1. **Introduction**

In the 16th century, Thomas More conceived of Utopia, an imaginary and ideal country which presents his idea of a ‘communist-like’ democracy where private property was abolished, and all things were shared by everyone. His work, published in 1516, has often been considered a sharp criticism of the economic and social conditions that prevailed in Europe.
in his day. Nevertheless, he was not always serious about his depiction of a perfect place and social order, which can be inferred from the names he chose for the people and places in his work. For instance, in English, ‘Utopia’ is a homophone to ‘Eutopia’, which contains the Greek prefix ‘eu’ which implies ‘good’. On the other hand, the word Utopia means something along the lines of ‘nowhere, non-existent’. Thus the name ironically points at the exemplariness, but also at the unreality of this place, as it can mean both ‘nowhere’ and ‘good place’. Furthermore, the narrator is called ‘Hythloday’, which could be translated as ‘expert in nonsense’.

In the 17th century, Francis Bacon created his own version of Utopia, The New Atlantis, which was published in 1627. The story refers to a Greek myth about an ideal society that sank into the sea. Bacon’s names in The New Atlantis reflect more unequivocal approval than those of Thomas More. For example, ‘Bensalem’ means ‘son or offspring of peace, safety, and completeness’. In New Atlantis, one institution outshines all others, namely Saloman’s House, which is, as it were, a ‘scientific fraternity’: its fellows entirely dedicate themselves to the exploration of the workings of nature and the enlargement of knowledge. The New Atlantis is a symbol of progress, of the faith in science and technology, which was meant to finally lead to human mastery over nature.

This paper will focus on Thomas More’s presentation of an ‘ideal’ state – however serious or ironic he was in his depiction of Utopia as a role model of a perfect commonwealth. It will deal with the description of the island Utopia, its political and social order; the moral views and values of the Utopians and the underlying philosophy. Also, the role of religion shall be explored, and equally the Utopian laws and customs. The following part of this work shall be concerned with a brief comparison of how the aspects mentioned above are treated in Francis Bacon’s The New Atlantis. The section about The New Atlantis shall not so much aim at giving a detailed and all-encompassing depiction of all characteristics of the fictitious island that Bacon names in his book; it shall rather concentrate on the essential features which are in contrast with Utopia, that is, which account for a completely different concept of what an ideal state has to be like in Bacon’s view.

2. Thomas More’s Utopia

More’s Utopia was first published in Latin in 1516; it consists of three sections: 1) The Letter to Peter Giles, 2) Book I, “The Communication of Raphael Hythloday, Concerning the best
state of a commonwealth”, and 3) Book II, the main part of the work, which contains the
depiction of Utopia and its people. The narrator, Hythloday, is a fictitious Portuguese
voyager, whose story is to seem more realistic by pretending that he used to be a
companion of the historical person Amerigo Vespucci. In addition, his account gains even
more credibility by presenting him as “very learned in the Latin tongue, but profound and
excellent in the Greek language”, a man who “had given himself wholly to the study of
philosophy”; hence he is an altogether well-educated and eloquent man.

2.1 Description of the place

Shape, size and the topography of the island of Utopia are depicted quite minutely: The
island is 500 miles long and encompasses 200 miles across its broadest part. It is portrayed
as an altogether beautiful and fertile place. It appears to be isolated, not only because of its
geographic remoteness, but also due to its literal inaccessibility:

The channels be known only to themselves, and therefore it seldom chanceth that any stranger unless be he guided by an Utopian, can come
into this haven, insomuch that they themselves could scarcely enter without jeopardy, but that their way is directed and ruled by certain landmarks
standing on the shore. By turning, translating, and removing these marks into
other places they may destroy their enemies’ navies [...]. The outside or utter
circuit of the land is also full of havens, but the landing is so surely fenced,
what by nature and what by workmanship of man’s hand, that a few
defenders may drive back many armies.

