

nous publierons également en ligne les recensions d'ouvrages parues dans la revue, donnant à tout un chacun un accès facile et gratuit à ces textes. Un détour par notre site vous permettra aussi de découvrir la *Gazette/Newsletter* du printemps 2010, son actualité en images, ses comptes-rendus des divers colloques et ses petites histoires, comme celle qui révèle la vraie cause de la mort de Pic de Mirandole.

La recherche autour de More est féconde. Annonçons d'abord le prochain colloque du Center for Thomas More Studies de l'Université Dallas, qui aura lieu les 5 et 6 novembre prochains et sera consacré à More et Shakespeare. Au congrès annuel de la Renaissance Society of America qui a eu lieu à Venise les 8-10 avril 2010, Thomas More fut très bien représenté, avec de nombreuses conférences qui seront largement évoquées dans nos pages. L'an prochain est déjà sur les rails : animé par Seymour B. Hulse, le thème de « **Thomas More au seuil des temps modernes** », se propose d'explorer la double filiation, médiévale et renaissante, de l'auteur. Ce congrès de la RSA se tiendra à Montréal du 24 au 26 mars 2011.

Toujours soucieux d'améliorer la qualité de la revue, nous sommes à votre écoute pour toute suggestion.

Merci de votre lecture. Merci de votre soutien.

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Paradoxes of Pain: The Strategic Appropriation by Thomas More of Pico della Mirandola's Spiritual Works

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Thomas More's translations of the spiritual works of Pico della Mirandola are not simple transpositions from Latin to English; rather, More takes several liberties with the text. This essay argues that the most significant change that More makes to Pico's content is the amplification of the theme of pleasure and pain. This amplification, in turn, is a part of More's broader strategy of reaching a wider audience and with a greater impact.

Keywords: Thomas More, Pico della Mirandola, spiritual combat, pleasure and pain, happiness, interior life, twelve rules

Les traductions que More a faites des œuvres spirituelles de Pic de la Mirandole ne sont pas de simples transpositions de latin en anglais ; More prend en fait des libertés avec le texte. Cette étude démontre que le changement le plus important que fait More dans le contenu du texte de Pico est l'amplification du thème du plaisir et de la douleur. Cette amplification, à son tour, fait partie de la stratégie plus générale conduite par More, visant à toucher un lectorat plus large et à créer un plus grand impact.

Mots-clés : Thomas More, Pic de la Mirandole, combat spirituel, plaisir et douleur, bonheur, vie intérieure, douze règles

Las traducciones hechas por Tomás Moro de los trabajos espirituales de Pico della Mirandola no son simples transposiciones del Latín al Inglés; más bien, Moro se toma varias libertades con el texto. En este artículo argumentamos que el cambio más significativo hecho por Moro en las obras de Pico consiste en la amplificación de los temas del placer y el dolor. Esto, a su vez, forma parte de una estrategia más amplia de Moro para llegar a una audiencia más extensa y con más fuerza.

Palabras clave: Tomás Moro, Pico della Mirandola, combate espiritual, placer y dolor, felicidad, vida interior, doce reglas

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The twelfth-century morality play *Ordo Virtutum* by St. Hildegard of Bingen begins with the protagonist Anima (a personification of the soul) airily contemplating her condition as a vessel redeemed by Christ en route to the bliss of Heaven. But when the Virtues pledge their assistance "to fight along with" her,¹ Anima, who was unaware that a struggle would still be necessary after the saving waters of baptism, is stunned by the offer. Her shock turns to despair, her despair to rebellion, and her rebellion to misery. "God created the world," she protests shortly before taking up with the devil, "I'm doing Him no harm, but I do want to enjoy it!"²

What Anima did not know at the time is the counterintuitive fact that one of the chief stumbling blocks to ultimate happiness is the putatively reasonable desire to avoid pain of any kind at any cost. It is precisely the identification and removal of this stumbling block that lies behind much of Thomas More's various developments of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's "Prayer unto God" and the three duodecalogues "The Twelve Rules," "The Twelve Weapons of Spiritual Battle," and "The Twelve Properties of a Lover." More's poetic expansion of Pico's prose is a strategic effort to highlight the paradoxes of pain and thereby facilitate an advance in holiness and happiness. While it is beyond the scope of this essay to explore these paradoxes in detail, we can at least establish that such a strategy exists in the hope of spurring further inquiry.

¹ Hildegard of Bingen, *Ordo Virtutum* I.25.

² I.45-47, trans. mine.

