The Law of Freedom it is possible to discern the factors which Winstanley thought contributed to the process of restoring the individual. Winstanley's disavowal of anarchism indicates the evolutionary nature of his social theory. He ultimately recognized that the state epitomized that institutionalism which would be involved in utopian proposals for the reformation of men's characters. So in The Law of Freedom Winstanley outlined his views on authority and coercion. The provision of an element of coercion, a comprehensive legal system, and the codification of the law, were intended not only as a sanction upon the conduct of malevolent and recalcitrant individuals, but also as a guide to the actions of all members of society. Such jurisprudence constituted the minimum and rudimentary provision in The Law

139. ibid., p.12.

140. ibid., p.5.

141. ibid. p.8.

of Freedom for the restoration of man.

Winstanley's discussion of education was a more ambitious and positive aspect of his utopianism. This sphere also confirmed the integrated and self-sustaining nature of Winstanley's utopian society. Education in The Law of Freedom manifested two sides. Firstly, it was utilitarian; there were obvious propitious implications for the maintenance of a stable economy, and for the efficient operation of institutions in general, if citizens were well educated. But secondly, as we shall shortly note, Winstanley believed that education would have a more direct effect upon the process of restoration by facilitating the acquisition of reason. He regarded this in turn as a condition for the redemption of mankind. Further, he was convinced of the importance of an experimentally-orientated scheme. Thus education reflected Winstanley's theological convictions; experimentalism was also an essential factor in Winstanley's conception of mankind's spiritual restoration.

The next 'stage' in the maturing and restorative process outlined in The Law of Freedom, apprenticeship, was a similarly elaborate notion. In part, apprenticeship was a continuation of education, but it also introduced the individual to work and labour. Clearly, this ensured an adequate provision of labour to sustain the communist economy. However, Winstanley also argued that labour had restorative potential, particularly if it was undertaken as a communal activity, or if it resulted in a contribution towards the prosperity of the community. Hence, all men were to work until they were at least forty years of age. As we have noted, labour, private property, and political authority, were traditionally associated with the curse which had overcome fallen men. Yet in The Law of Freedom, although

fallen men were obliged to labour, this was to good effect, because it contributed to their restoration. Ultimately, Winstanley asserted that,

"No man shall be suffered to keep house, and have servants under him, till he hath served seven years under Command to a Master himself; the reason is this, that a man may be of age, and of rational carriage, before he be a Governor of a family, that the Peace of the Commonwealth may be preserved."¹⁴²

The more advanced stages of the restorative process outlined in The Law of Freedom, patriarchal authority and officialdom, also served a dual purpose. On the one hand, for an individual to become a patriarchal householder and an officer of the commonwealth, was a confirmation of his spiritual restoration. On the other hand, because these two spheres had so much influence upon life in Winstanley's utopian society, and because the fundamental purpose of that society was to effect the restoration of its citizens, it became imperative that only the best qualified citizens, those who had been restored, should assume the responsibility for supervising the moral regeneration of others. So in Winstanley's ideal commonwealth, patriarchalism fulfilled several functions. As we have seen, Winstanley regarded the family as an essential medium for the control of the conduct and the morality of all members of the true commonwealth. The family was also the basic unit for economic production. Thus, the relationship between an apprentice and his patriarchal master embodied both these aspects of family life. To become a patriarchal householder in The Law of Freedom, was to attain a prestigious position. The correlation that existed between this office and the restored condition meant that ambition was necessarily directed towards spiritual as

142. G. Winstanley, The Law of Freedom, (Sabine) p.600, (Hill) p.389.

well as towards worldly achievements. Because the sphere of private property that Winstanley admitted to his essentially communist utopia was based upon the family, the responsibility for it fell to the patriarchal householder. Thus, in contrast to Winstanley's impression of his own society, only the worthiest of citizens in The Law of Freedom were allowed to control private property. It appears that Winstanley assumed that, because patriarchal householders would be morally regenerate, they could be entrusted with the ownership of private property without becoming corrupted by its influence.

Retirement from manual labour, which was to take place at the age of forty, marked the consummation of the restorative process. At this point, an individual was to be absolved from the burdens associated with labour. Yet as he acquired the status of becoming a potential member of the officer class, he also faced the prospect of undertaking a different form of work. Within the rigidly hierarchical structure of age and authority that pervaded The Law of Freedom, officers, (again, the morally regenerate sectors of society), became responsible for the exercise of power, to the effect that younger members of society might be directed towards their own restoration.

Winstanley maintained that once a man had been educated, had served an apprenticeship, had worked for a number of years, and had probably become a patriarchal householder, he would have reached the age of forty, at which time he would become eligible to retire from labour and to assume public office. During the course of The Law of Freedom, Winstanley advanced a detailed description of the responsibilities and functions of the various officers of the commonwealth. Together such

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143. ibid., chapter 1V, (Sabine) pp.544-576, (Hill) pp.324-361.

officers constituted a hierarchical chain of authority which Winstanley justified in terms of the need to preserve good order throughout society. Hence Winstanley held an ideal of mutual surveillance reminiscent of that so evident in

¹⁴⁴
Utopia. So he held that,

"many eyes be watchful, the Laws may be obeyed, for to preserve Peace."¹⁴⁵

Winstanley entrusted the officers of his commonwealth with the task of guarding vigilantly against the development of covetousness and pride in the inhabitants, lest the commonwealth should decline from true magistracy into satanic tyranny. To this end Winstanley included the crucially significant age qualification of forty years, which was to be attained before a man could become an officer. It may not be merely coincidental that Winstanley had recently reached this age of maturity. At the age of forty he claimed to have experienced a spiritual restoration, and to have acquired the peace of mind which prompted him to inaugurate the Digger colony. The officers of Winstanley's utopian commonwealth were similarly enlightened :-

"for these are most likely to be experienced men; and all these are likely to be men of courage, dealing truly, and hating Covetousness."¹⁴⁶

Winstanley conceived of maturity as one criterion of restored human nature. Significantly, he stipulated that Royalists, and persons who dealt in the buying and selling of land (all of whom he may have regarded as irretrievably fallen), were to be permanently excluded from

144. Above, pp.284,289.

145. G.Winstanley, The Law of Freedom, (Sabine) p.552, see also, p.539, (Hill) p.333, see also, p.318.

146. ibid., (Sabine) p.543, (Hill) p.323.

holding office.

Throughout his social theory, Winstanley retained a radical appreciation of mankind's potential. However, as his ideas developed he adopted certain conservative notions. As we have shown, labour, private property, and political authority were all justified as necessary constraints upon the actions of fallen men. This was obviously an argument which recommended itself to the propertied classes who were not constrained to perform manual labour, but instead assumed the government of society. It is clear that both Thomas More and Gerrard Winstanley recognized that this intensely conservative theory had degenerated as a consequence of the self-interested actions of various social groups. As a consequence, More proposed to abolish private property altogether, to restrain the exercise of political authority, and to ensure an equitable distribution of labour, goods, and pleasures. By contrast, Winstanley initially refused to admit the necessity for maintaining either private property or political authority. However, in The Law of Freedom, he finally acknowledged that both these institutions, which had traditionally been associated with directing men towards their salvation, could instead contribute towards the restoration of mankind - as indeed could work and labour. Although his utopian institutionalism involved the provision of political authority, the existence of a sphere of private property, and the obligation to labour, Winstanley ensured that none of these institutions could be used corruptly. By asserting that only those individuals who had already been restored would be made responsible for power and property, the dangers of fallen men abusing authority and appropriating property were averted.

f) Some Further Considerations

After suggesting that the primary end of Winstanley's utopia was to suggest the institutional requirements for the spiritual restoration of mankind, we shall, in the remainder of this section, examine several further aspects of life detailed in The Law of Freedom. These might be regarded as corollaries to Winstanley's fundamental purpose and include his proposals for law reform, his assessment of the proper role of religion in society, the relationship of science to education, and the question of pleasure.