The island’s geographic inaccessibility is regarded as favourable by its inhabitants; it is even
enforced by the efforts of the Utopians, who wish to be unassailable. Beyond that, a formerly
existing connection with the mainland was cut off after a war which the Utopians had won.
The island is split up in 54 city states – it has often been pointed out that More alluded to
contemporary England, which consisted of 52 counties plus Wales and London.
Furthermore, the island’s capital, Amaurote, “together with the tidal river Anydrus, and the
magnificently arched stone bridge across it” is said to resemble London and the Thames,
also in shape and size. The names of both the town and its river provide further evidence for
the ironic ambiguity of some of the names that More used in his work. Amaurote is derived
from Greek ‘amauros’, which means ‘dark’; More defines it as an ‘urbem evanidam’, a
‘vanishing/fading town’, while ‘Anydrus’ means ‘river without water’.

However, the cities themselves display a strange conformity which could not possibly be
found anywhere else:

There be in the island fifty-four large and fair cities, or shire towns, agreeing
all together in one tongue, in like manners, institutions, and laws. They be all
set and situate alike, and in all points fashioned alike, as far forth as the place or plot suffereth.

The island seems to be divided almost geometrically; the cities are constructed alike, and each is surrounded on each side by at least 12 miles of agricultural land. Thus all the cities and its people are almost interchangeable in their uniformity – even the city of Amaurote is only considered to be the capital since it lies in the centre of the island.

### 2.2 Political and social order

The most extraordinary aspect about the social order that More sets for his Utopian society is the fact that it heads for an almost classless society, which makes it differ considerably from New Atlantis. There are neither classes nor castes; the society seems to strive for justice, equal rights – and duties – in every area of life. For example, every citizen has to work for at least a year on one of the farms, which are spread all over the country. Furthermore, everybody has to learn a particular craft: “That is most commonly either clothworking in wool or flax, or masonry, or the smith’s craft, or the carpenter’s science.” Thus every citizen become acquainted with manual labour. The Utopians do not accept idleness; everyone has to work six hours a day, which is sufficient to produce all the goods they need. This means that they require considerably fewer hours than Europeans, and perhaps More means to criticise the situation in Europe by making his narrator compare Utopia with other countries:

> The which thing you also shall perceive if you weigh and consider with yourselves how great a part of the people in other countries liveth idle. First, almost all women, which be half of the whole number. […] Besides this, how great and how idle a company is there of priests and religious men […]! Put thereto all rich men, specially all landed man, which commonly be called gentlemen and noblemen […], and truly you shall find them much fewer than you thought, by whose labour all these things are wrought that in men’s affairs are now daily used and frequented.

He reprimands the Europeans for not making good use of the work-force available: by excluding women from work, their economic efficiency is notably reduced.

The people live together in households, which are composed of forty men and women and two serfs each. These people choose a “goodman” or a “goodwife“ as the head of a household. Once per year, every group of thirty households elect a magistrate, a so-called Syphogrant or Philarch, whose “chief and almost […] only office […] is to see and take heed that no man sit idle, but that every one apply his own craft with earnest diligence”. Each
A group of ten Syphogrants elects another magistrate, a “Tranibore”, who is responsible for them and their households. The highest rank is taken by the Prince, who is chosen for life by the Syphogrants, who elect one of four people that are suggested by popular vote. These magistrates, however, are not especially privileged, apart from the fact that they are exempted from manual labour.

The Utopians appear to have relatively ‘progressive’ ideas concerning the role of women, at least for More’s time. For instance, women are not excluded from education or working life, but they are still not allowed to play any decisive role in politics. Also, the citizens of Utopia do not quite reach their goal to be a classless society, since there are still hierarchical structures, as it is a clearly patriarchal society: “The eldest […] ruleth the family. The wives be ministers to their husbands, the children to their parents, and, to be short, the younger to their elders.” Moreover, they have serfs, although they do not practise hereditary slavery: The main part of their serfs are Utopians or foreigners who committed a crime that in other countries would have been punished by death.

