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## Nature-Reason-Justice in *Utopia* and *Gulliver's Travels*

EUGENE R. HAMMOND

The "reason" which governs Thomas More's Utopians and Jonathan Swift's Houyhnhnms has made readers very uncomfortable. In earlier centuries, these readers often attacked More or Swift for believing in "rational" solutions to social problems. But this century's increasing interest in personae and in irony has allowed critics to distinguish ever more sharply between the authors, More and Swift, and the spokesmen for their utopian societies, Hythloday and Gulliver. And each time new weaknesses are discovered in either Hythloday or Gulliver, the possibilities increase that the societies they champion were also conceived ironically. In addition, the authors' richly detailed descriptions of Utopian and Houyhnhnm life make these societies especially vulnerable to ironic readings, once irony is suspected, because each detail can be scrutinized for adequacy. Now, after years of scrutiny, Utopia and Houyhnhnmland are rarely regarded as models of virtue. Instead, virtue is thought to be located in two individuals—Cardinal Morton and Don Pedro—who seem to have survived the voracious specter of irony by making only brief appearances. Cardinal Morton in *Utopia* judiciously moderates the discussion of some argumentative dinner guests. Don Pedro in *Gulliver's Travels* shows great generosity to a sailor (Gulliver) who has lost his wits. We cannot, however, from the qualities of these two men, determine much about the values implicit in the works as a whole unless we extrapolate recklessly. But we can and should, while recognizing that More and Swift were playful in their portraits of Utopians and Houyhnhnms, locate crucial values in Utopian and Houyhnhnm "reason." In both *Utopia* and *Gulliver's Travels*, reason is intimately linked with the virtue of justice, and in each, the institutional injustice of contemporary society is pointedly satirized through comparison with the impressive (if not perfect) justice of an imaginary, rational society.

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Book one of *Utopia* is often called "The Dialogue of Counsel,"<sup>1</sup> because its principal question, the question of whether it is possible to give ethical counsel to a European monarch, must be considered by readers at the end of book two when trying to decide whether their newly acquired knowledge of the Utopian commonwealth can be put to any practical use. But book one could as aptly be termed "The Book of Entrenched Injustice."<sup>2</sup> Each time Hythloday is encouraged by "More" and "Giles" to become a counselor, he responds not simply with a refusal, but with an account of some injustice so firmly entrenched that any attempt on his part to advise (or to intervene on behalf of justice) would be summarily dismissed. He reminds "More" and "Giles" how little most monarchs care about the just administration of their kingdoms: "They care much more how, by hook or by crook, they may win fresh kingdoms than how they may administer well what they have got" (*U*, p. 57). He contends that, while kings pretend a concern for justice by punishing thieves with death, they in fact encourage unjust customs which make thievery inevitable: soldiers disabled in the kings' aggressive wars are unable lawfully to support themselves; tenants are everywhere beggared by avaricious and idle landlords; whole towns of laborers and farmers are dispossessed by greedy wool merchants who care only to enclose increased pasturage for their sheep. Summing up, Hythloday insists that the institution of private property, which encourages systematic exploitation of the poor, is itself powerful enough to ensure injustice no matter what advice a king is given.

Much of *Gulliver's Travels*, too, is pre-eminently concerned with problems of entrenched injustice. In Gulliver's reports on Europe to the King of Brobdingnag and to his Houyhnhnm Master, he observes that courts of law exist not to provide justice, but to benefit their own officers; that civil and religious leaders, after being chosen for venal considerations, proceed to govern with the same motives; that the rich are left free to gorge themselves on the fruits of the labor of the poor; and that members of Parliament consistently ignore their constituencies, "sacrificing the publick Good to the Designs of a weak and vicious Prince, in

<sup>1</sup>J. H. Hexter, *More's Utopia: The Biography of an Idea* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 99. All references to *Utopia* in this essay are to *The Yale Edition of the Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, 14 vols., 1963—, vol. 4: *Utopia*, ed. Edward Surtz, S. J., and J. H. Hexter (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1965), cited in both the text and the notes as *U*. All references to *Gulliver's Travels* in this essay are to *The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift*, 14 vols., ed. Herbert Davis, vol. 11: *Gulliver's Travels*, rev. edn. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1959), cited as *GT*.

<sup>2</sup>See Ed Quattrochi, "Injustice, not Councilorship: The Theme of Book One of *Utopia*," *Moreana* 6, no. 31-32 (November 1971): 19-28.

Conjunction with a corrupted Ministry" (*GT*, p. 130). Among the rulers met or mentioned in *Gulliver's Travels*, only the King of Brobdingnag shows any concern for justice. The passion of the Lilliputian emperor is to reduce "the whole Empire of *Blefuscu* into a Province" (*GT*, p. 53). The King of Laputa pursues his absolute ambitions, when necessary, by crushing rebels under his flying island (*GT*, p. 171). The King of Luggnagg forces all his callers literally to "*lick the Dust before his Footstool*" (*GT*, p. 204), poisoning that dust if he so desires. And these fictional kings are all surpassed as brutal warmakers by the European monarchs, whose campaigns are recounted by Gulliver in bloody detail. The horrid Yahoos of book four are linked more specifically to kings and ministers than to any other men. After noting that most Yahoo herds have a "ruling Yahoo . . . more *deformed* in Body, and *mischievous* in Disposition, than any of the rest" (*GT*, p. 262), Swift drily leaves it to us to determine "how far this might be applicable to our *Courts* and *Favourites*, and *Ministers of State*" (*GT*, p. 263).

In both *Utopia* and *Gulliver's Travels*, the authors point to numerous injustices; but at the same time they attempt to shock us into recognizing that these injustices have been cleverly institutionalized. Government officials in both works show nothing but contempt for the justice they are presumed to administer. They "think . . . that all justice is only a plebeian and low virtue which is far below the majesty of kings" (*U*, p. 199). They consider "justice" to be simply a useful word to be employed to lull the people into the security of thinking they are well governed. While each king acts completely "in his own interest" (*U*, p. 93), his ministers twist the law unconscionably to give his actions "an outward mask of justice" (*iustitiae . . . personam*, *U*, p. 92).<sup>3</sup> Ignoring the welfare of the people, and proceeding entirely by "*Mystery*, *Refinement*, and *Intrigue*" (*GT*, p. 135), these ministers engage their countries in wars to give themselves a pretext to collect taxes, or "to stifle or divert the Clamour of the Subjects against their evil Administration" (*GT*, pp. 245–46). The audacity with which kings and ministers pretend to justice while ignoring it finds its most striking emblem in the royal seal of the treacherous King of Luggnagg. The impression on his seal is one of "*A King lifting up a lame Beggar from the Earth*" (*GT*, p. 216). The King of Luggnagg has no regard for the public welfare. And yet Gulliver describes his seal without any resentment or even puzzlement at its deception.

Gulliver's mindless response to such deception is not a unique frailty. More and Swift both indicate that, as a result of this routine and persistent deception, people seem to have forgotten the true meaning of

<sup>3</sup>See also *U*, pp. 71, 103, and 241.

justice. In book one of *Utopia*, Hythloday describes a dinner given by Cardinal Morton, at which one of the guests begins "to speak punctiliously of the strict justice which was then dealt out to thieves" (*U*, p. 61). Hythloday is incensed that this man can so complacently equate law and punishment with "justice." He responds: "This manner of punishing thieves goes far beyond justice and is not for the public good" (*U*, p. 61). Hythloday uses the seemingly redundant phrases "goes far beyond justice" and "is not for the public good" in order to remind the man that the goal of "justice" should be the "public good" and not simply the enforcement of king-serving laws.<sup>4</sup> In *Gulliver's Travels*, also, casual and deceptive use of the term "justice" has obliterated the original meaning of the term from memory. Gulliver, when he returns for the last time to England, feels he must defend himself against the charge that he did not claim any new land for His Majesty. He first describes the typical procedures for making such a claim:

A Crew of Pyrates are driven by a Storm they know not whither; at length a Boy discovers Land from the Top-mast; they go on Shore to rob and plunder; they see an harmless People, are entertained with Kindness, they give the Country a new Name, they take formal Possession of it for the King, they set up a rotten Plank or a Stone for a Memorial, they murder two to three Dozen of Natives, bring away a Couple more by Force for a Sample, return home, and get their Pardon.

