

HYTHLODAY AS PREACHER
AND A POSSIBLE DEBT TO MACROBIUS

Dorsch's interesting interpretation¹ of *Utopia* in terms of a Lucianic *jeu d'esprit* neglects the main target of Hythloday's impassioned rhetoric, i.e. his denunciations of the rich and mighty people of his day. An analysis of Hythloday's rhetoric, which is not my aim here, might well demonstrate how the emotional peaks of his speech in Book I and Book II are thematically related to his crushing indictment of the sins of the rich.

Raphael Hythloday is a fictional character who operates in a historical milieu. Through this device More achieves an astonishing degree of satiric verisimilitude which gives added poignancy to Hythloday's criticism of corrupt Europe. The division of *Utopia* into two books in fact emphasizes two methods of satiric attack which More had defined in his letter to Dorp.² After ridiculing Dorp's inability to endure sharp satiric thrusts in terms which are to occur again in More's letter to Petrus Aegidius,³ he goes on to draw a line between straightforward invective ("...qui in malos aperte ac simpliciter invehitur") and a more elegant way of indirect criticism ("non minus eleganter quam acerbe", "sumpta Moriae persona, quod Erasmus fecit")⁴ which employs a poetic fiction in order to drive home its point. These two methods of attack are applied in Book I and II of *Utopia* respectively. The figure of the traveller Raphael Hythloday, who is also both an uncompromising saint and a skilful philosopher well trained in the art of dialectics, is perfectly suited to report on an "ideal" state situated on the other side of the globe. One of the most influential and eloquent defences of the use of fictions by philosophers who want to teach virtue can be found in Macrobius' Commentary on *Scipio's Dream*,⁵ to which I will turn in the second part of this paper.

Since the truthfulness of the account of the traveller and philosopher Hythloday is disavowed through his very name ("speaker of nonsense") it has been said that Hythloday is a version of the wise fool,⁶ who is allowed to speak the unadorned truth about the court, the clergy, and the

1. T.S. Dorsch, "Sir Thomas More and Lucian: An Interpretation of *Utopia*", *Archiv* 203 (1967), 345-363.

2. E.F. Rogers, *The Correspondence of Sir Thomas More*, Princeton, 1947, 67-68.

3. *Utopia*, eds. Surtz and Hexter, vol. 4 of More's Complete Works, Yale U.P., 1965 (siglum here CW-4), 44: "iocos", "sales". Ever since Horace's 'sermones' the word 'sal' has been used to define metaphorically the specific qualities of sharp, biting satire. Cf. Ep. II, 2, 60: "Carmine tu gaudes, hic delectatur iambis, Ille Bioneis sermonibus et sale nigro."

4. Rogers, 67-68.

5. Cf. Macrobius, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*. Transl. with an Introduction and Notes by William Harris Stahl (New York, 1952).

6. A.L. Heiserman, "Satire in the *Utopia*", *PMLA* 78 (1963), 167.

times in general. Both Raphael's intense moral indignation and the specific objects which arouse it are in fact thoroughly conventional. He voices complaints which are the stock-in-trade of contemporary preachers.¹

- I -

Despite the hints contained in the name 'Raphael'² hardly any attempt has been made to view both Hythloday's rhetoric and his moral standards in the light of the tradition of preaching.³ The archangel and heavenly physician Raphael "qui medicinae praeest" (Orig. in Num. hom.)⁴ comes from a country with 'holy institutions' (CW-4, 102: "sanctissima instituta"), where the deadly sin 'superbia' has been radically removed. The angel's two functions as physician and as a scourge of Satan metaphorically define the serious roles of the conventional satiric *persona*. Accordingly, Raphael Hythloday offers, couched in a philosophical discussion, both remedies⁵ for the sick body politic and savage attacks on the evils of his time. Thus the frequent use of the medical metaphor in *Utopia*⁶ not only testifies to the pervasive influence of an age-old classical tradition of commonplaces (cf. CW-4, clv). In structural terms it also serves to emphasize the angelic and satiric function of the main speaker. Medical metaphors are, of course, abundantly used in all sermons dealing with the deplorable state of the church.

Raphael's concluding summing-up (*peroratio*, CW-4, 236-244) of the evils of contemporary society has the feel of medieval complaint. His final message is one of Christian pessimism:

Neque mihi quidem dubitare subit, quin uel sui cuiusque commodi ratio, uel CHRISTI seruatoris autoritas [...] totum orbem facile

1. Cf. W. Owst's chapter "The Preaching of Satire and Complaint" in his *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1933). J.W. Blench's *Preaching in England in the late Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries. A Study of English Sermons 1450-1600* (Oxford, 1964) is disappointing.

2. Cf. on this the informative study by Elizabeth McCutcheon, "Thomas More, Raphael Hythlodæus, and the Angel Raphael", *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* 9 (1969), 21ff., Ulrich Mölk, "Philologische Bemerkungen zu Thomas Morus' *Utopia*", *Anglia* 82 (1964), 315-316 (unfortunately not noticed by E. McCutcheon and the Yale editors) and my own *Wandlungen der Form in der literarischen Utopie. Studien zur Entfaltung des utopischen Romans in England* (Göppingen, 1970), 52-54. On Raphael see also R.S. Sylvester's stimulating article "Si Hythlodæo credimus: Vision and Revision in Thomas More's *Utopia*", *Soundings* (1968), 272-289 and Robbin Johnson's thoughtful and often illuminating general study *More's Utopia: Ideal and Illusion* (New Haven and London, 1969).

