ERASMIAN HUMANISM AND THE UTOPIAS OF THOMAS MORE AND JOHN MILTON

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ABSTRACT

The thesis examines the influence of Erasmus's Christian Humanism on the political thought of John Milton and Thomas More, and argues that Milton's politics was utopian like More's. In true Erasmian spirit, their utopias blend classical ethics and Christian beliefs and emphasize education and training in virtue. However, virtue was significant to their utopian models for different reasons: More encourages virtue as a corrective and advocates a collectivist culture which restricts individual liberty; Milton, on the other hand, champions individual liberty and argues that only through freedom true virtue can be attained.

DEDICATION

To Abba Jee, my grandfather, for his faith in (once) a lanky unruly girl.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

John Milton's liberalism and its contribution to the Western political thought is a canned subject, and in revisiting it one takes the risk of repeating what has been said many times before. Yet, it is worthwhile to reconsider Milton's politics to appreciate its participation in advancing the utopian thought initiated in the seminal early modern utopian writings such as Thomas More's *Utopia*. Milton's polemic voices a many Morean notions such as accountable rule, religious tolerance, and the need for a conscientious society. The recurring common themes in their works such as emphasis on human reason, liberty of conscience and virtue invite a comparison between their utopianism. Such an investigation, of course, begins with More and leads us further back to Plato and Aristotle. However, as J.C Davis has pointed out, Western utopianism was not a continuous trend: it was absent in the Middle Ages, and resurfaced only during the Renaissance. Utopianism of the Renaissance —More's utopianism included— betrays the classical political idealism which penetrated Western thought when humanists shifted the emphasis from the medieval to the classical learning. Therefore, any research that aims to underscore the similarities between More's utopianism and its successors would be incomplete without taking into account the mediatory role of the humanism of the Renaissance. Erasmus's humanism in particular contributed greatly in the revival of the utopian thought in the renaissance period. It bridged the classical ideals with the medieval Christian values through its emphasis on virtue, liberty of conscience, and freewill and through its faith in human's ability for self-improvement.

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The attributes of Erasmus's humanism will later become the founding tenets of More's *Utopia* and Milton's politics. Milton's political thought was utopian, and like More's *Utopia,* was modeled after Erasmus's Christian humanism and aimed to integrate classical ethics into Christian societies. Through this integration they strived for "the greatest possible happiness of the city as a whole;"[1] and both, Milton and More, were convinced of Erasmus's view that such a state is only possible if the citizens could be trained to develop a virtuous disposition. Milton's politics is analogous to More's utopian thought in its insistence on virtue. However, virtue was significant for them for different reasons: as J.C Davis has argued, More sees virtue as a corrective, and promotes a collectivist culture; Milton, on the other hand, advocates individual liberty and argues that only through freedom one can be trained in virtue. Milton's and More's understanding of a virtuous conduct is derived from scriptures and the Christian Humanism of Erasmus. In my thesis, I will examine the influence of Erasmus's humanism on the utopias of Milton and More and will underscore their differences.

When rationalizing why there was an outbreak of utopian writings after More and not before him, J.C. Davis accuses religious dogmatism of the Middle Ages for restricting human thinking. During the Middle Ages, the Church kept men preoccupied with the matters concerning Divine providence and eternal life, and earthly existence was given little importance. The Renaissance saw a shift in religious thinking; the emphasis in theology was turned from the doctrine to the application of religious beliefs. Henry F. Burton reckons the change to be in the "conception of deity:" the "cosmological" idea of deity was eroding and was getting replaced by

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1. Plato, "Republic," in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton: Princeton University press, 2002), 420b.

an "anthropomorphic" view of God.[2] In the religious circles, concerns moved from questions about what deity is like to what man's attitude towards deity ought to be. In Christian theology, this change switched human focus from heaven above to heaven on earth. Influenced by classicism, Christian religious thinkers were rewriting Christian morals with greater emphasis on ethical education than on revelation.[3] The same thought was responsible for ushering utopianism in the sixteenth- century. Davis credits political thinkers like Niccolo Machiavelli, Donato Giannotti, and Francesco Guicciardini for encouraging utopian thought by reviving classical republicanism. However, Davis forgot to mention Desiderius Erasmus, whose humanism had a greater part to play in inspiring the utopian thought which followed.

Davis is not the only one to neglect Erasmus; in the history of political theories, Erasmus's name is rarely mentioned. W.M Southgate argues that Erasmus is ignored because of his moderate views. Erasmus's political theories were a combination of old and new beliefs— part Medieval and part Renaissance— and were not so jarring or radical to grab the attention of the political theorists.[4] His politics was medieval in its support for king's authority, but classical or Platonic in its concerns for a king's education and his responsibilities. Erasmus did not separate politics from religion. Therefore, he could not imagine a country without a king as he could not imagine that a Christian nation could sustain without the authority of one unified church. For that reason, W.M Southgate calls Erasmus a "moderate reformer," whose religious philosophy did not endorse the extremism of Martin Luther or John Calvin and was desirous of reforming the Church from within.

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2. Henry F. Burton, "Seneca's Idea of God," *The American Journal of Theology* 13, no. 3 (1909): 350, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3154834.
3. Murray Gilbert, *Stoic, Christian, and Humanist* (United Kingdom: Taylor and Francis, 2013), 19-85.
4. W. M. Southgate, "Erasmus: Christian Humanism and Political Theory," *History* 40, no. 140 (1955): 2, http://www.jstor.org/stable/24403112.

Erasmus thought that Luther's theology was extremist in its rejection of freewill and in its advocacy of separation rather than the unity of the Church. Erasmus supported freewill but he was more temperate in his views and hesitated to take any side without adequate evidence and evaluation. In his *On the Freedom of Will* treatise, he admits that the concept of freewill has always been controversial in the history of Christian thought, but he believed that some "power of free choice" has always been allowed. He appreciates Luther's research on the matter, and praises his effort, but finds it unconvincing.[5] Freewill was a controversial subject in Erasmus's time, and it still is today. It is also the matter that distinguishes Erasmus's humanism from all the other humanism of his time. Before we analyze Erasmus's contribution to More's and Milton's utopias, it is imperative that we understand Erasmus's humanism.

The word "humanism" is problematic because the general consensus is that there were many kinds of humanism. Davis and Southgate unanimously agree that, unlike other movements, humanism does not follow a singular philosophy. Every humanist understood humanism in their own way. For example, Lorenzo Valla, the Italian humanist of the fifteenth-century, was against the freedom of the will, whose ideas later Martin Luther borrowed to support his argument against the freedom of the freewill.[6] However, Erasmus separated himself from Luther and Valla and pursued his own humanism which was based on the freedom of the will and liberty of conscience. The second generation of humanists, who were born between1450-1480, were not aware of the

5. Desiderius Erasmus and Martin Luther, *Luther and Erasmus : Freewill and Salvation*, ed. E. Gordon Rupp and Philip S Watson (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), 27.
6. James D. Tracy, "Erasmus the Humanist," in *Erasmus of Rotterdam : a quincentennial symposium*, ed. Richard L. DeMolen (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1971), 29.

disagreement between Protestantism and humanism; that is why, more humanists converted to Protestantism during this time."[7]

The humanism that Erasmus, and More followed did not disconnect itself from orthodox Christianity; however, like all the other humanisms, Erasmian humanism was also an intellectual movement and was geared towards classical learning and education. James D. Tracy argues that humanism was not philosophy at all. For his understanding of humanism, he relies on Paul O. Kristella's observation that sees humanism as a "phase in rhetorical tradition of Western culture."[8] Tracy notes that in ancient Athens, rhetoric was considered as the opposite of philosophy. Socrates and Plato did not approve of rhetoric, but when Romans were introduced to Greek culture, they found rhetoric more practical than philosophy. Later on, the two great Roman writers, Marcus Fabius Quintilianus and Marcus Tullius Cicero integrated the Greek theory of rhetoric into their writings. Quintilianus, also known as Quintilian, derived his methods of education and principles of oratory from the theory that he discusses in his book *Institutio Oratoria, Institutes of Oratory.*[9] Cicero considered a good orator to be the one who was well-versed in a variety of disciplines such as poetry, history, and philosophy.[10] He called such an education program *Studia Humanitatas*, which we now know as humanities. Unlike Socrates, Cicero did not see rhetoric as a pointless

7. Tracy, "Erasmus the Humanist," 29.James D Tracy records that he once conducted a research study on German, Swiss, and Dutch protestants from the fifteenth to early sixteenth centuries which showed that out of the 24 humanists that were born between 1450 and 1480 only 5 converted to Protestantism; however, out of 127 that were born between 1481 and 1510, 84 became Protestants.
8. Tracy, "Erasmus the Humanist," 31.
9. Tracy, "Erasmus the Humanist," 30.
10.Tracy, "Erasmus the Humanist," 30. S.J Aubrey Gwynn*, Roman Education from Cicero to Quintilian*, Oxford University Press, 1926.

theory; it had a definitive purpose, which he believed was the purpose of any educational program, to train citizens in virtue.[11]

Tracy notes that for Cicero and Quintilian rhetoric was an "art of speaking" that can be used "to promote civic virtue."[12] In their understanding of rhetoric, they relied on Greek stoicism that argued that man was naturally good. Cicero believed that man was endowed with reason and with the sense of honor, which Plato saw as justice. In Cicero's view, man had the innate ability to see right from wrong, but he would resist good until he is persuaded. It is the sense of honor in a man that forces him to be persuaded to do good. Quintilian based his educational methods on the same argument and reasoned that ethical conduct can only be encouraged through education and not by harsh physical punishments.

In the fifteenth- century, Italian universities replaced the medieval syllabus, which was based on Aristotle's philosophy, with Cicero's teachings. Like other Northern humanists, Erasmus was disenchanted with medieval scholasticism; therefore, he favored Quintilian's educational methods. He was an intellectual who trusted man to be a rational being, capable of self-improvement and progress through education. Much of his faith in human reason came from his classical education and his engagement with the Greek and Roman writings of antiquity. Erasmus was a proponent of *Ad Fontes*— meaning "back to the sources"— which broke away from scholastic understanding of the Bible and encouraged its study in the original texts of Hebrew, Greek and Latin. Erasmus thought of himself as an educator and wrote many books with the intent to educate people. In his writings, he borrowed heavily from the classical writers. His most famous

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11. Tracy, "Erasmus the Humanist," 31.
12. Tracy, "Erasmus the Humanist," 31.

book, *Adagia,* was a collection of Greek and Latin proverbs and thanks to him, those proverbs are part of our everyday language.

However, Erasmus is known less for his contributions in the field of religious education and more for his anti- Luther polemic; his stance against Luther's separatist theology earned him a reputation of being an anti-reformation. Such criticism discounts the educative role of Erasmus, which he relentlessly pursued. Acknowledging Erasmus's contribution as an influencer and educator, Hanan Yoran and Lewis W. Spitz see Erasmus as a reformer with far-reaching influence. Yoran describes Eramsus as a universal reformer who spoke to men, women, laymen, nobles, kings and princes, and was universally admired.[13] Erasmus was a reformist not in the religious sense alone; his concerns were beyond the realms of church and were centered on developing a social value system, which is ethical and practical.

Erasmus's Humanism was a quizzical combination of orthodox Christianity and Classical ethics. It is ambiguous because on one hand it liberates man through its classical faith in human reason; on the other hand, it restrains him for exploring his full potentials by subjugating his will to God's Grace. Therefore, scholars have tried to contain the ambiguity in Erasmus's humanism in the oxymoronic phrase, Christian Humanism. Rajan Balachandra defines Christian Humanism as a struggle between two polarities. A Christian humanist is one who is "haunted by the dangers of humanism:" as a humanist he is "committed to a strong sense of reason to know the nature of things;" and as "a Christian, [he] is committed to an equally strong sense of limit of reason."[14] The Classical influence on Erasmus can be seen in his writings : in his discussion on the subject of free

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13. Hanan Yoran, *Between Utopia and Dystopia: Erasmus, Thomas More, and the Humanist Republic of Letters* (Lanham: Lexington Books, a division of Rowman & Littlefield, 2010), 1.
14. Rajan Balachandara, *Poetic traditions of the English Renaissance*, ed. Maynard Mack and George deForest Lord (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 252.

will, *The Freedom of the Freewill*, in his emphasis on education in *Enchiridion militis Christiani*, *A Handbook of Christian Soldier*, and *Institutio principis Christiani*, or Education of a Christian Prince (1516). However, as a Christian humanist, Erasmus could not bring himself to break away with the traditions of orthodox Christianity; and therefore, a state without any institutional control was unimaginable for him. His insistence on the unity of the church, and his support for the Church as a head of the state reflect his belief that human reason cannot be trusted without regulations. In Erasmus's time, politics and was not separated from the religion; therefore, the same mistrust permeates his politics that does not support democracy out of fear that unlimited freedom could be hazardous to social order.

Certainly, Erasmus was a liberalist, but not in the modern sense. In his schemes of thought, democracy did not exist as a viable option. The reason for Erasmus, or for any one from the sixteenth century, to dismiss democracy could be traced back to its Platonic rejection of the system for its anarchical tendencies. Plato was dismissive of democracy on the basis that it gives more value to the number of people supporting an idea than to its contents. He argued that in such a system false opinion may be passed as true simply by majority vote: "Do you think it possible for a man who does not know how to measure when a multitude of others equally ignorant assure him that he is four cubits tall not to suppose this to the fact about himself?"[15] Erasmus belonged to the same segment of people who were of the mindset that too many cooks spoil the broth, and the growing religious schism was further confirming their fear. Moreover, Erasmus, like Plato, was wary of the power that majority could exert over an individual: "Not that, as in human assemblies, I would measure my opinion by the number of votes or the status of the speakers. I know how frequently it happens that the greater part overcomes the better: I know those are not always the

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15. Plato, "Republic," 426e.

best things that are approved by the majority."[16] For an intellectual like Erasmus, a thought or opinion was worth considering only if it was true and reasonable; and if it was any of the two, it did not matter how many voices were supporting it.

For all the above reasons, Erasmus was against democracy, and for the same reasons, he did not condone a medieval understanding of monarchy which gave a king divine authority. Moreover, for someone born in the sixteenth or seventeenth century England, like More and Milton, democracy or republicanism was a foreign idea. To put things in perspective, it was a novel notion even in Milton's time—during the seventeenth century— when they executed King Charles I and "did not know what to do next"[17] The status of a king under the medieval political theory of divine authority remains unchallenged for a long time: Thomas Corns is resolute in his view that even Milton and other regicides were "against one king and not kingship."[18] To support his claim, he further argues that back then English dictionaries did not have a word to describe "the form of government England found itself in" after Charles I's execution.[19] He observes that the word "republic is used infrequently in the mid-century to describe the constitutional experiment of 1649-60 and later on, the word commonwealth is more commonly used."[20] If a century later — after waging a civil war, and after executing a king— English politicians were hesitant to adapt to a system different than monarchy, it is improbable that it would have favored republicanism or democracy in Erasmus's time.

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16. Erasmus and Luther, *Luther and Erasmus : Freewill and Salvation*, 43.
17. Thomas N. Corns, "Milton and the Characteristics of a Free Commonwealth," in *Milton and Republicanism*, ed. Quentin Skinner David Armitage, Armand Himy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 27.
18. Corns, "Milton and the Characteristics of a Free Commonwealth," 27.
19. Corns, "Milton and the Characteristics of a Free Commonwealth," 27.
20. Corns, "Milton and the Characteristics of a Free Commonwealth," 28.

However, a variant of modern republicanism is attributed to Eramus's age—Classical Republicanism— which did not oppose monarchy, but held governments responsible for the welfare of their societies. Intrinsic to the concept of the classical republicanism is the idea of virtuous living, which is cultivated through moral education. The revival of the Classical republicanism in the Renaissance is generally credited to Niccolo Machiavelli and Erasmus's name is never mentioned. Even though Erasmus was not directly involved in politics, he implicitly condones Classical Republicanism in his writings. Specifically in his instructive pieces for the young rulers, we see the principles of the Classical Republicanism at work. Erasmus, in his writings, initiated discussions which questioned the medieval doctrine of divine authority of a ruler. Resolute in his religious belief that man cannot be trusted to choose the right path on his own, he maintained that the only way to prevent man from doing evil is through education and through training in virtue. A king was no exception to this rule; instead, he argues that kingship being a highly skilled position requires even more rigorous training in virtue. In his instructive political writings such as *The Education of a Christian Prince*, Erasmus reinforces Plato's philosophy and argues that if a kingdom is not fortunate enough to have a philosopher as a king then it should train its kings to be philosophers:

> And so Plato is nowhere more meticulous than in the education of the guardians of republic, whom he would have surpass all the rest not in riches and jewels and dress and ancestry and retainers, but in wisdom only, maintaining that no commonwealth can be happy unless either philosopher put at the helm, or those to whose lot the rule happens to have fallen embrace philosophy—not that philosophy, I mean which argues about elements, and primal matters, and the infinite, but that frees the mind from the false opinions of the multitude and from wrong desires and demonstrates the principles of right government by reference to the example set by the eternal powers.[21]

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21. Desiderius Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, trans. Neil M. Cheshire, Michael J. Heath, and Lisa Jardine, ed. Lisa Jardine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 2.

Here, philosophy, for Erasmus, is the wisdom which aids a ruler to make right decisions and to favor truth irrespective of the influence of the multitudes.

By attaching great importance to a young prince's education and training, Erasmus ties the state and the prince into a two way relationship: the prince, as a future king, is responsible for the wellbeing of the state, and the state, on the other hand, is responsible for arranging for the best possible education of the prince. Throughout his book, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, Erasmus employs the language of the Classical republicanism: "The people must look to the same single object in selecting a prince as the prince should in his administration, which is of course the people's wellbeing regardless of all personal feelings."[22]

In the next chapter, I will observe and underscore the classical elements of Erasmian humanism. In reexamining Erasmus's humanism, my intentions are to unravel its twofold intermediary role in the formation of utopias of More and Milton: I will observe: one, how it fuses the classical moral philosophy with Christian values and bridges the classical ideal of a virtuous king with the medieval Christian expectations of a monarch; two, how his writings form dialogic relationships with More's utopia and also with Milton's vision of an ideal government: Milton's political views and his idea of a perfect leader. I will examine how More and Milton extend and integrate Erasmus's understanding of a virtuous living and his sense of liberty into their utopias.

It is widely known that Thomas More's *Utopia* is a rendition of Erasmus's humanism; moreover, John Milton's virtue-centered politics was also derived from the same Erasmian thought that found its voice in More's work. Understandably, to apprehend Milton's utopianism

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22. Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, 5.

one has to begin with More, but More would be incomprehensible without Erasmus, so we will begin with him.

CHAPTER 2

ERASMIAN HUMANISM: A PRECURSOR OF RENAISSANCE UTOPIANISM

"The name of Erasmus will never perish."[23]

Humanism and utopianism are interrelated; while the former encourages participation in humane causes, the latter proposes the best possible outcomes of any such involvement. This point of view best illustrates Erasmus's contribution to the development of utopian thought. Erasmus did not write a utopia, but through his moral teachings and writings he enabled the utopian genre to flourish in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Erasmus's humanist instruction was based on the moral philosophy of the classical antiquity which encouraged virtuous living. Erasmus was convinced that man, though fallen, can improve his condition through instruction and guidance. His teaching aimed to cultivate a social consciousness that would contribute to the common goodness. He was proposing a systematic change in the behavior of individuals that Francesco Petrarca or Petrarch has termed as "learned Piety."[24] Erasmus was not a "utopianist," the way we understand More to be a utopianist, but he achieved something important: his humanism "offered a comprehensive program of religious, intellectual and cultural reform, universal in scope. Its

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23. Lisa Jardine, *Erasmus, Man of Letters:The Construction of Charisma in Print* (United Kingdom: Princeton University Press, 1993), 189.The lines are taken from John Colet's letter to Erasmus. In the book, Lisa Jardine records that the letter was printed in *Epistolae Aliquot ad Erasmum* the first collection of Erasmus's letters in 1516.