(*GT*, p. 294)

Having evoked these callous and cruel practices, Gulliver merely says he has "conceived a few Scruples with relation to the distributive Justice of Princes upon these Occasions" (*GT*, p. 294). Swift, like More, uses deliberate redundancy to show that the term "Justice" has been emptied of its meaning. By specifically referring to "Justice" as "distributive," he focuses our attention on the grotesquely unequal "distribution" of favors between the natives and the English pirates. True justice in such matters is far from anyone's concern.

More and Swift suggest, through the policies they ascribe to Cardinal Morton and the King of Brobdingnag, how some of the current injustice might be ameliorated. But in addition they confront the problem that the *image* of justice in people's minds is being systematically defaced. Each creates a vivid image of a fictional land in which justice is ensured by the social structure (in both *Utopia* and *Houyhnhnmland* factions are

<sup>4</sup>The fact that justice is more often pretended than practiced is a recurrent theme of Hythloday's. See *U*, pp. 70, 80, 200, and 240.

unknown, the laws are few and simple, all members of society are cared for, virtuous conduct is rewarded with social esteem, and vicious persons—including, to his dismay, Gulliver—must forfeit their citizenship). Each takes extraordinary care to describe his fictional society so that it will not easily fade from the reader's memory. We do not easily forget a society in which men and women inspect each other before marriage; nor do we forget one in which horses thread needles with their hooves. Swift was acutely conscious that More's *Utopia* provided the model for his giving a fictional society extraordinary life. In the prefatory letter to *Gulliver's Travels*, Gulliver complains about his readers: "some of them are so bold as to think my Book of Travels a meer Fiction out of mine own Brain; and have gone so far as to drop Hints, that the *Houyhnhnms* and *Yahoos* have no more Existence than the Inhabitants of *Utopia*" (*GT*, p. 8). The point, of course, is that the Houyhnhnms and Yahoos have fully as much imaginative existence as do the Utopians.<sup>5</sup>

In the fictional societies of Utopia and Houyhnhnmland, More and Swift have created memorable images of simplicity, utility, fellowship, and justice which readers are encouraged to compare with the "justice" in their own lands. Swift's Gulliver fervently wishes that the Houyhnhnms could come to Europe to teach "the first Principles of Honour, Justice, Truth, Temperance, publick Spirit, Fortitude, Chastity, Friendship, Benevolence, and Fidelity," because only the *names* of these virtues, he says, "are still retained among us" (*GT*, p. 294). More's Hythloday, several times in his peroration, dares his audience to compare the justice of Utopia with the presumed justice of other lands: "I should like anyone to be so bold as to compare this fairness [in Utopia] with the so-called justice prevalent in other nations, among which, upon my soul, I cannot discover the slightest trace of justice and fairness" (*U*, p. 239).

The model of justice which More and Swift have chosen for their lands is not immediately obvious. Utopia and Houyhnhnmland bear little resemblance to the most famous of just societies, Plato's Republic, where justice results from a division of labor among those persons most suited for each kind.<sup>6</sup> They also differ significantly from each other. Because

<sup>5</sup>See John Traugott, "A Voyage to the Houyhnhnms," *SR* 69 (Autumn 1961), rpt. in *Swift: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Ernest Tuveson (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964), pp. 143–69.

<sup>6</sup>"The city was thought to be just because three natural kinds existing in it performed each its own function." Plato, *Republic*, 4. 435b, in *Plato: The Collected Dialogues*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, Bollingen Series 71 (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1961), p. 677. Although Utopia and Houyhnhnmland differ in structure from Plato's Republic, they of course share many traits with it. For the parallels between Plato's Republic and More's Utopia, see Edward Surtz, "Utopia as a Work of Literary Art," *U*, pp. clvi–clix. Parallels between Plato's Republic and Swift's Houyhnhnmland

the Houyhnhnms are naturally virtuous while the Utopians must struggle with recognizable human frailties, much of the description of Utopia is taken up with educational methods for improving the citizenry. The Utopians require a considerable array of governors while the Houyhnhnms make do with their quadrennial council. The Utopians have a strict religion which aids them in the pursuit of virtue; the Houyhnhnms, with no need for moral authority, have only a rather vague natural religion. The Utopians have numerous neighbors and therefore require a complex war policy; the Houyhnhnms are so isolated that they have never encountered any neighbors. But the inhabitants of both societies follow "nature" and "reason" religiously and herein lies our clue to the model of justice that they represent.

The standards of Utopia and Houyhnhnmland are defined in remarkably similar terms. The Utopians "define virtue as living according to nature" (*U*, p. 163). The Houyhnhnms "are endowed by Nature with a general Disposition to all Virtues" (*GT*, p. 267). The Utopians believe that a person "is following the guidance of nature, who . . . obeys the dictates of reason" (*U*, p. 163). The grand maxim of the Houyhnhnms is "to cultivate *Reason*, and to be wholly governed by it" (*GT*, p. 267). They believe that "Nature and Reason [are] sufficient Guides for a reasonable Animal" (*GT*, p. 248). The distinctive features of the terms "nature" and "reason," as the Utopians and the Houyhnhnms use them, are: 1) that nature is idealized and taken to be a reliable normative standard; and 2) that reason is in perfect accord with nature. These features are precisely those found in the philosophical writings of the Stoics, who at the same time regarded nature and reason as terms correlative with justice.

Neither reason (*ratio, logos*) nor nature (*natura, physis*) has in itself any necessary connection with justice, nor indeed any normative value. The Greek term *logos* referred to various powers of the mind, among them speech, speculative reasoning, and intuitive perception. Only when qualified by the adjective *orthos* did *logos* have unquestionable moral overtones. *Physis* (nature) was most often used by the Greeks as a comprehensive term to describe the physical world. To philosophers like Aristotle or the Epicureans, this *physis* was chaotic and morally neutral: "The virtues," as Aristotle says, "are engendered in us neither by nature (*ara physei*) nor yet in violation of nature (*para physin*); nature gives us the capacity to receive them (*pephykosi*), and this capacity is brought to maturity by habit."<sup>7</sup> The Stoic cosmology was the first clearly to idealize

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have been discussed by John F. Reichert, "Plato, Swift, and the Houyhnhnms," *PQ* 47 (April 1968): 179-92.

<sup>7</sup>Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 2.1, trans. H. Rackham, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1962), p. 71.



nature and reason and to make both moral norms. The Stoics use the term "nature" to refer not to the physical world, but to the spirit which, in their opinion, permeates and sustains all things.<sup>8</sup> Rejecting counter-arguments from Epicurean philosophers, the Stoics insisted that this nature (or, spirit of the world) is perfect, and they confined evil to the realm of non-being. Epictetus remarks cryptically: "Just as a mark is not set up in order to be missed, so neither does the nature of evil arise in the universe."<sup>9</sup> The ethical goal of the Stoics (as expressed by Epictetus) is therefore "to keep your moral purpose in a state of conformity with nature,"<sup>10</sup> "to learn nature and to follow her."<sup>11</sup>

To follow reason is, in the Stoic view, precisely equivalent to following nature. The intimate connection between reason and nature in Stoic thought stems from their belief in nature as a permeating spirit. The Stoics used several names interchangeably for this spirit;<sup>12</sup> one of them was reason. And since they believed that this reason exists in men as well as in the world as a whole, they determined that a man, when truly using his reason, is perceiving the divine reason, or nature's will. The will, or law, of this ideal nature is perfect justice.<sup>13</sup> In the Stoic view, therefore, the exercise of reason is profoundly ethical. To use one's reason is to acknowledge one's neighbor's needs as well as one's own: "What the will of nature is may be learned from a consideration of the points in which we do not differ from one another."<sup>14</sup> Marcus Aurelius includes the ethical attribute, "love of one's neighbor," as one of the principal

<sup>8</sup>One of the interlocutors in Cicero's *De Natura Deorum* quotes the demonstration of the Stoic Zeno that the world is indeed animate: "'Nothing,' he says, 'that is inanimate and irrational can give birth to an animate and rational being; but the world gives birth to animate and rational beings; therefore the world is animate and rational.'" *De Natura and Academica*, trans. H. Rackham, The Loeb Classical Library (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1933), p. 145.

