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Renaissance kings-mirror literature: The dual vision

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RENAISSANCE KINGS-MIRROR LITERATURE:

THE DUAL VISION

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PREFACE

Since man has lived in some semblance of organized society, whether banding together out of need for protection or for fellowship, he has felt a need for some form of government. Who rules? How is he selected? What powers does he have? What are his obligations to his subjects? In many primitive societies, such decisions were made on the basis of strength and brutality, with the victor becoming the ruler until someone stronger could grasp authority for himself, only to struggle consistently to remain in power. In many cases the oldest person ruled, judged to be the wisest by virtue of age, thus forming a patriarchial society. In all cases, the struggle for power is an inherent problem when a group of people live together, and it follows that systems of government become more complicated as the social structure of groups becomes more intricate.

At least since the days of classical antiquity, educated people have felt obligated to study and seek to understand the nature of the state. Plato had inquired into the qualities of the republic and Aristotle had analyzed the structure of politics. Their efforts were only the beginning. When Niccolo Machiavelli wrote The Prince and Sir Thomas More was writing Utopia, these Renaissance writers had at hand a ten-century heritage of books dealing with statecraft. So popular have such books been through the ages that they have become a genre of literature of their own, known as kings-mirror or mirror-for-

princes. In these works, writers through the centuries have explored the nature of statecraft and sought to advise rulers on how to govern well. For the most part, these works were much like each other as they exalted heads of state with flattery while reminding them of their duty to God and country, then offered them advice on educating their children, responsibility to the public, and general conduct.

With the exception of Plato, few if any of these writers attempted an analysis of statecraft or dealt realistically with the problems and responsibilities of power. Strangely, Renaissance Europe produced perhaps the two greatest treatises on statecraft just nine years apart, giving birth to the science of politics and to two theories of government still of great importance in any discussion of statecraft today--Utopianism and Machiavellianism.

This work shall explore the two selections of literature from which these theories come, The Prince by Machiavelli and Utopia by Sir Thomas More, and seek an answer as to why two such diverse political theories should have roots only a few years apart in Renaissance Europe. To reach this objective, a number of questions present themselves.

Why did England's Sir Thomas More, a distinguished statesman, lawyer, scholar, Christian Humanist, and author of poetry and scholastic works feel compelled to write a treatise on statecraft when literally hundreds of such books were available to him and to his monarch, King Henry VIII? Why, particularly, when doing so meant putting a brilliant career in law and politics in jeopardy because of his open criticism of Henry's and his predecessor's policies.

On the other hand, what did Machiavelli, the victim of oppressive government, imprisoned, tortured, and finally banished, hope to gain by writing what has since been commonly described as a manual for tyrants? Most important, what influences of sixteenth century Europe would be responsible for the formulation of two such divergent viewpoints on statecraft when the writers shared the same literary heritage on statecraft and were both citizens of Renaissance Europe?

In addition to these questions, three major considerations will be explored. First, what was the influence of kings-mirror literature on each of these men? Were they aware of the genre in which they wrote? How much were they influenced by their predecessors and how much did they borrow from them?

Second, how much did the Renaissance philosophy of humanism influence More and Machiavelli? And if they were humanists, how does one account for their radically different solutions to the mutual problem of government in their homelands.

Third, how important are the political differences of sixteenth century Italy and England to the two theories? Did the social and political conditions of their respective countries help explain them?

Together these major considerations, as well as the questions about More and Machiavelli, will explain how the two divergent theories of Utopianism and Machiavellianism were given birth within a decade of each other in Renaissance Europe.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

THE FORCES OF TRADITION AND HUMANISM IN THE RENAISSANCE

It was Machiavelli who classified government with the statement that "all states and dominions which hold or have held sway over mankind are either republics or monarchies."[1] He thus broke down all system of government as it was known to man in that age. A modern scholar has taken this one step farther to proclaim, "Man has long lived in a state of organized society, and for a great space of time that state has been predominantly monarchical."[2] Our attention in this study focuses on the monarchy and the ruler as he is exemplified by King Henry VIII who ruled England from 1509 to 1547, a sovereign who "started with everything and squandered it all"[3]; and the despotic merchant princes who ruled Florence during Machiavelli's lifetime. Life under these princes was a precarious adventure at best and holding a position of authority in their governments often ended in exile or death for the ambitious civil servant. Yet both More and Machiavelli served the state well and, predictably, one was exiled when the government changed hands, and the other was put to death by a monarch who had tired of dealing with his obstinance.

[1]Niccolo Machiavelli, The Prince and The Discourses (New York, 1950), p. 4.

[2]Lester K. Born, "Introduction," The Education of a Christian Prince by Desiderius Erasmus (New York, 1936), p. 44.

[3]Robert Bolt, "A Man for all Seasons" (New York, 1962), p. vii.

While the circumstances for each writing his book on statecraft were vastly different, their motives were similar: each was vitally concerned with the government of his homeland and each wanted to see that government become strong and fruitful. To ponder the powers and responsibilities of statecraft was not a characteristic uniquely theirs.

"Once the principle of monarchy is thoroughly established in a reasonably stable society, it is not surprising that philosophic thinkers should concern themselves with the rights, powers, duties, responsibilities, and personal qualifications of those destined to occupy the supreme position of king, whether that position be elective or hereditary, limited or absolute."[4] Further, once a ruler came to office, he was there until death or his replacement through revolution. For during the Renaissance, "The accession of a new monarch was much more important than that of a modern political party because there was no machinery for ridding a country of his administration."[5] Thus, in states where monarchs had such great power and all government focused on them, "men properly sought to deal with the problems of government at the centre."[6] Every public-spirited citizen, public officials, and monarchs as well, asked one basic question: What will secure good government? To arrive at an answer meant to first decide what the ruler should be and do if good government was to be a reality.[7]

[4]Born, p. 44.

[5]Allan H. Gilbert, Machiavelli's Prince and Its Forerunners (New York, 1938), p. 3.

[6]Gilbert, p. 4.

[7]Gilbert, p. 4.

That More and Machiavelli should make their thoughts and suggestions on these problems known on paper was not to set a precedent, but to join the long heritage of kings-mirror or mirror-for-princes literature. For ten centuries books of advice to princes had been available, thus providing ample help for these monarchs and counsellors seeking answers to the fundamental questions of statecraft. These books of advice were so popular that it is difficult to imagine a Renaissance library wholly without any. "Between the years 800 and 1700 there were accessible some thousand books and large, easily distinguished, sections of books telling the king how to conduct himself so that he might be 'clear in his great office.'"[8]

The outstanding authority on these works often referred to as "de regimine principum"[9] is Lester K. Born, who feels strongly that nearly every idea found in books on statecraft after Plato are present in either Plato's Republic or his Laws. "In Plato we meet the intellect whole influence directly or indirectly was to mold the course of political thought in the western world more than any other influence, Christianity not excepted, until the ascendency of Aristotle in the thirteenth century A.D."[10]

However, in tracing the ancient theories of statecraft, Born acknowledges that there are numerous other treatises on kingship that form the background for the Renaissance writers and these must,

[8]Gilbert, p. 4.

[9]Born, p. 44.

[10]Born, p. 45.

therefore, also be included in a study of this type. One important conclusion of such a study is that "originality is not one of the prime essentials of a good treatise on the education of a prince[11] and, in fact, "many so-called 'modern' ideas are merely reversions of the basic ideas of Greco-Roman antiquity"[12] which were to reappear in the Middle Ages and in our own day.

Perhaps Isocrates was the first to write in the genre of kings-mirror, when, in 374 B.C., he wrote a treatise setting forth "the duties and responsibilities of a prince to his people"[13] to Nicocles, the young king of Cyprus. Erasmus has acknowledged indebtedness to this treatise and there is thought to be traces of it in The Prince. Xenophon, who was thought to have lived about 350 B.C., wrote a number of works, including an imaginary dialogue between a ruler and a poet in which they discuss the ruler's obligations. This short treatise, entitled Hiero, entreats the king to beware of flatterers, to trust no one and to fear all brave men, regardless of how good a ruler they are.

Chronologically, Plato, Isocrates' contemporary, is the next important author. Though he did not write a specific treatise on statecraft, the major ideas found in all subsequent essays of this genre are contained in the Republic or the Laws. Plato attempted to serve a ruler, Dionysius the Elder who ruled Sicily, as an adviser, but the relationship was unsatisfactory, for Plato was unable to get

[11]Born, p. 45.

[12]Born, p. 46.

[13]Born, pp. 53-54.

along with the tyrant and was frustrated by not being able to test his theories. Of the various types of states, the Greeks felt monarchy to be the best, while tyranny ranked at the bottom.

> This is true because in a monarchy the one single ruler can make his decisions readily, lead at once for others to follow, and by setting a perfect example of efficiency and goodness to help his subjects. But under such a scheme (monarchy) the native characteristics and ideas of the ruler are of the utmost importance. First of all, the ideal prince must cherish only the truth, and then he must be temperate, just, and careful, but withal, possessed of courage and the ability to act. He should also be quick to learn, self-controlled, gentle, possessed of a good memory, a sound training, and years of experience. Furthermore, the ruler of the state should be tested for physical and mental endurance under severe strain, for he must be able to bear such crises equitably. The prince is to order his life and actions on those of God. The prince who remains watchful at night is a great defense against evildoers. The function of the prince is a noble one.[14]

Plato compares the good ruler to the pilot of the ship of state, making use for the first time of this famous illustration that later writers time and again borrow from him. It is also Plato who compares the monarch to the shepherd watching over his flock. Most important to the philosophy of Raphael Hythloday, More's mariner who sails to Utopia, Plato declares that there will be no rest from evil until philosophers are kings: "Until philosophers are kings, or the kings and princes of this world have the spirit and power of philosophy, and political greatness and wisdom meet in one, and those commoner natures who pursue either to the exclusion of the other are compelled to stand aside, cities will never have rest from their evils--no, nor the human race,

[14]Born, pp. 53-54.

as I believe--and then only will this State have a possibility of life and behold the light of day.[15] Plato criticizes the tyrant mercilessly. The center of his method of rule is disorder and he himself is plagued with distrust of all others, fraught with worry, and never free. The tyrant is the greatest distance from the philosopher.

Aristotle, Plato's pupil, "comes next in importance as well as in time."[16] In Politics, his major work, Aristotle writes extensively of monarchies and the state, and the duties of the ruler. His ideal prince is a virtuous man, chosen for leadership "because of his personal conduct and mode of life."[17] In all cases, the ruler is there to serve his subjects and tyranny is in no instance good or desirable. He also suggests even distribution of wealth, strong laws, and education as the soundest foundations of the state.

Next to nothing is known of Diotogenes, a Greek who wrote On Piety and On Kingship, of which only fragments survive, and who is thought to have lived during the third century B.C. He says in part that "there can be no justice without law. The king is law; therefore he must be just."[18] Ecphantus, also thought to have been Greek and to have lived in this period, believes that the prince is fashioned after God and is God's earthly counterpart. Therefore, he must rule with virtue and love.

Rome contributed a number of writers to the kings-mirror tradition, notably Polybius, Cicero, Seneca and Suetonius. Polybius wrote his

[15]Plato, The Republic, Vol. V, Ed. P. Shorey, (New York, 1935), p. 473.

[16]Born, p. 57.

[17]Born, p. 58.

[18]Born, p. 61.

History of Rome in forty volumes, discussing his ideas on princes in the sixth. One of his major statements is that "under a good prince the people always obey, for they have nothing to fear."[19] He discourses on the six types of government and concludes that the best will have a checks and balance system with a prince and a legislature. Cicero's Republic and the Laws were written about 50 B.C., as was his third major work, Offices. Cicero believed that monarchy was the best form of government and he entreats those citizens who are possessed of the qualities of a good ruler to devote themselves to state life. Leaders of the state should strive constantly to improve and examine themselves so they may serve as mirrors of conduct for their fellow citizens.

Seneca is a major writer in the kings-mirror tradition. In his De clementia he gives us a portrait of a prince who is perfect in every way, who knows how to control his power, who finds happiness in making his subjects happy, is lovable, well-liked, accessible to the people, and fair to all.[20] He should act so all know he belongs to the state rather than acting as though the state belonged to him. He should act toward his subjects as he wishes the gods to act toward him. Suetonius, a secretary to Hadrian in the first and second century A.D., is remembered today for his Lives of the Caesars in which he makes some observations on the conduct of the emperors and, as did others before him, compares the ruler to a shepherd watching over his flock.

Plutarch is thought to have lived in the first century A.D. This learned Greek, who left so many writings to posterity, is thought to

[19]Born, p. 62.

[20]Born, p. 67.

have written the first discourse that is strictly mirror-for-princes, the Discourse to an Unlearned Prince. Plutarch believed monarchy to be the safest form of government, for the prince is restrained by the people as the state is by him. Since the prince is created by the people, he can be removed by them. The prince must have the usual virtues extolled by Plutarch's predecessors, and he must beware of flatterers and achieve a very solid education. True virtue is the key to happiness.

Dio Chrysostom, also Roman and thought to have lived during Christ's lifetime, also believes monarchy to be the best form of government. Dio charges the prince to first know himself, to maintain a lively interest in many things, to always be moderate and love God, and then his people will love him. The safest man is he who has no enemies. The good prince acts like a shepherd to his people and rules according to the model and idea of Zeus. A ruler's most valuable asset is friendship and friends are the greatest assistance in ruling a state.

Marcus Aurelius, the Roman emperor who embodies the true philosopher-prince Plato spoke of, is able to lend unique insight to his observations on political philosophy since he was engaged in the actual task of ruling when he was writing down his observations. Born studied his Thoughts in twelve books carefully, then drew out those comments made by Aurelius that pertain to rulers and the task of ruling. The result is the picture of a prince who is again the paragon of virtue, kind to his fellow men, frugal, hard-working, simple, god-fearing, brave, honest, just. This prince should be dignified, slow to anger, he should beware of flatterers, and "walk with the gods, for it is possible to live well in an imperial

court."[21] He should remember that life is short and thereby scorn worldly wealth and instead consider the grandeur of the universe.

Dio Cassius, a Greek who settled in Rome about 200 A.D., is reminiscent of Machiavelli. He wrote an eight volume Roman History, part of which is "really a miniature mirror of princes, which is addressed, supposedly, by the chancellor of Maecenas to Augustus, in support of the establishment of the monarchy."[22] His prince, like the others, must be prudent, wise, moderate, frugal, honor God, and be worthy of his subjects imitating him. He should select good and honorable men to help him but the general population should not have direct voice in his rule because of their inexperience. The trick is to make every citizen feel he has a direct part in the state so all will be the prince's faithful allies. Flattery can destroy him if he is not careful of it.

Born briefly mentions the "Panegyrici Latini," a group of eulogies written in honor of several Roman emperors. Of these eulogies, Pliny is the best known author, and had the most to contribute through his writings. Pliny advises the prince to be a father to his people, merciful, self-controlled, liberal and generous. He should reform the youth and travel widely to broaden his understanding of various peoples and places.

The emperor Julian was a student of kingship and wrote considerably on that topic. Writing in the 300's, he used a number of metaphors in describing the good prince, including the shepherd and his folk, the able pilot of a ship in a storm, and comparing the good prince to a

[21]C. R. Haines, Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (New York, 1916), XXVII, p. 16.

[22]Born, p. 80.

queen bee without a sting. His prince is to be virtuous, not greedy, simple, just, merciful, and have those good qualities set forth by the writers of kings-mirror through the ages. His wife should share these qualities with him. When the prince is truly good, he is happy and his people are blessed.

St. Augustine was one writer we know Sir Thomas More was well acquainted with, for More once delivered a series of lectures on Augustine's City of God. In this voluminous work, the bishop of Hippo writes on religion, philosophy, history, ethics, and political science. He discusses Plato at length and shares many of that philosopher's ideas. Augustine's ruler would be a good Christian who ruled justly, had excessive humility, was quick to pardon while slow to punish, who followed his conscience, and loved God. Born refers to him as "anti-imperialistic."[23] Kingship is conferred by God and "men worship a God or gods who will help them in their rule, not from a desire to be good but to rule."[24] He is very much a pacifist and regards peace to be the only happy condition.

The Middle Ages also contributed a number of important kings-mirror treatises, most of which are relatively obscure to the modern reader. Martin of Bracara, who died in 580, authored a treatise entitled The Formula of an Honorable Life which he dedicated to the king of Glaicia. He entreats the king to live by the four cardinal virtues of prudence, magnanimity, continence, and justice. If he will do so, all will be well in the state. Isidore of Seville, who wrote in the sixth century,

[23]Born, p. 92.

[24]Born, p. 92.

entreats his king with the traditional virtues, reminding him to be mindful of God and to correct the evil in his state. The prince should be chaste, merciful, kind, obey his own laws, and be charitable.

Alcuin, Charlemagne's contemporary, and Smaragdus of St. Mihiel, an abbot, were citizens of the eighth century. Each wrote a kings-mirror treatise in which he entreats his king to remember that he rules by the grace of God, that he should uphold the kingly virtues as an example to his people, and that he should fear God. Other qualities, exemplified by nearly all the writers of this genre, as virtue, goodness, justness, and truthfulness, are also extolled.