Utopia seems to proclaim communistic views and standpoints: The citizens do not have any private property. Basically, everyone is to be offered the same conditions and chances; there is no lack of food, clothing, shelter, or any basic material which is essential for living. Every household specialises in a single craft, and the products of each household are freely available. For that reason, they have even abolished money, as it is simply not needed in their society:

> the father of every family or every householder fetcheth whatsoever he and his have need of, and carrieth it away with him without money, without exchange, without any gage, pawn, or pledge. For why should anything be denied unto him, seeing there is abundance of all things, and that it is not to be feared lest any man will ask more than he needeth? For why should it be thought that that man would ask more than enough which is sure never to lack?

The Utopians despise everything that in their view is superfluous, such as silver and gold, or any kind of precious metal or pearl. More criticises the view prevailing in most European countries, whose rich and noble people took great pains to manifest their superiority by expensive jewellery and clothes. Maybe Hythloday alludes to the medieval conception of the seven mortal vices, the first of which was “superbia”, when he states:

> Certainly in all kinds of living creatures either fear of lack doth cause covetousness and ravin, or in man only pride, which counteth it a glorious thing to pass and excel other in the superfluous and vain ostentation of things. The which kind of vice among the Utopians can have no place.
More mocks at his own society, which is fond of precious metals and gems, since a person’s wealth determined to a large extent his or her social standing.

The Utopians are said to have an abundance of gold, which they themselves do not consider a treasure, but only use it for hiring soldiers from other countries – or: “of gold and silver they make commonly chamber-pots and other vessels that serve for most vile uses” To carry on this irony, in Utopia it is a shameful punishment to be ‘covered’ with gold all over:

Finally whosoever for any offence be infamed, by their ears hang rings of gold, upon their fingers they wear rings of gold, and about their necks chains of gold, and, in conclusion, their heads be tied about with gold.

This depiction might well evoke the picture of richly adorned members of the nobility of More’s day. This irony is taken up again in the anecdote about some foreign ambassadors who wished to impress the Utopians by wearing very elaborate and valuable clothes and jewellery, and they were first mistaken for slaves by the Utopians. This corresponds to the widely maintained view that More intended to make his Utopia a ‘mundus inversus’ to Europe, “a mocking mirror to reveal the distortions of real-life societies.”

Unlike the Europeans, the Utopians wear almost similar clothes, which show only some minor distinctions between the sexes and between single and married people.

Since private property has been abolished, nobody has to be afraid of being robbed. Therefore, houses are not locked and thus easily accessible for everyone: “Whoso will may go in, for there is nothing within the houses that is private or any man’s own.” Also, for taking that commonly desired equality and justice one step further, “every tenth year they change their houses by lot.”

Just as there is no private property, privacy is obviously not esteemed very highly either. The citizens of Utopia appear to be supervised very thoroughly. For instance, their day is organised in details: They have to work three hours before noon, may rest for two hours after dinner, and work some more three hours, followed by supper.

All the void time that is between the hours of work, sleep, and meat, that they be suffered to bestow, every man as he liketh best himself. Not to the intent that they should misspend this time in riot or slothfulness, but being then licensed from the labour of their own occupations, to bestow the time well and thriftily upon some other science as shall please them.

It can be derived from this that efficiency is one of the major principles which affects even the spare time: The Utopians are welcome to practise sports, which is beneficial to their health, and indulge in games that resemble chess, as it stimulates their mind. Other games, e. g. dice are considered despicable and hence not to be played.
Dinner and supper are taken in great halls, which offer room for thirty families each. Eating at home is not expressly forbidden, yet everyone who does so is very likely to arouse suspicion and to be frowned at. For that reason, almost everyone joins in the communal meal. There are quite strict rules and orders concerning the distribution of food, the seating plan, and the behaviour in general during the meals in these halls, which thus form a great means of social control. Furthermore, whenever the Utopians wish to go to another city-state, they need a passport which tells the duration of their trip, and they are not allowed to travel alone.

