

UTOPIAN VALUES: AN EXAMINATION OF FREEDOM  
AND THE GOOD LIFE IN FOUR UTOPIAS

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## ABSTRACT

### UTOPIAN VALUES: AN EXAMINATION OF FREEDOM AND THE GOOD LIFE IN FOUR UTOPIAS

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Utopias are ideal societies--to their creators. To their critics, however, utopists tend to minimize freedom and include excessive order and restraint. In an attempt to reconcile what utopists consider the Good Life, with what their critics consider a desirable notion of freedom, I analyze the conceptions of freedom and the Good Life in Plato's Republic, Thomas More's Utopia, H.G. Wells' A Modern Utopia, and B.F. Skinner's Walden Two. On the basis of my agreement with Mill's claim in "On Liberty" that an autonomous choice of values is essential to the human condition, I criticize Plato, More, Skinner, and to a lesser extent Wells, for discouraging this choice. I conclude that freedom and the Good Life will be reconciled only when freedom, in the sense of autonomy, is seen as essential to the Good Life, in the sense of rationality and humanity.

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## INTRODUCTION

Utopias are ideal societies--to their creators. To their critics, however, utopias are planned societies which cannot tolerate freedom and change.<sup>1</sup> Utopists are criticized for presuming to have absolute knowledge of the Good Life,<sup>2</sup> and for daring to legislate about the ends of life.<sup>3</sup> The utopian paradox (why do societies which are meant to be good appear to be bad?)<sup>4</sup> is rooted in the controversial nature of freedom and

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<sup>1</sup> "Most Utopographers have organized their ideal societies along authoritarian lines. The Platonist Utopia... Sir Thomas More's...and the Wellsian Utopias all sacrifice liberty to order and democracy to authority." W. Warren Wagar, H.G. Wells and the World State (New Haven, 1961), p. 209.

"Utopia...is of necessity a changeless harmonious whole...In utopia, there cannot, by definition, be any room for eccentricity." Judith Shklar, "The Political Theory of Utopia," in Utopias and Utopian Thought, ed. Frank E. Manuel (Boston, 1967), p. 105.

<sup>2</sup> "Philosophy, by itself, can never discover what is right and just: it can only examine what we at any moment find right and just." R.H.S. Crossman, Plato To-day (London, 1959), p. 191.

<sup>3</sup> "What then are the ends of life...I do not think that one man has a right to legislate for another on this matter. For each individual the ends of life are those things which he deeply desires, and which if they existed...should give delight or joy or ecstasy." Bertrand Russell, The Scientific Outlook (London, 1949), p. 274.

<sup>4</sup> Or as Peyton Richter observes, "One man's utopia is another man's dystopia." Peyton Richter, ed., UTOPIAS: Social Ideals and Communal Experiments (Boston, 1971), p. 23.

value. For example, utopias by definition picture the Good Life. Yet utopists tend to minimize freedom, and are criticized for including excessive order and restraint. As utopists are by definition the omnipotent and benevolent creators of their universes, how can one reconcile this conflict between freedom and excessive restraint?

It seems to me that the only way out of this dilemma is to take an analytic approach to the concepts of freedom and the Good Life. I propose, therefore, in this paper:

- 1) to analyze what four utopists<sup>5</sup> and their critics have meant by freedom and the Good Life;
- 2) to attempt to reconcile freedom (in some sense) with the Good Life (in some sense).

I don't think that the utopian problem can be solved, and I don't think that the utopian problem should be solved.<sup>6</sup> But I do think that the utopian problem can, and should, be

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<sup>5</sup> Plato in his Republic, Thomas More in his Utopia, H.G. Wells in A Modern Utopia, and B.F. Skinner in Walden Two. For the purpose of this study, I shall consider all four books as utopias, and in isolation from their authors' other works.

<sup>6</sup> In the sense that the choice of moral values is essential to utopian creation and criticism, and I agree with Kateb that "a society in which moral choice ceased to be made would be a society...possessed of a vegetable quality....Within limits, the more choices the better, because choice means thought."  
George Kateb, Utopia and its Enemies (New York, 1963), p. 164.

I agree, also, with Isaiah Berlin that "the essence of men is that they are autonomous beings--authors of values, of ends in themselves," and that "the necessity of choosing between absolute claims is...an inescapable characteristic of the human condition."

Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," in Four Essays on Liberty (New York, 1969), pp. 136-137, 169.

constantly re-examined. This paper, then, is an attempt to re-examine, and to present my way of looking at, the age-old gap between life as it is, and life as it ought to be.

PLATO'S REPUBLIC

Plato is concerned with two types of freedom in the Republic. He is concerned with freedom as temperance or order, which he extols in Book IV, and with freedom as liberty or anarchy, which he deplores in Book VIII. Let us first examine freedom as temperance or order.

A. Freedom as Order:

Plato's concept of ordered freedom in Book IV rests on two assumptions:

- 1) within both a man's soul and a state, there is a "better part and a worse...by nature"; (IV,430)<sup>7</sup>
- 2) the man (or state) is temperate and master of himself (or itself) when the better part rules the worse, and is enslaved when the worse part rules the better. (IV, 430-31)

These assumptions rest in turn on the following beliefs, which are taken for granted in various parts of the dialogue:

- a) "a thing's function in general" is "the work for which that thing is the only instrument or the best one", (I,352) because it is "the use for which it is designed by nature"; (X,601)
- b) the function of reason is to rule the entire soul; (IV,441)
- c) reason is the divine element in the soul, (IX,589-90) and

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<sup>7</sup> The text used is Plato, The Republic, trans. with intro. and notes by F.M. Cornford (New York, 1945). Subsequent references will be to this edition.



the philosophic nature is something divine among humans; (VI,497)

d) "in philosophic discussion...reason, unaided by any of the senses" can grasp "the very nature of Goodness itself"; (VII,532)

e) "without having had a vision of...[Goodness] no one can act with wisdom, either in his own life or in matters of state"; (VII,517)

f) the soul can have this vision only if it is "freed" from the pleasures of the senses, which "like leaden weights charged with affinity to the mortal world, hang upon the soul, bending its vision downwards". (VII, 519)

From Plato's assumptions that it is the function of reason to rule the soul, or state, and that virtue is linked to naturally-ordained function, (I,352-53, X,601) it follows that ordered freedom and goodness are synonymous. In other words, the free man (or state) will be good, and the good man (or state) will be free, because in either case, reason will be in control.

#### B. Criticisms of Freedom as Order:

The main criticisms of Plato's view of ordered freedom are:

- 1) the lack of choice, in areas such as occupation and values;
- 2) the claims he makes for reason;
- 3) his identification of virtue with happiness.

#### 1) the lack of choice:

For Plato, true freedom is incompatible with choice. In a truly free state, there will be no choice between occupations, and no choice between governments. Since each man is naturally fitted for a specific occupation, (II,369) he will not have (or

want? or be allowed?)<sup>8</sup> to choose his occupation, but will be assigned to it on the basis of his natural ability. And since the Guardians also must have a "native aptitude for their calling", (V,374) the freest and best state is the one in which "the governors and the governed will share the same conviction on the question who ought to rule". (IV, 431)

Whether or not the Guardians in the Republic govern by force,<sup>9</sup> the fact remains that the freedom granted to the

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I agree with A.W.H. Adkins that "It is not necessary, indeed it is not desirable, that the citizen should make choices. Accordingly, in producing the ideal citizen for the Platonic state...Plato naturally devotes himself to the production of a citizen who has neither the need nor the desire to make choices."

A.W.H. Adkins, Merit and Responsibility (Oxford, 1960), p. 299.

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"There is no suggestion that the Guardians rule because the Economic Class allow them to rule...Plato thought it was more important that the most competent men should rule than that the less competent men should have any say in deciding who should rule;...the freedom accorded to the Economic Class was an exceedingly limited or even spurious freedom, the freedom which they would be allowed so long as they used it in the way which Plato wanted. There is very little doubt what would become of their freedom, if they showed any signs of getting out of line."

R.D. Cross and A.D. Woozley, Plato's Republic: A Philosophical Commentary(London, 1964), p. 108.

John Wild, in Plato's Modern Enemies and the Theory of Natural Law (Chicago, 1955), p. 58, says that there is "nothing opposed to freedom" in Plato's conception of order in the Republic. However, in his defense of Plato, he avoids the issues of choice and compulsion:

"Plato's view was that man is free in so far as he is enabled by proper nurture and the spontaneous exercise of his higher faculties to live a genuinely human life. He is oppressed in so far as he is deprived of the opportunity to live in an ordered community, to satisfy his material needs, and to receive intellectual nurture, or in so far as he fails to make use of these rights and thus enslaves himself. There is nothing opposed to freedom in this conception."

citizen<sup>10</sup> is not freedom to choose anything, but freedom to recognize the real structure of the natural order, and to act in accordance with it.

