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GIOVANNI PICO AND THOMAS MORE

The following notes are offered as a tentative contribution to the study of the influence of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola on Sir Thomas More. The indirect relationship between the two humanists is mainly evidenced by More's translation of Pico's *Vita* by his nephew Gianfrancesco and of some letters and shorter literary pieces of Giovanni Pico (1) which More also translated and published in English together with the *Life of John Pico*. A number of striking echoes from and parallels to Pico's ideas are scattered throughout More's other writings and I shall try to indicate and discuss a few of them. I should also like to draw the attention of More scholars to the nature of the variations and expansions carried out by More in translating Pico's shorter writings. These, apparently, enjoyed a considerable vogue in the sixteenth century: they were translated into French and German, and Pico's so called 'rules of a Christian life' were turned once again into English by More's friend Sir Thomas Elyot and printed in London in 1534, 1539, 1546, 1560 and 1585. A reprint of the rules, described as "idiotae viri sancti regulae vitam christianam complectentes", as the late Professor Delio Cantimori pointed out, (2) appeared as an appendix to the Savoyard Sébastien Castellion's Latin 'rifacimento' of *De Imitatione Christi* (1572).

In view of the lack of a full inventory or account of the contents of More's Pico translations, it will not be useless, perhaps, to add one or two descriptive details. Rastell's 1557 edition substantially reproduced the undated (1510?) quarto printed by Wynkyn de Worde under the title *Here is conteyned the lyfe of Johan Pico Earle of Myrandula a grete lorde of Italy... with dyvers epistles and other workes of the said Johan Pico*. The translations of Pico's letters contained in the volume are preceded by More's original 'explications' or summing up of the "argument or matter".

In his brief pioneering report on "Pico e l'Inghilterra" at the international conference which was held at Mirandola, Emilia, in 1963, Professor Roberto Weiss underlined the literal quality of More's *Life of Pico* and

added that a study of Pico's reputation in England was a desideratum of scholarship, since very little is known on the subject. Professor Myron Gilmore, in his even shorter observations on "More's translation of Gianfrancesco Pico's Biography", confined himself, basically, to commenting upon the several cuts and the few additions introduced by More. Neither scholar considered More's free rendering of Pico's own 'spiritual' or devotional writings which he added to his translation of the *Life*. (3) It was to pieces such as these that Gianfrancesco presumably referred when he said he had found among his uncle's papers "regulas bene vivendi circiter quinquaginta, breves profecto nimis et inexplicatas, quas in multa capita, si vixisset, deducturus omnino fuerat" (4). He published, however, apart from Pico's letters and other major works, only those "regulae XII", "spiritualis pugnae arma XII", and "de duodecim conditionibus amantis" which More translated and expanded.

My remarks essentially concern some parallel passages in More's *Life of Pico*, his *Four Last Things* and his *Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*. They suggest that Pico's life and ideas had indeed a seminal influence in the mind of the English humanist. I do not propose, however, to conduct any detailed investigation either into the *Life* or into More's translation of Pico's two letters to his nephew and future biographer, of his letter to the Urbino humanist Andrea Corneo, of his exposition or 'explication' of Psalm XV and, finally, of Pico's 'poetical prayer' or "Deprecatoria ad Deum". All these pieces could possibly be shown to have affected, to a varying degree, More's thoughts and literary techniques (e. g. in his discussion of Psalm 89 and of other biblical texts in the *Dialogue of Comfort*). What I wish to emphasize here is simply the fact that More's translation of Pico's *Life*, as well as of his minor writings, represents the earliest body of materials concerning the Italian philosopher to appear in English, apart from the long quotations of Pico's works which, according to Weiss, can be traced in the theological writings of John Colet after his return from Italy towards 1496.

