



The first edition of the book was published in Leuven at the end of 1516. The man in charge of doing it was his friend and also humanist, Erasmus of Rotterdam.
Reflections on the book Utopia, by Thomas Moore

This work, through dialogue, addresses issues about the best way a political community can adopt.

By: José Gómez Cerda | Source: Catholic.net

THE GROUP THOMAS MOORES presided by Monsignor Ramón Benito de la Rosa and Carpio, has a great interest in working on the education and formation of young politicians, with a content of the Christian integral humanism. The author of the article, José Gómez Cerda, is the first one from left to right.

For Thomas Moore, politics is above all the art of the possible from reason and in the field of society.

In the specific case of Utopia, Thomas Moore does not seek programs of immediate action - a task that corresponds to Christians under his responsibility - but main lines for the building of a future society.

Moore's starting point is not a search for what would ideally be fair in the world, but an effective method of working to expose what was wrong with society at that time. Utopia is the opposite of a prosperous state in economic development.

There are no massacres or revolts because it is a state in which spiritual and material values are developed at the same time, in a system of freedom and tolerance, which routes all activity towards community service, making the whole island to constitute a kind of unique and great family.

Utopia is an instrument of reflection with a certain peculiar method, new and effective-, for the search of a better world. We highlight three topics of this work that we consider especially relevant:

1. The suppression of money,
2. Removal of private property;
3. Human dignity and relevance; human labor

The key of the book is the sympathetic vision that Moore possesses of the events that he describes and analyzes. For everything to go well in society, private property should be wiped out. Money is the cause of almost all evils that befall in a society...

Is money the ultimate root of evils? Is money one of the links in the mechanistic determinism of history? Or, more positively, the elimination of money in Utopia, and thus the possibility of accumulating private goods, is the reason for the welfare of the Utopians? No, that's not the reason! But quite another.

If human businesses work well in Utopia, if people work and voluntarily give up the product of their work, if there is no greed for accumulating goods or intention to rise with power... it is because spiritual values prevail over the material values.

It's not because there's no money or private property. It is the love for the neighbor and the hope of a future life rewarded by God, which moves them to work and serve their fellow citizens.

Beyond the disappearance of private property or money, the lesson that Moore wants to give is this: "ambition, pride and sensual vices have thereby reduced the Christian conduct of people. It is shameful to contemplate how the Utopians, who have not received the revelation, are kept at a higher level than those of the kingdoms that are called Christians."

Whoever makes money, or possession of goods, the source of vice, is transferring the economic functions of these means to the ethical sphere, measuring the evils by wealth and making money with the patron of the moral sphere. Can a politician be honest, if he is dedicated to making alcoholic beverages, owning gambling banks, dealing drugs, stealing, promoting vices...? Being corrupt. Deceiving their clients...

When a society does not respond to the call of God and despises it, it falls into a situation more regrettable than those who are guided by the mere natural reason.

Education is not to train people as thieves, who will then be executed but must conform to true civic virtues. Thomas Moore gives great importance to education in order to achieve these objectives.

Raphael Hythlodius, a Portuguese, who said he traveled with Americus Vesputius, is the main character, who knows UTOPIA Island.

Thomas Moore proposes to Hythlodius that everything he has learned on his travels and the island of Utopia he should take it to Court, to teach it and for it to serve as guidance to those who govern.

If it is not possible to eradicate erroneous principles immediately, nor abolish immoral customs, then the public cause, which is politics, must not be abandoned. Good political knowledge has a form and a time which is indispensable to care for. In the passage of Utopia where the public offices on the island are treated, it is

said, for example, that "the sessions of the Senate are attended by two magistrates (wise elders, chiefs of tribe), different each day, being envisaged, that no matter concerning the State is ratified if it has not been subject to debate in the Senate at least three days before.

Any attempt to resolve public affairs outside the Senate or the assemblies of citizens is considered a serious crime. "In Utopia, it is customary not to debate in the Senate any proposal in the same day in which it is presented, but it is left for the next session. This prevents someone from releasing without more, the first thing that comes to his mouth, and then go looking for reasons to defend that criterion of him, instead of defending the interest of the State."

There is no distinction in social classes. Those among the fittest and intelligent are chosen ambassadors, priests, magistrates, and princes.

Thomas Moore says; "just as I cannot nod to all that Hythlodeus said, so I must also confess quite well that in the Republic of the Utopians there are many things that I would like to see implanted in our cities, although the truth is not to be expected to be."

Hythlodeus would say that if we seek a remedy for evil, it would take a revolution. Moore, on the other hand, thinks that as long as men do not become and are good – "and this goes for long" – the method of gradual reform should be adopted. Both move in a Christian key and accept that they are the vices and sins of humanity, those who have disfigured social harmony. "Man cannot be separated from God, or the politics of morality. This is the light that enlightened his conscience.

When we see that often money or "having" is the unique motive of so many people in politics — when you show off more what you have, than that is, we check how that model of life generates so many discriminations and human rights abuses. When we find an honest politician, as Thomas Moore was, it is a great discovery.