24. John Stephens, "*The Italian Renaissance:The Origins of Intellectual and Artistic Change*," (Addison Wesley Longman Limited, 1990), 139.

adherent sought to reform all aspects of European society, from children's manners to theology, and they addressed themselves to the Christendom as a whole."[25] When scholars refer to Erasmus as a reformer they do not mean just a religious reformer like Martin Luther, but more of a social reformer, one who intended to transform the whole society by means of education. In his letter to John Colet, Erasmus acknowledges his distinct role as a reformer or transformer in the field of education: "I have tried to teach a kind of piety, as certain others have written the certain theory of certain sciences" (Erasmus to John Colet December 1504).

Many attributes of Erasmus's humanism or his idea of learned piety later shaped the civilization of Europe, but before trickling into reality they served as the desired characteristics of the utopian societies such as More's fictional Utopia describes. More's fictional utopian society exhibits Erasmian influence in its confidence in human reason, in its emphasis on education, in its faith in liberty of conscience and freewill, in championing religious freedom, and in questioning the role of a monarch. Whatever Erasmus was trying to achieve through his moral teachings, More conveyed through the presentation of an imagined community that he named Utopia. Milton expressed similar sentiments more loudly and directly in his polemic.

Erasmus's role as the most influential person of his time is a well- researched and well-documented topic. His popularity and the merits of his oeuvre are undisputed, no matter how controversial the content of his works may be. He is mostly known for his endeavors in the field of education and biblical studies where his influence had far-reaching effects that crossed geographical borders and surpassed epochs of time. His theological influence can be assessed from Richard Shoeck's claim that both Martin Luther and John Calvin had studied Erasmus's work, and

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25. Yoran, *Between Utopia and Dystopia: Erasmus, Thomas More, and the Humanist Republic of Letters*, 1.

even William Tyndale relied on Erasmus for his translation of the Bible in English. The fact that Tyndale's translations are still used in the King James translation of the Bible is a proof of Erasmus's extant influence. However, Erasmus's biggest achievement by far was his defense of the *studia humanitatis* that integrated the classical ethical education into the Christian teaching.[26] The modern civilized societies owe much to Erasmus and other Northern humanists for making the classical models available to the Christian societies so they could improve on them. The resurgence of utopian writing was also a result of Erasmus's humanist efforts which made Plato's Republic and Aristotelean philosophy accessible to the English readers of the sixteenth century.

James D. Tracy defines humanism as the "philosophy of the Renaissance, which replaced the authoritative rule of scriptures and pessimistic view of earthly life with "a new appreciation of human dignity and freedom."[27] Erasmus's humanism also deviated from the medieval understanding of the Christianity; however, contrary to the bold spirit of the age, it was not rebellious but intercessory in its aims to unite both Christian and classical value systems into one whole that could bridge the gap between practice and principles. Like other sixteenth-century humanisms, Erasmus's humanism models Greek thought, but it was not wholly secular. Erasmus neither expelled God out of the human matters, nor did he completely reject the medieval understanding of the scriptures, but he modified medieval traditions through his classical learning and education: he expresses faith in freewill as well as in God's grace; he advocates for a king's absolute authority, but condemns tyranny as a punishable act.

Margaret Mann Philips observes that Erasmus's humanism was unique in the sense that his reverence for classical learning was not "an end itself," but was a necessary and permanent

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26. Richard J. Schoeck, *Erasmus of Europe : The Prince of Humanists, 1501-1536* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993).
27. Tracy, "Erasmus the Humanist," 29.

constituent in the reorientation of men's thought towards true values, whether aesthetic, ethical, or religious."[28] She records that in his early years, Erasmus was drawn towards classical studies because of his deep revulsion for scholastic theology. However, under John Colet's influence and after years of studies, he realized that classical virtues were not far from Christ's teachings, and that through classical education a society can be built, which is Christian in essence and not in the outlook alone. He was convinced that the early Fathers of the Church also approved of his views and valued classicism for its inherent Christian qualities, but their advices were ignored for many years.[29] Erasmus took upon himself to follow the advice of the Fathers of the Church and to make the knowledge preserved in the classical works available to the general public of Europe. Philips details the many ways Erasmus has done this: by directly translating, editing and interpreting the classical works, through invention such as writing *Adagia,* which was part translation and part commentary, and through writing original books like *Praise of Folly* that would appeal to a wider audience. Extending Philips's research, in the following sections, I will observe how Erasmus combined his commitment to the classical language and education with his devotion to his religion to imbed many useful classical concepts into the Christian thought, which would become essential components of utopian writings.

Phronesis and *Sapientia:* Wisdom and the Pursuit of Knowledge

Erasmus started out as a monk, and like all the other monks of his time, he was a *litterateur:* a man devoted to "a pure and proper use of language."[30] He had deeply studied the scriptures as well

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28. Margaret Mann Phillips, "Erasmus and the Classics," in *Erasmus*, ed. T. A. Dorey and Margaret Mann Phillips (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1970), 5.
29. Phillips, "Erasmus and the Classics," 4.
30. S. Dresden, *Humanism in the Renaissance* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), 114.

as the classical literature. He spent three decades of his life editing and translating the New Testaments, and about the same time in collecting and translating short Greek sayings for his book, *Adagia*.[31]Throughout his life, Erasmus fought to give classical and secular relevance to Christianity. In doing so, he gathered many enemies that Margaret Mann Philips categorizes into three groups. The first group was "reactionary," who were devout followers of scholastic theology and thought all pagan works were immoral, particularly the ones by Greek authors. Philips identifies the front runners of this group to be the theologians of the universities of Paris. The second group was of "enthusiasts of classical literature" who thought that the classical wisdom begins and ends in Cicero. Then there were religious reformers who made the transfer of knowledge from the classical antiquity almost impossible with their opposition of doctrines of freewill.[32]

Despite the opposition, Erasmus continued to encourage the pragmatism of the antiquity to free Christianity from the rituals and observances of the Middle Ages. The primary aim of his efforts was to restore the confidence in human reason and wisdom: to convince human society of its potential. Erasmus understands wisdom as defined in the ancient Greek by the word *phronesis,* which is often translated as practical virtue. Wisdom, in the writings of classical antiquity, is a combination of moral character and good judgement. In his book *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle separates practical wisdom, *phronesis,* from theoretical wisdom that is associated with the theoretical, or transcendental wisdom of a Greek philosopher, *soph.*[33] Cicero, in his writings, translated *phronesis* as *prudentia,* or *providentia* meaning prudence meaning sagacity, or foresight.

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31. Schoeck, *Erasmus of Europe : The Prince of Humanists, 1501-1536*, 366.
32. Phillips, "Erasmus and the Classics," 5.
33. Daniel C. Russell, "Phronesis and the Virtues " in *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. Roland Polansky (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 203-20

Aristotle explains practical wisdom as a person's ability to make a right decision in a timely manner.

Brendon Cook informs us that Erasmus used the word *prudentia* to translate the Greek word *φρόνησις* to suggest an act of wisdom accomplished with "intention and purpose." Cook explains that Erasmus arrives at the meaning by "equating the related adjective prudent with the word *φρόνιμος*" to describe someone who is "wise," "prudent," or of "sound judgement." At times, however, Erasmus understands wisdom in the context of Judeo-Christian tradition where it is more like *sapientia* and refers to the perceptiveness that comes from the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures.[34] On more than one occasion, he refers to it as a power, just like the Holy Spirit or the spirit of Christ, which a believer could wield against evil. His book, *Enchiridion militis Christiani* (1503), translated as *The Manual of the Christian Knight*, is the prime example of this in which he encourages Christians to live virtuously by "warring strongly against our [their] own inclinations."[35] The word *enchiridion* in Greek literally means "dagger" and in evoking an imagery of a weapon Erasmus persuades Christians to fight against their own fallen state, to with-stand their own demons. Moreover, he equates wisdom or reason to Christ and identifies malice as the common enemy of Christianity:

> The author and promoter of all wickedness is Belial, the prince of darkness, after whole example whoever walketh in darkness shall be overwhelmed in eternal night. On the contrary, Christ is the true light, that scattereth the mists of worldly wisdom,

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34. Brendan Cook, ""Prudentia" in More's "Utopia": The Ethics of Foresight," *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme* 36, no. 1 (2013), www.jstor.org/stable/43446324.Brendan Cook makes a similar remark about More arguing that the writer uses the terms *sapientia* and *prudentia* interchangeably in his novel.
35. Desiderius Erasmus, *A Book Called in Latin Enchiridion militis Christiani, and in English The Manual of the Christian Knight: Replenished with most Wholesome Precepts.* (Methuen & co., 1905), 31.

the brightness of his Father's glory; even their Justification and Redemption who are regenerate, and according to St. Paul, he is wisdom himself.[36]

By wisdom Erasmus does not mean worldly wisdom, which is irrational in his view, but the knowledge in its truest form. Wisdom in the Aristotelean sense—a superior judgment that allows a person to differentiate right from wrong — is Christ- like, and that is the true wisdom for Erasmus.

Furthermore, Erasmus insisted on the pursuit of knowledge. However, such a pursuit came with the condition that it should be an expression of love for Christ, and the purpose of learning should be the wellbeing of humanity:

> Are you a lover of learning? You do well, if you do it for the sake of Christ. But if you love it from a desire to know only, you by that means rest there, whence you ought to set out. But if you pursue knowledge, that by its help you can unravel the hidden meanings of scriptures, and thereby bring yourself and others to delight therein; then apply closely to your studies, but carry them on no further, than you think they may become serviceable to your cause of virtue. If you have a just confidence in your abilities and hope for great gains thereby in Christ, go on like a bold adventurer, to make great discoveries in the Heathen world of Knowledge, and to enrich the temple of the Lord with the spoils of Egyptians.[37]

By suggesting that the quest for knowledge is godliness, Erasmus validates not only classical education, but all sort of knowledge. He repeatedly insists that in the acquisition of truth source is of least importance, and what matters is your intentions. Erasmus recommends delving into the "Heathen world of Knowledge" to have a better understanding of God's works.

Following his own advice, in *Enchiridion,* Erasmus uses Aristotle's concept of *techne,* which means logical and rational knowledge, to explain the purpose of sciences. In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle explains *techne,* or craft*,* as a knowledge that is universal and that cannot be

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36. Erasmus, *A Book Called in Latin Enchiridion militis Christiani, and in English The Manual of the Christian Knight: Replenished with most Wholesome Precepts.*, 75.
37. Erasmus, *A Book Called in Latin Enchiridion militis Christiani, and in English The Manual of the Christian Knight: Replenished with most Wholesome Precepts.*, 97.

changed. We understand such knowledge in the modern terms of scientific knowledge; however, scholars have argued that such translation is faulty because *techne* does not essentially involves experimentation. He further explains *techne* by separating it from *arête*, or virtue. He argues that while *techne* is a craft or an act, *arête* or virtue is the attitude, or the intent of the person acting. *Techne,* he holds does nothing by itself, but it can be used for virtuous, or evil reasons.[38] Similarly, borrowing from Aristotle, Erasmus argues that knowledge should only be pursued for the love of Christ and the study of science should be used solely for the humane causes. In this way, Erasmus distinguishes between good and bad knowledge, which depends on the intentions of the seeker of knowledge. The distinction that Erasmus makes between two types of knowledge alludes to the biblical account of man's fall and the lessons on Christian piety in the Book of Genesis. Milton will later expand on this theme in his grand epic, where Eve is faced with a dilemma of choosing between knowing and not knowing. Eve's decision to pursue knowledge was immoral not only because it was an act of disobedience, but also because it shows her lack of devotion to God. She desired knowledge for selfish and narcissistic reasons alone, and such love, as Erasmus had established already, was unproductive and vain.

In his work, Erasmus continued to unite learning with piety. Such education may sound restrictive to the modern readers, but by legitimizing all sort of knowledge, provided that its intents are pious, he opened pathways through which creativity could flow. Erasmus molded the future while he nostalgically looked on to the past. In his introduction to the translation of *The Praise of*

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38. Tom Angier, "Techne in Aristotle's Ethics: Crafting the Moral," (Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010). In the book Angier offers an extensive study on the role of *techne* in Aristotle's ethics.

the Folly, Leonard F. Dean observes that Erasmus felt he was living among the barbarians.[39] Dean elucidates his point by quoting Erasmus who wrote in 1489, "It is certain that in early ages the study of eloquence, as of other arts, was most flourishing, and afterwards, as the obstinacy of the barbarians increases it disappeared."[40] Erasmus exposes this barbarism in his book *Antibarbari*, or *A Book against the Barbarians*, which was written perhaps in 1495, but was published almost two decades later in 1520 because of its controversial contents. Erasmus sets the book in the dialectical format of Plato's Republic in which he conveys his point of view through the dialogues of the characters. Originally, *Antibarbari* was written as an oration, and in that edition Erasmus describes barbarians as indolents, who use religion as an excuse "not to read the ancients."[41] In the later version, J D. Tracy notes, he analyzes barbarians' attitude more deeply and points out their mistake: Barbarians are greatly mistaken if they think to be praised for having contempt for anything."[42] In *Antibarbari*, James Batt, one of the characters, voices Erasmus's faith in the human's ability to do good; he argues that a man naturally desire things that are "virtuous, pleasant or useful such as wealth, distinction, dignity, and pleasure," and a righteous man only shows contempt towards these things when they are "an obstacle to virtue."[43] Erasmus's theology is God-fearing, but it does not endorse mysticism. It does not alienate man from the material consciousness, but seeks transcendence through virtuous deeds that are profitable for humanity. Dean further argues that the theological problems that Erasmus immaturely tackles in his early years of *Antibarbari* were more fully expanded upon in *Enchiridion.* In his writings, Erasmus

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39. Desiderius Erasmus, *Praise of Folly*, trans. Leonard F. Dean (New York: Hendricks House, 1969), 3.
40. Qtd in Erasmus, *Praise of Folly*, 3. See Dean's introduction.
41. Qtd in J D Tracy, *Erasmus, the Growth of a Mind* (Italy: Droz, 1972), 52.
42. Tracy, *Erasmus, the Growth of a Mind*.
43. Tracy, *Erasmus, the Growth of a Mind*, 53.

separates true piety from pretentious piety. Erasmus denounces false show of piety through rituals and religious ceremonies and affirms that true piety is virtuous behavior.

By taking rituals out of the equation, Erasmus equates piety to virtue. Through this new equivalence he made it easy for his readers to see that classic moral philosophy was not far off from Christian beliefs. The characters in *Antibarbari* try to drive home the same point through their debate. In the book, four speakers from different walks of life try to figure out why human education was in a terrible condition in their times. Jodocus, the physician, holds the stars responsible; William Herman, another character, blames the time and the world in general. Among them James Batt plays the mouthpiece of Erasmus, who was also embittered by the derelict monks and religious leaders, and like Erasmus, thought that the only way to the future was by escaping into the past. He accuses the monks and scholastic theologian who have altered the original Christian faith and now were keeping people ignorant of the classics under the pretense of the defense of the religion. He sarcastically remarks that a monastic life is perhaps more immoral than the Greek poetry. He further adds that the differentiation between religious and secular was superfluous because Church Fathers knew classical works, and they were both pious and well-read. From there, the speakers rush to discuss another matter: what does mystic mean when they say that not the well-educated, but one with the pure heart will enter heaven. The speakers reject the belief as fallacious and go on to clarify that Christ preached simplicity of heart and not "simple-mindedness." They support their argument through the example of Paul, Peter, John, and James, stressing that not all Apostles were uneducated.[44]

Antibarbari is an example that demonstrates that for Erasmus wisdom was the highest form of virtue, and putting it in the Christian context, he understood it as a quality of God that was

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44. Erasmus, *Praise of Folly*, 4-5.

shared with all human beings. If wisdom or knowledge was a virtue then by the same token, ignorance, or the lack of knowledge was evil. Western utopian thinking is also influenced by this thinking as in early modern utopias knowledge and wisdom is considered as a highly desirable quality. For example, in Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis*, when sailors first arrive at the island of Bensalem, impressed by the progress of the native, they too like Erasmus admire the native's wisdom as an act of God: "God surely is manifested in this land."[45] Similarly, More's utopian society is praise worthy because it is prudent and uses knowledge to its best end.

Erasmus on Freewill, Liberty of Conscience, and Religious Tolerance

Erasmus was not alone in his admiration for classical antiquity; the increasing popularity of classical literature was due to its widespread acceptance in Italy. The growing regard for classical learning was a matter of concern for the orthodox Christians. W.M. Southgate reports that the religious leaders of the Renaissance thought negatively of the classical philosophy. They desired to purify Western Christianity by purging it of Aristotelean and Platonic influences that became popular during the middle ages. Not only the religious humanists, but the first generation of nonreligious humanists also disapproved of Plato and Aristotle, and were more inclined towards Greek Sophism.[46] While reformists rejected Aristotle's and Plato's philosophy, and restricted classical influence to Saint Augustine, Erasmus turned to the teachings of Thomas Aquinas, Socrates, and Socrates's followers. Erasmus, who had earlier supported Luther asserting that he was not a heretic, found his beliefs at odds with Luther's teachings.[47] Erasmus and Luther disagreed

45. Francis Bacon, *New Atlantis and The Great Instauration*, ed. Wiley Blackwell (United Kingdom: John Wiley & Sons, 2017), 69.
46. Southgate, "Erasmus: Christian Humanism and Political Theory," 243.
47. Roland H. Bainton, *Erasmus of Christendom* (New York: Scribner, 1969), 193.

on the fundamental theological question of freewill. Erasmus was a follower of Aquinas, and like

him insisted that freewill was central to Paul's teaching.

On the other hand, Luther being a devoted follower of Augustine was adamant that freewill

has no place in Christian theology. Erasmus rebuts Luther's argument in his first polemical attack

on the theologian in an open letter, *De libero arbitrio diatribe sive collation, The Freedom of the*

Will (1525): "from the time of apostle down to the present no writer has yet emerged who has

totally taken away the power of freedom of choice, save only Manichaeus and Wyclif."[48] Erasmus

resented medieval theologians who excluded freewill from Christian theology, which he believed

was vital to the teachings of Christ. He argued that every disciple of Christ except for a handful of

followers were proponents of freewill.

That is why, to prove his point, in his open letter on the freedom of will, he eschews

classical references:

> Now, since Luther does not acknowledge the authority of any writer, of however
> distinguished a reputation, but only listens to the canonical Scriptures, how gladly
> do I welcome this abridgment of labor, for innumerable Greek and Latin writers
> treat of free choice, either as a theme or incidentally, so that it would be a great
> labor to collect out of them what each one has to say either for or against free choice,
> and to explain the several meanings of each individual opinion, or to resolve or
> approve their arguments — a tedious and long-winded affair, and as regards Luther
> and his friends, quite useless, especially as they not only disagree among
> themselves, but often contradict their own doctrine.[49]

He argues that he could have drawn from Greek writings of antiquity to support his argument since

the Greek writers have written extensively on the theme, but Luther disapproves of any source

outside scriptures, and therefore Erasmus quotes exclusively from scriptures. He repeatedly insists

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48. Erasmus and Luther, *Luther and Erasmus : Freewill and Salvation*, 4.
49. Erasmus and Luther, *Luther and Erasmus : Freewill and Salvation*, 42.

on the Christian origins of the idea of the freedom of choice, although he extolls Greek writers significantly, and distinguishes them as men of superior intelligence.

