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# Thomas More's *Utopia* and Teaching about Social and Political Order

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## Contradictory Readings

Thomas More's *Utopia* is one of those unique works the method and meaning of which is understood in dramatically contradictory ways. Without a doubt it is an amusing, ambiguous, and difficult work which does not give up its wealth of meaning easily. We are compelled to return to it time and time again. It intrigues and calls us back, and we are not always sure why. Students engage with it readily. With its litany of social institutions as examples of an ideal social order, and its direct and implied social criticism it has become a resource for political policy advocacy and for "change agents" everywhere. It was intended to be and still is a work for thinking and teaching about social and political order. The ambiguity and difficulty are central to its purpose, but it also offers a way of understanding its own method of teaching.[1] And in so doing it provides us with insight into its interpretation and how we might teach about social and political order and change.

Divergent ways of understanding Utopia might be illustrated by the positions taken by two essayists, critic Edward Rothstein and historian Martin Marty in a turn of the millennium collection *Visions of Utopia* (2003). In "Utopia and its Discontents," Rothstein concludes that utopian dreams of a perfect communal society "will always lie beyond our reach," and that "we know how visions are formed, how they are battered, how changes might occur and what dangers lie in its realization, how perfection might be sought but never realized."[2] Earlier he emphasized the meaning of the name "Utopia" as "no place," not mentioning the pun on "good place," and argued that utopias require "the suppression of normal life." "[U]topias, difficult to reach, difficult to believe in, and difficult to tell about, might seem to be unreachable fantasies or make-believe kingdoms." While utopias do not exist, they might or perhaps they should. They are "political programs" toward progress.[3] In wise writers' creations they have ironic or satiric undercurrents, as is characteristic of More's *Utopia*. Sometimes, however, they embody absolute power, loss of freedom and privacy. And so "all these paradises are really varieties of Hell."[4] Thomas

More's vision, with its authoritarian government, enforced egalitarianism and ironic patterns, has "led some to suggest that at times More is showing us not a utopia, but what a utopia should not be."[5]

Martin Marty in ""But Even So, Look at That": An Ironic Perspective on Utopias" calls More's work a "*humanist* utopia,*"* a "celebration of religious tolerance," and a tale of a "human city based on intellect and reason."[6] He contrasts the work with More himself "who lost self-control, direction and coherent philosophy" and became "a heresy hunter" and "sent one set of dissenters to their death."[7] More's *Utopia* is first a contrast with then contemporary England. The main character, Raphael Hythlodaeus "sounds like a modern social critic."[8] Foremost however, and despite personal inconsistencies, More most convincingly described a society based upon a reasonable and tolerant religion, a "religiously humanistic" social order. In the midst of the varieties of particular beliefs in Utopia, he quotes More, "the vast majority [of Utopians] take the more sensible view that there is a single divine power, unknown, eternal, infinite, inexplicable and quite beyond the grasp of the human mind, diffused throughout this universe of ours, not as a physical substance, but as an active force." Because of this "tolerant generalized religion," the Utopians readily converted to Christianity when they heard of its teaching and founder. It seemed similar to their beliefs and way of life. This liberal religious tolerance is the guiding positive outcome of *Utopia*.[9]

For Rothstein, the positive goods of the Utopian commonwealth are destroyed by its social constraints, compulsions, and loss of freedom. He notes More's irony but does not analyze where and when it comes into play. For Marty, the positive program and lasting contribution of *Utopia* is its reasonable tolerance, beyond its worthwhile social criticism. He mentions what Raphael Hythlodaeus "sounds like," but does not analyze how we might understand his criticism, nor the seemingly positive description of authoritarian Utopian customs and institutions in Book II of the work. We are justified, it would seem, in asking whether More's *Utopia* is inherently or practically a vision of a totalitarian order—"varieties of Hell"—or whether it truly might embody a liberal and religious tolerance. Which one is it? We might ask whether it is some kind of positive plan for a good society, a satirical critique of then contemporary Europe, an experiment in how we might conceive of a good society with useful and good institutions, or something else.[10] Upon reading the text for the

first time, students in classroom discussions come to contradictory conclusions similar to those of these professional essayists and scholars portrayed in one lecture series, between the covers of one slim volume. Students, general readers, as well as professors need answers to the questions that their contradictory responses raise. How are we to approach and understand this problematic and intriguing text? The answers we find might also offer us and our students' patterns for teaching and thinking about social and political order.

**The Structure of Utopia and the Dialogue of Counsel**

An outline of the structure of *Utopia*, comments on the kind of work it is, and its historical setting will help sort through the issues to be addressed. *Utopia* is divided into two books, the second of which was written first in 1515, while More was on a diplomatic mission to Antwerp.[11] It contains a monologic description of the island and commonwealth of Utopia, a fictional city somewhere in the Western hemisphere, narrated by Raphael Hythlodaeus, a fictional traveling companion of the famed Amerigo Vespucci. Book II is variously described as a version of an encomium or "demonstrative oration" in praise of a good, or the best commonwealth, and at the same time an example of a "deliberative oration," the intent of which is to persuade the reader of the reasonableness of an idea or proposal, and its "profit" or utility, goodness, and benefit for us.[12] In the process, More, through Hythlodaeus employs the topics and sequence of questions that made up the exercise of describing and criticizing the "best state" as developed by Plato in *The Republic, The Critias*, and *The Laws* and by Aristotle in *The Politics*.[13] Because the work is primarily rhetorical, rather than dialectical it is more descriptive than argumentative and the reader has to tease out through the descriptions and explanations, the rhetorical tropes and devices, through its pleading and contradictions, the meaning of the passages in which the author praises or covertly criticizes the institutions and customs of the "best" commonwealth.[14]

This brings us to one final piece of context for Book II. The speaker of the book is a character in the story, Raphael Hythlodaeus, a speaker who is not the author's mouthpiece. He is portrayed in Book I as both a philosopher, well-traveled and deeply learned, and something of an impractical idealist. His name reflects this dual emphasis. As Raphael he is named after the divine messenger of the Book of Tobit; as "Hythlodaeus" he is a teacher of nonsense. One

translator, in fact, uses this as his formal name, "Nonsenso."[15] And so we must be ready to encounter the seriousness of the questions that will be addressed through the monologue or oration, the complexity of rhetorical patterns and tricks that will be employed, and we are warned that we must approach all carefully, perhaps skeptically, and ready to enjoy the story.

Book II is for most readers the memorable part of *Utopia*; institutions and habits of the people are often understood as illustrations of More's intentions for the work or as a description of desirable laws and social patterns, as illustrated by the readings of Rothstein and Marty.[16] Each reader might have his or her own favorite example, either a seemingly positive contribution to a just social arrangement, or a satirical jab at sixteenth-century Europe, and perhaps at today. Often noted are, for instance: the foundational element of Utopian society, the absence of private property and work limited to six hours per day;[17] the formation of representative governance and the patriarchal headship of households;[18] the sameness and regulation of housing and dress;[19] the selection of marriage partners by viewing the intended partner naked as one would when examining a farm animal or horse for purchase;[20] the Utopian disregard for precious metals and jewels (they give them to children to play with) and their embarrassment for their guests when diplomats arrive conspicuously wearing gold and silver chains and jewels;[21] their thinking and teaching about the harmony of virtue and pleasure;[22] practices regarding war (male and females and families fight together), and the use of mercenaries;[23] and as noted earlier, their religious rituals, and laws regarding the minimum religious commitments and beliefs required of all.[24] Each step of the way the reader must make a judgment about how to read the particular passage, whether it is social criticism, might be something to emulate, whether it is seriously proposed or a satirical critique, whether we should think deeply about its possible application, laugh, react with revulsion, or consider it theoretically. And as noted earlier, and as will be illustrated in the following, discerning and casual readers as well as specialist scholars come to contradictory conclusions about how we ought to respond.