In one of his 'prefaces' to Pico's letters, More takes a hint from a parenthetical statement in the letter of May 15th 1492 to Gianfrancesco, that the flesh "concupiscit adversus spiritum et [...] circeis poculis in prodigiosas brutorum species illecebrosa deformat", in order to dwell at some length on the legend of Circe's seductive powers. (Some readers will be reminded, in this connection, of Budé's congratulating More, from Paris, in September 1517, on not having changed at all since entering the service of Henry VIII : "Eundem vero esse te semper, nec in Circeia ista officina aulicoque diversorio

mutatum esse... literae tuae argumento sunt plenoque documento" : *Correspondence*, 382). More's introduction ends by celebrating the "noble use of reason", and by exhorting his readers to beware "as Pico counselleth us, that we be not drunken in the cups of Circe, that is to say in the sensual affections of the flesh, lest we deform the image of God in our souls, after whose image we be made, and make ourself worse than idolaters". (11 B)

We are led by such comments to appreciate better the versatile character of More's youthful genius and literary attainments, upon which Erasmus rightly reminisced in his letter to Ulrich of Hutten (*Allen*, ep. 999) : "bonas literas a primis statim annis hauserat. Iuvenis ad Graecas literas atque philosophiae studium sese applicuit... Interim et ad pietatis studium totum animum appulit... Primam aetatem carmine potissimum exercuit, mox diu luctatus est ut prosam orationem redderet molliorem, per omne scripti genus stilum exercens". Erasmus' letter of May 1st 1506 to Richard Whitford (*Allen*, ep. 191) had already stressed the extraordinary richness of More's mind : "Neque enim arbitrator (nisi me vehemens in illum fallit amor) unquam naturam finxisse ingenium hoc uno praestantius, promptius, oculatius, argutius, breviterque dotibus omnigenis absolutius".

In the light of the findings of Mr Sears Jayne's study of *John Colet and Marsilio Ficino* (Oxford 1963), which considerably restricted the influence of Ficino's platonism upon Colet's ethical philosophy, it is particularly tempting for an Italian to speculate upon the actual extent of More's intellectual debt to Pico. To Antonio Bonvisi, the learned and prosperous Lucchese merchant who had settled in England, Sir Thomas appealed as the most faithful and the dearest of his personal friends. "The apple of his eye", he called Bonvisi in his touching letter from the Tower : "ut pauci sic amicos fortunatos ambiunt, quomodo tu prostratum, abiectum, afflictum et addictum carceri Morum tuum diligis, amas, foves et observas" (*Corr.*, 560-1). Among all the contemporary Italian humanists, Pico was surely the one who lay nearest to More's heart and affected in the clearest way his spiritual development throughout his career. Despite the lack of a direct knowledge of this country, which distinguished More from the other major English humanists of the age, Italy was thus very present in his life, both practical and intellectual, even if we disregard his selfless lifelong devotion to Rome as the centre of Christian unity.

Whereas More's biographers who lived closer to his age generally only mention his translation of the *Life* of Pico among his early various literary activities ("He made and translated many spiritual works in this age, as the

life of John Picus, Earl of Mirandula, his epistles and 12 rules of a good life of the same Earl", wrote Ro : Ba: in *The Lyfe of Syr Thomas More*, ed. E. V. Hitchcock, London 1950, p. 25), Cresacre More, writing only thirty years later, asserted that his great ancestor "propounded to himself as a pattern of life a singular layman, John Picus"(5). As a matter of fact, St Thomas's career was far different from that of the Italian humanist and one would be inclined to conclude, on the face of it, that the alleged imitation and affinity between the two was less deep and extensive than is commonly believed. And yet, as I should like to show, the recurrence of certain themes and attitudes in More's writings points to a deeper continuity of spiritual influence, so that there is some truth in regarding the translation of Pico's *Life* by More at the beginning of his literary career as "an autobiography of ideals rather than of facts"(6) just as More's *Dialogue of Comfort* has been aptly described by Hallett as "the nearest approach to an autobiography that the saint ever wrote."

No doubt More, who is likely to have been introduced to Pico's writings by Colet, was fascinated by the personality of the Italian philosopher and his immense learning. He may even have seen some features of his own youthful exuberant vitality reflected in the period of Pico's less pious recreations. Erasmus alludes good-naturedly to such moderately light experiences in More's adolescence "cum aetas ferret, non abhorruit a puellarum amoribus..." (Allen, ep. 999) and More himself may refer to them in a rather cryptic passage in his letter to Colet complaining of his absence from London, on October 23rd, 1504 : "Et qui tua nuper vestigia sequutus iam pene ex ipsis orci faucibus emereram, nunc rursum tamquam Euridice[...] in obscuras retro caligines nescio qua vi ac necessitate relabor" (Corr., 7). Significantly enough, however, the very earliest of the letters of More collected by Miss Rogers and dated approximately around November 1501, seems to echo, not only a Plautine saying, but also a famous sentence in Pico's *Oratio* on the dignity of man, "hac nati sumus conditione ut id simus quod esse volumus"(7). More writes in fact : "ita vivimus ut volumus, donet ergo Deus ut bene velimus" (Corr., 3).