Happiness and Pain

It is axiomatic that everyone wishes to be happy and that everyone instinctively recoils from pain, be it physical, emotional, or mental.³ While at first blush these two principles of action seem harmonious if not synonymous, experience and insight reveal a more conflicted state of affairs. An athlete knows that in order to achieve the thrill of victory he must undergo many hours of difficult trainings; a patient, at least one animated by what Tocqueville called "self-interest rightly understood," knows it is far better to undergo discomfort now with a surgical procedure or distasteful medicine than to avoid treatment and perish shortly afterwards; a shrewd lusher knows that in order to heighten the satisfaction of his drinking binges he must first increase his thirst by snacking on salty foods;⁴ and a good soldier knows that the anxious drudgery of constant vigilance is preferable to a false sense of security in the face of an enemy. Ironically, a person bent on avoiding pain often incurs the greatest dose of it, while someone who accepts pain in the right way and who even learns to welcome some pain in his life for the right reasons is better poised to attaining happiness.

One of the best summaries of this hard but crucial truth appeared a decade or so after More's *Pico* poems as "the principle and

³ For the universal desire to be happy as testified by classical philosophy, see Cicero, *Hortensius* (frg. 36 in C.F.W. Müller's edition); Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.4; Seneca, *On the Happy Life* 1.1; Augustine, *On the Happy Life* 2.10, *On the Trinity* 13.4.7. Perhaps the best summary of this position is Augustine's: "It is the decided opinion of all who are capable of using their reason to some extent that all men wish to be happy" (*City of God* 10.1).

⁴ Cf. *Confessions* 8.3.7.

foundation" of St. Ignatius of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*. "Man is created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul,"⁵ Ignatius writes, and since everything on earth has been created to help him in reaching this end, he should consider only how something aids in his return to God, not whether it is pleasant to him. Consequently, Ignatius concludes, we should not prefer health to sickness, riches to poverty, honor to dishonor, a long life to a short life,⁶ but instead redraw the map concerning pleasure and pain, apparent goods and apparent evils. In the words of a recent spiritual son of St. Ignatius, the Jesuit theologian Bernard Lonergan, even when our intelligence is bent on nothing but hedonistic gain, it is capable of recognizing that "objects of aversion" such as physical pain can be, under certain circumstances, surprisingly useful and hence "potential goods."⁷

Giovanni Pico was clearly cognizant of this spiritual principle: in a letter to his nephew Gianfrancesco, he avers that since "the way of synne" is equally or even more painful than the "wey of god," it would be a "point of extreme madness if we had not leuer labour there where we go from labour to rewarde then where we go fro labour to paine."⁸ The first, second, and eleventh rules of his *Duodecim Regulæ* appeal to a similar logic: the way of virtue may be hard, but no harder than the way of sin. On the contrary, Pico implies, the nadirs of the virtuous life are not so low and its zeniths much higher than the life of vice. Even on the basis of the pleasure

⁵ *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola*, trans. Elder Mullan, S.J. (New York: P.J. Kennedy & Sons, 1914), 23.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Cf. Bernard Lonergan, S.J., *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1958/1978), 606-607.

⁸ *CW* 1, 79, More's translation.

principle alone, the Christian ascetic may actually be better off than the unhampered voluptuary.

Pleasure and Pain in More's Adaptations

In his translation of the three duodecalogues mentioned earlier, More substantially amplifies this dimension of Pico's thinking. The side note to the 1557 edition of the first duodecalogue, the "Twelve Rules of John Picus Earl of Mirandula" was most likely not penned by More, but it is an apt summary of both the first rule and of the entire composition in More's hands: "If We refuse the Way of Virtue for that it is Painful, for the Like Cause ought We to refuse the Way of Sin."⁹ In the first and second rules More faithfully transposes Pico's arguments, namely, that: 1) life is painful either way, so one might as well choose the life of virtue; and 2) that the life of sin is actually more difficult and less enjoyable. More expatiates on Pico's third and fourth rules to keep this theme alive. Whereas Pico enjoins his reader in the third rule to remember that, given the example of the Cross, "it is foolish to believe that he can reach heaven except by a battle of this kind."¹⁰ More replaces the reference to a battle with the underlying reason why sinners wish to avoid spiritual battle in the first place, namely, that they, like Anima in Hildegard's play, foolishly "look for heaven with pleasure and delight."¹¹ And whereas Pico implicitly appeals in the fourth rule to

⁹ *CW* 1, 103, fn 21. The modernized spelling and syntax for this passage are taken from *The Life of John Pico and Poems on Spiritual Combat*, ed. Jeffrey S. Lehman (Center for Thomas More Studies, 2009), p. 50, ll. 6-7, heretofore *Life*, 50, ll. 6-7.