Himcmar of Rheims, also an eighth century writer, entreats his king, as a number have before him, to remember that he rules by the grace of God, thus giving strength to the idea of the divine right of kings. His charges to his king are similar to those made by his predecessors, telling him in addition that "war in the name of God is not sin; but only necessity should make a prince wage war to expand his territory."[25]

Peter Damiani, the cardinal bishop of Ostia who wrote in the tenth century, uses many biblical citations in his treatise and also a number of proverbs. He especially emphasizes crime and punishment, warning that even the death penalty, if used justly, is justifiable in the eyes of the church and God.

John of Salisbury in the eleventh century wrote an elaborate treatise on politics entitled the Policraticus in which he once more suggests the divine right of kings. In addition to the godly virtues noted by other

[25]Born, p. 109.

writers, Salisbury entreats his king to never forget thathe and his money both belong to the people. He felt that the original state was good and was not in need of laws, but in the present state both a prince and laws are needed. He speaks out strongly for justice and fairness toward those accused of crime. He closes with the admonition that all tyrants come to bad ends.

Perhaps the major writer of kings-mirror to come from the Middle Ages is Thomas Aquinas who lived in the twelfth century. Most of his ideas on politics are found in his essay On the Training of Princes. Under present conditions, he tells us, absolute monarchy is the best form of government. Peace can only be attained by the efforts of a good prince who follows the ways of God to the best of his ability.

> There are three main obstacles to the permanent existence and good order of the state. By nature, man cannot endure long in this life. This the prince should offset by care in training the younger generation to replace the previous one. A second difficulty is caused by "radicals" or chronic objectors. The corrective for them is found in laws, precepts, and punishments to check the existing trouble and to forestall similar conditions in the future. The third is for external causes such as war. The only protection in that case is to guard against all possible enemies. In addition, the prince should do his best to keep firm the bonds of peace and mutual good will within the state and to provide for the essentials of a normal life.[26]

Aquinas also states that glory is not the only reward, that the true reward comes from God. He also discusses tyranny, which he believes more likely to come out of a democracy than a monarchy.

Aegidius Romanus was a pupil of Thomas Aquinas and wrote a treatise On the Governance of Princes at the request of Phillip the Fair about 1287. Aegidius also believes monarchy to be the best form of government,

[26]Born, p. 116.

aristocracy second best, then democracy, then tyranny. The perfect prince must have the princely virtues exemplified by the other medieval writers of kings-mirror. To prevent internal disorder he should not allow small fortresses to be built within his kingdom; the country should be well policed and he should never repeat a mistake, but should learn from it.

> We may conclude with one of the most important of Aegidius's suggestions. The prince should surround himself with wise men and counselors. Their advice should be given in private and after due deliberation. Above all, they should speak the truth even though it may not please the prince. It is not enough for these counselors to be wise--they must be practical and should spend their time only on the larger problems of the state, such as the collection of the income and the preservation of wealth, commerce, especially in providing food for cities and towns, trade laws, maintenance of internal order, declaration of war, and the formulating of laws. Under such a plan, with a good prince, we hope for the best.[27]

Born concludes the following about the genre of kings-mirror writing to come out of the Middle Ages: "There is little originality displayed; the main argument is nearly always supported by wholesale quotations; the methods and topics are nearly all the same. Most of the works were written for a specific prince, and many were written in response to a special request."[28] It would be no easy task to satisfy the requirements of these writers. Taken as a whole, the ideal prince was a godly man.

> In summary we may say that the perfect prince of these ten centuries must be wise, self-restrained, just; devoted to the welfare of his people; a pattern in virtue for his subjects; immune from flattery; interested in economic developments; and educational programs, and the true religion of God; surrounded by efficient ministers and able advisers; opposed to aggressive warfare;

[27]Born, p. 120.

[28]Born, p. 125.

> and, in the realization that even he is subject to law and that the need of the prince and his subjects is mutual, zealous for the attainment of peace and unity.[29]

The influence of this literary heritage is important in understanding The Prince and Utopia, for they are both part of this tradition of kings-mirror literature and owe much of their development to the works of this type that preceded them. Machiavelli, in particular owes much to his predecessors. "Few of the ideas expressed in The Prince are altogether novel; most of them are to be found in medieval and renaissance works belonging to the type of books of advice to kings. Possibly a complete reading of the treatises belonging to this class would leave Machiavelli with nothing wholly new."[30] In form also, Machiavelli followed tradition. The structure of the book into chapters and even some of the chapter headings follow the conventional form of kings-mirror literature.[31] And like his predecessors, he covered the topics they discussed; how a prince should rule conquered territory, what advisors he could rely on, "how he should conduct himself among the intrigues of diplomacy, whether he should depend mainly on fortified castles or entrench on camps in warfare."[32] In The Prince, Machiavelli worried that perhaps he was presumptuous to be offering advice to a ruler since so many had before him and many were doing so in his day: "It now remains to be seen what are the methods and rules for a prince as regards

[29]Born, p. 127.

[30]Gilbert, p. 234.

[31]Max Lerner, "Introduction," The Prince and The Discourses (New York, 1950), p. xxxi.

[32]Lerner, p. xxxi.

his subjects and friends. And as I know that many have written of this, I fear that my writing about it may be deemed presumptuous, differing as I do, especially in this matter, from the opinions of others."[33] Yet history considers him anything but presumptuous, for he mastered the art of kings-mirror literature and in the opinion of many wrote the best of the advice-to-princes books. "In one aspect it is the best representative of the old because the great man has a power over the old that the mere student cannot possess. So The Prince may be called the best representative of the thousand books de regimine principum because of the mastery the author's mind had attained over the type."[34] Machiavelli superseded the old books and improved on everything done to date. While he followed the old format and covered all of the standard topics, he transcended the others, not only in his perfection of the genre, but by excluding one chief factor found in all the others: morality. He forewent it in favor of reality, telling the prince what he must do instead of what he should do.

> Thus, The Prince made a break with the whole tradition of what is called "mirror-of-princes" literature; of sweet, pious advice to a ruler. Over and over again, Machiavelli stressed the fact that he was not describing a good or honorable way to behave, or how society ought to be run. He was simply dealing with the question of how society is run and how people do behave (and, therefore, how a ruler must behave if he wishes to survive.)[35]

Machiavelli was fully aware that what he wrote could carry considerable influence. He wrote of the influence of these books of

[33]Machiavelli, p. 56.

[34]Gilbert, p. 232.

[35]J. Bronowski and Bruce Maglish, The Western Intellectual Tradition (New York, 1960), p. 31.

advice to kings in The Prince when he spoke of how much the common people "are extolled by historians and biographers of princes, and by those who trace their proper course of conduct."[36] It was Machiavelli's opinion that in writing The Prince he was doing something that would be immediately understood because of the number of books already written on the subject; but he asks much more of his reader than his predecessors had expected of their's. Rather than a courtier-type rendition of all that is expected of a Christian prince, Machiavelli went to the heart of the matter of statecraft and unknowingly formulated a political philosophy of such magnitude that today no political science course excludes it when the topic of modern politics is under discussion. In Chapter XV of The Prince, Machiavelli states his purpose in pursuing a topic well-worn by his predecessors, explaining in what way his treatise will be different from all the others: "But my intention being to write something of use to those who understand, it appears to me more proper to go to the real truth of the matter than to its imagination; and many have imagined republics and principalities which have never been seen or known to exist in reality . . . ."[37]

In the typical style of his age, Machiavelli makes no comment on his predecessors, mentioning classics only in a general way when they support one of his contentions; yet it is an improbability that he was not familiar with the writings of Plato, Aristotle, Xenophon, and Isocrates, and some scholars feel he was directly influenced by these classicists.

[36]Machiavelli, p. 472.

[37]Machiavelli, p. 56.

"This community of classical sources is one thing that marks The Prince as conventional. Erasmus asserts that his work called Institutio Principis Christiani is founded on the oration by Isocrates, of which he published a translation . . . . While claims perhaps too extreme have been made for the influence of Isocrates on The Prince, there are surely traces of it, and the probability that Machiavelli knew it is strengthened by its normal inclusion among important works of advice to monarchs."[38] The earlier writers of advice-to-princes books had overt influence on Machiavelli, influencing the format of his book and the topics he covered. These points plus his own comments about the books written before him indicate his thorough familiarity with his predecessors. Other than indirect influence from these sources, Machiavelli's thoughts came from his own observation of the state and his acquaintance with a number of Europe's rulers, particularly Caesar Borgia. His Prince was a uniquely original book, "the first strictly scientific doctrine produced in Europe, the result of an inductive psychological method."[39]

The problem of historic sources does not present itself with Sir Thomas More. The influence of Plato's dialogue, The Republic, is clearly woven into the creation of the mythical kingdom of Utopia. So strongly so, in fact, that there can be no mistaking the fact that Utopia is based on The Republic. More, a highly educated Englishman, pious Catholic, successful lawyer and skilled orator, had, with the other humanists of his day, studied antiquity and admired its philosophies.

[38]Gilbert, p. 12.

[39]Wyndham Lewis, The Lion and the Fox (London, 1955), p. 90.

For More, the most brilliant of the ancients was Plato, referred to by Hythloday in Book I of Utopia as "wisest of men."[40] One critic goes so far as to suggest that More would not have written the Utopia "without the example of Plato's Republic, and his friend Erasmus, in describing the education of a Christian prince, borrowed more heavily from Plato than from other classical authors."[41] Indeed, the humanists labeled their idealistic philosophy as "Platonic" and looked to Plato's writings for instruction about law and politics and even for moral guidance.

Seneca, too, was admired by More. Hythloday, we are told in Book I of Utopia, was learned in Latin because the Romans had left nothing of value "except what is to be found in Seneca and Cicero."[42] Hythloday also pays tribute to Plutarch, remarking that the Utopians had come to value his writings. These classicists gave reinforcement to More's ideas, particularly Seneca:

> Some parallels of thought in Seneca and in Utopia are evident, though Seneca may not be the only source for some of these ideas. More and Hythlodaye, for example, debated the question of service to a prince, quoting both classic and Christian support. The Utopians defined virtue as a life according to nature, a life of reason and sober happiness; they give citizens time to develop their minds; they valued mind and spirit above material possessions and placed service to the state above personal gain; they counted it cowardly to fear death, and when they had certain incurable diseases they might commit suicide with the consent of their priests.
>
> So far as the law of nature is concerned, then, the classical as well as the Christian tradition had a possible influence on the creation of Utopia and on the ideas of

[40]Thomas More, Utopia, trans. H.V.S. Ogden (New York, 1949), p. 25.

[41]Fritz Caspari, Humanism and the Social Order in Tudor England (Chicago, 1954), p. 15.

[42]Utopia, p. 2.

> Erasmus. The re-enforcement from the classics perhaps gave More and his friends the positive, dynamic quality with which they discussed human possibilities.[43]

While Machiavelli followed the standard structure of kings-mirror literature in writing The Prince, More chose to write Utopia in the form of a dialogue, another idea borrowed from Plato and being rediscovered during the Renaissance, for people in this age excelled in debate and disputation. Thus, Plato became the classical literary model.[44]

Though it is More who is given credit for introducing the term "Utopia" into our language as a word meaning "a place of ideal perfection," it was Plato who first envisioned such a society, thus setting the pace for all the Utopian writers to come--and there have been hundreds. It was his purpose in writing The Republic to set forth the ideal that all men should strive for, and, more specifically, to show how Athens might reach perfection, thus becoming the embodiment of justice.

"The Republic was the first and in many respects the greatest attempt to do what More attempted nearly two thousand years after--imaginatively to set forth an ideal model of the best state of the commonwealth. It is undeniably striking that More followed Plato in regarding community of property as indispensable to the ideal society."[45] Both Plato and More set up a community of property which prohibits money, calls for all citizens to have training in arms, and both set forth a community where property is shared equally, meals are eaten together as

[43]Pearl Hogrefe, The Sir Thomas More Circle, (Urbana, 1959), p. 19.

[44]John R. Hale, Renaissance (New York, 1965), p. 55.

[45]J. H. Hexter, More's Utopia: The Biography of an Idea (New York, 1950), p. 84.

a group in communal halls, and citizens reside together in close-knit habitation. But while he was "admittedly following Plato's example in creating the picture of an ideal state,"[46] More, like Machiavelli, goes beyond his model and beyond all kings-mirror literature he was familiar with to establish a new political doctrine. While the idea of establishing the ideal commonwealth can be traced to Plato, More outdoes his source by giving flesh and blood to his society. "He describes the structure of the entire Utopian society--the lives, duties, work, and pleasures of the mass of people--which Plato neglects."[47] Also, in Book I of Utopia he writes a dialogue on counsel that sounds like a direct answer to Machiavelli's assertions of the rights of a king. Thus, part of More's genius is accounted for by his ability to use the examples set before him to the best advantage, but, like Machiavelli, he then goes on to achieve a greater insight. It was this ability to go beyond the others that in part accounts for the greatness of these two men.

> Machiavelli and More have come to personify the beginnings of modern political thinking. After a long period in which the leaders of thought in Europe had assumed that social institutions in general were patterned by God and so could not be made better or worse by man, Machiavelli and More appeared as the most articulate spokesmen, each in his own way, of the idea that society and the institutions composing it--not merely individuals--can be changed for the better. In different ways each stumbled upon what later became crucial problems of Western society.[48]

Each has lent his name to a philosophy, opposite in outlook, yet closer in attitude than is often recognized. This will be dealt with more thoroughly later. Attention now turns to humanism, the

[46]Hexter, p. 84.

[47]Caspari, p. 59.

[48]E. Harris Harbison, "Machiavelli's Prince and More's Utopia," Facets of the Renaissance, (New York, 1959), p. 42.

Renaissance philosophy that helped shape the thoughts of these two political scientists. An understanding of Humanism rests upon an understanding of what the Renaissance was.

Scholars have disagreed for hundreds of years as to whether there was a "Renaissance" or if the age we have given that name to was merely the end of the Middle Ages and deserving of no greater recognition than that dark period enjoyed. Adequate arguments can be presented for each case. For purposes in this study, "The Renaissance is a somewhat loose but convenient label for that tract of time lying between the fourteenth and the seventeenth centuries,"[49] and thus the label will be used without contrition. As for what it was, "One man calls it the birth of modern man, another a rebirth of interest in the classics, still others an emancipation from centuries of darkness, a period of transition from medieval to modern times, or simply an era of unusual creativity. There are even those who say it did not happen at all."[50] For purposes in this paper the Renaissance can be considered to be an age of transition from medieval to modern civilization, distinctive because of its "high degree of cultural vitality."[51]

That the time preceding the Renaissance should be called the Dark Ages was the invention of the Renaissance Italians. They coined the term. "They looked back on the barbarian invasion of Rome as the drawing down of a coarse blind, and on the intervening ten centuries as a period

[49]Frederic R. White, "Introduction" in Famous Utopias of the Renaissance (Chicago, 1946), p. ix.

[50]Richard M. Ketchum, The Renaissance, (New York, 1961), p. 6.

[51]Harbison, p. 103.

of trance."[52] In fact, hostility to the Middle Ages was as much a characteristic of the Renaissance as was its "indifference in religion, and a narrowly aristocratic viewpoint."[53]

Italy became the seat of the Renaissance, one famous historian tells us, not because of "the revival of antiquity alone, but (because of) its union with the genius of the Italian people."[54] For the Italians, "learning was an end in itself, giving distinction and position to its possessor and serving as an aristocratic ornament."[55] Italy set the pace of the Renaissance, reviving interest in antiquity, giving us the sonnet, realism in painting, and classical proportions in architecture.

It was also in Italy that the great philosophy of the Renaissance, humanism, has its roots. It appeared in Italy toward the end of the thirteenth century. "It was in part an outgrowth of the earlier traditions of professional teaching in rhetoric and grammar in the medieval Italian schools. However, the emphasis on classical studies, which was to remain the distinctive characteristic of the Humanism of the Renaissance, was a new development that may have been encouraged by influence from France and from Byzantium."[56] It was the fifteenth century before humanism spread to other European countries, and it only

[52]Hale, p. 13.

[53]Joseph R. Strayer and Dana C. Munro, The Middle Ages, 395-1500 (New York, 1959), p. 548.

[54]Jacob Burckhardt, "The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy" in The Renaissance: Medieval or Modern? ed. Karl H. Dannenfeldt (Boston, 1959), p. 15.

[55]Strayer and Munro, p. 548.