The question of freewill is fundamental to Christian theology because of its connection to the deeper theological arguments about salvation, and Divine Justice. Freewill empowers man and makes him responsible for his own destiny, and with that it questions the notion of Divine omniscience and omnipotence. Roland H. Bainton explains that Erasmus opposed Luther's theological reasoning against freewill because he thought it "makes man into an automaton" who is controlled sometimes by God and other times by devil.[50] Luther argued that man is not completely a slave to God's will. He is free in his everyday affairs of life in which a non-Christian can be as good, or may be better, as a Christian, but his freedom is restricted when it comes to fulfilling God's demands. God, he persists, demands more than just righteousness alone. He asks for obedience, humility, and "purity of heart," which man cannot deliver because of his innately corrupted nature.[51] Erasmus agreed with Luther on the point that man cannot be perfect and that salvation comes through grace, but he argued that we cannot ignore the passage in scriptures where God has promised rewards for good deeds: "and great shall be your reward" (Matthew 5:12; KJV). The reward, Luther argues, was simply the appreciation of God's grace. Luther was committed to the belief that man has no merit. Erasmus, partially agreeing with Luther, held that there was no genuine merit (*meritum de condigno*), but was of the mind that there must be some approximate merit (*meritum de congruo*). He conceived a cooperation between man and God that could lead man to his salvation. He explains his point of view through the example of a toddler: when a toddler learns to walk he walks a little and then falls down. At this point, an adult would extend

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50. Bainton, *Erasmus of Christendom*, 187.
51. Bainton, *Erasmus of Christendom*, 187.

his hand and would assist the child to get to his destination. He imagined that God's grace works in a similar manner.[52]

Erasmus was not wholly against Luther; he tried his best to avoid altercation with Luther. In a letter, Erasmus admitted that he moved to Basel because it would have been hard for him to live in Louvain without accepting the role of a "hangman."[53]Erasmus was under pressure from both sides, Pope Adrian of Utrecht and Lutherans both wanted him to exert his influence to sway the general public to their sides. Erasmus was tactful enough to evade direct participation. He refused to reside in Rome, and precluded the society of the men that were associated with Luther. He never fully denounced Luther's theology. He and Luther had similar views against the doctrinal control of the papacy, but he disagreed with Luther when he proposed dismantling the authority of the Church. Erasmus thought Luther was giving rise to sectarianism, which was nothing but abomination for Erasmus. Before his letter on freewill, Erasmus was pressed a few times to declare Luther as heretic. In one of his letters, Pope Adrian urged him to come to the defense of the Church: "Beloved son, you are a man of great learning. You are the only one to refute the heresies of Martin Luther by which innumerable souls are taken to damnation. Rise up to the defense of the Church. How much better that the Lutherans should be reclaimed by your eloquence than by our thunders, to which, as you know we are averse."[54] Erasmus replied, "Who I am to write? I am said to be a Lutheran because I do not attack Luther, but I am reviled by Lutherans. I once reveled in the fraternity of scholars. I'd die rather than renounce so many friendships. And I would die rather than join a faction. How many times I have testified that I am not a Lutheran."[55] Erasmus's

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52. Bainton, *Erasmus of Christendom*, 188.
53. Bainton, *Erasmus of Christendom*, 172.
54. Qtd in Bainton, *Erasmus of Christendom*, 178.
55. Qtd in Bainton, *Erasmus of Christendom*, 178-79.

response clearly expresses his reluctance to write against Luther, and he avoided it as long as he could.

It was not until Thomas More and his other friends persuaded him to speak up to restrain Luther because they thought he was radicalizing reformation. Even then, Erasmus steered clear of direct attack and chose to write about the freedom of the freewill— Bainton informs us that it was Henry VIII who proposed the theme. In his letter on freewill, Erasmus introduced himself as the seeker of truth, a believer of moderation, and to this date scholars remember him by those titles. The titles are not erroneous because he truly believed in moderation, and for that reason he neither supported Rome, nor Luther. In his letter to the Lutheran, Ulrich Von Hutten he wrote:

> I do not deny I seek peace wherever possible. I believe in listening to both sides with open ears. I love liberty. I will not, I cannot serve a faction. I have said all of Luther's teaching cannot be suppressed without suppressing gospel, but because I favored Luther first I do not see I called upon to approve he has said since. I have never called Luther a heretic. I have complained of dissention and tumult.[56]

From the letter, it is clear that Erasmus thought Luther was against human freedom. However, a modern reader may hold the same opinion about Erasmus as well, who was imposing the authority of the Church over the individual. Erasmus was not a moral liberal in the modern sense, but he certainly steered the world towards it. Through his support for freewill, Erasmus made other liberties possible such as the religious liberty.

Erasmus advocated for religious tolerance— if not for all religions then at least for all Christian sects. We can have a glimpse of his tolerance in his letter to Hutten:

> Let is not devour each other like fish. Why upset the whole world over paradoxes, some unintelligible, some debatable, some unprofitable? The world is full of rage, hate, and wars. What will the end be if we employ only bulls and the stake? It is not a great feat to burn a little man. It is a great achievement to persuade him. [57]

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56. Qtd in Bainton, *Erasmus of Christendom*, 177.
57. Qtd in Bainton, *Erasmus of Christendom*, 178.

Erasmus did not only preach tolerance, but he practiced it as well. His patience for the Lutherans as well as for the supporters of the Roman Catholic Church was an expression of his religious tolerance. Whether or not Erasmus would have been equally tolerant of other religions is debatable, but he proved it through his attitude that he was as moderate and temperate as he portrayed himself to be in his letters.

For moderate he was, and therefore he carefully put his faith in the teachings of Aquinas. Had he not been a moderate, he would have turned to Pelagius's interpretation of freewill, which rejects the idea of original sin and insists that man can choose his own destiny without any divine intervention. He very thoughtfully puts his trust in the teaching of Aquinas who advocated for freewill through God's grace. Erasmus thought Aquinas's interpretation was reasonable and more rational than Augustine's explanation of God's plan:

> Again, suppose for a moment that it were true in a certain sense, as Augustine says somewhere, that "God works in us good and evil, and rewards his own good works in us, and punishes his evil works in us"; what a window to impiety would the public avowal of such an opinion open to countless mortals! Especially in view of the slowness of mind of mortal men, their sloth, their malice, and their incurable propensity toward all manner of evil. What weakling will be able to bear the endless and wearisome warfare against his flesh? What evildoer will take pains to correct his life?[58]

Here, Erasmus criticizes Luther's theology for purely civic reasons. He argues that Augustine's rejection of freewill minimizes an individuals' role in determining their own destiny, and discourages them to make any positive contribution to the society. On the other hand, freedom of choice liberates individuals by making them responsible for their actions and spurs them to good deeds. If this incentive is taken away from humanity then an average person, who is a slave of his or her desires, has no reason to fight against his or her own baser impulses.

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58. Erasmus and Luther, *Luther and Erasmus : Freewill and Salvation*, 41.

As we will see in succeeding chapters, the themes that Erasmus chose for his colloquies and polemics— freewill, liberty of conscience and tolerance— More turned them into a utopian fantasy. A century later, Milton concretized the arguments to revolutionize the politics of England.

Erasmus on Education and Virtuous Rule

During his life time, Erasmus's direct involvement in politics had been minimum, but he has been rightfully titled a kingmaker by some scholars. Literacy and education were always his chief concerns, but as he matured and earned recognition through his literary achievements, he turned his attention to the instruction of the young rulers. Education, for Erasmus, was not without political implications. David Rundle argues that this notion was commonly endorsed by all the devotees of *studias humanitatis:* they all believed in the power of education to influence politics. Rundle calls it the "pride of pedagogy"; humanists of the Renaissance borrowed this pride, or confidence from Socrates.[59] In *The Apology*, Plato pens Socrates's defense of his conduct, and among other charges he was also accused of taking money from the student for his instruction. He denies the charge, but at the same time argues that as the instructor of young men— who are better than any other living creature— he would have rightly deserved that tuition and merited more.

> There is actually a Parian philosopher residing in Athens, of whom I have heard; and I came to hear of him in this way: - I met a man who has spent a world of money on the Sophists, Callias the son of Hipponicus, and knowing that he had sons, I asked him: "Callias," I said, "if your two sons were foals or calves, there would be no difficulty in finding someone to put over them; we should hire a trainer of horses or a farmer probably who would improve and perfect them in their own proper

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59. David Rundle, "Humanism Across Europe: The Structures of Contacts," in *Humanism in Fifteenth-Century Europe*, ed. David Rundle (Great Britain: The Society for the study of Medieval Languages and Literature, 2012), 307-14.

virtue and excellence; but as they are human beings, whom are you thinking of placing over them? Is there anyone who understands human and political virtue?[60] For Socrates, the education of youth was of paramount importance, and teaching was a prestigious post. In his view, everybody could not be a teacher; only a virtuous person is worthy of teaching the youth.

Erasmus harbors similar concerns for the education of youth; particularly in *The Education of a Christian Prince* where his language betrays Socratic influence, but he shifts his focus exclusively on the education of a young prince: "Although each one of all the great arts is difficult, there is none finer nor more difficult than that of ruling well. Why in the case of this one alone do we feel the need of no training, but deem it sufficient to have been born for it?"[61] For many years Erasmus occupied himself with the instruction of young princes. He wrote didactic letters to the neighboring royals: Charles V, Henry VIII of England, and Ferdinand of Spain.[62] In his view, only a virtuous prince could have a successful rule because his people will submit to him willingly. He argues that in a monarchical system of governance the best suitable ruler cannot be selected through voting; therefore, a good prince can only be raised by taking greater care in his upbringing:

> Where there is no power to select a prince, the man who is to educate the future prince must be selected with comparable care; To produce a good prince, these and similar seeds should be sown from the start by parents, nurses, and tutor in the boy's young mind; and let him learn voluntarily and not under compulsion. For this is the way to bring up a prince who is destined to rule over free and willing subjects.[63]

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60. Plato, "The Apology," in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, ed. Edith and Huntington Hamilton, Cairns (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 20b.
61. Desiderius Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, trans. Lester Kruger Born (United States: Octagon Books, 1965), 143.
62. Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*. Lisa Jardine mentions that Erasmus wrote *Institutio Principis Christiani* in 1516 and dedicated it to Charles V, and in 1517, he sent a copy to Henry VIII and later that year to Ferdinand of Spain.
63. Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, 53.

Erasmus was against educating minors through exertion and severe punishments. In this respect, he looks up to Plato's moral philosophy which aimed to inspire virtuous behavior in a way that people will recognize the Good and do the Good voluntarily.

Erasmus trusted man's potential, but distrusted his nature. Adhering to Catholic beliefs, he thought man was tainted by origin sin; therefore, human beings cannot accomplish anything without institutional control. It is with this distrust, he defends the authority of Church without whose supervision in scriptural interpretation and doctrinal authority, he thought, humanity would fall off its right path. With this doubt, he advises against delving too deep into the scriptures:

> For there are some secret places in the Holy Scriptures into which God has not wished us to penetrate more deeply and, if we try to do so, then the deeper we go, the darker and darker it becomes, by which means we are led to acknowledge the unsearchable majesty of the divine wisdom, and the weakness of the human mind.[64]

He was resolute in his thinking that full and complete understanding of scriptures is beyond human reach, and it is more likely that man with his limited knowledge and sinful disposition will interpret things wrongly. Interpretation was a matter of huge importance during Erasmus's time. After all, it was the interpretation that was the root cause of religious schism, and consequently the reason of discord between Luther and Erasmus: "our battle is about the meaning of Scripture."[65]

With the mixed feelings of trust and distrust, Erasmus brings the matters of human conscience and virtue to the civic and political sphere. His writings simultaneously endorse and question the medieval ideals of kingship. The doctrines of medieval Christianity such as the Great Chain of Being and the divine rights of king ranked kings higher than nobility and commoners in hierarchy, and encouraged unlimited powers in a sovereign making him accountable to none but

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64. Erasmus and Luther, *Luther and Erasmus : Freewill and Salvation*, 37.
65. Erasmus and Luther, *Luther and Erasmus : Freewill and Salvation*, 43.

God. The political grounds for a monarch's unquestioned authority were also rooted in the issue of free-will, in the orthodox Christian view. Erasmus did not challenge the divine right of a king, but he did mandate an accountable rule. Through his conduct book for royals, *The Education of a Young Prince*, he gave the Western world an image of an ideal or virtuous prince, which further inspired the utopia of the classical republicanism or civic humanism.

Erasmus, along with other humanists like Machiavelli and More, were humanizing the divine authority of kings by delineating the role and responsibilities of a monarch: Machiavelli wrote *The Prince* in 1513 and Erasmus penned his treatise *The Education of a Christian Prince in 1516.* Lisa Jardine attributes the increased attention to the education and training of royal blood to "the political instability of the times, and the 'moral panic' generated by a period of high dynastic aspiration and territorial ambitions on the part of the most powerful princely houses of Europe (the Medici in Italy, the Valois in France and the Habsburgs in Spain, Germany, and the Low countries)."[66]However, Erasmus's point of view on the education of a prince is in opposition to Machiavelli's teachings. While Machiavelli believed in governing by force, Erasmus insisted that a prince should rule justly and kindly to win the favor of his people and to avoid rebellion. His treatise inverts hierarchy by proposing that a prince's existence relies on his state and not the other way round: "A prince simply cannot exist without a state, and in fact the state takes in the prince, rather than the reverse. What makes a prince great man, except the consent of his subject?"[67]

More personifies Erasmus's ideal ruler in the character of King Utopus. A century or so later, Milton will use Erasmus's idea of an ideal ruler to legitimize the regicide of King Charles I. Erasmus, More, and even Milton were not essentially against the divine right of kings; and yet,

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66. Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, vi.
67. Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, vii.

they initiated conversations that would later challenge the doctrine. Through their actions and writings they were engaging the world's attention to Socratic inquiry: What should be an ideal city like? For what else is More's *Utopia*, if not a Socratic inquiry? In fact, the whole novel is based on the Socratic method of dialectics in which More engages characters in argumentative dialogues to arrive at the best possible model of an ideal government. Notably, in their discussion, foremost attention is paid to the role of a king which will also be part of my discussion.

In the next chapter, I will explore how Erasmus's Christian Humanism informs More's utopia. We will observe how More's work exhibits Erasmus's understanding of the classical moral philosophy, particularly Plato's, and how he fuses it with Orthodoxy to create his imaginary virtuous state. In the chapter, I will try to grasp More's understanding of virtue, liberty and his vision of an ideal rule and ruler. The discussion will further aid us in understanding Milton's utopia.

CHAPTER 3

ERASMUS'S LEGACY IN MORE'S *UTOPIA*

Scholars of the period often depict Thomas More as a staunch Catholic with a Protestant mindset. More the writer is astonishingly in direct contradiction to More the man. In *Utopia*, More sketches an ideal state with the liberalism of a humanist; however, in his political context, he defended Catholic orthodoxy with his life by refusing to accept the legitimacy of Henry VIII's divorce from Catherine of Aargon for which he was beheaded in 1535. Unlike More, Raphael Hythloday, the narrator of *Utopia,* is a liberalist: he advocates freewill, liberty of conscience and religious tolerance*,* promotes equality, and questions the need for an organized religion. It is hard to reconcile the broadminded writer of *Utopia* with the persona of someone who, as the Lord Chancellor of the state, routinely interrogated and persecuted Protestants, wrote pamphlets against heresy, and barred heterodoxy. In *The Life of Sir Thomas*, More's son-in- law, William Roper, remembers his father- in-law as a "resolute" and "constant" Catholic until the end of his life.[68] According to Roper, during his life, More gave about one thousand pounds yearly in charity to poor Catholics, and after his death, he left a good portion of his assets to incarcerated Catholics, who were in jails because of their unwavering faith in Catholicism. Could the man and the writer be the one and the same? The question is generally directed towards every artist's work, but in

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68. William Roper, *The Life of Sir Thomas More*, ed. Elsie Vaughan Hitchcock (United States: Kraus Reprint Company, 1978), xiv.

More's case, one is compelled to ask this question in order to understand the different natures of the man and the writer.

Clarence Green remains unmoved by More's dual personality, and argues that the ambiguity surrounding More was the trademark of the Renaissance men: More, like Shakespeare, represents the confusion of the Renaissance period. Sixteenth- century England was neither completely Catholic, nor purely Protestant and that was the cause of the confusion, as Green notes: It could no longer rely on the principles that had been previously satisfactory, but it had not yet found a set on which it could rely."[69] However, it was not only a matter of religious schism; the growing disdain for Catholicism in Europe was further deepened when humanism started to take root. More's personality exemplifies the struggle between the classical secularism and Christian orthodoxy. In that, More was as confounding as Erasmus, and why should he not be? They were after all peas in the same pod: deeply committed to their religion and even more, if not equally, to the humanist cause.

Erasmus's influence on More is such that the one is rarely mentioned without the other. More was probably ten years younger than Erasmus, but in spite of their age difference their common interests led to a bond which lasted for thirty years or so. Throughout his life, he remained a stalwart supporter of Erasmus's humanism. Erasmus was acquainted with More on his visit to England in 1499 through a group of like-minded humanists: John Colet, Willian Grocyn, and Thomas Linacre. Over the years, Erasmus and More stayed in touch with each other through letters while engaging in many intellectual pursuits. One of them was the translation of Lucian's work

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69. Clarence Green, "Doctor Faustus: Tragedy of Individualism," *Science & Society* 10, no. 3 (1946): 276, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40399769.

from Greek to Latin. Lucian of Samosata was a Greek satirist and rhetorician known for his mock-serious manner and both scholars were drawn to him because of his unique style of rhetoric.