Book I was written primarily in 1516, the year of the first publication of Utopia, after More had returned from Antwerp, and is composed of two sections. The first section describes the setting and meeting of the character Thomas More, or Morus, and Hythlodaeus through the agency of the Dutch humanist and friend of Erasmus and More, Peter Giles.[25] In the course of the

following we will distinguish between More the author and what he might or might not have been suggesting through the character Morus sometimes referred to in scholarship as "persona More," and his discussion with Raphael Hythlodaeus. "Morus" is also a pun on fool, just as the name Hythlodaeus carried the meaning nonsense. More, the author, appreciated Chaucer and his creation of Chaucer the pilgrim on the Canterbury road, was himself fond of acting and understood that political roles involved one often in playing a part in a drama.[26] The character Morus is part of More, the author's role playing and, just as with Hythlodaeus, does not serve as the author's mouthpiece.

The second section of Book I is a long dialogue primarily between Morus and Hythlodaeus, an example of deliberative rhetoric in which Hythlodaeus attempts to persuade Morus and Giles of the inadvisability of a philosopher or any person of virtue and integrity advising a ruler or serving as a royal counselor (or in a royal council). Humanist writers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries often raised the question of whether one could advise a prince (or a tyrant) to act virtuously and govern well and in the process retain one's own integrity and life. This is known as "the question of counsel" and so we have from the period a number of "dialogues of counsel." Two of the more famous dialogues of counsel are found in More's *Utopia* and Book IV of Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier*.[27] To give direct advice was to invite risk of harm at the hands of the powerful or tyrannical who might take advice as criticism or disloyalty. One book of direct advice or counsel, Thomas Elyot's *The Boke Named the Governor*, included a disclaimer. Elyot wrote in his proem to Henry VIII: "where I commend herein any one virtue or dispraise any one vice I mean the general description of the one and the other without any other particular meaning to the reproach of any one person."[28] Later, at the end of the sixteenth century, Francis Bacon was to give proverbial form to the problem in is essay "On Counsel:" "A king, when he presides in counsel, let him beware how he opens his inclination too much in that which he propoundeth; for else counselors will but take the wind of him, and instead of giving free counsel, sing him a song of *placebo*."[29] This insight seems to rely upon Bacon's own experience that counselors ought, if they know what is good for them, to "take the wind" of the king, as it were, lest they sail in dangerous waters. A list of topics from Bacon's *Essays* reveals the dangers that one faced, whether king or courtier: "Of Seditions and Troubles," "Of Boldness," "Of Cunning," "Of Simulation

and Dissimulation," "Of Ambition." One need not be a Machiavellian to understand the dangers of power and the difficulties of virtue. More himself was to suffer execution, or martyrdom, as a result of his role in the dangerous court of Henry VIII. Critics have noted that the dialogue of counsel in Utopia dramatizes the questions More faced in 1515-1516 as he contemplated and finally entered royal service in the king's Council.

Morus takes the Ciceronian position arguing that one must not retreat into contemplative retirement and should accept the duties of the active life in moving political and social order to the best that can be attained, despite the risks. The Ciceronian politician attempted to unite in an active life *(negotium)* what is useful *(utile)* with moral uprightness *(honestum)* to produce decorum, a style of action which is "a morally right and a prudentially appropriate or useful manner."[30] Hythlodaeus, takes the Platonic position, arguing that the active life does not bring good results, that the powerful will not listen, that the political world is too full of flattery and corruption, and that one will lose one's virtue, if not one's life, in the futile attempt.[31] The Platonic understanding argues for contemplation *(otium)* over action, and teaching through the conversion of souls rather than amelioration of a particular political situation. Hythlodaeus becomes one such traveling Platonic teacher, providing a glimpse into a "best commonwealth," in which a just order promotes happiness and fulfillment.[32] At the end of Book I each has stated his case and position, and played a role in dramatizing the ideas they each represent. At the end of Book II, we are again left with both ideals seemingly remaining.[33]

Following the seemingly unresolved "dialogue of counsel" in Book I, Morus and Raphael retreat to dinner, after which (in Book II) Raphael will offer Morus and Giles his portrayal of the island, peoples, customs, and institutions of Utopia. Book I, written after Book II, sets us up for Book II, portraying social and political context for our understanding of the "best commonwealth." However, scholarship on *Utopia* has brought us to contradictory conclusions on how we should understand *Utopia*, paralleling the contradictory conclusions noted at the beginning of this essay. To resolve the problem of the conflicting conclusions, first we must look at a profound disjunction in the scholarship on *Utopia*. Second, I will offer a reading of the second part of Book I as More's guidance for us in discerning how to approach the "best" government and social order described in Book II. In the process, I will note a way through the scholarly

impasse. Third, from this analysis I will propose four characteristics of *Utopia* as elements of a strategy or method of its teaching that might be useful in our approach not only to *Utopia* itself, but to considerations of Utopian and political literature and discussions of and teaching about political and social order.

## Scholarship on Utopia

Scholarly tools and methods of interpretation have clarified to a great extent the intent and direction of the work. All of our more conventional and creative methods have been employed: contextual studies (political, social, economic), studies of literary and rhetorical forms, placing the work within intellectual and philosophical traditions (monastic, humanist, rhetorical, Platonic), identity studies (class and gender), and analyses of the formation of the individual work.[34] For the sake of simplicity, we might categorize the scholarship on *Utopia* as reflecting two characteristic methodologies, and two corresponding conclusions.

