

SOCRATIC METHOD IN MORE'S *UTOPIA*

Robert Frost's remark that Utopia is the opposite of civilization is usually interpreted as his dour judgment on history, yet the statement is also an evaluation of Utopia. The fact that a perfect society must, by definition, be changeless conflicts with the equally evident fact that individuals must change precisely in order to achieve perfection. A careful reading of Book I of *Utopia* will show that the irony of the work focuses precisely on the paradoxes involved in changing individuals and society for the better. In fact I wish to show that Book I illustrates, in terms of the classical values of dialogue and rhetoric, the complex problem of eliciting genuine human change and commitment to values which animated so many humanists concerned with social ills. I believe More views this problem from an ironic perspective which embraces the polarity between rationally perceived absolute value, admitting of no compromise, and the human situation, requiring considerable flexibility and openness to achieve change. In short, the irony of *Utopia* focuses on the paradoxical relationship of rhetoric and dialogue, Cicero and Socrates, and ultimately Raphael Hythloday and Thomas More.

Since the publication of the Yale edition of *Utopia*, More's use of irony has become a persistent critical problem. In their introduction, Surtz and Hexter grapple with the ambiguity which the irony creates.¹ Simply stated the problem is the relationship of Raphael Hythloday's character and opinions, revealed in Book I, to the social satire in his enthusiastic account of Utopia in Book II. Is Raphael an idealistic humanist whose views and attitudes are normative and through whom More is calling for social reform?² Is Raphael himself consciously satiric, lashing society in the tradition of Roman satire?³ Or is he the speaker of nonsense, a flawed narrator whose naive enthusiasm makes it unlikely that More endorses his views?⁴ The most recent chapter in this controversy is the J.H. Hexter vs. Ward S. Allen exchange.⁵ The former argued that Raphael Hythloday satirizes European society and that More « really » endorses Utopian values. More's final disclaimer of communism is laden with irony because he uses words like « magnificence », « wealth », and « nobility » which are precisely the values that Hythloday attacked in his account of Utopia. Allen countered by showing these words to have a positive value in much of More's other writing, and not

so clearly a negative meaning even in *Utopia*. More's disclaimer of communism is sincere, he concludes, or at least intended to be taken at face value within the dramatic context of the work, so that the reader will be stimulated to think about the problem himself. It appears to me that Professor Hexter is arguing for a satiric interpretation of the work, while Professor Allen holds that More's artistic intent is Socratic.⁶

What is at stake in this controversy is More's opinion of the desirability and practicality of social reforms along humanistic lines, i.e., the securing of just governance in the rising national states by educating the « wise counsellor. » Does More endorse the kind of reforms Raphael desires, and secondly, does he endorse the « wise counsellor », educated in classical rhetoric, as the role for those who wish to effect reform? The discovery of More's real position, hidden within the intricate dramatic and narrative structure of *Utopia*, depends upon reconciling two essential ideas in *Utopia*: the Dialogue of Counsel and Utopian communism.

In Book I Raphael rejects More's arguments in favor of political involvement. He states that the right to private property vitiates all efforts to persuade powerful men to act justly:

Yet surely, my dear More, to tell you candidly my heart's sentiments, it appears to me that wherever you have private property and all men measure all things by cash values, there it is scarcely possible for a commonwealth to have justice or prosperity -- unless you think justice exists where all the best things flow into the hands of the worst citizens ... (103/24-29).

Thus for Raphael the abolition of private property is not merely a desirable ideal; it is the absolute prerequisite for orderly governance, and *Utopia* is the *exemplum* of a successful communist society. *Utopia*'s just and prosperous society, without private property, is Raphael's evidence in support of his decision to flee political involvement in the cause of humanism:

As a result, when in my heart I ponder on the extremely wise and holy institutions of the Utopians, among whom, with very few laws, affairs are ordered so aptly that virtue has its reward, and yet, with equality of distribution, all men have abundance of all things, and then when I contrast with their policies the many nations elsewhere ever making ordinances and yet never one of them achieving good order -- nations where whatever a man has

acquired he calls his own private property, but where all these laws daily framed are not enough for a man to secure or to defend or even to distinguish from someone else's the goods which each in turn calls his own, a predicament readily attested by the numberless and ever new and interminable lawsuits -- when I consider, I repeat, all these facts, I become more partial to Plato and less surprised at his refusal to make laws for those who rejected that legislation which gave to all an equal share in all goods (103/32-105/7).