2) the claims he makes for reason:

Underlying Plato's view of ordered freedom are his assumptions:

- a) that there is an unchanging real world behind the transitory world of appearances;
- b) that the standards of this real world can be discovered through the process of dialectic;
- c) that the world of appearances should be ruled in accordance with the absolute moral and political standards of this real world.

Plato's critics, on the other hand, are assuming that knowledge of a real world of moral and political absolutes is neither possible, justifiable, nor desirable. They are also assuming that the function of reason is neither to rule, nor to acquiesce in being ruled, but to choose between temporary and relative values.<sup>11</sup> For these critics, there can be no freedom without a choice among values, and no happiness without freedom.

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and to the Guardians themselves, who will be "compelled" to govern. (VII,519) I do not agree with Crossman, who says, p. 184, that the Republic grants "to the aristocratic élite absolute freedom of action."

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Crossman says that "Plato claimed for 'Reason' a position which reason must always reject. The rational man is, above all, aware of his own limitations...He abhors the presumption that 'Reason' can or should rule...Philosophy, by itself, can never discover what is right and just; it can only examine what we at any moment find right and just and point out the implications of these assumptions." p. 191.

Plato's view of reason and the Good leads him to believe that man will be happiest in a rationally-ordered society, where "everything that is good and right derives its value" from an absolute, unchangeable Good. (VI, 504) His critics view of reason and the good lead them to believe that man will be happiest in a liberal society, where he is allowed to pursue his own good in his own way, so long as he does not "attempt to deprive others of theirs."<sup>12</sup>

3) his identification of virtue with happiness:

In the Republic, Socrates tries to prove that virtue, or ordered freedom, entails happiness, or that justice pays "in itself", apart from its results.<sup>13</sup> In my opinion, however,

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"The only freedom which deserves the name, is that of pursuing our own good in our own way, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs."  
 John Stuart Mill, "On Liberty," Utilitarianism, Liberty, and Representative Government (London, 1910), p. 75.  
 A case could be made (based, for example, on Wild's view as quoted in note 5, p. 6 above) that in depriving others of the right to live in an ordered society, we are depriving them of their good. But this is still to assume that the best, or most rational, order can be found.

Joseph Wood Krutch says that "Though men can reason, they are not exclusively reasoning creatures. None, therefore, of the classic utopias could be realized because each is based on the assumption that reason alone can be made to guide human behavior. Moreover...few people have ever wished to be exclusively rational. The good life which most desire is a life warmed by passions."

Joseph Wood Krutch, The Measure of Man (New York, 1962), pp. 58-59.

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"The main ethical thesis of the Republic is that justice pays, or that the man whose soul is most completely ordered by reason is also necessarily the happiest man."  
 M.E. Foster, The Political Philosophies of Plato and Hegel (Oxford, 1935), p. 77.

Socrates' argument is not convincing. This is because he is arguing from a metaphysical concept of happiness and the nature of man, and his opponents are arguing from a material concept of happiness and the nature of man.<sup>14</sup> For example:

i) In his argument with Thrasymachus in Book I, Socrates claims that "Injustice...can never pay better than justice". (I,353) This claim is based on the assumption that "living well" (i.e. justly) can be equated with "well-being and happiness". (I,353) But Glaucon will shortly (II, 358-60) make the point that men like Thrasymachus do not think that "Injustice... can never pay better than justice". This is because men like Thrasymachus do not assume that "living well" (in Socrates' sense of the word) can be equated with (their sense of) "well-being and happiness".

ii) In Book II, Glaucon argues with Socrates that "people say" justice is neither "good in itself" nor to be valued for its results. This is because "every man believes that wrongdoing pays him personally much better". (II,360) "Pays", obviously, is being used in a material, as opposed to a metaphysical sense. Nevertheless, Glaucon wants Socrates to praise justice "in and for itself" (II,358). He wants Socrates to show that the just man whose virtue does not materially pay

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David Sachs says that "Plato's conclusions about happiness and justice--as he conceives the latter--prove irrelevant to the dispute between Socrates and Thrasymachus (and Glaucon and Adeimantus, in so far as they, too, are concerned with the happiness of vulgarly just and unjust men)". David Sachs, "A Fallacy in Plato's Republic," in PLATO: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Gregory Vlastos, vol. 2 (New York, 1971), p. 45.

in either this life or the next, is "happier" (II,361) than the unjust man whose wickedness does materially pay, in this life and the next. Happier in what sense? Glaucon does not specify, but it seems to me that he is asking Socrates to prove that there is a happiness better than material happiness--better, that is, by material standards!<sup>15</sup>

iii) In Book IX, Socrates argues that a tyrant cannot be happy because he is not free to do what he "really" wishes. (IX,577) In other words, there is a gap between what a tyrant wants, and what he really wants, or between what he does want, and what Socrates thinks he should want. But does a tyrant want what Socrates thinks he should want? Obviously not. And the question becomes--not whether the tyrant can be really happy doing what he does want (i.e. in his wicked state)--but whether the tyrant wants to be really happy--in the Socratic sense.

I think that throughout his defense of justice in Book IX, Socrates is assuming:

- i) that insofar as people correspond to his conception of what it means to be human, they do want to be guided by reason;
- ii) that insofar as people correspond to his conception of what it means to be human, they will be really happy only if they are guided by reason.

But Socrates is not speaking to Glaucon's claims (II, 358-62) that people do not want to be guided by reason,

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see especially Glaucon's remark, following a list of the just man's tortures: "that will teach him how much better it is to seem virtuous than to be so". (II,362) [*Italics mine.*]

and that people do not want to be really happy--in the Socratic sense. The implication is:

- i) that Socrates and Glaucon have different conceptions of what it means to be human;
- ii) that Socrates and Glaucon have different conception of what it means to be really happy.

Socrates claims that the unjust man cannot be really happy if he is not really virtuous. Glaucon claims that the unjust man's apparent happiness is as real to him as the just man's real happiness is to Socrates. The issue then becomes: who is, or should be, the judge of what really constitutes happiness?

#### B. Freedom as Liberty:

Socrates attacks liberty in Book VIII for the same reason that he defends order in Book IV. In Book IV there was a better and a worse part of the soul; in Book VIII there are "desires of a higher order" and desires that are "base". (VIII, 561) The democratic man is criticized for setting "all his pleasures on a footing of equality", and for subjecting his life "to no order or restraint". (VIII,561)

Socrates claims that a democracy in which "anyone is allowed to do what he likes" (VIII,557) is an excessive state of affairs, which will lead to tyranny in the state and in the individual. However:

- i) Socrates sets up a straw man by drawing an exaggerated picture of liberty within a democracy:

Here, too, you are not obliged to be in authority, however competent you may be, or submit to authority, if you do not like it; you need not fight when your fellow citizens are at war, nor remain at peace when they do...In a democracy...men condemned to death or exile stay on and go about in public, and no one takes any more notice than he would of a spirit that walked invisible. (VIII, 557-58)

ii) Socrates claims that the democratic man who is "allowed to do what he likes" will become the tyrant who cannot do what he "really" likes. But this, as we have seen, is to assume that there is, and should be, an absolute criteria of what the tyrant really likes, and of what really constitutes happiness.

#### C. Summary:

Plato criticizes freedom as liberty because it allows for what he considers to be blind choice, misinterprets the role of reason, and has an empirical concept of happiness. His critics attack freedom as order because it does not allow for personal decision-making, misinterprets the role of reason, and has an a priori concept of happiness.

Plato maintains that people are freest and happiest when they do what he thinks they should do. His critics maintain that people are freest and happiest when they do what they themselves think they should do. Let us look at Thomas More's attempt to construct a utopia, where people are freest and happiest because they themselves think they should do what he thinks they should do.



THOMAS MORE'S UTOPIA

At first glance, freedom in More's Utopia seems very much like freedom in Plato's Republic. In both cases, the emphasis is on order, rather than on liberty. A closer examination, however, reveals some basic differences in the two approaches, particularly in the controversial areas of choice, reason, and the relation of virtue to happiness.