3. There are only some vague references to the medieval tradition; cf. P.A. Duhamel's "Medievalism of More's *Utopia*", SP 52 (1955), 99ff. Duhamel's attempt to view even the style of *Utopia* in the light of the scholastic tradition is misleading. - R.C. Elliott, "The Shape of *Utopia*" *ELH* 30 (1963), 331. - Thomas More, *Le Traité de la Meilleure Forme de Gouvernement ou L'Utopie*, texte traduit et commenté par Marie Delcourt (Bruxelles, 1966), IV-V on medieval social unrest.

4. *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* (Stuttgart, 1962), V, 253.

5. Cf. CW-4, 96.

6. CW-4, 94, 96, 100, 104.

in huius Reipublicae leges iam dudum traxisset, nisi una tantum belua, *omnium princeps parensque pestium superbia*, reluctaretur. (CW-4, 242, italics mine)

Since the fallen state of mankind is due to the rule of 'superbia' ("averni serpens", CW-4, 242), i.e. of disobedience of God's commandments, the realization of Utopia in this world remains an ontological impossibility. Contrary to his socialist interpreters, Hythloday, as spokesman of Thomas More, is well aware of this circumstance. It is a conviction which he shares with the anonymous preacher, who expresses it in almost the same words: "This pest, namely of pride, is mother and source of all the vices."¹ The pest of pride infects the whole social body, producing various kinds of subsidiary evils such as 'avarice', 'vanity', 'idleness' etc. which in their turn are responsible for the miserable state of the poor. All these evils are savagely castigated in the course of Hythloday's speech: the very words themselves are repeated again and again. In accordance with the theory of medieval thinkers² Hythloday's analysis of the economic and political situation of Europe implicitly reaffirms the superiority of moral laws over economic expediency. I agree with J.H. Hexter's verdict: "In its fundamental structure it [the Utopian commonwealth] is a great social instrument for the subjugation of pride."³ "Pride", says Hythloday, "can have no place in the Utopian scheme of things." One should add, however, that neither the preachers nor the Utopians see any inherent contradiction between what is useful and what is good. They do not separate virtue and reason. In Utopia, where virtue reigns, the importance of useful occupations is constantly stressed: "nec inutilibus opificiis occupata" (CW-4, 132), "omnes utilibus sese artibus exercent" (CW-4, 134). Hythloday's censures of the vices of an idle and wordly clergy (CW-4, 100; 228) are anticipated in innumerable sermons: "More do they [the clergymen] abound in eatings and drinkings than do lay-people as a rule, and they are more given up to idleness: for neither in bodily nor in spiritual things do they know how to occupy themselves usefully. Whence follow the aforesaid vices..."⁴ Compare this with Raphael's ironic attack on the "so-called religious" and the rich: "Besides, how great and how lazy is the crowd of priests and so-called religious! Add to them all the rich, especially the masters of estates, who are commonly termed gentlemen and noblemen." (CW-4, 131)

1. Owst, 314.

2. Cf. R.H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, 1926 (repr. Harmondsworth, 1966), 59.

3. J.H. Hexter, *More's 'Utopia': The Biography of an Idea* (Princeton, 1952), quoted in: *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Utopia*, ed. W. Nelson (A Spectrum Book, 1968), 64.

For an excellent analysis of the ethical and philosophical norms of *Utopia* see H. Schulte Herbrüggen, *Utopie und Anti-Utopie. Von der Strukturanalyse zur Strukturtypologie*, Beiträge zur englischen Philologie 43 (Bochum, 1960), 24ff.

4. Owst, 260. Cf. Owst, 319.

Although it is true that the words "avarice" and "pride" do not occur too often in *Utopia*, it has not been sufficiently realized that they occur at structurally important points. The most striking instance, Raphael's 'peroratio', has already been pointed out. Pride, which "can have no place in the Utopian scheme of things" (CW-4, 139; cf. CW-4, 155, 197), is first mentioned by Raphael in a sentence which serves both as a final verdict on the stupid conservatism of counsellors and a characteristically negative introduction to his merciless analysis of the situation in England: "Itaque in haec superba, absurda, ac morosa iudicia, cum saepe alibi, tum semel in Anglia quoque incidi." (CW-4, 58) Bearing this introduction in mind it seems obvious that the vivid illustration of those "superba ... iudicia" is the chief aim of the dramatic dialogue within the dialogue, the central portion of Book I.

Attempts to explain Raphael's curiously one-sided picture of the rich and the poor have suffered from a failure on the critics' part to look in the right direction for corroborative evidence. The passage in question sounds like a well-worn formula: "...accidit, ut alteri sint alterorum sorte dignissimi, quum illi sint rapaces, improbi atque inutiles, contra hi modesti uiri, ac simplices, cotidiana industria in publicum quam in semet benigniores." (CW-4, 104)

Yet Lupton is evidently at a loss to find a convincing explanation for this stereotyped and morally intransigent view of the rich and the poor: "This sounds rather rhetorical. But perhaps More had in mind a passage from the *Menippus* of Lucian in which the trial of the rich is described."¹ The Yale editors (CW-4, 379) offer quotations from Budé's *Prince* and Platina's *De bono*. It seems to me that Marie Delcourt² is closest to the mark because she stresses the importance of the medieval, Christian tradition. However, no examples are given.

Not only are the poor morally superior to the rich, they are also more useful to the commonwealth. Whereas in the view of the preachers and of Hythloday the rich in particular are prone to all the vices, the "fideles simplices"³ receive praise for their innocent simplicity, honesty and godliness. The striking glorification of hard work in Utopia – the chief task of the syphogrants is to prevent idleness; manual labour is restricted to six hours per day in order to enable the Utopians to pursue intellectual activities, these being more valuable – seems to be an echo of doctrines spread by late medieval homilists like John Bromyard. For idleness breeds idle thoughts, whereas labour shields men from temptation. It is well known that More forbade his servants to waste time on frivolous games.

