

THOMAS MORE AS A RENAISSANCE HUMANIST ★.

The topic chosen for this lecture reflects my own interests as a scholar, and it will also give me an opportunity to address myself to a question, often raised in my discussions with several More specialists and treated by them on more than one occasion ¹, that is, whether and to what extent the interpretation of Renaissance humanism which I have tried to propose and to defend over a number of years ² may be applied to Thomas More and his work. I shall try to show in this paper that Renaissance humanism, as I understand that term, constitutes a significant aspect of the life and work of Thomas More. I do not claim that it is the only or even the most important aspect, for apart from being a humanist and a scholar, Thomas More was a lawyer and statesman, a theologian and a martyr, and I do not wish to maintain that within the complex physiognomy of More's person and life, of his fame and his place in history, humanism is as important an aspect as some of the others. Yet I shall be concerned with Thomas More rather than with Sir Thomas More or with St. Thomas More, and I shall be satisfied if I can show that Thomas More, among other things, was also a humanist, just as many other Renaissance scholars were often something else besides being humanists, as for example Petrarch and Poliziano who were vernacular poets, or Ficino and Pico who were speculative philosophers.

A Renaissance humanist, as I understand that term, was not a preacher of vaguely defined human values, unburdened by specialized knowledge, as are many modern writers to whom the term is now freely applied, but a highly trained classical scholar, and a student (not necessarily a teacher) of the *Studia humanitatis*, the humanities, that is, of a cycle of studies that are described as containing grammar, rhetoric, poetry, history and moral philosophy. Humanist scholarship was not the sum total of Renaissance learning or culture. It did not include theology or jurisprudence, the philosophical disciplines other than ethics, or the sciences, although individual humanists, depending on their intellectual interests or professional ambitions, were able to combine the humanities with any other field of study. Humanist scholarship, as we described it, originated in Italy during the fourteenth and fifteenth century, and spread from there to the rest of Europe including England. The diffusion of Italian humanism in fifteenth-century England has been studied by Roberto Weiss and others ³. The process involved, as might be expected, Italian scholars who visited England for a shorter or longer period and English scholars who visited Italy or studied in Italy and returned with new knowledge, ideas and books.

Thomas More belonged to the first generation of English and other Northern scholars who received a full humanistic training at home without ever going to Italy, and Erasmus, who had his reservations about Italy and who visited Italy rather late in life, was still prompted to wonder what might have become of More if he had lived in Italy⁴. Yet More had Italian friends who lived in England⁵, and he had teachers and friends who had been to Italy, such as Colet, Grocyn and Linacre. More received a good humanistic training, although the details of his early education are unknown to us⁶. He learned Latin at an early age, and his Latin style was greatly admired by his humanist contemporaries. He made the effort of learning Greek, learned it well, and was a strong champion of Greek studies, as we may see from the long letters on the subject which he addressed to Martin Dorpius and to the University of Oxford⁷. We do not know for certain whether he taught grammar, but he wrote laudatory verses for some textbooks of grammar published by his friends⁸, and he gave lectures on Augustine's *City of God*⁹. The lectures have not come down to us, but there is good reason to assume that they dealt with questions of Roman history, as did other commentaries from the same period¹⁰. More's correspondence shows him to have been a respected member of the international community of humanist scholars¹¹. He was in close touch with many English and continental scholars, including Guillaume Budé, the leading French humanist of his time¹², and above all Erasmus, an intimate and lifelong friend who dedicated to him his *Praise of Folly*¹³, had More's writings published in Louvain and Basel¹⁴, and gave a fine portrait and eulogy of More in a letter to Hutten written in 1519¹⁵.

If we scan and survey the extant writings of Thomas More, we note that a sizable part of them fits the humanist pattern rather neatly, especially (but not exclusively) his Latin works, and the works of his earlier years. The verses he wrote for the grammar books of others, and the letters sent in defense of the study of Greek have been mentioned. As testimonies of his contribution to grammar, as then understood, we may add More's Latin translations from the Greek: three dialogues and a declamation of Lucian translated in competition with Erasmus¹⁶, and many epigrams from the *Greek Anthology*, some of them translated in competition with William Lily¹⁷. More's mastery of Greek appears also in the words and phrases inserted in his letters, especially to Erasmus, evidently after the model of Cicero's letters to Atticus. More's skill in rhetoric appears in the declamation on tyrannicide which he composed in reply to

Lucian and again in competition with Erasmus¹⁸, and also in his letters. Some of the longer letters have the form of invectives, especially the letters to Dorp and Lee which he wrote in defense of Erasmus¹⁹, and the letter to Germanus Brixius which he had printed separately and which is an early example of More as a polemicist, concerned in this case with political and scholarly issues²⁰. We read of public orations More delivered on ceremonial occasions²¹, but to my knowledge they have not been preserved. More's contribution to humanist historiography consists in his *History of Richard III*, a work that he composed in both Latin and English²². It had a complicated textual history and remained a fragment, but it is remarkable in both versions for its style and pathos and shows the influence of Sallust, Tacitus and other ancient historians²³.

Of greater significance is More's contribution to poetry. His English poems, most of them early, include verse translations of a few Latin prose pieces by Giovanni Pico della Mirandola²⁴. More's Latin poems, many of them translated from the *Greek Anthology*, were composed at different periods of his life. In the judgment of his contemporaries and of his modern editors, they excel in style and technique (he used several difficult verse schemes), and in the serious moral and political content of many pieces, as it is not often encountered in other poets of his age²⁵.