A. Choice:1) order:

Like the Republic, More's Utopia depicts a "well-ordered" society where "everything has its proper place and the general welfare is carefully regulated".<sup>16</sup> Unlike the Republic, however, order in Utopia is chosen, not imposed.<sup>17</sup> Everyone in Utopia votes for the government, and everyone in Utopia is eligible to be in the government.<sup>18</sup> So while the

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Thomas More, Utopia, ed. by Edward Surtz (New Haven, 1964), p. 74. Subsequent references will be to this edition.

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In the sense that the citizens of the Republic consent to be governed (IV,431), while the citizens in Utopia participate in the governing.

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with exceptions. Individuals who do not believe in the immortality of the soul or in Divine Providence are not allowed to hold office. Presumably, non-citizens and slaves are not allowed to vote. The higher officials are chosen from the group of scholars, although anyone who shows interest and ability may be elected (by a secret, official vote) to become a scholar. More does not specify whether women may become scholars or government officials, although on pp. 72-73 he implies that they may.

Utopian supervision of work, travel and leisure may give it some of the features of a police state, <sup>19</sup> its repressive aspects are mitigated by the fact that the syphogrant-policemen are elected annually, by secret ballot, by and from the people themselves.

Utopian officials are elected, rather than appointed, because More reject Plato's view that only a small segment of society is naturally equipped to rule. This in turn is because More rejects Plato's basic assumption that each man is naturally equipped to perform only one particular task.<sup>20</sup> In Utopia, each citizen learns to farm, to practice at least one craft, and is expected to defend his country if it is attacked. In Utopia, "each family...does its own tailoring", (p. 69) and "each man is expert in law" and is encouraged to plead his own case. (p. 114)

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"The chief and almost the only function of the syphogrants is to manage that no one sit idle." (p.69) "Nowhere is there any licence to waste time, nowhere any pretext to evade work...being under the eyes of all, people are bound either to be performing the usual labor or to be employing their leisure in a fashion not without decency." (pp. 82-83)

R.W. Chambers says that "quite certainly, the ideal of Utopia is discipline, not liberty...and the discipline of Utopia is enforced rigidly, even ferociously."  
R.W. Chambers, Thomas More (London, 1935), pp. 136-137.

Harry Ross says that "social discipline is the chief characteristic of Utopia."  
Harry Ross, Utopias Old and New (London, 1938), p. 59.

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Nettleship says that for Plato, "the division of labour is...a moral principle."  
R.L. Nettleship, Lectures on the Republic of Plato (London, 1962), p. 71.  
For More, on the other hand, the division of labour is a means to an end, not an end in itself.

2) liberty:

Because there is no rigid division of labour in Utopia, the people have the (limited) liberty of choosing their work. They do not, however, have the (absolute) liberty of choosing to work. This is because absolute liberty in this respect would conflict with the Utopian absolute good, which is pleasure. The Utopians consider that "all our actions...look at last to pleasure as their end and happiness". (pp. 94-95) If work were not compulsory, there might be a scarcity in commodities, or "the matter of pleasure". (p. 94) Therefore, the Utopians think it is better to sacrifice freedom of action, to ensure freedom from want.<sup>21</sup> For this reason, everyone in Utopia who is neither a priest, scholar, nor government official, must work for six hours a day. However, each citizen is allowed, not only to choose his craft, but also to learn an additional craft, and to practice "his choice unless the city has more need of the one than the other". (p. 69)

Utopian restrictions on work, leisure, travel and clothing can all be traced to the ultimate goal of pleasure. Pleasure requires an adequate supply of commodities, and an adequate supply of commodities precludes idleness, harmful recreation,<sup>22</sup>

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"For what can be greater riches for a man than to live with a joyous and peaceful mind, free of all worries...feeling secure about the livelihood and happiness of himself and his family". (p. 147)

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Although it may be argued that More has gone too far in his supervision of leisure activities. I would attribute this supervision to a basically pessimistic view of human nature, and agree with A.L. Morton that in his Utopia, More shows a "lack of trust in the ordinary activities of common people." A.L. Morton, The English Utopia (London, 1952), p. 47.

and luxury. But what about the restrictions on housing?

Every home has not only a door into the street but a back door into the garden. What is more, folding doors, easily opened by hand and then closing of themselves, give admission to anyone. As a result, nothing is private property anywhere. Every ten years they actually exchange their very homes by lot. (p. 65)

The lack of private property may be economically necessary, or even desirable from a moral point of view. But what about the lack of privacy?<sup>23</sup> Also, More says that

No one is forbidden, after the halls have been served, to fetch food from the market to his home: they realize that no one would do it without good reason. For, though nobody is forbidden to dine at home, yet no one does it willingly since the practice is considered not decent and since it is foolish to take the trouble of preparing an inferior dinner when an excellent and sumptuous one is ready in the hall nearby. (p. 79)

Eating at home in Utopia may be "foolish", but why is foolish equated with "not decent"? Because the Utopians define virtue in terms of reason,<sup>24</sup> therefore whatever is unreasonable (i.e. foolish) is considered to be not virtuous (i.e. not decent). Reason bids the Utopians to observe "public laws for the distribution of vital commodities, that is to say, the matter of pleasure". (p. 94) Therefore, any deviations from the communal norm in dining or housing could be seen as threatening to the public laws, and hence as unreasonable, i.e. not decent.

The same justification--of virtue, reason, and the public good--is given for the restrictions against atheists in

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Of course, with from ten to sixteen adults in a household, there would not be much privacy, even if the swinging doors did not "give admission to anyone".

<sup>24</sup>

"The Utopians define virtue as living according to nature...That individual, they say, is following the guidance of nature who...obeys the dictates of reason." (pp. 92-93)

Utopia. Those people who do not believe in Divine Providence and the immortality of the soul are forbidden to hold public office, and to defend their opinions in public. Such people, the Utopians believe, would have no reason to be virtuous, or to obey the laws. They must, accordingly, either be silenced, or persuaded to "give way to reason", before they endanger the order of society, and its ultimate goal of pleasure. (p. 135)

There are three questions that I want to ask in reference to the restrictions of individual liberties in Utopia:

- i) Do reason and the ultimate goal of pleasure necessitate such extensive restrictions in the areas of recreation and communal living? Or do these restrictions stem from More's basic, and seemingly pessimistic, assumptions about human nature?
- ii) Are these restrictions, including those on free speech, too high a price to pay for reason and the ultimate goal of pleasure?<sup>25</sup>

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H.W. Donner says that "Utopia is not a country where everybody acts reasonably from choice only, but under a compulsion intolerable to modern minds". However, he also says that in Utopia, "since the laws are made for their mutual advantage, they do not feel the severity of the laws as a painful compulsion, but gain their freedom within the law by identifying their own individual will with the common good".  
H.W. Donner, Introduction to Utopia (London, 1945), pp. 77, 38.

Russell Ames says that "while More did not conceive of the impossible limitless freedom espoused by nineteenth century liberalism, he outlined a very high level of reasonable and tolerant religious life in comparison to the general belief and practice of his age."  
Russell Ames, Citizen Thomas More and his Utopia (New York, 1969), p. 180.

iii) Who decides what is reasonable, and on what grounds?

The Utopians believe in observing

public laws for the distribution of vital commodities... provided they have been justly promulgated by a good king or ratified by the common consent of a people neither oppressed by tyranny nor deceived by fraud. (p. 94)

The Utopian tyranny is thus a tyranny of the majority in the name of reason. This is opposed to the liberal belief that

Mankind are greater gainers by suffering each other to live as seems good to themselves, than by compelling each other to live as seems good to the rest. 26

Mill, of course, is assuming that "mankind are not infallible," and that "their truths, for the most part, are only half-truths".<sup>27</sup> The Utopians, on the other hand, believe that "human reason can attain to no truer view" of virtue and pleasure "unless a heaven-sent religion inspire man with something more holy". (p.102)

#### B. Reason:

The main differences between More's and Plato's views of reason are:

- 1) More subordinates reason to religion;
- 2) More extends the abilities to reason and to "admit" religious truths to all.

#### 1) subordinates reason to religion:

- a) The Utopians think that without religious principles,

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Mill, p. 75.