The preachers share Hythloday's conviction that the poor are exploited by the rich: "the wiche, by colour of lawe and ayens lawe,

1. *The 'Utopia' of Sir Thomas More*, ed. J.H. Lupton (Oxford, 1895), 107.
2. Thomas More, *Le Traité*. . . IV, V.
3. Owst, 572.

robbeth and disployeth the poure peple, now betyng, now sleynge, now puttyng hem from hous and landes." ¹

At one point Hythloday seems, furthermore, to endorse the vision of an agrarian idyll which is rather remote from the actual economic developments in the early sixteenth century:

Cast out these ruinous plagues. Make laws that the destroyers of farmsteads and country villages should either restore them or hand them over to people who will restore them and who are ready to build. Restrict this right of rich individuals to buy up everything and this license to exercise a kind of monopoly for themselves. Let fewer be brought up in idleness. Let farming be resumed and let cloth-working be restored once more that there may be honest jobs to employ usefully that idle throng... (CW-4, 69/71)

His call for a return to the virtues of an autonomous agrarian community with everyone usefully employed is reminiscent both of escapist literary idylls in the tradition of Vergil and the image of the better life used by preachers and humanists² alike to expose the corrupting influence of the town and the new commercialism. Since the ideal of this passage does not even conform with his later proposition to abolish private property, I am inclined to interpret it not as a "rational, coherent" "theoretical solution"³ of the social problems of sixteenth-century England but as momentary relapse into habitual literary responses.

The image of the ideal husbandman as developed in the sermons requires that he should be a producer of wool.⁴ As late as the middle of the sixteenth century the Protestant reformer Martin Bucer, similarly concerned with the moral advancement of society rather than the material gain of individuals and seemingly unaware of the rapid growth of wool-production and cloth-industry in England, solemnly argues against the export of wool in order to ensure honest and useful work for the poor. He also pleads for a large-scale restoration of agriculture and a severe restriction of the right of bad individuals ("...pauci mali & noxij ciues [uti sunt, quicumque priuatas res suas, quam rempublicam amplius student augere]")⁵ to buy up everything, to turn arable land into pasture and to evict the tenants. Bucer's idea of the good life implies an identification of (relative) poverty, piety, and usefulness, which is partly based on the Scriptures, partly on ancient models of social thinking like

1. Owst, 324.
2. Cf. Rogers, 6-7. Letter to Colet (23 October 1504).
3. Johnson, 56. Johnson's criticism of the "coercive" nature of Hythloday's theoretical solution implies liberal standards of judgement which do not do justice to near-medieval thinking. From this point of view the theory of the fixed price, supported by many responsible theologians of More's time, would be just as unrealistic and "coercive". For the same reasons I doubt whether even Cardinal Morton would have approved of the phrase "society's corrective mechanisms". The general soundness of Johnson's argument is not affected by this criticism.
4. Cf. Owst, 357, 361.
5. Martin Bucer, *De Regno Christi Jesu Seruatoris nostri Libri II* (Basel, 1557), 200.

that of Plutarch. Despite the widening gap between social reality and moral theory, the topos of the simple, pious, industrious, self-sufficient farmer continues to serve as a social model in the thinking of eminent churchmen till the seventeenth century.¹ In the light of this evidence it seems that the remedies envisaged by Hythloday are typical of the wishful thinking of a fairly large section of conservative Christian radicals, both Catholic and Protestant, of More's time.² The problem of poverty and the attitudes taken by the Christian religion towards it are clearly more complicated than would appear from the brief comments we have made so far. The position of both Hythloday and the preachers is somewhat ambivalent. On the one hand poverty is, partly on the authority of the Gospel, idealized in a quasi-mystical fashion and on the other we find perceptive descriptions of the disastrous moral and physical effects of excessive want. If poverty is recommended as a social ideal the reader or listener is, therefore, obviously expected to think of a pious, simple life with, however, sufficient provisions to keep body and soul together.

Hythloday's rhetoric points back to the ancient tradition of *diatribe*³ which in Christian times had been adapted to the uses of pulpit oratory. It would be futile, therefore, to search for specific sources. Rhetorical devices such as antitheses, provocative rhetorical questions, animal metaphors, lists of abusive words, fictitious *interlocutores* whose objections are easily destroyed, irony, jokes, *exempla*, and imperatives have always been the characteristic weapons of moralists intent on lashing out against the moral depravity of society. Although Hythloday's analysis of the ills of contemporary society is intellectually on an altogether higher level than anything one can find in the sermons, he now and again almost habitually employs devices and formulae which are reminiscent of sermon practices.

In Book II Raphael pokes fun at the stupidity of the avaricious rich man who hides his gold in the earth, thus depriving even himself of its benefits: "quid enim aliud est, usibus demptum tuis & omnium fortasse mortalium, telluri reddere? & tu tamen abstruso thesauro, uelut animi iam securus laetitia gestis." (CW-4, 168, 170) Hythloday does not

1. Robert South: "To be pious is the way to be poor", in: *Sermons preached upon Several Occasions*, 5 vols. (Oxford, 1842), I, 56. "And the poor labouring peasant, with his coarse fare, and a good conscience to season and make a feast of it, feeds as cheerfully, and with as much inward satisfaction, as his great landlord or flourishing neighbour." (II, 42) - Jeremy Taylor, *The Whole Works*, ed. R. Heber (London, 1822), V, 2: "we find sinners prosperous ... and innocence is oppressed, and the poor cries and he wants a patron." - V, 223: "If men did but know what felicity dwells in the cottage of a virtuous poor man, how sound he sleeps, how quiet his breast..." On the social thinking of Anglican churchmen see Wilfried Keutsch's intelligent *Das Bild der Gesellschaft in anglikanischen Predigten des 17. Jhs.* (phil. Diss., Tübingen, 1967)

2. The explanation given for this passage in the *Commentary* (CW-4, 339/340) is too laboured and far-fetched to be convincing.