It is Raphael Hythlodeus who makes the description of Utopia and describes the benefits of the island, which according to himself considers, would be a consequence of the economic system that governs the island, of that community vision that he has seen and enjoyed, and in which there is no money no private property. It is him who describes and sees with good eyes that model, does not happen with the character of Thomas Moore himself, which marks clear distances.

-... "Anyway, my dear Moore, if I have to tell you truthfully what I have in my conscience, it seems to me that wherever private property exists, wherever everyone measures everything with money, it will be little, less than impossible, for the State to work with justice and Property."

"I am firmly convinced that a fair and equitable distribution of goods and a satisfactory organization of human affairs will be impossible if private property is not completely abolished. As long as it continues, it will also continue to weigh on

the largest and most select part of humanity, an overwhelming and intolerable load of poverty and concern. "

Moore: "I think the opposite. The well-being will never be possible where all the goods are common. How is the abundance of goods going to be achieved if everyone is subtracted from work? Not feeling urged by personal needs, men will become lazy, trusting in the industriousness of the neighbor. And as they are being harassed by poverty, and without law to protect the right to the goods that have been acquired, will they not inevitably be debated in perpetual massacres and revolts?

Moore's proposal to suppress the money, and with it the private property, is not supposed to infer a pessimistic position from him.

Who knows that frauds, robberies, looting, brawls, riots, wars, uprisings, murders, betrayals, and poisonings would be extinguished along with the suppression of money? And at the same time as money, fear, restlessness, worries, fatigues and vigils, and even the very poverty that seems to be short of money would also disappear; also she would decrease as soon as the money in the world is completely eliminated"

The words used by Hythlodius are certainly hard: "What kind of justice is that where a nobleman, a goldsmith, a lender, or, in short, one of those individuals who do nothing – or if they do, it remains useless to the State – allows them to lead a life of waste and magnificence based on idleness and useless occupations? Instead, the day laborer, the carter, the artisan and the farmer, who perform such hard and continuous work, that even the beasts of burden would endure them, and whose works are so indispensable, that without them the State would not last a single year, these men perceive a mean livelihood and they lead a miserable life. In such a way they live, that the condition of the beasts of charge might seem preferable to theirs (...) what benevolent precautions are made in favor of farmers, coalmen, carters and carpenters if without them it would be impossible for the State to subsist? Because, once they have reached their productive age of work, and they are laden with years and aches, and deprived of everything, it is then that – forgetting the many discoveries and the enormous benefits that have been reported to society – they are paid, ungratefully, with the most miserable of deaths. "

Work, as a necessary and priority element in the life of the Utopians, stands out as a constant reference in the work of Thomas Moore. He considers it an indispensable element for a society which, as UTOPIA can be considered happy and prosperous.

In the first book of Utopia, Moore starts from that society called Christian, but where money can do everything and men shun work, trying to succeed at the expense of the sweat of others. The counterpart would be found on the island of Utopia, which even though pagan, gives us an example of honest and laborious

life. The work is specifically addressed in the chapter dedicated to the arts and crafts of the Utopians.

In Utopia, nobody walks idle, but they all work, in a harmonious and balanced way. In Utopia, the work is something essential, but it will never be an objective of the good life, but a means for a good life.

Thomas Moore will never lose, neither in the work nor in his life, the hierarchy of goods and loves that the Christian life must have; and therefore the distinction of what are goals, as hidden or spiritual as they are, and what are means, by more manifest and material to be shown will be very clear. That's why in Utopia you work only six hours a day, with free time to eat, have fun and devote yourself to the things of the spirit. Six hours is enough because you work with intensity and because no one creates more needs than life demands. The only ones not obliged to the effort are the old and the sick. As a result of the above, the social constitutions of Utopia professions represent a title of honor. For their physical and intellectual endowments, some are dedicated to the field and industry, and others to the liberal arts and the spirit.

It is very positive therefore the valuation that is made in Utopia of the jobs, to the point of prescribing that "all – men, and women – have to learn a job". But within this general principle, Moore stands out among all the jobs, one that is considered obligatory for all citizens; it's agriculture. Indeed, all Utopians without exception, whatever job they have, are instructed in the art of agriculture since childhood.

In this sense, Thomas Moore, imbued perhaps by the religious spirit that made agriculture a dignified and necessary occupation for the same contemplative monks: "Of all that is used for the acquisition of goods, nothing is superior to agriculture, nothing is more fertile, neither more pleasant, nor more worthy of a free man "Why? Because in it the work is reconciled with the security of possessing sufficient goods (surplus) for its subsistence, and a system of solidarity that keeps the Utopians from all possible fear for their maintenance and economic stability.

The very thing of a true humanist is this attempt of harmony between the city and the countryside, the metropolis and the agro. For the citizens of Utopia, work is a sign and a mean of human liberation and the basis of individual dignity.