THOMAS MORE TO PETER GILES, GREETINGS

My dear Peter Giles, I am almost ashamed to be sending you after nearly a year this little book about the Utopian commonwealth, which I'm sure you expected in less than six weeks. For, as you were well aware, I faced no problem in finding my materials, and had no reason to ponder the arrangement of them. All I had to do was repeat what you and I together heard Raphael relate. Hence there was no occasion for me to labour over the style, since what he said, being extempore and informal, couldn't be couched in fancy terms. And besides, as you know, he is a man not so well versed in Latin as in Greek; so that my language would be nearer the truth, the closer it approached to his casual simplicity. Truth in fact is the only thing at which I should aim and do aim in writing this book.

I confess, my dear Peter, that having all these materials ready to hand left hardly anything at all for me to do. Otherwise, thinking through this topic from the beginning and disposing it in proper order might have demanded no little time and work, even if one were not entirely deficient in talent and learning. And then if the matter had to be set forth with eloquence,

1 In the first edition of Utopia (1516), this letter was called the 'preface' of the work; this is also its running title in the 1518 editions. On Giles (c. 1486–1533), see p. 9 and, on his role in the genesis of Utopia, see Introduction, p. 9.
2 On the chronology, see Introduction, pp. xi–xvii. On the meaning of 'Utopia', see p. 11.
3 Finding materials, disposing them in the proper order and couching them in the appropriate style are the three steps of literary composition (locutio, dispositio, elocutio), as that subject is treated in the classical textbooks of rhetoric and their medieval and Renaissance successors.
4 I.e., Raphael Hythlodaeus. His given name links him with the archangel Raphael, traditionally a guide and healer. (On his surname, see p. 30.)
5 Rhetorical theory identified three levels of style: the grand, the middle and the plain. This sentence hints that Utopia is written in the plain style — according to theory, the appropriate one for philosophical dialogue. In point of fact, while the account of the Utopian commonwealth in Book I of the work is written in a generally simple and straightforward style, some passages of Book II, as well as the peroration of Book I, diverge very considerably from the plain style. See Clarence H. Miller, 'Style and meaning in Utopia: Hythlodaeus's sentences and dictum'.
6 Knowledge of Greek was still uncommon among humanists in the early sixteenth century and that carried considerable prestige in their circles. Greek studies had been More's own preoccupation as a scholar in the decade leading up to Utopia.
More to Giles

not just factually, there is no way I could have done that, however hard I worked, for however long a time. But now when I was relieved of all these concerns, over which I could have sweated forever, there was nothing for me to do but simply write down what I had heard. Well, little as it was, that task was rendered almost impossible by my many other obligations. Most of my day is given to the law – pleading some cases, hearing others, arbitrating others, and deciding still others. I pay a courtesy call to one man and visit another on business; and so almost all day I'm out dealing with other people, and the rest of the day I give over to my family and household; and then for myself – that is, my studies – there's nothing left.

For when I get home, I have to talk with my wife, chatter with my children, and consult with the servants. All these matters I consider part of my business, since they have to be done unless a man wants to be a stranger in his own house. Besides, you are bound to bear yourself as agreeably as you can towards those whom nature or chance or your own choice has made the companions of your life. But of course you mustn't spoil them with your familiarity, or by overindulgence turn the servants into your masters. And so, amid the concerns I have mentioned, the day, the month, the year slips away.

When do I write, then? Especially since I still have said nothing about sleeping or even eating, to which many people devote as much time as to sleep itself, which consumes almost half of our lives. My own time is only what I steal from sleeping and eating. It isn't very much (hence the slow pace), but it's something, and so I've finally finished Utopia, and I'm sending it to you now. I hope, my dear Peter, that you'll read it ever and let me know if you find anything that I've overlooked. Though on this point I do not lack all confidence in myself – I wish my judgement and learning were up to my memory, which isn't too bad – still, I don't feel so confident that I would swear I've missed nothing.

For my servant John Clement has raised a great doubt in my mind. As you know, he was there with us, for I always want him to be present at conversations where there's profit to be gained. (And one of these days I)

More to Giles

expect we'll get a fine crop of learning from this young sprout, who has already made excellent progress in Greek as well as Latin.) Anyhow, as I recall matters, Hythloday said the bridge over the Anderby at Amurant was five hundred yards long; but my John says that is two hundred yards too much – that in fact the river is not more than three hundred yards wide there. So I beg you, consult your memory. If your recollection agrees with his, I'll yield and confess myself mistaken. But if you don't recall the point, I'll follow my own memory and keep my present figure. For, as I've taken particular pains to avoid having anything false in the book, so, if anything is in doubt, I'd rather say something untrue than tell a lie. In short, I'd rather be honest than clever.