The last and in a way most important field of the humanities is moral philosophy, which includes political philosophy. More's stature as a moral and political thinker appears in many of his poems and letters, and above all, in his most famous work, the *Utopia*, which is no doubt a major contribution to moral and political philosophy, and also a masterpiece of Renaissance humanism. As we have learned from Hexter and others²⁶, the second book of the *Utopia* was written in 1515 in the Low Countries where More spent several months as an envoy of Henry VIII. Most of the first book, often referred to as the dialogue of counsel, was added after More's return to London in 1516. The work has the form of a dialogue, especially in the first book, and this literary pattern links it with such ancient authors as Plato, Cicero and Lucian, and also with a large body of humanist literature from the fifteenth and sixteenth century²⁷. The dialogue form also presents a perennial problem to the modern interpreter because the author expresses his opinions not in direct statements made in his own name, but through the mouth of his characters. Hence it has been argued for ever, in the case of More as in that of

Plato and other writers, that certain ideas encountered in a dialogue cannot be taken as the considered opinion of the author, but are merely presented as part of a discussion, even when the participants of the discussion include the author himself, or in the case of Plato, his admired teacher Socrates. The matter has been further complicated in recent decades when the writings of Thomas More, and especially *Utopia*, have been reclaimed by literary historians and critics as works of literature, and freed, as it were, from the literal and dogmatic interpretations of political and other philosophers. Since my background is in philosophy rather than in literature, I must try to defend the rights and claims of a philosophical interpretation, for More as well as for Plato, while avoiding the pitfalls of a narrow dogmatic interpretation, and making allowance for the legitimate insights of the literary critics. A dialogue by More or by Plato must be appreciated as a work of literature, but it does not cease for that reason to be a work of philosophy. The play of conflicting opinions in a dialogue brings out the varied facets of a problem and the contrasts between its different solutions. However, this does not mean, at least not in all instances, that an author holds no opinion of his own, or that he considers all opinions expressed by his characters as equally valid or invalid. There are some sound philological methods that help us to ascertain what the author of a dialogue really means. Many dialogues are composed in a kind of crescendo style, and there is reason to believe that the character who speaks last also has the last word, as far as the author is concerned. Furthermore, if an opinion expressed in a dialogue can be corroborated by statements made by the author in his other works, and especially in works that are not written in the dialogue form, there is ample reason for treating such opinions as the author's own. It is of course true that the dialogue form allows the author to include many statements which he would not be prepared to defend in his own name. But it is equally true that plausible statements cannot be simply dismissed because they are found in a dialogue, especially if they are also found in other writings of the same author. We must proceed in each case with great caution. This is a rather general piece of advice, and I am afraid I have neither the time nor the competence to apply it in detail to an interpretation of More's *Utopia*.

I should like to add another word of caution concerning the general relationship between philosophy and literature in our time. Since much philosophical discourse in recent decades has been rather narrow and technical, and has often failed or refused to deal with some of the

major questions which occupied the center of traditional philosophy, it is not at all surprising that many critics and writers should have invaded and occupied the territory relinquished by the professional philosophers. This change of dominion is even welcome, and certainly preferable to complete intellectual anarchy. Yet the literary critics cannot have it both ways. If they claim that a poet or writer has a better answer to certain questions than the professional philosopher, or if they want to offer a better interpretation to the works of past philosophers than do their colleagues in philosophy, they should also submit to the rules and to the discipline that have traditionally governed the interpretation of past thinkers, whether they were professional philosophers or not. They cannot first claim to interpret the thought of the past, and then avoid the rules of a precise interpretation, hiding behind such dubious and elusive terms as « symbolism » or « deliberate ambiguity, » and failing to explain precisely what the words and sentences used by an author really mean. And when they claim that Shakespeare was a greater thinker than Descartes (and perhaps he was) they should not avoid telling us what his thought precisely meant. And if they claim that Plato and More are writers and not philosophers (something I consider to be wrong) they still should tell us what their thoughts really amount to.

Having spoken, perhaps at excessive length, about the literary form of More's *Utopia*, I must add a few words about its title, and about its general theme as expressed in that title. *Utopia* is a Greek word coined by More, and thanks to More, the word and its derivatives such as *Utopian* and *Utopianism* have become so familiar that we usually forget to ask about the original and precise meaning of the word *Utopia*. The word consists of the negation *ou* and the term *topos* which stands for place. The combination *Utopia*, Noplace, is neither precise nor felicitous in Greek, for the suffix *-ia* denotes an abstraction rather than a place, and the negative prefix for a noun should be an *alpha privativum*, not the negation *ou*, as such words as *akrateia* and many others show. There is no other comparable noun with the prefix alpha in the classical Greek vocabulary, and the best defense we can offer for More's word is that the word *atopia*, which would have been more correct, though not entirely correct, was preempted since ancient times by a different meaning (« absurdity », and other similar connotations). The complete original title of More's work was probably better understood by his contemporary readers: *De optimo reipublicae statu deque nova insula Utopia*. I should like to offer a guess about the way More arrived at the term *Utopia* (and I

am afraid this is the only scholarly contribution I may hope to make in this paper). In several letters written by More to Erasmus in 1516 when he sent him his manuscript, More does not use the title *Utopia*, but rather refers to his work as *Nusquama* (nowhereland)²⁸. It is quite possible that this was the original title (which was awkward enough) and that More then adopted the title *Utopia* while the work was in press, perhaps on the advice of Erasmus. The title *Nusquama* is clearly traceable to the end of the ninth book of Plato's *Republic* where Socrates states that the perfect republic which he and his friends have been describing exists only in their discourse, but nowhere on earth (*ges ge oudamou*)²⁹. I am convinced that More in the choice of his initial title *Nusquama* was inspired by this passage in Plato. Erasmus tells us that More was familiar with this work at an early age³⁰, but it is worth noticing that the first printed edition of Plato's works in Greek was published by Aldus Manutius in 1513³¹. It seems to me plausible that More used his leisure in Flanders to reread Plato's *Republic* in Greek and to discuss it with his friends. This does not detract from More's originality at all, but it shows More's knowledge of Plato, and especially of the Greek text of Plato. For in the Latin translation of Ficino which had been available in print since 1484, the crucial passage is mistranslated (*nusquam interius*, instead of *nusquam in terris*)³².