2.3 Moral and philosophical views and values

The most crucial aspect that Utopian philosophy deals with is the question “in what thing, be it one or more, the felicity of man consisteth." They distinguish between different types of pleasure: True and false, and physical and mental pleasure, the latter being ascribed to the soul. “To the soul they give intelligence and that delectation that cometh of the contemplation of truth: Hereunto is joined the pleasant remembrance of the good life past." In their view, leading a virtuous life means living in accordance with nature, which they actually adhere to by only producing and taking from their environment what is absolutely needed, and nothing beyond that. To this mental pleasure they also count education, which plays an important role in Utopia: In the morning, public lectures are offered, which are obligatory for those who have been appointed scholars, and optional for others. The other citizens might voluntarily attend them, and many of them do. Before Hythloday’s arrival, the Utopians were not acquainted with ancient European philosophers and mathematicians, nor with Greek and Latin. Yet they simultaneously managed to gain comparable skills and knowledge in the fields of music, logic, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and are very keen on learning about Greek literature.

As to the physical side, the Utopians delight in all kinds of physical activity, apart from cruel sports like hunting, which is considered a false pleasure. They also engage in all activities that offer pleasure to the body and the senses and that help to keep up “every man’s own proper health, intermingled and disturbed with no grief.”

2.4 Religion
The Utopian principle of joy and pleasure is linked up with basic Christian concepts and ideals, and in More’s day, it must have been a very daring statement to say that both leading a virtuous life and enjoying all sorts of pleasure is not contradictory. The Utopians believe that “the soul is immortal, and by the bountiful goodness of God ordained to felicity. That to our virtues and good deeds rewards be appointed after this life, and to our evil deeds punishments.” However, it is pointed out that this conviction shared by most citizens can as well be ascribed to reason as to religious beliefs. Utopia is not unambiguously Christian: Before the arrival of Hythloday and his companions, they had not yet heard of Jesus Christ, and some still practise some kind of pagan religion by worshipping e. g. the sun, the moon, or any historical hero, yet their number is constantly decreasing. The main part of the population fundamentally share the idea of monotheism:

the most and the wisest part […] believe that there is a certain godly power unknown, everlasting, incomprehensible, inexplicable, far above the capacity and reach of man’s wit, dispersed throughout all the world, not in bigness, but in virtue and power. Him they call the father of all. To him alone they attribute the beginnings, the increasings, the proceedings, the changes, and the ends of all things. Neither they give any divine honours to any other than to him. […] in this point they agree all together with the wisest sort in believing that there is one chief and principal god, the maker and ruler of the whole world, whom they all commonly in their country language call Mithra.

Despite the fact that the Utopians disagree as to who exactly this supreme being is, they agree that the origin of all things is to be attributed to the same creator. A great number of them converted to Christianism, which they find related to their own convictions and way of life – they have acted according to Christian principles before, just unknowingly, as it were, of Christian faith. It appears that Hythloday provided them with the ‘historical background and Christian system of ideas and values’ that they willingly accept. Moreover: “They have priests of exceeding holiness and therefore very few”. – This might be an allusion directed to the situation of the church in the late Middle Ages, which had an abundance of clerics. – Astonishingly, even women are entitled to become priests. The Utopians have special feasts and services on the first and the last day of each month and year, on which all gather in their churches in order to praise God and thank him for affluence past, and pray for further prosperity. They are tolerant towards other beliefs; they accept various sects among them and do not attempt to force their own convictions on others. Even so, their tolerance is limited: It is considered base and degrading to think that the human soul dissolves after death – those who believe in that are scorned and excluded from public office.
An interesting aspect, especially with regard to Bacon’s utopian state, which shall be discussed later, is their way to found their scientific endeavours on religious grounds: They enjoy their progress in unveiling “the secret mysteries of nature, they think themselves to receive thereby not only wonderful great pleasure, but also to obtain great thanks and favour of the Author and Maker thereof.” Thus enlarging their knowledge is regarded as honouring God, although some people disagree to that and refuse to gain further insight into the workings of nature. Those also despise idleness, as all Utopians do, and consequently dedicate their life to hard work, “thinking felicity after this life to be gotten and obtained by busy labours and good exercises."

All in all, the Utopians follow Christian principles, and in some points they even come close to an almost Puritan work ethic. However, some of their customs and laws run contrary to Christian ideas: Divorce is permitted in several cases, and those who are incurably sick and would rather die are encouraged to commit suicide.