Lucian was less popular with theologians like Luther, Martin Van Dorp, a professor of theology at Louvian University, and Tyndale, who condemned him for ridiculing Christianity, and disapproved of the circulation of his writings. For the same reason, they disapproved of Erasmus's famous *Moriae Encomium*, or *The Praise of Folly*, which mimics Lucian's sense of humor. Dorp, Dean records, was so offended that he sent a letter to Erasmus in 1514 to inform him that his work is looked upon with disfavor: "your Moria has excited a great disturbance even among those who were formerly your most devoted admirers…It is not for me to advise but you can easily make everything right by composing and publishing in reply to Folly, a Praise of Wisdom."[70] To which, Erasmus reacted by first writing to More to vent his anger over Dorp's comment. Later, both of them wrote to Dorp to explain that the piece was not to be taken seriously and whatever Erasmus had satirized in the *Praise of Folly*, he had already communicated in *Enchiridian*. Erasmus never wrote a *Praise of Wisdom*; however, it is perhaps coincidental that two years later, in 1516, More's *Utopia* was published. There may not be any connection between More's *Utopia* and Dorp's letter. More may have already been working on *Utopia* when Dorp sent his letter to Erasmus. But what if More's *Utopia* was actually written on Dorp's advice? The seeds of a utopia may have been germinating in More's mind, but Dorp's comment could have been catalytic in concretizing those thoughts. Such argument may be speculative, but it is worth considering for two reasons: one, More's *Utopia* and Erasmus's *The Praise of Folly* betray Lucian influence; two, More's *Utopia* is truly a praise of wisdom, a travelogue which records the political achievements of men from the

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70. Desiderius Erasmus, *Opus Epistolarum*, ed. P.S. and Allen (England: University of Oxford 1906), 611-12.

unknown parts of the world. More shares the purpose of the novella in the beginning of the first

chapter:

> But what he told us that he saw in every country where he came, it were very long to declare; neither it is my purpose at this time to make rehearsal thereof. But peradventure in another place I will speak of it, chiefly such things as shall be profitable to be known, as in special be those decrees and ordinances that he marked to be well and wittily provided and enacted among such people as do live together in a civil policy and good order. For of such things did we basely inquire and demand of him, and he likewise very willingly told us of the same. But as of monsters, because they be no news, of them we were nothing inquisitive, for nothing is more easy to be found than barking Scyllas, ravening Celaenos, and Laestrygons, devourers of people and such, like great and incredible monsters. But to find citizens ruled by good and wholesome laws, that is an exceeding rare and hard thing. But as he marked many fond and foolish laws in those new found lands, so he rehearsed divers act and constitution whereby these our cities, nations, and kingdoms may take example to amend their faults, enormities, and errors, whereof in another place, as I said I will entreat.[71]

The lines undermine the arguments of critics like R.S Sylvester, Thomas I. White, and Alistair

Fox, who claim that *Utopia* was merely a mockery of utopianism, and More's intentions in writing

the novel were not to endorse, but to condemn utopian thinking. Here, fearing that his novel may

strike as another imitation of Virgil's and Homer's epic, More distinguishes his novel from other

works by declaring that his protagonist, though a sailor just like Ulysses and Aeneas, is on a very

different expedition: his quest is an ideal system of governance. The lines leave no doubt that the

purpose of novel is not only to entertain, but to inform and instruct the readers about other forms

of governments, or alternate societies.

Certainly, a utopia prescribes a way of living. From that perspective, More's *Utopia* is a

conduct book; just as Plato's *Republic* or any other utopian writing is a conduct book. The novel

recommends a system of values which are non-Catholic, and sometimes even non-Christian and

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71. Thomas More, *Utopia*, trans. Ralph Robinson, ed. Wayne A. Rebhorn (New York: Barnes and Nobles Classics, 2005), 20.

wholly secular, and yet other times it suggests a blend of both secular and Christian ethics. The novel imitates *Republic* in expressing thematic concerns about an ideal state and the conduct of its citizens in a conversation between the characters of the narrative. However, the utopian characteristics that Hythloday imports from the far-off land were none other than what Erasmus had been campaigning for all along. The politics of More's utopian state is greatly influenced by the ideas expressed in Plato's Republic as well as by Erasmus's advices to young Prince Charles V in his book *Institutio Principis Christiani*, or *The Education of a Christian Prince.*

That More's work embodies Erasmian values is not a new argument; many scholars have made this connection in the past; and recently, participating in the discussion Horan insists that "More's Utopia should be read as an Erasmian work."[72]I once again invoke the Erasmian aspects of More's utopianism as a point of reference and comparison to Milton's utopianism. The following sections underscore the Erasmian elements of More's utopian society.

Hythloday: "A Sage Philosopher"

The biggest achievement of More's *Utopia* is not that it gave the Western world a model of a perfect state, but that it encouraged it to search and borrow from other systems of governance. In literary circles, this liberty triggered a trend which saw an influx of utopian writings during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Yet the oddest quality of More's novella is that it has a non-Christian model for a perfect society. Inevitably, More's liberalism carries an Erasmian message which advocates for "the great discoveries in the Heathen world of Knowledge" provided it is for "the greater gains" of Christ's

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72. Yoran, *Between Utopia and Dystopia: Erasmus, Thomas More, and the Humanist Republic of Letters*, 99.

cause.[73] In *Utopia*, this element of Erasmian humanism is personified in the character of the sagacious foreigner— Raphael Hythloday. Hythloday is an embodiment of Erasmus's idea of wisdom and knowledge; in fact, the whole book is truly what Dorp would have called "a praise of wisdom." In the first book of the novel, Peter Giles, More's friend, refers to Hythloday as someone who is more like "prince Ulysses" and "sage philosopher Plato" than "mariner Palinurus."[74] Wolfgang E.H. Rudat diverts our attentions to the underlying meanings of the remark and tries to convince us of its satirical tone. Undoubtedly, *Utopia* could be a satirical piece, written to mock the utopian thinking of reformists. Ulysses's heroic trait in Homer's epic is *metis,* which means crafty or sly, and he uses cunningness throughout the poem to survive through his journey. It is possible, as Rudat has argued, More compares Hythloday to Ulysses as a caution to the readers that Hythloday's story is nothing but a net of lies similar to the ones that Ulysses weaves to win over Cyclops.

However, it is noteworthy that More does not compare Hythloday to Ulysses alone, but also calls him a "sage philosopher," which is another classical allusion. A "sage" in classical philosophy is someone who is wise and prudent (*ho Sophos)*; the term is also used to describe a "good person" (*ho agathos*) and a virtuous person (*ho spoudias* and *ho asteios).*[75] Socrates, in *Symposium,* differentiates a sage from a philosopher. A sage for Socrates is a god-like figure, a possessor of wisdom. A philosopher, on the other hand, is the one who seeks wisdom; in *Republic,* Plato defines philosopher as someone "who feels no distaste in sampling every study, and who attacks his task of learning gladly and cannot get enough of it, him we shall justly pronounce the

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73. Erasmus, *A Book Called in Latin Enchiridion militis Christiani, and in English The Manual of the Christian Knight: Replenished with most Wholesome Precepts.*, 97.
74. More, *Utopia*, 17.
75. Julia Annas, "The Sage in Ancient Philosophy," *Anthropine Sophia* (2008): 11-27.

lover of wisdom, the philosopher, shall we not."[76]Remember: a sage is different from a philosopher; he is not a seeker of wisdom because he has wisdom. Thus, from classical point of view, Hythloday is either virtuous seeker of wisdom, or embodies both the seeker and the wise. Under both definitions, he symbolizes an exchange of wisdom, knowledge, or values: he has the knowledge of the exotic places, their customs and traditions, and as he continues to travel he acquires more knowledge. And by virtue of connection, *Utopia* also becomes an intermediary with Erasmian intentions: to bring heathen wisdom to the Christian world and, like a philosopher, to accumulate more wisdom by influencing future utopias.

Moreover, Peter Giles's remark is significant for its classical political undertone. In fact the whole debate between Hythloday and the other characters voices platonic concerns about a ruler's duties and character. Particularly, the connection that the remark draws between sailing and a philosopher is reminiscent of Plato's "Ship-of-State" metaphor in book VI of the *Republic.* The metaphor compares a state to a ship and argues that the only person best suitable to steer the ship is a philosopher. In Plato's argument, philosopher has the status of a navigator, or a "stargazer," and he is trustworthy because only he can direct the ship with his thoughtful directives.

With this understanding, the remark further validates Hythloday's role of a philosopher in the novel. Hythloday is reliable because he is a seasoned traveler and a thinker, which Plato saw as the striking characteristics of a philosopher: "They have no suspicion that the true pilot must give his attention to the time of the year, the seasons, the sky, the winds, the stars and all that pertain to his art, if he is to be a true ruler of a ship"[77] Hythloday embodies the persona of Plato's philosopher is further exhibited in his austere life style and the zeal for learning. In the novel,

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76. Plato, "Republic," 475c.
77. Plato, "Republic," 488d.

narrator informs us that Hythloday left all the money he had to his brother "for the desire he had to see and know the far countries of the world."[78]His reluctance to become a king's counselor and to use his knowledge and learning for the benefit of the "weal public" also expresses Platonic concerns about the rejection of a philosopher's wisdom in the spheres of government. A philosopher cannot contribute towards the well-being of his nation because ineligible politicians take control of the ship by influencing the ship owner, which symbolizes the king in monarchy and public in a democratic state. Plato held that every king is surrounded by a group of people, politicians or advisor, who would avoid any disagreement with the establishment for their own personal gains. Such people would climb the political ladder through flattery and sycophancy, and would only approve of old- fashioned wisdom and methods of governance to appease authorities. The same people would criticize new ideas, or would resist change fearing that it will make their own views obsolete:

> So both the raven and the apes think their own young ones fairest. Then if man in such a company, where some disdain and have despite at other other men's intentions, and some count their own best— if among such men," I say, "a man should bring forth anything that he hath read and done in times past, or that he hath seen done in times past, or that he hath done seen done in other places— there the hearers fare though the whole existimation of their wisdom were in jeopardy to be overthrown, and that ever after they should be accounted for every dizzards, unless they could be in other men's invention pick out matter to reprehend and find fault at.[79]

Hythloday uses the same argument to justify his unwillingness to serve a king. Hythloday is Plato's philosopher, who looks further into the future and directs the political efforts of the nation to the possibility of an ideal state. He is a quiet "stargazer;" unworldly and pensive, and, unlike the politicians that Plato compares to quibbling sailors, he is not power hungry.

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78. More, *Utopia*, 17.
79. More, *Utopia*, 23.

Additionally, a close comparison between Erasmus's biography and Hythloday reveals that Hythloday not only personifies Erasmus's humanism, but represents Erasmus himself. This point of view gives some weight to Merritt Abrash's argument that *Utopia* expresses More's "deepest misgiving" about an ideal society, and further speculates that the novel was a representation of the real argument between the three friends: Erasmus, More and Peter Giles. The character of More voices the writer's doubts about the existence of an ideal society as put forth by Plato and pursued by Erasmus. In contradiction, Hythloday counters More's misgivings by sharing a firsthand account of a state based on Platonic ideals. Like Erasmus, Hythloday reinstates confidence in Plato's *Republic,* which is symbolized in the state of Utopia. And by doing so he takes on Erasmus's role of an intermediary and implants classical values in Christianity. Besides that, Hythloday characterizes Erasmus is obvious in Hythloday's refusal to work as a king's advisor.

Erasmus, who was also a philosopher and the seeker of wisdom, had also refused to work for a king and Archbishop. John Jortin records that Erasmus makes an argument similar to Hyloday's in his letter to Servatius in which he refuses to return to Holland when he was requested to serve at Convent of the Regular Canon of Stein:

> You promise to seek out a place for me, where I may live and find advantage and profit: I cannot guess what you design: unless it to be to place me in a Nunnery, that I may be slave to women, I who have refused to serve Kings and Archbishop. Profit is what I value not: I would not be rich: I desire only what may enable me to preserve my health and pursue my studies, without being a burden on anyone.[80]

Erasmus has many things in common with Hythloday to justify the connection between the two: both are expatriates and philosophers; both refuse to serve royalty and reject worldly gains in the favor of intellectual pursuits. This point of view sees Hythloday as Erasmus's spokesperson and further authenticates *Utopia* as an expression of Erasmian humanism. If Hythloday is Erasmus

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80. John Jortin, *The Life of Erasmus* (London: Richard Taylor and Company, 1808), 54-55.

than his humanist teachings are mirrored in the character of King Utopus and his perfect kingdom. This understanding gives Hythloday's account credibility as a didactic and gives the whole story platonic purpose: Hythloday's travel to England becomes reminiscent of Plato's visit to Syracuse with the aim to convert the tyrant king Dionysius into a philosopher-king. Apparently, Hythloday has a similar aim at hand; he aims to transform the kingdom of England through the example of King Utopus. Like Erasmus, Hythloday's participation in politics is circuitous, but it is so powerful that it leaves deep imprints on the politics of succeeding generations.

Utopus: Plato's Philosopher King, and Erasmus's Christian Prince

"What does anointing mean if not greatness, leniency and clemency on the part of the prince?"[81]

Hythloday eschews politics, and remains committed to his role of a philosopher. In contrast, Utopus, the founder of Utopia, takes on the dual responsibility of a ruler and a philosopher and reifies Plato's idea of a philosopher king. In Book V of *Republic,* when asked by his companions what it is that their cities lack which prevents them from becoming an ideal state, Socrates responds that a utopian state is only possible if: "either philosophers become kings in our states or those whom we now call our kings and rulers take to the pursuit of philosophy seriously and adequately."[82]Repeatedly throughout the dialogues, Plato lectures his audience to train their citizen in virtue.[83] In *Republic*, Plato shares his vision of forming an elite class of philosophers who serve under rulers— the guardians of the state: "whichever, I said, appear competent to guard the laws

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81. Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, 152.
82. Plato, "Republic," 473d.
83. See, for instance, Apology 41e- 42a; Gorgias 521; Republic 403a, 500e ff.; Laws 643d-e. See also Mark Lutz, "Civic virtue and Socratic Virtue" where he discusses Plato's political philosophy at length.

and pursuit of society, these we should establish as guardians."[84]Plato maintained that the primary responsibility of the rulers is to instruct their citizens in virtue, and for that, philosophers, and not non-philosophers, are best- suited because they can teach through the example of their virtuous character. Robert Hoerber defines the relationship between the philosopher- ruler and the guardians to be such that "the philosopher rulers alone have the true knowledge and wisdom, while the courage of guardians depends on correct opinion, which they received from the ruling class"[85]

Erasmus gives the same advice to young Charles I in his treatise, *Institutio Principis Christiani*, or *The Education of a Christian Prince* where quoting Plato he compares a good prince to a dog who guards its flock.[86] He further emphasizes a prince's role of a philosopher- ruler by quoting the sayings of Eziekel and Solomon in the bible, and counsels the young prince that it is his foremost duty to instruct his people in virtue through his example: "And no prince should ease his conscious by saying, 'These things are for the bishops, not for me!' They surely are for you —— if you are really a Christian."[87] A good prince for Erasmus is like a father figure: "The good prince ought to have the same attitude toward his subjects as a good paterfamilias toward his household— for what else is a kingdom but a great family?"[88]Erasmus's views about a monarch's role are modeled after Plato's philosophy which made the king responsible for his people but in exchange for their individual liberties. In *Utopia*, More reinforces Plato's political philosophy through the character of Utopus, which asserts that the main aim of politician is "to care for its soul."[89]Plato's political theory which assigns a monarch the role of a guardian also restricts individual's liberty

84. Plato, "Republic," 484c.
85. Robert G. Hoerber, "More on Justice in the "Republic"," *Phronesis* 5, no. 1 (1960), www.jstor.org/stable/4181662.
86. Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, 167-68.
87. Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, 168.
88. Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, 170.
89. Plato, "Republic," 650b.

and imposes a strict collectivist culture on the society as we see in Utopia. I will discuss the collectivism of Utopia in the next section; in this section, I will focus on how Erasmus's understanding of a king and a tyrant has influenced the politics of More's Utopia, particularly the character of Utopus.

By drawing a parallel between Erasmus's *Institutio* and More's Utopus, I by no means intend to suggest that Erasmus pioneered the accountable rule. Born cites countless works from medieval and classical antiquity that emphasize the moral virtue of a prince and his responsibilities towards his kingdom.[90] However, Erasmus's influence in both literary and political realms should not be underestimated; for he wrote extensively, and as mentioned earlier, directly to the kings and princes. Most importantly, we can draw one connection with certainty and that is with More's *Utopia*. *Utopia* was published in December 1516 when Erasmus's *Institutio* was already published in April of the same year.[91] Erasmus's correspondence shows that More had read *Institutio* before its publication, and *Utopia* considers all the issues that Erasmus had discussed in his work. Therefore, it is not irrational to speculate that Utopus's character exemplifies the characteristics of a good prince as detailed in Erasmus's treatise.

Before we analyze Utopus's character we need to determine its political designation which Wayne A. Rebhorn argues is controversial. Rebhorn contends against Utopus's title as King Utopus, claiming that More never assigned him any such title in his original work in its Latin publication. He holds that by giving the utopian leader the rank of a king, Robinson was imposing his understanding of a monarchical government on Utopia, which, in Rebhorn's opinion is primarily a republican state.[92] If Robinson's argument is true then it is plausible that More refrained

90. Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, 99.
91. Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, 129.
92. More, *Utopia*, xlvi

from giving Utopus the title to suggest a democratic rule. The omission of the title also suggests Erasmus's influence on political thought who wrote in *Institutio prinicpis:*

> Whoever wants to claim the title "prince" for himself and to shun the hated name "tyrant" ought to claim it for himself, not through deed of horror and threats, but by acts of kindness. For it is of no significance if he is called "prince" and "father of this country" by flatterers and the oppressed, when he is a tyrant in fact.[93]

In the same book, Erasmus mentions that God in Holy Scriptures describes a tyrant by the title of "king" and he gives the reason for that is because in old times " the title of king was as hateful as that of tyrant."[94] May be, More was also aware of the specific passages in the Bible and therefore he did not choose to give Utopus the title of a king so he could serve as a contrast to the tyrannous monarchical ruler at home—Henry VIII.

However, it is a mere presumption because nowhere in the novel More mentions that Utopus was elected through a democratic process. It is, however, suggested in the beginning of Book Two that he won the territory by conquest. Nevertheless, one thing is clear that Utopus embodies all the qualities, with or without the title, which Erasmus thought a Christian prince should be cultured in through education. Erasmus's expectations of a Christian ruler are not far from Platonic ideals. Lester K. Born notes that in *Opera* Erasmus reasons that only a philosopher can be a true prince; and for Erasmus, a philosopher and a true Christian is one and the same thing.[95] He was convinced that a non-philosophical king is more likely to commit tyranny: "'you are making us a philosopher, not a prince.' 'I am making a prince,' I answer, 'although you prefer a worthless sot like yourself instead of a real prince! You cannot be a prince if you are not a philosopher; you will be a tyrant."[96]

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93. Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, 170.
94. Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, 166.
95. Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, 31.
96. Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, 150.

Moreover, an ideal prince for Erasmus is the one who like Plato's philosopher sailor earns the honor to rule through merit rather than being born into it: "In navigation the wheel is not given to him who surpasses his fellows in birth, wealth, or appearance, but rather to him who excels in his skills as a navigator, in his alertness, and his dependability."[97]Utopus is that philosopher sailor because he did not inherit *Utopia* but conquered the land and thus he merited that the island should be named after him.

Erasmus argues that a candidate for kingship should possess all of the classical virtues and should be devoted to his public: "most naturally the power should be entrusted to him who excels all in the prerequisite kingly qualities of wisdom, justice, moderation, foresight, and zeal for the public welfare."[98] And Utopus has them all. Our first impression of him in Book Two of Utopia is of a zealot, who immediately after coming to the throne began his development project and disconnected the island from the rest of the world: "even at his first arriving and entering upon the land, forth with obtaining the victory, caused fifteen miles space of uplandish ground, where the sea had no passage, to be cut digged up and so brought the sea round about the land."[99] The separation of Utopia is significant because it is the policy which separates More's utopia from Milton's utopianism. In More's utopian island, citizens are trained in virtue by minimizing their exposure to evil and Utopus achieves this by severing their ties with the rest of the world. Erasmus also believed that the removal of evil should be one of the top priorities of a good prince: "The first duty of a good prince is to desire the best things possible. The second duty, to see by what means all things that are evil can be avoided or removed."[100] In contradiction, Milton, as we will

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97. Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, 140.
98. Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, 140.
99. More, *Utopia*, 62.
100. Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, 187.

learn, considers evil as indispensable from the reality of life and holds that true training in virtue is one's ability to learn good through evil. I will discuss this in detail in the next chapter. However, for now, we need to understand that from More's point of view the separation of Utopia from the world is an expression of Utopus's wisdom. In isolating the island, Utopus's intentions were to preserve the culture and traditions of the island, which communicates his far-sightedness or prudence, and his commitment to the state. He is the guardian of the state in the truest sense.