The first book of *Utopia* deals with some of the political and social ills of contemporary England, and curiously enough, it is quite clear that More is perfectly serious in criticizing these ills, although the pattern of the dialogue form is followed more strictly in this book than in the second. The only problem that remains is whether the prudent and experienced man should serve as a counsellor of the king, and it has been rightly observed that the discussion seems to end with a negative conclusion. Since More at the time when he wrote the dialogue had served the king on some specific occasions, but hesitated for several more years before accepting a permanent office, I see no reason for doubting that the refusal to serve as expressed in the dialogue reflects his actual attitude at the time. We may rather ask why More came to change his mind at a later date, and it has been plausibly argued that the royal policy under Wolsey was actually trying in those years to find remedies for the evils criticized by More, and that he came to hope that he himself would help, while in office, to move things in the right direction³³.

The second book, which was written first and which contains the description of the ideal republic in Nowhereland and represents the core

of the work to which it owes its title and its fame, is a dialogue only in name, for it consists of a long and continuous discourse put into the mouth of a narrator who thus serves to mediate between the author and his reader, a device often used by Plato³⁴ but much more rarely by other ancient or humanist authors of dialogues. We must admit that the device of the fictitious narrator, Raphael Hythlodæus, may have helped More to disavow many details of his description of the ideal commonwealth, and even to blur the distinction between the serious and the less serious parts of it. On the other hand, the form of the dialogue or of the narrative should not prompt us to write off all parts of the description as playful or fictitious. The ideals of peace and of justice pervade all other writings of More and of his friend Erasmus³⁵, and the contrast between the just ruler and the tyrant is a recurrent theme in More's epigrams, where he even dares to express his preference for the republic over the monarchy³⁶. The abolition of property, and the complete equality of the life of all citizens, traits in which More's *Utopia* goes beyond Plato's *Republic*, must have appeared to More as a genuine solution to the social and political problems of the real world as he knew it, and he certainly meant to present to his contemporaries the ideal image of a more perfect political order. Yet neither the *Utopia* nor More's other writings nor the record of his political activities suggest that he ever thought it possible or desirable to bring about a Utopia in the real world of his time, whether by legislation or force, by reform or revolution. *Utopia*, like Plato's *Republic*, lived in his discourse, and the question whether and how it could be realized was not of primary importance to their authors; it was sufficient to describe their perfection, and to hold them up as exemplars worthy of imitation and of approximation.

More shows his humanist outlook by reserving all offices in Utopia for trained scholars³⁷, and by providing instruction and lectures for all its citizens³⁸. It has also been shown by Thomas White and others that the specific institutions and opinions of the Utopians, though novel and unique when taken as a whole, reflect in many details the teachings of Plato (and not only of his *Republic*, but also of his *Laws* and other writings), of Aristotle, of Epicurus and of other ancient thinkers³⁹. I also refuse to treat as unimportant what More tells us about the philosophical and religious opinions of the Utopians. The fictitious narrative allows More to present to us a community of human beings untouched by the Christian religion and by Greek philosophy. They believe in God as the

source of nature and of providence and in the immortality of the soul, and are even punished when they fail to hold these beliefs, and they have very precise convictions about virtue and pleasure⁴⁰. This means that for More these basic beliefs are not peculiar to any specific religious or philosophical tradition, but somehow inherent in human reason and a part of man's nature. These beliefs are so fundamental that More refuses to extend the rule of tolerance to the denial of providence and of immortality, following on this point the example of Plato's *Laws*⁴¹. In taking this position, More has forgotten neither his Christian faith nor his humanist enthusiasm, for he tells us with evident approval that his narrator has begun to introduce into Utopia the Christian religion as well as ancient and especially Greek philosophy and literature⁴². In describing and praising the beliefs of the Utopians, More does not disavow his religion or his classical scholarship, but he asserts what for him is the core of both, namely a rational religion and philosophy that is in fundamental agreement with both the Christian religion and with Greek philosophy. As a humanist and a friend of Erasmus, More was opposed to scholastic theology and firmly believed that the new tools of humanist scholarship, when applied to the original text of the Bible and of the Church Fathers, would lead to a new and improved form of religion⁴³. It is this combination of scholarship and religion that constitutes the legitimate core of such widely used and misused labels as *Christian humanism* or *learned piety*. This attitude had its antecedents among the Italian humanists, especially in Petrarch, whose writings found readers and imitators in many Northern monasteries, in Valla, whose *Notes on the New Testament* were edited by Erasmus, and in Manetti, who attempted a new translation of the *Psalms* and of the *New Testament* that was not widely diffused but did not remain completely unknown. More's closest contact with Italian humanism and philosophy also had a strong moral and religious accent. He translated into English the life of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, written by his nephew Gianfrancesco, as well as three of Pico's letters and a group of his short religious prose writings, dedicating his translation to a nun of his acquaintance⁴⁴.