[56]Ernst Cassirer, P.O. Kristeller, J. H. Randall, Jr., The Renaissance Philosophy of Man (Chicago, 1967), p. 3.

reached its climax there in the sixteenth. Humanism is not easily defined and must be distinguished from the term "Christian Humanism" for the very important reason that Machiavelli was a humanist, or more definitely a Scientific Humanist, while More was a Christian Humanist. Fundamentally, humanism in the Renaissance was the following: "Humanism means something different today, but in the Renaissance it stood for a view of life that, while devoutly accepting the existence of God, shared many of the intellectual attitudes of the ancient pagan world. It was interested in esthetics, saw the usefulness of a knowledge of history, and was convinced that man's chief duty was to enjoy his life soberly and serve his community actively."[57]

In spite of accepting the existence of God, humanism was, in a sense, a movement away from God, for men turned their attention away from heaven to matters on earth. While the doctrine of original sin was the doctrine of the medieval Catholic Church, original goodness was the doctrine of humanism[58] and the mind dwelt on man instead of God. There was in humanism, then, a new emphasis on man and his capabilities. The humanists were also familiar with classical languages and authors, had great admiration for classical antiquity and a genuine concern with the human, moral problems of man. By studying thought of the past, the humanists sought to improve the human condition of the present. Machiavelli wrote The Prince "for the express purpose of freeing his beloved Italy from foreign aggression,"[59] a purpose very much in keeping

[57]Hale, p. 15.

[58]Bronowski, p. 62.

[59]Robert B. Downs, Books That Changed the World (New York, 1956), p. 12.

with the humanist spirit. It was his concern for society and his love of Florence that lead him to the desperate solution of calling upon a tyrannical law-giver who by forcing his will on Italy would then be able to set up a republican government based on the example of the Roman Republic.[60] His humanism influences his solutions just as his knowledge of politics does. It is a combination of the two with which he seeks to solve the political problems of Florence. For this, he has been called "the first social scientist."[61] But just as Machiavelli transcended the writers of kings-mirror, he transcends the Italian humanists of his day in The Prince. "Here we are in the presence of something little short of a revolution in political thinking. The humanists who had written books about princes had written in the idealistic and scholastic medieval tradition; they were ridden by theology and metaphysics. Machiavelli rejected metaphysics, theology, idealism. The whole drift of his work is toward a political realism, unknown to the formal writing of his time."[62]

This drift toward realism is suggestive of the vast ideological conflict alive in Europe at this time. It represents a violent reaction against the rock-like orthodox fortress of Christian Humanism that had not been successfully challenged since the twelfth century.

> A vast idealogical conflict, latent since the thirteenth century, had shaken the continent throughout the sixteenth. Such superficially disparate figures as Machiavelli, Luther, Montaigne, Calvin, Giordano Bruno, Rabelais, Paracelsus, Copernicus, Vesalius and Cornelius Agrippa--

[60] Peter Laven, Renaissance Italy (New York, 1966), p. 155.

[61] Bronowski, p. 30.

[62] Lerner, p. xxxi.

> all these were leaders and (however unintentionally) collaborators in the greatest intellectual revolution the Western world had ever seen. Scornful as each of them was of many of the others, they were all attacking --and in surprisingly parallel or complementary ways-- the great central orthodox fortress of Christian humanism, which had stood, only occasionally challenged, since the twelfth century.[63]

The common foe was Renaissance Christian Humanism and the result of the attack was a decentralizing influence "away from a unified and unifying concept of universal law and order, and toward the individuation and relativization of the 'sciences' of man and society."[64]

Machiavelli demonstrates fully the repeal of universal law by the Counter-Renaissance, a term introduced by the writer Hiram Haydn.

> Indeed, this tendency is basic to Machiavelli's thought. It is not only apparent in his emphasis upon the importance of a single individual to the formation of a state; it is central to his idea of the state. For him, law is not prior to the state, nor is justice. There are no universal laws or objective standards upon which the laws of a state should be founded, and to which her government is subordinate. On the contrary, law is devised (and differently) within each state to assist in its preservation and growth, and is secondary to and dependent upon military strength . . . . Thus, the religionists and mystics of the Counter-Renaissance stress active volition, love and faith--or passive grace and revelation. The scientists cultivate an empirical attitude and investigate the "brute fact." The writers on social, political, ethical and historical matters adopt the pragmatic consideration of "things as they are," whether in dealing with men or events. Practice and fact, not theory; the particular, not the universal; the intuitive or volitional or empirical, not the speculative or intellectual or logical.[65]

Haydn makes a very good case of the Counter-Renaissance and it would serve to explain the philosophies of some of the outstanding Renaissance thinkers mentioned earlier. The Counter-Renaissance figures do not see

[63]Hiram Haydn, The Counter-Renaissance, (new York, 1950), p. 14.

[64]Haydn, p. 152.

[65]Haydn, p. 152.

law and reason operative everywhere in the universe like the Christian Humanists. The Christian Humanists' goal was the virtuous conduct of life. "But the empiricists of the Counter-Renaissance conceive of knowledge in general, and of scientific knowledge in particular, as valuable in proportion to their practical usefulness to men--not so much in terms of helping them to lead virtuous lives, as comfortable, secure and healthy ones."[66]

Machiavelli writes of things as they are. He does not bother with dreaming of a Utopia where the conduct of men is ideal. Machiavelli goes beyond history and modifies the unacceptable lesson he felt it taught. He does this by imposing his own views, drawn from his own experience and observations of contemporary events, upon history.

During much of the Renaissance the humanists were able to keep philosophy separate from theology. Machiavelli had little interest in the latter. An atheist, or at best a non-practicing Christian, he was concerned with society and government, but never from a theological point of view. This view is just the opposite of his contemporary, Sir Thomas More, who was one of the outstanding Christian Humanists of history.

Sir Thomas More is the epitome of Christian Humanism, a movement centered on striking a balance between the Christian faith and classical reason.

> The devout hope for the consummation of personal immortality in a dogmatically explored heaven is matched by an insistence upon the rational and moderate conduct of one's life upon this earth. The cardinal virtues of classical antiquity are invoked, along with the proverbial Christian ones: the injunction to hope and charity is no more urgently presented than the pursuit of justice, wisdom,

[66]Haydn, p. 240.

> temperance and fortitude advocated by Plato and Cicero. Platonic and Stoic doctrines are given Christian baptism, and serve to supplement Aristotelian logic in serving as rational apologetics for the Christian concept of an intricately ordered universe ruled by God's law.[67]

The Bible was studied alongside the pagan authors.

> Two essential traits, inseparable and interrelated, distinguished the Christian humanists. They were as ardently devoted to the literature of Christian antiquity--the early Fathers and the New Testament--as to the literature of pagan antiquity; and they passionately believed that embedded in both these literatures was a wisdom that could both improve individual men and, far more important, renovate the moribund Christian society of their own day temporally and spiritually, in head and members.[68]

It was, therefore, a program for action in which the Christian Humanists sought a social and spiritual renewal through a restoration of Christianity as Christ had taught it. Erasmus and More were the culmination of this Christian Humanism and it was of overwhelming importance for both of them.

> They were Christian intellectuals with an infectious belief in the power of good scholarship and proper education. They thought that if men only <u>knew</u> what Socrates said and what Jesus preached, if men could only be made to see the gulf between apostolic Christianity and sixteenth century Christianity, reform would inevitably follow. No one could stop it, they believed, once men of intelligence and good will had been exposed to the best that had come down from ancient Greece and Palestine.[69]

Most of the Christian Humanists were exclusively intellectuals. They were writers, teachers, scholars, and men of influence, but they

[67]Haydn, p. 3.

[68]Hexter, p. 53.

[69]Harbison, pp. 56-57.

carried no responsibility for putting into practice the reforms they advocated. The outstanding exception was More. His life was one of service to the public and to the king. A deeply devoted Christian and scholar, he was trained as a lawyer and spent much of his time helping the less fortunate. When called to counsel by Henry VIII, he argued long with himself as to whether he would be effective at all in that capacity knowing that he strongly disagreed with Henry on many points. Yet he finally accepted the call for a number of reasons which will be dealt with later, including the very important reason that as a Christian Humanist he felt compelled to serve his fellow man even if in a position where one must "make the best of things, and what you cannot turn to good, you can at least make less bad."[70] Just as Machiavelli goes beyond the humanists of Italy to develop a new political philosophy, More, too, transcends the accepted definition of Christian Humanism to make it uniquely his own. "More's humanism shines brightly. It combines a thorough knowledge of the classics, the Bible, and the Fathers with a reverence for self-abnegating human endeavor. It is moral as well as intellectual, public as well as private. Above all, it is flexible and humane, able to reshape itself for any occasion, adjusting its stance as circumstances demand and showing More to be here, as well as in other respects, truly "a man for all seasons."[71] More was also, like Machiavelli, a social scientist, carefully observing the evils of society as he saw them, and pointing out and suggesting solutions. Yet there

[70]More, p. 23.

[71]Richard S. Sylvester, ed. The Complete Works of St. Thomas More, Vol. II (New Haven, 1963), p. 136.

is one very major difference between these two Renaissance social scientists. The difference is morality, as pointed out before. While morality is lacking in Machiavelli's philosophy, it is very much evident in that of More. When Machiavelli was realistically writing on how a prince must get and retain power to be successful, More was wrestling with a new set of problems: "the New Statesmanship, 'Machiavellian' in character."[72]

While the tradition of kings-mirror literature accounts for the difference in style between the two works and the element of humanism accounts for the difference in approach to problem-solving, we still must take a careful look at the men as individuals, the times they lived in, and the content of Utopia and The Prince before accounting for the diverse solutions Machiavelli and More present to society to solve essentially the same problem--that of the obligations and privileges of the monarchy.

[72]Bronowski, p. 47.

CHAPTER II

MACHIAVELLI AND THE POLITICS OF REALISM

Niccolo di Bernardo Machiavelli was born in 1469 into a Florentine family of impoverished gentry, who fought constantly to keep from slipping into the ranks of the middle class. Little is known of the future political analyst until he reached the age of 29 and entered politics. His father had been a lawyer and as a boy Machiavelli received an ordinary literary education, learning Latin, but no Greek. Other facts are obscure. He wrote later in life, "I was born poor, and I learned to know want before enjoyment."[73] There is evidence he began a study of law but never completed it. He greatly admired Livy and studied Roman history extensively. We know of little other early influence upon him, though there must have been many childhood impressions that were to help mold his character. "He was later to remark that those things heard and seen in early years 'cannot help but make an impression on a young man,' which will 'guide his actions for the rest of his life.'"[74]

Florence was never a politically stable place in which to live during Machiavelli's life. Periodic military crises had been a part of her history since the 1300's but she had always successfully weathered

[73]Roberto Ridolfi, The Life of Niccolo Machiavelli (Chicago, 1954), p. 4.

[74]Ridolfi, p. 4.

them, thus advancing the belief that Florence was a government of the people, representing all that was finest in Italy's tradition. This idea was so potent that "few of the Florentines realized that only the facade of republicanism was being preserved."[75] In truth, Florence was a city embroiled in petty political conspiracies pitting the Pope against the Medici, the Archbishop against the Pope, the Medici against the Archbishop or for him, all in an unpredictable fashion.

Cruel revenge and broken faith, jealousy and resentment, conspiracy and murder were all a part of the Florentine political scene. The years during which Machiavelli grew up saw several attempts to overthrow the Medici with even the Pope entering the strife, attacking with spiritual weapons by excommunicating many of the Medici and placing the city under an interdict when his nephew was caught in the act of conspiracy and imprisoned. While the Florentines were unintimidated by such spiritual offenses, the continuous war of armies drained their resources and eventually defeated them.[76] Florence employed a mercenary army and the cowardice of the ordinary soldier made a deep impression on Machiavelli, who was to make much of this in his later Histories.

Machiavelli was born in the same year Piero de' Medici died. The Medici had ruled Florence for several generations prior to this and Piero's son Lorenzo succeeded his father as Duke of Florence. The rule of Lorenzo de' Medici was popular with the people. He averted war and

[75]Hale, p. 80.

[76]Ridolfi, p. 7.

probably saved Florence by throwing himself on the mercy of the King of Naples, thus bringing an honorable peace to end the wars between those two cities, and events from then on were favorable to him. While Machiavelli continued to observe broken faith and intrigue in the politics of the Medici and the Pope, Lorenzo, through an iron rule, was "quietly extinguishing the liberty of Florence."[77] This had inevitable results.

> As freedom ebbed away, there went also the old way of life of the city which we have described, surviving only in the regrets of those who had enjoyed its last moments. The corruption of morals, beginning with the corruption of political life, which arose inevitably from the changing times and was imported from other courts, was favored by Lorenzo as an instrument of government. These were precisely the years in which the generation of Machiavelli was at an age most susceptible to corruption. Writing in later years of these changes in Florentine life, he noted in his contemporaries also a greater and more unbridled mordacity: "The one who could rend his fellows most cleverly, was deemed the wisest and most estimable." It would seem that he owed something himself to this background as well as drawing conclusions from it.[78]

The simple living Florentines had known, gave way to luxury and gambling, lechery and sodomy, and religious decay. Rome set the worst example and the vice of laymen was merely representative of that of their priests and monks. It was in 1490, when Machiavelli was 21, that the prophetic voice of Savonarola was heard.

A missionary friar, Savonarola was greatly troubled by the corruptness of the church and set out to do battle by proposing to make the city of Florence "so holy that its example would spread to the rest of the church."[79] Within three years Florence was in his power. An

[77]Ridolfi, p. 7.

[78]Ridolfi, p. 8.

[79]Hale, p. 60.

eloquent speaker, he drew huge crowds to the churches where he preached sermons appealing to a people who feared for their salvation. With neither flattery or threats could Lorenzo silence him and in the end Lorenzo died and his followers were driven from the city. "Christ was named king, with Savonarola as His spokesman."[80] Florence was purged, briefly, making huge bonfires of worldly trinkets and replacing bawdy songs with hymns. Once again, Florence truly had a government of the people and one, according to his writings, that Machiavelli would have admired.

But this was not totally the case, for Machiavelli did not like Savonarola. He was a friar and a foreigner, and he intended to set up a state dedicated to the service of God. Machiavelli felt the church should serve the state and he wrote in a letter to a friend at this time that he judged the great friar to be "a trimmer and an ingenious liar."[81] In his later years he was to reflect upon Savonarola with reverence and respect. But at this period in his life, he was a care-free young man, fond of the luxuries and the life style the friar had supressed and he liked the free and easy life. Indeed, the charm of self-sacrifice soon wore off for most Florentines and when the government was once again stable and no longer in need of Savonarola's eloquence, the tide turned against him. "His political supporters fell away; his religious disciples were cowed by the fear of papal censures. The pro-Medici and the pleasure-loving, together with the ecclesiastics who had been offended by Savonarola's holier-than-thou attitude, trumped up

[80]Hale, p. 61.

[81]Ridolfi, p. 9.

charges of heresy against him, 'proved' them, and had him hanged and burned."[82] The death of Savonarola was to be Machiavelli's last lesson in politics as a private citizen. In May of 1498, just five days after the execution of the reformer, Machiavelli was designated by the new Florentine government, the Council of Ten, to serve as Second Chancellor, a minor job he was to hold for fourteen years. There is no historical documentation to account for why Machiavelli was appointed to this position. Whether he knew some influential official or whether he already had some minor reputation as a man of letters is unknown. But it seemed a job perfect for him, for it put him near the center of important decisions and he was given increasingly important responsibilities. He was a bureaucrat, an idea man, and he was good at it. Within a decade he was sent on diplomatic missions, visiting every important city in Italy and many elsewhere. His alert intelligence and his tough understanding of diplomatic realities soon made him a graduate diplomat.

> The picture we get of him during these years is that of an exceptionally acute observer of the political scene, unquestioningly faithful to his government although sometimes critical of its policies, always conscious of the weakness of the city-state he represents, always anxious to compensate by sheer intelligence for this weakness by turning up ingenious solutions to unsolvable problems, yet usually aware of the grim limits on Florentine freedom of action. He is generally second-in-command on any given legation, not first--which suggests that his bosses value his brains above his judgment. Occasionally he compares someone's policy with that of the Roman Republic in similar circumstances, to the advantage of the ancients, which suggests that although he is not a man of wide culture, he is reading the ancient historians.[83]

[82]Hale, pp. 61-62.

[83]Ferguson, p. 46.

The turning point in Machiavelli's intellectual development came in 1502 when he was sent on a diplomatic mission to Caesar Borgia, Duke of Valentino, and son of Pope Alexander VI. By the time Borgia was seventeen he was a cardinal, and he became not only an able military leader, but a cruel, pitiless dictator as well. He was celebrating the successful ensnarement of some conspirators he had just had murdered when Machiavelli arrived. Borgia came closer to embodying Machiavelli's "prince" than any other tyrant in Europe: a number of writers have suggested that Machiavelli modeled his ideal prince after Borgia. "Machiavelli was to make Borgia the hero of his book The Prince."[84] Meeting the great Borgia left a deep impression on the young diplomat.

> To Machiavelli, meeting the brilliant ogre in the flesh, they were lessons in philosophy. The man of ideas found himself face to face with the man of action, and did him homage; envy burned in the young diplomat's soul as he realized the distance he had still to travel from analytical and theoretical thought to a magnificent crushing deed. Here was a man, six years younger than himself, who in two years had overthrown a dozen tyrants, given order to a dozen cities, and made himself the very meteor of his time; how weak words seemed before this youth who used them with such scornful scarcity! From that moment Caesar Borgia became the hero of Machiavelli's philosophy.[85]

In 1507 Machiavelli saw the triumph of one of his basic ideas--that of a national militia composed of citizens to replace the cowardly mercenary troops who could not be relied upon during a crisis and who were easily bought with gold. After long hesitation, the Florentine government accepted Machiavelli's idea and appointed him to make it a

[84]Bronowski, p. 28 .