More responds bluntly: « I am of the contrary opinion. Life cannot be satisfactory where all things are common » (107/5-6). This statement makes the critical dilemma apparent. If More's attitude is really represented by his persona's words in the Dialogue of Counsel, then he has disengaged himself from any serious avowal of communism and thus undercut most of the satire in Book II. But if More, as author, uses his own character as a foil to Raphael's attack on European society, then a consistent reading of the Dialogue of Counsel means More has no hope of realizing the social goals of humanism, since Raphael's position precludes any such hope without communism. The dilemma can also be stated in terms of Raphael's character. If More's character is a foil, then Raphael is a serious character with a prophetic, satiric vision. If More's attitude is represented by his own character, then Raphael is *Hythlodæus*, « the speaker of nonsense » -- a satiric character rather than a serious character with a satiric vision.

I hope to show that this dilemma can be resolved by interpreting *Utopia* as a Socratic dialogue; that Socratic irony, not just satiric irony, operates in *Utopia*; that Renaissance humanism as a « civilizing » influence is being scrutinized. More's « real » position, I think, will be found to lie much deeper than has been suspected.

II

Book I of *Utopia* is concerned with the realization of certain practical objectives in the real world. Can these objectives be achieved through the « power of persuasion » in the councils of the powerful without necessitating the moral compromise of the persuader? In short, how should the wise counsellor operate: by bearing witness to the truth or by engaging in dialogue about means and ends? Book I is a dialogue about how and if a rhetorician should engage in dialogue.

The dialogue has received little attention from theorists of literary criticism⁷. Perhaps this is due to their viewing it as an embryonic novel or drama or essay, as if the dialogue were an early stage of a genre whose later developments are more interesting to investigate. Yet the dialogue is a genre, not just a method. To say one has « read a dialogue » is quite as paradoxical as saying that one has « seen a symphony ». The dialogue is an attempt to transmute one medium into another, to render the spoken word into the written *as spoken*. Even though a literary dialogue is just now being analyzed, dialogue itself has been studied by both clinical psychologists and existential philosophers⁸. These studies have resulted in insights which can be focused on the literary dialogue.

Dialogue is the primary method by which an individual grasps a truth and gives it the kind of assent which causes a change in principles or behavior at the deepest levels. This kind of dialogue has « radical openness, » « suspended judgment », or « involvement » ; it leads to « commitment » (or « adjustment »). Whatever terminology one uses, dialogue is characterized by a spirit of inquiry shared by two or more interlocutors ; the inquiry leads to insights the discovery and effect of which are intimately connected with the personal relationship which exists, or has come to exist, between the interlocutors.

This description of dialogue obviously resembles the Socratic method. But while Socrates practiced the dialogue method, it was Plato who developed the literary genre. Plato felt that dialogue was an essential part of philosophizing, and he attempted to recreate for a reader the experience of participating in a dialogue with Socrates, although he obviously manipulated the interchanges for his own purposes. That Plato succeeds, even if only partially, in allowing his reader to participate vicariously in a dialogue is a literary achievement commensurate with his philosophic one. The dramatic device which permits the sharing is irony. The reader cannot really remain at the level of Socrates' listeners, nor can he be allowed to anticipate Socrates' statements in a way which ignores the dialectical process of their discovery :

The reader cannot be questioned like the slave in the *Meno*, but he can be asked to watch a discussion in which lines of inquiry are opened and not exhausted. The alert student is expected to pursue the inquiry further. In following through he will find that he has been prodded into doing philosophy by himself instead of merely observing how others do it. This method by which Plato, as it were, pretends ignorance in order to awaken the mind of the reader, is his own version of Socratic irony. It is also his way of justifying the technique of written dialogue, by avoiding what he elsewhere deplors, viz., the attempt to put knowledge into the reader's soul « like giving sight to blind men's