Basically, however, I am inclined to agree with Professor Weiss that what most attracted More to the character and mind of Pico was the latter's spiritual fervour and his commitment to orthodox Christianity. Pico's combination of "cunning and virtue", his belief, as professed in a letter to Politian quoted from *De Ente et Uno*(8) in Gianfrancesco's biography, that God could be rather apprehended and communed with through love and "sapientia",

than understood and known through intellect and "scientia", joined with his contempt of all earthly things - which More continually echoes, as in his prison prayer for God's grace "to set the world at nought", - appealed powerfully to Sir Thomas' aspirations. Pico's peculiar philosophic and intellectual complexity, apart from his later dislike of public "dispicions" and "altercations" as a show of learning which was little profitable to the "en-searching of truth" (a dislike which More fully sympathized with), probably failed to engage his permanent interest.

Like his master Colet, he was soon to grow too engrossed with the practical problems of his bustling daily life to care much for theoretical subtleties and propositions. More's parenthetical comment, upon Pico's ambition to have his 900 *conclusiones* publicly debated in Rome and upon the veto of Pope Innocent VIII, is very telltale : "And so was the reading thereof forboden. Lo, this end had Picus of his high mind and proud purpose : where he thought to have gotten perpetual praise, there had he much work to keep himself upright, that he ran not in perpetual infamy and slander".(4 C)

Neither did Sir Thomas ever share Pico's deep curiosity about occult, magical and cabalistic doctrines. The harmonising tendencies of the "count of Concordia" which, building upon and developing Ficino's achievement in his *Theologia Platonica* (1482), aimed at reconciling differing philosophical ideologies and even conflicting schools of religious thought - the Oriental wisdom and secret lore with the Christian revelation - did not elicit a serious response from More's combative moral intransigence.

In terms of sheer intellectual convictions, then, the area of agreement and sympathy between Pico and More does not strike me as having been very wide. Moreover, Sir Thomas' mature powers were, admittedly, devoted to the unstinted service of his country as a leading magistrate and statesman : a calling which remained totally alien to Giovanni Pico. As More puts it in the *Life*, "wedding and worldly business, he fled almost alike. Notwithstanding, when he was asked once in sport, whether of those two burdens seemed lighter and which he would choose, if he should of necessity be driven to that one, and at his election ; which he stuck therat at little, but at the last he shook his head, and a little smiling he answered that he had lever take him to marriage, as that thing in which there was less servitude and not so much jeopardy. Liberty above all thing he loved..."(8 B)

Erasmus is our chief witness for the reasons that led More to abandon his plan to become a priest and, instead,

to marry twice: "vigiliis, ieiuniis, precationibus aliisque consimilibus progymnasmatibus sacerdotium meditando. Necque quicquam obstabat quo minus sese huic vitae generi addiceret, nisi quod uxoris desiderium non posset excutere". And, in the same letter to Hutten, he added that "ab aula principumque familiaritate olim fuit alienior, quod illi semper peculiariter invisa fuerit tyrannis, quemadmodum aequalitas gratissima" (Allen, ep.999). Both in the politically relativistic advice of speaker "Morus" to Hythlodæus in Utopia(9), and in some of his own letters, More drops a few significant clues to his reluctant determination to embrace "worldly business" and the service of his prince, let alone the yoke of wedding and its incidental or contingent servitudes. A passage in his long letter to a monk eloquently reflects More's high sense of social duty and moral obligation to his fellow citizens. He had ultimately followed the advice which Andrea Corneo had offered to Pico, who had rejected it: "to surcease of study, and put himself with some of the great princes of Italy, with whom... he should be much more fruitfully occupied"(14 A). More embraced "Martha", even without utterly forsaking "Mary"; he let himself be tossed in the flood and rumbling of temporal affairs and he brought up the children of his flesh with more assiduous dedication than he brought forth his intellectual offspring for the common profit, a different choice from Pico's. Even if he occasionally looked back to a 'spiritual' career, More was aware that such yearning might be caused by base motives: "dum leviter temet examinas in sanctam fugiens solitudinem noxiis te subducere voluptatibus, in Dei secretiore conspectu... deprehendaris fortasse negocia detrectasse et te subtraxisse laboribus, et pietatis umbra quaesivisse voluptatem quietis et molestiarum fugam appetisse"(Corr., 204).