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Mill, p. 114.

which "reason leads men to believe and to admit", <sup>28</sup> reason is "insufficient and weak by itself for the investigation of true happiness". (p. 92) Without religious principles, in fact, rationality, in the Utopian sense of the word, is not possible:

After this life, accordingly, vices are ordained to be punished and virtue rewarded. Such is their belief, and if anyone thinks otherwise, they do not regard him even as a member of mankind, seeing that he has lowered the lofty nature of his soul to the level of a beast's miserable body. (p. 134)

b) There are two schools of ascetics in Utopia; one is celibate and one is not. The Utopians regard the latter as saner but the former as holier. If the former

based upon arguments from reason their preference of celibacy to matrimony and of a hard life to a comfortable one, they would laugh them to scorn. Now, however, since they say they are prompted by religion, they look up to and reverence them. (pp. 138-139) 29

c) The Utopians pray that

if there is anything better and more approved by God than that commonwealth or that religion...He will, of His goodness, bring him to the knowledge of it, for he is ready to follow in whatever path He may lead him. (p. 145)

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such as "The soul is immortal and by the goodness of God born for happiness. After this life rewards are appointed for our virtues and good deeds, punishment for our crimes". (p. 92) Plato also believed in the immortality of the soul, in teleology, and in rewards and punishments in a future life. However, he would have called these principles rational, in the sense of being actively discovered (or re-discovered) by reason, rather than religious, in the sense of being passively admitted by reason.

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One suspects that the Utopians would be too reasonable to admit (much less reverence) any religious extravagances that were not in keeping with their utilitarian principles.

d) The Utopians entrust the education of their young to the priests. The priests are elected solely on the basis of moral qualifications,<sup>30</sup> as opposed to the scholars, who are elected primarily on the basis of intellectual qualifications.<sup>31</sup> There is only one paragraph devoted to the education of the young in Utopia, (p. 140) just as there is only one paragraph devoted to religion in the Republic. (IV, 427)

2) extends the abilities to reason and to admit religious truths to all:

In Utopia, knowledge of the Good is assumed to be available to all. This is because the Utopians believe that absolute moral knowledge rests on religious, rather than on rational principles. And religious principles are assumed to be "heaven-sent" to all, rather than rationally discovered by a few.

C. The Relation of Virtue to Happiness:

In the Republic, Socrates claims that justice is both an intrinsic and an extrinsic good. He claims that the just man will be happy apart from any rewards in this world or the next. He bases his claim on metaphysical, a priori notions of happiness and the nature of the soul.

More, on the other hand, has the Utopians believe that virtue is an extrinsic good only. They believe that "all our

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More says that the priests are "elevated to such dignity for being the very best among the good, nothing but virtue taken into account". (p. 141)

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"An outstanding personality, a first-rate intelligence, and an inclination of the mind toward learning", are the qualifications for a life of scholarship. (p. 89)



actions, and even the very virtues exercised in them, look at last to pleasure as their end and happiness." (pp. 94-95) The Utopians think that the virtuous man will be happy because of, and not apart from, the rewards in this world and the next. Their subordination of reason to religion leads them to believe that a man who does not recognize the religious principles, would have no (other) reason to be virtuous:

Once the principles are eliminated, the Utopians have no hesitation in maintaining that a person would be stupid not to seek pleasure by fair means or foul, but that he should only take care not to let a lesser pleasure interfere with a greater nor to follow after a pleasure which would bring pain in retaliation. To pursue hard and painful virtue and not only to banish the sweetness of life but even voluntarily to suffer pain from which you expect no profit (for what profit can there be if after death you gain nothing for having passed the whole present life unpleasantly, that is wretchedly?)--this policy they declare to be the extreme of madness. (p.92)

#### D. Summary:

Plato's concept of ordered freedom is based on a belief in justice as an intrinsic good, and subsequently linked to a metaphysical notion of happiness. He is criticized for not allowing for personal decision-making, for misinterpreting the role of reason, and for having an a priori notion of happiness.

More's concept of ordered freedom is based on a (qualified) belief in pleasure as an intrinsic good,<sup>32</sup> and

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More says that the pleasures which the Utopians "admit as genuine they divide into various classes...To the soul they ascribe intelligence and the sweetness which is bred of contemplation of the truth. To these two are joined the pleasant recollection of a well-spent life and the sure hope of happiness to come." (pp. 98-99)

Again: "They cling above all to mental pleasures, which they value as the first and foremost of all pleasures. Of these the principal part they hold to arise from the practice of the virtues and the consciousness of a good life." (p. 100)

subsequently linked to a religious notion of happiness. He too can be criticized for allowing only a limited amount of personal decision-making, for misinterpreting the role of reason, and for having an a priori notion of happiness.

Plato is attacked for claiming that people are freest and happiest when they do what he thinks they should do. His critics think that people are freest and happiest when they do what they themselves think they should do. More's Utopia, where people are presumed to be freest and happiest because they themselves think they should do what he thinks they should do, depends on three assumptions:

- i) that the Utopians accept the religious principles in theory;
- ii) that the Utopians accept the religious principles in practice;<sup>33</sup>
- iii) that the Utopians are willing to defer the enjoyment of freedom and happiness to the next world.<sup>34</sup>

For those who do not accept these assumptions, the utopian problem still remains: is it possible to construct a

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Hume makes the point that "with regard to a future state", there is a great disparity between what people "pretend to affirm", and what people "really believe", as evidenced by their actions. David Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature, ed. D.G.C. Macnabb (London, 1962), I,3,ix. In Utopia, I think the (supposedly) small amount of atheists, and the large amount of disciplinary regulations, is an illustration of Hume's contention.

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"Freedom, like all other good things, they conjecture to be increased after death rather than diminished in all good men." (p. 137)

well-ordered society, with a liberal concept of freedom, a naturalist theory of reason, and an empirical notion of happiness? In other words, can a utopia allow people to choose what they themselves think they should do, and still be well-ordered? And if not, why not? Let us turn now to a more recent approach to the utopian problem, H.G. Wells' A Modern Utopia.

Wells' approach to the concept of freedom is fundamentally different from Plato's and More's. For Wells, unlike Plato and More, liberty is: 1) a necessary condition for individual realization, 2) a necessary condition for a social utopia, and 3) not incompatible with order. Plato revokes liberty for the sake of rational order and metaphysical happiness. More limits liberty for the sake of religious order and spiritual happiness. Wells, on the other hand, orders society for the sake of liberty and a more material happiness. Let us examine Wells' position more closely, under the headings of liberty, reason, and the relation of virtue to happiness.

A. Liberty:

1) individual realization:

Wells sees liberty as a necessary condition of individual realization, because he thinks that choice is the most basic feature of human existence. He writes:

To the classical Utopists freedom was relatively trivial. Clearly they considered virtue and happiness as entirely separable from liberty, and as being altogether more important things. But the modern view...steadily intensifies the value of freedom, until at last we begin to see liberty as the very substance of life, that indeed it is life, and that only the dead things, the choiceless things, live in absolute obedience to law. 35

Because Wells thinks that choice is essential to the human condition, his modern utopians, except for the samurai, are free to travel, work, pray, and express themselves as they please. They may attempt to join the samurai order if they choose, and their private lives (apart from parenthood) are their own concern.

Wells limits liberty, particularly in the areas of leisure and childbearing, on the grounds that the liberty of some must be compromised in order to secure the maximum amount of liberty for all. Accordingly, all utopians (except in the rare cases of inherited income) must earn the minimum wage, and there are stringent marriage regulations for couples who plan to have children. But the utopians are able to change their employment as often as it is economically possible, and couples without children need not marry, or may terminate their marriage after three years.

2) a social utopia:

Wells sees liberty as a necessary condition for a social utopia, because he thinks that liberty is essential to progress, and progress is essential to his idea of (material) happiness. He writes:

The State is to be progressive, it is no longer to be static, and this alters the general condition of the Utopian problem profoundly; we have to provide not only for food and clothing, for order and health, but for initiative...to speak teleologically, the world exists for the sake of and through initiative, and individuality is the method of initiative. (p. 88)

Of course liberty by itself cannot guarantee progress. But Wells is assuming that in his modern utopia:

a) increased liberty will lead to increased experimentation:

with a certain small property a man is free to do many things, to take a fortnight's holiday when he chooses, for example, and to try this new departure from his work or that; with so much more, he may take a year of freedom and go to the ends of the earth; with so much more, he may obtain elaborate apparatus and try curious novelties, build himself houses and make gardens, establish businesses and make experiments at large. (p. 91)

b) liberty will be combined with a good (i.e. samurai-controlled) moral and intellectual atmosphere:

from leisure, in a good moral and intellectual atmosphere, come experiments, come philosophy and the new departures. (p. 154)

And as a further incentive to progress, poetic or creative activities will be encouraged. Every citizen will be provided with the fullest possible education, and with leisure and opportunity for self-development. Wells says that:

it is a primary essential to our modern idea of an abundant secular progress that these activities should be unhampered and stimulated. (p. 267)

3) order:

Liberty is not incompatible with order, for Wells, because he thinks that widespread liberty would not be possible without order. So although Wells, like Mill, values liberty as "one of the principal ingredients of human happiness, and quite the chief ingredient of individual and social progress,"<sup>36</sup> he also, unlike Mill, values order, discipline, and political elitism. Two of the central themes of A Modern Utopia are:  
a) Wells' attempt to show that an ordered society is a good thing;

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"On Liberty," p. 115.

b) Wells' attempt to show that an ordered society is not incompatible with liberty.

a) Order, for Wells, is a good thing, because order is equivalent to sanity and progress. Sanity and progress are good things because they lead to (material) happiness.