<sup>9</sup>*Encheiridion* 27 in *Epictetus: The Discourses as Reported by Arrian, The Manual, and Fragments*, 2 vols., trans. W. A. Oldfather, The Loeb Classical Library (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1928), 2:507.

<sup>10</sup>*Encheiridion* 13, Loeb 2:493.

<sup>11</sup>*Encheiridion* 49, Loeb 2:533.

<sup>12</sup>These names include nature, God, Zeus, creative fire (*pneuma*), destiny, order, and many others. "Stoici dicunt non esse nisi unum deum et unam eandemque potestatem, quae pro ratione officiorum variis nominibus appellatur." Servius, *ad Verg. Georgica* 1.5, fragment 1070, in Hans von Arnim, ed., *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, 4 vols. (Lipsiae: B. G. Teubneri, 1905), 2:313. Cited by E. Vernon Arnold, *Roman Stoicism* (New York: The Humanities Press, 1958), p. 221n.

<sup>13</sup>Cicero prefaces his discussion of Justice in *De Legibus* with the words, "I shall seek the root of Justice in Nature, under whose guidance our whole discussion must be conducted" (1.6.20). *De Re Publica and De Legibus*, trans. Clinton Walker Keyes, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1966), p. 318.

<sup>14</sup>*Encheiridion* 26, Loeb 2:505.



attributes of the rational soul. And he concludes, "right reason differs not at all from justice."<sup>15</sup>

The Stoic attitude toward nature and reason has had a lasting appeal to Western Christians. The thought of several early Church fathers — Origen, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria — is permeated as much by Stoic as by Christian ideas. Thomas Aquinas appeals repeatedly to nature and to reason. With only two significant modifications (he regards the spirit of nature as an agent of the Christian God; and he explains the corruption of human nature not in terms of individual failures of the moral will, but in terms of weakness due to original sin), he can be said to have integrated the Stoic attitude toward nature and reason into orthodox Christian thought.<sup>16</sup>

Christians have always felt compelled to criticize the Stoics for their self-sufficiency, even when borrowing their ideas. More and Swift were no exceptions. More calls the Stoics "factitious wisemen" (*facticios sapientes*) in *De Tristitia Christi*,<sup>17</sup> but in his *Dialogue of Comfort*, he says that the writings of the pagan philosophers, while they "are not suffycient to be taken for our phisicians," nevertheless "some good drugges haue they yet in their shops / for which they may be suffrid to dwell among our poticaryes."<sup>18</sup> Similarly, Swift laughs that "the Stoical Scheme of supplying our Wants, by lopping off our Desires; is like cutting off our Feet when we want Shoes."<sup>19</sup> And he questions in one of his sermons whether the Stoic idea that virtue is its own reward is not "too abstracted to become a universal influencing principle in the world."<sup>20</sup> But in his *Letter to a Young Gentleman* he forcefully recommends that a young divine make the works of the heathen philosophers "a considerable Part of your Study."<sup>21</sup> And when consoling Stella on a life well spent, he stoically reminds her that her recollected virtue should "shoot a radiant Dart, / To shine through Life's declining Part."<sup>22</sup>

More's Utopians, then, are following a long-standing, and not necessarily un-Christian tradition when they, like the Stoics, "define virtue as living according to nature" (*U*, p. 163), and when they cite nature as

<sup>15</sup>*Meditations* 11.1, in Whitney J. Oates, *The Stoic and Epicurean Philosophers* (New York: Random House, 1940), p. 571.

<sup>16</sup>"Treatise on Law," in *The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 3 vols., trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947), 1:993-1161.

<sup>17</sup>*Complete Works*, 14, pt. 1, ed. Clarence Miller, p. 243.

<sup>18</sup>*Complete Works*, 12, ed. L. L. Martz and F. Manley, p. 11.

<sup>19</sup>"Thoughts on Various Subjects," *Prose Works*, 1:244.

<sup>20</sup>*Prose Works*, 9:244.

<sup>21</sup>*Prose Works*, 9:74.

<sup>22</sup>*The Poems of Jonathan Swift*, ed. Harold Williams, 2nd edn., 3 vols. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1958), 2:764.

their authority for living simply, for pursuing pleasure, for choosing their religion, and for colonizing foreign lands. The Utopian regard for nature is a regard for nature as the Stoics saw it, for an all-good, creative, and sustaining deity which embodies the laws of nature, and thus makes plain the duties of man.<sup>23</sup> The Utopians show no special reverence for mere physical "nature." They divide their land from the mainland by digging up the connecting isthmus. They transplant an entire forest to a site more economically convenient. They improve their "naturally barren soil . . . by art and industry" (*U*, p. 179).<sup>24</sup> Using one's reason to improve physical nature is regarded as honoring the spirit of nature which reason follows.

The Utopian eagerness to improve upon physical nature extends even to the realm of living beings. For example, they develop an incubation method for hatching chickens which has the amusing consequence of chicks waddling after the human beings they regard as their mothers. T. S. Dorsch has called this practice of incubation "unnatural,"<sup>25</sup> and he interprets its inclusion as a clue from More that the Utopians are not consistent in applying their principle of adherence to nature. But the Utopians are not committed to an unreconstructed nature. They follow the law of nature which calls for the common good. If more efficient chicken production enhances the common good, then incubation is "natural" in the Utopian sense. Similarly, the primary unit of Utopian society is the family,<sup>26</sup> but the family is not rigidly determined by physical fatherhood and motherhood. If a Utopian mother dies or is sickly, her child is nursed by a volunteer who is kind enough to take the place of the mother, and henceforth "the child who is thus fostered looks on his nurse as his natural mother" (*U*, p. 143).<sup>27</sup> The nurse earns the right to be a mother by her love and care, not simply by giving birth. Similarly, if a son wants to take up a profession other than that of his father, he becomes a member of a family where his chosen profession is

<sup>23</sup>The Utopians use the terms nature and God interchangeably (*U*, p. 217). They share the Stoic assumption that nature is inherently good and kindly (*U*, pp. 151, 165).

<sup>24</sup>Alice B. Morgan, in "Philosophic Reality and Human Construction in *Utopia*," *Moreana* 10, no. 39 (September 1973):15-23, refers to these efforts to improve physical nature as the work of benevolent human artifice. I agree, though I would call these efforts not "artifice" but attempts to realize the ideal nature which the Utopians follow.

<sup>25</sup>T. S. Dorsch, "Sir Thomas More and Lucian: An Interpretation of *Utopia*," *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen*, 203 (1967):349-63, rpt. in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Utopia*, ed. William Nelson (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968), p. 91.

<sup>26</sup>"ex familijs constet ciuitas" (*U*, p. 134).

<sup>27</sup>More's Latin, "Qui educatur, nutricem parentis agnoscit loco" (*U*, p. 142), does not in this case use the word *natura*, but the translator's use is justified. To acknowledge a nurse as a mother is surely to alter custom in order to serve a more spiritual "nature."

practiced. Again the Utopians interpret the spiritual father-son relationship, and not physical fatherhood, as the natural norm.