The first category of scholarship we might call the ideological or doxographic method. This group of critical writings has largely come to the conclusion—variously stated, and with weight on different aspects of the work—that More has marshaled a deliberate political argument about social hierarchy, wealth, property and money, voiced through the character Raphael Hythlodaeus, the fictional visitor to the island of Utopia, and the principal speaker of Book II with its lengthy outline of Utopian institutions and practices. This first method is likely to conclude that More's work reaches toward modernity or modern ways of conceiving of political and social order with an emphasis on property or economic and social relations, and equality over medieval and renaissance understandings of hierarchy and "order and degree." The second set of methods and interpretations emphasizes not the particular ideas but the rhetorical form and a rhetorical reading of *Utopia*, its humanist dimension. It emphasizes not ideas, but the work as form of literature or as a rhetorical construction that must be interpreted as a literary fiction in which ideas are dramatized to play against each other. In addition, this second set sometimes emphasizes medieval antecedents to the work, particularly monastic, that More might have borrowed, the sources from which he borrowed them, and moral and spiritual commitments he exhibited. This broad set of scholarship tends to emphasize either the traditional commitments, pointing to ironic and comedic elements in

the portrayal of Raphael and Morus, or to ambiguity in the portrayal which is so overwhelming that it points to an educative process in More himself, and perhaps the formation of More's own identity.[35] Both sets of scholarly methods and conclusions consider the economic, social, and religious conditions of England and the European continent and share an attempt to read *Utopia* in this context and as a response to them. It is significant that in the critical edition of *Utopia* in *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More* (1965) the first ideological or doxographical tradition is represented by the lengthy introduction by J. H. Hexter, and the second rhetorical tradition is represented by the second lengthy introduction and following commentary by Edward Surtz.[36] These two introductions simply are not harmonized in the critical edition, nor are they in most subsequent work. As a recent More biography noted, "Utopia remains one of the most frequently read and debated classics of all time. To appreciate the depth and the difficulty of the problems this book was designed to explore is to appreciate why no consensus has been possible, even among those who know Utopia best."[37]

The ideological or doxographic tradition is usefully exemplified by the work of Quentin Skinner. Building on the work of Hexter, Skinner argues that the only thing not subject to debate in the interpretation of *Utopia* is that it is about "The Best State of the Commonwealth."[38] In his widely read *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, Skinner argues that Thomas More, the author, speaks through the voice of Raphael Hythlodaeus to claim that pride is encouraged by the inequities of the hierarchical social order of the day, and that the only remedy for this is to change the institutions of the day to eliminate the corrupting powers of wealth and private property. He concludes that More voices a radical humanist critique of the humanist ideology of rule by well educated, humanistically trained princes, governors, or advisors to princes.[39] In another formulation, reaching the same conclusion, Skinner argues that More enacts through Raphael and Morus a debate between a Platonic withdrawal from political action and a Ciceronian engagement with politics and political order. Morus represents the humanist Ciceronian active life, but his confidence in the humanist program of hierarchical leadership, and humanist, classical education, is eroded by the end of the dialogue, and he accepts then into the humanist active effort Raphael's Platonist conclusion that hierarchical institutions, and the economic and moral results of private property converge to produce

an unjust society. The "best commonwealth," representing true nobility, must therefore be pursued in a costly new egalitarian way.[40]

The interpretive pattern and methodology established by Hexter and Skinner has now become the standard treatment not only in Skinner's *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* (1978), but also in the *Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy* (1988) in a chapter contributed by Skinner. It also has been incorporated into Copenhaver and Schmitt's briefer summary and history, *Renaissance Philosophy* (1992), and in the essay contributed by James Hankins to *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism* (1996). It is a firmly established interpretation within some of the standard and most readily available reference works and briefer histories.[41]

The second set of methodologies and conclusions, those that focus on rhetorical patterns, sometimes begin by denying Skinner's most basic assertion, that the only solid thing in *Utopia* is that is about "The Best State of the Commonwealth." The writers within this school of interpretation cite Richard Sylvester's rhetorical interpretation that the title is "The Best State of the Commonwealth and the New Island of Utopia,"[42] the "and" adding an element of ambiguity. Is Utopia the best state? Is the book about Utopia and about the best state or commonwealth—two different things? The title is not, in other words, 'The Best State of a Commonwealth as seen in the New Island of Utopia.' The title claims that it is "A Truly Golden Handbook, no less Beneficial than Entertaining," signaling through its exaggeration once again that the reader must be aware of the rhetorical patterns and wordplay throughout the text. This set of historians and critics will often emphasize the elements of entertainment, exaggeration, satire, humor, dialogue, irony, and ambiguity or uncertainty. As noted earlier, More does not speak through either Raphael Hythlodaeus or through Morus, but through the dialogue between them (contrary to Hexter and Skinner's assessment). He lets each portray a different set of ideas and attitudes with which the reader must then contend.

Some of this second group of critics take their starting point from R.W. Chambers' famous biography of More in which he points to a common feeling with the medieval tradition expressed in *Utopia*, the difference being that Utopia is founded upon reason alone without the benefit of religion.[43] And thus there is continuity between More the writer of *Utopia*, who was no radical political thinker, and More the defender of Catholic doctrine and practice against

reformers of all kinds, who refused to bend before the assertion of religious supremacy by Henry VIII. Some of the critics who follow Chambers, with increasing sophistication of interpretation, do so by developing in More's work a humanist, religious reform, for example Edward Surtz and another in more recent decades John C. Olin, both Jesuit scholars. Others, for example Louis Martz, do so as literary scholars who share catholic piety regarding More with Chambers, Surtz and Olin.[44] This literary or rhetorical school of interpretation, building on the works of Richard Sylvester, R. J. Schoeck, and Elizabeth Mc-Cutcheon to name just three of the most prominent,[45] has recently produced a full introduction to Utopia in the work of Alistair Fox's *Utopia: An Elusive Vision*.[46]

Fox argues that the work from beginning to end builds upon a deliberate ambiguity and playful irony. This is the case with the title, mentioned earlier, and with preliminary letters, verse, and fictional alphabet and maps (the so called Parerga)[47] as well as through the fictional dialogue.[48] Consistently throughout the text we are presented with fiction as fact, fact as fiction, and are encouraged both to believe and disbelieve what we read and is inspired in our imagination. Fox further argues that there is a development in the process of Book II. The book begins with rather straightforward description of admirable Utopian institutions, which we are led to trust through a deliberately positive rhetorical presentation, despite hidden irony and deliberate wordplay. As the book develops, the institutions and practices become increasingly suspect, and the rhetorical play becomes more critical and ironic.[49] Fox argues that More was, in fact, teaching himself through the writing of the book. He started with the positive portions of Book II, and as the portrayal deepened in his mind, later portions turned more critical.[50] He could not continue the positive portrayal as he had planned. He added the first book to develop the increasingly problematic portrayal, and left the final work playful, ironic, paradoxical, and ambiguous—or "elusive." Thus, the work itself is a work in the construction of More's own intellectual and moral commitments and personal identity.[51]

A rhetorical interpretation of *Utopia* is also represented in standard resources for scholars and students. Brendan Bradshaw combines literary sensitivity with a full explication of the sources and topics More negotiated. He outlined the dialectic between the Platonic and Ciceronian ideals illustrated in the characters of Hythlodaeus and Morus; a humanist sense of the dignity of the soul

and an Augustinian sense of fallen human nature; classical notions of a rationally organized commonwealth and messianic notions of the people of God to be rescued from poverty and oppression.[52] He concludes: "in the resources of reason, rhetoric and moral virtue, the humanist possesses the means and, therefore, incurs the duty, to pursue the interest of the commonwealth even in the world of *Realpolitik*."[53] However, we are not given a way of sorting through the teaching of *Utopia*, through the seeming impasse represented by the idealistic Hythlodaeus and the skeptical and practical Morus. Bradshaw's interpretation is presented in the *Cambridge History of Political Thought, 1450-1700* (1991). Similarly, a thoroughly rhetorical interpretation by Dominic Baker-Smith, "Reading *Utopia*," is included in the now "go-to" introductory series for many works of literature, history, and philosophy, the *Cambridge Companion to Thomas More* (2011). He concludes, "surely one indubitable quality of *Utopia* is that it unsettles familiar attitudes and prompts acts of political imagination, by which we 'fele ourselves stered and altered.' Its goal is a state of mind rather than a specified state of society."[54] The conclusion that *Utopia* ends with a sense of ambiguity without resolve and without a way to work toward resolution is now in several works where it will be regularly consulted by students of politics and literature.