2.5 Laws and customs

Apart from some strict laws concerning marriage and adultery, the Utopians “have but few laws, for to people so instruct and institute very few do suffice. Yea, this thing they chiefely reprove among other nations, that innumerable books of laws and expositions upon the same be not sufficient.” This might be another allusion to the bad state of affairs prevailing in Europe. In Utopia, marriage is originally supposed to last lifelong and be faithful; adultery is punished with serfdom, and in case of a second offense, even with death. The council may decide on punishments for other serious offences, but in general, the case is settled within the families, strictly obeying the hierarchical order: “The husbands chastise their wives, and the parents their children”. The Utopians have particular marriage customs: Women may not marry before they are eighteen years old, men must be at least twenty-two. Their laws concerning premarital intercourse are very strict: Those who are convicted need a special permission by the Prince if they wish to get married, and they are also said to bring dishonour upon the goodmen or -women of their household. One particular custom of the Utopians must have been highly provocative for More’s readers; Bacon reacted on it in his own utopian version, as shall be shown later. As Hythloday reports, for choosing wives and husbands, a sad and an honest matron sheweth the woman, be she maid or widow, naked to the wooer. And likewise a sage and discreet man exhibeth the wooer naked to the woman. At this custom we laughed, and disallowed it as
foolish. But they, on the other part, do greatly wonder at the folly of all other nations which, in buying a colt, whereas a little money is in hazard, be so chary and circumspect, that thought he be almost all bare, yet they will not buy him unless the saddle and all the harness be taken off, lest under those coverings be hid some gall or sore. And yet in choosing a wife, which shall be either pleasure or displeasure to them all their life after, they be so reckless, that all the residue of the woman’s body being covered with clothes, they esteem her scarcely by one handbreath (for they can see no more but her face), and so to join her to them not without great jeopardy of evil agreeing together, if anything in her body afterward should chance to offend and mislike them.

This ‘mutual premarital inspection’ is a striking contrast to the Christian morality which they normally foster and which accounts for the severe punishments of premarital intercourse. Nonetheless, this custom also reflects the Utopians’ rationality and practical mind, as it is supposed to prevent people from ‘buying a pig in a poke’ and consequently contributes to faithful marriages.

3. The New Atlantis

Francis Bacon’s New Atlantis, “A work unfinished”, which was published posthumously in 1627, also mainly consists of a depiction of an idyllic world. This depiction, however is embedded in a brief but concise adventure story about travellers who, due to unfavourable winds, discover the island of Bensalem. Thus contrary to More’s Utopia, the detailed descriptions of the island are elements of a narrative, however fragmentary.

3.1 Place and location
Francis Bacon’s New Atlantis is situated in the South Sea. It derives its name from the legendary island of Atlantis, which, according to Plato’s dialogues ‘Timaios’ and ‘Kritias’, sank into the sea. Some hints maybe indicate that it might even be more specifically located west of Papua-New Guinea, namely on one of the Solomon Islands, which had been discovered by the Spanish and were only known in England by hearsay. At first sight, the island of Bensalem appears to be isolated and separated from the rest of the world just like Utopia, but on looking more carefully, some striking differences become evident: Through history, Bensalem is linked up with the Antiquity; it has once been closely connected with other civilisations:

At that time, this land was known and frequented by the ships and vessels of all the nations before named. And (as it cometh to pass) they had many times men of other countries, that were no sailors, that came with them; as Persians, Chaldeans, Arabians; so as almost all nations of might and fame resorted hither; of whom we have some stirps and little tribes with us at this day. And for our own ships, they went sundry voyages, as well to your Straits, [...] as to other parts in the Atlantic and Mediterrane Seas; as to Paguin (which is the same with Cambaline) and Quinzy, upon the Oriental Seas, as far as to the borders of the East Tartary.