For the Utopians, the most important principle of nature, the principle which ensures justice among them, is the Stoic principle that all human beings are bound in "natural fellowship" (*U*, p. 163).<sup>28</sup> The Utopians derive this principle from nature's impartiality. They believe that "no one is raised so far above the common lot of mankind as to have his sole person the object of nature's care, seeing that she equally favors all whom she endows with the same form" (*U*, p. 165). Man's responsibility not to harm his fellows holds for the Utopians (as it does for the Stoics) even beyond national boundaries. In this way they differ markedly from the citizens of Plato's Republic, who regard non-Greeks as "enemies by nature."<sup>29</sup> For the Utopians, the fellowship of nature renders treaties redundant: "What is the use of a treaty, they ask, as though nature of herself did not sufficiently bind one man to another" (*U*, p. 197), "as though peoples which are divided by the slight interval of a hill or a river were joined by no bond of nature" (*U*, p. 199).

The law of "natural fellowship" does not simply restrict hostility. It demands generosity. It demands that one place the public good above all personal concerns.<sup>30</sup> Utopian society generously heeds the responsibilities of natural fellowship. The Utopians share both their work and the rewards of their work: they provide housing, good food, and health care for everyone; they keep no hereditary slaves; they do not restrict hard labor to certain classes; and they open intellectual and governmental careers to all that show an aptitude. Their public officials "live together in affection and good will" (*U*, p. 193).<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup>Cicero stresses this aspect of nature in *De Officiis*, 1.16.50: "naturae principia sint communitatis et societatis humanae." *De Officiis*, trans. Walter Miller, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1968), p. 52.

<sup>29</sup>*Republic* 5.470c, *Dialogues*, p. 709.

<sup>30</sup>"As Plato has admirably expressed it, we are not born for ourselves alone, but our country claims a share of our being, and our friends a share" (Cicero, *De Officiis* 1.7.22, Loeb, p. 23).

<sup>31</sup>"Conuiuant amabiliter" (*U*, p. 191). The Utopians do not interpret "fellowship" as meaning precise equality. In the Utopian households, "the oldest . . . rules. . . . Wives wait on their husbands, children on their parents, and generally the younger on their elders" (*U*, p. 137; see also *U*, p. 141). Fellowship and mutual concern actually seem to be increased by this moderate hierarchy, for the hierarchy aids in maintaining an order which is beneficial to all. There are cases, too, in Utopia, when fellowship is suspended. Upon conviction, criminals in Utopia are treated as slaves. And the Zapoletans, a murderous race, are treated almost as beasts. The Utopians hire the Zapoletans, "whom they would jeopardize rather than their own citizens" (*U*, p. 149), to fight in the first ranks when they must go to war. The Zapoletans forfeit their right to equal treatment when they themselves ignore the natural law: "forgetting both kinship and friendship, they run one another through with the utmost ferocity" (*U*, 207). The inferior status of

The Utopians are as ready to befriend the citizens of foreign countries as their own neighbors. They are anxious to save the lives of foreigners even in time of war. Philip Dust, in criticizing the Utopian state, finds this fellowship naive and contradictory. "How," he asks, "can a country which refuses to make treaties on the ground that nature binds men in natural union account for nature not preventing war in the first place?"<sup>32</sup> But this apparent contradiction is resolved if we recall that in the Stoic cosmology, which More's Utopians follow, the guiding spirit of nature is ethically perfect, but not all-powerful. This nature indeed binds men together; but man can subvert the intention of nature's law by following his pride rather than his reason. When, inevitably, some men choose to oppose nature by making war, the Utopians attempt to minimize the consequences. They enter the war on the side they deem just. They conclude the war as quickly as possible. They take no pride in their effort unless they save lives.

One of the practices which the Utopians justify as natural has, in the light of subsequent British colonial policy, been subjected to rigorous scrutiny. The Utopians send out excess citizens as colonists, and expect the colonists to fight for their new land if the natives resist the incursion: "They consider it a most just cause for war when a people which does not use its soil but keeps it idle and waste nevertheless forbids the use and possession of it to others who by the rule of nature ought to be maintained by it" (*U*, p. 137). Might the Utopian justification — *ex naturae praescripto* — simply be self-serving casuistry justifying imperialism? If so, the ethical structure of their society based on "nature" might begin to crumble. But, as Marie Delcourt has pointed out, if the land is truly "waste" (*uacuum*) and the citizens truly excess (and *moles*, or "vast throng," in the phrase "plus aequo moles intumuerit," *U*, p. 136, seems to indicate that they are), the act is indeed justified by the *praescriptum naturae* that land should be used to feed people when they are hungry.<sup>33</sup> The principle that land should be cultivated to feed the hungry was certainly important to More. In book one and again in the peroration he sharply criticizes those who deny the people sustenance by enclosing farmland to increase their profits. The prospect of starvation from overpopulation is a terrifying one. It is not improbable then that, on the

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criminals and Zapoletans seems to violate Utopian practice of fellowship, but their treatment is justified by a second fundamental principle of justice—that virtue be rewarded and vice punished. Utopian use of the Zapoletans, however presumptuous, does not necessarily violate the spirit of justice.

<sup>32</sup>"Alberico Gentili's Commentaries on Utopian War," *Moreana* 10, no. 37 (February 1973):35.

<sup>33</sup>Marie Delcourt, "Le Pouvoir du Roi dans *l'Utopie*," *Mélanges offerts à M. Abel Lefranc . . . par ses élèves et ses amis* (Paris: Librairie E. Droz, 1936), pp. 101-12.

grounds of preventing starvation, More saw Utopian colonization as just. Moreover, if the Utopian invocation of nature here to justify colonization is indeed an example of casuistry, it is a unique example. The law of nature is nowhere else invoked to justify a questionable or self-serving practice. One cannot too easily conclude that its use here is evidence that More intended us to question the Utopian natural ideal.

Swift's Houyhnhnms, like the Utopians, follow "nature" in the Stoic sense of the term, although the term "nature" is used in various senses throughout *Gulliver's Travels*. F.R. Leavis, in his famous essay on "The Irony of Swift," cites the word "nature" as a paramount example of Swift's carelessness with words and concepts: "it is not great intellectual force that is exhibited in his indifference to the problems raised — in, for instance, the *Voyage to the Houyhnhnms* — by his use of the concept, or the word, 'Nature'."<sup>34</sup> Leavis is correct that Swift uses "nature" in several different senses, even within the final voyage. But those senses can be distinguished and their purposes explained.

Probably the most frequent uses of the word "nature" in *Gulliver's Travels* are those associated with Gulliver's repeated problems with his bodily processes, euphemistically termed "the Necessities of Nature" (*GT*, p. 29).<sup>35</sup> These instances, along with the Houyhnhnm puzzlement (upon recognizing that Gulliver wears clothes) that "Nature should teach us to conceal what Nature has given" (*GT*, p. 237), serve Swift's satirical end — "to mortify pride"<sup>36</sup> — by evoking embarrassment at elements of our nature which we are powerless to alter. The nature to which they refer is no ideal. The alternative of acting more "naturally" in this regard is neither desirable nor socially possible. But Swift's strategy leaves us vaguely uncomfortable about possible differences between our own nature and "nature" as a moral standard.

Swift's wittiest use of the word "nature" occurs in his portrait of the inverted English system of justice. Gulliver explains that to judge justly would be, for an English magistrate, unnatural. He has "known several of them to have refused a large Bribe from the Side where Justice lay, rather than injure the *Faculty*, by doing anything unbecoming their Nature or their Office" (*GT*, p. 249). The topsy-turvy world of English justice includes the lawyers as well as the judges: "My lawyer being practiced almost from his Cradle in defending Falshood; is quite out of

<sup>34</sup>F. R. Leavis, *The Common Pursuit* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1958), pp. 86–87.

<sup>35</sup>See also *GT*, pp. 23, 94, and elsewhere.