3. *Reallexikon...* (Stuttgart, 1957), III, 998ff.

address himself to More or Peter Giles, but to an imaginary opponent whom Augustine in his sermon on *Avaritia* mockingly calls "O Dives."¹ Thus More introduces a powerful rhetorical device at the expense of realism.

Wimbleton, in a sermon against the cupidity of the rich, uses the hyperbole of the rich men devouring the poor: "And covetise maketh, also, that rich men eat the poore, as beastes done their lesous [pastures], holding them lowe."² This image of the voracious man-beast signalling the chaotic nature of a world gone topsy-turvy is to reappear in the most famous passage of *Utopia*: "Ergo ut unus helluo inexplebilis ac dira pestis patriae, continuatis agris, aliquot millia iugerum uno circumdet septo, eijciuntur coloni." (CW-4, 66)

It is the very absence of pride, avarice, and cupidity which makes the Utopian Commonwealth the very opposite of Christian Europe: "What sort of holiness did the Utopians possess to merit the heavenly grace of not having avarice and cupidity break or creep into that island alone for so many centuries, of not having them drive out and expel justice and decency by their audacity and shamelessness?" (CW-4, 11) exclaims Budé in his letter to Lupset. More's satirically effective fiction of Utopia is based on a number of antitheses, moral, social, and geographical, which are part and parcel of the traditional outlook of educated men all over Europe. What renders his fiction exciting and new is the ingenious mixture of certain elements, not the elements themselves. More argues within a common framework of moral norms and emotional attitudes the chief elements of which seem to be the following: vice and virtue, true Christians and bad Christians, private property and common possession of property, reason and passion, this world and the other world. As for the Utopian Commonwealth the logic of the fiction of an ideal heathen community implies that allowances must be made for the fact that the Utopians lack the light of revelation.

All this is well known. It seems, however, worth remembering that the preachers' set of norms does not basically differ from the one given above. It is furthermore quite conceivable that More's central idea of contrasting corrupt, avaricious Europe with a model state where private property (with its concomitant vices) has been abolished was not only

1. *Reallexikon...*, III, 1004. - In the tradition of the Morality Play the allegorical figure *Avaritia* represents a particular aspect of sinful life; cf. W. Habicht's comment (*Studien zur Dramenform vor Shakespeare*, Heidelberg 1968, 56) on *Humanum Genus* in *The Castle of Perseverance*: "Doch bildhafter ist seine Sündenmanifestation in der zweiten Sündenphase derselben Moralität; hier dominiert *Avaritia* als das typische Laster des Alters noch stärker als in der ersten, und *Humanum Genus* zeigt sich momentweise, im Einklang mit vielen ikonographischen Darstellungen der Habsucht, als Geizhals, der begierig Geld in Empfang nimmt, das er vergraben will." This image is originally biblical. Cf. Germain Marchadour, *The Bible in the Works of St. Thomas More* (Nieuwkoop, 1969), II, 26: "Hoard not up your treasure in earth..."

2. *Dwst*, 305.

sparked off by Vespucci's report on entirely different countries in another hemisphere but also by the preachers' current practice of opposing the deplorable state of their Church, i.e. of contemporary Christendom, with the idealism, innocence and communism of the Apostolic Church. Vague references¹ to ancient communism are sometimes used to give added force to criticism of the abuses of the rich: "In commune to all, rich and poore, the earth was made. Why will ye rich chalenge proper right therein?"² There is, however, no attempt to probe further into the social, political, and moral consequences of the abolition of private property.

The marginal comments of *Utopia*, probably written by Erasmus and Giles (cf. CW-4, 280, 281) and obviously approved of by the author, are intended as an aid for those readers who might miss the satiric meaning of the fiction. They are constant reminders that the description of the happy isle must not be primarily read for its own sake but as a veiled criticism of Christendom. Yet the point of reference implied in these annotations very often is not the ideal republic Utopia in the other hemisphere existing simultaneously with Europe but some vague, better past with which it is associated: "Nulli urbi cupido promouendorum finium." (CW-4, 112) Marginal note: "At hinc hodie pestis rerumpublicarum omnium." Temporal adverbs like "nunc" and "hodie" are repeatedly used throughout the marginal notes to refer to the corrupt state of contemporary European society. The importance of these glosses should not, of course, be overstressed. Since they form, however, an organic part of the literary product as intended by its author it is interesting to note that he accepted interpretations of the main text which tend to undermine the tangible, geographical "reality" of the model commonwealth by linking it up with general, widespread ideas of an ideal past. There is a revealing passage in *The Life of Pico* translated by More which acutely sums up the moral and literary function of the antithetical presentation of virtue and vice, past and present: "But rather the more worshipful that our ancestors were, the more vile and shameful be we, if we decline from the steps of their worshipful living: the clear beauty of whose virtue maketh the dark spot of our vice the more evidently to appear and to be the more marked."³ The evil nature of vice is shown up more clearly by contrasting it with virtue. In *The Ship of Fools* Barclay conjures up literary reminiscences of ancient and virtuous Rome for satiric purposes.

1. In her *Social Criticism in Popular Religious Literature of the Sixteenth Century* (New York, 1944), 26-28, H.C. White mentions an anonymous prose satire *The Praier and Complaite of the Plowman unto Christe* (written shortly after Langland's *Piers Plowman*, finally published in 1531), which supports the idea of Christian Communism.

2. Owst, 305.

3. "The Life of John Picus", in: *English Works*, 1557, p. 2. More here is not translating but adding to his Latin source.