The theme of law reform was particularly close to Winstanley's heart and the construction of a utopia enabled him, theoretically at least, to correct the incongruities and anomalies that he saw and experienced in the contemporary legal system of fallen 'kingly government'. In his analysis of law,¹⁴⁷ Winstanley argued that there were two forms; 'natural law', and 'written law' (by which we must assume that he meant positive law). He contended that, because men could either be rational or unreasonable, the calibre of written law would be determined by the prevailing disposition of human nature. Hence Winstanley's plea for rational men to formulate a written law incorporating the principles of natural law, was a clear indictment of the abuse of prerogative rights. So in the light of his conception of equity, and in the hope of complementing the capacities of the reasonable and restored individuals who were to inhabit the utopian commonwealth, Winstanley designed the legal system of The Law of Freedom. Thus he defined law as, ideally,

"a Rule, whereby Man and other creatures are governed in

147. ibid., (Sabine) pp.587-589, (Hill) pp.374-377.

their actions, for the preservation of the common peace."¹⁴⁸

It was typical of Winstanley that he regarded a rational life, conducted in accordance with the law of reason, as a means towards the acquisition of peace of mind, and the recovery of the 'light'. Recognizing that, whatever form of law was subscribed to by the most substantial numerical following would effectively constitute the rule according to which a particular society was governed, Winstanley hoped that,

"if the experienced, wise, and strong man bears rule, then he writes down his minde to curb the unreasonable law of covetousness and pride in unexperienced men, to preserve peace in the Commonwealth."¹⁴⁹

Therefore, in his utopia, Winstanley attributed the responsibility for providing legislative guidance for the unregenerate elements of society to the restored elite.

It is perhaps paradoxical that, despite his earlier appeals to ancient custom, Winstanley ultimately advanced a written codification of law. It can only be assumed that, given his emphasis upon reason and equity as bases for jurisprudence, Winstanley must have conceived of his own proposals as, to some degree, an embodiment of the common law as it existed before being corrupted by the Normans. This shift in emphasis was no doubt occasioned by Winstanley's revised view of human nature. Because he was no longer so confident in the potential of mankind's intuitive and self-imposed rectitude, Winstanley saw the need for a legal code as "a bridle to unreasonableness."¹⁵⁰

148. ibid., (Sabine) p.587, (Hill) p.374.

149. ibid., (Sabine) p.588, (Hill) p.375.

150. ibid., (Sabine) p.588, (Hill) p.376.

Thus, presumably, one reason for Winstanley's insistence that the people should be inculcated with a knowledge the law,¹⁵¹ was his conviction that they must be made aware of the manner in which they should conduct themselves. Winstanley also expected this principle to apply to magistrates. One aspect of Winstanley's concern to provide his utopia with a legal system that was antithetical to the version employed in 'kingly government', was his omission of the practice of judicial interpretation. So he insisted that "no single man ought to Judge or interpret the Law."¹⁵² Clearly, Winstanley perceived judicial interpretation as a derivation from the prerogative discernible in kingly government. Hence, in an attempt to avoid any corruption in the purity of enactment, Winstanley asserted that it would be "the Law, who indeed is the true Judge."¹⁵³ Further, Winstanley contended that in a true commonwealth, there should be no lawyers; each individual would be permitted to argue his own case, just as Winstanley himself would have preferred to do during his days as a Digger.¹⁵⁴ Through the institution of local peace-makers, and the quarterly circulation of the judge's court,¹⁵⁵ Winstanley hoped to achieve a somewhat more decentralized and efficient judicial system. To avoid the cruelty of unnecessary imprisonment, and to provide the opportunity for repentance, Winstanley proposed that bail should be readily available. All this was facilitated by a preference for short and pithy

151. ibid., (Sabine) p.590, (Hill) p.378.

152. ibid., (Sabine) p.554, (Hill) p.335.

153. ibid., (Sabine) p.554, (Hill) p.336.

154. ibid., and above, p.499.

155. ibid., (Sabine) pp.555-556, (Hill) pp.337-338.

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 laws which were to be annotated in the native tongue, and
 propagated regularly upon the sabbath. 157

The impact of organized religion is less evident in Winstanley's commonwealth than it is in Utopia. The reason for this lies partly in the fact that, for Thomas More, the salvation of the Utopian was dependent upon his adherence to a degree of religious conformity. For Winstanley however, the restoration of the individual depended upon men coming to God (as Winstanley conceived of Him) through individual experience. This did not require the doctrines or rituals of organized religion. In The Law of Freedom, Winstanley hoped that his utopian citizens would be provided with the experience of God that he had insisted upon in his earlier pamphlets. In his last piece, Winstanley's anti-intellectualism and his anticlericalism also achieved full expression.

Religion in The Law of Freedom was sustained by the conviction that God was the spirit of the whole creation. 158
 Winstanley insisted upon experimental perception because he regarded the creation as the source of the only possible certainty about God. Thus he contended that, as knowledge of the secrets of nature would yield up knowledge of God, so too would the experimentalism involved in ascertaining such insights, advance the individual's knowledge of himself. Winstanley hoped that by this means men would realize certain truths about their spiritual condition. Thus he proclaimed his own understanding of the fallacies of contemporary belief and psychology as

"a Doctrine of a sickly and week spirit, who hath lost his

156. ibid., (Sabine) pp.552-553, (Hill) p.334.

157. ibid., (Sabine) p.563, (Hill) p.346.

158. ibid., (Sabine) p.564, (Hill) p.347.

understanding of the knowledge of the Creation, and of the temper of his own Heart and Nature, and so runs into fancies, either of joy or sorrow.

And if the passion of joy predominate, then he fancies to himself a personal God, personal Angels, and a local place of glory which he saith, he, and all who believe what he saith, shall go to after they are dead.

And if sorrow predominate, then he fancies to himself a personal Devil, and a local place of torment, that he shall go to after he is dead, and this he speaks with great confidence.

.....this divining Doctrine, which you call spiritual and heavenly things, torments people always when they are weak, sickly and under any distemper; therefore it cannot be the Doctrine of Christ the Saviour."¹⁵⁹

Winstanley's emphasis upon experimentalism as the source of true spiritual awareness obviously required that his utopian society should ensure a substantial degree of toleration and of free speech. To this end Winstanley rejected all notions of clerical authority and stipulated that,

"He who professes the service of a righteous God by preaching and prayer, and makes a Trade to get the possessions of the Earth, shall be put to death for a Witch and a Cheater."¹⁶⁰

Consequently, the 'ministry' in The Law of Freedom was assigned a purely educative and propagandist function. Nevertheless, Winstanley's notion of the sabbath approximated the Puritan concept of sabbatarianism. Thus Winstanley recognized the regenerative utility of a regular day of rest within the rhythm of labour. In order to foster a community spirit, Winstanley also believed it essential that every parish should be afforded a regular opportunity to

159. ibid., (Sabine) pp.567-568, (Hill) pp.351-352.