This translation leads us to More's English writings, most of them political and religious in content and composed during his later years, except for the *History of Richard III*. More's achievement as a writer of English prose, and his contribution to its development, have been much discussed in recent years. I must leave the final judgment in this matter to

the specialists in English literature, and shall venture only a few observations, based on a partial reading of More and on some analogies from Italian literature. The fact that More was also a prominent writer of English prose has its counterpart in the Italian prose written by Dante and Boccaccio, by Bruni, Alberti and Manetti, by Ficino and Landino, by Bembo and by many other Italian scholars. This fact speaks for itself, and in my opinion it disposes of the often repeated cliché that the humanists threatened the development of vernacular prose and even tried to destroy it. As a rule, vernacular literature began with poetry and with popular prose whereas learned prose continued for a long time to be written in Latin. In order to become the vehicle of learned prose, the vernaculars had to be molded and transformed under the influence of Latin. They needed an abstract vocabulary, a more precise and uniform grammar and sentence structure, and a clearer system of literary composition. In Old and Middle English, this development was initiated by King Alfred, by Chaucer and other writers, but the process had to be repeated in the sixteenth century after the English language had undergone more profound linguistic changes than Italian has ever witnessed since the fourteenth century. I am inclined to think that More played an important role in this development, and that his experience as a humanist scholar and as a writer of Latin prose made him eminently suitable for this task.

I should like to add a short comment on one of More's last and most moving works, the *Dialogue of Comfort* written when he was a prisoner in the Tower⁴⁵. The consolation More provides in this work for himself and for his reader is based on his religious faith and on the help given him by God, as has been rightly stressed by the interpreters. I cannot help noticing a secondary or subordinate humanist overtone even in this work. I find it not only in the form of the fictitious dialogue purporting to be a translation from Latin, but also in the obvious similarity to Plato's *Criton* and to Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, and in More's explicit references to the arguments of the philosophers which are not sufficient, to be sure, but at least worthy of mention⁴⁶.

The work of More, just as that of Erasmus, reflects his humanism not only in what it contains but also in what it excludes. More quotes and admires Thomas Aquinas, as many humanists do, but he shows no interest in late scholastic logic, natural philosophy, or theology. The absence of scholastic philosophy is characteristic in an age in which this tradition was still powerful and when many persons whom More knew and corresponded with were thoroughly trained in it. More showed some interest in

the crafts and sciences, and especially in printing and in the new geographical discoveries, but he made no original contributions to this area of knowledge. It may be of interest that an edition of Euclid which he owned is now in the Columbia University Library ⁴⁷.

More's interest in music is attested by Erasmus ⁴⁸, whereas we have more direct evidence for his lively interest in the visual arts. The double portrait of Erasmus and Petrus Aegidius of Antwerp (to whom the *Utopia* is dedicated) by Quentin Massys was painted for More and was sent to him as a gift by the sitters. More not only thanked his friends for their gift, but also composed two Latin poems for the pictures which must have hung in his home ⁴⁹. They have since found their separate ways to Hampton Court and to Longford Castle ⁵⁰. The portraits of More and of his family by Hans Holbein are well known ⁵¹, but it seems to be less widely known that Holbein arrived in London with a recommendation from Erasmus to More, lived for a while in More's home, and was introduced by More to the king and to many of his other courtly patrons ⁵². Finally, More commissioned his tomb for the Old Church in Chelsea where it still may be seen (I have not seen it, but it is described though not reproduced in the catalogue of the More exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery). ⁵³ He composed for this tomb a detailed prose epitaph of himself, and appended to it the verse epitaph of himself and of his two wives, which is one of his most beautiful Latin poems ⁵⁴.

I should like to stress as another facet of More's humanism the cult of friendship that appears in his correspondence and especially in the letters he exchanged with Erasmus. The friendship between scholars is one of the characteristic features of Renaissance humanism, and as so many other things, it is an inheritance from classical philosophy and literature where friendship appears as a prominent topic of moral discussion in Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, Cicero and others. It is one of the curious examples of the impoverishment of modern thought that the theme of friendship has almost completely disappeared, if not from our actual life, at least from our contemporary philosophical thought and discourse.

To complete the picture of More as a humanist, I should like to mention the wit for which he was rightly famous among his friends and contemporaries ⁵⁵. It often occurs in his letters and other works, and even in the writings and anecdotes of his last days. The depth of his irony reflects the attitude of a man who ridicules all that is trivial in human experience, in order to reserve his respect and serious thought for higher

matters, and who at times is even able to joke and play about matters for which he shows a genuine respect on other occasions. It is for this reason that he liked and translated Lucian, and that Erasmus dedicated to him his most ironic and no less serious work, the *Praise of Folly*, whose original title (*Encomium Moriae*) contains a pun on More's name. For the same reason, the author of a good modern play on More, Robert Bolt, described him in the title as *A Man for All Seasons* ⁵⁶. The title is taken from a short eulogy of More in Robert Whittinton's *Vulgaria... et de institutione grammaticulorum opusculum*, a textbook in English and Latin frequently printed in the 1520's and 1530's, where the author calls More in English « a man for all seasons », and in Latin « vir ut ita dicam omnium horarum. » ⁵⁷ The Latin phrase is taken verbatim from the preface of Erasmus to the *Praise of Folly*, ⁵⁸ and thus Erasmus's Latin is the ultimate source of the modern English title of the play, through the intermediary of the English and Latin passage of an obscure grammarian. Apparently the Erasmian origin of the phrase was unknown to the modern playwright and his literary advisers, and this is one of the many examples that show how the widespread ignorance of Latin and of its literature tends to conceal for most people, including those considered sophisticated and even educated, the true sources of our civilization.

It is more difficult to decide whether and to what extent More the statesman and More the religious thinker, writer and martyr are linked with More the humanist and scholar. More is by no means the only person whose life and thought had different dimensions that are not easily brought together under a single denominator. There is every reason to believe that his state letters and public orations reflect the same style of writing and thinking that characterizes his Latin works. His training in the common law, and his activities as a lawyer, were an important factor in his political career, but quite unrelated to his training and work as a humanist, as Erasmus stated rather bluntly ⁵⁹. On the other hand, there is no doubt that More as a member of Parliament and as a royal envoy, adviser and chancellor tried to promote the same ideals of justice and of peace that he expressed in his humanist writings, especially in the epigrams and in *Utopia*. I am unable to judge whether More's theological writings show in style and technique any similarities with the polemical letters and invectives of his earlier years, but the question ought to be investigated.