The salient point of Socratic irony is that Plato thought he needed it. Plato seems to have considered the verbal, oral quality of the dialogue essential to his own philosophy. He wished his readers to accept his ideas with the same conviction which Socrates himself had been able to elicit. Plato's portrayal of Socratic irony has been studied extensively by Hans Georg Gadamer among others¹⁰. Gadamer points out that the critical insight of the Socratic method is that the question is more difficult than the answer¹¹. Socrates, in his role as gadfly, asks questions of his interlocutors which destroy their certitude about the opinions and beliefs which justify their conduct. Plato's dialogues frequently begin with a concrete moral problem, e. g., a man prosecuting his father. From such a situation Plato portrays Socrates' interrogation of the principles beneath the moral problem and how he eventually reduces his interlocutors to a condition of anxiety and uncertainty. At his point Socrates' function as a gadfly gives way to his role as midwife. By continuing to ask questions and elicit answers Socrates leads his interlocutors to deeper, more profound insights which actually alter their deepest principles. But the Socratic method allows these insights to emerge as a discovery and consensus, so that they do not « belong » to anyone, Socrates or his listeners ; rather, the truth is the Logos being revealed independently of the egos of the interlocutors. This is the objectivity which transcends the subjectivity of the individual participants in the dialogue.

The ability to ask Socratic questions presupposes that one knows what one doesn't know. This *docta ignorantia* is the obverse of the rhetorical ideal of humanism, the *doctus orator* typified by Cicero. The objective of rhetorical training is *phronesis*, a prudence or control of a situation¹². Cicero's dialogues do not develop ideas according to the dialectic of an actual conversation but according to the logic of formal argument. The tone of the Ciceronian dialogue is speculative rather than dramatic ; the reader overhears a discussion, he does not participate in a search. The structure of the oration is not related to a method of discovery as much as to a method of instruction as the *doctus orator* instructs his listeners about a truth of which he has firm possession. The characterization of the interlocutors is not germane to the tension of the dialogue but is a form of *elocutio*. The interlocutors accept their teacher's opinion because of its logical and emotional force ; there is no suspended judgment, and little dramatically portrayed reorientation of commitment.

These differences between the Platonic and Ciceronian dialogues involve more than mere differences of style. The dialogue format reflects the difference between Socratic wisdom and *phronesis*. Cicero's dialogues

do not portray the emergence of the Logos and hence have no need of Socratic irony. The truth does not emerge but is re-presented in persuasive terms by one who has already grasped it as a whole and has organized it into subordinate parts.

The control and logical subordination of Cicero's dialogues is clearly analogous to the style of his orations and to the logic of the Ciceronian sentence itself. Cicero's dialogues, as well as his syntax, require the possession of truth before its articulation, and, in fact, the style is directed to reinforcing the impression that the speaker has truth in his possession and thus speaks with authority. In short, the Ciceronian dialogue takes positions. Its style compels it to do so.

Socrates' notion of the philosophic endeavor as a search for relevant wisdom requires irony for its written expression as a way of letting the reader participate in the dialogue from which the Logos emerges. The Ciceronian dialogue does not require such irony. Its style is directed to edifying the reader through the control exerted over him by the *doctus orator*. But besides Plato and Cicero another dialogist influenced More: Lucian, a superb rhetorician who burlesqued the literary dialogue itself and developed a comic form of it as a vehicle for satirizing behavior rather than challenging it or speculating about it.

More's contact with Lucian's works has been well documented¹³. Lucian retains a strong sense of scene and character, both influences of Roman comedy. His dialogues are populated by « wise fools » who possess not *docta ignorantia* but a kind of *indoctissima sapientia*¹⁴. Rather than acute questioning intellects which destroy false certitude, they have an unlearned common sense which throws false virtue and false wisdom into shame and confusion. The wise fool does not seek truth himself nor does he assist others to find it; he is rather a moral witness whose testimony against the vain and wicked is all the more damning because he seems so foolish.

Socratic and satiric irony each thrust toward effecting a basic change in the reader's behavior. While the objective of Socratic irony is discovery of a new truth which will alter his behavior, satire confronts the reader with the evil behavior of both the world and himself, and he may or may not be motivated to change himself or his society. Moreover, if he is so motivated, the change is liable to be viewed as a return to traditional moral principles rather than the discovery of new ones. Lucianic satire, and all satire, attacks the actual practices of men, whereas Socratic irony not only questions actual practices but also undermines the opinions

which support those practices. While questioning an *individual's* justifications for his conduct, Socrates undermined the *sensus communis* which even the satirist would have supported and would have needed for his art¹⁵.