[85]Will Durant, The Story of Civilization, Part V: The Renaissance (New York, 1953), p. 548.

reality. The militia successfully seiged Pisa and Machiavelli was in triumph. But it was short-lived.

The republic fell in 1512 when Pope Julius II ordered the armies of the Holy League to suppress Florence and restore the Medici. The militia broke lines when faced by the League's trained mercenaries and Florence was taken.

Machiavelli attempted to make peace with the Medici but to no avail. His name was found on a list of citizens plotting to overthrow the new leader. He was arrested, tortured, and finally released when no evidence against him could be proved. Fearing further trouble, or perhaps by official orders, he slunk off to his ancestral villa outside Florence, taking with him his wife and four children, and it was there that he was to spend all but the last of his remaining fifteen years. For Machiavelli, used to being in the center of things and making influential decisions, the exile was torture.

> Now he was an outcast, sent into exile from the city, newly released from the prison of Bargello, his hands still swollen from torture. He had lost his position, his work, and his money. He had not enough to maintain his wife and children. A few months later he wrote: "I shall have to cower among my rags, or retire to some out-of-the-way spot to teach children their letters, forsaking my own family as though I were dead," and again: "I am wearing out and cannot go on long in this fashion without being contemptible from sheer poverty."[86]

He was bored, resentful, frustrated and homesick for the world of politics, his lifeblood, when he wrote to a friend, "I have only one choice: either to talk of politics or to take a vow of silence."[87]

[86]D. Erskine Muir, Machiavelli and His Times (New York, 1936), p. 134.

[87]Harbison, p. 48.

So in his letters he talked, going over in his mind all that had happened.

> He had come to the conclusion, he writes Soderdini, that the sole criterion of politics should be their results, not the means used to attain them. The same end can be attained by different means, just as you can get to the same place by different roads. "Just why different procedures should now help and now hinder, I do not know," he writes, "but I would like to know" . . . . What interests me more than theory is what is, what has been, and what may reasonably happen."[88]

Reading and writing were a salvation for Machiavelli. He now reread much classical literature and history, true to the humanist tradition of his age. Out of the reading and from his own experience came new insights into the nature of politics. These ideas were accumulated into The Prince. In another famous letter to a friend, Machiavelli described his love of reading and his inspiration for The Prince.

> "On the threshold I slip off my day's clothes with their mud and dirt, put on my royal and curial robes, and enter, decently accoutred, the ancient courts of men of old, where I am welcomed kindly and fed on that fare which is mine alone, and for which I was born; where I am not ashamed to address them and ask them the reasons for their action, and they reply considerately; and for two hours I forget all my cares, I know no more trouble, death loses its terrors: I am utterly translated in their company. And since Dante says that we can never attain knowledge unless we retain what we hear, I have noted down the capital I have accumulated from their conversation and composed a little book, De Principatibus, in which I probe as deeply as I can the consideration of this subject, discussion what a principality is, the variety of such states, how they are won, how they are held, how they are lost . . . ."[89]

Thus The Prince had its origin. But there was more purpose in the writing of it than merely to set down thoughts. The former civil

[88]Harbison, p. 48.

[89]Lerner, p. xxix.

servant had become convinced that the only hope for salvation for his beloved Florence and for Italy lay in the rise of a great leader--"A leader strong and ruthless enough to force his authority on the petty Italian states, merging them into a single nation capable of defending itself and of driving the hated foreigners from the land. Where to find such a ruler? The Prince was Machiavelli's conception of the kind of leader required, and a detailed blueprint of the path he must follow to gain success."[90] The leader is patterned after Caesar Borgia and with such a leader Machiavelli envisioned a united Italy, strong against any adversary and at peace internally. Thus he wrote the book rapidly, anxious that his solution to Italy's troubles be known. He unabashedly dedicated it to Lorenzo de' Medici, the new ruler of Florence, hoping that by doing so Lorenzo would read it, recognize Machiavelli's governmental talents, and re-employ him. He wrote of this to a friend. "Anybody, it seems to me, should be glad to have the services of a man who has acquired so much experience at the expense of other employers. Of my trustworthiness there could be no doubt. Having so long kept faith with people, I would not be likely to begin betraying now. A man who has kept his word loyally for forty-three years, as I have, could not change his nature very easily. The fact that I am a poor man is proof of my loyalty and honor."[91]

The Prince was written, then, for a two-fold purpose--because he loved Italy and felt that such a prince as he described could save her,

[90]Downs, p. 19.

[91]Harbison, p. 49.

that by reading his little book the Medici could become the saviors of Italy. And he wrote it in his own self-interest, hoping it would re-instate him in the Medici's favor and secure him re-employment. But these reasons are not accepted by everyone. Some feel it to be a satire on Borgia, others simply a "cool, disillusioned analysis of how to get and hold on to power."[92] Perhaps, it has been suggested, Machiavelli was trying to trap the Medici into following his precepts so outraged Florentines would throw them out and put Machiavelli's party back in power. Or maybe he was showing up despotism for what it really is so others would take warning.

Adequate defenses can be made for all these suppositions. The contention here is, carefully considering his diplomatic career and from those few letters that survive, that Machiavelli was most sincere in his desire to see a strong leader arise in Italy to bring it unity and stability again. He was merely being realistic as to method, diagnosing it as he saw it. He was a child of his time, no better or worse than other civil servants and politicians.

> Cynics have said that The Prince has been so widely read partly because it is so short. Certainly it can be glanced through in a couple of hours, and its clear style, its brevity and its arrangement make it easy to read. Probably many who look at it for the first time lay it down with a slight feeling of disappointment. Is this, indeed, one of the most well-known books ever written? Can it have been studied by kings and rulers of every country for over four hundred years? Is it to this day so important as to have been the subject chosed by Signor Mussolini for his thesis as candidate for a doctorate?[93]

Mussolini possibly learned a great deal from Machiavelli that furthered his career as a tyrant. He was, after all, reading the book that has

[92]Harbison, p. 49.

[93]Muir, p. 136.

often been referred to as a handbook of tyrants, a code of tyranny, teaching "how to usurp a government, how to perpetuate and increase his power, the methods he must use to take away a people's liberties,"[94] etc. And it does tell of these things; but to read this little book in this manner is to misuse it. Unlike his mirror-for-princes predecessors, Machiavelli was not telling his readers how things ought to be run; he was merely writing of how society is run and how people do react and behave. His concern was advising his prince on how to make his country hold its own in power politics. "He identified the prince with the country, and held that the tenets of ordinary morality need not apply to the prince. The prince acts on behalf of the community and must be willing, therefore, to let his own conscience sleep. In reality, the moral obligation of a prince is like that of a soldier who must achieve victory at any price."[95]

Machiavelli's essential argument is that the welfare of the state justifies everything and there are, rightfully so, different standards of morality in public life and private life. In addition, the interest of the prince must be identified with that of his community and one must assume that in advising the prince, one is advising the state. This premise is difficult to accept today, especially in a system such as ours which operates on a checks and balance system. But in the sixteenth century, individualism was a dominant characteristic and the power and ability of the individual was of exaggerated importance. Thus, this

[94]H. Butterfield, The Statecraft of Machiavelli (New York, 1956), pp. 102-103.

[95]Bronowski, p. 37.

identity of the prince and his state is an important point and must be kept in mind when reading The Prince.

This book is often misunderstood because the reader is unclear as to Machiavelli's purpose. He had learned the hard way, as the diplomat of an often weak and little-respected Florence that the "little guy" stands no chance in the big game of foreign politics. He also saw that the good guy often comes in last as demonstrated by Soderdini's defeat. "Soderdini presided over the Council of Ten for which Machiavelli served as secretary. An honest man, he trusted the citizens of Florence and they trusted him.[96] Honor did him no good. Caesar Borgia, on the other hand, proved to Machiavelli that deceit and ruthlessness pay heavy dividends. All this convinced Machiavelli more strongly than ever that Florence must have "a resolute ruler in whose policy there could be no place for scruple."[97]

> These lessons he spelled out in The Prince, supporting modern examples of political behavior with references to similar examples in ancient Greece and Rome. Men had written about statecraft all throughout the Middle Ages, but always in terms of what the Christian ruler had to do to survive. Though statesmen had always flouted Christian morality when it suited them, the principle had never been openly stated before, let alone recommended. In The Prince we have for the first time a work

[96]Soderdini and his government refused to sign a questionable pact with Aragon against Pope Julius II and the Medici, and when the latter successfully swept through Italy, Florence was lost and Soderdini fled when he refused to bow to treachery to save Florence from takeover by the Medici.

[97]Hale, p. 148.

> that deals with politics as a study of the practical and expedient rather than of the ideal, and with history as a guide to conduct in the present.[98]

Machiavelli felt history could serve as a guide because men remain the same and thus there will always be the same results. He will often give a modern example and then compare it to ancient Greece or Rome to support his contention. This, again, was a technique popular with the Italian humanists and it was an excellent way to reinforce a point.

The prince Florence needed would be entitled to do what he wanted, so long as it was not for personal gain but was for the good of the community as a whole. Under this tenet, one could excuse any crime, for a prince serves a higher morality than any ordinary code of ethics.[99]

Maintaining the stability and security of the state was a delicate matter. Machiavelli deals lightly with hereditary monarchies, for an average ruler, he felt, could control them. His attention rivets on the problems of the new monarch, for those problems are far more complex. When new territories are added to the kingdom and the nationality and language are the same as the conquerors, control becomes no problem if two principles are followed: "The one, that the blood of their old rulers be extinct; the other, to make no alteration either in their laws or in their taxes; in this way they will in a very short space of time become united with their old possessions and form one state."[100] But if they do not share language and nationality, strong measures of control

[98]Hale, p. 148.

[99]Bronowski, p. 37.

[100]Machiavelli, p. 8.

are necessary. Machiavelli suggests that possible means for their control are for the ruler to go and reside in the area personally, to send colonies (cheaper than maintaining occupying armies), to make friends of feebler neighbors and to endeavor to weaken stronger ones.

In a discussion on how provinces are to be governed, Machiavelli offers three suggestions by which a republic accustomed to its own laws and freedom may be held. The first is to destroy it, the second to go there and reside in person, the third is to allow it to live under its own laws while subjecting it to tribute and putting the government in the hands of friends. He suggests that one of the first two courses be followed. "But in republics there is greater life, greater hatred, and more desire for vengeance; they do not and cannot cast aside the memory of their ancient liberty, so that the surest way is either to lay them waste or reside in them."[101] He also warns that the multitude is fickle and while it may be relatively simple to persuade them to do something, it is difficult to make them continue. At this point, the political scientist tells us, force must be used to compel them to believe. When seizing a state, it is best to commit all atrocities at once:

> Whence it is to be noted, that in taking a state the conqueror must arrange to commit all his cruelties at once, so as not to have to recur to them every day, and so as to be able, by not making fresh changes, to reassure people and win them over by benefiting them. Whoever acts otherwise, either through timidity or bad counsel, is always obliged to stand with knife in hand, and can never depend on his subjects, because they, owing to continually fresh injuries are unable to depend upon him. For injuries should be done all together, so that being less tasted, they will give less

[101]Machiavelli, p. 19.

> offence. Benefits should be granted little by little so that they may be better enjoyed.[102]

Caesar Borgia is cited as the model to be followed, a man of "great courage and high ambition. I feel bound," continues Machiavelli, "to hold him up as an example to be imitated by all who by fortune and with the arms of others have risen to power."[103]

For those who will take heed, Machiavelli sums up the heart of the whole matter of staying in power in the following passage:

> But my intention being to write something of use to those who understand, it appears to me more proper to go to the real truth of the matter than to its imagination; and many have imagined republics and principalities which have never been seen or known to exist in reality; for how we live is so far removed from how we ought to live, that he who abandons what is done for what ought to be done, will rather learn to bring about his own ruin than his preservation. A man who wishes to make a profession of goodness in everything must necessarily come to grief among so many who are not good. Therefore it is necessary for a prince, who wishes to maintain himself, to learn how not to be good, and to use this knowledge and not use it, according to the necessity of the case.[104]

So the prince must distinguish resolutely between morality and statesmanship, between his private conscience and the public good, and for the state must even be ready to commit what the private citizen would condemn as wicked. He must steer clear of half-solutions; enemies who cannot be won over must be annihilated, as must all contenders for his throne. His army must be strong, for he is no stronger than they are. While prepared always for war, he must also know the arts of diplomacy,

[102] Machiavelli, p. 35.

[103] Machiavelli, p. 29.

[104] Machiavelli, p. 56.

for at times cunning and deceit accomplish far more than war, and more cheaply, too. If treaties become burdensome, they are not to be honored. Of necessity he needs some public support, but if he must choose between being feared without love or being loved without fear, "it is much safer to be feared than loved, if one of the two has to be wanting. For it may be said of men in general that they are ungrateful, voluble, dissemblers, anxious to avoid danger, and covetous of gain; as long as you benefit them, they are entirely yours."[105] To make himself popular, the prince should patronize the arts and learning, provide public entertainment, honor the guilds, and always maintain the majesty of his position. He should not give the people liberty, but should comfort them as far as possible with the appearance of liberty. Though he may not be particularly virtuous, he should at least appear to have all the virtues, especially religion, for men judge other men by this one quality:

> Everybody sees what you appear to be, few feel what you are, and those few will not dare to oppose themselves to the many, who have the majesty of the state to defend them; and in the actions of men, and especially of princes, from which there is no appeal, the end justifies the means. Let a prince therefore aim at conquering and maintaining the state, and the means will always be judged honourable and praised by everyone, for the vulgar is always taken by appearances and the issue of the event; and the world consists only of the vulgar, and the few who are not vulgar are isolated when the many have a rallying point in the prince.[106]

Machiavelli devotes two chapters to the counsellors of princes, concerning himself first with secretaries and secondly with flatterers.

[105]Machiavelli, p. 61.

[106]Machiavelli, p. 66.

One's first impression of a ruler, he observes, comes from seeing the men who are about him. If they are faithful men of ability, one judges the prince to be an excellent man, and vice versa. The secret of a healthy relationship between a prince and his ministers is this:

> For a prince to be able to know a minister there is this method which never fails. When you see the minister think more of himself than of you, and in all his actions seek his own profit, such a man will never be a good minister, and you can never rely on him; for whoever has in hand the state of another must never think of himself but of the prince, and not mind anything but what relates to him. And, on the other hand, the prince, in order to retain his fidelity ought to think of his minister, honouring and enriching him, doing him kindnesses, and conferring on him honours and giving him responsible tasks, so that the great honours and riches bestowed on him cause him not to desire other honours and riches, and the offices he holds make him fearful of changes. When princes and their ministers stand in this relation to each other, they can rely the one upon the other; when it is otherwise, the result is always injurious either for one or the other of them.[107]

Machiavelli was well-qualified to speak of this relationship since he was a counsellor many years, and following his own example, it is understandable that he puts great emphasis on good ministers and on these ministers serving their prince to his gain rather than to their own.

Machiavelli ends his treatise with a plea to Lorenzo di' Medici to become this leader Italy needed so desperately to achieve unification. Ironically, Lorenzo paid no attention to the book or to the plea, nor did writing it secure a position for Machiavelli in Lorenzo's government. But he kept on writing, producing during his exile The Discourses, the Art of War, The History of Florence, and Mandragola, the latter being perhaps one of the finest of plays to come from the Italian Renaissance. The Pope was so pleased with this little tale of seduction and adultery

[107]Machiavelli, pp. 86-87.

that he commissioned the exiled Machiavelli to write The History of Florence. This occupied him for five years, but it didn't satisfy his longing to re-enter politics.

When fortune again brought revolution to Italy and the Medici were thrown out, Machiavelli rejoiced and applied for his old post as secretary. Because of his association with the Medici in dedicating his book to Lorenzo, he was turned down. Scholars differ as to whether he knew of his rejection before he died. At any rate, very shortly before or very shortly after the new republican government had overwhelmingly rejected his bid to be secretary, Machiavelli fell ill, suffering violent stomach spasms. His family gathered around him, he confessed to a priest, and died. 'He left his family in the utmost poverty, and the Italy that he had labored to unite was in ruins. He was buried in the church of Santa Croce, where a handsome monument, marked with the words, Tanto nomini nullum par elogium--'No eulogy would do justice to so great a name'--bears witness that an Italy at last united has forgiven his sins and remembered his dream."[108]

The Prince, though rejected by Lorenzo de' Medici, had circulated in manuscript during Machiavelli's lifetime. It was plagiarized and corrupted and received something of an underground fame. But not in a manner that would have pleased the author, for the term "Machiavellian" soon became synonomous with something diabolical, villianous, and cruel. "The term's progenitor, Niccolo Machiavelli, is a popular symbol for the scheming, crafty, hypocritical, immoral, completely unprincipled, and

[108]Durant, Part V, p. 555.

unscrupulous politician whose whole philosophy is that the ends justifies the means. The highest law to Machiavelli, it is universally believed, was political expediency. In seventeenth-century England, 'Old Nick' was an interchangeable epithet for Machiavelli and Satan."[109] This connotation remains too prevalent today. For better or worse, The Prince has come to symbolize a whole approach to politics--that is, ruthless realism as opposed to the ethical and humane. It brushes aside impatiently the tender-mindedness of such idealistic reformers as Sir Thomas More. And in doing so, he wrote with a political realism unknown to his time, composing a grammar of power not just for his age, but for all ages to follow.