Utopus is not only the guardian of the state, but he is Erasmus's Christian prince as he is very considerate of the feelings of the locals. Erasmus considers benevolence not only as a quality of a Christian prince but his duty:

> He who is carrying on the offices of the state must give his attention to nothing but that. He must perform kindness even to those who are ungrateful, to those who do not understand, and to those who are opposed. If these conditions are not to your liking, why you desire the burden of ruling?[101]

Hythloday informs us that when Utopus started his development project he did not simply ordered the people to work on the project, but sent his own soldiers to work along with them to make sure that locals are not offended: He set to this work not only inhabitants of the island (because they should think it was done in contumely and despite) but also all his own soldiers."[102]

An additional benefit of sending the soldiers to work was that the project was finished promptly, which forced his critics to admire and envy the outcome. Utopus's decision to send his soldiers so they could assist the locals with the restructuring of the island exhibits his kindness as well as his prudence. We know that drawing from the classical moral philosophy, Erasmus counts wisdom as a virtue which is a desirable trait in a person, but in a prince it is a precondition or qualification:

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101. Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, 182.
102. More, *Utopia*, 62.

In the case of a private citizen, it is perhaps quite enough that he should have a good mind, since he is directed by the laws, and the public officials set forth what he shall do. But in the case of the prince, it is of little help that he shall have been endowed with a good mind that desires the best things if there is not also present wisdom which points the way to gain that which the prince desires.[103]

Here and everywhere else in *Institutio*, Erasmus insists that the wisdom of a prince is reflected in his policies and this is how we learn of Utopus's prudence— through his policies. Another example of his wise policies is his ground plan of the city that is spacious and full of gardens. Through Hythloday's account, we learn that utopians were growing their own vegetables, and the stores were set up right next to them, which served as the point of sale for their produce. All of this was made possible with the thoughtful planning of Utopus, who constructed the cities not for one generation, but for the generations to come. These accounts portray Utopus as an astute leader by Aristotle's description of a wise man: one who has the ability to do the right thing at the right time.

Among policies, law-making is the biggest challenge for any ruler and it is the real test of his wisdom. Erasmus asserts that a "good wise, and upright prince is nothing else than a sort of living law. He will make it his effort to pass not many laws but the best possible ones that will prove most beneficial to the state. A very few laws suffice for a well-organized state (*civitas*) under a good prince and honorable officials."[104] Utopus shows a similar leniency in imposing laws over Utopia. Hythloday tells us that there were fewer laws in the country and people are expected to know them by heart. The reason Hythloday gives for this clemency is that utopians thought it illogical to have more laws than what people can remember or follow. Besides, people are not handed over laws but are trained in them: "for all laws are made and published only to the intent that by them every man should be put in remembrance of his duty."[105] King Utopus's policies and

103. Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, 187.
104. Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, 221.
105. More, *Utopia*, 113.

laws condone liberty of conscience which also stem from the doctrine of freewill. Through these policies King Utopus demonstrates that he shares Erasmus's faith in human reason which Plato saw as inner justice. And only a wise person could access that justice and could be guided by it. By that standard, King Utopus is a wise person and Erasmus's true king. Erasmus argues that a good prince distinguishes himself from an average man through his facility of discriminating bad from good:

> The great mass of people are swayed by false opinions and are no different from those in Plato's cave, who took the empty shadows as the real things. It is the past of a good prince to admire none of the things that the common people consider of great consequence, but to judge all things on their own merits as "good" or "bad."[106]

King Utopus demonstrate this wisdom through his acceptance and understanding of religious diversity in his kingdom, and he further promotes this view by subjecting his people to tolerance.

Erasmus is known for his tolerance; however, his views on tolerance were not exactly how we understand tolerance to be. Gary Remer argues that Erasmus's conception of tolerance supports the traditional view of dialogue, which validates debates or discussions in the quest for truth. The search for truth mandates that the inquirer must be free to ask questions, and all views must be equally revered.[107] Remer further argues that Erasmus was convinced of Platonic philosophy which believed in the possibility of only one truth. Based on that, Erasmus held that through dialogues between diverse religions one true religion will shine through. Remer asserts that Milton followed the same line of thought in *Areopagitica* and so does More, in *Utopia*. In his account of the customs and laws of the utopians, Hythloday reveals their liberal way of life. He reports that before Utopus's occupation of the land people were divided over the matters of religion, which

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106. Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, 148.
107. Gary Remer, "Dialogues of Toleration: Erasmus and Bodin," *The Review of Politics* 56, no. 2 (1994): 305, www.jstor.org/stable/1407820.

caused great tension among the residents of Utopia. Therefore, as soon as he took charge of the land, he gave freedom to all to practice their religion: "he made a decree that it should be lawful for every man to favor and follow what religion he would, and that he might do the best he could to bring others to his opinion, so that he did it peaceably, quietly and soberly, without hasty contentious rebuking and inveighing against others."[108]The tolerance King Utopus displays is purely Erasmian in its emphasis on search of one true religion through dialogue. Erasmian tolerance as demonstrated in Utopus's religious policy, also takes precedence over modern day concept of freedom of expression or speech; Utopians are allowed to practice their diverse religions, but they are also allowed to share and support their religious views by engaging people in meaningful discussions without giving offence.

The qualities that elevate Utopus's character to the status of a true king also separates him from a dictator and a tyrant as characterized by Erasmus. Simply having wisdom or justice is not enough to be a king; the main test lies in how those faculties are used, what purpose they serve. In *Institutio*, Erasmus draws a clear line between a tyrant and a king. A tyrant by Erasmus's standard is the one who uses the gift of wisdom selfishly for personal benefit. A King, on the other hand, uses the same faculty for the welfare of many:

> The tyrants' rule is marked by fear, deceit, and machinations of evil. The king governs through wisdom, integrity and beneficence. The tyrant uses the imperial power for himself; the king for the state. The tyrant guarantees safety for himself by means of foreign attendants and hired brigands. The king deems himself safe through his kindness to his subjects and their love for him in return.[109]

Like the sage prince of Erasmus's conduct book, Utopus very prudently lays down the infrastructure and the laws of the state that he saw most beneficial for his people. His generosity

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108. More, *Utopia*, 129.
109. Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, 163.

was not limited to his people but was extended to his neighboring countries as well. He kept himself and his people safe through sound foreign policy and diplomatic relations. He eschews war; Erasmus's good prince avoids war at all cost and goes on war only out of necessity. Erasmus had always been averse to war and censured it in almost all his works.

Erasmus's good prince is tolerant; a tyrant, on the other hand, "is happy to stir up factions and strife between his subjects and feeds and aids chance animosities."[110] Utopus's tolerance is exemplary, and unlike Erasmus's tyrant, who spreads dissention and disunions in the fear of a revolt against his government, Utopus "rejoices in the freedom of his people"[111] A tyrant does not only try to influence the intellectual and spiritual growth of his people, but also tries to exert control over people's finances. A tyrant willfully creates wealth inequality by giving monetary benefits to his favorites, and by depriving his opponents or critics of those benefits. In this matter, Utopus truly exemplify an ideal rule because nowhere in the world the wealth is distributed more equally than in Utopia.

Erasmus's description of a tyrant is rooted in Aristotelian politics, which separates a prince from the tyrant on the basis of their selfless devotion to the state. Erasmus argues that a prince will always be considerate of the needs of his people; a tyrant, on the other hand, will always be looking for the personal benefit. A tyrant severs his bond with the public, and cheats on them by giving preference to personal affairs over the matters of state.[112] Over the succeeding decades, this distinction would be repeatedly invoked, and would revolutionize England's politics in the seventeenth century. As we will see, Milton, in his political polemic, especially in his

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110. Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, 164.
111. Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, 164.
112. Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, 167.

legitimization of King Charles's execution, makes a similar argument, and More's model monarch—Utopus— is also an exemplary ruler under the same distinction.

Some readers see Utopus as Henry VIII's antithesis and Utopia as a criticism of England. The organization of the two books in the novel supports this view. In the first book, Hythloday explains why he would not serve a king. The kings Hythloday mentions in the discussion has all the traits of Erasmus's tyrant: they prefer to have flatterers and sycophants in their counsel than to have honest and wise men; they prefer "warlike matters or feat of Chivalry" over peace.[113]Immediately after the criticism of monarch, Hythloday criticizes the poor condition of England and suggests that bad policies and laws are responsible for England's circumstances. From Hythloday's account, we learn that some of the biggest problems of England are: beggary, idleness, unemployed soldiers, poor management of man power, injustice, and a lousy penal system where the punishment is bigger than the crime. As we have learned, a king was considered a bellwether of his nation in More's time, and Hythloday's criticism of England points finger in King Henry VIII's direction. If England was in doldrums because of King Henry VIII's incompetence, Utopians, on the other hand, were thriving because of Utopus's competence. Through his example and policies he sets a model that his people will continue to follow for many years to come.

Virtue and Collective Conscience in More's *Utopia*

Erasmus held that all living beings are naturally inclined to form a society:

> Animals destitute of reason, live with their own kind in a state of social amity. Elephants heard together; sheep and swine feed in flocks; cranes and crows take flight in troops; storks have their public meetings to consult previously to their emigration and feed their parents when unable to feed themselves; dolphins defend

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113. More, *Utopia*, 23.

each other by mutual assistance; and everybody knows that both ants and bees have respectively established, by general agreement a little friendly community.[114]

Therefore, it was only natural that human beings would also cooperate with each other to form a community. In *The Praise of Folly,* he argues that from birth human beings are mutually independent.[115]A society, in his view, is "proper fitting of each one in his own particular sphere."[116]Undoubtedly, an ideal form of government for Erasmus was, of course, monarchy, but he was not in the favor of absolute rule. He idealized a mutualist relationship between the citizens and the ruler in which the citizens are subordinate to the ruler, but are not forced into slavery. The citizens willingly surrender their freedom to a deserving leader, who in return ensures a safe rule. He understood their relationship under Plato's idea of justice as virtue, which both unites and distinguishes a ruler from his citizens. Robert Hoerber argues that Plato separates virtue, particularly justice, of the rulers from the virtue of the masses. Hoerber sees the distinction to be that the justice or virtue which is exclusive to the ruler is based on the "ideas of knowledge," and the virtue attributed to the masses is the formation of the "correct opinion."[117]The virtue of the rulers is superior to the virtue of the citizens since they have the "knowledge of ideas" that assists citizens to form correct opinions.[118]This means the virtue of the citizens is inferior because it is dependent on the knowledge of the ruling class.[119] This distinction is generally understood as "private virtue" and the "virtue of polis."[120] While anyone can be trained in the "virtue of polis," only a few possess "private virtue," which is attained through "a strict program of testing" and is

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114. Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, 10.
115. Erasmus, *Praise of Folly*, 38.
116. Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, 11.
117. Hoerber, "More on Justice in the "Republic"," 32.
118. Hoerber, "More on Justice in the "Republic"."33
119. Hoerber, "More on Justice in the "Republic"."34
120. Hoerber, "More on Justice in the "Republic"."32

based on the "personal contemplation of eternal truths."[121] Plato divides citizens into three different classes and maintained that each class exhibits virtue in their own way.[122] When both rulers and the ruled practice their respective virtues only then a society can achieve a harmonious balance as the one we see in More's *Utopia*. However, such a harmony cannot be achieved without certain preconditions. Plato's philosophy, which proposes that citizens should be trained in virtue views citizens as a group and it mandates that the interests of the group or the state should take precedence over the wishes of the individuals, and More's Utopia is a prime example of such a collectivistic society. More's Utopia is a society in its pristine form, unadulterated by evil and malicious intent. The utopians maintain their virtue by excluding themselves from the rest of the world and by involving the whole society in a rigorous training in virtue.

Plato's political theory was acceptable for Erasmus and More because it was consistent with their beliefs that saw a king in a position of power. Erasmus's educational philosophy which lays great emphasis on the instruction of the young princes is also rooted in Platonic division of virtue. In *Institutio*, Erasmus describes a monarch in terms of an authority figure—shepherd dog, bishop— who inspires obedience and emulation among his people. However, it is More who precisely absorbs Plato's theory into his utopian thought. More, like Plato, believed that the main aim of a government should be to build a republic of virtue. As we see in *Utopia*, Utopus as a true Platonic ruler, and the "possessor of knowledge," is the guiding force which disciplines the people of the island. More's utopians, in their policies and conduct, ultimately become as prudent as their ruler— Utopus. In Book Two, we are told that before Utopus's conquest of the island, utopians were "rude," and "wild" and it was Utopus who brought them to "excellent perfection in all good

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121. Hoerber, "More on Justice in the "Republic"."32
122. Hoerber, "More on Justice in the "Republic"."34

fashions, humanity, and civil gentleness, wherein they now go beyond all the people of the world."[123]However, Readers are made aware of Utopus's contributions, even before Utopus's formal introduction in the book, in the "Poems of Utopia":

> General Utopus made me, from no island, an island.
> I alone of all lands, in the absence of philosophy
> Have presented for mortals the philosophical city.
> Willingly I will share what is mine, without reluctance accept
> Something better.[124]

The poem, of course, sets readers' expectations of the book and acknowledges that novel is a rendition of Plato's "philosophical city", but the most noteworthy are the lines that follow in which we are told that Utopia like Plato's republic is an exchange where you "willingly share what is [your] mine," your individuality (or private property) to "accept something better," an ideal state.

Interestingly, in Hythloday's account the discussion on Utopus's personal life is minimal. We learn about him mostly through Hythloday's description of his policies, laws and social reforms. It seems as if Utopus, the person, did not exist at all. This is odd because Utopus is the only Utopian, other than Hythloday, who has a name, other Utopians are nameless. A name is the identity of a person, which separates him or her from masses. Utopus has a name, but he does not have any private identity either, Independent of the state; the idea that Utopus and the state are one and the same is further symbolized in the naming of the island after him: "King Utopus whose name as the conqueror the island beareth."[125] The naming of the land after Utopus implies that the state and the leader are not two separate entities. And this connection is invoked many times: Hythloday credits Utopus for all the progress Utopia has made, we are reminded repeatedly that

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123. More, *Utopia*, 62.
124. Thomas More, *Utopia*, trans. David Wootton, ed. David Wootton (United States: Hackett Publishing Company, 1999), 48.
125. More, *Utopia*, 62.

through his prudence and guidance Utopus had transformed Utopia into his mirror-image. The relationship, of course, alludes to the Platonic relationship between the philosopher-king and the guardians of the republic. It also reinforces the Platonic notion that a just or wise man is not any different than a just city: "Then a just man too will not differ at all from a just city in respect of the vary form of justice, but will be like it."[126]

The unification of the king and the state in More's *Utopia* alludes to Erasmus's description of the relation of the prince to its people as that of the mind with the body: "the rule of the prince is no different from that of the mind over the body. The mind dominates the body, but it does so to the great advantage of the latter rather than to itself."[127] Only when mind and body are in cooperation can we then say the body is alive. Although the mind occupies a superior position in the human body— in the head—but it is still it is an organ just like any other. The union of the state and Utopus is further emphasized through the structural and cultural uniformity among the cities of Utopia. Hythloday informs us that all the cities were identical to the extent that if you have seen one, you have seen them all: "As for their cities, whoso knoweth one of them, knoweth them all: they be all so like one to another as far forth as the nature of the place permitteth."[128] Certainly, the structural uniformity underscores the Utopians' well- organized lifestyle. Understandably, a republic of virtue would require some sort of order, and More's utopian state is highly disciplined. The discipline is expressed not only in the structural uniformity of the cities, but also in their similar customs and routines.

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126. Plato, "Republic," 444b.
127. Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, 175.
128. More, *Utopia*, 65.

The uniformity reminds J.C Davis of a monastery, and he records that other scholars have also commented on the monastic living of the Utopians.[129] Their unvarying life style points to More's predilection for monastic living.[130] It was a lifestyle More was most familiar with; there was "the absence of pomp; devotion to work, study, prayer; the uniformity to dress; the general austerity; the contempt for gold; the communion of property; the communal meals taken 'with some reading which is conducive to morality.'"[131] Davis notes that in many respects the Utopians resemble the Carthusians, a Catholic order that More followed for four years.[132] There are indeed many commonalities between the Utopians and Carthusians: Carthusians live a solitary life in closely knit small communities; their contact with the people outside their community is minimal, but they do enjoy a strong bond with the community; each community is autonomous and provides for themselves through agriculture and artisan work. The Utopians are deeply concerned as Carthusians are, to make "conscience effective," to make sure that "between intention, deed and effect there are unbroken links."[133]

Conscience was a contentious subject in More's time and scholars are divided about More's views on the workings of conscience. Alvaro De Silva argues that More employs the word conscience to mean "his mind," his "inner most thought," and his "understanding," and "therefore something reasonable."[134] This view is further supported by More's biographer, Nicholas Harpsfield, who affirms that for More the matter of conscience was inseparable from his idea of

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129. J C. Davis, *Utopia and the Ideal Society: A Study of English utopian writing 1516-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 58.See Donner, *Introduction to Utopia,* pg 80; W.H.G Armytage, *Heavens Below: Utopian Experiments in England*

130. Davis, *Utopia and the Ideal Society: A Study of English utopian writing 1516-1700*, 56.

131. Davis, *Utopia and the Ideal Society: A Study of English utopian writing 1516-1700*, 59.

132. Davis, *Utopia and the Ideal Society: A Study of English utopian writing 1516-1700*, 59.

133. Davis, *Utopia and the Ideal Society: A Study of English utopian writing 1516-1700*, 61.

134. Thomas More, *The Last Letters of Thomas More*, ed. Alvaro De Silva (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 9.

selfhood. Harpsfield informs us that in his last moments, More broke his silence of long and acknowledges his act of defiance as one guided by his conscience: "I will nowe in discharge of my conscience speake my minde plainlye and freely touching my Inditement and your Statute withal."[135]

However, Davis contradicts this interpretation, and argues that for More conscience was not subjective but "a positive, an institutional, factor." He holds that More's "conscientious refusal of the oath of supremacy" of Henry VIII was not a working of personal conscience but a commitment of conscience to the "higher authority," the laws of God and Church:[136]

> This indictment is grounded upon an acte of parliament directly repugnant to the laws of god and his holy churche the supreme gover[n]ment of which, or any parte whereof, may no temporal prince presume by any lawe to take upon him, as rightfully belonging to the Sea of Roome, a spiritual preminence by mouthe by the mouthe of our savior himself, personally present uppon the earth [only] to Saint Peter and his successor, Byshopps of the same sea, by special prerogative graunted; It is in lawe amongst Christen men insufficient to charge any Christen men.[137]

Davis notes that More was preoccupied with the themes of laws, conscience, and social conformity throughout his writing career.[138] More's epistle reveals that conscience for More was a much needed catalyst that would kindle virtuous spirit in a man. Thus, the correlation between virtue and conscience for More is that the conscience aids virtue, but once the highest order of virtue is acquired, then conscience is of little consequence: "yet conscience is such that it does not recriminate us when we are deep in the ways of virtue."[139] More understands the relationship between conscience and virtue in Ciceronian sense, which sees the relationship between moral