These three classical authors, Plato, Cicero and Lucian, all used the dialogue to attempt to change people: by creating or recreating an insight, by effecting a conviction through rational proof, and by lacerating folly to compel a return to conservative values. It seems to me that the critical controversy about *Utopia* resolves itself into whether the irony is Socratic or satiric. I think that Book I is a Socratic dialogue about rhetoric and dialogue, about how the humanist should operate. As such it sets the dramatic context for the satire of Book II. More by-passed the strictly Ciceronian format so popular with other Renaissance humanists. Rather than merely imitating classical models, he dramatized the conflict between classical values portrayed in the models, the basic attitudes which direct one's whole moral vision and determine one's moral behavior. Now I wish to show how these attitudes are dramatized and satirized in Book I of *Utopia*.

III

There seem to be several reasons for placing Book I of *Utopia* in the tradition of the Socratic-Platonic dialogue. First, its subject is a moral decision -- whether to enter or to flee the active life at court. Secondly, its dialectic is marked by More, as *persona*, questioning Raphael about his convictions and opinions of the dilemma of the humanist in the world. Yet the Lucianic temper can be felt. For while More strives to ask the Socratic questions, Raphael insists on giving Ciceronian answers. In fact Raphael is gradually revealed as a burlesque of the humanist, but he also gradually assumes the character of the Lucianic « wise fool ». He is both Raphael, the messenger of truth, and Hythlodæus, a speaker of nonsense¹⁶.

The characterization of Raphael as a burlesque of the humanist begins when More first encourages him to enter royal service. More compliments him on his « complete learning » (*absoluta doctrina*) as well as his « great experience » (57/18-20). Immediately Raphael contradicts More by saying that he has no skill in the kind of counsel kings want, viz., how to increase their wealth. Kings, he adds, don't want advice nor do they take it. He illustrates this point through a dialogue in which he participated at the home of Cardinal Morton, a profound statesman who pos-

essed all the accoutrements of the ideal Renaissance counselor (59/20-61/6). In the Cardinal's presence, he debated an English lawyer about the severity of English laws concerning theft. The lawyer expressed amazement at the failure of capital punishment to reduce the number of thieves in England. Raphael first attacked the severity of the punishment, then proceeded to trace the causes of theft to wars of adventure, to standing armies which undermine legitimate authority, to the English enclosure laws which embrace a multitude of social evils, the wellspring being the unscrupulous greed of the privileged few, and the pitiful ill-timed luxuries available to the poor. Since these causes of theft are in the very fabric of English society, there is no remedy short of a revamping of the entire social structure. Raphael concludes, « Cast out these ruinous plagues ... » He then proceeds to describe the corrective measures restoring individual farming rights and restricting monopolies. Finally he ascribes the root of evil to bad education : « ... you allow your youths to be badly brought up ... » (16/17 - 71/16).

Interrupting the lawyer's response to this harangue, the Cardinal redirects the dialogue to the original question : the proper penalty for theft, rather than the causes of theft and their remedies. Raphael then begins again to address the question and does so in fine humanistic fashion, citing examples from antiquity and the Old Testament to prove the unfairness of capital punishment for theft, and then he offers an experience from his travels, the practice of the Polylerites, as an alternative. This nation punishes theft with a form of indentured servitude. He sees « no reason why this method might not be adopted even in England and be far more beneficial in its working than the justice which my legal opponent had praised so highly » (79/38 - 81/2). Of course, there are reasons why it might not work, but Raphael doesn't see them. The lawyer, on the other hand, doesn't see any reasons why the proposal might work : « Never could this system be established in England without involving the commonwealth in a very serious crisis » (81/2-4). This statement is true as far as it goes, and the rest of the listeners agree. Raphael's own uncompromising moral vision is thus met by an equally unyielding resistance. At this point Morton interrupts with the obvious compromise : rather than argue whether it should be done or whether it can be done, he suggests trying the Polylerites' system in a modified form, particularly with regard to vagrants (81/7-18). But Raphael misses the distinction between confrontation and compromise : « When the Cardinal had finished speaking they all vied in praising what they all had received with contempt when suggested by me ... » (81/19-20).