All in all, the review of the scholarship of the interpretation of the intent and meaning of *Utopia* leaves one unsatisfied, despite the insights of many interpreters. The standard critical edition, our scholarly resources for teaching and individual works of interpretation present dramatically conflicting interpretations. As George Logan stated, "Utopia has proved to be too sophisticated for its readers, both in substance and in literary method."[55] Perhaps this is overstated. Perhaps interpreters have proven too sophisticated. There are some works which offer a more balanced approach, treating both political ideas and rhetorical forms together, but none offer a clear explanation of how they get to their conclusions.[56] However, More himself offers a guide, a model of interpretation that a reader might employ profitably.

**Cardinal Morton as Guide**

In Book II Raphael describes a series of supposedly good institutions and customs. Their portrayal raises doubts and questions. How are we to take them? In the middle of Book I, through the "Dialogue of Counsel" discussed earlier,

More offers us an example of how this might be done. Raphael Hythlodaeus describes a series of good practices observed through his travels, much like the customs and institutions of Utopia he will later describe in Book II. He advocates these as responses to particular social injustices apparent in the England of the early 1500s. The character of Cardinal Morton responds to these examples in a particularly instructive way as we will see, and thus offers a model for how we as readers might understand and respond to Raphael's proposals as we move through Book II. We should remember that this section was written last, as if More purposely offered a model for reading what would come next.

More writes a number of dialogs over the course of his lifetime, and, according to Kenneth Wilson, often the dialog is between an older and a younger character, with the implication that the older is teaching the younger.[57] In the case of *Utopia*, this is complicated by two factors. While Raphael Hythlodaeus is older and more experienced than Morus, his name also means something like "Nonsense." Similarly, as we know from Erasmus, the younger Morus's name itself is a pun for "Fool" or "Folly." Their debate remains unresolved, in keeping with the characteristics represented by the names of the debaters. At the end of both Book I and Book II, neither capitulates to the other, leaving distinct sense of ambiguity or paradox. Should we follow nonsense or foolishness? However, within the dialogue there is another older character introduced by way of a story, whom Hythlodaeus described as *"Prudentia ac virtute venerabili"*—a man venerated for prudence and virtue.[58] This character is John, Cardinal Morton, former Archbishop of Canterbury, Cardinal, Royal Councilor, Lord Chancellor under Henry VII, and in whose court More himself was raised and trained. Morton is portrayed wholly positively in both *Utopia* and in More's roughly contemporaneous *The History of King Richard III*. In both works he is seen as one who understood the rough realities of the political world, and who is virtuous, wise, and respected.[59]

At the heart of the "Dialogue of Counsel" Raphael tells of an episode in which he sat at Morton's table and told of the (fictional) Polylerites (people of much foolishness) and how they pursued the punishment and correction of thieves. Contrary to England's practice of executing thieves, the Polylerites demand restitution, sentence them to hard labor, and require the wearing identifiable clothing and a badge labeling them. They also might give the convicted freedom if they do their work with energy and good will. The purpose, he says,

"of the punishment is to destroy vices and save men."[60] In the process of the discussion Morton must dismiss a lawyer who is insulted by Raphael's portrayal of English law, and a Friar dedicated to poverty who ironically rejects Raphael's insistence that private property is the source of England's ills. At the end of Raphael's Polylerite example Morton concludes:

> It is not easy to guess whether this scheme [for the punishment and rehabilitation of thieves] would work well or not, since it has never been tried. But perhaps when the death sentence has been passed on a thief, the king might reprieve him for a time without right of sanctuary, and thus see how the plan worked. If it turned out well, the practice might be made law; if not, he could then carry out the punishment of the man already condemned. This would be no more perilous to the public or unjust to the criminal than if the condemned person had been put to death at once, and in the meantime the experiment would involve no risk. In fact, I think it would not be a bad idea to treat vagabonds in this way too, for though we have passed many laws against them, they have had no real effect as yet.[61]

While Morton responds with appreciation and even extension of Raphael's instructive anecdote, Raphael does not recognize this appreciative response. Instead, he uses the examples of the lawyer, friar and others to conclude that "from this episode you can see how little courtiers would value me or my advice."[62] This is all couched within the discussion of whether or not a person of Raphael's or Morus's learning should attempt to instruct a prince in the ways of virtue and about good social institutions, the "dialogue of counsel." Raphael concludes that this is not possible. Morton's example however exposes Raphael's lack of insight into his own experience and his failure to attend to the drama in which he has participated. Not only is it possible to find a virtuous prince or courtier and offer counsel, but Raphael's own experience has proven it. Morton is such a prince or courtier, and Raphael has acted effectively as a counselor to a prince.

Between the two major participants in the dialogue, Hythlodaeus and Morus, is a third authoritative character who teaches us how to respond to the description of institutions that Raphael will give us in Book II. As Harry Berger argued, Morton is an anti-Hythlodaeus. Raphael is pure monologue, closed to arguments and insights from others, and, in this instance, from his own experi-

ence. Morus in turn is a lesser Morton, playing a critical role in the dialogue, but sometimes unsure of how to respond.[63] Morton voices more than a simple "pragmatism" as Dominic Baker-Smith would have it.[64] Nor is Morton's, and by implication, More's response "accommodation" to political necessity, as Davis argues.[65] All politics involves pragmatism, accommodation, and compromise. To describe Morton as such is to accept the claims of Hythlodaeus that only prefect virtue and all-knowing goodness is the standard of all political regimes and actors. The characterization of Morton offers us something more profound. He exercises a sense of caution—"it is not easy to guess"—understanding that his own speculation might be in error. He relies on experience in observing and judging social order. What has been done in the past has provoked unjust results. He thinks suggestively about possible good and bad consequences of new institutions and practices. No one knows what the outcome will be to a new policy or law. And he offers a cautious suggestion, recognizing the possible need for modification on the basis of further experience. A proposal might be tested; there is some risk involved, but the outcome might be beneficial and just. If unintended consequences arise, the old practice might be reinstated. Morton's response is a classic example of prudential or practical wisdom in its political form as taught in Aristotelian ethics and politics, still foundational even through the Platonic resurgence of which More was a part. "Practical wisdom," as Aristotle concluded, "is a true and reasoned state of capacity to act with regard to the things that are good and bad for man."[66] Morton illustrates how a prudent counselor, courtier, prince, or thinker will respond to complex moral and political situations and proposals. And for the reader he illustrates the discrimination necessary for approaching the description of Utopia, a supposed "best commonwealth," Raphael will later elaborate in Book II.[67] Reminding us of the fictional nature of the text we are reading, Morton complains that it is difficult to tell what the outcome of a proposal might be, since it has not been tried, even though Raphael has represented the Polylerite example as one that has been tested. Morton thus plays the role of a prince, in his case an ecclesiastical and temporal prince, with court and courtiers, flatterers and those looking for preferment. Raphael has become a counselor to a prince in the ways of virtue and good social institutions and Morton has responded with a desire for justice, with insight and prudence.