For example:

i) A "sane order" involves the "deliberate solution of problems, a progressive intention steadily achieving itself."

(p. 125)

ii) A "sanely" organized society would be able to "supply every material need of every human being." (p. 137)

iii) "In any sane State," with "sane marriage and birth laws," employment would be satisfying and unemployment would disappear. (pp. 150-53)

iv) Wells' own, non-utopian world, is "inferior" because it is "out of order":

Men die of starvation...men and women are lashed together to make hell for each other; children are born--abominably, and reared in cruelty and folly; there is a thing called war, a horror of blood and vileness. The whole thing seems to me at times a cruel and wasteful wilderness of muddle. (p. 131)

b) Order, for Wells, is not incompatible with liberty, because he thinks that an ordered society will lead to an increase in liberty:

It does not follow...that a man is more free when there is least law and more restricted when there is most law... Consider how much liberty we gain by the loss of the common liberty to kill...It follows, therefore, in a modern Utopia...that the State will have effectively chipped away just all those spendthrift liberties that waste liberty, and not one liberty more, and so have attained the maximum general freedom. (pp. 33-34)

M.L. Berneri disagrees:

The assumption that laws are the best guardians of freedom is at the basis of nearly all utopias, and in spite of his plea for freedom, Wells commits the fault of his forerunners by introducing a vast amount of legislation into his utopia. He puts forward the childish view that murders are avoided by 'the loss of the common liberty to kill,' as if people would start butchering one another if all punishment for murder were suddenly abolished. 37

One could argue that since "the modern Utopia must have people inherently the same as those in the world", (p. 23) Wells' legislation will be necessary. But the utopians repudiate the doctrine of original sin. They hold that "man, on the whole, is good", (pp. 299-300) and that "crime and bad lives are the measure of a State's failure". (p. 144)<sup>38</sup> And since "in the case of a Utopia one assumes the best possible government", (p. 142) should so much legislation be necessary?

Wells claims that without state control of reproduction-- certainly the most repressive of his legislation--<sup>39</sup> no utopia

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Marie Louise Berneri, Journey Through Utopia (Freeport, N.Y., 1969), p. 29.

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Although on pp. 73-74, Wells alludes to the "inherent moral dross in man that must be reckoned with in any sane Utopia we may design and plan". See also p. 166.

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Although Ross is wrong when he says that "These marriage laws, enlightened in appearance, cover in reality a despotic discrimination. Without a combination of physical and mental excellence, no man or woman has the right to mate, much less, of course, to produce children". [*Italics mine.*] Harry Ross, Utopias Old and New (London, 1938), p. 180.

According to Wells, "The State is justified in saying, before you may [marry or] add children to the community...you must be above a certain minimum of personal efficiency...you must be above a certain age, and a certain minimum of physical development, and free of any transmissible diseases. You must not be a criminal unless you have expiated your offense. (pp. 183-184) [*Italics mine.*]



would be possible. (pp. 152, 180) The question is, not whether a utopia without such legislation would be possible, but whether a utopia with such legislation would be desirable-- i.e. would be a utopia. Mark Hillegas, in his Introduction to A Modern Utopia, evades the issue by saying that:

Like it or not, there can be no question that it [Wells' legislation on population control] represents the wave of the future, the inevitable forward movement of our culture and that of most other nations. (p. xviii)

I disagree with Hillegas, on the basis that utopists (and their critics) are expected to distinguish between what will be, and what should be, and between what is inevitable, and what is desirable. And I, for one, would not expect the best of all possible worlds, (p. 18) "where men and women are happy and laws are wise", (p. 30) to contain (or need) such repressive legislation on population control.<sup>40</sup>

Wells' view that a utopia must have a centrally-ordered government and economy is less controversial. However, an ordered state is not necessarily a well-ordered state, and Wells' claim that order is not incompatible with liberty rests on the assumption that his modern utopia will be well-ordered, i.e. well governed:

The old Liberalism assumed bad government, the more powerful the government the worse it was, just as it assumed the natural rightness of the free individual...But suppose we do not assume that government is necessarily bad, and the individual necessarily good--and the hypothesis upon which we are working practically abolishes either alternative--then we alter the case altogether. (p. 166)

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On the grounds that the positive effects of such legislation--in material terms--would be more than offset by the negative effects--in psychological terms--of having one group of people wield power of that nature over another group, and of the possible abuses of that power.

The dreadfulness of all such proposals as this [the exile of criminals] lies in the possibility of their execution falling into the hands of hard, dull, and cruel administrators. But in the case of a Utopia one assumes the best possible government. (p. 142)

Let us look at two aspects of Wells' governing class, or samurai, more closely: i) their discipline, and ii) their elitism.

i) discipline:

The outstanding features of Wells' samurai are their moral excellence (they represent "all that is fine in humanity" (p. 369)) and their discipline (they observe a "prescribed rule of living" (p. 259)). Unlike the rest of the population, they are not allowed to eat, drink, dress, pray, work or play as they please. Wells implies that the morality of the samurai is due to their discipline:

We forbid a great deal... We think that a constant resistance to little seductions is good for a man's quality. (p. 286)

Wells also implies that the "laxness" of the non-samurai is equivalent to immorality:

the supreme legislative assembly must have one-tenth, and may have one-half of its members outside the order, because it is alleged, there is a sort of wisdom that comes of sin and laxness. (p. 311)

But Wells thinks that liberty is necessary for individual realization and a social utopia. So can he still claim, without being inconsistent, that it is good for the state's leading citizens to be disciplined?

Furthermore, Wells claims that liberty is a good thing because it encourages imaginative activities which lead to discoveries and progress. He calls the poetical, or imaginative

types, "the most important element in human society". (p. 274) But then he claims--despite the fact that poietic types are of questionable morality (pp. 267-269) and are by their "very nature undisciplined and...positively hampered by precedents and good order"(p. 272)--that the majority of the samurai engage in poietic activities. (p. 277) Wells' utopian double says:

On the whole it [the samurai Rule] is so good that most men who, like myself, are doing poietic work, and who would be just as well-off without obedience, find a satisfaction in adhesion. (p. 280)

I think this quotation illustrates the fundamental ambivalence of Wells' position. He is committed to liberty, because he wants his utopia to be progressive, and he is committed to discipline, because he wants his utopia to be well-ordered. But to combine "progress with political stability", (p. 271) and imagination with discipline, is an epistemological, as well as a practical, problem.

ii) elitism:

Wells is committed to liberty, but not to democracy. He thinks that "the Utopian organization demands more powerful and efficient methods of control than electoral methods can give". (p. 258) Accordingly, the samurai occupy all the responsible administrative positions in the state, and with the exception noted on p. 311, they are the only voters.

Theoretically, the samurai order is open to everyone. In practice, however, "the Rule was planned to exclude the dull, to be unattractive to the base, and to direct and co-ordinate all sound citizens of good intent". (p. 279) Similarly, all samurai

rulers and officials are theoretically put on trial every three years. In practice, however, they are tried by a jury of their peers, and "the tendency is to give a practically permanent tenure to good men". (p. 311)

There are obvious dangers in having an elite, almost self-perpetuating<sup>41</sup> governing class that is all-powerful, and responsible only to itself for power.<sup>42</sup> On the one hand, Wells seems to assume that because the samurai are willing to govern and live austerely, they will govern well. But on the other hand, there is an ominous note in the following statement about the samurai Rule:

We forbid a great deal...We think that a constant resistance to little seductions is good for a man's quality. At any rate, it shows that a man is prepared to pay something for his honour and privileges. (p. 286)

And we are reminded of Plato's admonition that:

you can have a well-governed society only if you can discover for your future rulers a better way of life than being in office...The life of true philosophy is the only one that looks down upon offices of state. (VII, 521)

#### 4) summary:

Wells' attempt to show that order is not incompatible with liberty rests on the assumption that his utopia will be well-ordered. Wells' assumption that his utopia will be well-ordered rests in turn on the assumption that discipline is

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Wells writes that the "marriage regulations tend to make the samurai something of an hereditary class. Their children, as a rule, become samurai." (p. 299)

<sup>42</sup>

Ironically, Wells says in his autobiography that Lenin's "reconstructed Communist Party" is "an extraordinarily similar scheme" to his samurai.  
H.G. Wells, An Experiment in Autobiography (Toronto, 1934), p. 566.

better, morally speaking, than liberty. And Wells' assumption that discipline is better than liberty seems to contradict his previous assumption that liberty is necessary for individual realization, and for a utopia which aims at material happiness.