- II -

Traditional geography, which still held its ground at the time More wrote his *Utopia* because of the very uncertainties about the new discoveries, enabled him to locate his moral isle in such a way as to underline the satirically effective antithetical structure of his fiction. Utopia is not simply situated in the Southern hemisphere; More apparently intended it to be diametrically opposed to England and Europe in the South temperate zone:

At in illo nouo orbe terrarum, quem circulus aequator uix tam longe ab hoc nostro orbe semouet: quam uita moresque dissident: foederum nulla fiducia est: quorum ut quodque plurimis ac sanctissimis ceremonijs innodatum fuerit: ita citissime soluitur inuenta facile in uerbis calumnia... (CW-4, 196/198)

Apart from helping to create the illusion of reality the function of the geographical details is to support the purpose of moral, social and political criticism. This strategy of exploiting the geographical, intellectual and moral opposition between the efficient and virtuous Utopians and the lax and corrupt "Ultra-equinocticals" (CW-4, 109) is particularly obvious at the end of Book I and does not require further comment. However brief the genuinely narrative segments of his fiction may be they are almost invariably turned into *exempla* to illustrate a point of moral philosophy. A typical example of this economic and morally controlled method of narration is the short paragraph on the imprudent mariners, who do not use the magnetic needle with the necessary caution and thus provoke disaster - a telling episode, which, by the way, anticipates the moral problem created by modern science.

Because he has chosen an elevated philosophical theme More cannot possibly descend to the level of mere fabulators and please his readers with an extensive travel account. Accordingly, he confines himself to a brief description of Hythloday's journey which, except for the part based on Vespucci, consists of geographical commonplaces thinly dressed up with imaginative details:

To be sure, under the equator and on both sides of the line nearly as far as the sun's orbit extends, there lie waste deserts scorched with continual heat. A gloomy and dismal region looms in all directions without cultivation or attractiveness, inhabited by wild beasts and snakes or, indeed, men no less savage and harmful than are the beasts. But when you have gone a little farther, the country gradually assumes a milder aspect, the climate is less fierce, the ground is covered with a pleasant green herbage, and the nature of living creatures becomes less wild. At length you reach peoples, cities... (CW-4, 53)

Seen in the light of traditional geographical theory one of the most striking features of Hythloday's journey is his crossing of the torrid zone which was considered to be impassable. For according to the view

formulated in the *Somnium Scipionis* and expounded in the *Commentary* of Macrobius the existence of a torrid zone on both sides of the equator made impossible all attempts to establish contacts between the inhabitants of the two temperate zones.¹ Cicero writes :

You see, Scipio, that the inhabited portions on earth are widely separated and narrow, and that vast wastes lie between these inhabited spots, as we might call them ; the earth's inhabitants are so cut off that there can be no communication among different groups ; moreover, some nations stand obliquely, some transversely to you ; and some even stand diametrically opposite you ; from these of course you can expect no fame. You can also make out certain belts, so to speak, which encircle the earth ; you observe that the two which are farthest apart and lie under the poles of the heavens are stiff with cold, whereas the belt in the middle, the greatest one, is scorched with the heat of the sun. The two remaining belts are habitable ; one, the southern, is inhabited by men who plant their feet in the opposite direction to yours and have nothing to do with your people ; the other, the northern, is inhabited by you Romans...²

This view is endorsed by More most explicitly in the passage in which he makes Hythloday say that "according to their chronicles... they had never heard anything about our activities (they call us the Ultra - equinoctials)..."³ (CW-4, 109) It seems characteristic that the only contact he allows previous to Hythloday's arrival serves to emphasize and illustrate one of the most fundamental moral themes of *Utopia* : the shining example of the Utopian Commonwealth will go unheeded in Europe because of the perverse mental attitudes of Europeans.

1. There is no need here to describe in detail the classical and medieval attitudes concerning the existence of Antipodeans in the South temperate zone. Strabo (*Geographia*, 2.5.13) considers as probable the existence there of human beings different from the races he knows. Cicero, less scientifically minded than Strabo and therefore less cautious, seems to take their existence for granted. Augustine devotes a brief section of *De civitate Dei* (XVI, ix) to the Antipodeans ; like Plutarch and Lucrece, he rejects the idea of their existence : he does so, however, on theological grounds. More must have been familiar with that passage ever since he had lectured on *De civitate Dei*. On this and related questions cf. Pauly-Wissowa, *Realencyklopädie*, s.v. Antipoden ; Kimble, G.H.T., *Geography in the Middle Ages* (London, 1938) ; Wright, J.K., *The Geographical Lore of the Time of the Crusades* (New York, 1925), 56, 57. Stahl, W.H., "Astronomy and Geography in Macrobius", *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 73 (1942), 232-258. - Cf. Martiani Minnei Felicis Capellae *De Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii Libri VIII*, ed. A. Dick (Stuttgart, 1969), 298 : "aliae autem duae uitalis aureae habitu temperatae habitationem animalibus indulerunt."

2. Quoted in Macrobius' *Commentary*, 206.

3. More is by no means old-fashioned in repeating this time-honoured geographical topos. Even the geographer Waldseemüller, who ought to have known better, repeats it by quoting a relevant passage from the ancient geographer Pomponius Mela (*Chorographia* I.1.) : see his *Cosmographiae introductio*, transl. Joseph Fischer and Franz von Wieser (Ann Arbor, 1907), 62.

The theory of the existence of Antipodeans, which is central to More's fiction of *Utopia*, was kept alive in the Middle Ages by Macrobius in particular,¹ who was regarded as an authority on geography and on dreams. Ten editions of his *Commentary on Scipio's Dream* from 1472 to 1515 are sufficient proof of his continuing popularity.² There can hardly be any doubt that More was perfectly familiar with what was virtually a basic textbook in his lifetime.