Still, it is obvious that in his stubborn refusal of obedience to King Henry and in refraining from the oath on the Act of Supremacy, which compelled all English subjects to recognise the king as head of the Church, More put first the supreme claims of conscience. He may thus be said to have lived up to one of Pico's *Conclusiones* (number 18 of "conclusiones in theologia secundum opinionem propriam a communi modo dicendi theologorum satis diversa") which reads: "Dico probabiliter et, nisi esset communis modus dicendi theologorum in oppositum, firmiter assererem, assero tamen hoc dictum in sese probabile, et est quod sicut nullus opinatur aliquid esse verum praecise quia vult credere id esse verum"(10). Sir Thomas in fact could not convince himself to take the oath: he was intellectually unable to "frame his mind" to accept the king as supreme head of the Church. "For the instruction of my conscience in the matter", he said or wrote in

1534, "I have not slightly looked, but for many years studied and advisedly considered, and never could yet see nor hear that thing (nor, I think, I shall never) that could induce my own mind to think otherwise than I do" (Corr., 516).

I am not trying to suggest that More's position can be assimilated to, or was inspired by Pico's sanguine conception of the individual person's central value in the scheme of creation and of the earth in the universe: a view further ennobled by Pico's emphasis on the supreme dignity of man in nature and on his unbounded freedom as a world in himself. True, More had expounded Lucian's *Philopseudes sive Incredulus* as a text susceptible of rational 'applications' adumbrating some Christian truths and as an allegory of the lies and fabulous accretions which obfuscated the clear essence of evangelical ethics, as if truth "non posset sibi sufficere nisi fulciretur mendaciis" (Corr., 13). His defence of classical scholarship against scholastic cavils and theological objections, in his long letter to Dorp, is one of the noblest, wittiest and best-argued praises of the new learning and a satire on the philistines opposing the spread of Greek and liberal studies: "Satis ubique reperias eorum qui libris non reiectis modo sed etiam numquam inspectis, cum quovis in Scripturis exercitatissimo sint parati de quovis Scripturae textu, non memoriae, sed Moriae vi certare pertinacissime" (Corr., 45).

More professed his preference for rational, non dogmatic discussion: "ego ratione malo quam autoritate contendere" (Corr., 61). In the 1518 letter to the University of Oxford, where he described himself, with partly ironic humility, as "homuncio non magna prudentia, minore rerum usu, doctrina vero minus quam mediocri", More lashed out against an ignorant preacher who "quicumque Graecas appetere literas, aperte vocavit haereticos... lectores earum diabolos maximos", and went on to celebrate the vital relevance of Greek learning to Christian piety: "cui non perspicuum est, cum in caeteris artibus omnibus, tum in ipsa quoque theologia, qui vel optima quaeque invenerit, vel inventa tradiderunt accuratissime, fuisse Graecos? Nam in philosophia, exceptis duntaxat his, quae Cicero reliquit et Seneca, nihil habent Latinorum scholae, nisi vel Graecum, vel quod e Graeca lingua traductum est" (Corr., 117).

Even if all Renaissance utopianism, as Professor Novicki and Dr Yates submitted in their comments on the report of Professor Weiss at the Mirandola conference, stems philosophically from Pico's view of man as the only privileged creature, endowed with the power to choose his path and to control and change his destiny, by radically

altering, if necessary, the institutions and structures of society through science and planning (surely the most humanistically advanced insight, as Professor Hexter pointed out, which More can be rightly credited with at least foreshadowing in *Utopia*), still, neither in his translation of the *Life of Pico* nor in his additions and changes did More show a marked interest in such views, which are, incidentally, quite soft-pedalled, to say the least, in Gianfrancesco's biography. One of More's metrical developments of Pico's "spiritualis pugnae arma XII quae homo cum peccandi eum libido tenet in promptu habere debet", the eighth, named "Hominis dignitas et natura", is significantly slanted in a religious direction with very little humanistic flavour or heightening (26 DC):

Remember how God hath made thee reasonable,
Like unto his image and figure,
And for thee suffered pains intolerable,
That he for angel never would endure :
Regard O man thine excellent nature,
Thou that with angel art made to be egal,
For very shame be not the devil's thrall.