However, this apparent contradiction can be resolved, a) if Wells is adopting the Platonic position that there is something superior to liberty and material happiness. Or, b) if Wells is saying that liberty is not possible without order, and order is not possible without some part of society being disciplined. In this latter case, discipline would mean deferring immediate (material) happiness for long-range (but still material) honour and privileges, as Wells implies on pp. 173 and 286. Or, it would mean exchanging the relatively low<sup>43</sup> goals of sensual satisfaction, for the higher (but still material) goals of honour and authority.

To ascertain which of these alternatives Wells adopts, let us look at his concept of reason, and the metaphysical and ethical positions that follow from it.

#### B. Reason:

Wells' basic philosophical position is diametrically opposed to Plato's. Wells takes a naturalist view of reason, which means that he is a sceptic epistemologically, a nominalist metaphysically, and a relativist ethically. For example:

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low in a pragmatic sense of impeding performance, rather than in an ethical sense.

My...scepticism is essentially a doubt of the objective reality of classification...classification is a necessary condition of the working of the mental implement but...it is a departure from the objective truth of things...Plato...tended to regard the idea as the something behind reality, whereas it seems to me that the idea is the more proximate and less perfect thing, the thing by which the mind, by ignoring individual differences, attempts to comprehend an otherwise unmanageable number of unique realities...this subordination of the class to the individual difference, not only destroys the universal claim of philosophy, but the universal claim of ethical imperatives, the universal claim of any religious teaching. 44

Nothing endures, nothing is precise and certain...and Plato turned his back on truth when he turned towards his museum of specific ideals. (pp. 20-21)

In the world of reality, which...is nothing more or less than the world of individuality, there are no absolute rights and wrongs, there are no qualitative questions at all, but only quantitative adjustments. (p. 37)

In reference to Wells' claim that "in the world of reality...there are no qualitative questions at all, but only quantitative adjustments", I want to raise the following three issues:

1) the samurai:

Wells implies that the moral superiority of the samurai is based on discipline. And he seems willing to acknowledge, in their case, Plato's claim that there are "coarser pleasures" which "corrupt the soul". (p. 289) But Wells is not willing to acknowledge, in his basic philosophical position, the dogmatic epistemological assumptions upon which Plato's claim is based.

Is Wells' concept of a moral aristocracy inconsistent with his naturalist assumptions? And, to put the question in

terms of the liberty-discipline issue raised earlier, is Wells' claim that discipline is a (morally) good thing, inconsistent with his claim that liberty is a (materially) good thing?

It seems to me that there is no inconsistency in either case, if we assume that Wells views morality pragmatically as service to the state. Wells says, for example, that:

i) The "base", who have no "'moral sense'...count as an antagonism to the State organization". (pp. 269-70) Their defects stem from "a narrower and more persistent egoistic reference", (p. 269) just as the morality of the samurai stems from a wider and more persistent altruistic reference. Plato's "better part and a worse" have become Wells' self-sacrifice and self-seeking.

ii) The aim of the samurai Rule is:

to discipline the impulses and emotions, to develop a moral habit and sustain a man in periods of stress, fatigue, and temptation, to produce the maximum co-operation of all men of good intent, and, in fact, to keep all the samurai in a state of moral and bodily health and efficiency. (p. 280)  
[Italics mine.]

So if we assume that Wells equates morality with service to the state, then samurai discipline could be seen as a means to efficient government, and efficient government could be seen as a means to increased liberty and material happiness. Wells says:

Under the unnatural perfection of security, liberty and abundance our civilization has attained, the normal untrained human being is disposed to excess in almost every direction...The past history of our race is very largely a history of social collapses due to demoralization by indulgences following security and abundance...Our Founders organized motives from all sorts of sources, but I think the chief force to give men self-control is Pride. Pride may not be the noblest thing in the soul, but it is the best King there, for all that. They looked to it to keep a man clean and sound and sane. (pp. 292-93)

Sanity is the key to Wells' materially-ordered utopia,

just as knowledge is the key to Plato's metaphysically-ordered republic. Sanity, for Wells, means "good management and comprehensive design in every material thing"; (p. 159) "material order" means "perfected communications, perfected public services and economic organizations". (p. 173) The "moral and intellectual problem" (pp. 172-173) behind Wells' utopia is not to find Plato's "essential nature of the Good", (VI,504) or "clear pattern of perfect truth" (VI,485) upon which to pattern a static utopia. As a naturalist, Wells does not share Plato's rationalist belief in an absolute Good, perfect truth, or the desirability of a static utopia. Wells' problem is rather to find "a considerable number and a succession of...men and women of will", (p. 173) whose renunciation and discipline will guarantee "an abundant secular progress". (p. 267)

2) the "Drink Question":

If Wells firmly believed that "there are no qualitative questions at all, but only quantitative adjustments", which I interpret as meaning that the state should seek to compromise between relative goods, rather than attempt to impose an absolute Good, then he would limit the consumption of alcohol only insofar as it interfered with the efficient operation of the state. But in fact, Wells says that the "desirable ends" with respect to the "Drink Question" will be:

the maintenance of public order and decency, the reduction of inducements to form this bad and wasteful habit...and the complete protection of the immature...Public drunkenness will be an offense against public decency, and will be dealt with in some very drastic manner. (pp. 63-64) [Italics mine.]



Contrast this with Mill's position in "On Liberty" that:

no person ought to be punished simply for being drunk...If a person harms only himself, the inconvenience is one which society can afford to bear, for the sake of the greater good of human freedom. 45

3) "public decency":

[Italics mine.]

With reference to the Drink Question again, who will decide what constitutes public decency? The samurai? And if so, on what grounds? Again, if Wells firmly believed that "there are no qualitative questions at all, but only quantitative adjustments", then he would rely on a head count to find out what--for all the utopians--constitutes public decency. But the samurai are the only judges, and, for the most part, the only voters. So without resorting to an unqualified<sup>46</sup> head count, how do the samurai decide what constitutes public decency? They refer, no doubt, to the Book of the Samurai:

a compilation of articles and extracts, poems and prose pieces, which were supposed to embody the idea of the order. It was to play the part for the samurai that the Bible did for the ancient Hebrews...the Book of the Samurai had been under revision...Now, there is hardly anything in it that is not beautiful and perfect in form... [it contains] all the guiding ideas of our Modern State. (pp. 282-83)

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"On Liberty," p. 138.

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Wells' qualified head count, or "curious exception" to the samurai being the only voters, that:

the supreme legislative assembly must have one-tenth, and may have one-half of its members outside the order, because, it is alleged, there is a sort of wisdom that comes of sin and laxness, which is necessary to the perfect ruling of life, (p. 311)

seems to reflect a basic ambivalence in this connection, between democracy and aristocracy, or between the liberty to choose values, and what Wells considers the "decency" of imposed values.

It seems that despite his repudiation of certainty, perfection, and absolute moral standards, Wells does recognize a fixed and dogmatic body of knowledge, which contains "all the guiding ideas of our Modern State". So on the one hand, we have Wells' liberalism and his naturalism, which lead to the position that people should be allowed to choose what they consider to be right and wrong, because choice is a good thing, and in any case, "there are no absolute rights and wrongs". (p. 37) And on the other hand, we have Wells' suspicion of "that inherent moral dross in man," (pp. 73-74) and his dogmatic interpretation of decency. And the problem is, how shall we reconcile this conflict between liberty and decency?

### C. The Relation of Virtue to Happiness:

Wells claims to have a liberal concept of freedom, i.e. to see liberty as necessary for individual and social well-being. He claims to have a naturalist theory of reason, i.e. to repudiate dogmatic, a priori theories of morality. And he claims to have an empirical notion of happiness, i.e. to think that people will be happy doing what they think they should do. However, we have seen that Wells' claim that his utopia is well-ordered rests on the samurai, and that the decisions of the samurai are based on an almost completely dogmatic, a priori set of moral standards. In view of these standards, Wells' utopia cannot be grounded completely in either a liberal concept of freedom, a naturalist theory of reason, or an empirical notion of happiness. Accordingly, A Modern Utopia is as liberal as is consistent with Wells' conception of public decency. And

Wells' conception of public decency is based, not on metaphysical or religious grounds, but not on an appeal to the people either.