This account of how Raphael feels he would be misunderstood at a king's court is immediately followed by his recounting of the debate between the friar and the hanger-on. The latter's ironic suggestion that beggars be accepted into monasteries stings the friar, who counterattacks with all the apparatus of scholastic disputation, including the authority of Scripture and the Holy See. The hanger-on makes his suggestions with as much vehemence as Raphael, but ironically. The friar cannot refute a suggestion and is reduced to foolishness. But Raphael entirely misses the humor of the situation and interprets the audience's reaction as serious, and he condemns them because they listened to the hanger-on instead of him ; he accuses the court of Morton of base flattery (85/33-36). More responds to this story with irony which is often missed. By Raphael's account I was, he says, « pleasantly reminded of the very Cardinal in whose court I was brought up as a lad » (87/3-4) -- a subtle jibe at Raphael who has just slandered that very court !

Raphael's narration was designed to support his decision to avoid courtly life because courts would not listen to him. Several things become clear from Raphael's story. First he attempts to give advice which actually demands the deepest kind of interior change, but his demand for this change is based on his own authority, on his claims to have more experience than his listeners. Secondly, he will settle for nothing less than this interior change and the consequent social revolution. The fact is, as Sylvester has pointed out, Raphael's effort at persuading Morton was a practical success.¹⁷ Morton agreed that some aspects of his solution be *tried*. In the real world of court politics this is as much as any counsellor could reasonably hope for, but to Raphael it is a failure, and he offers it as convincing evidence that he would not be listened to. Raphael really does not want *consent* to practical suggestions, but *assent* to a moral posture which is based upon his unique experience and which he attempts to present with rhetorical force. His fear is not that the solutions he proposes will not be adopted, but that the king will not be converted to his moral posture. The issue is not whether the humanist has a chance to influence events, but how he should try to influence them. And it is clear that Raphael wishes to operate by « giving sight to blind eyes. » It is equally clear that More does not agree with this view of the humanist's function at court.

More presents his challenge to Raphael again : why doesn't Raphael enter the service of a king ? Again Raphael responds negatively, but the answer again develops the humanist burlesque. Raphael defends his decision by narrating a hypothetical meeting of the council of the King

of France. The Latin narration is 464 words long (86/31 - 90/22). He concludes by asking « What reception from my listeners, my dear More, do you think this speech of mine would find ? » More deadpans, « To be sure not a very favorable one. » Missing this little ironic jab, Raphael begins another hypothetical council session, this one twisted into a narration 924 words long, and concludes « ... if I tried to obtrude these and the like ideas on men strongly inclined to the opposite way of thinking, to what deaf ears should I tell the tale ! » More replies, « Deaf indeed, without doubt » (90/22 - 96/31).¹⁸

By carrying rhetorical *copia* to these absurd lengths Raphael is revealed as a burlesque of the humanist. But More now continues to press him on the matter of his decision. He accuses him of attempting to impose new ideas from without on people of the opposite conviction. More refers to this procedure as *haec philosophia scholastica* (98/6), and he seems to mean that Raphael wishes to alter his listeners' convictions by sheer force of argument, in short by putting sight into blind men's eyes, forgetting that the true function of rhetoric is to deal with means and ends. Raphael's philosophy, says More, is suited to « the private conversation of close friends » and not to the councils of kings (99/5-8). Raphael responds with a debater's trick : he agrees with More that philosophy has no part in kings' councils ; thus he simply equates his own attitude with philosophy *per se*. More patiently distinguishes Raphael's philosophy from that suitable to a royal council. The terms in which he describes this philosophy -- *civilior, cum decoro, concinne* -- refer not to method but to personal style and attitude. Finally More recommends that Raphael consider « taking a silent part » in the council. But Raphael will have none of this, and he calls such tactics « sharing the madness of others ». He then concludes by isolating himself from any dialogue : « If I would stick to the truth, I must needs speak in the manner I have described. To speak falsehoods, for all I know, may be the part of a philosopher, but it is certainly not for me » (101/7-9).

With these words Raphael consciously rejects any flexibility in dialogue and identifies himself as a *doctus orator* with a univocal approach to truth. He sees no other way to speak ; another way must be false. More puts the « other side » of this view in his own mouth, but by giving himself the kind of Socratic role he advocates for Raphael, he must perforce play the ironic questioner, the seeker for truth. He must assist others to discover the truth, not attempt to convince them of it. Raphael envisions himself operating by oratorical, not dialogical, methods, and he concludes that these methods would not work. The paradox of this position is

that, granting Raphael's character, he is probably right. If Raphael could respond to More's own probings and actually enter into a genuine dialogue, he could also initiate the same search as a counsellor. But he is incapable of such a response. In short, if he were to behave in court as he says he would, and as he does with More and Giles, the effect would be quite as negative as he predicts, and as it is both on More and on the reader.