160. ibid., (Sabine) p.597, (Hill) p.385.

161. ibid., (Sabine) pp.562-563, (Hill) pp.345-346.

socialize. Obviously this was a vital consideration in such an intensely patriarchal society which lacked the communal activities so evident in the daily life of Utopia. Hence Winstanley stipulated that on occasions when the parish was gathered together, the ministry should perform its educative work, and the people should be kept aware of the affairs of the commonwealth. Ironically, this means of disseminating information reflected an essential function of the contemporary clergy, who Winstanley arraigned so steadfastly. However, the sabbath in The Law of Freedom was envisaged as an occasion for making speeches on the arts and sciences, and on the nature of man. In terms of Winstanley's religious outlook, this might almost be regarded as 'lay preaching'.

In our conclusion we shall compare the role and significance of science in Utopia to that in The Law of Freedom. However, it would be inappropriate to leave our detailed consideration of the latter work without some reference to science, particularly as one of the most startling aspects of Winstanley's thought was the integration of his views on the spiritual facet of experimentalism with his appreciation of natural philosophy. Winstanley's conception of science was essentially utilitarian. He argued that physics, surgery, astrology, astronomy, navigation, and husbandry were all sciences. He also contended that by studying these subjects,

"hereby men will come to know the secrets of Nature and Creation, within which all true knowledg is wrapped up."¹⁶²

The inclusion of astrology in this list might appear to be both anomolous and somewhat misguided. However, this provision

162. ibid., (Sabine) p.563, (Hill) p.346.

indicates that Winstanley placed far greater emphasis upon the prospects of progress within the human condition than Thomas More had done. As we have already noted, astrology contributed to the discovery of the new cosmology which in turn stimulated scientific advance and reinforced a more optimistic concept of progress. So Winstanley's reference to astrology, rather than constituting an antiquarian reminder, reflected the development of a new and aggressive attitude towards nature, and of ambitious proposals for the improvement of mankind's predicament. These are themes to which we shall return.

Winstanley's more optimistic worldview was also expressed in his advocacy of the experimental method which, partly as a consequence of his anti-intellectualism, again brought together his views on education and science. Thus Winstanley asserted that in a system of true magistracy,

"one sort of Children shall not be trained up onely to book learning, and no other employment, called Schollars, as they are in the Government of Monarchy,..."¹⁶³

One reason for

this was Winstanley's association of manual labour with experimental knowledge as prerequisites to the spiritual
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regeneration of man. So, conversely,

"Traditional Knowledg, which is attained by reading, or by the instruction of others, and not practical, but leads to an idle life;.... is not good."¹⁶⁵

Winstanley defined the

experimental method as,

"nothing by imagination, but what he hath found out by his

163. ibid., (Sabine) p.577, (Hill) p.362.

164. Above, p.579.

165. G.Winstanley, The Law of Freedom, (Sabine) p.579, (Hill) p.364.

his own industry and observation in tryal." ¹⁶⁶

By providing an understanding of nature, Winstanley expected this process to bring men closer to God. This casts doubt upon R.L.Greaves's claim that,

"one striking aspect of Winstanley's programme of education was its total exclusion of religion."¹⁶⁷

Clearly, Greaves has failed to recognize the impression made by Winstanley's spirituality on the institutions advocated in The Law of Freedom.

As we draw towards our concluding comparison of the social theories of More and Winstanley, one final point deserves attention. In comparison to More's detailed evaluation of the philosophy of pleasure, Winstanley had little to say on the matter, except to assert that the citizens of his true commonwealth would enjoy "pleasure plentiful". ¹⁶⁸ One possible reason for this omission is Winstanley's greater emphasis upon ensuring material prosperity. So Winstanley might well have expected labourers in his utopia to work longer hours. This was not anticipated by More, who, in Utopia, insisted that the provision of leisure time was to be paramount. Further, Winstanley had to compensate for those members of his utopian society who had retired from manual labour completely. It might be assumed that this elite was a leisured class. However, as we have seen, Winstanley charged the retired and the regenerate with the administration of the commonwealth. It is significant that, unlike More, Winstanley was reluctant to discuss education

166. ibid., (Sabine) p.564, (Hill) p.347.

167. R.L.Greaves, op.cit., p.172.

168. G.Winstanley, The Law of Freedom, (Sabine) p.585, (Hill) p.371, and see above, p.552.

as a form of pleasure. Instead, he reiterated the theme of spiritual restoration and would,

"suffer no children in any Parish to live in idleness, and youthful pleasure, all their days, as many have been; but that they be brought up like men, and not like beasts: That so the Commonwealth may be planted with laborious and wise experienced men, and not with idle fools."¹⁶⁹

It seems that Winstanley anticipated a society in which such 'wise and experienced men' would be too preoccupied with the supervision of the institutional process by which others could be restored to enjoy the luxury of free time.

The Law of Freedom was Winstanley's most sophisticated and considered piece. Although Winstanley's economic theory was occasionally naïve, he compensated for this with an acute appreciation of the integrated nature of societal institutions - even in the utopian form. In The Law of Freedom, Winstanley finally resolved, to his own apparent satisfaction, the problem that had pervaded his writings. The medium of utopianism proved useful, at least on the theoretical level, in enabling Winstanley to advance his proposals for the restoration of man. In his final publication, Winstanley's social theory was brought to a successful conclusion.

169. ibid., (Sabine) p.576, (Hill) p.361.

PART FOUR CONCLUSION

CHAPTER ELEVEN : CONCLUSION

The purpose of this concluding chapter is twofold. Firstly, it is worthwhile emphasizing some of the most interesting points to arise from a comparative analysis of the social theories of Thomas More and Gerrard Winstanley. Secondly, as a corollary to the initial intention, it then becomes necessary to attempt to account for the questions upon which these two theorists differed. We have seen that both More and Winstanley considered some of the most important concepts in social theory, including the state, political authority and obligation, law, property, and patriarchalism. Nevertheless, More and Winstanley often differed quite radically in their appraisal of these concepts. We have also seen that their respective views of the human condition and mankind's potential were similarly disparate. In the second section of this chapter we shall show that this disagreement can be explained, to some degree, by reference to certain momentous developments in intellectual history, particularly man's conception of his own nature and potential, which occurred during the period separating Winstanley from More. We shall begin, however, with a brief comparative reconsideration of our major conclusions.

i A Comparative Analysis

Thomas More's sombre view of human nature led him to fear that men seldom realized their full potential. More's appreciation of the Fall of Man meant that he emphasized the innate and ineradicable depravity of mankind. According to More's account, human actions were characterized by an almost inevitable sinfulness; man was held responsible for his own conduct by the judgement of a just God. Man was proud, covetous, and avaricious; he sought power over his fellow; he was given to unrestrained sensuality; he was fearful and lived in darkness. Despite all this, More retained the conviction that man was a morally responsible agent capable of freely exercising his will in accordance with reason, which, although an impaired faculty, provided man with the means of securing the grace and salvation made available by a merciful God. For More, the Fall determined man's nature, but the Passion described his potential. At the heart of More's theologically-orientated social philosophy lay the hope that men could order their affairs to further their salvation. However, this ideal was coupled with the apprehension that the legacy of the Fall had left many men bereft of the necessary rectitude to attain the good for which Christ had died. So More retained an ambivalent attitude to the affairs of men. He at once derided the preoccupation with 'worldly' matters yet saw that social and political life could determine the spiritual condition of the individual since it appeared that man was to some degree a conditioned being.