For posterity, More's work as a humanist and even as a statesman and theologian has been overshadowed by his death as a martyr of his Catholic faith. For this martyrdom he was finally canonized in 1935,

whereas his firm and noble conduct in prison and in the face of death have been admired through the centuries by many persons who do not share his religious convictions but who do not believe that any man or woman should be punished, let alone, executed for his religious or other opinions. Political crimes are quite a different matter, and it is a sad comment on our recent and current confusion that many people seem unable or unwilling to distinguish between dissident political opinions (which should be tolerated) and criminal political actions (which should be punished). There is no doubt that More died for his religious faith and derived from it the strength for his steadfast conduct. I should like to think that also his political and moral convictions, and especially his belief in justice, played a role in shaping his attitude (we are told by Erasmus that More hated and abhorred tyranny throughout his life)⁶⁰, and that the examples of Socrates and of Boethius (a Christian condemned by a heretical king) were on More's mind.

Whether More lived and died for a cause that was doomed or bound to win is a question to which the answer will vary, depending on our own beliefs and on our understanding of modern history. Opinions on this matter have differed a great deal from the sixteenth century to our time, and they will continue to differ. The question is not as important as it appears to be, for in history the lost causes are not fruitless or forgotten, and as time passes, they may even become winning causes again. Although More's cause, at least in England, may have seemed lost for a long time, he has remained a tragic hero, and has repeatedly been presented as such. In freely choosing to accept the consequence of his beliefs and actions, he won a victory over his enemies, his king, and death itself. His writings, and the record of his life and death, are there and will be there for us and others to see and to admire. The historical event itself, whether an action or the production of a work of art or of writing, passes by in great speed, and our choices must be made quickly and often in a hurry. But the memory and record of what was done, the work produced by the artist or writer or thinker remain for ever unless they are physically destroyed, and may be restudied after they have been forgotten or misunderstood. There is a dimension of history that does not disappear with the moment that witnessed an event or the origin of a work. This work continues to live and to inspire us, and to give us a measure by which we may judge the present which passes as quickly as the past and which is often trivial or insignificant. In this sense, More the man, the statesman and the saint, but also More the humanist and the scholar will continue to live, and a centenary celebration is merely a reminder, for those who need to be reminded, of what should be a permanent possession and a part of our life as scholars, thinkers and thoughtful persons.

NOTES

★ This paper is based on the Annual Thomas More Lecture given at Yale University on December 2, 1978, and subsequently repeated at Barnard College (Columbia University, New York), at the Istituto Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento (Florence) and at the University of Hamburg. It is a tribute to More upon the fifth centenary of his birth, and to two distinguished More scholars who were my friends and died in 1978, Richard Sylvester who invited me to give the lecture, and William Nelson who was my colleague at Columbia for many years. I am indebted to Father Germain Marc'hadour for valuable information and suggestions.

1. Richard S. Sylvester, « Thomas More : Humanist in Action », *Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 1, ed. O.B. Hardison (Chapel Hill, 1966), 125-137 ; reprinted in *Essential Articles for the Study of Thomas More*, ed. R.S. Sylvester and G.P. Marc'hadour (Hamden, Conn., 1977), 462-469, 665-666. Richard J. Schoeck, « Thomas More and the Italian Heritage of Early Tudor Humanism, » in *Arts Libéraux et Philosophie au Moyen Age (Actes du Quatrième Congrès International de Philosophie Médiévale*, Université de Montréal, 1967, Montreal and Paris, 1969), 1191-1197. William Nelson, « Thomas More, Grammarian and Orator, » *PMLA* 58, 1943, 337-352, revised in *Essential Articles*, 150-160, 604-607. Especially the last article provides a rich documentation for our theme.

2. P.O. Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought* (New York, 1961), 3-23, 92-119, 145-146, 153-166.

3. R. Weiss, *Humanism in England during the Fifteenth Century* (3rd ed., Oxford, 1967). P.O. Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought II* (New York, 1965), 69-88. George B. Parks, *The English Traveler to Italy I* (Rome, 1954).

4. Desiderius Erasmus, *Opus Epistolarum*, ed. P.S. Allen, vol. III (Oxford, 1913), no. 635 (Letter to Joh. Frobenius, dated Louvain, 25 August 1517) : what would More have achieved, si hoc ingenium instituisset Italia, si totum Musarum sacris vacaret.... ? (57/6-8).

5. One of his closest friends was Antonio Bonvisi of Lucca who resided in London.

6. For his life, see R.W. Chambers, *Thomas More* (London, 1935). G. Marc'hadour, *L'Univers de Thomas More* (Paris, 1963). 'The King's Good Servant' : *Sir Thomas More*, Ed. J.B. Trapp and H. Schulte-Herbrüggen (exhibition catalogue, London, National Portrait Gallery, 1977-78). For his early training and career as a humanist, see William Nelson (above, note 1).

7. *The Correspondence of Sir Thomas More*, ed. Elizabeth F. Rogers (Princeton, 1947), nos. 15 and 60.

8. More added two Latin poems to John Holt's *Lac puerorum*, written in 1497 and printed about 1510 (*The Latin Epigrams of Thomas More*, Edited with Translations and Notes by Leicester Bradner and Charles Arthur Lynch, Chicago, 1953, p. 117-119, Appendix II, nos. 1 and 2, cf. Nelson, p. 153-154). He also added one Latin poem to Thomas Linacre's *Progymnasmatum grammatices vulgaria*, printed about 1512 (*The Latin Epigrams*, p. 119-120, Appendix II, no. 4, cf. Nelson, p. 605, note 18).