<sup>36</sup>John Hawkesworth, *The Works of Jonathan Swift, Dean of St. Patrick's, Dublin*, 24 vols. (London: C. Bathurst, 1765–1775), 2:410n. Hawkesworth's phrase is cited by Charles Peake, "The Coherence of *Gulliver's Travels*," in *Swift*, ed. Claude J. Rawson (London: Sphere, 1971), p. 178.

his Element when he would be an Advocate for Justice, which as an Office unnatural, he always attempts with great Awkwardness, if not with Ill-will" (*GT*, p. 249). These legal officials, in the thoroughness of their institutionalized corruption, no longer distinguish the customary from the natural. Their bizarre dissociation of nature and justice constitutes a telling criticism of the profession.

Gulliver's use of the term nature in the first three books of *Gulliver's Travels* is Aristotelian rather than Stoic. When he describes the Lilliputians as following "the great Law of Nature . . . to propagate and continue the Species" (*GT*, p. 60), or when he notes that his "natural Love of Life" (*GT*, p. 157) was quickened by his first glimpse of people on Laputa, he is not speaking of any law of nature based on a reasoned plan. The nature he refers to does not prescribe, as it does for the Stoics or the Utopians, an ethical standard. It merely defines actions in which the human will plays little or no part. In book two, Swift pointedly criticizes Gulliver for accepting this amoral nature as a sufficient moral guide. When Gulliver picks up a Brobdingnagian book which "treats of the Weakness" of man, and draws "several moral Applications useful in the Conduct of Life" (*GT*, p. 137), he dismisses the inquiry as a waste of effort. He regards any such "Quarrels we raise with Nature" as "ill-grounded" (*GT*, pp. 137-38). Gulliver accepts an amoral nature in this case in order to avoid making any moral effort. The obvious inadequacy of the "nature" he accepts makes us hesitate when we discover in book four the certainty of Gulliver's Houyhnhnm Master that "Nature and Reason were sufficient Guides for a reasonable Animal" (*GT*, p. 248). The Houyhnhnms would seem to be making the same mistake as Gulliver. But since the Houyhnhnms by etymology are "*the Perfection of Nature*" (*GT*, p. 235),<sup>37</sup> this nature is as reliable a norm for the Houyhnhnms as it was for the Stoics (and the Utopians). The Houyhnhnms have no reason to distrust a nature which has endowed them with "a general Disposition to all Virtues" (*GT*, p. 267).

The "nature" followed by the Houyhnhnms, like that followed by the Utopians, prescribes natural fellowship and the common good: "They will have it that *Nature* teaches them to love the whole Species" (*GT*, p. 268). The Houyhnhnms take this responsibility seriously. Critics and readers too seldom note that "*Friendship* and *Benevolence* are the two principle Virtues among the Houyhnhnms" (*GT*, p. 268).<sup>38</sup> Their

<sup>37</sup>Many readers, e.g. Paul Fussell in *The Rhetorical World of Augustan Humanism* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1965), p. 71, have interpreted the Houyhnhnm etymology as having been invented for purposes of self-aggrandizement. But the evidence which follows indicates that they do live up to the standard they are said here to embody.

<sup>38</sup>Houyhnhnm "benevolence" is often contrasted with genuine affection, and regarded as inferior. But "benevolence" in the eighteenth century meant considerably



friendship can be seen in their visits to dying friends, their love of conversation, and their harmony in the state of marriage. Their benevolence is evident from their hospitality. The Houyhnhnms make all strangers feel "at home" (*GT*, p. 268). Gulliver's Houyhnhnm host, even upon the arrival of a neo-Yahoo (Gulliver), does not hesitate to express "the Concern he was in, that [he] had nothing to eat" (*GT*, p. 232). Houyhnhnm benevolence can also be seen in their providing for any fellow Houyhnhnms that happen to be in need, in their education of Houyhnhnm females as well as males, and in their care not to overburden their numbers through indiscriminate breeding.<sup>39</sup>

The natural fellowship of the Houyhnhnms has been much maligned; their capacity for showing as much affection for a neighbor's offspring as for their own, and for showing as much friendship and benevolence to their whole species as to their spouses, is regarded by many critics as bizarre and unnatural. Before criticizing the Houyhnhnms, though, we should recall that much of the behavior satirized earlier in *Gulliver's Travels* exemplifies either absurd or horrible disregard for natural fellowship. The furious Lilliputian civil war between the Big-Endians and the Little-Endians is the most striking example of pointless hostility. The Lilliputians are rivalled in such hostility by the race of lawyers, which, according to Gulliver, engages in "a Confederacy of Injustice, merely for the Sake of Injuring their Fellow-Animals" (*GT*, p. 251). Most damning of all, Gulliver reports that among his people "the Trade of a *Soldier* is held the most honourable of all others: Because

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more than the benign neglect which it has come to mean today. Witness these lines from Pope's *Essay on Man*, in which benevolence is equated with charity:

Self-love thus push'd to social, to divine,  
 Gives thee to make thy neighbor's blessing thine.  
 . . . . .  
 Grasp the whole worlds of Reason, Life, and Sense,  
 In one close system of Benevolence:  
 Happier as kinder, in what'er degree,  
 And height of bliss but height of Charity.

*Epistle IV*, lines 353-60.

<sup>39</sup>As in Utopia, natural fellowship in Houyhnhnmland does not mean absolute equality. The Houyhnhnms maintain a class structure based on shape, color, and qualities of mind. Gulliver's Master points out to him that ignoring such distinctions "would be reckoned monstrous and unnatural" (*GT*, p. 256). In addition, Houyhnhnm "Reason . . . maketh a Distinction of Persons, where there is a superior Degree of Virtue" (*GT*, p. 268). This distinction is the same one that allows the Utopians to sacrifice Zapoletans rather than their own citizens in time of war. Since justice requires not only natural equality, but reward for virtue and punishment for vice, the aims of these two aspects of justice must be carefully weighed.



a Soldier is a *Yahoo* hired to kill in cold Blood as many of his own Species, who have never offended him, as possibly he can" (*GT*, pp. 246–47). There are many definitions of a soldier which at least sound acceptable. But this one achieves its horror by accentuating the natural fellowship of the species which the soldier is so ruthlessly violating.

In Gulliver's own adventures with Europeans, he is often frustrated because he cannot depend upon the spirit of fellowship in others. His seemingly natural assumption, while on his third voyage, that a Dutch stranger would treat him with courtesy, proves wholly erroneous: "I Spoke *Dutch* tolerably well; I told him who we were, and begged him in Consideration of our being Christians and Protestants, of neighboring Countries, in strict Alliance, that he would move the [pirate] Captains to take some Pity on us. This inflamed his Rage" (*GT*, p. 154). Much chastened by this incident, Gulliver, though he still assumes that fellowship is natural, is more cautious when he next encounters Europeans at sea. This time his captors are Portuguese: "I told them, I was born in *England*, from whence I came about five Years ago, and then their Country and ours were at Peace. I therefore hoped they would not treat me as an Enemy, since I meant them no Harm, but was a poor *Yahoo*" (*GT*, p. 286). Gulliver's sense of his vulnerability to the arbitrary timing of a declaration of war between two governments makes the same comment on governmental meddling as does the Utopian rejection of treaties. Human fellowship is a natural right which no government is empowered to violate.

The natural fellowship of the Houyhnhnms is not customary. It means the sacrifice of romantic love. But it would certainly promote greater co-operation (and justice), and thus it is quite "natural" in the Stoic sense. The concern for fellowship shown by the Utopians and the Houyhnhnms breaks down the barriers of pride (including family pride and lovers' pride) which all of us erect; this fellowship, far from being absurd, is the personal virtue that makes possible the social justice in the Utopian and Houyhnhnm societies.