More makes Raphael's attitude toward truth, his total commitment to oratory and *phronesis*, the motive for the latter's description of *Utopia*. Raphael turns aside More's objections to communism by appealing to his experience in Utopia : « But you should have been with me in Utopia and personally seen their manners and customs as I did, for I lived there more than five years and would never have wished to leave except to make known that new world » (107/18-22). Raphael's mission, then, is « to make known that new world », to deliver the message of Utopian rationality to irrational Europe. But Peter Giles responds to it with the crucial objection : « ... it would be hard for you to convince me that a better ordered people is to be found in that new world than in the one known to us » (107/24-26). Giles' focus is epistemological. How will Raphael *convince* his listeners ? How is the recounting of Utopia's excellence to be persuasive, not only that Utopia is better than England, but that its perfection can and ought to be imitated. In short, Giles is asking why the account of Utopia should receive a welcome different from the one the Morton household gave the account of the Polylerites : that it's all very nice, but it won't work here.

Raphael's response to this challenge more clearly focuses the epistemological problem. First he challenges Giles' learning : « ... you could give a sounder opinion if you had read the historical accounts of that world » (107/32-34). Those accounts, « if we must believe them, » indicate that Utopia is older than Europe. The « we » is important because apparently no one but Raphael has had access to these histories. The history of Utopia is as privileged a piece of information as the experience of having actually lived there. But Raphael continues ascribing the superiority of the Utopians to their « application and industry » (107/39). The Utopians' chronicles relate how the island learned every art and craft of the Roman Empire from the crew of a Roman ship that was wrecked on their shore. This is what Raphael means by « application and industry » : *phronesis*, an ability to increase technical control. Raphael admires the readiness with which the Utopians learn, and it is that readiness which he denies to Europe :

But if any like fortune has ever driven anyone from their shores to ours, the event is as completely forgotten as future generations will perhaps forget that I had once been there. And, just as they immediately at one meeting appropriated to themselves every good discovery of ours, so I suppose it will be long before we adopt anything that is better arranged with them than with us (109/12-17).

Raphael wishes Europe to respond to him the way the Utopians did to the Roman ship -- « at one meeting » adopt « every good discovery ». He apparently sees no reason why communism can't be learned quickly as an art or craft. He assumes its utilitarian value is evident to Europe, and that it ought to be adopted enthusiastically. Such an ability to perceive utility and adopt it is what makes Utopia wise and happy : « This trait, I judge, is the chief reason why, though we are inferior to them neither in brains nor in resources, their commonwealth is more wisely governed and more flourishing than ours » (109/17-20).

This answer to Giles' challenge reveals that Raphael considers his message in purely oratorical terms : he is merely giving testimony of a way in which Europe can increase its *phronesis*, its technical control of its own social order. He expects to operate on More and Giles the way he would in a king's council, the same way he tried to operate at Morton's house. Yet Raphael's answer to Giles is that *in Utopia* it wouldn't be hard at all to convince people, but in Europe it's impossible. He simply does not perceive any difference between « arts and crafts » and the restructuring of an entire social order. When asked why his account should be convincing, Raphael gives the *cul de sac* answer that the Utopians wouldn't need convincing, while Europeans can't be convinced. This, he concludes, proves the evident superiority of the Utopians.

More interrupts and requests Raphael to tell all about Utopia ; if it is so well governed More wishes to know about it. But his request is weighted with the ignorance of the Socratic questioner : « ... set forth ... everything which you think we should like to know. And you must think we wish to know everything of which we are still ignorant » (109/22-26). Thus the description of Utopia is to be Raphael's response to More's invitation that he « put up or shut up. » His account will be a defense of his decision to flee politics, since Utopia should justify his conviction about the necessity and practicality of communism for any kind of just governance. But, more importantly, his account will be an attempt to practice on More and Giles the kind of persuasion which he says will fail in a council, but which he holds to be the only alternative for an honest man.

He will attempt to change their values about private property, not through dialectic and dialogue, but through the testimony of authority and experience. In short, Book II becomes a test case for Raphael's attitudes as they are revealed in the Dialogue of Counsel.