Yet, it is not fair to suppose that Machiavelli endorsed only a prince who was a despot, though this unfortunate view is that assumed by those who read only The Prince. Machiavelli wrote The Prince as a drastic prescription for the times, a remedy for the severe political illness of an Italy who desperately needed a strong ruler to pull her together and drive out the French, Spanish and Hapsburg rulers. In his later book, The Discourses on the First Ten Books of Titus Livius, Machiavelli is able to reflect on how to build a lasting government in a republic. And he make it quite clear in The Discourses that he considers the state to be healthiest as a republic. He argues at length to show that "popular government is normally in most respects superior and in a few inferior to that of a Prince."[110] The following selected passages from The Discourses illustrate this point:

[109]Downs, p. 17.

[110]J. W. Allen, A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century (London, 1957), p. 464.

> Contrary to the general opinion, then, which maintains that the people, when they govern, are inconsistent, unstable, and ungrateful, I conclude and affirm that these defects are not more natural to the people than they are to princes. To charge the people and princes equally with them may be the truth, but to except princes from them would be a great mistake. For a people that governs and is well-regulated by laws will be stable, prudent, and grateful, as much so, and even more, according to my opinion, than a prince, although he be esteemed wise: and, on the other hand, a prince, freed from the restraints of law, will be more ungrateful, inconstant, and imprudent than a people similarly situated. The difference in their conduct is not due to any difference in their nature (for that is the same, and if there be any difference for good, it is on the side of the people); but to the greater or less respect they have for the laws under which they respectively live . . . . But as regards prudence and stability, I say that the people are more prudent and stable, and have better judgment than a prince . . . . We also see that in the election of their magistrates they make far better choices than princes; and no people will ever be persuaded to elect a man of infamous character and corrupt habits to any post of dignity, to which a prince is easily influences in a thousand different ways . . . . We furthermore see the cities where the people are masters make the greatest progress in the least possible time, and much greater than such as have always been governed by princes; as was the case with Rome after the expulsion of the kings, and with Athens after they rid themselves of Pisistratus; and this can be attributed to no other cause than that the governments of the people are better than those of princes . . . . If now we compare a prince who is controlled by laws, and a people that is untrammelled by them, we shall find more virtue in the people than in the prince; and if we compare them when both are freed from such control, we shall see that the people are guilty of fewer excesses than the prince, and that the errors of the people are of less importance, and therefore more easily remedied. For a licentious and mutinous people may easily be brought back to good conduct by the influence and persuasion of a good man, but an evil-minded prince is not amenable to such influences, and therefore there is no other remedy against him but cold steel.[111]

But we must beware of now concluding that Machiavelli was more a champion of democratic government than a supporter of despotism. Neither description will fit him.

[111]Machiavelli, pp. 262-265.

"In The Discourses, Machiavelli thus presents both an estimate of human nature and a political program seemingly in conflict with the statements of The Prince. But the conflict is perhaps more apparent than real. The Discourses concerned people, like the Athenians and Romans of old, who had great civic virtues and were capable of self-government. The Prince concerned people, Machiavelli's Italians, who in his view had lost their civic virtues and therefore required the strongest kind of government from above."[112]

In truth, it would seem when both works are carefully examined that Machiavelli felt popular government to be the healthiest kind and the "arbitrary government of a Prince as a desperate remedy for corruption."[113]

> What he really cared about was the establishment of orderly government and general security. What he above all hoped, was to see Italy so strengthened that she should be able to rid herself of foreign domination. He had to deal with an Italy in which the restraints of religion, of respect for law, even the belief in moral obligation, seemed almost to have perished. He desired to show his countrymen the causes of the public misery, of the extreme instability of Italian governments, of the ruinous faction struggles and the helplessness before foreign invaders, from which the country suffered.[114]

It was not for any one kind of government, but merely for a revival of public spirit that he contended.

[112]Crane Brinton, John B. Christopher and Robert Wolff, A History of Civilization, Volume I (New Jersey, 1963), p. 425.

[113]Allen, p. 465.

[114]Allen, p. 465.

CHAPTER III

THOMAS MORE AND THE UTOPIAN IDEAL

Much of the popularity Sir Thomas More enjoys today can be attributed to Robert Bolt, author of the Broadway hit play and the academy award-winning movie, A Man For All Seasons. In his play Bolt dramatizes the struggle between More and King Henry VIII over More's refusal to give public approval of Henry's divorce from Catherine and subsequent marriage to Anne Boleyn. The play does not associate More as the author of Utopia and there is in it very little mention of More's contributions to Renaissance Humanism; what the play does do is to draw a character portrait of More, King Henry, Thomas Cromwell and others, and it adds colorful depth to perhaps the most exciting period in English history. Foremost, it stirs the reader or theatre-goer to want to know more about the remarkable man who defied the flamboyant and autocratic Henry VIII and paid for it with his life. The student of Utopia needs to know more about this man particularly, for as with all important writings, it is vital to know as much about the author as possible so one can more fully understand just what he was writing and what influences were at work on what he wrote. This is especially necessary with More.

"Because of More's deep engagement in the 1520's with Henrician power politics, with the struggle over the rising Lutheran movement and, later, with the fatal issue of the King's divorce, it has never been possible, if it were desirable, to separate interpretation of the Utopia from its author's life."[115]

The man who was to serve as Lord Chancellor of England under Henry VIII, to author one of the literary classics on statecraft, to be the greatest of English humanists, and to become a Catholic saint, was born in London in 1478, the son of a lawyer--an attribute he holds in common with Machiavelli. As a youth he attended St. Anthony's in London, the leading school of the day, and there he learned Latin. By his father's procurement, he was at age twelve placed into the home of Thomas Morton who was then Archbishop of Canterbury and Lord Chancellor, and soon to become a Cardinal. While there, More began developing his intense interest in government, princes, and the lessor fortunate people of London. Morton saw promise in the youth who waited his table, and it was probably because of the Archbishop's influence that More attended Canterbury College, Oxford, to study law, a vocation he was never completely happy with though he was one of the finest lawyers of his day.

While at Lincoln's Inn studying law, More delivered several public lectures on St. Augustine's The City of God which would suggest that More thought a great deal about an ideal society long before he wrote

[115]Robert P. Adams, The Better Part of Valor (Seattle, 1962), p. 127.

the Utopia. Whether he was influenced at all by St. Augustine, we do not know. He makes no mention of it and his lectures have not survived. His audience for these lectures were, according to one biographer, "all the chief learned men of the City of London."[116] While studying law, More also pondered a clerical life. Erasmus, the great continental humanist, writes that More was at this time thinking of taking orders in the church and he was living with an order of Carthusian monks. (Lay scholars might at that time live with the monks under monastic regulations without taking vows.) In his letter to von Hutten, Erasmus writes: "There was no obstacle to his (More) adopting this kind of life, except the fact that he could not shake off his wish to marry. Accordingly he resolved to be a chaste husband rather than a licentious priest."[117] Thus, More gave up the idea of a clerical life, but remained a devoutly religious man, to the extent that all his remaining life he wore the painful haircloth shirt of the penitent next to his body, a thoroughly medieval notion, and observed ritual prayer daily.

Having resolved to marry, he began actively searching for a wife. We are given considerable insight into how More chose his wife by William Roper, More's son-in-law and perhaps his most famous--though not always historically accurate--biographer. Roper reports that the match came about in this way:

> He resorted to the house of one Mr. Colt, a gentleman of Essex, that had often invited him thither, having three daughters whose honest conversation and virtuous education provoked him there especially to set his

[116]William Roper, "The Life of Sir Thomas More" in The Utopia of Sir Thomas More (New Jersey, 1947), p. 211.

[117]Desiderius Erasmus, "Letter to Ulrich von Hutten" in More's Utopia and Its Critics ed. Ligeia Gallagher (Chicago, 1964), p. 74.

> affection. And albeit his mind most inclined him to the second daughter, for he thought her the fairest and best favored, yet when he considered that it would be both great grief and some shame also to the eldest to see her younger sister preferred in marriage before her, he then of a certain pity framed his fancy towards her, and soon after married her.[118]

Choosing a wife on such a basis should not surprise us about the man Erasmus described by saying that "In company his extraordinary kindness and sweetness of temper are such as to cheer the dullest spirit, and alleviate the annoyance of the most trying circumstances."[119] Erasmus also characterized More, whom he knew intimately, by indicating that he had happy eyes, that he dressed simply, that he was born and made for friendship, that he had much common sense, and a good sense of humor.[120] The people of London greatly loved him while he was serving as a lawyer in Chancery because he had a reputation for being a gentle and fair man.

Four children were born to Jane Colt and him. Her death came only seven years after their marriage and he immediately remarried, choosing a widow named Alice Middleton who, despite her sharpness, proved to be an excellent mother for his children.

He was practicing law in London and building an outstanding reputation for himself when he was elected a member of Parliament in 1504. Here he argued against King Henry VII's demand that a new tax be levied to pay for the marriage of his daughter who was to become the Scottish queen, and because of More, the King's demand was rejected.

[118]Roper, p. 212.

[119]Erasmus, p. 73.

[120]Erasmus, p. 73.

One scholar suggests that More was in danger of losing his life because of the displeasure he had caused the King,[121] and he would have fled abroad had Henry VII not died in 1509.

Henry VII had done a great deal to strengthen the English government, living within his income, charitable and generous, devoted to government administration. He was a suspicious person and watched his nobles and counsellors carefully. England's economy was built more and more on the export of wool during his administration and because of this, feudalism gradually died as peasants were forced to move off the manors and into the cities to make way for sheep on the lands. Thomas More was to write in Utopia that the sheep were eating up the peasantry, an adequate description of what was happening. In the cities there was no work for these farm laborers and the slums began to teem with these people. An unsympathetic society put into effect even more enclosure laws and the European market for wool began to open up.

> As the market grew, the merchants and great landowners of England redoubled their efforts to extend wool production. The landowners found the simplest way of doing this was to claim for themselves the common lands which the peasants had a right to use. Thus the peasant was more and more deprived of the opportunity of keeping cattle, his entire business fell into disorder, and financial ruin overtook him. Then the great landowner's land hunger grew more quickly than the peasant was "freed" from the soil. All kinds of expedients were adopted. Not merely individual peasants, but sometimes the inhabitants of entire villages and even small townships were expelled, to make room for sheep.[122]

[121]Russell Ames, Citizen Thomas More and His Utopia (London, 1949), p. 41.

[122]Karl Kautsky, Thomas More and His Utopia (New York, 1959), p. 166.

But Henry VII was a strong king and government was stable under him. What a relief this must have been to the English people who still had forceful memories of The Hundred Years War and the recent War of the Roses. Their sovereign was not always the most scrupulous of rulers, but he did manage to keep England out of war, to strengthen the monarchy and hold the nobility in rein, and to build up a surplus in the treasury. "Machiavelli would have approved--and so have most modern historians."[123]

But More did not. Sensitive as he was, he no doubt was dismayed by some of Henry's tactics of raising money by his enforcement of long-forgotten laws and his practice of "getting a grant from Parliament for a war, then calling off the war and keeping the money."[124]

When Henry VIII was crowned, More wrote verses of congratulations to him which might suggest that he was not above flattery, and indeed, he rose rapidly both in city and Crown service after that.[125] He first became Under Sheriff of London and achieved great political popularity in London as he gained knowledge "of human suffering and social problems as lawyer, parliamentarian, and judge; acting with integrity, and with kindness to the unfortunate, not hoarding his money but raising a large family and entertaining liberally."[126] Out of these experiences with English life, "the Utopia was growing."[127]

[123]Harbison, p. 55.

[124]Harbison, p. 55..

[125]Ames, p. 43.

[126]Ames, p. 44.

[127]Ames, p. 45.

He became known not only for his oratorical skill, but also for the justness and fairness with which he represented his clients. His connections with the Crown grew when he was selected to represent some merchants in a disagreement and it was necessary to confer often with the chancellor of England, Lord Wolsy, who was very much a Machiavellian. More's biographer, Ames, suggests that there should not be such a "puzzle" by critics as to why More made his "sudden" transition to Court service, for he was gaining more connections with the Crown all the time.[128]

In 1515 Henry VIII, who was quick to see promise in More, appointed him to a royal mission which took him to Flanders to deal with commercial negotiations. It was here, with considerable time on his hands, that More wrote Book II of Utopia. The word "utopia" comes from two Greek words meaning "not" and "place," or, literally translated, it means "Nowhere." In Book II of Utopia, More describes an island, 500 miles in circumference and containing 54 well-planned cities. The society he sets up here is his solution to what he feels to be basically wrong with English society: the great concern over "mine-and-thine." In his ideal society, all men share in common, so this problem is eliminated. There is no lower class in Utopia; you are either a citizen or slave. There is a prince, but he shares equally with everyone and he is not a hereditary monarch, but is selected by the people and can be removed from office by them if he is not a good ruler.

[128]Ames, p. 45.

To make Utopia credible, More very rationally introduces the reader to his island. He had read Amerigo Vespucci's account of Four Voyages which was enjoying wide circulation, and his imagination had been fired by the explorations abroad taking place at this time. (He was even, some years later, to join a venture to send a ship to the New World--a venture that did not work out successfully.) So, Utopia grew on a fictitious framework of one Raphael Hythloday, a sun-tanned mariner and explorer, who had visited the mythical island of Utopia during his travels. This was merely to take advantage of a timely subject and situation, and such a framework with enough basis in fact to make it believable was a favorite device of Renaissance scholars.

Since Henry VIII had come to the throne, conditions for the lower classes in England had not improved. There was increasing unemployment, rent and food prices continued to rise, and the unhappy lower classes begged for assistance. It was natural that a man of More's character should "cast about for means of alleviating the intolerable conditions."[129] Consequently, his disillusionment with Henry, coupled with the plight of the poor whom More was always in sympathy with, combined to form the frame of mind he was in when writing Utopia. "That he should be called upon to explain to his friends his view of the state of things in England and to compare it with that which he saw around him is natural enough. And Erasmus is right in describing Utopia as an attempt to show whence spring the evils of states."[130]

[129]Kautsky, p. 166.

[130]F. J. C. Hearnshaw, The Social and Political Ideas of Some Great Thinkers of the Renaissance and the Reformation (New York, 1934), p. 138.

Perhaps the greatest Continental humanist, Erasmus, was a Dutch scholar and a priest who became acquainted with More when he visited England in 1499 as the guest of a rich pupil whom he tutored. More was only twenty-two while Erasmus was eleven years his senior, but the future Lord Chancellor of England made a great impression on the Dutchman and they were intimate friends and continual correspondents from then on. The English humanists had profound influence on Erasmus and he later expressed his desire to live out his life on the island. Though this first trip did not keep him in England long, he was back at the personal invitation of Henry VIII when that monarch ascended the throne and he stayed in England for five years. Henry wrote the following letter to Erasmus, which enticed the latter to England:

> Our acquaintance began when I was a boy. The regard which I then learned to feel for you has been increased by the honorable mention you have made of me in your writings, and by the use to which you have applied your talents in the advancement of Christian truth. So far you have borne your burden alone; give me now the pleasure of assisting and protecting you so far as my power extends . . . Your welfare is precious to us all . . . . I propose therefore that you abandon all thought of settling elsewhere. Come to England, and assure yourself of a hearty welcome. You shall name your own terms; they shall be as liberal and honorable as you please. I recollect that you once said that when you were tired of wandering you would make this country the home of your old age. I beseech you, by all that is holy and good, carry out this promise of yours. We have not now to learn the value of either your acquirements or your advice. We shall regard your presence among us as the most precious possession that we have . . . . You require your leisure for yourself; we shall ask nothing of you save to make our realm your home . . . . Come to me, therefore, my dear Erasmus, and let your presence be your answer to my invitation.[131]

The king virtually ignored Erasmus' presence in England, however, and it

[131]Durant, p. 276.

was only because of his close association and friendship with a circle of English humanists, including More, that he stayed as long as he did.

He and More benefited greatly from their friendship and thought highly of each other. In a letter to Ulrich von Hutten who had written to Erasmus asking about More, the humanist wrote: "For to me too, it will be no unpleasant task to linger awhile in the contemplation of a friend, who is the most delightful character in the world."[132] The modest More wrote once to a friend of his: "I cannot get rid of a prurient feeling of vanity . . . when it occurs to my mind that I shall be commended to a distant posterity by the friendship of Erasmus."[133]

It was in the home of Thomas More during those five years in England that Erasmus wrote the Enocomium Moriae, a Latin title punning More's name, which translates as Praise of Folly. A prolific writer, this was but one of a dozen books to come from his pen, and whole volumes of his letters, many to and from More, survive.