The nature, then, which the Utopians and the Houyhnhnms follow, is a structured, purposive nature, one which directs the Utopian and Houyhnhnm citizens as to how to live with their fellows. We should not forget that reason, much more frequently cited by critics as the standard of Utopian and Houyhnhnm behavior, gains its moral authority in both Utopia and Houyhnhnmland from its conformity with this nature. Reason in Utopia perceives the same truths of nature — the existence of a benevolent God and the natural fellowship of all men — as it did for the Stoics and for Thomas Aquinas. And it entails the Stoic responsibility: "to help all other men" (*U*, p. 163). The similar ethical orientation of Houyhnhnm reason has often been ignored, perhaps because when Houyhnhnm reason is defined, it is defined primarily in terms of what it

is not: "Neither is *Reason* among them a Point problematical as with us, where Men can argue with Plausibility on both sides of a Question; but strikes you with immediate Conviction; as it must needs do where it is not mingled, obscured, or discoloured by Passion and Interest" (*GT*, p. 267). Since the most unusual aspect of Houyhnhnm reason as defined here is its "immediate Conviction," this immediacy has been emphasized to the exclusion of its ethical dimension. Houyhnhnm reason has frequently been seen as unique, as dangerously deistic, or as linked with Descartes's "rational intuition" of clear and distinct ideas.<sup>40</sup>

The association with Descartes is specious. Swift mocks Descartes's "rational intuition" in the *Tale of a Tub* because it doesn't take into consideration the workings of other people's reason. Houyhnhnm "rational intuition," by contrast, is common and respects the needs of the community. The distinction between common reason and personal reason is made by Swift himself in his sermon "On the Trinity": "*Reason* itself is true and just, but the *Reason* of every particular Man is weak and wavering, perpetually swayed and turned by his Interests, his Passions, and his Vices."<sup>41</sup> In book four of *Gulliver's Travels*, men use their (corrupted, personal) reason to increase their natural vices, to develop more destructive weapons of war, to subvert "general Reason" and "common Justice" (*GT*, p. 249). The Houyhnhnms, using their "general Reason" (a shared reason which Swift equates with "common Justice"), always act not for their own good, but for the good of their species.

The Houyhnhnms may resemble deists in their reliance on reason. But the dangers Swift saw in deism were occasional, and do not seem relevant to the Houyhnhnms, who are remote both from Christianity and from desires for self-aggrandizement. Swift often condemned deism (when compared with orthodox Anglicanism) as the first step toward unbelief and a consequent freedom from moral discipline. But religious orthodoxy is not a serious issue in *Gulliver's Travels*. The Lilliputian emperor professes the religion of the Brundecral but the text of the Brundecral becomes a pretext for faction, and nothing in his religion restrains the emperor from such outrageously unjust plans as that of torturing Gulliver to death while publishing his own "*Lenity and Tenderness*" to the world (*GT*, p. 72). The admirable characters in *Gulliver's Travels*—Don Pedro, the Brobdingnagian King, Lord Munodi,

<sup>40</sup>See, for example, Gordon McKenzie, "Swift: Reason and Some of its Consequences," in *Five Studies in Literature*, Univ. of California Studies in English, vol. 8, no. 1 (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1940), p. 104, and Samuel Holt Monk, "The Pride of Lemuel Gulliver," *SR* 63 (January-March 1955), rpt. in Milton Foster, ed., *A Casebook on Gulliver among the Houyhnhnms* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1961), p. 242.

<sup>41</sup>*Prose Works*, 9:166.

Glumdalclitch, and the sextumvirate of worthies in Glubbudbrib — are no more overtly religious than the Houyhnhnms. There is no indication in the work that any religious standard higher than the nature and reason of the Houyhnhnms should be appealed to.

Finally, Houyhnhnm reason is not unique; the idea of reason as immediate conviction did not originate in the seventeenth or eighteenth century. Reason for the Stoics (and even for Plato) is a perception of ideal nature. If one is uninhibited by “Passion or Interest,” that is, by forms of selfishness, this perception will be immediate. The most prominent characteristic of Houyhnhnm reason is its Stoic inseparability from virtue. The Houyhnhnms attribute man’s general corruption to “gross Defects in *Reason*, and by consequence, in *Virtue*” (*GT*, p. 259). Houyhnhnm reason, fostering virtue and natural fellowship, enables them to achieve a just Stoic state.

Even if it be granted that the Utopian and Houyhnhnm societies are based on Stoic standards of reason, nature, and justice, the idea that More or Swift would ask us to admire, or even accept, such societies is still open to question. The most frequent criticisms of Utopia and Houyhnhnmland by critics who interpret these lands ironically are that the Houyhnhnms are cold and passionless, that the Utopians are calculatingly efficient, and that both societies severely restrict personal freedom. It is argued that there is no Utopian we can admire as much as we do Cardinal Morton, that there is no Houyhnhnm that can compare with Don Pedro de Mendez. These criticisms are justified, at least in part; but at the same time, they fail to acknowledge that the same society, even if it is fictional, cannot maximize both common justice and individual freedom.

The sacrifices required of individuals in Utopia and in Houyhnhnmland are not so severe or restrictive as many have made them out to be. The authority of Ricardo Quintana’s *The Mind and Art of Jonathan Swift* (1936) has contributed much to the widespread idea that the Houyhnhnms are cold and lacking in emotions. Quintana writes that in book four of *Gulliver’s Travels* “the life of reason . . . is given merely an intellectual statement, for though we understand the admirable Houyhnhnms we are not moved by them, and this not because horses are an inappropriate symbol but because ideal civilization as conceived by Swift is an emotionless thing.”<sup>42</sup> Samuel Holt Monk’s expression of the same point is rhetorically designed to denigrate the Houyhnhnms. He writes that “The Houyhnhnms are the embodiment of pure reason. They know neither love nor grief nor lust nor ambition.”<sup>43</sup> Monk’s

<sup>42</sup>Ricardo Quintana, *The Mind and Art of Jonathan Swift* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1936), pp. 319–20.

<sup>43</sup>Monk, p. 241.

ordering of the passions — love, grief, lust, ambition — is significant. The control of lust and ambition by reason we all admire. And most of us would accept the control of grief by reason. But by placing love, a passion we value, in the first and most prominent position after stating that the Houyhnhnms embody pure reason, Monk is implicitly arguing that since their reason suppresses such an admirable quality, it must be flawed. The Houyhnhnms, however, are not without passions, though “their Wants and Passions are fewer than among us” (*GT*, p. 242). The virtues of the Houyhnhnms include not merely self-limiting ones like temperance and chastity (and even those show public spirit as they prevent adultery, jealousy, and overpopulation), but openly generous and public-spirited ones like friendship and benevolence. Houyhnhnms carry these virtues farther than any human does, showing “Affection” to all children, and, *pace* Monk, “love” to the “whole Species” (*GT*, p. 268). Although the Houyhnhnm practice of these virtues is infrequently dramatized, we do see repeated examples of the sorrel nag’s affection for Gulliver and of general kindness shown to Gulliver by his Houyhnhnm Master.

In *Gulliver’s Travels* it is the ministers of state, and not the Houyhnhnms, who lack the conventional passions. Gulliver thinks he can please the reasonable Houyhnhnms by describing the extraordinary control which government ministers keep over their passions. These ministers, he says, are “wholly exempt from Joy and Grief, Love and Hatred, Pity and Anger.” A minister “makes use of no other Passions but a violent Desire of Wealth, Power, and Titles” (*GT*, p. 255). The Houyhnhnms, of course, are not impressed. It is precisely these self-seeking passions which Houyhnhnm reason has no part of. Houyhnhnm reason is defined as “not mingled, obscured, or discoloured by Passion and Interest” (*GT*, p. 267). But it is essential to see that in this definition, “Passion and Interest” are nearly synonyms, and represent selfish disregard for others. Houyhnhnm reason being an instrument of justice, it opposes not passions *per se*, but those passions which endanger the common good. Whatever coldness it seems to have is directed primarily against a warmly passionate love of oneself.