So in the final analysis, Wells does not allow his utopians to do (completely) what they think they should do. This is because he is afraid that if people are allowed to do what they think they should do, they will not do what he thinks they should do. And this is because Wells sees a gulf between his conception of what man should be (in terms of Wells' own a priori standard of decency), and the non-Wellsian conception of what man should be (in terms of what Wells considers man's "inherent moral cross").

So we are back to the utopian problem, of allowing people to choose what they think they should do, and still have a well-ordered society. And it seems to me that this problem will be solved only by allowing--even encouraging--people themselves to be the judge of what constitutes well-ordered. Only then will it be possible to have a well-ordered society, with a liberal concept of freedom, a naturalist theory of reason, and an empirical notion of happiness. Such a society will be possible only when it is good to choose what one thinks is good. And men will act as they should, only because they choose to become what they think they should be.

Let us turn to Skinner's version of a well-ordered society, in which men act as they should, not because they choose to become what they think they should be, but because there is no difference between what they should be, and what they already are.

Skinner's approach to the concept of freedom is fundamentally different from Plato's, More's, and Wells'. The latter three agree on the assumption that freedom, in the sense of the absence of external control,<sup>47</sup> is possible, though undesirable. They disagree on the manner and extent to which individual freedom should be controlled by society. Skinner, on the other hand, constructs *Walden Two* on the assumption that freedom is impossible:

'I deny that freedom exists at all. I must deny it--or my program would be absurd. You can't have a science about a subject matter which hops capriciously about. Perhaps we can never prove that man isn't free; it's an assumption. But the increasing success of a science of behavior makes it more and more plausible.'<sup>48</sup>

So unlike Plato, More, and Wells, whose fundamental distinction is between a controlled or ordered society, and an uncontrolled or liberal society, Skinner's basic distinction is between the right kind of controlled society (run by behavioral scientists), and the wrong kind of controlled society (run by anyone else). Let us take a closer look at Skinner's position, under the headings of freedom, and man as he really is.

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<sup>47</sup>

or internal control, as in the case of Plato's Guardians, and Wells' samurai.

<sup>48</sup>

B.F. Skinner, Walden Two (Toronto, 1970), p. 257. Subsequent references will be to this edition.

A. Freedom:1) Skinner's position:

Skinner proceeds on the assumption that man's behavior is controlled by his environment, i.e. by society. His purpose in Walden Two, therefore, is not to show that control of the individual by society is a good thing, but to show that control of the individual and society by behavioral scientists is a good thing. He argues as follows:

- i) Behavioral science produces the necessary<sup>49</sup> illusion of freedom by relying on positive instead of negative reinforcement:

'By using the principle of positive reinforcement--carefully avoiding force or the threat of force--we can preserve a personal sense of freedom.' (p. 264)

'We can achieve a sort of control under which the controlled, though they are following a code much more scrupulously than was ever the case under the old system, nevertheless feel free. They are doing what they want to do, not what they are forced to do...The curious thing is that in that case the question of freedom never arises... The question of freedom arises when there is restraint--either physical or psychological.' (p. 262)

But is it a good thing for man to be controlled without being aware that he is being controlled?<sup>50</sup> Even if he is happy? He may feel that he is happy, without knowing that he is not happy. (Just as behaviorism induces the feeling of freedom without the knowledge of not being free.) And lacking the ability (or need,

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<sup>49</sup>  
for the survival of society. "There's no restraint and [hence] no revolt." (p. 262)

<sup>50</sup>  
or how he is being controlled? Frazier, the creator of Walden Two, says proudly that "We deliberately conceal the planning and managerial machinery". (p. 235)

or desire<sup>51</sup>) to make decisions for himself, man may ultimately cease to know anything at all, or even to be human.<sup>52</sup>

ii) Behavioral control (or rule by the experts) is superior<sup>53</sup> to democracy, because the average citizen is not well-enough informed to decide who should rule, or to cast his "own" vote on political issues:

'Are the people skilled governors? No...when we've once acquired a behavioral technology, we can't leave the control of behavior to the unskilled...What they conspicuously don't know is how to get what they want. That's a matter for specialists....The people are in no position to evaluate the experts.' (pp. 266-267)

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"In Walden Two no one worries about the government except the few to whom the worry has been assigned....Even the constitutional rights of the members are seldom thought about, I'm sure. The only thing that matters is one's day-to-day happiness and a secure future.'" (p. 270)

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using autonomy as a criterion of rationality, and rationality as a criterion of humanity. I agree with Mill that: The mental and moral, like the muscular powers, are improved only by being used...He who lets the world... choose his plan of life for him, has no need of any other faculty than the ape-like one of imitation. He who chooses his plan for himself, employs all his faculties.

"On Liberty," p. 116.

Skinner, of course, denies that autonomy is possible. But I think he fails to distinguish between a control that is deliberately conditioned, and a control that is not deliberately conditioned. Certainly the latter, i.e. the Managers and the Planners, are more autonomous than, in the sense that they are choosing goals and values for, the former. Andrew Hacker makes this point in his article, "Dostoevsky's Disciples: Man and Sheep in Political Theory," Journal of Politics 17 (1955):590-613. On p. 609, Hacker writes:

It must be in any community where extensive conditioning is operative, the conditioners may be called autonomous individuals, but the conditioned may not.

Hacker goes on to say that the conditioned are neither autonomous, nor individuals (i.e. humans), obviously using autonomy as a criterion for humanity.

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"for immediate practical purposes.'" (p. 196)

'We have a Political Manager, who...with the help of the Planners draws up what we call the 'Walden Ticket,' and we all go to the polls and vote it straight.'

'Most of your members merely vote as they are told?' said Castle.

'And why not?' said Frazier....'Why should our members take the time...to inform themselves on so complex a matter?...We all know what we want so far as the local government is concerned, and we know how to get it--by voting the Walden Ticket.' (p. 197)

iii) Behavioral science is an effective check against tyranny, because the behaviorist must control for the good<sup>54</sup> of the controlled:

'Temporarily, they [the Planners and Managers] have power, in the sense that they run things--but it's limited. They can't compel anyone to obey, for example. A Manager must make a job desirable....His power is scarcely worthy of the name.'(p. 233)

'Our Planners know...that any usurpation of power would weaken the community as a whole and eventually destroy the whole venture...There's no power to usurp...There's no police, no military, no guns or bombs...to give strength to the few....And there's little real wealth to tempt anyone....The physical plant of the community would be practically worthless without the members.' (p. 271)

'Our Planners act perfectly well in practically complete anonymity.' (p. 276)

Skinner is assuming that control becomes tyrannical only when it monopolizes the commodities of force, wealth, and prestige. But what about the monopoly of control itself? And the manipulation of men's minds--even if it is for their own good? Again, the assumption is that freedom (in the sense of autonomy) is irrelevant where material happiness is concerned.

iv) The techniques of behavioral science are essential to the realization of the Good Life, when the Good Life is defined (only) in material terms. When he is asked to define the Good

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<sup>54</sup>

i.e. "'net positive reinforcement'" (p. 302)

Life, Frazier answers:

'health...the minimum of unpleasant labour...a chance to exercise talents and abilities...intimate and satisfying personal contacts...relaxation and rest...and that's all, absolutely all.' (pp. 159-161)

So in the final analysis, Skinner's arguments that behavioral control is the best kind of control, rest on the following assumptions:

- a) Freedom (in the sense of autonomy) is impossible, and in any case irrelevant and impractical where material happiness is concerned.
- b) Material happiness is the only kind of happiness, and the Good Life is the same for everyone.<sup>55</sup>
- c) The Good Life is a question of facts, rather than values, and can be justified on an experimental, rather than a rational basis.<sup>56</sup>

These assumptions are challenged by Skinner's critics, who argue that a behavioral society is not the best kind of society.

2) criticisms of Skinner's position:

- a) Skinner claims that determinism is an assumption that makes behaviorism possible. His critics argue that freedom is an assumption that makes rationality possible:

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or can be made to be. On p. 104, Frazier says that our "original sin," is that "each of us has interests which conflict with the interests of everybody else." But on p. 197, he says that in Walden Two (as a result, no doubt, of behavioral engineering) "our interests are all alike."