¹⁰ *CW* 1, 372, ll. 10-11. Translation mine.

¹¹ *CW* 1, 104, l. 8; *Life*, 51, l. 5.

the reader's sense of knightly honor when he says that we should follow the path of our Lord even if there is no reward, More casts this honor in terms of the "delight" of being conformed to our "blessed Lord and Saviour."¹²

More dutifully repeats the rest of Pico's rules in the first duodecalogue on how to wage a successful campaign against the life of vice. However, in the eleventh rule, which originally compares the "sweetness of victory" (*dulcedo victoriac*) to "the sweetness of sin" (*dulcedo peccati*).¹³ More makes several small but significant changes. First, he replaces "sweeter" (*dulcius*) with "more pleasure" and "the sin to which temptation inclines you" (*peccatum ad quod te [tentatio] inclinat*) with "beastly pleasure."¹⁴ This is followed by two verses not found in Pico:

Of virtue more joy the conscience hath within
Than outward the body of all his filthy sin.¹⁵

More goes on to compare the "joy of victory" to the "sensual pleasure" of concupiscence which foolish men consider to be the only real kind of pleasure. Whereas Pico traces the origin of such folly to deception, More claims that they have not thought the matter through, that they are behaving like dumb beasts "unadvisedly/ lacking discretion."¹⁶ More thus brings into sharper focus two different kinds of pleasure, one spiritual and one carnal, and prompts the reader, even if only for the sake of selfishness, to weigh carefully the merits of each.

¹² *CW* 1, 105, ll. 18-20; *Life*, 51, ll. 18-20.

¹³ *CW* 1, 374, l. 25.

¹⁴ Cf. Pico's words (in *CW* I:374, ll. 23 and 34) vs., respectively, More's (in *CW* I:374, ll. 4 and 6; *Life*, 56, ll. 17 and 19).

¹⁵ *CW* 1, 108, ll. 7-8; *Life*, 56, ll. 20-21.

¹⁶ *CW* 1, 108, ll. 12-13; *Life*, 56, l. 26; 57, l. 1.

More has a similar aim in his emendation of Pico's second duodecalogue, "The Twelve Weapons of Spiritual Battle, which Everyman Should Have at Hand When the Pleasure of a Sinful Temptation Cometh to Mind."¹⁷ More's retooling is apparent from the title alone, for he has replaced Pico's *libido peccandi* (the lust for sinning) with the "pleasure of a sinful temptation."¹⁸ And it is evident in his diction elsewhere in the poem, as when More writes of "eternal joy" as the contrast to "eternal pain" rather than Pico's "eternal reward" (*aeternum praemium*).¹⁹ In his various stanzas More dexterously develops Pico's original themes on the paucity, brevity, futility, and troublesome character of carnal pleasure, and he even configures some concepts that may not have been intended as an example of righteous pleasure. Pico's ninth weapon, "The Peace of a Good Mind,"²⁰ could easily be a designation of noetic satisfaction or rest, the absence of internal conflict, or the good that comes from rightly ordered appetites and emotions. Thomas More, however, again turns to the prism of pleasure to elucidate this weapon:

Why lovest thou so this brittle world's 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 warranties
Thou shalt no pleasure comparable find
To th' inward gladness of a virtuous mind.²¹

¹⁷ *CW* 1, 109, ll. 13-15; *Life*, 58, ll. 15-18.

¹⁸ For Pico's original wording, cf. *CW* 1, 376, l. 7.

¹⁹ For Pico's wording, cf. *CW* 1, 376, l. 14; for More's, cf. *CW* 1, 109, l. 18; *Life*, 59, l. 3.

²⁰ For Pico's wording, cf. *CW* 1, 376, l. 16; for More's, cf. *CW* 1, 109, l. 20; *Life*, 59, l. 5.

²¹ *CW* 1, 112, ll. 7-13; *Life*, 61, ll. 29-31 and 62, ll. 1-4.

For More, it would seem, the peace of a good mind is a powerful spiritual good because it is the greatest pleasure a human being can experience.