Gerrard Winstanley's observations on human nature were often as disparaging as More's had been, especially as his ideas gained maturity. Nevertheless, Winstanley's conception of man's potential was considerably more benign. Winstanley recognized

that human conduct was often immoral, but he attributed this to the effect of deficient institutions and patterns of behaviour, rather than to the innately sinful character of mankind. Winstanley believed that men certainly fell from righteousness, but he regarded the 'Fall of Man' as a phenomenon explicable in terms of the life cycle of the individual. In abandoning a more traditional or orthodox conception of the Fall (such as that advanced by More) Winstanley failed to provide a wholly adequate or comprehensive explanation for certain aspects of the human condition. So he still assumed the inevitability of the 'original sin' and of the continuing and successive fall of each individual. Indeed, the institutional structure of his ideal commonwealth presumed that the early phases of the life cycle would be a time during which individuals would be unreasonable and less than righteous. Further, Winstanley implied that, even had Adam remained in the original (prelapsian) condition, Adam would have had to labour to attain his subsistence. However, Winstanley's view of human nature was distinguished by a conviction that social life might be ordered so that individuals could attain spiritual regeneration, psychological assurances, and emotional satisfaction, in this life. Thus, according to Winstanley, the fulfilment of human potential need not be postponed to a promised existence beyond the grave.

More and Winstanley shared the understanding, although for slightly different reasons, that men's manners were detrimentally influenced by prevailing institutional arrangements. In More's case, this perception was of an hierarchical society, the ordering of which was attributable to human sinfulness. So, for instance, More regarded the stigmatization of labour, both in the general case of manual labour, but also often of intellectual work, as a

direct consequence of the widespread sin of sloth. More argued that such reluctance to labour resulted in needless scarcity, which in turn encouraged inappropriate and unnatural demands. Clearly, More inverted the accepted conception of private property and its role in civil society. Instead of arguing that private property restrained human sinfulness, More contended that pride and covetousness were actually furthered as scarcity and inequality led to competition between men sustained by the 'irrational' fear of want.

More accepted that the role of the state in determining men's conduct was essential, but he portrayed the contemporary state as a faltering institution. More believed that fallen men often misapprehended their real interests. Thus governors and legislators abused political authority and converted it into an insidious form of power with the specific intention of promoting their own interests at the expense of those of their fellow citizens. More also pointed to the abuse of the law by the elite at a cost to the common weal. On the world scale, the contemporary conception of civil society and political life led to warfare, even between states within Christendom. Above all, More was appalled by the propensity of men to pervert the mediation of the Church to excuse sin and to promote a false sense of spiritual security amidst an already sufficiently imperilled predicament.

Winstanley's indictment of contemporary institutions was as thoroughgoing as More's had been. Perhaps naïvely, Winstanley assumed that even if they did not have to hire out their labour to earn a living, the common people would readily labour. Winstanley's view of hired labour was closely related to his view of property rights. He believed that the inequality

sustained by the existing system of private property was itself attributable to the illegitimate appropriation of the produce of the labour of one social group by another. Yet Winstanley went further, and from his conception of the 'common treasury', asserted that private property in land derived from the abrogation of every Englishman's birthright to obtain his subsistence by freely cultivating the land. This argument aligned with Winstanley's views on the illegitimate foundation of the English state and the continuing infringement of the liberty of the common people.

Through an elaborate application of the theory of the Norman Yoke to the analysis of contemporary society, Winstanley attempted to show not only that the existing state was founded by conquest, but also that it had never acquired legitimacy and was consequently sustained by coercion. In particular, Winstanley argued that political offices were usually occupied by oppressors, and that the common law was an instrument of oppression exercised to promote the interests of a self-conscious elite. Winstanley subsumed the contemporary Church within this conspiracy theory. He viewed organized religion as an interest group. The theological complexion of the state Church, whether episcopalian or presbyterian, made little difference to Winstanley. He regarded the Church as a corporation with a financial interest in maintaining the existing political régime. So Winstanley accused the clergy of practising duplicity by exacting payment for false doctrines, contrived by the spiritually ignorant, who were trained in academic institutions designed to perpetuate the existing tyranny of state and church.

More and Winstanley both used utopianism as a medium through which to express proposals for the amelioration of mankind's

predicament. In More's case utopianism proved particularly valuable. It enabled him to retain an essentially deprecatory perception of human nature, while at the same time advancing recommendations for the institutional means of rectifying faults in the prevailing social order. In this enterprise, More exploited the literary facet of utopianism to the full. Thus he used devices such as satire and irony to present, by juxtaposition, an argument for the reform of Christendom in accordance with the ideals furthered by the commonwealth described in Utopia.

The social institutions outlined in Utopia presented a stark contrast to those maintained in contemporary Europe. More accepted that as a consequence of the Fall, man was obliged to labour for his subsistence, but More believed that should this obligation be assumed universally, labour would provide one means of diminishing many of the worst aspects of the fallen condition. In Utopia, attitudes to labour were closely associated with attitudes to property. The insistence upon an absolute system of communism ensured that the distribution of goods would be as equitable as the initial obligation to labour towards their production. More believed that if production responded to needs rather than to wants, scarcity would be avoided. So More suggested that the institution of this system in contemporary society would counter the sinfulness nurtured by private property. He argued that communism of this kind would also facilitate an equitable distribution of leisure time, which in turn, should afford the opportunity to cultivate virtue. Thus communism was good for the soul.

More regarded the state as an indispensable institution for the regulation of men's conduct, but he had a specific type of

establishment in mind. More held that civil society could be morally sound only if it embodied a close identification of individual and public interest. Clearly, this ideal was exemplified by More's economic proposals; but More also conceived of political authority as the antithesis of power exercised to further the self-interest of the contemporary ruling elite. So More included in Utopia devices which he believed capable of ensuring that authority would be assigned only to the most virtuous and other-regarding citizens. More was so concerned that governors should promote the interests of the common weal, that he intended the costs involved in the pursuit of self-interest to the exclusion of the common good, to dissuade the ambitious and selfish. In outlining his case for this type of state, More was aware that individual rights could only be secured by the promotion of the public interest; but he went even further. More was certain that the salvation of the individual citizen would be directly influenced by the moral calibre of state institutions. Thus he insisted upon the correspondence of positive law to natural law. 'Virtue' and 'civil obedience' were to be synonymous. In essence, More intended the social institutions described in Utopia to provide the individual with the best possible opportunity of realizing the end for which Christ had died.

A similar conception of utopianism solved the problems confronted by Winstanley during the course of his intellectual development. Winstanley was concerned to evaluate the means by which mankind could be spiritually regenerated. Initially, he anticipated that the millennium would shortly bring about this ideal. He was soon disillusioned. So he turned to a more active design by instigating the communal cultivation of common land

in the belief that the example of an anarchical communal form of life would change the hearts of men. Again Winstanley was disappointed. Finally, in appreciating the full magnitude of the task, Winstanley argued that only the comprehensive reform of social institutions would promote the commensurate reform of human nature. Winstanley outlined the details of his scheme in the form of a utopia.