Macrobius, among other writers, also might have furnished More with the second major assumption underlying his location of *Utopia*, i.e. that the five belts encircling the earth are arranged in perfect symmetry and that the corresponding zones are characterized by the same climatic conditions. The *Commentary* contains a diagram to this effect.³ Pace George Parks, who claims that More developed from established geographical doctrine a new theory, which we may call the theory of climatic symmetry,⁴ I cannot discover much "boldness"⁵ or originality in explicitly assuming the existence of civilised Antipodeans about whom Macrobius was able to speculate in the following manner :

If life is possible for us in this quarter of the earth that we inhabit because we tread on the ground and look up at the sky overhead, and thrive upon the abundant air that we inhale, and because the sun rises and sets for us, why should we not assume that there are men living there as well where similar conditions always obtain ? We must agree that the men who are supposed to be dwelling there breathe the same air as we because both zones have the same moderate temperature over their entire circuit ; the same sun will of course be setting for them when it is rising for us and will be rising for them when setting for us ; they will tread the ground as well as we and above their heads will always see the sky. Have no fear they will fall off the earth into the sky, for nothing can ever fall upwards. If for us *down* is the earth and *up* is the sky -- to affirm it is to be

1. Macrobius, *Commentary*, 205, note no. 23 by Stahl. Cf. also the excellent introduction by Stahl, p. 16ff. in particular, to which I am much indebted. Cf. also Wright, J.K., *The Geographical Lore of the Time of the Crusades* (New York, 1925), 56. Very little is known about Macrobius himself. He seems to have belonged to the circle of Symmachus (400 A.D.) Cf. Stahl's *Commentary* ; Matthias Schedler, *Die Philosophie des Macrobius und ihr Einfluß auf die Philosophie des christlichen Mittelalters*. Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters, Bd. 13, Heft 1 (1916). E.R. Curtius, *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter* (Bern, 1948), 442-444.

2. Zinner lists Macrobius in his "Index of important and widespread books" of the Renaissance. S. E. Zinner, *Geschichte und Bibliographie der astronomischen Literatur in Deutschland zur Zeit der Renaissance* (Stuttgart, 1964). According to Marie Delcourt (*Utopia*, 1936, pp. 213-216) Macrobius, among many other authors, provided More with unusual words.

3. Macrobius, *Commentary*, 202.

4. George Parks, "More's *Utopia* and Geography", *JEGP* 37 (1938), 236.

5. Parks, 235.

jesting – then for those people as well up will be what they see above them, and there is no danger of their falling upwards. I can assure you that the uninformed among them think the same thing about us and believe that it is impossible for us to be where we are ; they, too, feel that anyone who tried to stand in the region beneath them would fall.¹

But then Parks does not mention either Cicero or Macrobius. More, of course, is not much interested in geography as such. If we were to take his literary fiction as a serious contribution to geographical theory we would have to accept a rigid stereotyped picture of the earth in which differences of climate correspond to varying degrees of civilisation in an overall symmetrical order. Instead of being “bold” and “worthy” of a disciple of the new learning this theory would be even further removed from reality than that of the ancients.

There are two more reasons why I believe a reading of the geographical section of Macrobius' *Commentary* could have contributed to the making of *Utopia*. None of the comments by other writers (Augustine, Capella, Mela) on the subject of Antipodeans contains such a detailed speculation on them and no other writer, except perhaps Cleomedes,² is so emphatic in stressing that their existence is a conclusion arrived at by the exercise of reason alone.

On the whole it would seem as if the conflicting attitudes of the classical and medieval³ tradition towards the idea of Antipodeans was another factor in that complex process which finally led to the creation of *Utopia*. As More pondered on these attitudes, it may well have occurred to him that he could combine them in an ironical fiction. Following that body of opinion which, like Macrobius, postulated the existence of inaccessible Antipodeans, because reason⁴ left no choice but to infer it, he could have been induced to construct for the Antipodeans a pattern of social life also based on the dictates of reason alone. At the same time

1. Macrobius, *Commentary*, 204.

2. “Necessario autem existere et perioecos et antipodes et antoecos physiologia docet, cum nihil de his tradatur rerum memoria. Nam neque ad perioecos proficisci possumus, propterea quod oceanus innavigabilis est et beluosus qui nos ab illis dirimit, neque ad incolae alterius temperatae, cum torridam nobis transire non liceat. Climata autem terrae aequae temperatae etiam aequae habitari necessarium est ; animantium enim amans est natura, et ubicunque terrarum fieri possit, omnia referta esse animalium rationis expertum et participum, fert ratio.” *Cleomedes de Motu Circulari Corporum Caelestium Libri Duo*, ed. H. Ziegler (Lipsiae, 1891), 29.

3. Wright, *op.cit.*, 429 quotes an interesting comment by A. Neckham (*De naturis*), which makes it clear that the idea of Antipodeans fascinated the Middle Ages despite (or because of) Augustine's strictures and that it was regarded as a matter for philosophical speculation. “Nonne enim et antipodes sub pedibus nostris esse dicuntur. Si tamen philosophice loqui volueris, non magis sunt sub pedibus nostris quam nos sub pedibus eorum. Sed numquid de primis parentibus descenderunt antipodes ? Secundum Augustinum non sunt antipodes, sed doctrinae causa aut figmenti ita dici solet.”

4. “illa vero ... sola ratione intellegitur, quod propter similem temperiem similiter incolatur...” : *Ambrosii Theodosii Macrobiani Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis*, ed. Jacobus Willis, Lipsiae, 1963, 112.