More's ruminations on pleasure and pain continue in the "Twelve Properties or Conditions of a Lover,"²² his expansion of Pico's *Duodecim Conditiones Amantis*.²³ The defining traits of a passionate lover are an ideal venue for exploring the relationship between happiness, pleasure, and pain, for love, as Romeo once remarked, is both "a madness most discreet" and "a preserving sweet."²⁴ The smitten lover is deliriously happy, or at least joyful, even when in the most exquisite pain for no other reason than that his pain is subordinated to or flows from a higher unity, actual or anticipated, with the object of his desire. Pico and More's comparison of the sometimes silly and hyperbolic thoughts and deeds of lovers with those of the lovers of God is also an effective way of putting into perspective the often unconventional and excessive actions of the saints, God's most passionate lovers: for when someone is in love, be it with a human paramour or the Divine Spouse, he or she is apt to do things deemed senseless or bizarre by everyone else. This, in turn, reveals divine love as the crucial component in inspiring and elevating the embrace of the right kind of pain and the avoidance of the wrong kind of pleasure. Without a consuming love of God, the ascetical disposition commended by Pico and More could easily degenerate into a form of masochistic hedonism.

The purpose behind More's elaborations on the gleefully lovesick beau in Pico's poem is especially obvious in his treatment of

²² *CW* 1, 113, l. 11; *Life*, 63, ll. 5-6.

²³ *CW* 1, 376, l. 20.

²⁴ *Romeo and Juliet* 1.i.199-200.

the ninth property: "even to wish to suffer something detrimental and [to have] that detriment be sweet."²⁵ The word I have translated here as "detriment(al)" is *incommodum*, something inconvenient, troublesome, disadvantageous, or harmful. In More's "Twelve Properties or Conditions of a Lover," this property has been promoted from ninth to fifth and rendered "To desire also to suffer harm for his love, and to think that hurt sweet."²⁶ Both appearances of *incommodum* have been translated by More with terms associated more with pain ("harm" and "hurt") than with mere adversity. In the subsequent "Balade" section More goes on to express what might be the core of this thinking on the question of pleasure and pain:

Not only a lover content is in his heart
But coveteth eke and longeth to sustain
Some labour, incommodity, or smart,
Loss, adversity, trouble, grief, or pain:
And of his sorrow joyful is and fain,
And happy thinketh himself that he may take
Some misadventure for his lover's sake.

Love is so powerful a force that it not only overcomes the fear of pain but it converts that fear into a positive desire. If this is true on a natural level, it is much more so on the supernatural, when the object of love is a God who gladly suffered "trouble, pain, and woe," and in so doing has taken on our "dolour, grief, and adversity."²⁸

And if true love — that is, love of the True — is the key to sorting out and transforming the miasma of pleasure and pain, then it is appropriate that both Pico and More turn from a theory of love to its practice. Pico's *Depraecatoria ad Deum* is essentially a love letter

²⁵ *CW* 1:376, l. 30. Trans. mine.

²⁶ *CW* 1, 113, ll. 16-17; *Life*, 63, l. 13.

²⁷ *CW* 1, 116, ll. 4-10; *Life*, 65, l. 7-13.

²⁸ *CW* 1, 116, ll. 13 and 16; *Life*, 66, ll. 17 and 20.

to God begging for the ability to love Him better. "Grant, I pray," Pico writes, "that the ardor in our hearts may be equal to this great love [You have for us] that burns forever."²⁹ Pico ends with a poignant petition for the transformation of his love for God from that of a servant to that of a son:

And when...my spirit has been led before its Lord,
And comes to possess the happy lot of the promised
kingdom,
May it experience you not as a Lord but as a Father.³⁰

Thomas More not only keeps these features intact, he refines them further. More, for instance, substitutes Pico's concluding word *Finis* for a more appropriate Christian conclusion to prayer: "Amen."

More's Linguistic Modifications

Besides his intensification of the theme of pleasure and pain, Thomas More makes at least three other significant modifications to Pico's original writings: he translates them into English, he versifies them, and he magnifies them. Each of these merits greater attention.

More's decision to translate Pico's works into English was no doubt animated in part by the goal of reaching an audience wider than the educated elite who knew Latin. True, his immediate audience would still have to be literate and hence to some extent educated, but even here his chances of reaching out to the uneducated English classes were greater by his use of their mother tongue; for if perhaps they ever heard these poems, they would be able to understand them. Seen in this light, More's progressive use

²⁹ *CW* 1, 380, ll. 68-69. Trans. mine.

³⁰ *CW* 1, 380, ll. 75-77. Trans. mine.

and development of the English language (e.g., his coining of neologisms) could be evidence of a desire to reach the so-called common man.