In considering the questions of institutional reform, Winstanley appraised many of the concepts which had previously concerned More. Winstanley examined the moral implications of a specific form of labour. He accepted that the economy could only be sustained if all men responded, at least for most of their lives, to the universal obligation to labour. However, Winstanley also maintained that communal labour, particularly on the land, was such a reasonable practice that experience of it would impress upon the participant a sensation of universal love. Winstanley believed that the utilitarian and spiritual considerations attending labour also pertained to communism. By insisting that land, and goods within the distributive system, should be regulated according to the principle of communal ownership, Winstanley intended to ensure that no individual could acquire the means of constraining another to labour for hire. This, Winstanley was convinced, would avert the immorality of exploitation, profit, and accumulation, which he associated with contemporary modes of property-holding and production. Yet, in his final analysis of the concept of property, Winstanley maintained no objection to the assumption of private property in goods which, having been allocated to individual households, had left the productive and distributive systems. Winstanley assumed that by this stage property would be devoid of any potential to foster immoral

actions. Winstanley argued that goods distributed in this fashion should be allocated according to an equitable standard of needs which would, in turn, provide an index of demand and sufficiency for the regulation of the economy. Property held by the family was to be the responsibility of its most spiritually regenerate member - the patriarchal householder. Effectively, the householder would possess property as a trust on behalf of the family; his right of disposal being limited by the provision that property of this sort could not be returned to an exchange market.

Initially, Winstanley upheld certain anarchical principles because of his aversion to what he conceived as 'Norman' political institutions. However, his developing conviction that the spiritual regeneration of human nature would have to be carefully supervised, prompted him to explore the administrative facet of the state. In contrast to the 'Norman' state, founded by conquest and upheld by coercion, Winstanley argued that the state ought to be established and maintained by the consent of the people.¹ Winstanley justified the state as an institution necessary for the restraint of the unreasonable and the unregenerate. Yet he believed that this should entail the exercise of authority by the regenerate on behalf of all members of society. This stipulation involved the further provision that the institution and offices of the state should regulate the process by which individuals would be guided to spiritual regeneracy. Hence, Winstanley's insistence that the law should be equitable, devoid of the corrupt exercise of prerogative, and, as

1. Cf., the discussion of the family and its role in the 'anthropological' basis of political obligation, in, G.J. Schochet, Patriarchalism in Political Thought, (Oxford 1975), pp.10-12.

an instrument of discipline, advance moral rectitude. Winstanley ultimately asserted that only the conception of civil society outlined in The Law of Freedom could enable man to realize his full potential of spiritual restoration on earth.

Radical proposals for the reform of social institutions such as those advanced by More and Winstanley, necessarily take into account conceptions of the extent to which the prevailing predicament of mankind is improvable. This consideration will be influenced by views of human nature, and especially by ideas concerning the limits of mankind's potential. The operational definition of utopianism established in chapter one² accommodates these aspects of the thought of More and Winstanley. As we have seen, both thinkers produced quite explicit arguments concerning the condition and potential of human nature, and also the institutional amelioration of the current predicament. However, their conclusions were radically different.

More regarded human nature as constant and essentially immutable. He nevertheless believed that an improvement in men's manners was, in principle, possible. However, More's social philosophy was characterized by a conundrum. He suggested that although institutions and human conduct could be markedly rectified, human nature was so depraved that it was unlikely that the means of achieving such reforms would ever be put into effect. As a utopian theorist, More was in a limited sense, an optimist; as a student of the human condition who assumed that the reformed society would probably not be instituted, More was a pessimist. Furthermore, the social institutions outlined in Utopia evinced this same hesitancy. Thus, although More optimistically argued that an immediate improvement in men's conduct was feasible, and

2. Above, chapter one, section ii.

that men could be aided in attaining their salvation, he offset this by pessimistically positing a static society. In terms of institutions, man's relationship to the environment, science and technology, and indeed the malleability of human nature, this picture did not accommodate any conception of progress.

Winstanley's thought on these matters was radically different. In comparison to More, Winstanley evinced a profound optimism. He believed that human nature could be improved to such a degree that men would experience spiritual regeneration before death. In responding to the call for a 'healing government'³ Winstanley addressed the task with the conviction not only that mankind's present predicament could be resolved, but also that the future held the prospect of an ongoing improvement in the human condition. The fact that Winstanley maintained a cyclical conception of the human lifespan mitigated against his assumption of the spiritual restoration of mankind en masse. Instead, he believed that although human nature was not contaminated by innate and original sin, each individual fell into a state of unrighteousness, redemption from which was nevertheless possible. Winstanley could not envisage the eradication of evil from the human condition. He was, however, sufficiently optimistic to predict the improvement of the human condition, particularly with respect to science and technology, material abundance, and man's ability to influence his natural environment. The contrast between the life-cycle of the individual and the conception of linear progress in a properly constituted society, is the result of Winstanley's anticipation of the continuing problem of evil in the human condition. This consideration undoubtedly compounds the difficulty of interpreting The Law of Freedom. Nevertheless,

3. Above, p. 536.

it remains clear that during the period separating Winstanley from More, intellectual changes of profound significance had occurred.

ii The Changing Intellectual Perspective

A social theorist's apprehension of man and man's predicament will naturally influence the form of any solution the particular theorist proposes to that condition. In Utopia, Thomas More specified an institutional design conducive to man's salvation. By contrast, in The Law of Freedom, Winstanley outlined an institutional design intended to effect not only the spiritual regeneration of individual men, but also to encourage the amelioration of the human condition through scientific and technological advance. More's vision of a largely static society and Winstanley's commitment to improvement by linear progression in his true commonwealth provide strikingly different appraisals of the human condition. It remains for us to attempt to explain this disparity between the respective worldviews of More and Winstanley.

It is perhaps not too much of a generalization to argue that early-modern English society did not undergo any fundamental transformation between 1516 and 1652, particularly in material conditions. Certainly, such changes that did take place, for instance in population increase, urbanization, or agricultural and industrial production, were not sufficiently radical to account for such markedly different worldviews as those of More and Winstanley. So the solution to the problem must be sought in the realm of ideas. This is not to suggest that either More or Winstanley was an entirely typical thinker of his particular era. Nevertheless, a consideration of the thought of these two theorists reflects certain intellectual changes which occurred during the intervening period separating the respective publications of Utopia and The Law of Freedom. One of these changes was an increasing adherence to the concept of progress.

Students of intellectual history have often considered the concept of progress. In a work concerning the history of the idea, J.B. Bury argued that progress,

"means that civilisation has moved, is moving, and will continue to move in a desirable direction."⁴

According to this definition, chronological change is the crucial facet of progress, the nature of that change remaining largely unspecified. Herbert Butterfield reflected this aspect of the concept when talking in terms of "an expanding future" and the "idea of a civilisation that was supposed to develop indefinitely."⁵ However, Butterfield qualified this statement by maintaining that progress involves,

"the view that time is actually aiming at something, that temporal succession has meaning and that the passage of ages is generative."⁶

This elaboration seems to suggest that progress should refer to a specified end condition, but this obviously contradicts the earlier criterion of indefinite development. As Carl Becker pointed out,⁷ progress is a problematical concept because it appears to involve both a state of constant flux and the objective of a finite end.