More must have been aware of the objections raised by Augustine and other Christian authors against that dangerous *experimentum rationis* of some pagan philosophers, which was rather difficult to reconcile with certain teachings of the Gospel. How could the Antipodeans have descended from Adam if their territories were inaccessible ? How could Christ have died for them ? Since, as an *experimentum rationis*, Utopia is not feasible and does not represent More's ultimate ideal,¹ he could in a deeper sense sympathize with this critical attitude and deny his Utopians any real existence. In Utopia the rational chimera of the pagan philosophers is only given an hitherto unparalleled degree of aesthetic verisimilitude for satiric purposes.

From an historical perspective More's fictitious contribution to the age-old debate takes a highly ironic turn. The pagan Antipodeans, abhorred by traditional Christian apologists, are now held up to them as a mirror to remind them of their own shortcomings.

I am not arguing in favour of any definite influence of Macrobius on More. Still, apart from Macrobius' geographical theory there are other elements in his *Commentary on Scipio's Dream* which are closely connected with the theme and literary method of *Utopia*. Among the themes dealt with by Macrobius and relevant for *Utopia* are the use of fictions in philosophical treatises, the immortality of the soul and the reward of the just ruler. The very first sentence of the *Commentary* sums up the different strategies employed by Plato and Cicero in their discussions of the ideal state and, in doing so, implicitly illuminates More's own method : “in our reading of Plato's *Republic* and Cicero's *Republic*, my son Eustachius, my joy and boast in life, we noted this difference at a glance : the former drafted plans for the organization of a state, the latter described one already in existence ; the one discussed an ideal state, the other the government established by his forefathers.”²

Plato had discussed this problem in the *Timaeus* (19d) and stated that the description of an ideal community raises basically insoluble difficulties for the poet whose art of imitating the world of phenomena is utterly unsuited to give a convincing picture of an abstract construction, namely the world of ideas. In order to visualize his ideal state Plato had, therefore, drawn on the quasi-historical myth of Atlantis. More's striking and modern solution for this problem of creating the illusion of reality for the ideal state is to invent a myth of his own based on empirical reality and traditional geographical lore adapted to his moral purpose. Since More's mythical fiction does not merely “gratify the ear” (*Commentary*, 84) – Hythloday himself contemptuously dismisses fabulous reports written for that purpose (CW-4, 53) – but encourages the reader to practise virtue by presenting a “holy Commonwealth”, the *Utopia* falls into the group of the ‘narratio fabulosa’ which is opposed to the ordinary fanciful fable and “rests on a solid foundation of truth.”³ It is

1. Cf. on this R. Johnson's illuminating discussion of *Utopia*.

2. Macrobius, *Commentary*, 81.

3. Macrobius, *Commentary*, 85.

only this second subdivision (the first, like the fables of Aesop, being wholly fictitious) of the didactic fable, best exemplified by Plato's story of Er and Scipio's dream, which can, according to Macrobius, be used with profit by the philosopher.

Small wonder then that Cicero and Seneca are the only Latin philosophers approved of by Hythlodæus. Both were, like Plato, concerned with politics and took a high ethic line. Among the "certain treatises" (CW-4, 51) of Cicero appreciated by Hythlodæus surely none is more impressive in terms of poetic grandeur and moral seriousness than the *Somnium Scipionis*, which was the only part of the *De Re Publica* known till 1822.¹ Since *Somnium* was usually transmitted with the *Commentary* of Macrobius, readers would view it in the light of Macrobius' Neo-Platonic exposition, which, with its stress on the immortality of the soul and the yearning for the divine,² is perfectly suited to Raphael's own exalted temperament. When Raphael dismisses the death of his body as irrelevant and refers to heaven as his true abode (CW-4, 51) he, like a true Christian Neo-Platonist of the type epitomized by Ficino, shows himself to be aware of the divine origin of his soul and its desire to be freed from the body in order to return to the divine realm. Raphael's "truly philosophic spirit" (CW-4, 57), his concern for the contemplative ideal rather than the real world, does not allow him to get involved in the sobering complexities of actual politics. The differences between the man actively engaged in the cares of daily life, who devotes himself to the preservation and improvement of the commonwealth, who loves his children and shows prudence, wisdom, justice in all his dealings with his fellow human beings on the one hand and the ascetic philosopher aspiring toward the ideal on the other hand are beautifully set off in chapter 8 of Macrobius' *Commentary*.

The 'social animal' and the philosopher as described above are embodiments of the political virtues and the cleansing virtues respectively – a distinction originally made by Plotinus in *On the Virtues* and handed on by Macrobius. It is obvious that this distinction bears directly upon More's personal dilemma of 1515 as dramatized in the *Dialogue of Counsel*: the prudent politician More is opposed to the idealistic Hythlodæus, whose stance can be well enough described by quoting Macrobius' description of the cleansing virtues:

The virtues of the second type, known as the cleansing virtues, are to be found in the man who is capable of attaining the divine. They release the minds only of those who have resolved to cleanse themselves from any contaminations with the body, and by an escape from mortal things, as it were, to mingle solely with the divine. These are the virtues of men of leisure, who have withdrawn from active service in the state. We mentioned above the nature of each of these virtues when we were speaking of the virtues of philosophers, those which they, indeed, regard as the only virtues. (*Commentary*, 122-123)