Through comparison with Morton, we learn something about how we should understand the other characters. Raphael will have some interesting and good things to say. He is experienced and has seen something good and worthwhile. He is "Raphael" a divine messenger; he has seen and experienced something of the Platonic best society. He is, as it were, a messenger from on high. He is also a portrayer of nonsense. He will sometimes miss the point. His judgment cannot always be trusted. What he tells us and what he concludes must be tested. It might be fiction.

Morus is a character who has not yet reached the wisdom of Morton, but he has been in good company and has had a good education—he exemplifies a wise courtier in training. Morus responds that over against Raphael's "school philosophy" is a more "civil philosophy." He says that in the "councils of Kings"

> there is no place for this school philosophy which supposes every topic suitable for every occasion. But there is another philosophy, better suited for the role of citizen, that takes its cue, adapts itself to the drama in hand and acts its part neatly and appropriately. This is the philosophy for you to use.[68]

Against Hytholdaeus's school or scholastic philosophical argument, there is Morus' "civil philosophy." The academic philosopher may think he knows the best course of action, the best institutions, the best customs, but he is not always attuned to the civil customs or political characteristics of social life. Morus explains how this civil philosophy is to be approached: "by an indirect approach you must strive and struggle as best you can to handle everything tactfully—and thus what you cannot turn to good, you may at least make as little bad as possible."[69] He understands the necessity of working within the drama of the court, as illustrated by the characters and situations Raphael describes. And he knows of the difficulties of working with those characters, to whom we should add Raphael Hythlodaeus himself, the divine teacher of nonsense who does not see everything, who pushes too far, too hard, and antagonizes others. The effective counselor will work through the drama of a court and with a prince and courtiers more easily and effectively through this indirect approach. One must understand the drama, the personalities and characters, the interests, and the powers that contend for advantage and for what they think is right. As might be expected from his direct challenge to the interested parties

around Morton's table (the lawyer and the friar), Raphael provokes animosity through his direct criticism. If Morus cannot through his own actions portray how this civil philosophy is practiced, we can see it in the character and actions of Morton. Not only does he work through the drama of Raphael, the lawyer and friar, but he turns Raphael's example of the Polylerites and their treatment of thieves to good effect, which Raphael had himself argued could not happen in a European court. Hythlodaeus would contribute to the ineffectiveness of philosophical and experiential knowledge of what is good through his overly insistent claims and unperceptive experience in the drama of court life.[70] Morus will plead for a more practical approach, producing some good out of the situation before him.[71] Morton through his understanding of what is good, practical wisdom in human affairs, and experience in court life will salvage and even improve on what good can be gained from Hythlodaeus' travel and learning.

Morton in effect becomes the resolution, hidden away within a story, of the Dialogue of Counsel and of the question of how to read *Utopia*. He reconciles Ciceronian action and Platonic contemplation virtuously. Morus will play the Ciceronian political actor, neither wholly affirmed as the only way of life, nor silenced by Raphael's arguments. Hythlodaeus will remain the Platonic philosopher. Like Socrates and Plato, he will eschew direct political action, but become a teacher of the best way, even if we must test his examples and insights. As he says, he would not have left Utopia "had it not been to make this new world known to others"[72]—another contradiction between his words and actions. We learn this "indirectly" through the drama of Morton's table. Again Berger: "More has placed the contrast to all Utopian methods, and the criterion by which they are to be judged, in the figure of Cardinal Morton."[73]

We have in *Utopia* neither a treatise that we must describe as finally ambiguous, nor one that argues for a particular political or economic organization. It is rather a rhetorically constructed political treatise filled with potentially good and bad ideas, wise and unwise solutions, "a nursery of correct and useful institutions,"[74] which must be examined, considered, tested, and debated. If the rhetorical critics are correct, More offers clues along the way about what we should look for. According to Fox, in his earlier work, *Thomas More: History and Providence*, this sense that we must test and discover the virtuousness of a particular institution or custom over time through history, and thus under the guidance of "providence" is a part of the Utopian way of thinking, and is part

of a "Morean synthesis."[75] Morton becomes an exemplar of how we are to approach Utopian practices and institutions. It takes a wise ruler to judge and initiate reform of existing institutions and practices and produce good results. *Utopia* as a work of literature becomes a handbook in training for the aspiring wise councilor. It is a tool for testing good and bad ideas, the social effects of customs, for measuring sixteenth-century society, our society, or perhaps any society against an ideal. It is a work for training the political leader in practical wisdom or the virtue of prudence. This is true for us as readers five centuries later.

As we read through the philosophical exercise of "the best commonwealth," presented to us in the rhetorical wordplay of Raphael's monologue in Book II, we can test the institutions and customs he presents. Would they work as described in the real world of human nature, personalities, characters, interests, and social customs? Are there flaws within them? Are their ideals truly good? How do they reflect not only on the sixteenth century, but on our own day? Contrary to the doxographic critics, *Utopia* does not advocate a particular ideological program or critique of existing institutions and customs. And contrary to the literary critics, *Utopia's* ambiguity is resolved as the reader plays the role of Morton, testing, judging, and reading within the drama at hand. It is an exercise in political education.

## Practical Categories for Reading *Utopia*

If *Utopia* has intrigued us and our students, captured our imaginations and encouraged our attempts to think through institutions, governance, and the patterns a society might adopt, then we can ask what intellectual and rhetorical patterns or practices lead to its success. And by extension we can ask what kinds of communication we might look for and employ in our teaching about politics and social order. What follows is a simple proposal for the consideration of four such patterns. All are included in Utopia and can be found prominently in other early modern literary and utopian works. This is neither an exhaustive nor systematic catalog, but simply a set of observations, and proposals to inform our reading, thinking, and teaching.

The first pattern I call "elevation." This is a broad category that encompasses the ideal or supposedly ideal world of *Utopia*. It is characteristic of the exercise of creating a "best commonwealth" going back to Plato. In the sixteenth cen-

tury it might include Sir Philip Sidney's ideal "golden world," and the "green world" of pastoral and garden imagery.[76] It thus allows for the comparison of the civilized and corrupt court and society with the innocence of nature and the garden or an earlier golden age. It encourages the understanding of the failure to find pure justice in all human societies by comparison with a past, distant, natural, or more divine or perfect world. It shows up imperfection and loss by elevating our sight to a proposed good by comparison. This might be understood as the opposite of satire (which, of course, also has its uses in *Utopia*). It shows up weakness, absence, lack, or ill will, not by critical exposure, but by reflection of a brighter and purer light. Because of their "elevation," the supposedly ideal institutions of Utopias compel our assent and encourage us to imagine them good and workable. Because of their elevation, utopian works encourage us to aspire to heights of justice and goodness. As Fox argued, the pattern of presentation of Book II of *Utopia* moves from manifestly ideal institutions, laws and practices, to those which are increasingly suspect.[77] Because we begin with a compelled assent, we are able to move sympathetically through the descriptions to ponder them before we feel compelled to test and accept or reject them. The "suspicion" of our own times reverses this approach, encouraging us to stand above, to cast a critical eye on all that we observe. We might be justly wary of ideals and idealists. They have failed too often, and their actual behavior often betrays their personal moral authority. More reveals this through Hythlodaeus. But we can look upward or forward (or backward to a golden period), if only to glimpse the possibility of something better.