He, too, wrote in the mirror-for-princes genre, producing a treatise entitled Institutio principis Christiani (Education of a Christian Prince) which he dedicated to young Charles V. His treatise is rich in "pre-Machiavellian platitudes of how a king should behave."[134] Like the writers on statecraft before him, Erasmus declares monarchy to be the least evil form of government. He also "feared the people as a 'fickle, many-headed monster,' deprecated the popular discussion of law and politics, and judged the chaos of revolution worse than the tyranny

[132]Erasmus, p. 70.

[133]Durant, p. 291.

[134]Durant, p. 286.

of kings."[135] He charges his Christian prince not to concentrate his wealth, to tax only luxuries, to cut back the number of monasteries and increase the number of schools. Above all, he is opposed to war; there should be, he felt, no war in a Christian state, not even against the Turks. He tells Charles that all war begats is war.

Though his name is continually linked with More's, the ideologies of the two were different; and while both are great Christian Humanists, Erasmus is much more the liberal. Like More, he greatly admired the ancients, going so far in his humanistic fervor to address Socrates as "Saint Socrates" in a letter to a friend. He was a Latin scholar and Cicero, Horace and Seneca seemed almost alive to him. "Seneca seemed to him as good a Christian as St. Paul, and a much better stylist."[136] While More remained a devout Catholic to the end of his life, Erasmus openly criticized the church, going so far as to satirize the decadence of Pope Julius II in a skit called Iulius exclusus. (Though Erasmus tried to conceal his authorship of this blasphemous work, More inadvertently listed it among Erasmus' works, giving the authorship completely away.) Erasmus was not even sure he was a Christian. He questioned the divine authorship of the Old Testament and even declared his willingness to see it abolished. He doubted hell, the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Virgin Birth. "He expresses surprise that More was satisfied with the arguments for personal immortality."[137]

[135] Durant, p. 287.

[136] Durant, p. 272.

[137] Durant, p. 288.

> Despite this strong bent toward rationalism, Erasmus remained externally orthodox. He never lost his affection for Christ, for the Gospels, and for the symbolic ceremonies with which the Church promoted piety. He made a character in the Colloquies say: "If anything is in common use with Christians that is not repugnant to the Holy Scriptures, I observe it for this reason, that I may not offend other people." He dreamed of replacing theology with "the philosophy of Christ," and strove to harmonize this with the thoughts of the greater pagans. He applied to Plato, Cicero, and Seneca the phrase, "divinely inspired"; he would not admit that such men were excluded from salvation; and he could "scarce forbear" praying to "Saint Socrates." He asked the Church to reduce the essential dogmas of Christianity to as "few as possible, leaving opinion free on the rest." He did not advocate the full tolerance of all opinions, but he favored a lenient attitude toward religious heresy. His ideal of religion was the imitation of Christ; we must admit, however, that his own practice was less than evangelical.[138]

Yet, during his lifetime, Erasmus remained steadfastly loyal to the church in spite of his criticisms.

Because of his translation of the New Testament, he became a modern New Testament scholar and in this lies his importance as a theologian, scholar, and divine. He influenced reformers on the Continent and in Europe, knew all the great kings of the day and visited their courts. Through his popular writings, he helped spread humanism and a revival of the classics throughout all Europe.

It is suggested from time to time that Hythloday is really Erasmus in Utopia. Though a case can be made for this--Erasmus knew the more realistic side of what it meant to be king's counsellor, for he had been asked several times to serve in such a capacity and he had been around kings' courts extensively and very likely he and More had often discussed

[138]Durant, pp. 288-289.

the role of the counsellor--still, More, too, could easily have reached Hythloday's conclusions on his own. We do know, however, that More was in close contact with Erasmus during the writing of Book I of Utopia. Because we know that Erasmus resided in the More household for about a month in 1515 when More would have been working on Book I, it is logical to assume that they discussed the book and the related problem of counsellorship.[139] An acceptable explanation for the fact that More sees both sides of the question is that as an outstanding lawyer, he would of course have the capacity to see both sides of an issue and his conclusion is the one that comes from his own lips: "You make the best of things, and what you cannot turn to good, you can at least make less bad."[140] But in reaching that conclusion, "An analysis of the literary method of this dialogue suggests that he (More) viewed the detachment and fairness the presentation of both sides."[141]

It was Erasmus who saw Utopia through the press and surely, as Hexter suggests, he had carefully discussed the problems dealt with in the Dialogue with More. But Erasmus had never experienced the problem Machiavelli and More were facing in their homelands--"whether a state can survive if it practices the morality that it preaches to its citizens."[142] Because of this, the inspiration for the Dialogue was perhaps Erasmus, but the insight was More's.

[139]For a complete discussion on the discourse between More and Erasmus during this time, see J. H. Hexter's Biography of an Idea (New York, 1965), pp. 99-102.

[140]More, p. 23.

[141]Bevington, p. 162.

[142]Durant, p. 288.

Hythloday reports the following about the island Utopia: All property is held in common, the population is kept constant, crops are controlled and food is distributed at public markets and common dining halls. Since every citizen has enough for his basic needs and since all have learned to control their proud and greedy desires, money and finery are scorned. Everyone learns farming and a craft; the six-hour working day leaves ample time for modest relaxation and community education. The rulers are elected from the learned class. Laws are few and so clearly phrased that lawyers are unnecessary. Divorces are granted for adultery and intolerable incompatibility. War is waged only in self-defense or to relieve the oppressed. Various religions are tolerated, but those who do not believe in immortality and divine providence are excluded from public office. Bondage suffices as the punishment for most crimes.

Unlike their Machiavellian counterparts, the Utopians "hate and detest war as a thing manifestly brutal, and yet practiced by man more constantly than by any kind of beast."[143] They go to war only for just causes, though their list of what is "just" is rather long. "The Utopians have this one aim in war, to accomplish what they would gladly have achieved without war if just terms had been granted in time. Or if that cannot be done, they aim to exact so severe a revenge from those that have injured them that they will be afraid to do it again. Their policies are directed to these ends, which they strive toward in such a way as to avoid danger rather than to attain glory and fame."[144]

[143]More, p. 63.

[144]More, p. 64.

When possible, they use mercenaries to fight for them, but when forced to fight, they do so bravely, women alongside their men.

They make alliances with no nations, observing that among other nations "the alliances and pacts of princes are usually so carelessly observed."[145] More's knowledge of Florentine governmental policies might have influenced some of his thinking about treaties, for the Florentines, like so many European governments, cared little whether treaties were honorably observed.

> No confidence is put in alliances, even though they are contracted with the most sacred ceremonies. The greater the formalities, the sooner the treaty may be dissolved by twisting the words, which are often purposely ambiguous. A treaty can never be bound with chains so strong, but that a government can somehow evade it and thereby break both the treaty and its faith. If statesmen found such craftiness and fraud in the contracts of business men, they would scornfully brand them as sacreligious and worthy of the gallows. These very statesmen, however, take pride in giving just such counsel to princes. Thus justice seems to be a low and humble virtue, one which dwells far beneath the high dignity of kings. Or there may be two kinds of justice, one the people's justice, mean, lowly, bound by fetters on every side so that it cannot jump the fences, the other the justice of princes, which is more majestic and so much freer than the other that it may take whatever it wants.[146]

The prince of Utopia is selected by a democratic process with provisions made so that he cannot conspire with the various district leaders to "change the government and enslave the people."[147]

The cities of Utopia are held together by national sentiment and pride in their way of life. They are sure that their way is best known

[145] More, p. 62.

[146] More, p. 62.

[147] More, p. 33.

to man. And, indeed, it has been good to them. They are far richer and more powerful than their neighbors, they always win in war, and they enjoy what they consider to be the good life, composed of equal parts work, cultural pursuits, and games. Thus, they live according to nature, believing the pleasure which a rational life can give to be the highest human good. Their tranquil existence contrasts sharply with the social and economic ills that More found to exist in 16th Century Europe. He, like others, had thought all this would change when Henry VIII came to the throne.

Henry VIII had been greeted with universal joy at his coronation. "More, too, hoped that a prince had now come who would submit to the guidance of philosophers, and be a father to his people, and not a slaveholder."[148] More even wrote laudatory verses for the new king and Erasmus was lured to England by the promises of sweet freedom that Englishmen were sure was now at hand. "The temper of the times at the outset of Henry VIII's reign," was, according to Adams, "one seemingly most favorable to both peace and to humanism."[149] Henry was to be, then, the ideal Christian prince, the product of a new age, and under him England looked forward to a prosperous and peaceful future. The king went so far as to execute two unpopular ministers who had served under Henry VII, according to Lord Mountjoy, one of the King's early favorites at court and one of Erasmus' earliest English patrons, in a letter to Erasmus in which he tried to entice the latter to England:

[148]Kautsky, p. 129.

[149]Adams, p. 42.

"Our king does not desire gold or gems or precious metals, but virtue, glory, immortality . . . . The other day he wished he was more learned. I said, that is not what we expect of your grace, but that you will foster and encourage learned men. Yea, surely, said he, for indeed without them we should scarcely exist at all. What more splendid saying could fall from the lips of a prince?"[150]

But by the time Henry VIII had been on the throne five years, he had squandered the wealth left in the treasury by his father on a futile war with France. He was, and remained, a popular king noted for his generosity, as a friend of science and trade, and as an amiable man, almost as much as he was noted for his six wives.

While More strongly disapproved of Henry's war policies, he admired the king as a man; in fact, when he resigned as Lord Chancellor he told Cromwell, who was succeeding him: "Master Cromwell, you are now entered into the service of a most noble, wise, and liberal prince."[151] For a period of time the king and More enjoyed each other's friendship. Roper tells of the king visiting the More estate, an unusual practice for a monarch: "And for the pleasure he took in his company, his Grace would suddenly sometimes come home to his house at Chelsea to be merry with him; whither once, unlooked for, he came to dinner, and after dinner in a fair garden of his walked with him for the space of an hour, holding his arm about his neck."[152]

[150]Adams, p. 42.

[151]Harbison, p. 54.

[152]Roper, p. 223.

Roper goes on to relate how he "rejoicing told Sir Thomas More how fortunate he was whom the King had so familiarly treated," to which More replied with frankness: "I find my Grace my very good Lord indeed, and I do believe he does as singularly favor me as any subject within his realm. Howbeit, son Roper, I may tell thee, I have no cause to be proud thereof. For if my head would win him a castle in France'--for then there was war between us--'it should not fail to go."[153]

In spite of the friendship offered to him by the King, More could not disspell his suspicion that Henry would become the worst of tyrants. More had been a student of tyranny all his life and had a very practical interest in it, going beyond the academic and literary. Work done by any writer of this age on the theme of tyranny was "most acutely relevant to the conditions of Renaissance kingship"[154] because it was an age of tyrants and More feared for the good of England. In his Richard III, a play More left unfinished and never dared publish, the Humanist drew a basic contrast "between two types of princes--the relatively just king versus the tyrant, Edward IV versus the Machiavellian Richard of Gloucester."[155] Richard is pictured as a tyrant permanently engaged in total war with the world and who has only one principle: self-interest. He represents "the horror that is realistically possible when a man of genius, but one who follows no mandates of love or law but only his compulsive and limitless criminal ambition, violently abuses monarchic

[153]Roper, p. 223.

[154]Adams p. 35.

[155]Adams, p. 80.

power and becomes a despot, ruling by terror."[156] In his play, More writes the following about Richard: "None evil captain was he in the war, as to which his disposition was more meetly than for peace . . . . Friend and foe was muchwhat indifferent: where his advantage grew, he spared no man's death whose life withstood his purpose."[157] Edward, on the other hand, is pictured as just, merciful, excelling in war, wise, adventurous. He sought to avoid unnecessary wars and always wanted to create conditions for a Christian peace. In keeping with the proper destiny for a tyrant, More pictures a horrible death for Richard, that he might come to an appropriate end--and not in a "false blaze of chivalric glory."[158]

> More's Richard is a tragic figure of large proportions: he is not inhuman or a monster but rather represents the horror that is realistically possible when a man of genius, but who follows no mandates of love or law but only his compulsive and limitless criminal ambition, violently abuses monarchic power and becomes a despot, ruling by terror. In his vision of Richard's death, More went far beyond mere gratification of Tudor patriotic cultists' pleasure in a choice bit of vicarious slaughter, pleasure sweetened with moral virtue since Richard stood as the arch-villian opposed to the virtuous hero of the future Henry VII. More shows us a world far removed from the realm of chivalric grandeur such as the poet Brixius hoped to represent in his poetic vision of Capain Here's death. What More did was to express his critical humanist understanding of the death appropriate and necessary for a man more depraved than any wild beast: "(He perished) . . . as ye shall hereafter hear, slain in the field, hacked and hewn of his enemies' hands, harried on horseback dead, his hair in despite torn and tugged like a cur dog."[159]

[156]Adams, p. 81.

[157]Adams, p. 80.

[158]Adams, p. 80.

[159]Adams, p. 80.

More's Richard with his atmosphere of impurity and the consequences of tyranny, is far removed from the ideal society of the Utopia with its ideal ruler and ideal commonwealth and its "mood of philosophical calm that permeates the second book of the Utopia."[160] In Utopia a rational society is created where tyranny cannot exist. Ironically, like The Prince, More's Richard might serve as a handbook for the potential tyrant. "The History was an exemplum but, as More must have come to see, it was also a handbook. The potentially good monarch would profit from its powerful depiction of monstrous injustice, but it could also teach the potential tyrant much about that subtle policy which the later sixteenth century would identify as 'Machiavellian.'"[161]

It is thought that perhaps Shakespeare based his Richard III on the Richard created by More, for they are so very much alike. It has also had considerable influence as the initiation of modern historical writing and is considered a classic of Renaissance prose. Yet, as stated before, it was not finished nor was it published during More's lifetime, for More felt this to be too dangerous.

In a series of epigrams he wrote around 1510, More also deals with the nature of tyranny, seeking to expose it as he had done in his play.

> Among the other poems in the Epigrammata of 1518 are no less than twelve which are concerned with tyrants and the suffering they cause in the commonwealth. Again and again More contrasts the good king with the tyrant, the possibility that a ruler like King Utopus will appear with the present danger than another Richard might ascend the throne. Many of the poems read like program notes for the performance which was to be staged in the History . . . . In both the

[160]Sylvester, p. cii.

[161]Sylvester, p. cii.

> Richard and the Epigrammata the people learn to appreciate a good king only when a bad one has succeeded him.[162]

Other comments about kings and tyrants in the epigrams are these:

> "A king who respects the law differs from dread tyrants thus: a tyrant thinks of his subjects as slaves; a king, as his own children. A king who performs his duties properly will never lack children. He is father to the whole kingdom."
>
> "A kingdom in all its parts is like a man; it is held together by natural affection. The king is the head; the people form the other parts."
>
> "What is a good king? He is a watchdog, guardian of the flock. By his barking he keeps wolves from the sheep. What is the bad king? He is the wolf."[163]

That tyranny was one of More's most persistent themes is clear. It is not surprising that More observed Henry VIII with scrutiny and that his enthusiasm soon faded for that king who continued to "maintain the public figure of the almost stainless Christian prince."[164] Upon reading a copy of Erasmus' Education of a Christian Prince, he wrote that good friend of his: "You have done well in writing on the instruction of a Christian prince. How I wish Christian princes would follow good instructions. Everything is upset by their mad follies."[165] But for all his fears for the future of England should she find herself in the hands of the tyrant he suspected Henry VIII of gradually becoming, there was little he could do. The open criticism he leveled at Henry VII had nearly cost him his life and English history abounds with examples of the outspoken who had crossed their kings and had paid the penalty with

[162] Sylvester, p. xcix.

[163] Hogrefe, p. 107.

[164] Adams, p. 80.

[165] Desiderius Erasmus, The Education of a Christian Prince (New York, 1936), p. 27.

their lives. So, when More had returned to England in 1516, he made use of the mightiest weapon of the humanists--the pen--and wrote Book I of Utopia, a dialogue on kingship and counsellorship. His method of criticism becomes very subtle. Under the guise of attacking a "French" king's Court, More is in reality speaking out against Henry and his Court. "The most victorious and triumphant King of England, Henry the Eighth of that name," begins More in the opening line of Book I of the Utopia, "in all royal virtues a prince most peerless . . ."[166] More perhaps wrote this with tongue-in-cheek, although More's personal liking for Henry might suggest that the King could be worthy of this praise if only he would heed some wise advice about the troubles in his kingdom--advice that is duly given by More.