The Utopians face similar charges of coldness. Their domestic relations, however, are not lacking in warmth. Their good will is evident in their shared feasts, their generous care of the sick, and their eagerness to adopt and care for orphans. But their warmth and human concern do seem to vanish in the section describing their military practices. The apparent contradictions of this section have aroused considerable suspicion about the Utopian ideal. After introducing the section of Utopian military affairs by asserting that the Utopians regard war “with utter loathing” (*U*, p. 199), Hythloday proceeds to describe the considerable attention that they pay to military affairs. Hythloday has expressed in

book one his objections to the keeping of mercenaries, yet he describes here how the Utopians regularly employ Zapoletans to fight for them. The Utopians hold that it is beneath man's dignity not to believe in the immortal soul, yet they "do not care in the least" how many mercenary Zapoletans are killed in their service (*U*, p. 209). In addition, they bribe enemy civilians to kill their own leaders, and they will go to war on behalf of a friendly nation on the seemingly flimsy pretext that their merchants have been treated unjustly. Citing less evidence than the foregoing, T. S. Dorsch concludes that "everything relating to the Utopians' attitude to war and methods of conducting a war is described with an irony that could scarcely be missed."<sup>44</sup> The irony which Dorsch perceives is not, however, pervasive. Along with these questionable practices, Hythloday describes many which are obviously humane. The Utopians employ any means possible to avoid bloodshed: they use abstention from trade rather than war to punish wrongs; they do not avenge their own economic loss with war; they celebrate bloodless victories far more than bloody ones; they never pursue a vanquished enemy, or seek booty, or harm a civilian.

This section on Utopian military affairs is the most problematic in the work. If More intended that the section be interpreted ironically, the noble Utopian practices would seem to serve no purpose. If the section is a mixture of thoroughly admirable and thoroughly despicable practices, it is incoherent. It can be read, however, as a mixture of thoroughly admirable and possibly admirable practices, all of which stem from application of the principles of justice. First of all, the Utopian interest in military affairs is not in itself surprising. Even a just state will be surrounded by avaricious enemies;<sup>45</sup> it must therefore have a well-considered war policy and a well-prepared citizenry. Plato's Republic, Lycurgus's Sparta, and the just state described by Cicero in *De officiis*, are all concerned with military affairs, and all try to develop just standards for using military force. The Utopian interest in military affairs is no more intense than the interests of its predecessors. The Utopian employment of Zapoletan mercenaries can also be justified. Hythloday objects in book one to the keeping of mercenary armies for two reasons: they are a menace to the citizenry in time of peace; and their very availability encourages a prince to go to war. The Utopians avoid both these evils. They never use mercenaries within their own territory, and they only hire mercenaries after a war has been declared.

<sup>44</sup>Dorsch, p. 93.

<sup>45</sup>The last words of Hythloday's peroration make clear the external threat to Utopia: "not all the envy of neighboring rulers, though it has rather often attempted it and has always been repelled, can avail to shatter or to shake that nation" (*U*, p. 245).

All the other seemingly ironic Utopian war practices can be defended by an appeal to some principle of justice. The Utopian willingness to go to war to punish a country which has treated the merchants of Utopian allies unjustly is perhaps their least defensible policy, but even it is an attempt to deter injustice. And the Utopian practice of assassinating enemy princes is arguably more just than are standard practices of "honorable" warfare. More knew that Hythloday was taking an unusual position in encouraging assassination. He acknowledges that the idea is "elsewhere condemned as the cruel deed of a degenerate nature" (*U*, p. 205).<sup>46</sup> But although the Utopian practice is not in keeping with traditional customs of "honor," Hythloday's defense of its justice is plausible: "by the death of a few guilty people they purchase the lives of many harmless persons who would have fallen in battle, both on their side and that of the enemy" (*U*, p. 205). The Utopian method of waging war can be interpreted as an attempt not only to restore the just balance between king and subject, but to improve the prospects of fellowship between nations by putting the kings who start wars in greater jeopardy. More clearly distances himself from Hythloday, and suggests at the end of book two that all these matters should be further discussed. But no single Utopian policy is without question absurd or immoral.

Critics are disturbed, finally, by the apparent harshness, the lack of freedom, implicit in the rule of reason in Utopia and Houyhnhnmland.<sup>47</sup> The Houyhnhnms have no choice but to obey a decree of their assembly; the Utopians are constantly under the eyes of some authority, and their second offense at any one of a number of crimes means immediate death. Even the freedom of thought of the Utopians and the Houyhnhnms seems to be severely restricted. The Houyhnhnms can think of nothing but what is reasonable; the Utopians are silenced if they promote unusual views on matters of politics or religion. Readers are not attracted by the thought of membership in such societies. E. E. Reynolds's complaint against Utopias—"They are all marked by over-regimentation and would be very dull countries in which to live"<sup>48</sup>—must be granted to be apt. But More and Swift have made the workings of reason in Utopia and Houyhnhnmland so direct that coercion is

<sup>46</sup>See Cicero, *De Officiis*, 1.13.40, Loeb, pp. 42-45, where assassination is condemned as unjust. Alberico Gentili, a sixteenth-century jurist who disapproved of the Utopian practice, cites several classical philosophers and jurists who criticize the practice of assassination. *De Iure Belli Libri Tres* (1612), trans. John C. Rolfe, 2 vols., The Classics of International Law (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1933), 2:167.

<sup>47</sup>See, for example Robbin Johnson, *More's Utopia: Ideal and Illusion* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1969), p. 106.

<sup>48</sup>E. E. Reynolds, *Saint Thomas More* (New York: P.J. Kenedy & Sons, 1954), pp. 92-93, rpt. Nelson, p. 113.



minimized. The citizens of Houyhnhnmland are already reasonable and they need no coercion;<sup>49</sup> the citizens of Utopia are so close to reason that most of them do not sense coercion. John Traugott attempts to define the workings of reason in Utopia with the following image: "As the heliotrope to the sun, is each rational will in Utopia to justice."<sup>50</sup> Actually, the heliotrope image applies more to Houyhnhnmland than to Utopia. Gulliver's Master Houyhnhnm follows the will of the general assembly as a heliotrope does the sun; he makes no choice. Nor is the assembly's decision to banish Gulliver questioned by the sorrel nag, though he has become greatly attached to Gulliver. Similarly, a Houyhnhnm suffers no inner conflict when he is provided with a spouse. He looks upon it "as one of the necessary Actions in a reasonable Being" (*GT*, p. 269). There is no conflict whatever in Houyhnhnmland because any purely selfish interest is obviated by the clear possession of reason.

Guided by such reason, the Houyhnhnms have almost no need of government. Problems exist only when new circumstances arise (like the arrival of Gulliver). Even so, once a decision is made upon principle, a Houyhnhnm would never *want* to do anything that the will of all forbade. On the other hand, the decisions of a Utopian citizen are not involuntary. The Utopians do have personal passions and interests; some of them do commit adultery, and must be punished. All of them are watched so closely that they have little opportunity to act viciously. But More does not emphasize the coercion in a way that would tempt the reader to find the picture ironic. On the contrary, the freedoms which the Utopian system makes possible are frequently called to mind. We are told that a Utopian can choose to work a lifetime (rather than two years) on the farms; that one can choose a profession, and even a second profession, and practice the preferred one unless the state requires either one of them in particular; that one need not attend the communal meal; that no one is sent to the infirmary if he would rather remain at home; and that Utopian leisure is dedicated to the freedom and culture of the mind. The Utopians recognize that they cannot be perfectly free in this life, and they patiently await greater freedom in the next: "Freedom, like all other good things, they conjecture to be increased after death rather than diminished in all good men" (*U*, p. 225).

It cannot be denied that substantial coercion does exist in Utopia. However, as C. S. Lewis has commented, "It is not love of liberty that makes men write Utopias."<sup>51</sup> What makes men write Utopias is seeing

<sup>49</sup>"They have no Conception how a rational Creature can be *compelled*, but only advised or *exhorted*" (*GT*, p. 280).