So, in contrast to Utopia, the history and the development of Bensalem is clearly interwoven with highly advanced civilisations of the ancient world. The people of New Atlantis managed to take advantage of the knowledge and achievements of other cultures without exposing their own, even without being known to any other part of the world after the great times of seafaring, and thus intense contact with other peoples, was over. As to the country and its people, Bacon seems to aim at describing a ‘paradise on earth’ by emphasizing the divine beauty and perfection of Bensalem. It is termed a “happy and holy ground”, which is so faultless that any outward influence could only mean deterioration, therefore, contacts with other nations are reduced to a minimum, although chance travellers are welcome.

### 3.2 Political and social order

Contrary to Utopia, very little is said about how the state is governed. We only learn that it is a monarchy that apparently resembles the contemporary Jacobean constitution in Britain to a high degree. Consequently, as critics have remarked, the New Atlantis is probably not the ideal of a man who was discontent with the constitution of his own state. Another way of interpreting Bacon’s being rather enigmatic and indirect on political, constitutional, economic and social details might suggest that he had simply decided to put
the main emphasis on something else, namely the domination of science in his utopian world. The government is hinted at only indirectly; we merely learn that Bensalem is a very ancient civilisation, whose constitution had been established 1,900 years before by the most revered King Solamona, who is almost praised like a saint. Since then, the state, its government and system of laws have been unchanged. This idea of stability and perfection from the very beginning corresponds to the concept of flawless supremacy and excellence attached to Bensalem throughout the book.

Bacon does not explain very much about the social order and the life of the ‘ordinary’ people: Contrary to Utopia, the society of Bensalem is clearly hierarchically ordered, and people’s differences in rank are noticeably expressed by clothing, jewellery, and other attributes of power and wealth. For example, there are lengthy passages concerned with the minute depiction of privileged persons dressed in elaborate clothes, e.g. of one of the fathers of Salomon’s House, whose entrance is likewise described in detail.

One parallel to Utopia might be the lack of individuality – people live together in large families ruled by the Father of the Family, the Tirsan, who secures the maintenance of peace and harmony among the members of his family. People are not supposed to take individual decisions; everything is discussed and decided upon by consultations within the family.

3.3 Religion and science

In The New Atlantis, science and religion are entangled with each other. Scientific progress and the advancement of knowledge reasoned by religion forms the basis of the state. This becomes evident in the state’s most important institution, Salomons’s House, a scientific brotherhood, also termed the College of the Six Days’ Works. In Bensalem it is commonly viewed as “the noblest foundation […] that ever was upon the earth; and the lanthorn of this kingdom”. Its foremost target is to increase their knowledge and put it into practice for the benefit of the people. Knowledge, or truth, is symbolised by light, and it is valued higher than anything else. Since the foundation itself and the scientists, the Fathers of Salomon’s House, are explicitly Christian, their probing into the workings of things could never be regarded as putting into question the divine origin of the world. Every insight they gain is merely considered to honour God and prove the greatness of his creation. Salomon’s House is instituted

for the finding out of the true nature of all things, (whereby God might have the more glory in the workmanship of them, and men the more fruit in the use of them,) […] The End of our Foundation is the knowledge of Causes,
and secret motions of things; and the enlarging of the bounds of Human Empire, to the effecting of all things possible.

This institution being the most valuable achievement of Bensalem, Bacon takes great pains to list every field the scientists engage — and succeed — in. For further progress, every twelve years some members of Salomon’s House are sent by ship to other countries in order to spy out their development and bring home news “especially of the sciences, arts, manufactures, and inventions of all the world”. Navigation is forbidden except for this “trade […] for God’s first creature, which was Light”. Consequently, those members of Salomon’s House who take part in the voyages are also called “Merchants of Light”. At the same time, one of Bensalem’s main features is the people’s effort to keep up an “aura of secrecy”; as the narrator marvels

that they should have knowledge of the languages, books, affairs, of those that lie such a distance from them, it was a thing we could not tell what to make of; for that it seemed to us a condition propriety of divine powers and beings, to be hidden and unseen to others, and yet to have others open and in a light to them.

Bensalem is elusive, not tangible, and, as if by God’s interference and providence, hidden from the rest of the world, which could only spoil and disturb the perfection of this commonwealth. Even more, their ability to see others, but themselves remain unseen is almost divine. This secrecy distinguishes New Atlantis considerably from More’s Utopia, who tries to cast light on every single aspect that he treats in his design of a better state. Except for the unknown history and past of Utopia, he is in every respect explicit about how his world is ordered and how it works.