Utopia opens with More, first-person, explaining that he is in Flanders on business for the king when he meets an old friend, Peter Giles, in Antwerp where More has gone to visit. Giles is talking to a seaman and promptly introduces him to More as Raphael Hythloday, (Greek for "nonsense") a learned man who had traveled to far and strange places. Hythloday accompanies them home for lunch and upon proving his wide knowledge, Giles wonders why he isn't in the service of some king, noting that Hythloday's advice would be invaluable. And that by doing so, the mariner would be able to serve his own interests and be of use to his friends. Hythloday replies that he is not particularly concerned about his friends and that he is not about to enslave himself to any king. When Giles objects that he is suggesting Hythloday be of service

[166]More, p. 1.

to a king and not a slave to him, Hythloday replies that "The difference is a mere matter of words."[167] Giles then innocently suggests that a life of service will be of benefit to others and will make Hythloday happy, and the latter retorts with, "Would a way of life so abhorrent to my nature make my life happier? Now I live as I will, and I believe very few courtiers can say that. As a matter of fact, there are so many men courting the favor of the great that it will be no great loss if they have to do without me or others like me."[168]

More enters the conversation, telling Hythloday he admires a man such as he who desires neither wealth nor power, but that he would be doing a thing "worthy of a generous and philosophical nature like yours, even though you might not enjoy it."[169] Such a service could be performed by belonging to some great prince's council "whom you would urge on to whatever is noble and just . . . And your efforts would be effective, because a people's welfare or misery flows from their prince, as from a never-failing spring."[170]

Hythloday accurately describes many of the princes of Europe when he defends himself by saying that "the public would not be any better off through the sacrifice of my 'leisure' because princes are concerned with war rather than the useful arts of peace."[171] And in war he has no skill or interest. "They are generally more set on acquiring new

[167]More, p. 5.

[168]More, p. 5.

[169]More, p. 5.

[170]More, p. 5.

[171]More, p. 5.

kingdoms rightly or wrongly, than on governing well those they already have."[172] And the counsellors consider themselves to be so wise that they need no advice from others--yet, if they seek the favor of a man who stands well with the prince, they will applaud the most foolish of statements of these men. He shows how consistently these counsellors defend their own reputations by showing others who have come along with a good idea to be stupid and weak.

By relating a story of a trip he took to England, Hythloday criticizes the English government, especially insofar as it is unfair to the lower classes because of the Enclosure Laws, which he discusses.

When the conversation returns to the discussion of advising kings, More tells Hythloday that he cannot change his own opinion as to why a wise man should become a counsellor:

> "I still think that if you could overcome the aversion you have to the courts of princes, you might do a great deal of good to mankind by the advice that you would give. And this is the chief duty of every good man. Your Plato thinks that commonwealths will only become happy when either philosophers become kings or kings become philosophers. No wonder we are so far from happiness when philosophers do not deign to assist kings with their counsels."[173]

Hythloday assures More that men such as himself are not so inhuman but that they would willingly become counsellors; in fact, he goes on, there have already been many books published giving advice to kings if they would but read the books and heed the advice. But, he states:

> "If I were at the court of some king and proposed wise laws to him and tried to root out of him the dangerous seeds

[172] More, p. 6.

[173] More, p. 18.

> of evil, do you not think I would either be thrown out of his court or be held in scorn?"[174]

The mariner sets up an imaginary situation: he is a counsellor to the King of France. The King presides over the council on which sit the "wisest men," and they are discussing the means by which the King might overthrow Italy and a number of other nations. Each counsellor in turn gives him advice on intrigue and crafty ways of achieving this goal.

> "Now in this great ferment, with so many brilliant men planning together how to carry on war, imagine so modest a man as myself standing up and urging them to change all their plans, to leave Italy alone and stay at home, since the kingdom of France is indeed greater than one man can govern well, so that he ought not to think of adding others to it."[175]

He gives the example of a king who tried to rule two kingdoms and ended up ruling both so poorly that he was forced to give up one in order to rule the other one well. So if he were to tell the King's council that these wars would throw the country into chaos, exhaust the treasury and might all be fought for nothing, and that the King should tend to his ancestoral kingdom, love his people and govern them gently and let other kingdoms alone since his own is too big for him, "Pray how do you think such a speech as this would be taken?"[176]

More admits that it would not be taken well. Hythloday then goes into the methods the King's counsellors suggest for building up the treasury. One suggests declaring war, then calling off the war after the revenue has been collected from the people to support it and keeping

[174]More, p. 18.

[175]More, p. 19.

[176]More, p. 20.

the money. (This is a technique used by Henry VII, as pointed out earlier.[177]) Various other methods, such as fines, increasing or decreasing the value of money, and so forth, are suggested. And after all the suggestions are in, Hythloday will once again rise and give his opinions on the matter, first stating that a council that would give such advice to their king is "both dishonorable and ruinous."[178] Then turning to the King, he would tell him that "both his honor and his safety consisted more in his people's wealth than in his own."[179] Behaving in such a way will make him hated by his subjects and:

> "If a king is so hated and scorned by his subjects that he can rule them only by insults, ill-usage, confiscation, and impoverishment, it would certainly be better for him to quit his kingdom than to keep the name of authority when he has lost the majesty of kingship through his misrule."[180]

The traveler from Utopia continues with his advice to the King of France, saying that a king who knows only how to take his subjects' pleasures from them shows that he does not know how to rule over free men. He should free himself from sloth and pride for it is these qualities that make the people hate and scorn him. He should live on his own income and spend no more than his revenues; he should curb crime and prevent it rather than allow it to increase. Laws already in disuse should not be rashly revived, and no property should be seized "on the grounds that itis forfeited as a fine, when a judge would regard a subject as wicked and

[177]See page 55.

[178]More, p. 21.

[179]More, p. 21.

[180]More, p. 21.

fraudulent for claiming it."[181]

He tells of the Macarians who live somewhere near Utopia, and who have an excellent king who rules wisely and fairly. "Such a king as this will be a terror to evil-doers and will be loved by all good men."[182] But if he were to tell the King's council about the Macarian king, More agrees with him that it would fall on deaf ears.

The two begin a discussion on philosophy and its role in advising a king. More concludes that there is no place for speculative philosophy "which thinks all things suitable for all occasions,"[183] but that Hythloday should use another kind of philosophy "that is more urbane, that takes its proper cue and fits itself to the drama being played, acting its part aptly and well."[184] Adds More:

> "Would it not be better to say nothing than to make a silly tragicomedy by mixing opposites? You ruin a play when you add irrelevant and jarring speeches, even if they are better than the play. So go through with the drama in hand as best you can, and do not spoil it because another more pleasing comes into mind.
>
> "So it is in a commonwealth and in the councils of princes. If evil opinions cannot be quite rooted out, and if you cannot correct habitual attitudes as you wish, you must not therefore abandon the commonwealth. Don't give up the ship in a storm, because you cannot control the winds. And do not force unheard of advice upon people, when you know that their minds are different from yours. You must strive to guide policy indirectly, so that you make the best of things, and what you cannot turn to good, you can at least make less bad. For it is impossible to do all things well unless all men are good, and this I do not expect to see for a long time."[185]

[181] More, p. 22.

[182] More, p. 22.

[183] More, p. 23.

[184] More, p. 23.

[185] More, p. 23.

Hythloday remains unconvinced. "The only result of this," he answers, "will be that while I try to cure others of madness, I myself will rave along with them."[186] He ends the discussion on a pessimistic note, saying that if he were on a king's council, either he would think different thoughts from the rest of the counsellors, which would be just like having no thoughts at all, or he would agree with them and be an accessory to their madness. On being a counsellor, he says:

> "A man has no chance to do good when his colleagues are more likely to corrupt the best of men than be corrupted themselves. He will either be corrupted himself by his colleagues, or, if he remains sound and innocent, he will be blamed for the folly and knavery of others. He is far from being able to mend matters by guiding policy indirectly!"[187]

Hythloday has the last word in the discussion on kingship. His conclusion is that Plato himself shows why wise men will not meddle in affairs of state. When, according to Plato, they see people out in the rain, they do not go out into the rain to try to pursuade the people to come inside, for they know they will accomplish nothing and will only get wet themselves. "So they stay indoors. Although they cannot remedy the folly of others, they can at least be wise themselves."[188] The conversation on kingship ends and the discussion turns to other matters.

Hythloday represents a realistic Christian Humanist's view of what would happen should one really try to bring about reform in the court of one of the princes of that day. More is also very much the Christian

[186]More, p. 24.

[187]More, p. 24.

[188]More, p. 24.

Humanist, but an idealistic Christian Humanist who still believes that in spite of evidence to the contrary, one must still try to correct evil where he sees it and to make the best of things," and "what you cannot turn to good, you can at least make less bad."[189]

> The author of Utopia was no Utopian. He knew that the intellectual in a bureaucracy has little chance to innovate, that the mere presence of Christian humanists in princely councils afforded neither the assurance nor even the hope that the aspirations of the Christian humanists might shortly and fully be realized. He knew that in such councils a man must temper his speech, and that if he must always speak the truth as he saw it he had no place there. Yet despite this insight into the frustration which Christian humanists were certain to suffer in princely councils--perhaps rather because of this insight--More presents a lively, cogent, and persuasive case for their entry into such councils.[190]

Though More's dialogue on kingship contains elements of hope, overall the picture is a gloomy one for the would-be Christian counsellor. Knowing full well the difficulties he would face as a counsellor to Henry VIII because of his awareness of how differently he and the king felt about matters of state, one can sympathize with this conscientious man when he was faced with the decision of entering the King's service to do what he could to lessen wrong, or holding himself aloof from the Court, knowing as he did that the outcome of entering Court service must be tragic.

> More accepted office under Henry, and was used as an unwilling tool to achieve the very aims he opposed. How could he reconcile his employment to his conscience? To put the question in broader terms, how can a good man serve a wicked king? The issue is discussed in Book I of Utopia, and we may be sure that More took office in the

[189]More, p. 23.

[190]Hexter, p. 131.

> hope that if he could not pursue good policies, he could at least mitigate bad ones. He was quite aware of the latent conflict between the King's will and his own principles. He realized the probable outcome of the conflict and tried to prepare his family long in advance.[191]

Kautsky suggests that More was pressured into Henry's service because after the publication of Utopia he had ceased to be a private individual, and had become one of the most influential men in the realm. Henry had tried to win More before and "Now he strained every effort to attract him to his service." It was not wise, Kautsky goes on, to refuse such overtures by such an all-powerful king, for it would be "synomymous with high treason, often involving execution." An absolute monarch like Henry would tolerate a "private opposition no more than a public one; he acted on the principle of who is not for me is against me. This, plus the conviction that he might be able to achieve some good in Henry's court which offered "peace, sympathy with Humanism, economy" seems to Kautsky to be the best explanation for More entering royal service.[192]

Hexter proposes several reasons of a different nature for More entering Court service. He suggests that upon his return from the Continent in 1516 where he had written Book II of Utopia, More was in narrow financial straits. While abroad, he had been expected to live very well and this had drained his personal resources. He did not require much for himself, but he had a large household to support and he was noted for his generosity. No poor person in need who ever came to his door was turned away empty-handed. Thus, courtier-pay might have lured him. Considering what More wrote in the Dialogue about

[191]Ogden, p. ix.

[192]Kautsky, pp. 140-141.

Christian Humanists serving princes when the opportunity arises, Hexter considers that:

> If he was convinced when he wrote the Dialogue that given the opportunity a Christian humanist ought to go into the council of a great prince, it is hard to see why he did not go there. The door was open; many of his dearest friends had already passed through it; the only one that was holding him back was himself. He was not likely to be holding himself back for any material or personal reason; he did not allow such reasons to determine the grave decisions of his life.[193]

More did not enter the service of Henry VIII for a year and a half after writing the Dialogue of Counsel "because he did not think he ought to be there." This would mean that More's attitude on serving princes is "the same as the one there expressed by Hythloday and is not the one that he ascribes to himself."[194]

> At that time he had not convinced himself even by his own brilliant argument that the Christian Humanist innovator was in duty bound to become a royal servant, that in so doing he would most nearly achieve his own highest purpose. In 1516 More still tenaciously clung to the position of the unattached intellectual of which Erasmus' career was the exemplar.[195]

Hexter rules out the possibility of financial circumstances forcing More into Henry's service, and he rules out the possibility that More "was forced into the royal service through either fear or unbearable pressure of an unspecified nature exercised by the King and the Cardinal."[196] In Utopia More set up minimum standards acceptable of a good government:

[193]Hexter, p. 135.

[194]Hexter, pp. 135-136.

[195]Hexter, p. 136.

[196]Hexter, p. 139.

> Avoidance of futile and costly wars of continental conquest, renunciation of crooked fiscal devices, a princely and pastoral care for the flock that God entrusted to the ruler to protect it from the ravening and insatiable wolves of the world--these were not Utopian goals, nor were the politics More proposed to attain these ends Utopian policies. These were the minimum that a good Christian was bould to advocate in an English prince's council, and if he could not advocate at least so much, better had he stay away from such councils altogether.[197]

But should there be a time and a place and prince who would listen to such counsel with a welcome ear, might not even the most detached intellectual feel called upon to try to translate good intentions into sound politics? "Even as he wrote the Dialogue of Counsel, More might have suspected that the time and the place and the prince were at hand in that year, in his own England, in his own king."[198] The conclusion is Hexter's: "If More declined to enter the royal service in 1526, it was because he thought he ought not enter; when he did enter in 1518, it was because he thought he ought to enter."[199] After searching his own heart, More entered Court service because he felt he must and, because he must truly have felt that what he could not turn to good he could at least make less bad and it was his duty as a Christian to do so.

When More accepted the call to counsel in 1518, he rose quickly. In 1521 he became under-treasurer and was knighted, and in 1523 he became the speaker for Parliament by appointment of the King. He also continued his writing, but his concern now was with the new heretics who were causing much stir in England and on the Continent. Though Henry

[197]Hexter, p. 146.

[198]Hexter, p. 146.

[199]Hexter, p. 140.

was given credit, More is generally considered to be the author of an assertion of the seven sacraments, (Assertio septem sacramentorum) for which Henry was given the title "Defender of the Faith" by the Pope. This was followed by More's response to Luther when the latter attacked Henry verbally, and More's Dialogue Concerning Heresies written against William Tyndale. There were a number of other defenses and secular writings, and even while imprisoned in the Tower of London he pursued his writing, producing his Treatise on the Passion, which he left incomplete, and the Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulation, his most finished work.

Little information is available about More's tenure as a counsellor--in fact, though he held several offices and accompanied Wolsey and Henry on various missions, there is not much detail available about the years from 1518, when he accepted Henry's call, to 1529 when he replaced Wolsey as Lord Chancellor of England, the first Lord Chancellor selected from outside the clergy, and the highest appointive office in the realm--second in power only to the King. More accepted the position with reluctance. The following is excerpted from his acceptance speech:

> "I ascend this seat as a post full of troubles and dangers and without any real honour. The higher the post of honour the greater the fall, as the example of my predecessor proves.[200]

Now More was no longer his own man, for "in the crisis of England's religious revolution men who had risen as high as More had in the King's service were truly in bondage to a prince; they had lost all their

[200]Kautsky, p. 155.

freedom, even the freedom of silence."[201] His gloomy forebodings on becoming Lord Chancellor were to be soon fulfilled. "He tried to remain neutral, but in vain."[202]

The dilemma which caused his downfall is historic. Catherine of Aragon had been married to Henry VIII's older brother Arthur as a marriage of convenience to form an alliance between Spain and England. Married at age eleven, Arthur died at twelve and Henry was next in line of succession. Seven years later Henry and Catherine were wed to maintain the English-Spanish alliance. The Pope had granted special dispensation to allow the marriage because Christian law forbade a man to marry his brother's widow. But Catherine provided Henry with no male heirs--only a daughter named Mary--and the queen "had grown increasingly plain and intensely religious."[203] Henry requested a divorce from the Pope on the grounds that the marriage was not legal--a man must not marry his brother's widow--and that God had punished him by giving him no male heirs, the exact penalty the Bible outlined for such a sin. In simplest terms, the Pope refused, Henry broke from the Church of Rome and established his own Church of England with himself as its head. Thomas Cranmer, a "yes-man" for the King, became the Archbishop of Canterbury, Henry divorced Catherine and married one of his Court ladies named Anne Boleyn who in a matter of months would present him with another daughter who was to be Queen Elizabeth I, "and

[201] Hexter, p. 156.

[202] Kautsky, p. 155.

[203] Bolt, p. vii.

the Established Church of England was off on its singular way."[204]

Sir Thomas More had already stood in Henry's way on two occasions when the King had made specific requests of Parliament. Now, Henry needed More's approval of the divorce and remarriage because of More's great popularity with the people of England and the influence he had over them. More refused to give it and resigned, pleading ill health, the day after Parliament completely submitted to the king by passing the Act of Supremacy making King Henry VIII the supreme head of the Church of England. Even though no longer Lord Chancellor, the King felt he must have More's approval, but More held out. "A system of chicanery and torments began. More's property, which was not very considerable, was confiscated by the king. More did not possess much cash, being poorer at the close of his court career than at the commencement. He now lived at Chelsea in great need."[205] Yet when Cromwell, who was to bring the first copy of The Prince into England and become a disciple of its philosophy, came to Chelsea to tell More that he was succeeding him as Lord Chancellor, More intently told him:

> "Master Cromwell, you are now entered into the service of a most noble, wise, and liberal prince; if you will follow my poor advice, you shall, in your counsel-giving unto his Grace, ever tell him what he ought to do, but never what he is able to do . . . For if a lion knew his own strength, hard were it for any man to rule him."[206]

As a last effort to force More to submit, the King required the taking of an oath stating a belief in the marriage and succession, recognizing Anne Boleyn as the new Queen and Henry as the head of the

[204]Bolt, p. ix.