1. More would have found numerous references to other parts of *De Re Publica* in Augustine's *De civitate Dei*.

2. Cf. ch. 9-14 of the *Commentary*.

The last sentence is particularly important as it throws into sharp relief the whole point of the discussion of this chapter. Blessedness can be achieved only by virtuous men. Macrobius is, therefore, at pains to prove that the ability to find and exercise the virtues is not confined to philosophers alone. Apart from the four cardinal virtues (in their strict definition not accessible to anyone but a true philosopher like Hythlodæus), there are more general and practical political virtues through the exercise of which man may earn himself a place among the blessed as well.¹ Looking at *Utopia* from this angle one must conclude that More the author would deem justified the positions of both Raphael and *Morus*. The dialogue then would serve as an inconclusive dramatic externalization of these conflicting positions with the implied author's sympathies, however, clearly leaning toward the pragmatic, meliorative attitude. And More had Macrobius' authority to confirm him that the active practical life as envisaged by the *persona* More is just as praiseworthy as Hythlodæus' philosophic detachment. The cardinal virtues of prudence, temperance, courage, and justice thus become political virtues by being re-defined in terms of social and political reality. It is interesting to see that, for Macrobius, political justice is apparently quite compatible with private ownership:

To have political justice, one must safeguard for each man that which belongs to him. From justice comes uprightnes, friendship, harmony, sense of duty, piety, love, and human sympathy. By these virtues the good man is first made lord of himself and then ruler of the state, and is just and prudent in his regard for human welfare, never forgetting his obligations.² (*Commentary*, 122)

Scipio's Dream is modelled on the vision of Er at the end of the *Republic*, Plato's most thorough investigation of the idea and nature of justice. Placed at the very end of *De Re Publica*, the dream's function is to illustrate the reward which the departed soul of the just man may expect in heaven from which it originally came. According to Plato the just ruler, who must be a philosopher, returns to the Islands of the Blessed (*Politeia* 540B). Ulrich Mölk has argued persuasively that we should identify Hythlodæus "as a messenger from heaven... whose mission is to present to the corrupt states of Europe the shining paradigm of the Utopian Commonwealth. After fulfilling his mission he will return to Utopia."³ Macrobius, as we have seen, extends to non-philosophers this reward of a blessed existence in heaven after death.

1. Macrobius, *Commentary*, 123.

2. "never forgetting his obligations" is a relatively loose translation of the original "...humana non deserens." (*Somnium*, ed. Willis, 38). Ironically, it is the idealist and moralist Hythlodæus who does not live up to the standards of the just and good man set by Macrobius.

3. Ulrich Mölk, "Philologische Bemerkungen zu Thomas Morus' *Utopia*", *Anglia* 82 (1964), 315-316: "... als solchen Abgesandten des Himmels..., dessen Mission darin besteht, den zerrütteten Staaten Europas das leuchtende paradigma der utopischen Verfassung vorzuhalten. Nach Ausführung seiner Missionsaufgabe wird er nach Utopia zurückkehren."

It would be more appropriate for the heaven-sent physician and Christian philosopher Raphael to retire to Paradise than to the Islands of the Blessed. More, the humanist and close friend of Erasmus, would probably use these words as synonyms. In the Middle Ages the "garden of Eden was universally believed to exist and, although cut off from ordinary approach, was supposed still to be waiting for the saints before their ascent to Heaven. Medieval maps often showed its location."¹ In many respects Raphael's identity resembles that of a saint: he has renounced all worldly riches, he preaches sermons to a hopelessly corrupt world and, lastly, he is inspired by a vision of the better life. As the Earthly Paradise for the saints, so Utopia is the most fitting abode for Raphael Hythloday. As far as their respective locations on the map are concerned, the happy isle Utopia and Paradise are in fact rather difficult to separate: "Paradise is in the east (India or Asia, or perhaps so far as to be at the other side of the world); it is cut off from man because it is located on a high mountain or by the ocean or by a fiery wall, or by more than one of these, making it an island."² Thus the tradition of the *Journeys to Paradise* provides a few details which More made use of in the *Utopia*: Vincent of Beauvais stresses the temperate climate of Paradise,³ St. Thomas Aquinas thinks that it is "shut off by mountains or seas or some 'torrid region' "⁴, Isidore of Seville mentions a "desert waste with serpents and wild beasts"⁵ beyond the beautiful region. To some extent at least these examples seem to account for the stereotyped character of the brief narrative referring to Raphael's journey.

1. H.R. Patch, *The Other World According to Descriptions in Medieval Literature* (Cambridge, Mass., 1950)

2. Patch, 153. 3. Patch, 152. 4. Patch, 151. 5. Patch, 149.

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POSTSCRIPT

I am grateful to Father Marc'hadour for drawing my attention to a remark by More in *A Dialogue Concerning Heresies* (*English Works*, p. 126) which confirms my point that *Utopia* was written with a full awareness of the facts and the implications of the debate of the Antipodeans:

"Or who would not wene it impossible, but if experience had proued it that the hole earth hangeth in the ayre, and men walk fote against fote, & shippes saile bottom against bottom, a thyng so straunge, & seeming so far against nature & reson, y^e Lactancius a man right wise and wel lerned in his work which he writeth *de diuinis institutionibus* rekeneth it for impossible, & letteth not to laugh at y^e Philosophers [sic] for affirminge of y^e point, which is yet now founden trew by experience of them y^e hauein [sic] lesse than two yeres sailed the world rounde about."

The phrase "and men walk foot against foot" is reminiscent of Cicero's "who plant their feet in the opposite direction of yours." More, however, curiously reverses the traditional order and function of the arguments of the debate in order to be able to drive home his lesson on the unreliability of "nature and reason" as ultimate standards of judgement: the arguments produced by Lactantius against the philosopher's dream of reason were, according to More, also based only on "nature and reason" and therefore liable to being refuted by reality. The last sentence of the quotation refers to Magellan's circumnavigation of the globe. Cf. Germain Marc'hadour, *L'Univers...* p. 324. On the use of Antipodeans in medieval satiric fictions and tales see the article by R.S. Loomis, "King Arthur and the Antipodes", *MP* 38 (1940/41), 289-304, which does not, however, mention More's *Utopia*.