Elevation, however, cannot stand alone, for, as Morus, says "it is impossible to make everything good unless all men are good, and that I don't expect to see for quite a few years."[78] All persons are not good, nor are all our portrayals of the ideal. We do not see the good with clarity, and portrayals of the ideal may contain a good deal of "nonsense." Utopia we know is a "good place" and a "no place." We are instructed to see through the debate and dialogue of Morus and Raphael, the example of Morton, and the gentle questioning of Peter Giles a second characteristic which we might call "prudential uncertainty." This is not a suspicion that stands critically above, but a willingness to consider a possibility. It is an understanding of complexity, recognition that all is not well, and yet an acceptance that we do not immediately have the understanding to make all well. "Prudential uncertainty" is a counterbalance to the creation of ideal or

best worlds. Morus's conclusion at the very end of the work also echoes this quality: "while I can hardly agree with everything he [Raphael] said (though he is a man of unquestionable learning and enormous experience of human affairs), yet I freely confess that in the Utopian commonwealth there are very many features that in our own societies I would wish rather than expect to see."[79] Here More, through Morus, the Morton in training, portrays prudential uncertainty in his respect for learning and experience, his ability to test what he has heard, his hope for the good, and recognition of the difficulty of finding or enacting what appears good in this world. Erasmus complained that "scrupulous and exact knowledge of academic subjects…causes almost a lack of common sense in those who have grown old in them."[80] This might especially be the case when the subject does not admit an exact knowledge, as Morus argues to Hythlodaeus. Prudential uncertainty might show itself in sound common sense developed through time and experience.

The third category for our understanding and teaching is the use of "indirection." Here we have a practice that is explicit in Morus's answer to Raphael. More in fact used indirection throughout the work. He shows us how to read the description of Utopian institutions as outlined in Book II indirectly in a story, through Morton's response as a virtuous and prudent prince to Raphael's earlier descriptions of punishment of thieves in Book I. He does so without readers realizing it at the time. *Utopia* itself from the preliminary fictional and playful humanist letters, the dubious names of Utopian places and practices, the setting in a garden, to the description of a fictional ideal society are all indirect pointers to teach us about how a commonwealth might be organized, what customs and laws might be promoted, how virtuous leaders will act, what to avoid, when we might be speaking or listening to nonsense, and how to understand the organization of a society. Indirection catches us unaware, reveals insights that we are not predisposed to receive, opens us to glimpses of what might be good or evil in our society or in ourselves. Indirection causes us to return to a work, an idea, or a scene to consider more fully what it might mean. The indirection of *Utopia* and of the utopian literary tradition is one of the primary elements of its appeal to its readers. As literary works, utopian writings share the novelist and poet's desire not to reveal too much too soon, to risk encouraging misunderstanding, to divert our attention for a time, until we are ready to understand the

complexity and depth of our condition and their insights. Indirection helps us see beyond the political passions of our "hyperpartisan" times.[81]

Finally, I would recommend a fourth category for teaching of politics, "comedic parody." It is significant that the most comedic character in *Utopia* is the exacting philosopher Raphael Hythlodaeus. Raphael for all of his learning and experience creates one of the most comedic scenes in the work when he asserts that no prince would listen to him and his undoubtedly learned teaching at just the moment when he tells of an incident, of which he was a part, when a prince did listen to him, grasped his meaning and even proposed further application. Perhaps it is appropriate that the one who presumes wisdom be the source of our merriment. Instruction is easier to take when it comes with laughter; presumptuous preaching can be tedious. The comedic element in the platonic renaissance has been highlighted by no less a philosopher than Ernst Cassirer;[82] Trevor-Roper among others, has linked More's humorous translations of Lucian to the same platonic impulse.[83] More's contemporaries certainly caught this element of the work, which in turn led C. S. Lewis in his *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century* to argue for the important half-truth that *Utopia* was simply a jest.[84] We find the same comedic patterns in More's friend Erasmus though with a more satirical sense. When we approach utopian literature without looking for this element, or when we read works without it, we and they might fail to bring the "prudential uncertainty" and sense of "indirection" necessary for the creation and reading of the tradition. Other utopian works of the early modern period, such as Bacon's *New Atlantis* and Campanella's *The City of the Sun*, lack the comedic element (and prudential uncertainty), and are characteristic of didactic exercises in the proposed good. We read them wondering how they can be trusted. Compared to the living qualities of More's *Utopia*, they are historical artifacts. It is sufficient to claim that comedic parody is a part of More's rhetorical repertoire. We miss the delight of *Utopia* if we miss its humor. And further we might miss the opportunity to learn and perhaps to teach if we neglect to poke respectful fun at presumed wisdom of political leaders and writers, and our own fallibility, as More did of himself.

## Conclusion

*Utopia* is not just a satire, or about private property and economic equality, or simply about the then current social issues of England, or a blueprint

for a perfect communal society. It is not about More's identity formation, and it is does not leave us with complete ambiguity, as many scholars variously propose. It is not a portrait of a totalitarian Hell or a proposal for a liberal, religious humanism as Rothstein and Marty concluded. More offers us the pattern of a good or best political order, flawed by pride and perhaps misunderstanding, a series of supposedly ideal social practices to be tested, illustrations of intellectual closedness, openness, and critical appraisal in the give and take of Hythlodaeus (Nonsense) and More (the Fool), and of Cardinal Morton (a virtuous and wise politician). We, the readers, must learn to see ourselves in Hythlodaeus and Morus, and play the role of Morton.[85] More creates a good place, but a flawed good place as well, as a humanly created society must be. While he elevates our vision, he places us back in the real world of politics and personalities, indirectly bringing the ideal and the imperfect together. Then he teaches us how to live with the two, to read through the example of a wise and good ruler and his prudential insight. In the process he shows us our own limitations, encouraging humility in our comparison of the ideal and our flawed world, and providing a way of testing our own ideals, reasoning, and action. Indirectly, by shaping our emotional and intuitive perception, he teaches us to ask questions of ourselves, our ideals, and what we might, can and should attempt. This would seem to be a model for understanding and teaching utopian and political literature, and a guide for testing our understanding and teaching about good or supposedly good societies, about social change and our role in it.

## NOTES

[1]  An earlier version of this essay was presented at a Baylor University conference, the Pruit Memorial Symposium, "Schooled in the Heart: Moral Formation in American Education," Oct 30-Nov 1, 2003. The keynote addresses of the conference were published in Schooled in the Heart: Moral Reformation in American Higher Education, ed. Douglas V. Henry and Michael D. Beaty (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007). I am grateful to the Baylor organizers for the opportunity to test the central ideas that appear here, for the questions and discussion of the audience, and to Fresno Pacific University for supporting the research and travel.