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There is no doubt, however, that Pico's morally orthodox principles and the mystical tenour of his 'regenerate' life, as mirrored both in Gianfrancesco's *Vita* and in his devotional shorter pieces, stuck firmly in More's mind. Echoes and analogues of Pico's commonplaces of Christian piety, as I said at the outset of this paper, crop up in his unfinished treatise *The Four Last Things* and in the great *Dialogue* of 1534 written in the Tower of London. As an instance, I shall quote a passage in the *Life* which is probably a rephrasing of one of the "regulae" and which re-emerges in a parallel sentence of *The Four Last Things*, besides running as a purple thread through the general woof of the *Dialogue of Comfort*. The echoes chiefly regard the problems of virtue and sin, of death and doom, of temporary pleasure and everlasting joy. One of Pico's warnings, incidentally, seems to provide the *text* or very theme of *The Four Last Things*, based though this treatise is upon *Ecclesiasticus*, vii, 27 : "memorare novissima et in aeternum non peccabis" (in More's own translation, "Remember the last things, and thou shalt never sin" 72 A). Pico himself had probably the same passage of Scripture in mind when he said to a proud "cunning man" : "If we had evermore before our eye the painful death of Christ, which he suffered for the love of us ; and then if we would again think upon our death, we should well beware of sin". (p. 7 H - 8 A).

Here follow then some of the parallel passages in

Pico and *The Four Last Things*.

Letter to John Francis (11 h - 12 A).

But now if we be forlaboured in the way of sin as much as in the way of God and much more... then must it needs be a point of extreme madness if we had not leaver labour there where we go from labour to reward than where we go from labour to pain.

The idea, with its obsessive emphasis on the "labour" of sin, roughly corresponds to rule I and II of Pico's "Regulae XII", which translated by More in rhyme royal stanzas, read : (21 AB)

Whoso to virtue esteemeth hard the way,
Because we must have war continual
Against the world, the flesh, the devil that aye
Enforce themself to make us bond and thrall,
Let him remember, that choose the way he shall,
Even after the world, yet must he need sustain
Sorrow, adversity, labour, grief and pain.

Think in this wretched worldes busy woe,
The battle more sharp and lenger is, iwis,
With more labour and less fruit also,
In which the end of labour labour is :
And when the world hath left us after this,
Void of all virtue, the reward when we die
Is nought but fire and pain perpetually

And this is what we read in *The Four Last Things* (98 EF):

If virtue were all painful, and vice all pleasant, yet since death shall shortly finish both the pain of the one and the pleasure of the tother, great madness were it if we would not rather take a short pain for the winning of everlasting pleasure, than a short pleasure for the winning of everlesting pain. But now, if it be true, as it is indeed, that our sin is painful and our virtue pleasant, how much is it then a more madness to take sinful pain in this world, that shall win us eternal pain in hell, rather than pleasant virtue in this world, that shall win us eternal pleasure in heaven ?

Reverberations of similar themes from earlier to later works are not of course confined to the *Life of Pico* and *The Four Last Things*. Let us only recall the metaphor of man's life upon earth as a prison, or rather as the serving of a capital sentence which will be carried out at any moment. More's Epigram 101, "In huius vitae vanitatem", first presents the doleful picture : "Damnati ac morituri in terrae claudimur omnes carcere. In hoc carcere mortem nemo fugit". The thread is picked up in *The Four Last*

Things : "old and young, man and woman, rich and poor, prince and page, all the while we live in this world we be but prisoners, and be within a sure prison, out of which there can no man escape... There is no remedy therefore, but as condemned folk and remediless, in this prison of the earth we drive forth awhile, some bounden to a post, some wandering abroad, some in the dungeon, some in the upper ward, some building them bowers and making palaces in the prison, some weeping, some laughing, some labouring, some playing, some singing, some chiding, some fighting..."(84 C,E). In the *Dialogue of Comfort*, More finally projects his own predicament in the Tower with poignantly similar words : "For, of very truth, our very prison this earth is ; and yet thereof we cant us out... divers parts diversly to ourself ... Upon our prison we build ; our prison we garnish with gold and make it glorious ; in this prison they buy and sell ; in this prison they brawl and chide ; in this they run together and fight ; in this they dice ; in this they card ; in this they pipe and revel ; in this they sing and dance ; and in this prison, many a man reputed right honest letteth not for his pleasure in the dark privily to play the knave".(p. 382).