More's challenge to Raphael cannot be met successfully. The tension between the rhetorical and Socratic attitude is dramatized by Raphael's dilemma ; the logical *cul de sac* in his position guarantees his failure because his decision to flee the active life is based upon his conviction that he will fail to convince others. If he succeeds in convincing More and Giles by Utopia's example that communism is necessary and practical, then he has undercut his own arguments against playing the role of the wise counsellor. If he fails to convince them, he can only accept it as further proof that his decision was correct and that the rest of mankind is either stupid or selfish or both. His position is ridiculous. He must fail in order to justify himself.

IV

The polarity between the Socratic and rhetorical attitudes established in Book I decidedly shapes the satire of Book II. Book I is a dramatic portrayal of its contents : the position of the humanist attempting to play the role of counsellor without compromising the truth which he firmly possesses. Raphael holds true to his moral vision ; for him philosophy is only bearing witness to the truth of that vision ; the Socratic attitude is simply « to speak falsehoods ». His account of Utopia is intended to persuade, to effect a change in the values of his listeners by rhetorical means. The entire thrust of Book I's elaborate dialogue is to establish this intent. It is not enough for Utopia to be good, or for Raphael to be « right » about Utopia and Europe ; he must convince More and Giles that Utopia alone is rational and just, and thus vindicate his decision to flee the active life. The issue is the challenge to communicate that truth to the characters so as to change their minds. The satire of Book II cannot be interpreted apart from his epistemological challenge.

Raphael's posture accords exactly with that of King Utopus. But unlike Utopus he does not have the power to determine behavior. Rather, at Morton's court, he tried to change the convictions of those who had power -- and failed. To engage in counsel Raphael would have to embrace dialogue with others and suspend the certitude with which he holds his convictions. This he refuses to do. He remains true to his moral vision and lacerates the follies of 16th century Europe, but the power of this insight depends upon a certitude which isolates him from the personal

encounters which might actually lead people to agree with him. Rather he operates only as the *doctus orator* knowing full well that he is ineffective.

The satire of Book II builds upon the character of Raphael and his dilemma. In fact, Utopian society is Raphael's character writ large; the Utopian body politic incorporates the « controlling reason, » the *phronesis*, which dominates Raphael's character. This rationality is typified by the communism imposed by King Utopus and accepted by his subjects. It continues to be accepted because of its self-evident rationality. Utopian society is thus a humanistic paradise because its past is totally retrievable; in fact it has no past since all its social institutions perdure unchanged from their origins. Utopia is a cultural eternity; the opposite of civilization.

Utopia's perfectly reasonable society deflates the wickedness and folly of 16th century Europe. Raphael is simply enraptured by Utopia and clings to its standards as uncompromisingly as the Utopians themselves. Yet while Raphael expounds the glories of a society which is perfectly reasonable, More's attitude reminds us that reason is not perfect and certitude must always be conditional. But neither Raphael nor the Utopians can tolerate this imperfection. Both are isolated from civilization; Raphael must cut himself off from dialogue just as King Utopus severed his realm from the mainland. Both Utopia and Raphael are secure in a vision of rational perfection; neither can really become involved in the life of sinful man.

Thus, in the dialogue of Book I, Raphael Hythloday burlesques the humanist version of the *doctus orator* while More portrays himself as a Socratic character. The dynamics of Socratic and rhetorical method within the dialogue reveal the tensions with which the humanist must grapple if he wishes to be effective in the active life. When More finally rejects Utopian communism he is certainly being ironic; but the irony is Socratic, directed at Raphael, and at us. For Raphael doomed himself to losing the argument. More cannot endorse the evils in European civilization, but he cannot reject the dialectic of civilization; he cannot approve of an attitude which frustrates all the good which it clearly perceives, but he cannot endorse a society which tolerates evils it could change. More understood the difference between Utopia and civilization better than we. He understood the tragedy of human change; the struggle to really choose the better and reject the worse. He understood it -- and he smiled.