9. Nelson, p. 152. Cf. Erasmus, ed. Allen, IV (1922), no. 999 (to Hutten, 23 July 1519) at p. 17 : Augustini libros de civitate dei publice professus est adhuc pene adolescens auditorio frequenti.
10. See the commentaries on the *City of God* by Bernardus Andreae and by Vives.
11. *The Correspondence*, ed. Rogers. Sir Thomas More, *Neue Briefe*, ed. H. Schulte Herbrüggen (Muenster, 1966).
12. *Correspondence*, nos. 65-66, and *pass.* Other foreign correspondents, aside from Erasmus, include Martinus Dorpius (no. 15 and *pass.*), Petrus Aegidius (no. 25, etc.), Hier. Buslidius (no. 27), Joh. Froben (no. 67), Conradus Goclenius (no. 112-113, etc.), Nicolaus Leonicus Thomaeus (no. 131), Franc. Cranevelt (no. 135, etc.), Joh. Bugenhagen (no. 143), Joh. Cochlaeus (no. 162, etc.), Joh. Sinapius (no. 185), Hier. Perbonus (no. 187), and Antonio Bonvisi (no. 217). Schulte Herbrüggen (*Neue Briefe*, no. 142 a) adds Joh. Eck to the list and mentions lost letters to or from Peutingger, Hutten, Pirckheimer, Rhenanus, Reuchlin, Emser and Murner (p. XVI).
13. Erasmus, *Morias Enkomion*, ed. I.B. Kan (Hague, 1898), p. I-VII. Erasmus, ed. Allen, vol. I (1906), p. 459-462, no. 222.
14. The *Utopia* was printed in Louvain in 1516, in Paris in 1517, and twice in Basel in 1518 with the Epigrams. Cf. Erasmus, ed. Allen II (1910), p. 494-495, no. 543 ; p. 496-497, no. 545 ; III (1913), p. 3-6, no. 597 ; p. 50-52, no. 628 ; p. 56, no. 634 ; p. 56-57, no. 635.
15. Erasmus, ed. Allen IV (1922), p. 12-23, no. 999.
16. More, *Translations of Lucian*, ed. Craig R. Thompson (*The Yale Edition of the Complete Works*, vol. 3, pt. 1, New Haven, 1974). Cf. Craig R. Thompson, *The Translations of Lucian by Erasmus and St. Thomas More* (Ithaca, 1940). The first edition was published by Badius Ascensius in Paris in 1506.
17. *The Latin Epigrams*, ed. L. Bradner and C.A. Lynch (Chicago, 1953), p. 6-14, and *pass.*
18. *Translations of Lucian*, ed. Craig R. Thompson (1974), p. 94-127.
19. *Correspondence*, nos. 15 and 75.
20. *Ibid.*, no. 86. It was first printed in London in 1520.
21. Nelson, p. 157-159. In 1522, More addressed a formal oration of welcome to Charles V during his visit to London ('*The King's Good Servant*,' p. 12).
22. More, *The History of King Richard III*, ed. Richard S. Sylvester (*The Complete Works*, vol. 2, New Haven, 1963).

23. See R.S. Sylvester's introduction to his edition.
24. *The Workes of Sir Thomas More* (London, 1557), 21-34. *The English Works of Sir Thomas More*, ed. W.E. Campbell and A.W. Reed (London and New York, 1931), 21-34 and 381-396.
25. *The Latin Epigrams* (ed. Bradner and Lynch, Chicago, 1953), p. XXVII-XXVIII and 4.
26. J.H. Hexter, *More's Utopia* (Princeton, 1952). Id., « The Composition of Utopia, » in St. Thomas More, *Complete Works*, vol. 4, ed. E. Surtz and J.H. Hexter, New Haven, 1965 (*Utopia*), p. XV-XXIII. Erasmus, ed. Allen IV, p. 12-23, no. 999 : Secundum librum prius scripserat per ocium, mox per occasionem primum adiecit ex tempore, (21/259-260).
27. R. Hirzel, *Der Dialog* (2 vols., Leipzig, 1895, repr. Hildesheim, 1963).
28. Erasmus, ed. Allen II (1910), p. 339-340, no. 461 (More to Erasmus, 3 Sept. 1516) : Nusquamam nostram nusquam bene scriptam ad te mitto : praescripsi epistolam ad Petrum nostrum (339/1-2) ; p. 346-347, no. 467 (More to Erasmus, c. 20 Sept. 1516) : Misi ad te iam pridem Nusquamam (346/13-14) ; p. 370-372, no. 481 (More to Erasmus, 31 Oct. 1516) : Nusquamam nostram gaudeo probari meo Petro (372/62). See also p. 353-354, no. 474 (Erasmus to More, Antwerp, 2 Oct. 1516) : (P. Aegidius) mire favet tuae Nusquamae (354/29-30). Beginning with a letter dated c. 4 Dec. 1516 (Allen, p. 412-414, no. 499), More refers to his work as *Utopia* (414, 41 and 55).
29. Plato, *Republic* IX 592 a 11.
30. Erasmus, ed. Allen IV, no. 999 : adolescens etiamnum dialogum moliebatur in quo Platonis communitatem ad uxores usque defendit (21/253-254).
31. A.A. Renouard, *Annales de l'imprimerie des Alde* (3rd ed., Paris, 1834), p. 62 no. 4. With a Latin preface of Aldus to Leo X, and a Greek poem of Marcus Musurus in praise of Plato and Leo X (ed. Beriah Botfield, *Prefaces to the First Editions of the Greek and Roman Classics and of the Sacred Scriptures*, London, 1861, 286-290 and 290-296).
32. Plato, *Opera*, tr. Marsilius Ficinus, Florence, s.a. (1484), pt. 2, f. y 4 recto col. a. The same text appears in the second edition, Venice, 1491, f. 233 recto, col. a, and also in the dedication copy written for Lorenzo de' Medici, Laur. 82, 7, f. 148 v (communication of Dottoressa Antonietta Morandini).
33. Cf. *Utopia*, p. XL-XLI (Hexter).
34. For example, in the *Phaedo*, *Theaetetus*, *Parmenides*, *Symposium*, *Protagoras*.
35. Robert P. Adams, *The Better Part of Valor : More, Erasmus, Colet, and Vives, on Humanism, War, and Peace, 1496-1535* (Seattle, 1962), 122-157.
36. *The Latin Epigrams*, ed. Bradner and Lynch, p. 83, no. 182, cf. p. 48, no. 91 and *pass.*