More's versification of Pico appears to stem from a similar motivation. Pico's three duodecalogues were originally written in prose and his "Prayer unto God" in unrhymed verse. More, on the other hand, employs for all of his translations of these works the fairly sophisticated *rhyme royal*, a seven-line stanza in iambic pentameter with an *ababbcc* rhyming scheme previously used by Dante, Chaucer, and Boccaccio. *Rhyme royal*, however, despite its lofty title and degree of refinement, is not limited to the few.³¹ On the contrary, it has been speculated that rhyming techniques were pioneered by medieval clerics to aid unlettered worshippers in their appropriation of catechetical doctrines and rubrical directions.³² Thomas More may have had the same aim with his use of the fetching sequences of rhymed endings in *rhyme royal*.

Lending further support to the contention that More is targeting a wide audience and endeavoring to make a profound impact on them are the kinds of interpolations found in More's translations. Of the twenty-eight additions, noted and bracketed by Jeffrey Lehman in his edition,³³ that More makes to Pico's "Twelve Rules," approximately half of them add greater emotional timbre to the text either through vivid imagery or exhortation. Instead of Pico's "worms' meat,"³⁴ More says that we will all be "vile carrion

³¹ The name is said to be in honor of the Scottish king James I, who wrote poetry of this kind; it does not designate the intended audience or its circle of admirers. Cf. *A Handbook to Literature*, 5th ed., eds. C. Hugh Holman and William Harmon (New York: Macmillan, 1986), 432.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Cf. *Life*, *op. cit.*

³⁴ *CW* 1, 376, l. 5.

and wretched worms' meat",³⁵ instead of "perpetual pain,"³⁶ More mentions "fire and perpetual pain",³⁷ instead of Christ's death on a tree.³⁸ More speaks of Christ's "most odious and vile death on a tree."³⁹ There are also emotionally provocative elements in More's version that are not counted by Lehman as separate additions. Rather than speak generically of Christ's crucifixion,⁴⁰ More adverts to His "manly fight" and "bitter passion",⁴¹ and in place of Pico's "smashing the babes of Babylon at the stone,"⁴² More enjoins the reader: "Beat out their brains therefore at the stone"⁴³ — as if the original were not graphic enough! In sum, More is making his writing have a deeper impression on his audience by employing imagery that is arresting and difficult to forget.⁴⁴

³⁵ *CW* 1, 109, 112; *Life*, 58, 1. 12.

³⁶ *CW* 1, 372, 1. 9.

³⁷ *CW* 1, 104, 1. 5; *Life*, 50, 1. 26.

³⁸ Cf. *CW* 1, 372, 1. 23.

³⁹ *CW* 1, 105, 1. 7; *Life*, 52, 1. 10.

⁴⁰ *CW* 1, 372, 1. 12.

⁴¹ *CW* 1, 104, 11. 10-11; *Life*, 51, 11. 7-8.

⁴² *CW* 1, 374, 1. 20.

⁴³ *CW* 1, 107, 1. 25; *Life*, 56, 1. 8.

⁴⁴ A similar pattern is discernible in More's changes to the remaining duodecalogues and the *Deprecatória*. In "The Twelve Weapons," More changes the sixth weapon from a "suspicion [*suspicio*] of impenitent departing" (*CW* 1, 376, 1. 13) to a "fear" of impenitent departing (*CW* 1, 109, 11. 16-17; *Life*, 59, 1. 2). (A suspicion may lead to fear, but it is primarily an intellectual stance, whereas fear, while inspired by the intellect's apprehension of a danger, is an emotion.) More also adds emotionally-charged adjectives to the twelve weapons, as when he speaks of the "great" benefits of God and the "painful" cross of Christ (*CW* 1, 109, 11. 21-22; *Life*, 59, 11. 6-7, resp.). In "The Twelve Properties of a Lover," More's hortatory aims are evident in his expansions on the theme of love in terms of pleasure and pain. And in his "Prayer of Picus Mirandula unto God," he adds "a very tender loving" to "father" in the last line (*CW* 1, 123, 1. 11; *Life*, 74, 1. 27). Interestingly, More omits the descriptive phrases of God that are most likely to arouse a sense of awe, e.g., Pico's praise of God as He "whom the blessed multitude of the angelic choir serves, beyond the flaming walls of the lofty world" and "You who guide the world with a nod, at whose command the lightning bolts