It is worth pointing out what appears to me as a further reminiscence, in the *Dialogue*, of what More had written about the sudden disgrace and execution of the "great duke" of Buckingham in *The Four Last Things*. Here the nobleman had been shown, on the day of his daughter's marriage, with "all the country about resorting to him, while they kneel and crouch to him and at every word barehead begrace him" (86 B), as unaware of the impending catastrophe. In the *Dialogue*, the "grisly cruel hangman Death" approaches man - the strongly medieval, morality play tone of the passage justifies us in regarding him as Everyman - and "shall amid all his royalty and all his main strength neither kneel before him nor make him any reverence... but rigorously and fiercely grip him by his very breast..."(p. 370).

Under correction, I should hazard the guess that Shakespeare instinctively turned to More's classic of thanatology more than once, especially when faced with the theme of death, its problems and its symptoms. But the investigation of this debt would take me too far from the subject of this paper. In the *Dialogue of Comfort* More harps again on the image of acute pain which he had developed in the *Four Last Things* -- "think what it will be then, when thou shalt feel so many such pains in every part of thy body, breaking thy veins and thy life-strings, with like pain and grief as though as many knives as thy body might receive should everywhere enter and meet in

the middes" (77 G). The same people who shun a martyr's violent death will perhaps "in their deathbed complain that they think they feel sharp knives cut a-two their heart-strings" (p. 406) : as though a man's pain "to have a knife to cut his flesh on the outside, from the skin inward" were greater than "if the knife might begin on the inside and cut from the middes outward"(p.406). Thus did More brace himself against such physical torture as might have fallen to his own lot in the Tower : cruel, to be sure, yet not worse than the pangs which accompany the natural death of everyman(11).

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If we now pause briefly to consider More's own method of rendering Pico's pithy Latin maxims in English verse, one preliminary observation is in order. It is agreed that the cuts, additions, and slight changes he wrought in the *Life of Pico* were probably inspired by his plan to abridge and simplify the original text for the edification of the Poor Clare Joyce Lee and of other pious readers. Let me suggest in this context a final possible submerged link between the *Life* and the *Dialogue*. In book 3, ch. 20, of the latter work, More cheers himself up in his seclusion by thinking of the ascetic way of life he had cherished and contemplated embracing in his youth : "to have less room to walk in and to have the door shut upon us, these are, methinketh, so very slender and slight, that in so great a cause as to suffer for God's sake we might be sore ashamed so much as once to think upon them". The imprisonment we shrink from, others freely choose: "Holy monks, I mean, of the Charterhouse order such as never pass their cells but only to the church set fast by their cells, and thence to their cells again. And Saint Bridget's order and Saint Clare's much like, and in a manner all close religious houses ; and yet anchors and anchoresses most especially, all whose whole room is less than a meetly large chamber".(p. 385)

This didactic and homiletic aim accounts for the omission, in his translation, of most of Gianfrancesco's references to contemporary Florentine and other Italian humanists less well known than Politian (More barely refers to the Florentine poet and friend of Pico, Girolamo Benivieni, who wrote and elaborate "commentariolum", over one hundred pages long in Garin's edition, upon his platonising 'canzona d'amore' as "one Hierome Benivenius" (6 C), while Savonarola is "one Hieronimus, a friar preacher of Ferrare").(9 E). It also justifies his occasional hortatory digressions and interpolations, aimed at bringing home the 'vanity of human wishes', or at ringing the changes upon Juvenal's "stemmata quid faciunt ?", as in the original opening remarks upon Pico's personal virtue far

outweighing and outshining his inherited family honours.