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135. Nicholas Harpsfield, "The Life and Death of Sir Thomas More, Knight," *the Early English Text Society*, Sometymes Lord High Chancellor of England (1932): 193.
136. Davis, *Utopia and the Ideal Society: A Study of English utopian writing 1516-1700*, 47.
137. Roper, *The Life of Sir Thomas More*, 92-3.
138. Davis, *Utopia and the Ideal Society: A Study of English utopian writing 1516-1700*, 47.
139. More, *The Last Letters of Thomas More*, 18.

goodness and *Officium, appropriate action*, to be such that "one cannot subsist without the other"[140]

Utopians integrate these notions into their society and that is why they are "paragons of virtue;" they achieve utopian living not by following a well-thought-out penal system but through their training in virtue: [141]

> They do not only fear their people from doing evil by punishments, but also allure them to virtue through rewards of honor. Therefore, they set up in marketplace images of notable men and of such that has been great and bountiful benefactors to the commonwealth for the perpetual memory of their good acts, and also that the glory and reknown of the ancestor may fire and provoke their posterity to virtue.[142]

More was resolute that a spiritually and intellectually sound society does not require laws to restrain them from doing evil. *Utopia* exemplifies More's aspiration for a community that is not governed by law, but by reason, or well-developed conscience. Utopia is an extremely moral and civilized society. For More, both the terms are one and the same. In his definition of social advancement, he does not differentiate between the spiritual and the intellectual accomplishments of humanity. For More, any technological or agricultural progress was incomplete without the spiritual growth. Besides, More believed that only ideal men are capable of forming ideal societies; and an ideal man is the one in whom spiritual and intellectual co-exist harmoniously. For a highly civilized society like Utopia, this balance between spiritual and intellectual is what defines a man, and anyone who cannot achieve this balance is a lowly creature:

> Him that is of contrary opinion they count not in the number of men, as one that hath avaled the high nature of his soul to the vileness of brute beasts' bodies, much less in the number of their citizens, whose laws and ordinances, if it were not for fear, he would nothing at all esteem. For you may be sure that he will study either with craft privily to mock or else

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140. Marcus Tullius Cicero, *A commentary on Cicero, De legibus*, ed. Andrew R Dyck (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 70.
141. More, *Utopia*, xxxi
142. More, *Utopia*, 112.

violently break the laws of his country, in whom remaineth no further fear than of the laws, not no further hope than of the body.[143]

More's idealistic notions about human reason finds its parallels in modern thought in terms like spiritual intelligence, emotional intelligence and in the theories of multiple intelligence. Particularly, the term *spiritual intelligence* is more closely related to More's description of a cognizance that aids man to choose the best suited policy for himself and his community. The term *spiritual intelligence* was coined by Donah Zohar, who describes it as an analytical measure much like intelligence quotient (IQ), which is a measure of our "rational or intellectual intelligence." We use intellectual intelligence to determine problems and to find logical and strategical solutions for them. Intelligence quotient is a measure that categorizes people based on their ability to make rational and logical decisions.[144] Similarly, emotional intelligence is a determinant of our understanding of our emotions as well as of other peoples. Then, from modern perspective, utopians are emotionally and spiritually intelligent.

However, More did not think that spiritual intelligence was an inborn trait, but it was more of a skill that could be acquired through arduous training. As Davis has already argued, in More's utopian community there is no such thing as independent conscience. What is good or what is bad is not based on personal opinion but shaped by a society's collective expectations. The idea is consistent with More's understanding of the liberty of conscience. Antony Kenny and Brian Cummings object to applying a modern understanding of liberty of conscience and argue that for More human conscience was not independent of orthodoxy; instead, just like a church, where God's truth is revealed when it follows the teaching of tradition, man accesses truth through his

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143. More, *Utopia*, 130-31.
144. Danah and Dr. Ian Marshall Zohar, *Connecting With Our Spiritual Intelligence* (United Kingdom: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2000), 3.

conscience when it is agreement with convention. Cummings' interpretation of More's views on conscience is that it does not guide everyone to the right path; for instance, he explains, it excludes heretics and non-believers. To put in Marvin O Connell's words: "conscience for More was the right to be right not the right to be wrong."[145] And that right thing for More was Catholic tradition and to compromise that sense of righteousness was infidelity to his conscience. In Utopia, there are no laws, but everything they do is law. The community maintains a collective conscience through uniformity, social pressure, indulgent atmosphere and shared property.

But then what should we make of the fact that even though More's ideal society is monoculture, it is a tolerant community? To understand this ambiguity we once again rely on Gary Remer's argument and construe that for More, like Erasmus, there was only one true religion— Catholicism— but he allowed religious diversity in support of the traditional view of a dialogue, which maintains a single truth can only be revealed through dialogue. Moreover, the community is tolerant only in the outlook, but at the core it is primarily monotheistic and permits limited tolerance. Hythloday tells us that there are polytheists in Utopia, worshippers of sun and moon, but they are fewer in numbers when compared to the "wise" monotheist population of the island:

> But the most and the wisest part(rejecting all these) believe that there is a certain godly power, unknown, everlasting, incomprehensible, inexplicable, far above the capacity and reach of man's wit, dispersed throughout the world, but no in bigness, but virtue and power. Him they call the father of all. To him alone they attribute the beginnings, the proceedings the changes, and the ends of all things. Neither they give any divine honors to any other than him.[146]

Hythloday's language suggests that although all religions were tolerated, religions that have similar beliefs and values as Christianity were revered more: Hythloday distinguishes the region

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145. Qtd in Brian Cummings, "Conscience and the law in Thomas More," *Renaissance Studies* 23, no. 4 (2009): 16, http://www.jstor.org/stable/24419384.
146. More, *Utopia*, 127.

of those believers as "the wisest part." Utopus further restricts freedom of religion by prohibiting atheism and disbelief in afterlife: "he earnestly and straightly charged them that no man should conceive so vile and base an opinion of the dignity of man's nature to think that the souls do die and perish with the body, or that the world runneth at all adventures governed by no divine providence.[147]Apparently, Utopians were compelled to conform to certain ideas not through strict laws, but by restricting their access to the outside world, and by building social pressure through uniformity and by discouraging conflict: those who do not believe in the immortality of soul and deny "providential judgement" were not considered as humans and were considered ineligible for governmental and prelatic offices.

Davis reads *Utopia* as a social experiment which aims to study how to make conscience work effectively on a population larger than a circle of monks. He asserts, "it showed a society in which law, social pressure and conscience converge in the direction of goodness, but it was a standard of goodness which was pre-ordained not chosen by the inhabitants of that society, to which their willfulness was made to conform."[148] More's utopian thought envisions a society where virtue reigns devoid of vice. Davis doubts that a society like More's is capable of moral behavior if moral behavior means to choose good over evil when both the alternatives are available.[149] More's *Utopia* was unique in making a move away from the medieval mentality which maintained that men can be only trained through the fear of retribution. However, it did completely separate itself from the medieval anxieties related to the freedom of individuals.

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147. More, *Utopia*, 130.
148. Davis, *Utopia and the Ideal Society: A Study of English utopian writing 1516-1700*, 50.
149. Davis, *Utopia and the Ideal Society: A Study of English utopian writing 1516-1700*, 54.

More's *Utopia* proposes a totalitarian society where collective conscience is fostered by making it

impossible for the individuals to think on their own.

CHAPTER 4

ERASMUS'S LEGACY IN MILTON'S UTOPIA

Milton's politics is significant for two specific reasons: one, it clings to the ideals of the past, ones that were resuscitated by Erasmus's Christian humanism, and were eroding by Milton's time; two, it resembles More's utopia in its emphasis on training in virtue; however it separates itself from More's utopianism by defining virtue as an individual's independent struggle rather than the collective effort of a community.

Like Erasmus, Milton's political vision was founded on the binary of virtue and liberty, and echoes Erasmian concerns for civic virtue: "if individuals are not disposed to be virtuous citizens, they cannot hope to maintain their liberty for long."[150] Christopher Hamel understands this binary as a correlation in which liberty can only be attained through virtue. In *Second Defense,* Milton argues that it was individuals' "by nature supreme right (*jus populi natura supremum*)" to "preserve the common safety, peace and liberty of all men."[151] From this, Hamel construes that civic virtue for Milton was of secondary importance: second to individual liberty. He argues that for Milton civic virtue was not an end itself.[152] I will argue that this is the difference which separates Milton's utopian thought from More's utopianism. More's utopia is rooted in Plato's

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150. John Milton, "A Second Defence of the English People," in *John Milton prose : major writings on liberty, politics, religion, and education* (Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, 2013), 375.
151. Milton, "A Second Defence of the English People," 375.
152. Christopher Hamel, "The Republicanism Of John Milton: Natural Rights, Civic Virtue and the Dignity Of Man," *History of Political Thought* 34, no. 1 (2013): 38, http://www.jstor.org/stable/26225864.

political philosophy that restricts individual liberty and insists on a collective understanding of virtue. Milton's politics, on the other hand, liberates individuals and encourages individuals to exercise virtue independently, so they could be contributive members of society.

However, I disagree with Hamel's argument that Milton put liberty before virtue and agree with David Harris Sack who argues that Milton did not see any order in the relationship of virtue and liberty: in mathematical terms the relationship can be defined as commutative.[153]Martin Dzelzainis makes a similar argument and describes the relationship as between virtue and liberty as cyclical: only virtuous men desire liberty and only with liberty one can exercise true virtue.[154]

Undoubtedly, liberty was of great importance for Milton, who was a moral liberalist, like Erasmus, and he vehemently argued for the liberty of conscience throughout his life: in *Areopagitica,* he rejected licensure of books and champions freedom of expression; in infamous *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, he argued for the right of a couple to divorce by mutual consent and freed them from the shackles of the canon law. He was against prelatic control over human conscience. "On the New Forcer of Conscience under the Long Parliament," expresses his moral liberalism, where embittered and enraged, Milton scorns Presbyterian members of the Westminster Assembly: "Dare ye abjure the Civil Sword / to force our conscience that Christ set free." He was convinced in his mind and heart that Christ shared his faith in man's ability to choose the right path on his own without any coercion.

What type of liberty did Milton pursue? Whether or not he pursued liberty at all, is a controversial subject. Political theorists are always eager to label Milton's political thought as

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153. Davis Harris Sacks, "Liberty and the Law," in *Milton, Rights, and Liberties*, ed. Christophe Tornu and Forsyth Neil (Austria: Peter lang, 2007), 74.
154. Martin Dzelzainis, "Liberty and the Law," in *Milton, Rights and Liberties*, ed. Christophe Tournu and Neil Forsyth (Peter Lang, 2007), 65.

either republicanism, or liberalism. Sack describes them as "mutually exclusive" terms. A republican is a "humanist and a communitarian" who draws his political theory from "the ancient moral philosophy and classical literary theories"; conversely, a liberal is a "philosophical individualist," who relies on the discussions on "natural rights, natural law and covenant theology."[155] Quentin Skinner, Martin Dezelzainis, and Paul Rahe categorizes Milton's political philosophy as classical republicanism drawn from Machiavelli's discourses and Cicero and Aristotle's moral philosophy.[156] Others, David Masson, Barbara Lewalski, and Annabel Patterson look up to Milton's politics as the dawn of liberalism.[157] Similarly, Clement Fatovic argues that early republicanism was not as far apart from liberalism as it was thought to be.[158] I derive my understanding of Milton's freedom from Lewalski, Patterson, and Fatovic and will argue that Milton's political thought transitioned from republican to liberal in his later polemic. However, breaking away from Rahe and Skinner, I will argue that Milton's republicanism, in his earlier polemic, was more Erasmian than Machiavellian.

Milton was a proponent of freedom of individual, but, as Christopher Hamel has already argued, he did not endorse possessive individualism— a concept that an individual is the owner of his abilities and person, and owes nothing to society.[159] Instead, he was of a communitarian

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155. Sacks, "Liberty and the Law," 70.
156. Quentin Skinner, *Visions of politics. Volume 2 : renaissance virtues* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). Also see Paul Rahe, "The Classical Republicanism of Milton," and Martin Dzelzainis, Milton's Classical Republicanism edited by David Armitage, Quentin Skinner, Armand Himy. Cambridge Press University. 1998.
157. Barbara Lewalski, *How Radical was the Young Milton*, Annabel Patterson, Early Modern Liberalism, and David Masson,*The Life of John Milton: Narrated in Connexion with the Political, Ecclesiastical, and Literary History of His Time*, 7 vols., London.
158. See Clement Fatovic, "Anti Catholic Roots of Liberal and Republican Conception of Freedom in English Political thought." *Journal of the History of Ideas*. 2005.pp.37-58
159. See Macpherson, Crawford Borough, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke.*Oxford University Press. 1964.

mindset and wanted to liberate individual thought, so it could contribute towards the wellbeing of the Commonwealth. His primary concern in all his political polemic had been the commonwealth. Even in his polemic on domestic affairs such as on divorce, published in 1643, Milton weighs the impact of a troubled married life on the Commonwealth. An unhappy married life, he warns, would leave its citizens "unserviceable and spiritless to the Common-wealth,"[160] and again in *Tetrachordon,* where Milton's voice grows grimmer *"*unactive to all public service, dead to Common-wealth."[161]

Certainly, Milton's politics is centered on Erasmian humanism and supports its educational and moral philosophy. Like Erasmus, Milton's political thought prioritizes education and training in virtue. In *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrate* alone, Milton uses the word "vertue" or "virtue" seven times as a quality in multiple contexts —reason or wisdom, justice, and courage—to give power to the argument for Charles I's execution. For Milton, a king was neither above law, nor better than his subjects, and if a common man is liable for his actions, then so is the king. Milton held that the persecution of a tyrant is a just and reasonable cause that only virtuous men could support. And for those Presbyterian, who resisted Charles I's execution, Milton wished them "better instruction and vertue equal"[162] because he believed that to punish a tyrant is "the necessary self-defense of a whole Common-wealth."[163]

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160. John Milotn, "The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce," in *John Milton Prose : Major Writings on Liberty, Politics, Religion and, Education*, ed. David Lowenstein (United Kingdom: A John Wiley & Sons, Ltd Publications, 2013), 165.
161. John Milton, "Tetrachordon," in *John Milton Prose: Major Writings on Liberty, Politics, Religion, and Education*, ed. David Loewenstein (United Kingdom: A John Wiley & Sons Ltd., Publications, 2013), 222.
162. John Milton, "The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates," ed. John Rumrich William Kerrigan, and Stephen M. Fallon (New York: The Modern Library, 2007), 1056.
163. Milton, "The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates," 1052.

Over and over again, Milton appeals to human virtue in his polemics of social reform such as *of Education*, and *The Readie and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth.* Human virtue, which was a component of Christian Humanism, becomes a defining attribute of the commonwealth that Milton envisions. Milton's utopia is to live in close proximity to God: to gain knowledge about Him, and to use this knowledge to emulate Him by achieving moral excellence or "true virtue." In his treatise, *Of Education,* he outlines his utopian vision and the purpose of education in a commonwealth: "The end then of learning is to repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright, and out of that knowledge to love him, to imitate him, to be like him as we may the nearest possessing out souls of true virtue, which being united to the Heavenly grace of faith, makes up the highest perfection."[164]

Milton's politics was utopian by virtue of its humanist tendencies that are immediately reminiscent of Plato's Republic and More's *Utopia.* It also satisfies Karl Mannheim's definition of a utopia, which explains a utopian thought to be the one that is directly in conflict with reality, the "existing order of things,"[165] and through its tussle with reality new realities are born. Mannheim argues that utopias hold a dialectical relationship with the current reality, and it is through their conflict that new realities are conceived. However, Milton's political thought was not "utopian" if the word utopia is misinterpreted to be something entirely new. Milton's utopia, like More's utopia, does not offer anything novel, but challenges the present by reviving the utopias of the past and integrating them into his own political thought. James Holly Hanford also consents to this view and argues:

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164. Milton John, "Of Education," in *The Complete Poetry and Essential Prose of John Milton*, ed. John Rumrich William Kerrigan, and Stephen Fallon (New York: The Modern Library, 2007), 971.
165. Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* (New York: Routledge & Kegan, 1936), 173.

> Milton's true kinship is not with [John] Bunyan or[Richard] Baxter, not yet altogether with [Oliver] Cromwell and the heroes of battle for religious and political liberty, but with those men of the older day, whose spiritual aspirations were united with the human passion for truth and beauty and who trusted the imagination as an important medium for the attainment of their ideal.[166]

Milton's utopian thought is kindled by the same Platonic thought which first enamored More, and that is how his work should be read: a progression of previously conceived utopias towards reality.

In the following sections, I will examine Milton's political polemic more closely. In the first section I will underscore the influence of Erasmus's humanism on Milton's political thought. I will also discuss the similarities and the differences between More's Utopia and Milton's politics. In the second section, I will trace the influence of Erasmus's *Institutio principis Christiani* on Milton's expectations of an ideal ruler.

Virtue, Individual Liberty and Milton's Ideal Commonwealth

The most striking commonality between More's Utopia and Milton's political thought is that they are grounded on Erasmus's faith in human reason and his notions of liberty of conscience and intellectual liberty.[167]Milton was deeply committed to the freedom of thought and freedom of conscience and vociferously advocated for it throughout his writing career. However, his liberalism was neither original nor spontaneous, but was a radical manifestation of Erasmus's moderate philosophy which had previously informed More's utopian thought. The lawless, inherently virtuous society that More imagined in his little book, Milton doggedly pursued his realization in England. His early poetry reveals that he had always been a nationalist, fired with

166. James Holly. Hanford, "Milton and the Return of Humanism," in *Poetic traditions of the English Renaissance*, ed. M (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 163.
167. Yoran, *Between Utopia and Dystopia: Erasmus, Thomas More, and the Humanist Republic of Letters*, 69-71.Hanan Yoran has made a similar point in his book.

the ambition to bring immortal fame to his language: "yet I had rather, if I were to choose, / Thy service in some graver service use / such as make thee search thy coffers round" ("At a Vacation Exercise").[168]

However, it is in his political polemic that we see him clamorously cheering for change, and it is there that More's influence on his political views is more pronounced and lucid. His polemic imagines an ethical community which rivals More's utopian society in its prudence and sound judgement. Their political utopias were similar in their vision of a Christian humanist society, but they used different approaches to attain it. More's *Utopia* is a social experiment in an extremely controlled environment which allows little to no individual liberty to the participants and through a calculated technique develops collective conscience. More built his ideal society away from England and in isolation from the rest of the world. On the other hand, Milton situated his utopia within the boundaries of England and anticipated its transformation to an ideal commonwealth. More and Milton both emphasized training civilians in virtue, but unlike More, Milton did not believe that humans could be trained in groups, like sheep; for him training in virtue comes with an individualized test where the individuals were free to choose and learn to be virtuous by testing their faith: by confronting evil and recognizing good.

For Milton, individual liberty was not a license granted by a government to its people, but it was an individual's birthright established by God as detailed in the doctrines of freewill: "Many there be that complain of divine providence for suffering Adam to transgress. Foolish tongues!

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168. John Milton, "The Complete Poetry and Essential Prose of John Milton," (New York: The Modern Library, 2007), 29-31.

When God gave him reason, he gave him freedom to choose, for reason is but choosing."[169] Milton's faith in human reason betrays his humanism.

