

Thomas More and his "Utopia"

Post by "Cassius" of August 31, 2023 at 3:19 PM

As Joshua points out in several of our podcasts, More seems to want to accept many of the "life for happiness and pleasure" aspects of Epicurus, but he wants to condemn and banish as totally unacceptable the core viewpoints of an absence of providential god and reward and punishment after death.

I have not read this material recently enough to pass judgment on the extent to which More really believed this, or was just hedging his bets or protecting himself from the church, but the way Joshua describes his enthusiasm in the position, it sounds to me like More may serve as a classic example of the type of person who wants to pick and choose what they regard as beneficial ethics without taking the full medicine of a proper understanding of the universe.

Joshua indicates that More would expel true Epicureans from his otherwise "Epicurean-lite" society, and so it sounds to me like "Utopia" might serve as an ultimate example of the problems with an "eclectic" or "syncretic" approach to Epicurus that fails to appreciate the full philosophy.

These hazards are such that if this reading of "Utopia" is accurate, I would label More as "Anti-Epicurean."