[2]  Edward Rothstein, Herbert Muschamp, Martin Marty, Visions of Utopia, ed. F.D. Norton (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 28.

[3]  Rothstein, 2-3.

[4]  Rothstein, 3-4.

[5]  Rothstein, 8.

[6]  Marty, 58.

7   Marty, 61, 67. On More as persecutor of heretics see the carefully developed essay of Richard Rex, "Thomas More and the heretics: statesman or fanatic?" The Cambridge Companion to Thomas More, ed. George M. Logan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011): 93-115.

8   Marty, 61-2.

9   Marty, 65-6, 69.

10  All of these positions have some presence in the scholarly literature as well as in Rothstein and Marty's appraisals. There are a number of introductions to the text, all of which have some merit, and some of which will be discussed below. See F.E. and F.P. Manuel, Utopian Thought in the Western World (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979) for Utopia and the utopian tradition in general. For More and Utopia, Dominic Baker-Smith, More's Utopia (New York: HaperCollins/Academic, 1991); Alistair Fox, Utopia, an Elusive Vision. (New York: Twayne, 1993); Judith Jones, Thomas More (Boston: Twayne, 1979); George M. Logan, The Meaning of More's Utopia (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983); The Cambridge Companion to Thomas More. The Center for Thomas More Studies, directed by Gerard Wegemer, at the University of Dallas has many good materials for More and Utopia: https://www.thomasmorestudies.org/study.html#Utopia. A Thomas More Source Book, eds. G.B. Wegemer and S.W. Smith (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2004) also introduces More, his thought and writings.

11  See J. H. Hexter's part in the introduction to the Yale edition of The Complete Works of Thomas More, Vol. 4, Utopia. eds. E. Surtz, S.J. and J.H. Hexter (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), xv-xxiii.  Hexter's reconstruction of the writing of Utopia is used often. See the now standard edition for teaching, Thomas More, Utopia, ed. and trans. George M. Logan and Robert M. Adams, Revised Edition, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), xvi-xvii. I will cite this text throughout the paper for convenience as UTO.

12  Arthur F. Kinney, Humanist Poetics: Thought, Rhetoric, and Fiction in Sixteenth Century England (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1986), 58-9. Logan, Meaning, 51-52, 144-45.

13  Logan, Meaning, 131ff. And Logan's introduction UTO, xxv. See also the interesting discussions of the philosophical importance of Utopia, Thomas I. White, "Aristotle and Utopia," Renaissance Quarterly, 29(1976): 635-75; "Festivitas, Utililitas, et Opes: The Concluding Irony and Philosophical Purpose of Thomas  More's Utopia," Quincentennial Essays on Thomas More. ed. Michael J. Moore, Albion, 10(Supplement 1978): 135-50; "Pride and the Public Good: Thomas More's Use of Plato in Utopia," Journal of the History of Philosophy, 20(1982): 329-54; and "The Key to Nowhere: Pride and Utopia," Interpreting Thomas More's Utopia, ed. J.C. Olin (New York: Fordham University Press, 1989), 37-60.

14  This quality of the work is treated in most introductions. Some of the more important developments in the scholarship are: Kinney noted above; Elizabeth McCutcheon, "My Dear Peter: The Ars Poetica and Hermeneutics for More's Utopia, Angers: Moreanum, 1983, and "Denying the Contrary: More's Use of Litotes in the Utopia," in Essential Articles for the study of Thomas More, eds. R. S. Sylvester and G. P. Marc'hadour (Hamden: Archon, 1977), 263-74; James Romm, "More's Strategy in Naming," Sixteenth Century Journal, 22(1991): 173-83; R.J. Schoeck, ""A Nursery of Correct and Useful Institutions": On Reading More's Utopia as Dialogue," Essential Articles, 281-289. Edward Surtz, "Utopia as a Work of Literary Art," introduction to the Yale edition of the Complete Works of Thomas More, Vol. 4, Utopia, cxxvff; Richard Sylvester, "'Si Hytholdaeo Credimus': Vision and Revision

in Thomas More's Utopia," Essential Articles, 290-30; Warren Wooden, "Satiric Strategy in More's Utopia: The Case of Raphael Hythloday," Renaissance Papers (1977): 1-9, and "Thomas More and Lucian: A Study of Satiric Influence and Technique," University of Mississippi Studies in English, 13(1972): 43-57.

[15] See More, Utopia, intro. and trans. Paul Turner (New York: Penguin Books, 1965).

[16] For an example of this kind of reading, see Anthony Kenny, Thomas More (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), chap. 2. Despite being treatment by a noted philosopher in Oxford's "Past Masters" series, it is a wholly inadequate introduction.

[17] UTO, 48-50, 103-4.

[18] UTO, 47-8, 54-8.

[19] UTO, 49.

[20] UTO, 79-80.

[21] UTO, 61.

[22] UTO, 65-9.

[23] UTO, 85-90.

[24] UTO, 66. On More's seeming religious tolerance before the Reformation, see Sanford Kessler, "Religious Freedom in Thomas More's Utopia," Review of Politics, 64(2002): 207-30. The roots of Utopia's minimal religion are found in Plato's Laws, and are part of the Platonic revival of the 15th and 16th centuries, as are many of the institutions and ideas in Utopia. See the essays by White above, and Dominic Baker-Smith, "Uses of Plato by Erasmus and More," Platonism in the English Imagination, eds. Anna Baldwin and Sarah Hutton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 86-99.

[25] For the Erasmus, the northern humanist tradition, and its character in England see James K. McConica, English Humanists and Reformation Politics: Under Henry VIII and Edward VI (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), and McConica's, "Thomas More as Humanist," The Cambridge Companion to Thomas More, 22-45. The humanist impulse to social reform was shared among those who remained Catholic, and those who became Protestant and Puritan; see Margo Todd, Christian Humanism and the Puritan Social Order, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987. On Erasmus's social thinking, see The Politics of Erasmus: A Pacifist Intellectual in his Political Milieu (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978).

[26] Alistair Fox, "Chaucer, More, and English Humanism," Rulers, Religion, and Rhetoric in Early Modern England: A Festschrift for Geoffrey Elton from his Australian Friends, Parergnon, n.s. 61(1988): 63-75; and Richard Sylvester, "A Part of His Own: Thomas More's Literary Personality in His Early Works," Moreana, 15-16(1967): 29-42.

[27] Baldassare Castiglione, The Book of the Courtier, trans. Thomas Hoby (London: Dent/Everyman, 1994). John Guy, "The Henrician Age," The Varieties of British Political Thought, 1500-1800, eds. J.G.A. Pocock, G.J. Schochet, and L.G. Schwoerer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 13-22.

[28] Thomas Elyot, The Boke Named the Governor (London: Dutton/Everyman, 1962), xiv.

[29] Francis Bacon, Selected Writings, ed. H.G. Dick (New York: Modern Library, 1955), 59.

[30] Gerard B. Wegemer, Thomas More on Statesmanship (Washington, DC: The Catholic University Press of America), 113-14. Quentin Skinner, "Thomas More's Utopia and the Virtue of True Nobility," Visions of Order, Vol II, Renaissance Virtues (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 219; the original version of this essay was published in 1967.