He believed that in the real world good and evil exist intertwined with each other; they are weaved into the fabric of life in a way that you cannot separate them:

> Good and Evil we know in the field of this world grow up together almost inseparably; and the knowledge of good is so involved and interwoven with the knowledge of evil and in so many cunning resemblances hardly to be discerned, that those confused seeds which were imposed on Psyche as an incessant labor to cull out and sort asunder, were not more intermixed.[170]

Therefore, a virtuous state for Milton was not the one that exists without evil, but the one that is exposed to evil and knows how to resist it. Virtue for Milton was a struggle of an individual to understand good on his own and by experiencing evil: "It was from out the rind of one apple tasted that the knowledge of good and evil as two twins cleaving together leapt forth into the world. And perhaps this is that doom which Adam fell into of knowing good and evil, that is to say of knowing good by evil."[171]

To propose that there is life without sin was inhuman and unnatural for Milton, as he pertinently argued in *Areopagitica*: "They are not skillful considerers of human things who imagine to remove sin by removing the matter of sin."[172] He scorned More's and Plato's utopias in *Areopagitica*, which he thought were impractical fantasies, tales of foreign societies that existed in distant lands, disconnected from the real world. Such utopias were not true representation of God's world, which was a mix of good and evil, and therefore had no practical value; and that is

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169. John Milton, "Areopagitica," in *The Complete Poetry and Essential Prose of John Milton*, ed. John Rumrich William Kerrigan, and Stephen M. Fallon (New York: The Modern Library, 2007), 944.
170. Milton, "Areopagitica," 939.
171. Milton, "Areopagitica," 939.
172. Milton, "Areopagitica," 943.

why they were ineffective in the real world: "To sequester out of the world into Atlantick and Eutopian polities which never can be drawn into use, will not mend our condition; but to ordain wisely as in this world of evill, in the midd'st whereof God hath plac't us unavoidably."[173] In Milton's view, evil was "unavoidable" reality, and it was not without purpose: it was a part of God's plan.

And yet his political views embody the same Platonic idealism that he derides in *Areopagitica.* His ideal commonwealth is also founded on the Platonic notions of educating and training citizens in virtuous conduct. Even in *Areopagitica,* Milton dismisses some parts of Plato's political utopia such as his idea of licensing books, but other parts he retains and assimilates into his politics: he argues that Plato's idea of licensing books was not only unfeasible, but it was also inconsistent with Plato's ideals of "unconstraining laws of virtuous education, religious and civil nurture" which were the bonds and ligaments of the commonwealth, the pillars and the sustainers of every written statute."[174] Those are the constituents of More's utopian thought as well, and Milton's popular support for a free commonwealth is also rooted in those ideals. Milton's polemic communicates More's vision of a highly civilized commonwealth which is so well-trained in virtue that it does not require any forceful subjugation to law. Their ideas of virtuous living are so similar that at times it is hard to distinguish between the writings of the two authors. For example, consider the following passage:

> In the publishing of humane lawes, which for the most part aime not beyond the good of civill society, to set them barely forth to the people without reason or Preface, like a physicall prescript, or only with threatnings, as it were a lordly command, in the judgement of Plato was thought to be done neither generously nor wisely. His advice was, seeing that persuasion certainly is a more winning, and more manlike way to keepe men in obedience then feare, that to such lawes as were of principall moment, there should be us'd as an induction, some well temper'd

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173. Milton, "Areopagitica," 943.
174. Milton, "Areopagitica," 944.

discourse, shewing how good, how gainfull, how happy it must needs be to live according to honesty and justice, which being utter'd with those native colours and graces of speech, as true eloquence the daughter of vertue can best bestow upon her mothers praises, would so incite, and in a manner, charme the multitude into the love of that which is really good, as to imbrace it ever after, not of custome and awe, which most men do, but of choice and purpose, with true and constant delight[175]

Without any identification, the passage would have struck a reader, who is familiar with More's *Utopia*, as an excerpt from More's popular book. Notice, in *Utopia,* Hythloday gives a similar reason when explaining why utopians preferred fewer laws in their state:

> They have but few laws, for to people to instruct and institute very few do suffice. Yea, this thing they chiefly reprove among other nations, that innumerable books of laws and expositions upon the same be not sufficient. But they think it against all right and justice that men should be bound to those laws which either be number more than be able to be read, or else blinder and darker than that any man can well understand them.[176]

The former may have appeared as an excerpt from More's *Utopia;* instead, surprisingly, the passage is from Milton's political tract, *The Reason of Church Government,* in which Milton reasons against the episcopal form of Church government and favors ministerial government of Presbyterian Church on the basis that episcopacy restricts the liberty of conscience that God grants the individuals.

The tract was a part of the series of anti-prelatical tracts that were written in support of *Root and Branch* Petition presented to House of Commons on Dec 11, 1640. The anti-prelatical tracts were the beginning of what Martin Dzelzainis has recognized as the tussle between the law and liberty.[177] Milton wrote the tract in 1641 to show his allegiance to Presbyterian party in the

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175. John Milton, "The Reason of Church-Government Urg'd against Prelaty," in *John Milton Prose: Major Writings on Liberty, Politics, Religion, And Education*, ed. David Lowenstein (United Kingdom: A John Wiley & Sons Ltd., Publication, 2013), 63.
176. More, *Utopia*, 112.
177. Dzelzainis, "Liberty and the Law," 57.

Parliament against Archbishop, William Laud's policies, and protests in solidarity with the Scottish Kirk in the Bishops' Wars of 1639 and 1640. In 1639, Charles I went on war with Scotland in his efforts to impose Episcopal Church government upon the Presbyterian Kirk of Scotland. That year, Milton was on a tour to Europe, but after hearing the news, he cut short his trip and hurried back to England where he thought he was needed the most. During this time, in a reaction to King Charles's coercive policies, the Scots rejected the authority of bishops and banned the Book of Common Prayers from the churches and established a national Presbyterian Church.[178] The contention between Scotland and Charles I eventually led to the English Civil War of 1642. Milton was wary of Charles I's intentions all along; therefore upon his return from Europe he sided with Thomas Young— Milton's tutor at one time—and defended Presbyterian cause. In his tracts, Milton condemned Charles I's policies which he thought were deterrent to civil liberties and reformation spirit.[179]

In the excerpt from the treatise mentioned above, Milton regards the secular idealism of Plato with admiring deference and expresses his faith in the possible existence of a society that resembles More's Utopia: a society which is innately good without the fear of law and punishment. Like Erasmus, Milton believed in the liberty of conscience and thought constraining men forcefully under the fear of laws was an ineffective policy because it could restrain people for the "principal moment," a short period of time only. A more effective policy would be the one that would teach them to do good at all times without prompting and this, he argued, could only be achieved if they are persuaded to be obedient to God willingly and independently.

178. Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, *The Life of John Milton : A Critical Biography* (United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 120-54.
179. Lewalski, *The Life of John Milton : A Critical Biography*, 120-21.

Milton boldly began his tract with a pagan reference, but as a true Christian humanist he was adamant that Plato's moral philosophy was not at a variance with the Bible which preaches willing obedience to God and rejects forceful subjugation: "But this practice we may learn, from a better & more ancient authority, then any heathen writer hath to give us, and indeed being a point of so high wisdome & worth, how could it be but we should find it in that book, within whose sacred context all wisdome is infolded?"[180] In the following lines, he continues to support his argument with the example of Moses. He argues that when Moses first set up his community, he did not write down any laws, but strengthened the bond between his people and God by relaying stories from Genesis. To further prove his point, he quotes the Jewish historian Titus Flavius Josephus, who records in his book *The Antiquity of the Jews* that Moses, unlike other legislators of his time, did not build his community upon laws and contracts, but by persuading them that they were God's most noble creation and therefore they should act accordingly.

Liberty, for Milton, was a Christian cause. Milton was certain that God did not prescribe any form of Church government and gave the people liberty to choose whatever form of government they would prefer. Erasmus and Milton endorse intellectual freedom based on the biblical principle of temperance which is a habit of mind to practice self-control and restraint, and to avoid excesses in all matters of life. By that principle all things are lawful if used in moderation. "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any" (1 Corinthian 6:12; KJV). He opposed episcopal polity because in his view it was a non-Christian tradition. He argues that episcopacy was partly adapted after Jewish tradition, "the pattern prescribed by God in Old Testament," and partly after the Apostles' example. He maintained that episcopacy had transitioned to merely a custom or ritual

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180. Milton, "The Reason of Church-Government Urg'd against Prelaty," 63.

and did not follow the true spirit of the Apostles. Besides, he reasoned, the New Testament freed

Christians of the bondage of episcopacy; then why should they allow themselves to be enslaved

by the traditions of the past:

> Secondly, how the Church-government under the Gospell can be rightly call'd an imitation of that in the Old Testament? For that the Gospell is the end and fulfilling of the Law, our liberty also from the bondage of the Law I plainly reade. How then the ripe age of the Gospell should be put to schoole againe, and learn to governe her selfe from the infancy of the Law, the stronger to imitate the weaker, the freeman to follow the captive, the learned to be lesson'd by the rude, will be a hard undertaking to evince from any of those principles which either art or inspiration hath written.[181]

Milton's arguments echoes Paul's address to Galatians in which he reminds that their faith in God

alone justifies them and they do not need to revert to the law of Moses because God has made it

obsolete for them and have blessed them with His spirit through the birth of His Son: "But now,

after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and

beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?" (Galatians 4:9; KJV). For Milton,

the reinstatement of ecclesiastical bureaucracy was a regressive movement, which would reverse

all the efforts of reformists. He feared that Charles I's policies were slowly taking England back

to the Dark Ages.

As a Christian Humanist, Milton understands religion in the Platonic sense and sees it as a

quest for truth, and believed that it could be practiced beyond the walls of a church. He held that

"Judaic Law was political," and therefore preferred prelacy and rituals; conversely, the Gospel, in

his view, did not subject conscience to written laws but gave Christians the autonomy to choose

good on their own:

> The whole Judaick law is either politicall, and to take pattern by that, no Christian nation ever thought it selfe oblig'd in conscience; or morall, which containes in it the observation of whatsoever is substantially, and perpetually true and good, either

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181. Milton, "The Reason of Church-Government Urg'd against Prelaty," 70.

in religion, or course of life. That which is thus morall, besides what we fetch from those unwritten lawes and Ideas which nature hath ingraven in us, the Gospell, as stands with her dignity most, lectures to us from her own authentick hand-writing and command, not copies out from the borrow'd manuscript of a subservient scrowl, by way of imitating.[182]

The lines allude to the Bible, but are also suggestive of classical confidence in human nature; once again we are reminded that man is a reasonable being and would naturally — under the instruction of Gospel— prefer good over evil and truth over lies. He strongly believed that God has blessed every grown man with the liberty of choice, and laws and restrictions are meant to be for children and not for adults. He repeatedly uses this argument in *The Reason of Church Government* and then in Areopagitica:

> God uses not to captivat under a perpetuall childhood of prescription, but trusts him with the gift of reason to be his own chooser; there were but little work left for preaching, if law and compulsion should grow so fast upon those things which hertofore were govern'd only by exhortation. [183]

Here, Milton's audience is once again reminded of Paul's message to Galatians where he equates obedience under laws to slavery and describes Jewish Christians as children or immature heirs who adhered to their laws with slavish obedience, and therefore, they were not any better than slaves. "Now I say, that the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world." (Galatians 4:1-4; KJV). A child for Milton as well as for Paul is someone who immaturely clings to the dogmas and traditions and cannot separate himself from the customs of the world and cannot recognize the right path on his own.

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182. Milton, "The Reason of Church-Government Urg'd against Prelaty," 70.
183. Milton, "Areopagitica," 934.

As we can see, the liberalism which is associated with Milton was at first nothing but a religious fervor against Catholicism and a protest against prelatic control over individuals' conscience. Scholars who read Milton's polemic that way argue that Milton's fight was purely personal without any civic cause, starting with anti-prelatic polemics and divorce tracts, expressions of his intolerance for Catholics and resentment for his own marriage. Charles G. Osgood imputes Milton's "grand plans" of civic liberty to an act of "egoism."[184] There are others like Willmore Kendall, John Illo, who point out the inconsistencies in Milton's polemic to undermine their contribution to the freedom of thought and expression.[185]

Dzelzainis, however, breaks away from this negativity and shows faith in Milton's liberalism arguing that it "genuinely informed" his understanding of "religious, social and political issues."[186] Dzelzainis correctly understands Milton's polemic, particularly the ones written between 1643 and 1645, as "advancing the domestic branch of the 'cause of true and substantial liberty.'"[187] It is quite possible that initially Milton was concerned about the personal liberty only, but with age, time, and with his growing involvement in the political affairs of the country, the scope of that liberty kept widening. Dzelzainis does not separate Milton's struggle for personal liberty from civil or political liberty. If personal, he argues, is seen as the "several equally important manifestation of 'true' liberty," then "the prose writings of 1643 to 145 devoted to domestic topic such as divorce could in effect do duty for the political writings which he so

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184. Charles G. Osgood, "Areopagitica-1644," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 89, no. 3 (1945): 496, www.jstor.org/stable/985430.
185. John Illo, "The Misreading of Milton's Areopagitic," *Radical Perspectives in the Art* (1972): 180, 89. Willmoore Kendall, "How to Read Milton's *Areopagitica* " *Journal of Politics* (1960).
186. Dzelzainis, "Liberty and the Law," 70.
187. Dzelzainis, "Liberty and the Law," 1.

conspicuously failed to produce at the time."[188] Besides, the movement from personal to universal is the most natural progression of thoughts and feelings; we can only empathize with others' circumstances when it is a relatable experience for us. If Milton's four tracts on divorce were a result of his own embittered married life; if he wrote *Areopagitica*, as Osgood has pointed, only because he thought his own voice was constricted; and if he was against popery and episcopacy because it thwarted his religious freedom, then all of this means that he understood and valued liberty more than anyone else. It was a need very dear to his heart.

Although freedom—freedom of speech, religious freedom, autonomy of individual— was a subject central to all of Milton's polemic, it is *Areopagitica* which Babara Lewalski and Catherine Belsey extol as the keystone in the tradition of liberalism. It is at the same time Milton's most controversial political piece because it is simultaneously republican and liberal. Written, in November 1944, against licensing of books, the treatise was an act of rebellion in itself since it was published, after parliamentary order of 1943, without license.[189] Milton asserts his liberty to express by publishing the tract without the government's consent. However, the title and the content of the treatise are suggestive of Milton's republicanism because of its humanist connection. The title of the treatise, notes William Kerrigan, is appropriately chosen to suggest the "moral reform" it intends.[190] It alludes to Isocrates's seventh oration, *Areopagitica Discourse* (c.355 B.C.E), and emulates its form of classical oration. Isocrates stood on Mars Hill and proposed moral reform to Athenian Council of Areoparagus. The reference was significant for the seventeenth-century Protestants for they knew that the apostle Paul stood on the same hill and preached Christian Gospel to Athenians. The allusion was also relevant because in his address to Athenians

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188. Dzelzainis, "Liberty and the Law," 58-59.
189. Milton, "The Complete Poetry and Essential Prose of John Milton," 923.
190. Milton, "The Complete Poetry and Essential Prose of John Milton," 924.

St. Paul quoted Greek poetry to draw parallel between Christianity and Greek tradition to make his audience realize that the unseen deity their poets mentioned in their poetry is none other than the one God Christian worship.[191]

In the pamphlet, Milton situates his utopia in the period of great antiquity, and in the beginning of *Areopagitica,* he lauds the efforts of the parliament in the progress of the country, but also expresses his fear that the current licensing policies were taking them back to the ways of barbarians: "if any should accuse me of being new and insolent, did they know how much better I find ye esteem it to imitate the old and elegant humanity of Greece than the barbaric of Hunnish and Norwegian stateliness."[192] Milton, perhaps, like Erasmus, also thought that he was living in the times of barbarians. However, he did not express his resent for the government in the treatise; instead he extols the governments' prior efforts and only criticizes the Parliament Act of 1943.

Milton idealizes the intellectual freedom enjoyed by the Greeks; he pensively recalls Isocrates's address to Athenians in a tone that betrays envy, and admires the rhetorical prowess of Isocrates with which he could influence the politics of the state. Classical antiquity embodies the intellectual utopia that Milton envisions where people were encouraged to gain all sort of knowledge and were respected for their endeavors in the pursuit of knowledge: "Such honor was done in those days to men who professed the study of wisdom and eloquence, not only in their own country but in other lands, that cities and seignories heard them gladly and with great respect if they had aught in public to admonish the state."[193] Through the comparison, Milton wanted to emphasize that Parliamentary Act of 1943 was a regressive policy.

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191. Milton, "The Complete Poetry and Essential Prose of John Milton," 924.
192. Milton, "The Complete Poetry and Essential Prose of John Milton," 929.
193. Milton, "Areopagitica," 929.

After the historical review of licensing, Milton drops his republicanism and articulates his hallmark arguments against licensing which would put him on the list of early liberal thinkers: 'Read any books that come to thy hands, for thou art sufficient both to judge aright and to examine each matter,'[194] he cheers. When talking about liberty in the treatise, Milton employs the modern day language of natural rights. Milton thought it to be a man's birth right to choose and to exercise virtue thus. Therefore, the censorship of books, in his view, was unnatural and irreligious: "Why should we then affect a rigor contrary to the manner of God and of nature, by abridging or scanting those means which books freely permitted are, both to the trial of virtue and the exercise of truth?"[195] Sacks argue that for Milton "liberty was a possession whose worth depended on its use. Like material wealth, the freedom to act created the good of other or the general welfare. It is inextricably intertwined with virtue, which necessarily involves freedom of choice"[196] Books, thus, become a symbol of both virtue and liberty because in choosing a book a person uses liberty and in deciding which book offers the best knowledge he exercises virtue. Only with freedom citizens could be trained in "true" virtue and those who have acquired true virtue would be contributive citizens. And a true virtue for Milton is one that struggles tenaciously to resist evil:

> I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race where the immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat. Assuredly we bring not innocence in the world, we bring impurity much rather: that which purifies us is trial and trial is by what is contrary. That virtue which is youngling in the contemplation of evil and knows not the utmost that the vice promises to her followers, and rejects it, is but a blank virtue, not a pure.[197]

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194. Milton, "Areopagitica," 937.
195. Milton, "Areopagitica," 944.
196. Sacks, "Liberty and the Law," 74.
197. Milton, "Areopagitica," 939.

The relationship between virtue and liberty can be best understood in these lines. As Milton argues that "pure" virtue cannot be attained without liberty, without freedom of choice, and impure or "cloistered" virtue cannot make any positive contribution to the society. Thus, for Milton, as Hamel has pointed out, liberty comes before virtue.[198]

Milton moves back and forth between republicanism and liberalism in almost all his polemic— an inconsistency for which he is greatly criticized. With the exception *Of Civil Power* and *The Readie and Easie and Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth*, which many scholars find clearly liberal. However, the governmental structure that Milton proposes in the treatises is a republic: a government formed by the representatives elected by popular voting. Interestingly, Milton's ideal commonwealth bear many similarities with More's *Utopia*. The treatise shares Milton's plan for a grand council and regional assemblies. The members of the grand council have life tenure, and they are to be chosen by a stringent process in which best suited candidates are selected from a carefully prepared list. In *Utopia*, "ambassadors, tranibores, priests, and finally the prince" are chosen with equal care.