<sup>50</sup>Traugott, p. 153.

<sup>51</sup>C. S. Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*, The Oxford History of English Literature, 12 vols. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1954), 3:168.



how men abuse the liberty that they have. The restriction and self-sacrifice which Utopian societies entail is not practiced for its own sake; indeed it would be easier to write a mere Land-of-Cockaigne story than a Utopian one. (Plato contrasts the "civic community" he is describing in the *Republic* with a mere festive community.<sup>52</sup>) The limitations on freedom in Utopia and Houyhnhnmland are in effect postulated as the necessary conditions for a fairer share of justice becoming available to all. Swift passionately admired Thomas More ("the only Man of true Virtue that ever England produced"<sup>53</sup>), who sacrificed his personal interests, and finally his life, for the good of an institution (the universal Church) which he saw as benefiting the general welfare. The five ancients whom Swift links with More as the sextumvirate of worthies in Glubbudrib all, like More, sacrificed their lives in the effort to preserve or to re-establish a just society.<sup>54</sup> It is the same principle of self-sacrifice, though not so heroically realized, which is practiced by the citizens of Utopia and Houyhnhnmland. Swift and More were acutely aware of the necessity for balancing one's own claims against those of society.

The very ease with which the Utopians and the Houyhnhnms adapt to their societies, however, creates a problem for readers looking for ideals. To the extent that the Utopians and the Houyhnhnms are so reasonable that they do not sense any coercion from their societies, they become paradoxically so much the less admirable as individuals. The Houyhnhnms are the more extreme case. Since they make almost no moral choices, it has been suggested that they are no more to be admired than the Yahoos are to be blamed.<sup>55</sup> Swift's first biographer, John Boyle, stung by what he saw as misanthropy in the theme of *Gulliver's Travels*, fought back at Swift by attacking Swift's Houyhnhnms: "They are incapable of doing wrong, therefore they act right. . . . They act inoffensively, when they have neither the motive nor the power to act otherwise."<sup>56</sup> Kathleen Williams has cited the same flaw—"they have only the negative virtue of blamelessness"—but she concludes not that

<sup>52</sup>*Republic*, 4.421b, *Dialogues*, pp. 662–63.

<sup>53</sup>Marginalia in Swift's copy of Lord Herbert of Cherbury's *Life and Raigne of Henry VIII*, *Prose Works*, 5:247.

<sup>54</sup>See M. M. Kelsall, "Iterum Houyhnhnm: Swift's Sextumvirate and the Horses," *EIC* 19 (January 1969):35–45.

<sup>55</sup>"Although he hated the *Yahoos* of this Country, yet he no more blamed them for their odious Qualities, than he did a Gnnayh (A Bird of Prey) for its Cruelty, or a sharp Stone for Cutting his hoof" (*GT*, p. 248).

<sup>56</sup>John Boyle, *Remarks on the Life and Writings of Dr. Jonathan Swift, Dean of St. Patrick's, Dublin* (1751), rpt. in Swift: *The Critical Heritage*, ed. Kathleen Williams (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), p. 127.

Swift erred, but that he did not intend the Houyhnhnms to be an ideal: "the handling of [the Houyhnhnms] seems to suggest not only the remoteness but the inadequacy by human standards, of the life of Reason." Citing Gulliver's erratic behavior after leaving Houyhnhnmland, and the generosity which Don Pedro *chooses* to show, she argues that the "conscience" of Don Pedro, rather than the "reason" of the Houyhnhnms, is the ideal toward which the work points.<sup>57</sup> In the same way, Robbin Johnson has rejected Utopian reason as remote and inhumane compared with the practical humanity of Cardinal Morton, who promotes justice in a difficult human environment and not simply in the easier world of Utopia.<sup>58</sup>

Williams and Johnson have undoubtedly discovered the least impeachable characters in *Gulliver's Travels* and *Utopia*. But their interpretations fail to account for the effectiveness of Houyhnhnm and Utopian reason in ridiculing the avaricious, proud, and unjust behavior of men. The most comprehensive response thus far to Williams's view of the Houyhnhnms has been that of R. S. Crane. He argues that the Houyhnhnm standard of reason is a reputable standard, that the contrast between the Houyhnhnm and the human ways of life proves that man is not the *animal rationale* that he thinks he is, and that the principal issue of *Gulliver's Travels* is "not of how men ought to govern their actions, but of what kind of creature man, as a species, essentially is, and what opinion, consequently, he is entitled to entertain of himself."<sup>59</sup> But *Gulliver's Travels* is not simply an insult. It does not neglect the issue of "how men ought to govern their actions." Crane's interpretation, focusing as it does on the individual reason rather than the social justice of the Houyhnhnms, places an unnecessarily wide gulf between them and the human hero, Don Pedro de Mendez; also, by suggesting that Swift is criticizing our entire species, it strips away Don Pedro's power to serve as a model of behavior.

We should not be forced to choose between Cardinal Morton and the Utopians, between Don Pedro and the Houyhnhnms. Cardinal Morton and Don Pedro exhibit, in fact, the same virtues as do the Utopian and the Houyhnhnm societies. Morton's concern for justice can be seen in his even-handed moderation of disputes, and in his interest in Hythloday's idea for a fairer system of criminal justice. Don Pedro appears in a less political context, but he is the human being who best practices the

<sup>57</sup>Kathleen Williams, "Gulliver's Voyage to the Houyhnhnms," *ELH* 18 (December 1951):281, 284.

<sup>58</sup>*More's Utopia*, pp. 57-59, 69.

<sup>59</sup>Review of "Three Ways of Looking at a Horse," by Martin Kallich, *PQ* 40 (July, 1961):429.

Houyhnhnm lesson of disinterested rational benevolence. When Gulliver, who learns to mimic the Houyhnhnms but never to understand them, grudgingly acknowledges Don Pedro—"at last I descended to treat him like an Animal which had some little Portion of Reason" (*GT*, p. 287)—Don Pedro has not shown "reason" in any sense with which we are now familiar. But he has shown no "little portion" of friendship and benevolence, virtues which the Houyhnhnms regard as inseparable from their reason. The presence of Cardinal Morton or of Don Pedro does not invalidate the criticisms which More and Swift have made of man's behavior in general. Rare exceptions do not spoil a thesis. But neither should their appearance cause us to doubt the usefulness of the Utopian and Houyhnhnm ideals.

Both Utopia and Houyhnhnmland have long suffered from association with "ideal reason" rather than "ideal justice."<sup>60</sup> Since "reason" has so many different connotations, many different purposes have been attributed to the Utopians and the Houyhnhnms. Although Utopian reason harmonizes easily with religious faith, many have condemned it for being a standard inferior to that of faith. Although Houyhnhnm reason is a means of achieving justice, William Godwin is regarded as rather freakish<sup>61</sup> for finding in Houyhnhnm society "a more profound insight into the true principles of political justice, than [in] any preceding or contemporary author."<sup>62</sup> Swift would have disagreed with Godwin's optimistic belief that men could ever be governed as the Houyhnhnms are, but he would have been pleased, I think, with Godwin's recognition that the Houyhnhnms provide a model of political justice. More and Swift are playful throughout their descriptions of Utopia and Houyhnhnmland. They do not suggest those lands to us as serious models. But in creating fictions that provoke us to recall the authentic meanings of the word "justice," they are serious indeed.

<sup>60</sup>See Charles Peake, "Swift and the Passions," *MLR* 55 (April 1960), rpt. Foster, p. 295.

<sup>61</sup>Irvin Ehrenpreis, *The Personality of Jonathan Swift* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1958), p. 101.

<sup>62</sup>William Godwin, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and its Influence on Morals and Happiness*, ed. F. E. L. Priestley, 3rd edn., 3 vols. (1798; rpt. Toronto: The Univ. of Toronto Press, 1946), 2:209n.