It is clearly difficult to establish both a set of criteria and some form of time scale according to which 'progress' can be assessed. If, for example, progress is regarded as implying a desirable transition, then criteria such as increased knowledge,

4. J.B. Bury, The Idea of Progress, (New York 1932), p.2.

5. H. Butterfield, The Origins of Modern Science, (London 1949, 1980 edition), p.212.

6. ibid., p.219.

7. C. Becker, 'Progress', Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences, Vol. XI, (New York 1933), p.498.

growing material prosperity, or the capacity to regulate the environment, are likely to prompt arguments as to whether mankind has actually 'progressed'. Above all, the concept of progress appears to involve a particular perception of human history, and especially of mankind's future. Thus, it is argued that the Greeks lacked an appreciation of progress because they maintained a cyclical theory of history involving the successive improvement and deterioration of man's circumstances.⁸ Although this view was superseded by the Judaeo-Christian linear conception of history, an appreciation of progress did not arise as a consequence. Christianity posited the notion that time would elapse until the coming of the apocalypse, without any improvement in man's condition, and indeed with the prospect of some degeneration.⁹

It is apparent that neither belief in fortune, nor belief in the intervention of divine providence is conducive to the anticipation of mankind's progress. The basic criterion of the concept of progress appears to be confidence in man's capacity to resolve his ongoing predicament without any necessary preconceived awareness of the precise manner in which progress is to be achieved. Thus, aspiration is fundamental to the concept of progress. As we have seen, the degree to which More and Winstanley aspired to amend the human condition relates to their respective degrees of optimism concerning human progress. It therefore seems significant that, as Keith Thomas has shown,

"the difference between the eighteenth and sixteenth centuries lies not in achievement but in aspiration."¹⁰

8. See, e.g., J.B. Bury, op.cit., chapter I, section 1.

9. See, e.g., T.E. Mommsen, 'St. Augustine and the Christian Idea of Progress', J.H.I., Vol. XI (1951), pp. 346-374.

10. K.V. Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic, (London 1971 1973 edition), p. 788.

If this is

the fundamental difference between More and Winstanley, we must try to discover why Winstanley's aspirations went far beyond More's.

It is obviously impossible to do anything more than provide a fleeting glimpse of the intellectual transformation that occurred during the early-modern period. This revised worldview was occasioned by the 'scientific revolution'.¹¹ As contemporary thinkers often realized, the implications of a new conception of the physical universe could not be confined to natural philosophy alone. The breakdown of the Aristotelian-Ptolemaic description of the universe ultimately destroyed the synthesis with Christian doctrines which this cosmology had inspired. The implications of contemporary scientific discoveries were so profound that an entire system of thought was discredited and replaced by a substantially different worldview.

An amended perception of the human domain prompted new explanations of mankind's predicament. The development of the experimental method¹² suggested that the understanding of nature might one day facilitate man's control of the natural environment. The replacement of the geocentric conception of the cosmos with the heliocentric, and eventually the acentric-infinite

11. For a variety of widely differing accounts of the scientific revolution see, M. Boas, 'The Establishment of the Mechanical Philosophy', Osiris, Vol. X (1952); H. Butterfield, op. cit.; A. Koestler, The Sleepwalkers, (London 1959); T. S. Kuhn, The Copernican Revolution, (Cambridge Massachusetts 1957); R. K. Merton, Science, Technology and Society in Seventeenth-Century England, (1938), (New York 1970).

12. See, J. H. Randall, 'The Development of Scientific Method in the School of Padua', J.H.I., Vol. 1 (1940), pp. 177-206.

universe, invalidated belief in the immutability of the heavens, and in the natural and spiritual ordering of the universe in terms of the 'great chain of being'. New scientific evidence undermined the physical basis of the view that man inhabited a region of sublunary degeneracy. Although this discovery could be used to compliment man's dignity, it was often offset by the realization that the earth was merely a small planet orbiting an insignificant star in a vast universe; the Christian account of the creation and of man's uniqueness was therefore suspect. This distancing of man from God might have produced a wholesale crisis of confidence had not a considerable consolation come to light. The discovery of the mechanical universe, an order regulated by natural laws applying equally to terrestrial and celestial phenomena, certainly diminished belief in the immanent intervention of God in the affairs of men. However, although this increasing tendency to delineate the natural from the supernatural left man to his own devices, the scientific disclosures which inspired such secularism appeared to provide man with the knowledge and means of determining his own affairs and future. As Herschel Baker has argued, during the course of the seventeenth century, the long-standing balance of reason and revelation was disturbed to such an extent that the complexion of God's sovereignty was radically changed by the development of new grounds for confidence in the powers of man.¹³

Social theory did not remain immune from the dramatic revision of natural philosophy. The relationship between these two spheres of thought is so enormously complicated that it is by no means clearly understood.¹⁴ This is partly a consequence of

13. H. Baker, The Wars of Truth, (Gloucester Massachusetts 1952, 1969 edition), p.95, passim.

14. See below, p.616 ff.

the all-pervading nature of any worldview. T.S.Kuhn recognised this problem in maintaining that,

"Man does not exist for long without inventing a cosmology, because a cosmology can provide him with a world-view which permeates and gives meaning to his every action, practical and spiritual."¹⁵

Science and natural philosophy are integral to conceptions of man and his capacities. The implications of the scientific revolution centred on the seventeenth century reverberated through contemporary and subsequent social theory.

The new cosmology as discerned in universal natural laws revealed a harmonious universe, which it had previously been assumed had been destroyed by the Fall of Man. Thus God came to be conceived as the first cause, the prime mover of the mechanistic universe, evident as effect in the creation, yet no longer providential. This is the God of 'Newtonian Deism'. In Baker's words,

"causality is seen to lie in the inherent mathematic harmony of the universe, a harmony that both describes the way things are and the reason that they are that way."¹⁶

Evil and misfortune were no longer explained with reference to religion or magic, but were instead accepted as explicable in terms of natural laws regulating the entire universe. The apparent inadequacy of providence as an explanation of the human predicament encouraged the development of optimism concerning the progress of man.

The new understanding of the universe, and the laws governing it, prompted the belief that human activity could be similarly

15. T.S.Kuhn, op.cit., (1977 edition), p.6.

16. H.Baker, op.cit., p.314.

comprehended. The idea that scientific knowledge could benefit mankind by providing him with the means of controlling his physical environment, was paralleled by the notion that to discern the laws of human interaction would benefit man by securing the means of remedying the institutional environment. This, of course, presumed that human conduct was reducible to a set of laws discernible by reason. The most coherent and stimulating instance of this line of thought is the philosophy of Thomas Hobbes, whose political thought was founded upon premises concerning the dynamics (matter in motion) of human behaviour.¹⁷ Good and evil were becoming utilitarian concepts devoid of any moral injunction. Ultimately ideas associated with Descartes' rational and beneficent God, Newton's mechanical philosophy, and Locke's replacement of the notion of innate ideas with that of knowledge founded on sensation, came to fruition in the social theories of the French Enlightenment.¹⁸ This has taken us well beyond the intellectual climate prevailing at the time of either More or Winstanley. However, in attempting to account for the differences in the respective social theories of More and Winstanley, it is important to bear in mind the intellectual developments outlined in this brief synopsis, because the trends we have described post-dated More's Utopia, whereas Winstanley's The Law of Freedom was written

17. For this particular interpretative analysis see, M.M. Goldsmith, Hobbes's Science of Politics, (New York 1966), and, J.W. Watkins, Hobbes's System of Ideas, (London 1964).