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Frazier says to Castle: "I can't give you a rational justification for any of it....This is the Good Life. We know it. It's a fact, not a theory. It has an experimental justification, not a rational one." (p. 161)  
See also p. 203, where the question is what people do want, as opposed to what people should want.



Choice--moral or otherwise--is the hallmark of the civilized man...and distinguishes humanity from the rest of creation...Automatic virtue...is not compatible with what we ordinarily consider to be rational conduct.... The very least that we are entitled to expect from a utopian society is that it not diminish human rationality, whatever the ends may be for which that diminution is effected. 57

b) Skinner claims that behaviorism is necessary for the realization of material happiness. His critics argue that freedom is necessary for the realization of human happiness:

Behind the ancient and possibly quite unsatisfactory concepts of free will, individual responsibility, and the validity of value judgements, lie some realities without the recognition of which it is not possible to imagine a world in which human beings will be either successful or happy. 58

c) Skinner claims that freedom and values are irrelevant to a Good Life. His critics argue that the freedom to create or discover values is essential to a human life:

The essence of men is that they are autonomous beings--authors of values, of ends in themselves. 59

Belief in the reality of values and in man's ability to recognize or establish them is a sine qua non for any world which is to remain what has previously been thought of as human. 60

It is assumed, then, by the critics of behaviorism, that man's humanity is dependent on his rationality, and that man's rationality assumes the opportunity and man's ability to make autonomous choices. Skinner, on the other hand, says that:

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Kateb, p. 164.

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Krutch, p. 195.

59

Berlin, pp. 136-137.

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Krutch, p. 257.

'The majority of people don't want to plan. They want to be free of the responsibility of planning. What they ask is merely some assurance that they will be decently provided for. The rest is a day-to-day enjoyment of life.'  
(p. 167)

Is Skinner implying:

- i) that people want to be less than rational, or human?
- ii) that people ought to be less than rational, or human?<sup>61</sup>
- iii) that we should proceed from a different (i.e. non-Platonic, non-religious, and non-liberal) conception of what it means to be human? Let us see.

B. Man As He Really Is:

As a behaviorist, Skinner discards the traditional Platonic, religious, and liberal distinctions between man as he really is, and man as he appears to be. He writes as follows:

What was needed was a new conception of man, compatible with our scientific knowledge. (p. 312)

'Our conception of man is not taken from theology, but from a scientific examination of man himself.' (p. 199)

'What is the 'original nature of man'? I mean, what are the basic psychological characteristics of human behavior... and the possibilities of modifying them and creating others? That's really an experimental question--for a science of behavior to answer...Experimentation...not reason.' (p. 175)

'A laissez-faire policy which trusts to the inherent goodness and wisdom of the common man is incompatible with the observed fact that men are made good or bad and wise or foolish by the environment in which they grow.' (p. 273)

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61

in order for the community to run more smoothly. Since Skinner believes in the possibility and desirability of psychologically changing people who come to Walden Two, why doesn't he change them into people who want to plan and make their own choices? Obviously, because this would not be to the practical advantage of the community as a whole.

So if there is no difference between man as he really is, and man as he appears to be, then there is no difference between what man ought to be and what he is, and between what man ought to desire and what he does desire. Frazier says that:

'In the long run, when the values have been adjusted, all kinds of work are equally desirable [i.e. desired]. If they weren't, there would be a demand for the more desirable, and the credit value would be changed.' (p.52)

The "'basic problems'" of Walden Two are:

'What do people want? What will satisfy them? How can they be made to want what they can get? Or how can they get what they want without taking it away from anyone else?' (p. 203)

So according to Skinner:

- i) men want what they should want;
- ii) most men prefer material comfort and security to Platonic rationality, Morean virtue, or liberal autonomy.

It follows, then, that the implications that men should want to be either rational, virtuous, or autonomous are based on a scientifically invalid conception of man.

One could argue at this point that a scientific conception of man may not be the best conception of man--from an ethical or utopian point of view. And Skinner would reply that a scientific conception of man is the best conception of man--from a practical point of view. Furthermore, he would add, to assume that a practical ethics makes man less than human is to beg the question of what it means to be human.

But if freedom, rationality, and ethical values are irrelevant to Skinner's utopian community, in what sense is that community utopian? Skinner may be able to condition men to want

what he thinks they should want. But if what he thinks they should want is defined only in terms of survival and happiness, in what sense are they better than non-utopian men? And in what sense is the world they live in a better world?

Plato assumes that his utopia will be a better world because it will be more rational. More makes his claim in terms of virtue, and Wells in terms of freedom. Skinner, on the other hand, assumes that his utopia will be a better world because it will create more happiness. But are happier people necessarily better people? Plato, More, and Wells assume that their utopians will be happier because they are better, i.e. more rational, virtuous, or free. Skinner, however, assumes that his utopians will be happier because they are more satisfied. But are more satisfied people necessarily better people? It seems to me that Walden Two is the reductio ad absurdum of utopian inquiry. This is because Skinner attempts to construct a utopia based on a non-utopian (i.e. non-ethical) conception of man and the Good Life.

But all conceptions of man are ultimately assumptions which are impossible to prove.<sup>62</sup> And all value judgements are

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The scientist Rene Dubos writes: "While I do not question, of course, that scientists are objective in the actual performance of their experiments, it seems to me that they plan their studies on the basis of large philosophical and social assumptions. For example...They may assume on faith that life is the expression of some divine vital spirit, or accept--also on faith--that living processes are but the expression of the activities of a kind of chemical molecule." Rene Dubos, The Dream of Reason: Science and Utopias (New York, 1961), p. 4.

ultimately intuitive.<sup>63</sup> So it is fruitless to inquire who has the right conception of man, or the right approach to the Good Life.

Skinner's conception of man and the Good Life must be rejected--not because it is wrong. It must be rejected because Skinner's claim that freedom, virtue, and rationality are irrelevant makes utopian thought itself irrelevant. However, at the outset of this paper, I stressed the importance of utopian creation and criticism on the grounds that autonomous thought about moral issues is essential to (my conception of) rationality and the human condition. It follows, then, that if utopian thought<sup>64</sup> is a good thing, then a society in which utopian thinking is encouraged will be better than a society in which utopian thinking is not encouraged. Better in the sense of having a greater distribution of autonomous, value-oriented, and hence rational thought.

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"Value...is ultimately an intuitive matter."  
Milford Q. Sibley, "Apology for Utopia I," Journal of Politics  
7(1940), p. 65.

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Not only in the narrow sense of the writing and criticism of utopian literature, but in the broad sense of the inquiry into the fundamental assumptions and values which underlie all political and social activity. I agree with Sibley that "every conscious action in the realm of economics and politics implies a utopia of some kind, however incomplete and unexpressed it may be. Even the most minute alterations imply at least a tentative assumption as to the nature of the existing whole and a judgment regarding the whole which ought to be."

Sibley, p. 69.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has been an attempt to re-examine the perennial utopian conflict between freedom and excessive restraint. I proposed originally:

- 1) to analyze what four utopists and their critics have meant by freedom and the Good;
- 2) to attempt to reconcile freedom (in some sense) with the Good Life (in some sense).

In the light of my analysis, and on the basis of my agreement with Mill that an autonomous choice of values is essential to the human condition, I conclude that:

- a) Plato,<sup>65</sup> More, Skinner, and to a much lesser extent, Wells, can be criticized for discouraging the widespread creation and criticism of fundamental values.
- b) Plato, Wells, and Skinner can be criticized for leaving the administration of their utopias (i.e. the interpretation of values) to experts.<sup>66</sup>
- c) Freedom (in the sense of autonomy) can be reconciled with the Good Life (in the sense of rationality and humanity) only

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<sup>65</sup> to take the Republic alone, and as a utopian document.

<sup>66</sup> I am assuming that the practical experience of interpreting values is indispensable to the creation and criticism of values.

Kateb says: "We can grant to Skinner that the ideal community must be designed and set in motion by a few; but after that, the many must share in something resembling citizenship. Their very rationality depends on it."  
Kateb, pp. 207-208.

when it is seen as indispensable to it.

On the basis of my conception of what it means to be human, I conclude that the utopian process (of man's choice of a Good Life, and participation in the administration of a Good Life) should become the utopian product. In other words, I think that people should be encouraged to choose what they think they should do, on the grounds that the process of choosing is more important than the product of the choice. And I hold that it is only when people choose to become what they think they should be, that we shall bridge the gap between life as it is, and life as I think it ought to be.

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