Lewalski notes that in *The Readie and Easie* Milton drafts his vision of an ideal government which was based on Jean Bodin's anti-democratic political theory.[199] The treatise was anti- democratic but was also strictly against monarchy. In the treatise, Milton argues that a monarchical government was already a thing of past for England, and reverting to a model of governance that was rejected once before was nothing but a fool's errand:

> Besides this, if we returne to Kingship, and soon repent, as undoubtedly we shall, when we begin to finde the old encroachments coming on by little and little upon our consciences, which must necessarily proceed from king and bishop united

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198. Hamel, "The Republicanism Of John Milton: Natural Rights, Civic Virtue and the Dignity Of Man," 38.
199. Lewalski, *The Life of John Milton : A Critical Biography*, 393.

inseparably in one interest, we may be forced perhaps to fight over again all that we have fought, and spend over again all that we have spent.[200]

Milton doubts that it is even possible to form an incorruptible one –person government in England: an ideal government that would put state before himself cannot be sustained in a single person.

> I denie not but that ther may be such a king, who may regard the common good before his own, may have no vitious favourite, may hearken only to the wisest and incorruptest of his Parlament: but this rarely happ'ns in a monarchie not elective; and it behoves not a wise nation to committ the summ of thir well-being, the whole of thir safetie to fortune. And admit, that monarchy of itself may be convenient to some nations, yet to us who have thrown it out, received back again, it cannot be prove pernicious.[201]

Unlike the one- person government that the majority preferred, the Parliament of England exhibits prudence that we have witnessed earlier in More's Utopus. In his second treatise, Milton pays tribute to the Parliament of England in a language that is immediately reminiscent of More's Utopus and Erasmus's "good prince:"

> The Parliament of England, assisted by a great number of the people who appeerd and stuck to them faithfullest in defence of religion and thir civil liberties, judging kingship by long experience a government unnecessarie, burdensom and dangerous, justly and magnanimously abolishd it; turning regal bondage into a free Commonwealth, to the admiration and terrour of our emulous neighbours.[202]

In the above lines, replace "The Parliament of England" with king and you have More's Utopus. Here, the parliament is a prudent reformer like Utopus, who took over the island and transformed it into Utopia. Milton describes the Parliament as the defender and protector of civil liberties; similarly, Utopus coached the uncultured inhabitants of the island in "humanity and civil gentleness."[203] In many ways, both the Parliament and Utopus are liberators and emblems of

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200. John Milton, "The Readie and Easie Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth," in *John Milton Prose: Major Writings on Liberty, Politics, Religion, And Education*, ed. David Lowenstein (United Kingdom: A John Wiley&Sons Ltd., Publication, 2013), 433.
201. Milton, "The Readie and Easie Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth," 377-78.
202. Milton, "The Readie and Easie Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth," 429.
203. More, *Utopia*, 62.

progress and advancement who have transformed their countries to an extent that they inspire envy in their neighboring countries: The Parliament turned "regal bondage into a free Commonwealth to the admiration and terrour in our emulous neighbors," and the neighbors of Utopia "which at first began to mock and to jest at this vain enterprise, then turned to marvel at the success, and to fear."[204]

From regicide tracts to *Readie and Easie*, the virtuous conduct that Milton expects from a ruler is reminiscent of Christian humanist work of Erasmus: *The Education of a Christian Prince*. It is true that over the years Milton's politics took many turns: from monarchical to republicanism and from republicanism to liberal or liberal republicanism. But he was consistent in his distinction between a tyrannical and an otherwise rule. Erasmus's influence was significant to Milton's understanding of a tyrant. The characteristics that Milton associates with a tyrant are similar to what Erasmus delineates in his conduct book for the young prince Charles V. It is significant to discuss tyranny here because tyranny was innately connected to the binary relationship of virtue and liberty that Milton's utopia proposes.

Erasmus's *Institutio Principis Christiani* and Milton's tracts on Tyranny

Milton's rhetoric communicates a noticeable change in what he thought was an ideal form of government. Although Milton begin participating in the mainstream politics with his regicide tract, *The Tenure of Magistrates and Kings*, and *Eikonoklastes*, Jane Hiles still accuses Milton of "royalist reflex" in *Eikonklastes*. And what they mean by that is *Eikonoklastes* made a weak case against Charles I and was unsuccessful in proving his tyranny only because Milton tried to emulate *Eikono Basilike* and "following its pattern shifted the blame from the king to the advisors and

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204. More, *Utopia*, 62-63.

others."[205] The result was "what Milton delivers, however, is not a subtle exercise in the logic of republicanism, nor is it an especially passionate invective against the crimes of King Charles I's reign."[206] Milton, perhaps, does exhibit "royalist reflex" in *Eikonoklastes*, but in this section I will add to that perspective by arguing that Milton relied on royalist language in his tract only to prove the King as a tyrant.

Hiles evaluates *Eikonoklastes* failure on the rhetorical grounds, but pays less attention to the psychology of Mitlon's audience, or even Milton's own psychology. Even though the country had rid itself of a monarchical rule by executing his king, it had not completely adapted to the new form of government, and a monarch was still revered by the majority. Milton's deference to the king in the preface of *Eikonklastes* suggests Milton still esteemed the status of a king highly: "To descant on the misfortunes of a Person fallen from so high a dignity, who has also paid his final debt both to the Nature and to his Faults, is neither of itself a thing commendable, nor the attention of this discourse."[207] It can be argued that Milton, in the given lines, is paying respect to the king as a dead person and not to his rank. However, there is not a doubt in our minds that for Milton and his contemporaries Charles I's execution was a tragedy not because he fell, but because he fell from "so high a dignity." Milton begins with a disclaimer that in choosing to write about a king his intentions were not to become famous, but that was what he was exactly doing. Another question comes to mind is that Milton was direct and passionate in *Tenure of Magistrates and Kings,* why could he not replicate that in *Eikonoklastes*? To explain that, we can reason that after

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205. Jane Hiles, "Milton's Royalist Reflex: The Failure of Argument and the Role of Dialogics in Eikonoklastes," *Spokesperson Milton: Voices in Contemporary Criticism*: 88.
206. Hiles, "Milton's Royalist Reflex: The Failure of Argument and the Role of Dialogics in Eikonoklastes," 88.
207. John Milton, "Eikonoklastes," in *Eikon Basilike with selections from Eikonoklastes* (Canada: Broadview Editions, 2006), 221.

Eikon Basilike the popularity of dead Charles I was on the rise and Milton feared that vitriol against the king may have opposite effect and may push the sentiments more in the favor of Charles.

At the time Milton wrote *Eikonoklastes*, medieval notions of king's divine right were still prevalent. Most English people still believed in a king's birth right to rule and thought negatively of the King's execution, worrying that his execution would have grave repercussions. Milton challenges those false notions arguing that a king is a king by his actions and not by his decorum or title: "Nevertheless for their sake who through custom, simplicity, or want of better teaching, have not more seriously considered Kings, than gaudy name of Majesty, and admire them and their doing, as if they breathed not the same breath with other mortal men."[208] In the same vein, Erasmus argues that each ornament that a king adorns is a symbol of his virtues: wisdom, leniency, and clemency. If a king lacks all those virtues than all the ornaments and his outwardly stateliness reduces his character to that of an actor:

> But if the prince has none of these qualities [B 438], but these symbols are not ornaments but stand as accusations against him. If a necklace, scepter, royal purple robes [L568], a train of attendents are all that make a king, what is to prevent the actors who come on stage decked with all the pomp of state from being called king?[209]

Milton was always against the understanding that gave political and royal legitimacy to a king under the doctrine of divine right. He continuously tried to humanize the role of king and finally attempts to shatter that fallacious godly image in *Eikonoklastes.* In that, Milton was in contradiction with Erasmus who could not fully separate himself from the medieval influence and continue to see king as a godly, fatherly figure. In *institution*, he alludes to Aristotelian image of a king as a custodian of the state, "what is a king if not the father to a great multitude?"[210] Milton

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208. Milton, "Eikonoklastes," 221.
209. Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, 152.
210. Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, 170.

refrains from associating divinity with a king, but at times evokes the king's image of a father figure to support his argument against tyranny. However, he employs the imagery just to emphasize that even children refuse to tolerate a father who is tyrannical:

> We endure a father though he be harsh and strict, and we endure sych a king too; but we do not endure even a father who is tyrannical. If a father kill his son he shall pay with his life: shall not then a king too be subject to this same most just of laws if he has destroyed the people who are his sons?[211]

Here and everywhere else, Milton repeatedly argues that a king is not above the law and when it comes to justice a king should be treated as everyone else. In *The Tenure of Magistrates and Kings,* Milton uses an even harsher tone for a tyrant and grants him no mercy. Erasmus also disallows any leniency towards a tyrant prince. Unlike Milton, he does not ask for an equitable punishment for a king, but argues that a prince's punishment should be severer given the enormity of his fault:

> In the case of private individuals some concession is granted to youth and to old age: the former may make a mistake now and then; the latter is allowed leisure and cessation of toils. But the man who undertakes the duties of the prince while managing the affairs of everyone is not free to be either a young man or an old one; he cannot make a mistake without a great loss to many; he cannot slacken in is duties without the gravest disaster ensuing.[212]

Milton's accusations of King Charles I as a tyrant find legitimacy in Erasmus's discourse on tyranny. The many traits of a tyrant that Erasmus mentions in *Institutio* were flattery, greed, war mongering, self-indulgence, selfishness, and the habit of putting self above the state. Milton made all these allegations against King Charles I in his regicide tracts. The first allegation he makes in *Eikonoklastes* was flattery. It is also the attribute of Milton's rhetoric that Hiles identify as "royalist reflex." Contrary to Hiles accusation, Milton was not delegating blame to King's subordinates and advisory, but was building his case against the King: "Those nearest to this king and most of his

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211. Milton, "Eikonoklastes," 326-27.
212. Milton, "The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates," 1055.

Fourites were Courtiers and Prelates; men whose chief study was to find out which way the King inclined, and to imitate him exactly."[213]

Erasmus's tyrant possesses the same trait: "The tyrant is pleased either with stupid dolts, on whom he imposes; or with wicked men, whom he puts to evil use in defending his position as tyrant; or with flatterers, from whom he hears just praises."[214] Understanding the King's action in view of the conduct that Erasmus prescribes to a monarch, Milton did not think that the King's advisor were to blame for the king's actions, but it was the King's fault that he chose flatterers and sycophants for his advisors. Detailing the corruption of King Charles I's advisors, he wrote that they always opposed the Parliament, breed the false notion that the king would have "no need of parliaments anymore." However, in their behavior they were simply imitating the king himself: "who never called a parliament but to supply his necessities; and having supplied those, as suddenly and ignominiously dissolved it, without redressing any one grievance of the people."[215]

For Milton and for Erasmus, tyranny was directly related to liberty and virtue and it further alludes to Plato's philosopher- king. Only a virtuous king can encourage virtue in his citizens. And only a free man possesses the talent to exercise virtue. King Charles I was a child and a slave in Milton's opinion; and we now know, references to child and slave in Milton's rhetoric are biblical allusions which suggest a person's inability to recognize truth. He details King Charles's slavish and childish impulse in *Eikonklastes*: He immaturely waged a war against his "native country, Scotland;" heavily taxed his people to collect money and squandered it on his extravagances and futile wars; never listened to anyone but to those who will affirm his madness; never called the Parliament session, and called it only to fulfill his own needs. But in doing all this, Milton argues

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213. Milton, "Eikonoklastes," 228.
214. Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, 164.
215. Milton, "Eikonoklastes," 228.

that King Charles was not free because he did all this "not of his own choice and inclination."[216] By that Milton means that the King was not virtuous to be free and was not free to be virtuous: "For indeed none can love freedom heartilie, but good men; the rest love not freedom, but licence."[217] Being a slave himself, the King cold neither grant nor protect "civil liberties:" "But being slaves within doors, no wonder that they strive so much to have the public State conformably govern'd to the inward vitious rule, by which they govern themselves"[218]

Milton continuously associates the word "tyranny" in his political polemic with popery and with a monarchical government. An accurate and deep understanding of Milton's definition of tyranny is important to understand his inconsistent politics. Milton's utopian politics began as a protest against tyranny of popery that constrained religious liberty. Later on, he objected to monarchy for the same reason: for its oppression of civil liberties. Over time, Milton's view of popery and monarchy changed and they ceased to be mere symbols of tyranny for him, but tyrannical in themselves. Milton was convinced that liberty of individuals would always be in jeopardy under episcopal and monarchical rule. The utopian form of rule for Milton was the one that safeguards civil liberties, "the noblest, the manliest, the equalest, the justest" form of government, "a free Commonwealth," and in that he cared less whether it was a republican, or a liberal government.

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216. Milton, "Eikonoklastes," 229.
217. Milton, "Areopagitica," 1024.
218. Milton, "Areopagitica," 1024.

CONCLUSION

A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing. And when Humanity lands there, it looks out, and, seeing a better country, sets sail. Progress is the realization of Utopias.[219]

Oscar Wilde aptly summarizes why I choose to talk about utopia; why I insist that Milton's political thought should be read as a utopia; and most importantly why I chose to compare Milton's political thought with More's utopia. Utopias are essential because they goad humanity forward: urge it to do something different, to explore the unknown. Milton's political thought was also utopian in that sense; it may have not invented anything new, but it certainly made significant contribution in championing individual liberty and tolerance —and through them liberalism. The Western political utopia has been my obsession for quite some time and I am glad that by virtue of this thesis I got an opportunity to delve into its origins.

Most of us would find it hard to associate any sort of utopianism with Milton. Especially when his political efforts had no jarring effect in his own time: *Areopagitica* was ignored and the Parliament continued to censor books that were believed to be heretical; monarchy was restored despite Milton's vehement protestations against it. However, we cannot discount its contribution in shaping the western political thought: its influence, centuries later, on the French and American revolutions, and its enduring relevance to contemporary political discourses, western as well as eastern: Dr. Issa Islam has recently published a research on Milton's influence in Middle Eastern

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219. Oscar Wilde, *The Soul of Man under Socialism* (United States: Thomas B. Mosher, 1905), 40.

and Northern Africa. We cannot talk about individualism or freedom without evoking Milton's Satan, so powerful is the grip of Milton's imagination. Even his failed rhetoric such as *Areopagitica* remains one of the most quoted work— scholars have drawn connection between *Areopagitica* and Stuart Mill's *on Liberty*; allusions to the tract are routinely made in the discourses of freedom of expression, journalism and freedom of thought. Even the Supreme Court of United States invoked *Areopagitica* in the case of Huey Long's tax on newspaper advertisement. Justice Sutherland presided the case and made his decision by reviewing the history of British government's attempts to control newspaper publications in pre independence America.[220]

Nevertheless, scholars have criticized his work for unoriginality, which may have undermined my argument that sees Milton's political thought as utopian. It would weaken my argument only if by utopia we understand something new or unique, which I have already argued would be a wrong interpretation of the word. I understand the word "utopia" to mean what Thomas More, who coined the word, intended it to mean a "no place;" it is a desire, it is a place to be, or as Karl Mannheim has described it is someone's "wishful thinking."[221] It can be something entirely new; it can be commonplace, but it is always an aspiration. The appeal of a utopia lies in its desirability. And for the thinkers from Milton's era individual liberty was highly desirable. It was certainly not novel, but was greatly needed. Moreover, Milton did not pioneer republicanism, but he definitely propagated it, and stayed true to his vision of a free Commonwealth— as we have observed in *The Easie and Readie Way to Establish* a Commonwealth— when everyone else were abandoning it.

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220. Ernest A. Strathmann, "Areopagitica, 1944," *Bulletin of the American Association of University Professors (1915-1955)* 30, no. 4 (1944): 575, https://doi.org/10.2307/40220563, www.jstor.org/stable/40220563.
221. Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, 184.

Milton's writings anticipate a new political order, where civil liberties would no longer be ignored. And if no one else, Milton was aware of the potency of his work and imagination. Throughout his works, he projects himself as an instrument of change, and it is a role he took seriously and remained committed to it till the end. Milton was confident, even in 1660 when he feared that all his effort go in vain and the nation will backslide to a monarchical government, that his ideas will be more relevant to the future generations:

> But I trust I shall have spoken perswasion to abundance of sensible and ingenuous men: to som perhaps whom God may raise of these stones to become children of reviving libertie; and may reclaim, though they seem now chusing them a captain back for Egypt, to bethink themselves a little and consider whether they are rushing.[222]

In his writings, he repeatedly refers to himself as God's vessel and claims to speak on His behalf: "to justify God's way to men." This is further confirmed by Milton's last wife's account in which she reports that Milton strongly believed that his poetry was inspired by the Holy Spirit. In *The Reason of Church Government*, he identifies himself as God's selected herald," and compares himself to Christian prophets, Isaiah and Jeremiah.[223]

Certainly, Milton understood prophet strictly in religious sense and saw it as God's agent on earth. However, a prophet, in Milton's view, is an intermediary between God and his people with a special mission: he is not simply a transmitter of God's messages, but is responsible for restoring order, and for directing his people to a new and improved future. Milton construes this particularly from the biblical account of Ezekiel, who prophesied the restoration of Israel. According to the Old Testament, Ezekiel was in exile along with other Jews when a messenger brought the news of the destruction, and it is at that time he portended the restoration of Israel. The restoration of Israel is symbolized by the reconstruction of the Temple which was destroyed along

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222. Milton, "The Readie and Easie Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth," 446.
223. Milton, "The Complete Poetry and Essential Prose of John Milton," 836-37.

with the city as a punishment from God. In *The Reason of Church-Government*, Milton invokes

the Ezekiel's account to state the importance of the church, but simultaneously he underscores the

role of a prophet:

> In the Prophesie of Ez-kiel from the 40 Chapt. onward, after the destruction of the Temple, God by his Prophet seeking to weane the hearts of the Jewes from their old law to expect a new and more perfect reformation under Christ, sets out before their eyes the stately fabrick & constitution of his Church, with al the ecclesiasticall functions appertaining; indeed the description is as sorted best to the apprehension of those times, typicall and shadowie, but in such manner as never yet came to passe, nor never must literally, unlesse we mean to annihilat the Gospel.[224]

The lines portray a prophet as an agent of change, someone who by God's command influence

people to abandon their traditions and customs in favor of a better way of life. Milton claimed that

he was one such person. It is indeed hard for us to contend with his role as a prophet. Whether he

received revelations from God or not we cannot say for sure, but his work was prophetic, for all

utopias are prophetic in their move away from the current reality to a more perfect existence.

By comparing More's *Utopia* with Milton's political polemic my intentions are to bring to

the fore its participatory role in advancing the utopian thought which was first imagined by Plato

(as far as we know). The thesis also aims to emphasize that without Erasmus's mediation, without

his validation of Classical education, classical philosophy such as Plato's might not have made its

way to Christian societies; we might not have had *Utopia*. This is probably an exaggeration, but it

is not extremely far-fetched; at least latter is true, Erasmus's influence on More's *Utopia* remains

unchallenged. And let's not forget Erasmus's *Adages* that made classical wisdom commonplace.

More's and Milton's politics encourage two different types of utopias—collectivist and

individualistic. These are the two main models that inform the later utopias. Particularly, twentieth-

century utopian and dystopian fiction such as *1984* and *Men like Gods* grew out of the tension

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224. Milton, "The Reason of Church-Government Urg'd against Prelaty," 67.

between these two utopias. One can continue to draw parallels as all the Wellsian utopias were products of this tension. My thesis aims to highlight the diverse natures of Milton's and More's utopias in the hope that their manifestation in other forms of writings would be recognized.

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