[205]Kautsky, p. 156.

[206]Harbison, p. 54.

church. To refuse the oath was high treason, punishable by death. More refused. He was arrested, imprisoned in the Tower of London, tried, found guilty on perjured evidence, and executed.

Roper, who was present at the execution, records that as More was ascending the scaffold in the Tower where he was to be beheaded, he remarked to the executioner:

> "Pluck up thy spirits, man, and be not afraid to do thine office. My neck is very short. Take heed therefore thou strike not awry for saving thine honor."[206]

Hexter writes that it was not for what he had said that More died, but "for what he had refused to say." He had refused to allow "naughty counsels or to approve what he believed to be pestilent decrees; he had stood silent and his silence passed for treason, and so he died."[207]

> When the foreseen break came, More faced death with the magnanimity of a tragic hero and the constancy of a martyr. Henry could kill but not corrupt him. In killing More, Henry added greatly to the cogency of Hythloday's argument in Book I against serving kings. Was More's decision to serve a king wrong, his career a mistake, his death folly?[208]

More had followed a Machiavellian chancellor, Wolsey, and the Machiavellian Cromwell followed him. He had served a prince he thought to be noble and humanistic, only to watch him become power-hungry and spoiled--in short, another Machiavellian. As a Christian Humanist of good conscience, he chose not to remain silent and submit. So he paid with his life, but he did not compromise his morals to the Machiavellian nature of politics.

[206] Roper, p. 280.

[207] Hexter, p. 156.

[208] Ogden, p. x.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

> It is noteworthy that the two most potent books on the State written in the Sixteenth Century were written within so few years of each other. Parts of Utopia read like a commentary on parts of The Prince, as Johnson's Rasselas reads like a commentary on Voltaire's Candide, though we know that in neither case can the English writer have read his continental predecessor.[209]

How could Renaissance Europe give birth to these diverse books and their resultant philosophies so few years apart? Why does Utopia sound as if it were written as a commentary on The Prince? A number of theories combine to provide answers to these questions.

First, it must be taken into consideration that both More and Machiavelli were the inheritors of a common classical tradition, and though we can never accurately know which of the classics each was familiar with, we know they both admired the ancients and looked to them for advice. Each in his own way sought a return of the Roman Republic; in form Utopia resembles the Roman Republic more closely than any other society known to have existed in the ancient world, while the peace that would come to Italy under Machiavelli's ideal prince would restore the stability and progressiveness of the Roman Republic at its height. Combined with the wise rule of the Romans and the idealism of Seneca

[209] R. W. Chambers, "The Meaning of Utopia," in More's Utopia and Its Critics ed. Ligeia Gallagher, (Chicago, 1964), p. 116.

would be the philosophy and the philosopher-king of Plato--thus More sought to draw from the best of the classical world. Machiavelli had grown up in a divided, unstable Italy that longed to return to the glory of Rome and from the little we know of him, he read the Roman authors avidly, developing a special admiration for Livy.

Both More and Machiavelli were influenced by their medieval predecessors who wrote in the genre of kings-mirror literature, and we can be sure that they were aware of the tradition in which they wrote. Machiavelli, in particular, made special reference to this and More, too, would be familiar with the hundreds of books written during the medieval ages on advice to kings, for he was a well-read man and no Renaissance library was wholly without these works because of their popularity.

That this form of advice to kings was so popular is explained in part by the fact that it was a profitable style of writing. Only the upper class could read and because chivalry was a part of the code of life for several centuries, the gentry sought out advice on manners, courtship, and precepts for ruling well. Thus, much of literature was written for the patronage of kings, nobles, and the princes of the church.

More conceived of his Utopia as an ideal state where the Christian virtues had been discovered and were faithfully practiced by a people who had never been introduced to Christianity but who had simply found the "best" way of life. The society of Utopia never changed, much like the "static" medieval monasteries of More's time. In this regard, More was thoroughly medieval, for he believed wholly in the timeless standards

of right and justice,[210] the virtues on which Utopia was based. Thus, medievalism and a rediscovery of the classics were influential on More, and his kings-mirror treatise grew out of the whole tradition behind him.

Machiavelli was more overtly influenced by the medieval traditions of kings-mirror than More, who chose to write in the dialogue style of Plato. For Machiavelli, not only topics covered but chapter divisions, his dedicating the book to a prince, and many of his ideas form a synthesis of his predecessors. He himself spoke of writing yet another of these books of advice. And his "passing remark on restraining greedy officials would have been easily caught by his contemporaries because it was one of the subjects often written on by advisers of kings."[211]

But the classical and medieval tradition of kings-mirror writings do not account for why More and Machiavelli wrote their books; their importance is that we know these books were available to these men and that at the close of the Middle Ages there was a revival of the classics which opened up to the learned the methods of government and society practiced by the ancients. The tradition does account for the genre of book they wrote, and that each would set down his thoughts in the form of advice-to-kings was merely to join a long and popular tradition.

Why each wrote his book, suggesting the solutions for the ills of society that he does in such different ways, is the result of a combination

[210]Harbison, p. 63.

[211]Gilbert, p. 29.

of factors. The disintegration of medieval Christian republics came about rapidly in the fifteenth century.

> The pattern was still there in men's minds, the pattern of a hierachical society headed in its temporal aspects by the Emperor and in its spiritual aspects by the Pope. Most men still assumed that this pattern of feudal and ecclesiastical organization was God's design for Christiandom. But the discrepancies between the form and the reality were growing at a bewildering pace. In parts of Europe--especially in North Italy, for example--economic and social power lay in fact with a class which had no place in the pattern, the "middle class" of merchants, industrialists, lawyers, and scholars. Political power rested in an institution unknown to the medieval pattern, the sovereign, territorial state . . . . Respect for legitimate authority, for what Burke would later call "precedent, prescription, and antiquity," was still dominant in much of Europe. But in Italy it yielded to admiration for talent and determination, inventiveness and virtuosity.
>
> In other words, something like the modern sovereign, territorial state and something like modern capitalistic practice in commerce, industry, and even agriculture (in England, for instance) had appeared in the Europe of 1500. But there were no categories of thought through which these developments could be understood, let alone be controlled. The Middle Ages had an unshakable sense of right and justice, but never any very effective way of enforcing the right. There was always a principle to cover every incident, a law to apply to every case, but there were no effective sanctions. Here in early sixteenth century Europe were strong rulers and powerful merchants creating a kind of illegitimate order of their own. Was it enough simply to put them down as "tyrants" and "despots," "monopolists" and "usurers," using the traditional categories of thought? Was there no better way to understand them, no new perspective in which the strange new world of 1500 A.D. might become more intelligible?[212]

It was at this time men began rediscovering the ancients, finding that they faced the same difficulties. Thus, we might conclude that modern political thought, of which Machiavelli and More have remained two of

[212]Harbison, pp. 44-45.

the foremost spokesmen, had its beginning in the fifteenth century because of the coincidence of rapid social change combined with the rediscovery of the classics. That Machiavelli and More should attempt to solve some of these problems has been dealt with. Because of his love for Italy and his concern that she be reunited and able to defend herself against much stronger foes, Machiavelli was driven to conceive of a prince who could do all this. More, on the other hand, lived in a stable England where the problem was a too-strong monarch who had gone beyond what was to More the acceptable limits of power and control. He, too, sought to propose the best government possible and in the process to eliminate any possibility of tyranny. Machiavelli sought tyranny as the ideal solution to weak government; More saw tyranny as an evil of such magnitude that it was to be greatly feared and all precautions must be taken to prevent it.

Each of these men was vitally concerned with the government of his homeland, each wanted to see it become strong and fruitful. And in finding the method to bring this about, each went beyond the kings-mirror literature of his day to develop a new philosophy, one based on the thoroughly un-medieval ideal that society and institutions <u>can</u> change to become something better. In different ways, each one was cognizant that great mobility and flux existed in society.

They wrote their books, then, because they were conscientious men, concerned about society and especially concerned about the prospering of their homelands. That they wrote their books within a decade of each other is explained by the combination of decay in Europe, and humanism--

a rediscovery of the classics. In part the differences in their solutions are based on the differences in the needs of their countries; in part they are explained by the different forms of humanism these two men practiced.

Machiavelli belonged to the "Counter-Renaissance," a scientific off-shoot of humanism which reacted against Christian Humanism with its universal laws and its concepts of justice and virtue. Instead, the scholars of the Counter-Renaissance moved toward "the individuation and relativization of the 'sciences' of man and society."[213] In the Florence in which Machiavelli grew up man was reaching out for more knowledge. It was a scientific age in addition to being the one that promoted much of the best art ever produced in the world. Machiavelli was part of the intellectual tradition of the Counter-Renaissance and he used his keen insight to analyze events in Florence. As a practicing politician he knew the fine points of political existence. As a scientist, he looked at the problem of statecraft confronting him empirically and analytically. From a scientific viewpoint he could write that states never remain stable, that states naturally either rise or decline. And as a humanist, he knew conditions had been much the same in Roman times, that history repeats itself, and that princes could learn much through the triumphs and mistakes of their predecessors. From his own humanist predecessors Machiavelli adopted several premises for his prince, including that of worldly fame as a reward for his ruler rather than eternal salvation. Machiavelli writes of how society <u>is</u> run and how people <u>do</u>

[213]Haydn, p. 152.

react. Thus, the goodness of the Christian Humanists must be seen in its proper perspective--and it has no place in politics. He knew men to be naturally selfish, cowardly, fickle, base and generally worthless;[214] thus, personal morality had no real value for him. He came to feel that there is a political morality which "has its own autonomy and which must inevitably cancel out personal morality in moments of crisis."[215] Thus, the prince must let his personal conscience sleep, for goodness only comes to grief.

> . . . for how we live is so far removed from how we ought to live, that he who abandons what is done for what ought to be done, will rather learn to bring about his own ruin than his preservation. A man who wishes to make a profession of goodness in everything must necessarily come to grief among so many who are not good. Therefore, it is necessary for a prince, who wishes to maintain himself, to learn how not to be good and to use this knowledge and not use it, according to the necessity of the case.[216]

This seeming lack of morality is what has given Machiavelli's name the evil insinuations it suffers today. We tend to forget that what he wrote then was a remedy for the immediate evils afflicting Italy. Nevertheless, The Prince has been used as a handbook for tyrants throughout the ages.

> That dictators and tyrants of every era have found much useful advice in The Prince is undeniable. The list of avid readers is impressive: Emperor Charles V and Catherine de Medici admired the work; Oliver Cromwell procured a manuscript copy, and adapted its principles to the commonwealth government in England; Henry III and Henry IV of France were carrying copies when they were murdered; it helped Frederick the Great to shape Prussian

[214] Garrett Mattingly, "Changing Attitudes towards the State during the Renaissance" in Facets of the Renaissance, ed. William H. Werkmeister, (New York, 1963), p. 35.

[215] Harbison, p. 53.

[216] Machiavelli, p. 56.

> policy; Louis XIV used the book as his "favorite nightcap"; an annotated copy was found in Napoleon Bonaparte's coach at Waterloo; Napoleon III's ideas on government were chiefly derived from it; and Bismarck was a devoted disciple. More recently, Adolf Hitler, according to his own word, kept The Prince by his bedside where it served as a constant source of inspiration; and Benito Mussolini stated, "I believe Machiavelli's Prince to be the statesman's supreme guide. His doctrine is alive today because in the course of four hundred years no deep changes have occured in the minds of men or in the actions of nations."[217]

To explain the birth of "Machiavellianism," we can combine the conditions of Machiavelli's Italy, the dissolution of medieval institutions and the classical revival of literature; the scientific humanism of the Counter-Renaissance caused Machiavelli to look for a new solution that had never been tried before, experimental in nature in the best scientific tradition, which called upon an iron-handed ruler who put concern for the state above his own moral beliefs to achieve stable government. However, in an honest attempt to do justice to Machiavelli, we must nevertheless not overlook that sacrifice of "morality."

> Machiavelli's profound error, we believe, was not that he was amoral or immoral, but that he did not sufficiently reckon with the moral factor in politics. In short, his "science" was faulty. He should have seen, for example, that his hero Borgia failed to build a princedom because the only bond that connected him with his condottieri and the people whom he ruled was that of naked self-interest.[218]

One solution as to why Machiavelli works on the basic assumption of man's evilness is postulated by Bronowski: "Perhaps Machiavelli chose the postulate of man's evilness because of his own bitter personal experiences as a Florentine diplomat. Or he may have elected evil because it was

[217]Downs, p. 26.

[218]Bronowski, p. 40.

the dominant view of his times, especially as expressed in the theological notion of man's depravity."[219] So Machiavelli's basic contingency remains, "In certain circumstances certain acts are permissible."

Sir Thomas More also perceived political reality and dealt with the actual problems of his time with carefully thought-out solutions in place of the conventional sentiments of his day.

One of the great Christian Humanists, his writing is characterized by "an intimate concern with the suffering of the common people, and a feeling that the state exists for its members."[220] Machiavelli, in contrast, saw the state as a work of art and the people only as pieces in the artwork. His concern for the little man was impersonal. While More optimistically sought man's goodness, Machiavelli worked on the assumption that man is basically evil. In Utopia More says quite implicitly that the prince is surrounded by men who are exactly like Machiavelli, proposing to the prince that his own personal wishes are unidentifiably those of the state. More couldn't accept this. Both Henry and Wolsey were Machiavellian while More was Christian in emphasis. His Utopia is based on Christ's Sermon on the Mount while Hythloday is a Christian Humanist who presumably has the opportunity to join the council of a prince. "Knowing what the courts of sixteenth century Christian rulers are like, his ideals and capacities being what they are, is he or is he not bound to render service to a prince? This is Hythloday's problem; it is also More's problem in 1516, since his ideals,

[219]Bronowski, p. 33.

[220]Bronowski, p. 44.

capacities and opportunities coincide precisely with Hythloday's."[221]

More's solution for the conscientious Christian Humanist who would be a counsellor is that instead of becoming a king himself, these philosophers become the advisers and instructors of kings, thus achieving indirectly with their influence what others would try to achieve directly. By this method, the counsellor could perhaps not remedy all evil but could at least make it less bad. This was the duty of the Christian Humanist, as More saw it. In More the Christian faith and classical reason strike an impressive balance, the best characteristic of the Christian Humanists.

> The devout hope for the consummation of personal immortality in a dogmatically explored heaven is matched by an insistence upon the rational and moderate conduct of one's life upon this earth. The cardinal virtues of classical antiquity are invoked, along with the proverbial Christian ones: the injunction to hope and charity is no more urgently presented than the pursuit of justice, wisdom, temperance and fortitude advocated by Plato and Cicero. Platonic and Stoic doctrines are given Christian baptism, and serve to supplement Aristotelian logic in serving as rational apologetics for the Christian concept of an intricately ordered universe ruled by God's law.[222]

There is a reason for the coincidence that parts of Utopia read like a commentary on parts of The Prince.

> Before The Prince was written, ideas used in The Prince had been gaining ground. They were the 'progressive' ideas and we may regard Utopia as a 'reaction' against them. Over and over again, in Book I of Utopia, Raphael Hythloday imagines himself as counselling a prince, telling him what he ought to do, against those who are telling him what he can do; and always Raphael admits that these ideas of justice which he has brought from

[221] Hexter, p. 114.

[222] Haydn, p. 3.

> Utopia are opposed to all that the most up-to-date statesmen of Europe are thinking and doing.[223]

Borgia, the Pope, and Henry VIII were these progressive new rulers who, as Machiavelli advises, used power ruthlessly. Thus, More wrote Utopia in part as a protest against the New Statesmanship, Machiavellian in character, as well as being a protest against the New Economics in England that was forcing the common man off the land and into the tenements of London. More was the champion of the little man and Utopia expresses his outrage at what is happening to them. This outrage against the New Statesmanship and the New Economics, combined with his Christian Humanism and love of the classics, explain the Utopia.

Renaissance Europe produced these two diverse political philosophies within so few years of each other than, because of the combination of the decay of medieval institutions, the classical revival, and two men who sought to better their own governments through the philosophies of Christian Humanism, and scientific humanism. The world benefited from their observations. They have come to personify the beginnings of modern political thinking. "Together they represent the first tough-minded but imaginative thinking about modern political, social, and economic problems. And together they symbolize the perennial tension between the two polar attitudes on these problems; that of the 'realist' and that of the 'moralist.'[224]

[223]Chambers, p. 114.

[224]Harbison, p. 42.

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