The metrical treatment of Pico's 'rules', 'weapons' and 'conditions', however, calls for a few comments. Such translations and amplifications tie up - not only chronologically, but in style - with More's remaining pieces in verse, like the complaint or "rueful lamentation" on the death of Elizabeth of York, and the other poems to which C.S. Lewis has ascribed considerable originality in their freedom, as he thought, from all traces of humanism(12). I think that More, in them, gave a freer rein to his genuine, if limited, taste for poetry, which did not long outlive his precocious maturity of mind. Of course no claim of a much higher artistic merit can be advanced for the stanzas wherein More, with a possible pun of his own name, "more at length declared", or "more openly expressed in Ballad" Pico's succinct statements of the requirements of the warfaring Christian, and of the believer's relationship to God, than for his other lines, such as those he prefixed to the English version of Lorenzo Spirito's *Libro della Ventura*.

The verse form has obviously nothing to do with the "painted poetry" which was later imputed to More by Tyn-dale in a derogatory sense, but is certainly an expression of More's wit, of his love of conceit and of punning, that comes to the fore in a number of his humanistic letters, such as those to Dorp, to Tunstall, and to Germain de Brie (*Corr.*, 27 sq. 89, 220). In replying to the French humanist's attack (*Antimōrus*) on him in 1520, More in fact disclosed his view about poetical licence: "poetices op-ponis privilegium quo videlicet historica lege tradendae veritatis eximitur. At ego, profecto, Brixi, ut poetice, augustam sane ac perquam liberam divam, non adeo angustis limitibus obseperim, quin ut verborum ita rerum quoque fingendarum detur licentia, modo sumpta pudenter; ita plane non patiar, ut quidlibet impudenter ementiens idem-que tractans absurde, totam rerum seriem atque adeo summam invertat atque demutat" (*Corr.*, 220).

More used the same stanza and rhyme scheme in all his renderings of Pico's rules, weapons and conditions. Besides translating the "properties or conditions of a lover" into English prose, he paraphrased all of them in verse, comparing point by point the condition of human love with that of the love of God. Their order in the Latin original undergoes some change in More's translations. Pico's *conditio* 4 becomes More's third property, his no. 3, 5, 6, 7 and 8 become respectively stanzas 4, 6, 7, 8 and 9 in the "ballad", while no. 9 is translated by V, no. 10 by XI and no. 11 by X. The comparison or analogy between profane and sacred love is often introduced by a standard link -so, thus, lo, like - in the second of the two stan-

zas which develop each of Pico's 'conditions', v.g. "The first point is to love but one alone.../So thou that hast thy love set to God"etc. (See other instances further below).

The more interesting amplifications occur in the twelve 'rules' and the twelve 'properties'. They reveal, in fact, clear elements of the Christian humanistic background; even more strikingly, one can occasionally catch in them some very unusual Petrarchan accents, perhaps the only ones to be voiced by More's rugged and "Hogarth-like" Muse. I shall end these very unsystematic considerations with a couple of instances.

Here is More's rendering of Pico's n.4 of "Spiritualis pugnae arma XII", which reads: *Vita somnus et umbra*:

This life a dream and a shadow. (26 A)

This wretched life, the trust and confidence
Of whose continuance maketh us bold to sin,
Thou perceivest well by experience,
Sith that hour in which it did begin,
It holdeth on the course, and will not lin,
But fast in runneth on, and passen shall,
As doth a dream or shadow on the wall.

This echoes Plato's myth, in the *Republic*, of the men living in a cave and seeing only the shadows of the objects reflected on the wall.

Pico: *Pax bonae mentis*. More: *The peace of a good mind* (26D)

Why lovest thou so this brotles worldes joy?
Take all the mirth, take all the fantasies,
Take every game, take every wanton toy,
Take every sport that men can thee devise,
And among them all on warrantise
Thou shalt no pleasure comparable find
To th'inward gladness of a virtuous mind.

Pico's sixth property of the lover: "amare omnia quae ad eum attinent, amicos omnes, domus, vestes, imagines" is "more openly expressed" as follows (30 AB):

There is no page or servant, most or least,
That doth upon his love attend and wait;
There is no little worm, no simple beast,
Ne none so small a trifle or conceit,
Lace, girdle, point, or proper glove straight,
But that if to his love it have been near,
The lover hath it precious, lief and dear.

So every relic, image or picture,
That doth pertain to God's magnificence,
The lover of God should with all busy cure

Have it in love, honour and reverence,
And specially give them preeminence
Which daily do his blessed body wurch:
The quick relics, the ministers of his church.