Finally, unlike More's *Life of Pico*, which omits large portions of the original, his renderings of the duodecalogues contain more additions than omissions, and substantial ones at that. The most obvious cases are the "Twelve Weapons of Spiritual Battle," "The Twelve Properties or Conditions of a Lover," and "And a Prayer of Picus Mirandula," wherein More turns twelve lines into ninety-six, twenty-six lines into one hundred ninety-five, and sixty-two lines into eighty-eight, respectively. But it is also evident in "The Twelve Rules," which augments its twelve omissions with the aforesaid twenty-eight additions. Thomas More no doubt dwells at length on these topics because he considers them important. The recognition of the primacy of the spiritual battle over any of our temporal struggles, fears, or ambitions, together with a personal and passionate love of God, mark the crucial beginning of what spiritual writers call the interior life. It is More's goal, it would appear, to goad as many as possible to that life with a more robust, memorable, and accessible treatment than Pico's insightful but comparatively sparse outline.

Conclusion

In the *Ordo Virtutum*, a chastened Anima eventually finds her way back to God. Stinking from the wounds "with which the ancient serpent infected" her,⁴⁵ she does not need to be asked twice

fall" (*CW* 1, 378, 11. 18-19 and 22-23, resp. Trans. mine). It is as if More wished to keep the emotional connotation of the prayer tensely focused on God's "dreadful majesty" and "rigorous judgment" (*CW* 1, 120, 11. 13 and 20; *Life*, 71, 11. 13 and 21, resp.), with no release afforded by the intellectual "Ah" of wonder.

⁴⁵ III.171-72. Trans. mine.

by the Virtues to "put on the armour of light,"⁴⁶ nor does she hesitate any longer to tell Satan, "I have recognized that all my ways were evil... but now, O trickster, I am fighting against you!"⁴⁷ Anima has learned through bitter experience what St. Thomas More hopes can be gained through sincere spiritual reading and prayer, namely, that shirking pain at the expense of spiritual growth brings in its wake a pain that is pointless, destructive, and worse than that which was initially avoided. It has been said that a wise man learns from his mistakes while a wiser man learns from the mistakes of others. By his liberal translations of Pico's three duodecalogues and *Deprecatoria*, Thomas More is hoping to make his foolish readers wise and his wise readers wiser. Fittingly, More's own last days bear eloquent testimony to the kind of difficult but happy life in the midst of pain that is adumbrated in these, his earliest works:

Thus should of God the lover be content
 Any distress or sorrow to endure,
 Rather than to be from God absent,
 And glad to die, so that he may be sure
 By his departing hence for to procure,
 After this valley dark, the heavenly light,
 And of his love the glorious blessed sight.⁴⁸

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⁴⁶ III.184.

⁴⁷ IV.212-13.

⁴⁸ *CW* 1, 115, ll. 26-30 and 116, ll. 1-2; *Life*, 65, ll. 30-33 and 66, ll. 1-3.

The Subordination of Humanism: Young More's 'Profitable' Work, *The Life of John Pico*¹

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This article revisits the often argued question of the relationship between More's English *Life of Pico* and his Latin original. However, instead of emphasizing More's transformation of his humanist model into what is essentially a work of medieval piety, the article arrives at the conclusion that humanism and faith in More's text mutually reinforce each other. By looking in detail at some of More's changes to Gianfrancesco's Latin biography, especially his striking omissions of intrusive authorial comments, the paper will argue that More turns his model into a much more open and contradictory text, thus provoking his readers to reflect upon their own state of soul in comparison with Pico's. In addition, More's transformation of his appended material from Pico's writings also makes it clear that his humanism remains essentially subordinate to his faith.

Keywords: *The Life of John Pico*, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Humanism, Christian devotion, translation

Cet article reprend la question souvent débattue de la relation entre The Life of John Pico de Thomas More et le texte latin d'origine. Cependant, au lieu de mettre l'accent sur la transformation du modèle humaniste dans ce qui est essentiellement une œuvre de dévotion, l'article réussit à conclure que l'humanisme et la foi qui sont au cœur du texte de More se renforcent mutuellement. En étudiant dans le détail les changements que More apporte à la biographie latine de Gianfrancesco, notamment aux remarquables omissions

¹ This paper first took shape in a seminar at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, led by David Loewenstein and Michael Witmore, and matured during the Center for Thomas More Studies 2009 conference: 'Thomas More's *Life of Pico* & Earliest Works.' I'm indebted to the conference organizers and participants, especially Gerard Wegemer, and to the Wisconsin faculty for their encouragement and insightful comments both upon my draft and upon More's *Life of Pico*.