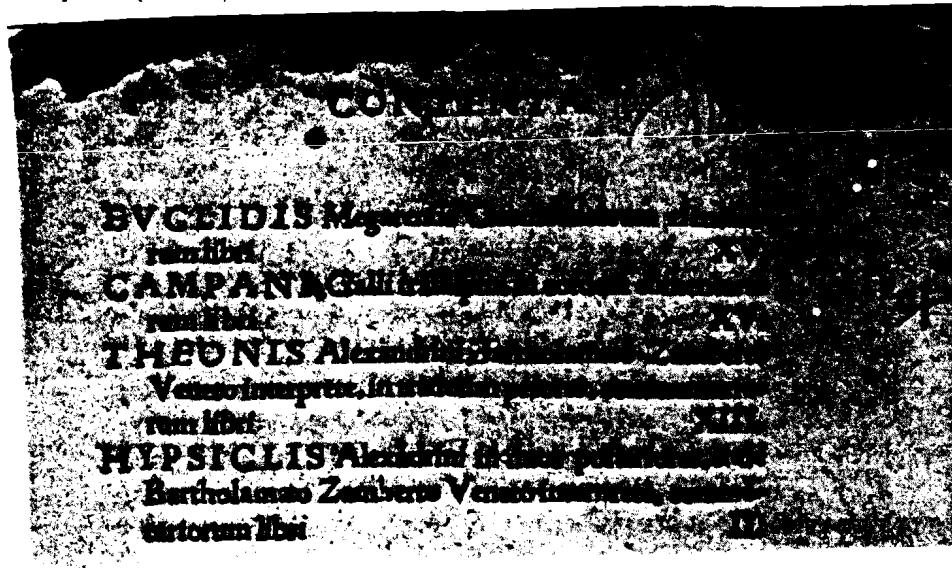
37. *Utopia*, p. 132.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 128.
39. Thomas I. White, *A Study of the Influences of Plato and Aristotle on Thomas More's Utopia* (thesis, Columbia University, 1974). Lina Beger, « Thomas Morus und Plato, » *Zeitschrift fuer die gesammte Staatswissenschaft* 35, 1879, 187-216, 407-483. Thomas I. White, « Aristotle and Utopia, » *Renaissance Quarterly* 29, 1976, 635-675. Edward Surtz, *The Praise of Pleasure* (Cambridge Mass., 1957).
40. *Utopia*, p. 160 ff. and 216 ff.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 220 ff. Cf. Plato, *Laws* X 906 c-910 e. Edward L. Surtz, *The Praise of Wisdom : A Commentary on the Religious and Moral Problems and Backgrounds of St. Thomas More's Utopia* (Chicago, 1957).
42. *Utopia*, p. 216-218 and 180-182.
43. *Correspondence*, nos. 15, 60, 75, 83. Cf. H. Holeczek, *Humanistische Bibelphilologie als Reformproblem bei Erasmus von Rotterdam, Thomas More und William Tyndale* (Leyden, 1975).
44. *The Workes of Sir Thomas More* (London, 1557), 1-34. *The English Works of Sir Thomas More*, ed. W.E. Campbell and A.W. Reed (London, 1931), 347-396. Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *His Life...* tr. Sir Thomas More, ed. J.M. Rigg (London, 1890). M. Kullnick, « Thomas Morus' 'Picus Erle of Mirandula,' » *Archiv fuer das Studium der Neueren Sprachen* 121, 1908, 47-75, 316-340 ; 122, 1908, 27-50 (who gives the full text in both Latin and English). More made a few significant changes in his version of the Life of Pico, omitting philosophical details and emphasizing the religious aspects. Cf. R. Weiss, « Pico e l'Inghilterra, » in *L'Opera e il Pensiero di Giovanni Pico della Mirandola nella Storia dell'Umanesimo* (Convegno Internazionale, Mirandola, 1963, published Florence, 1965), I, 143-156, at 146-147. Myron Gilmore, « More's Translation of Gianfrancesco Pico's Biography, » *ibid.* II 301-304. R.J. Schoeck, « Thomas More and the Italian Heritage of Early Tudor Humanism » (cited above, note 1).
45. More, *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*, ed. Louis L. Martz and Frank Manley (*The Complete Works*, vol. 12, New Haven, 1976).
46. *Ibid.*, p. CXVII.
47. Euclid, Campanus, Theo Alexandrinus and Hypsicles, with a preface of Jacobus Faber Stapulensis (Paris, Henr. Stephanus, 1517). On the title page, an owner's note of Thomas More. Columbia University Library, Plimpton 513/516/Eu 2. See reproduction below p. 22.
48. Erasmus, ed. Allen IV, p. 12-23, no. 999 : delectatur omni musices genere (15/78).