18. See, C.L. Becker, The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers (New Haven 1932); R.O. Rockwood, (ed.), Carl Becker's Heavenly City Revisited, (Cornell 1958); E. Cassirer, The Philosophy of the Enlightenment, (Princeton 1951); C. Frankel, The Faith of Reason, (New York 1948); N. Hampson, The Enlightenment, (London 1968); P. Hazard, The European Mind 1680-1715, (London 1953, trans. J. Lewis May from, 'La Crise de la conscience européenne', Paris 1935), European Thought in the Eighteenth Century from Montesquieu to Lessing, (1946, Cleveland 1963); I.O. Wade, The Intellectual Origins of the French Enlightenment, (Princeton 1971).

during the course of this revision of the worldview at a time when many of these ideas were incipient. The intellectual atmosphere produced by the changing natural philosophy is particularly evident in the writings of Francis Bacon.

There are two important reasons for briefly considering Bacon's thought. Firstly, as the most eager advocate of confidence in newly-founded human potential, Bacon provides a revealing insight into the changing worldview, especially because his aspirations were formulated in anticipation, and often without any precise awareness, of the scientific and technological means of their achievement. Secondly, it is apparent that Winstanley was influenced, either directly, or as seems more likely, by a popularized form of Baconianism.

Bacon announced that it was his purpose to

"lay more firmly the foundations, and extend more widely the limits, of the power and greatness of man."¹⁹

Bacon sought to establish a linear conception of human progress. Thus he challenged the prevailing deference to the authoritative ideas of antiquity by inverting the existing idea of 'Ancients' and 'Moderns'; thus arguing that because mankind had in fact gained in experience, contemporaries ought to conceive of themselves as 'ancients', while regarding the Greeks as representing the youth of human history.²⁰ "Rightly", argued Bacon, "is truth called the daughter of time, not of authority."²¹ Bacon insisted that men must dismiss the cyclical view of scientific advance and

19. F. Bacon, Novum Organum, (1620), Works, Vol. 1V, Aphorism CXVI, p. 104.

20. F. Bacon, The Great Instauration, (1620), Works, Vol. 1V, p. 13 ff.

21. F. Bacon, Novum Organum, (I), LXXXIV, p. 82.

recession, and radically revise their appreciation of their own potential. In commenting on the prevailing conception of the human condition Bacon maintained that,

"by far the greatest obstacle to the progress of science and to the undertaking of new tasks and provinces therein, is found in this - that men despair and think things impossible."²²

To counter such pessimism, Bacon attempted to instil a far more positive response to the problems confronting mankind; "the mould of a man's fortune," he wrote, "is in his own hands."²³ Clearly, such an attitude was designed to counter resignation to capricious fortune or to providence. Not surprisingly, Bacon proposed the strict delineation of philosophy and theology.²⁴ So, in assessing mankind's predicament, Bacon concluded that,

"man by the fall fell at the same time from his state of innocency and from his dominion over creation. Both of these losses however can even in this life be in some part repaired; the former by religion and faith, and the latter by arts and sciences."²⁵

In discussing the means of effecting the second part of this design, the improvement of mankind's immediate circumstances, Bacon dwelt on three major themes - the advantages of the experimental method, the utility of knowledge, and the prospect of recovering the dominion over nature.

Bacon believed that much of the adversity evident in the human condition had persisted not as an ineradicable consequence of the Fall, but as a result of mankind's own folly, which was

22. ibid., (I), XCII, p.90.

23. F. Bacon, Of Fortune, (1597, 1612 edition), Works, Vol. VI, p.472.

24. See, F. Bacon, Novum Organum, passim.

25. ibid., (II), LII, pp.247-248.

rectifiable. According to Bacon, the most pronounced instance of man's poor judgement was discernible in existing scientific method. So Bacon rejected the syllogistic method which, he argued, mistakenly deduced general axioms from particular instances, and merely encouraged an over-reliance upon authority and received ideas. Instead, he proposed an inductive method based on experiment according to which general axioms were to be established by a gradual derivation from particular instances and 'middle axioms'.²⁶ It is doubtful whether Bacon's proposed new method was as dramatic an advance from the syllogism as he claimed. Nevertheless, in terms of his commitment to a concept of progress characterized by aspiration, it was imperative that Bacon regarded the experimental method as a corrective for certain consequences of the Fall. He recognized the need to provide a means of scientific advance which would compensate for certain human shortcomings. Hence his contention that,

"it is a false assertion that the sense of man is the measure of all things."²⁷

So Bacon advocated the quantitative measurement rather than the qualitative assessment of nature. Matter rather than substance was to be the object of enquiry. Experiments were to be devised to constrain men to proceed in this manner. Perhaps more significantly, Bacon insisted that that experimental enquiry should only attempt to discern efficient causes. This, rather than the search for final causes, should define the extent of scientific investigation.

Bacon was not unaware that the investigation of nature and the quest for knowledge itself, were controversial issues. Thus,

26. ibid., passim.

27. ibid., (I), XL1, p.54, passim.

he responded by assigning to natural philosophy, only the investigation of efficient causes, while reserving for theology the revelation of first causes. By this delineation, Bacon attempted to repudiate the association of the search for knowledge with the form of curiosity by which Eve and Adam had brought about the Fall.²⁸ He maintained that the investigation of nature was a legitimate province of human enquiry. This, Bacon pointed out, was not to be confused with the desire to emulate God by attaining the moral knowledge of good and evil - which had caused the Fall.²⁹ "Knowledge being now discharged of that venom which the serpent infused into it,"²⁹ Bacon proceeded to establish the proper purpose of knowledge acquired through the experimental investigation of nature. Thus Bacon adhered to certain basic principles. He maintained that "human knowledge and human power meet in one,"³¹ and that "truth...and utility are...the very same."³² The utilitarian application of scientific knowledge is a pervading principle of Bacon's thought. The extent to which Bacon aspired to use science for the improvement of human life is evident in his description, in New Atlantis, of the scientific institution 'Salomon's House'. Bacon envisaged the ultimate

"knowledge of the Causes and secret motions of things; and the enlarging of the bounds of Human Empire, to the effecting of all things possible."³³

We have already seen that man was commonly assumed to have

28. Above, pp.101-102.

29. F.Bacon, The Advancement of Learning, (1605), Works, Vol.111, Bk.I.

30. F.Bacon, The Great Instauration, p.20.

31. F.Bacon, Novum Organum, (I), 111, p.48, (II), 1V, p.120.

32. ibid., (I), CXXIV, p.110.

33. F.Bacon, New Atlantis, (1627), Works, Vol.111, p.156.

forfeited his dominion over nature as a consequence of the Fall.³⁴ Bacon believed that by the means already specified, human power would be so increased that the dominion over nature could be recovered.³⁵ Bacon assumed that man's contemplation of his creation would be pleasing to God. As we have discovered, Thomas More would have accepted this view.³⁶ However, the aggressive facet of Baconianism, by which the experimental knowledge of nature was conceived as a means of ensuring human power and progress through the control of the creation, is irreconcilable to More's pessimistic assessment of limited human potential. Clearly, Bacon articulated a revised worldview. Hence the following confident proposal :-

"let the human race recover that right over nature which belongs to it by divine bequest, and let power be given it; the exercise thereof will be governed by sound reason and true religion."³⁷

These are sentiments which Winstanley implicitly applauded.