The structures of Salomon’s House are clearly hierarchical: The community of the scientists ranges from empirical observation to the building up of theories. Yet all its members are clearly superior to other citizens, since they create and secure Bensalem’s most precious treasure, that is, knowledge, which equals power. Consequently, its members, seen as benefactors of man, have a great deal of influence on everyday life: On the one hand, they are not obliged to inform the government of their inventions and newly illuminated truths about the world, so they can decide freely which of their discoveries and findings will be made known publicly. Their social status and public reputation is that of royalty — or of clergy: For instance, one of the Fathers of Salomon’s House is received by the populace as if he were a king or a religious person of high rank. Salomon’s House is both a fraternity and a college; correspondingly, its fellows are ‘priest-like’ scientists.
A striking difference to Utopia can be noticed in the way in which knowledge and education are dealt with in Bensalem: Despite the weight of scientific research, only very few people are entitled to share the wisdom acquired in Salomon's House; the number of people working there is low. The Bensalemites are unambiguously Christian; their belief is founded on more or less the same biblical background. They were converted to Christianism by a vision of a pillar of light, which is particularly interesting after all that is said about the symbolical meaning of light to them.

Compared to More’s Utopia, the Bensalemites’ degree of toleration of other religions is notably smaller. The few Jews that are allowed to live among them are different from those in other parts of the world; they have adjusted their own belief towards Christian principles, as it were, and thus they are accepted by the Bensalemites.

3.4 Moral and philosophical views and values

It is often stressed throughout the narration that no European nation bears likeness to Bensalem’s chastity and virtuosity; it takes pride in being “the virgin of the world”. In the whole country, there are no brothels, “no dissolute houses, no courtesans, nor anything of that kind.” A sharp contrast is drawn to the implied European immorality and depravity.

The enlargement of knowledge has highest priority, and whoever renders outstanding services to that aim is honoured and compensated generously: A statue of him will be made and placed in a gallery of renowned inventors in Salomon’s House. The most appreciated value is, as mentioned above, progress in science, specifically research for the prolongation of life, for finding medicines, drugs and potions, and for inventing healthier and better-tasting foods and drinks.

The views concerning marriage are consistent with the Bensalemites' concept of virtue and chastity. Marriage is valued highly, and it is conceived as “a remedy for unlawful concupiscence” which the Bensalemites are said to notice in Europe, which is widely regarded as an impure and immoral place. Polygamy is forbidden, yet contrary to Utopia, there are no severe punishments mentioned for those who break this law. However, marriage has to be approved of by the parents of the future couple; otherwise, the children from that marriage may only inherit a third of their parent’s property.
3. 5 Laws and customs

Details about Bensalem’s system of laws are kept in the dark too, but from the few things we learn, it can be derived that they are based on humane traditions. Solamona intended to join “humanity and policy together”. For instance, despite all reservations against strangers, foreigners in distress are offered generous help and support. For that purpose, they maintain a well-equipped Strangers’ House. On the other hand, laws regulate the admittance of strangers and determine how much they are allowed to learn about the island. Likewise, travels abroad only serve to investigate other countries’ accomplishments, and they are restricted to few members of Salomon’s House, who are sent out in regular intervals – these strict laws are meant to keep the harmonious and efficient commonwealth of the island unchanged.

Yet no laws concerning criminal offences are referred to, maybe there is simply no need for them in such a peaceful and orderly, ‘angel-like’ society.

There is a singular quasi-religious ceremony which is meant to promote social cohesion among the members of the family and to remind the people of their attachment to the state: The Feast of the Family, which, financed by the state, honours fertile and prosperous families. It is an event that does credit to any man with thirty living descendants over the age of three. The Feast of the Family is generally held in high esteem among the Bensalemites who prepare it very carefully: All arguments are settled by the Tirsan before the feast, and all the decisions he takes then equal laws.