Finally, here is a bold picture of the typical Petrarchan lover, torn between hope and despair and wavering between the extremes of bliss and pain:

Pico's condition X ("Flere cum eo saepe, vel si absens ex dolore, vel si praesens ex laetitia") is thus expanded by Sir Thomas (31 AB):

The lover is of colour dead and pale,
There will no sleep into his eyes stalk,
He favoureth neither meat, wine nor ale,
He mindeth not what men about him talk,
But eat he, drink he, sit, lie down or walk,
He burneth ever as it were with a fire
In the fervent heat of his desire.

While condition XI becomes (31 C):

Diversly passionate is the lover's heart,
Now pleasant hope, now dread and grievous fear,
Now perfect bliss, now bitter sorrow smart,
And whether his love be with him or elsewhere,
Oft from his eyes there falleth many a tear,
For very joy, when they together be,
When they be sundered, for adversity.

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NOTES

1) - All quotations, in this article, from Giovanni Pico's works and from Gianfrancesco's biography, unless otherwise specified, refer to the 1572 Basel edition, Opera Omnia, tomus I. Pico's Vita by his nephew ("Ioannis Pici Mirandulae viri omni disciplinarum genere consummatissimi Vita per Ioannem Franciscum Illustris Principis Galeoti Pici filium conscripta") unpagged, begins the volume. The devotional shorter pieces, i.e. "Regulae XII, partim excitantes, partim dirigentes hominem in pugna spirituali", "Spiritualis pugnae arma XII", "De duodecim conditionibus amantis". "In Psalmum IX commentarius", & "Deprecatoria ad Deum" occupy folios 332-340 in tome I of Opera Omnia.

All references to More's Pico and The Four Last Things are to the 1557 edn of his works, with spelling modernized. For the Dialogue of Comfort I have used the Everyman edn, printed with the Robinsen Utopia (1962 reprint).

2) - D. Cantimori, "Note su alcuni aspetti del misticismo del Castel-

lione e della sua fortuna", in Autour de Michel Servet et de Sébastien Castellion, recueil publié sous la direction de Bruno Becker, Haarlem, Willink, 1953, pp. 239-243. For early XVIth century MS translations of Pico's minor pieces in European libraries, see Eugenio Garin's introduction to his edition of Pico's De Hominis Dignitate, De Ente et Uno, Heptaplus e scriptis variis, Florence 1942, p. 54, n.l., as well as P. O. Kristeller, "Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and his sources", in L'opera (fully cited in the next footnote), vol. I, pp. 112, 114. 116-18.

3) - See L'opera e il pensiero di Pico della Mirandola nella storia dell'umanesimo, Convegno internazionale, Mirandola: 15-18 settembre 1965. Vol. I, Relazioni, Florence, 1965, pp. 143-52 (Weiss' report), and vol. II, Comunicazioni, pp. 301-304, (Gilmore's paper).

4) - Ioannis Pici, Opera Omnia, tome I.

5) - Cressacre More, The life and death of Sir Thomas Moore, London 1726, pp. 18-9.

6) - Cambridge History of English Literature, vol. III, 1909, p. 17.

7) - Pico, De Hominis Dignitate, ed. Garin, p. 110.

8) - De Hominis Dignitate... etc., ed. Garin, "caput quintum", p. 418.

9) - "Si radicatus euelli non possint opinioniones pravae... non ideo tamen deoerenda Respublica est, & in tempestate navis destituenda est, quoniam ventos inhibere non possis... & quod in bonum nequis uertere, efficias saltem, ut sit quam minime malum. Nam ut omnia bene sint, fieri non potest, nisi omnes boni sint, quod ad aliquot abhinc annos adhuc non ex-
pente". Utopia, Yale edn, 1965, p. 98/25.

10) - Pici... Opera Omnia, p. 94 and 224.

11) - See H.W. Donner, "St. Thomas More's Tractise on the Four Last Things and the Gothicism of the Transalpine Renaissance", in English Manuscellany, 3, Rome, 1952, p. 37.

12) - C.S. Lewis, English Literature in the sixteenth century excluding drama, Oxford 1954, p. 133. Lewis, however, does not take any notice or cognisance of More's verse "expansions" of the devotional maxims of Pico.

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