NOTES

1. J. H. Hexter and Edward Surtz S. J. Eds., *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, Vol. 4 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1965). All quotations in the text are taken from this edition.
2. That Raphael's views are normative is the view of J. H. Hexter. See his *More's Utopia: The Biography of an Idea* (Princeton University Press, 1952).
3. See Robert C. Elliott, *The Shape of Utopia: Studies in a Literary Genre* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1970), pp. 3-49.
4. See Richard Sylvester, « 'Si Hythlodæo Credimus': Vision and Revision in Thomas More's *Utopia*, » *Essential Articles for the Study of Thomas More*, R.S. Sylvester and G.P. Marc'hadour, Eds., Hamden, CT: Shoe String (Archon), pp. 290-301.
5. J. H. Hexter, « Intention, Words and Meaning: The Case of More's *Utopia*, » *New Literary History*, VI (1975), pp. 529-41. Ward S. Allen, « The Tone of More's Farewell to *Utopia*: A Reply to J. H. Hexter, » *Moreana*, 51 (September, 1976), pp. 108-118.
6. That More's artistic intention is Socratic is also the conclusion of R. J. Schoeck, « A Nursery of Correct and Useful Institutions': On Reading More's *Utopia* as Dialogue, » *Essential Articles for the Study of Thomas More*, pp. 281-89. Schoeck, however, does not discuss the function of Raphael's character in More's Socratic intent.
7. Two major, but outdated, studies are: Elizabeth Merrill, *The Dialogue in English Literature*, Yale Studies in English No. 42 (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1911) and Gottfried Nieman, *Die Dialogliteratur der Reformationzeit* (Leipzig, 1905).
8. For example see Walter J. Ong, S.J., *The Presence of the Word: Some Prolegomena for Cultural and Religious History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1967) and Rollo May, *Love and Will* (New York: Norton Press, 1965).
9. John M. O'Brien, *The Socratic Paradoxes and the Greek Mind* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967), p. 109.
10. Hans Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik* (Tübingen, Mohr, 1960), pp. 344-60.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 345.
12. The relation of *sophia* and *phronesis* is explicated by Gadamer, pp. 16-27.
13. Craig Thompson, Ed., *The Translations of Lucian: The Yale Edition of the Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, Vol. 3, part I (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1975). Also see T. S. Dorsch, « Sir Thomas More and Lucian: An Interpretation of *Utopia*, » *Archiv für das Studium der Neueren Sprachen*, CCIII (1966), pp. 345-63.

14. The best treatment of Lucian's style is J. Bompaigne, *Lucien écrivain* (Paris, 1958). An earlier but useful work is A. Bellinger, « Lucian's Dramatic technique, » *Yale Classical Studies*, Vol. I (1928), pp. 3-40.

15. For the relation of *sensus communis* to the Socratic method see Gadamer, pp. 18-22.

16. I believe that Sylvester's analysis of Raphael's character is basically correct, but I am trying to place that character in the literary traditions in which More was operating. The problem of Book I is how should a counsellor operate, and More formulates that problem in terms of the two great literary archetypes with which he was intimate : the Ciceronian *doctus orator* and the Socratic questioner. Raphael's character illustrates the epistemological (and perhaps moral) pitfalls of the purely oratorical approach to counsel.

17. « *Si Hythlodæo Credimus ...*, » p. 298.

18 For a brief but trenchant analysis of the irony involved in Raphael Hythlodæus's bombast in these passages see Clarence H. Miller's review of the Yale edition of *Utopia* in *English Language Notes*, III (June 1966), p. 305.

• **UTOPIE ET SOCIALISME** de Martin Buber, paru en hébreu dès 1946, est paru en édition française (Paris 1977), traduit sur l'édition allemande par P. Corset et F. Girard. Le philosophe de *Je et Tu*, dans un survol historique qui se terminera sur le « non-échéec exemplaire » des kibbutzim, accole (p. 28) les deux ancêtres, l'Athénien et le Londonien :

Le système social du socialisme et du communisme modernes a, comme l'eschatologie, le caractère de proclamation et d'appel. Certes, Platon était déjà poussé par l'exigence de produire une réalité conforme à l'idée ; certes, déjà, il chercha aussi jusqu'à sa mort avec une passion inlassable les instruments humains de réalisation. Mais ce n'est qu'avec le système social moderne que commence cet entrelacement intense de la doctrine et de l'action, du projet et de l'expérimentation. Pour Thomas More, il était encore possible de mêler l'instruction sérieuse au jeu gratuit et, avec une ironie supérieure, de faire alterner la présentation d'aménagements « bien plus absurdes » avec ceux de tel ou tel qu'il « souhaite plus qu'il n'espère » voir imités.

G. M.