The Feast of the Family serves to confirm the existing relations between the members of the family to one another, and to the state. It is full of symbols of fertility and prosperity, e. g. ivy, grapes, and a jewel shaped like an ear of wheat. The narrator judges this event to be a “most natural, pious, and reverend custom” which again gives evidence for “that nation to be compound of all goodness.”

Bacon ironically hints at Utopia’s ‘mating arrangement’ through the narration of a Jew living in Bensalem: “I have read in a book of one of your men, of a Feigned Commonwealth, where the married couple are permitted, before they contract, to see one another naked. This they dislike, for they think it a scorn to give a refusal after so familiar knowledge” Thus another solution is suggested: The Bensalemites resort to a “more civil way”: A friend of the two potential marriage partners observes the other bathing.

4. Conclusion
More’s Utopia and Bacon’s New Atlantis represent two different ‘variations on the same theme’: designing an ideal society.

In Utopia, class society and private property have been abolished, whereas both are in existence in Bensalem. In Utopia everyone is provided with everything needed for life, but all luxury, say, precious metals and pearls, are despised, while they are cherished in Bensalem, and largely made use of to stress class distinctions.

Utopia has a democratic constitution; Thomas More describes the political order quite minutely. – Bensalem is traditionally a monarchy, but Bacon keeps silent on political and constitutional matters; his utopia is much rather a community of scientists: New Atlantis appears like a state “in which the fruits of science and technology have made political rule superfluous.” The progress made in science and technology is the primordial source of wealth and prosperity in Bensalem. Yet this knowledge is not spread freely, but withheld carefully by the fellows of Salomon’s House, the dominant research institute, which was founded with biblical sanction. Knowledge or truth is achieved by understanding natural laws, and so it means gaining power over nature for “the effecting of all things possible”, as the main object of Salomon’s House is formulated. This goal mirrors an “unbounded belief in man’s powers”, which makes Bacon “the truly representative man of his time”, namely the first period of materialism.

Utopia takes a totally different view on the role of knowledge and education: Learning is promoted widely as a source of personal pleasure, and so every citizen is encouraged to learn and know as much as he or she wants to. Similarly, Utopia’s philosophy is rather a ‘pursuit of happiness’ for the individual: Everyone has to work only six hours a day and may spend the rest of the day doing things he or she enjoys – although these activities nearly always prove to be of some usefulness to the whole community.

The Utopian society strives for equality and social justice – whether or not these concepts are put into practice might be disputable, however, this basic idea is unambiguously there. In this respect, Utopia stands in marked contrast to Bensalem, whose social order could be termed an “elitist meritocracy”: Science is not regarded as a collective enterprise: Only very few people are engaged in scientific endeavours, and these designated experts are clearly separated from the citizens. Privileged as they are, they are held in veneration and, in case they have achieved a great success, they are honoured individually – contrary to the prevailing current not to single out individual persons.

Production in the broadest sense is what the Bensalemites aim at – this includes also the propagation of humans, as the Feast of the Family testifies. Family life is important for
Utopia and for New Atlantis; and in both worlds the families are patriarchal systems, although this patriarchy appears a bit moderated in Utopia.

Religion is of great importance in both Utopia and Bensalem: The Bensalemite society is peaceful and homogenous in their religious faith: They are explicitly Christian, apart from some Jews who are accepted to live among them since they have slightly 'christianised' their convictions. The Utopians, however, display a larger variety of religious ideas, yet they share the monotheistic conviction that everything was created by one divine creator, and that the human soul is immortal.

All in all, both utopian worlds try to organise their commonwealth as economically as possible to make it advantageous both to the state and the society. They are each conceived as a prosperous, productive, orderly and virtuous commonwealth, in which everything is abundant. However, they stress on totally different aspects: In Utopia, the main target is to achieve a pleasant and healthy life for every single person in the community. In their view, this can be achieved through a classless communist society, where all persons have equal rights and possibilities. Only those things indispensable for life are produced. Bensalem, however, represents a materialistic world, in which class society and private property are existent. Progress in science and technology is the main object, as it offers power over nature.

5. Bibliography

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