[31] UTO, 13-14, 27-28.

32   See Eric Nelson, The Greek Tradition in Republican Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 11-15, 33-36. Arthur J. Slavin, "Platonism and the Problem of Counsel in Utopia," Reformation, Humanism, and 'Revolution,'" ed. G.J. Schochet, Proceedings of the Folger Institute Center for the History of British Political Thought (Washington DC: Folger Shakespeare Institute, 1990), I, 207-10, 213-16. Hythlodaeus also sounds like Erasmus, see Logan, Meaning, 34.

33   At the end of Book II is another crucial passage for the interpretation of Utopia. The question is again whether Morus represents More, and whether his words are ironic or to be taken more literally. For two positions see Skinner, "More's Utopia," 243-4, and Foundations, 257; and Wegemer, Thomas More on Statesmanship, 123-7.

34   See note 10 above.

35   Particularly Fox, Utopia. This second tradition could be divided into two traditions, one focusing on More's Christian piety and the other on literary forms alone, but I will refer to them as one, with two emphases, because of their mutual focus on rhetorical analysis of the text.

36   The Complete Works of Thomas More, Vol. 4, Utopia, eds. E. Surtz, S.J. and J.H. Hexter. Hexter writes Part I, and Surtz Part II. They are not integrated.

37   Gerard B. Wegemer, Thomas More, A Portrait of Courage (Princeton: Scepter Press, 1995), 46.

38   Skinner, "Thomas More's Utopia," 213-4.

39   Sinner, Foundations, I, 256-62.

40   Sinner, "Thomas More's Utopia," 242-44.

41   Skinner, "Political Philosophy," Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy, eds. Charles B. Schmitt, et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 389-452. Brian Copenhaver and Charles B. Schmitt, Renaissance Philosophy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 274-77.  James Hankins, "Humanism and the Origins of Modern Political Thought," The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism, ed. Jill Kraye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 137-40.

42   Sylvester, "'Si Hythlodaeo Credimus,'" 291.

43   R.W. Chambers, Thomas More (1935; rpt. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1958), 263.

44   John C. Olin, "Erasmus's Adagia and More's Utopia," Moreana, 100(1989): 127-36. Louis Martz, Thomas More: The Search for the Inner Man (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 26-7.

45   See note 14 above.

46   Fox does not share the piety of some of the others, see note 10 above.

47   See Warren Wooden, "A Reconsideration of the Parerga of Thomas More's Utopia," Quincentennial Essays on Thomas More, ed. Michael J. Moore, Albion, 10(Supplement 1978): 151-160.

48   Fox, Utopia, 38.

49   Fox, Utopia, chapters 5 and 6.

50   Fox, Utopia, 31-34.

51   Fox, Utopia, 91, building on Stephen Greenblatt, Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

[52] Brendon Bradshaw, "Transalpine Humanism," The Cambridge History of Political Thought, 1450-1700, eds. J.H. Burns and M. Goldie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 110-125.

[53] Bradshaw, 125.

[54] Baker-Smith, "Reading Utopia," The Cambridge Companion to Thomas More, 162.

[55] Logan, Meaning, 3. At the Baylor conference where this paper was first tested, one of the panelists echoed Logan after the session, saying that the thought sometimes More was to clever for his own good. He may be right.

[56] I recommend four works which provide a balanced approach: Baker-Smith, More's Utopia; Gerard Wegemer, Thomas More on Statesmanship; Peter Iver Kaufman, Incorrectly Political: Augustine and Thomas More (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007); Glenn Burgess, British Political Thought, 1500-1660 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 1-19. All engage with the scholarship substantively and bring together the various parts of More's writing and activity into a coherent whole.

[57] K.J. Wilson, Incomplete Fictions: The Formation of English Renaissance Dialogue (Washington DC: The Catholic University Press, 1985), 139.

[58] The Complete Works of Thomas More, Vol. 4, Utopia, 58/21-2.

[59] Wegemer, Thomas More on Statesmanship, 5-8.

[60] UTO, 23-4.

[61] UTO, 25.

[62] UTO, 27.

[63] Harry Berger, Jr., Second World and Green World: Studies in Renaissance Fiction Making, selected and arranged by J.P. Lynch (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 28-30; in the same volume the essay "Utopian Folly: Erasmus and More on the Perils of Misanthropy," 237-48, is a rejoinder to Hexter and the doxographic set of interpreters.

[64] Baker-Smith, More's Utopia, 104-112.

[65] J.C. Davis, "More, Morton, and the Politics of Accommodation," The Journal of British Studies, 9(1970): 40-49. Davis sees Morton as treated ambivalently by More, contrary to my assertion above that he is treated positively throughout More's writings. See note 59 above.

[66] Nichomachean Ethics, VI, 5.

[67] Wegemer, Thomas More on Statesmanship, 149. R.B. Branham, "Utopian Laughter: Lucian and Thomas More," Moreana, 86(1985): 33. See also Travis Curtright, The One Thomas More (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 72-104, who critiques Skinner, Logan, and Bradshaw, and relates More's civil philosophy to his work as a lawyer in pursuit of equity.

[68] UTO, 34-35.

[69] UTO, 35.

[70] Wolfgang Rudat, "More's Raphael Hythloday: Missing the Point in Utopia Once More?" Moreana, 69(1981): 48-52.

[71] James Nendza, "Religion and Republicanism in More's Utopia," The Wester Political Quarterly, 37(1984): 210, sees More's civil philosophy as the most important teaching of Utopia for today.

[72] UTO, 39; see also Slavin.

[73] Berger, Second World, 33.

[74] See Schoeck, nt. 13 above, who emphasizes Utopia as a dialogue.

[75] Alistair Fox, Thomas More: History and Providence (Hew Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 70-1; see also Brendon Bradshaw "The Controversial Thomas More," Journal of Ecclesiastical History, 36(1985): 537-45, who comes to a similar conclusion, despite his criticism of Fox.

[76] Berger, Second World, 3-40.

[77] Fox, Utopia, 31, 52.

[78] UTO, 35.

[79] UTO, 107.

[80] The Complete Works of Thomas More, Vol. 4, Utopia, Surtz's commentary on 98/6, 371 on the "civil philosophy" discussion.

[81] James Hankins, "Hyperpartisanship," The Claremont Review of Books, XX(2019-20) 8-17, and "Imprudent Expertise," First Things, June/July (2020) 23-28. Hankins is one of the foremost current interpreters of Italian Renaissance Humanism, of which More is a related "Northern Humanist." His just released Virtue Politics: Soulcraft and Statecraft in Renaissance Italy (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2020) is a major restatement of the character and quality of the political teaching of Renaissance humanists. More and Utopia are mentioned numerous times.

[82] Ernst Cassirer, The Platonic Renaissance in England, trans. J.P. Pettegrove (New York: Thomas Nelson, 1953), 172-3.

[83] Hugh Trevor-Roper, "Sir Thomas More and Utopia," Renaissance Essays (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 33-4.

[84] C. S. Lewis, English Literature in the Sixteenth Century (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954), 167.

[85] Both Wegemer, Thomas More on Statesmanship, and Kaufman, Incorrectly Political, portray this well (note 56 above).