49. *The Latin Epigrams*, p. 120-121, Appendix II, no. 5. Erasmus, ed. Allen III (1913), p. 10-12, no. 601 ; p. 76, no. 654 ; p. 103-105, no. 683 ; p. 105-107, no. 684 ; p. 131-133, no. 706.
50. The portrait of Petrus Aegidius belongs to the Earl of Radnor, whereas the corresponding portrait of Erasmus was held to be the one owned by the Galleria Nazionale d'arte antica in the Palazzo Barberini in Rome. See 'The King's Good Servant' (1978), p. 41-42, nos. 53-54, reproduced on p. 40 and 53. It has now been proven that Matsys' portrait of Erasmus painted for More is the version in Hampton Court, whereas the version in Rome is merely a replica, though authentic. See Margaret Mann Phillips, « The Mystery of the Matsys Portrait, » *Erasmus in English* 7, 1975, 18-21. L. Campbell, M. Mann Phillips, H. Schulte Herbrüggen and J.B. Trapp, « Quentin Matsys, Desiderius Erasmus, Pieter Gillis and Thomas More, » *Burlington Magazine* 120, 1978, 716-725. J.B. Trapp, « A postscript to Matsys, » *ibid.* 121, 1979, 434-437. J.B. Trapp and H. Schulte Herbrüggen « Addenda and Corrigenda » (to the catalogue of the More exhibition of 1978), *Moreana* 16, 61, 1979, 43-50 at p. 45.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 31, no. 26 (and frontispiece), p. 85-86, no. 169 (and p. 84), p. 89, nos. 176 and 177 (and p. 107). The original portrait of More by Holbein is in the Frick Collection in New York.
52. Erasmus, ed. Allen VI (1926), p. 441-443 (no. 1770, at 443, 71-74). Cf. p. 391-392 (no. 1740, at 392, 221-25).
53. 'The King's Good Servant', p. 139-140, no. 287. A good idea can be obtained from plate no. 22 in E.E. Reynolds, *The Field Is Won* (London 1968)
54. *The Latin Epigrams*, p. 104-105, no. 242. The poem was composed around 1512 and printed in 1518. The prose inscription that precedes it on the tomb was composed in 1532.
55. T.E. Bridgett, *The Wisdom and Wit of Thomas More* (London, 1892).
56. Robert Bolt, *A Man for All Seasons* (London, 1960 and New York, 1962).
57. Bolt's preface (p. V-XIX) is reprinted in *Essential Articles*, p. 473-480. It begins with a citation from Robert Whittinton that ends with the words « a man for all seasons » (p. V ; *Essential Articles*, p. 473). Robert Whittinton's *Vulgaria... et de institutione grammaticulorum opusculum*, a text book in English and Latin, was printed at least 10 times from 1520 to 1533. The passage in question is found on f. XV verso of most editions, and on f. 14 in a few others. A modern edition based on one of the two 1520 editions was published by Beatrice White : *The Vulgaria of John Stanbridge and the Vulgaria of Robert Whittinton* (*Early English Text Society, Original Series* 187, London, 1932) where the passage appears on p. 64-65. The English text reads « as who saye a man for all seasons, » and it is followed by a Latin version (of the same Whittinton) which reads « vir ut ita dicam omnium horarum. » This Latin version is omitted by Bolt. The edition of 1533 was displayed in an exhibition at the Folger Shakespeare Library in case 9, with the book opened on f. XV verso (Sir Thomas More, *The Man and His Age*, April-November 1978, exhibition folder). The Pynson edition of 1520 was exhibited in London ('The King's Good Servant,' p. 134, no. 266)

58. Erasmus, *Enkomion Morias* (1898), p. II (cf. Erasmus, ed. Allen I, p. 460/20-21, no. 222) : « cum omnibus omnium horarum hominem agere et potes et gaudes. » It seems to me certain that Whittinton's English phrase (adopted by Bolt) was derived from his own Latin phrase which in turn depended on Erasmus. Richard S. Sylvester, « The 'Man for All Seasons' again : Robert Whittington's Verses to Sir Thomas More » (*Huntington Library Quarterly* 26, 1962-63, 147-154, at p. 147, note 21) states that « Whittington's 'a man for all seasons' probably echoes Erasmus' phrases in the preface to the *Praise of Folly* 'cum omnibus omnium horarum hominem agere' ». He fails to mention Whittinton's Latin phrase which makes the dependence on Erasmus certain rather than probable. Another source which was pointed out to me by Clarence Miller is Erasmus, *Adagia*, Chil. I, Cent. III, Prov. 86 (*Opera Omnia*, vol. 2, Leyden, 1703, col. 144) : Omnium horarum homo. Qui seriis pariter ac iocis esset accommodatus et qui quum assidue libeat convivere, eum veteres omnium horarum omnium horarum hominem appellabant. After this definition, Erasmus cites Quintilian (*Institutio Oratoria* VI 3, 110), and Suetonius (*Tiberius* 42). Cf. Margaret Mann Phillips, « Omnium Horarum Homo », *Moreana* 13, 50, 1976, 13-14.

59. Erasmus, ed. Allen IV, p. 12-23, no. 999, (at, 17, 140-155). Cf. R.J. Schoeck, « Sir Thomas More, Humanist and Lawyer, » *University of Toronto Quarterly* 26, 1964, 1-14, repr. in *Essential Articles*, p. 569-579, 674-676 ; Id., « Common Law and Canon Law in their Relation to Thomas More, » in *St. Thomas More : Action and Contemplation, Proceedings of the Symposium held at St. John's University* (Oct. 9-10, 1970, ed. Richard S. Sylvester, New Haven, 1972), 15-55.

60. Erasmus, ed. Allen IV, no. 999 : quod illi semper peculiariter invisus fuerit tyrannis (15/87-88).



More's signature on a book edited by Lefèvre d'Étaples and printed in 1517 by Henri Estienne : see above p. 14 and note 47. Reproduced with the kind permission of the Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University.