We have already established that More's Utopia was a static society and that More's optimism was decidedly restrained by his disparaging regard for human nature and his tempered assessment of man's potential. All this is reflected in two spheres which later formed important parts of the Baconian programme - education and science.³⁸ For More, the primary function of education was moral; even as a pleasure education in

34. See above, pp.100-103.

35. See, C.Webster, The Great Instauration, (London 1975), especially p.18.

36. Above, p.339.

37. F.Bacon, Novum Organum, (I), CXXIX, p.115.

38. See, C.Webster, op.cit., particularly chapter 111.

Utopia was designed to inculcate virtue. Thus More intended education to guide the individual to his salvation, and not to project mankind to a progressive amelioration of the predicament. The use which More found for science and technology in Utopia was imbued with a similar belief. The Utopians enjoyed contemplating nature, and proved receptive to technical innovation, but they had not designed any programme with the specific intention of ascertaining scientific knowledge for utilitarian reasons. In distinguishing More's views on education, science, and progress, from Winstanley's, it is not inappropriate to cite Bacon, who, in arguing for an ordered methodology, commented that,

"simple experience, ... if taken as it comes, is called accident; if sought for, experiment."³⁹

In addition to textual evidence for the affinity of Winstanley's ideas and elements of Baconianism, there is also circumstantial evidence to suggest that Winstanley was acquainted with the new science. In general, it can be assumed that Winstanley was influenced by the early stages of the percolation of new scientific and philosophical ideas from the intellectual elite down through society as the seventeenth century progressed.⁴⁰ This impression is furthered by Charles Webster's painstaking research into the popularization of Baconian philosophy.⁴¹ This movement was especially pronounced during the Civil War when men such as Hartlib, Dury, and

39. F. Bacon, op. cit., (I), LXXXII, p. 81. Our interpretation contests the view forwarded by R. P. Adams, particularly in, 'The Social Responsibilities of Science in Utopia, New Atlantis and After', J.H.I., Vol. X (1949), pp. 374-398; see above, pp. 159-160.

40. See, K. V. Thomas, op. cit., chapter 22, especially, pp. 769-773, and B. S. Capp, Astrology and the Popular Press, (London 1979), chapter 9.

41. C. Webster, op. cit. passim, especially, p. 499.

Comenius actively sought the dissemination of Baconian ideas. In particular, Winstanley's works can be scrutinized for hints of his familiarity with the writings and ideas of individual members of the scientific community. Thus Christopher Hill has suggested that at one point in The Law of Freedom Winstanley⁴² reveals an awareness of the work of William Harvey.

It should be apparent from our analysis of The Law of Freedom⁴³ in chapter ten that Winstanley was deeply influenced by Baconianism, and by changing emphases of the worldview in general. Winstanley's experimentalism and hostility to received ideas in any sphere of human activity, is an extended and popularized version of an important Baconian principle. Winstanley's evaluation of education is similarly sympathetic to the Baconian ideal. Winstanley certainly conceived of education as possessing a moral aspect, but this was closely related to a strand of utilitarianism. In associating education with experimentalism, Winstanley believed that men should be taught how to investigate nature, not only in the interests of their spiritual felicity, but also so that mankind as a whole could benefit from the experimental discoveries of the individual. So Winstanley's arguments for education extended through his emphasis upon the experimental method to his advocacy of scientific research. Although his ideas were often crudely formulated, Winstanley again emphasized certain Baconian principles. For instance he argued that the experimental method implied the restriction of enquiry to efficient rather than final causes. Thus he asked,

42. C. Hill, 'William Harvey and the Idea of Monarchy', P.&P., No. 27, pp. 54-72, n. 42, citing, The Law of Freedom, (Sabine), p. 565.

43. Above, pp. 593-595.

"what other knowledg have you of God, but what you have within the circle of the Creation?"⁴⁴

More importantly, and on this point and its implications Winstanley was most at variance with More, Winstanley advanced the following recommendation :-

"if any through industry or ripeness of understanding have found out any secret in Nature, or new invention in any Art or Trade, or in the Tillage of the Earth, or such like, whereby the Commonwealth may more flourish in peace and plenty; for which Vertues those persons received honor in the places where they dwelt,

When other parts of the Land hear of it, many thereby will be encouraged to employ their Reason and industry to do the like, that so in time there will not be any Secret in Nature, which now lies hid....but by some or other will be brought to light, to the beauty of our Commonwealth."⁴⁵

This proposal reflects several vital aspects of the changing worldview. It involves not only the emphasis upon the utilitarian application of scientific discovery and the insistence upon the organized communication of such knowledge, but also the understanding that man could aspire to the radical improvement of his condition.

The guiding principle of Thomas More's social theory was his conviction that institutions ought to be reformed to create a society in which men could be trained in virtue and attain their salvation. Nearly a century and a half later, Gerrard Winstanley believed that institutional reform could provide men not only with their spiritual redemption on earth, but also with the restitution of socio-political liberties and dominion over nature. Later still, certain social theorists of the Enlightenment speculated upon the idea of the perfectibility of

44. G.Winstanley, The Law of Freedom, (Sabine) p.565 (Hill) p.349.

45. ibid., (Sabine) p.571, (Hill) pp.355-356.

man. We have dealt in this section with the development of secular aspiration and have seen that whereas Thomas More predated this intellectual trend, Gerrard Winstanley lived through a transitional phase of the increase in optimism that occurred during the course of the seventeenth century. In answer to the question of why Winstanley's ideas concerning mankind's predicament, and the potential to rectify it, differed so markedly in comparison to More's, we might content ourselves by simply arguing that Winstanley reflected intellectual developments which stimulated a more optimistic appraisal of the human condition. However, more fundamental questions arise when we try to explain the development of such optimism. It is, of course, possible to cite causes of the 'scientific revolution' - education, individual genius, improved communications, voyages of discovery, printing, more accurate instrumentation, Protestantism, population increases, and prosperity and patronage. Yet as scholars who have considered this problem have

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recognized, that these explanations, either individually or collectively, do not provide an entirely satisfactory account for such a radical intellectual upsurge. Greater optimism and the idea of progress arose before many of the assumptions which would appear to be necessary to sustain such beliefs had in fact been validated.

In discussing the decline of magical beliefs, which had often been maintained as a response to conceptions of a precarious predicament, Keith Thomas has shown that superstition waned before alternative technological or social means of understanding or controlling the environment had fully

46. See, e.g., H. Butterfield, op.cit., p.118.

developed. As Thomas admits,

"the ultimate origins of this faith in an unaided human capacity remain mysterious."⁴⁷

In analysing the respective social theories of More and Winstanley, it is possible to provide a plausible account of what each sought to achieve. However, ultimately, the explanation of why their designs differed so fundamentally in aspiration seems destined to remain somewhat elusive and superficial.

47. K.V. Thomas, op.cit., p.794, see also, p.797.

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The bibliography is divided into four sections :-

Primary Sources

Secondary Works on Thomas More

Secondary Works on Gerrard Winstanley

Selected Secondary Works

The sections devoted respectively to More and Winstanley contain complete lists of all relevant works consulted. The general secondary bibliography contains a list of all other works cited and an additional number of references to works which have also proved helpful. References are listed, by author, in alphabetical sequence. However, because of the developmental nature of much debate within the secondary literature, individual titles have been listed chronologically under the author.

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