But the difficulty can easily be cleared up if you'll ask Raphael about it – either face-to-face or else by letter. And you must do this anyway, because of another problem that has cropped up – whether through my fault, or yours, or Raphael's, I'm not sure. For it didn't occur to us to ask, nor to him to say, in what part of the New World Utopia is to be found. I would give a sizable sum of money to remedy this oversight, for I'm rather ashamed not to know the ocean where this island lies about which I've written so much. Besides, there are various people here, and one in particular, a devout man and a professor of theology, who very much wants to go to Utopia. His motive is not by any means idle curiosity, a hankering after new sights, but rather a desire to foster and further the growth of our religion, which has made such a happy start there. To do this properly, he has decided to arrange to be sent there by the pope, and even to be named bishop to the Utopians. He feels no particular scruples about applying for this post, for he considers it a holy ambition, arising not from motives of glory or gain, but from religious zeal. Therefore I beg you, my dear Peter, to get in touch with Hythloday in person if you can, or by letters if he's gone – and make sure that my work contains nothing false and omits nothing true. Perhaps it would be

9From Greek kythlos ("stalk, 'monoculus') plus dainin ("to distribute") or perhaps dainoi (in the rare sense of 'lauding', 'conning'); hence 'monoculus peddler' or 'expert in monoculus'. Similarly, 'Anderby' and 'Amurant' are from anydras, 'waterless', and amaranthos, 'made dark or dim'. For the bridge, see p. 48 below.
10This section has not been located in the theological literature. More's formulation of it echoes a passage in a late classical work well known to humanists, Andreas Cellarius' Civil Nights (XII.6). The marginal glosses are apparently by Giles, though Erasmus may also have had a hand in them (see p. 121 and note).
11A note in a 1664 translation of Utopia identifies this learned divine as Rowland Phillipps, Warden of Magdalen College, Oxford. But there is nothing to support the identification, and the passage may simply be one of the book's jokes at the expense of theologians.
More to Giles

better to show him the book itself. If I've made a mistake, there's nobody better qualified to correct me; but even he cannot do it, unless he reads over my book. Besides, you will be able to discover in this way whether he's pleased or annoyed that I have written the book. If he has decided to write out his own story himself, he may not want me to do so; and I should be sorry, too, if in publicising the commonwealth of Utopia I had robbed him and his story of the flower of novelty.

But, to tell the truth, I'm still of two minds as to whether I should publish the book at all. For men's tastes are so various, the temper of some are so severe, their minds so ungrateful, their judgements so foolish, that there seems no point in publishing a book that others will receive only with contempt and ingratitude. Better simply to follow one's own natural inclinations, lead a merry life, and avoid the harrowing task of publishing something either useful or pleasant. Most people know nothing of learning; many despise it. The crotchet of too difficult whatever isn't crotchet. The pedant diminishes as mere trifling anything that isn't stuffed with obsolete words. Some readers approve only of ancient authors; many men like only their own writing. Here's a man so solemn he won't allow a shadow of levity, and there's one so insipid of taste that he can't endure the salt of a little wit. Some are so flat-nosed that they dread satire as a man bitten by a rabid dog dreads water; some are so changeable that they like one thing when they're seated and another when they're standing. 

These people lounge around the taverns, and over their cups they pass judgement on the intelligence of writers. With complete assurance they condemn every author by his writings, just as the whim takes them, plucking each one, as it were, by the beard. But they themselves remain safe - 'out of range', so to speak. No use trying to lay hold of them; these good men are shaved so close, there's not so much as a hair of their heads to catch them by.

14 Although More's letters express considerable anxiety about the reception of Utopia, the claim that he is ambivalent about publishing it would seem to be largely conventional. In a letter of c. 20 September 1516 he told Erasmus (who saw the book through the press), 'I am most anxious to have it published soon', and on 13 December he confided that 'from day to day I look forward to my Utopia with the feelings of a mother waiting for her son to return from abroad' (Selected Letters, pp. 74, 87).

15 The nose, traditionally the organ expressive of anger and derision, is the seat of satire. So those who don't relish satire use flat-nosed.

16 The last phrase echoes the Instructio aduenus Ciceron (XVII) of the first-century BC Roman historian Sallust; the paragraph as a whole resembles Erasmus' complaints, in his letter to Maurer van Dorp, about ill-intoxicated readers of The Praeclarum Tassum (CIVE, 189, 120).

Moreover, some people are so ungrateful that even though they're delighted with a work, they don't like the author any better because of it. They are no different from rude guests who, after they have been lavishly entertained at a splendid banquet, finally go home stuffed, without a word of thanks to the host who invited them. A fine task, providing at your own expense a banquet for men of such finicky palates and such various tastes, who will remember and reward you with such thanks!

Nevertheless, my dear Peter, raise with Hydriolus the points I mentioned. Afterwards I will be free to consider the matter once more. But in fact, if he himself gives his consent — since it is late to be wise now that I have finished all the work — in all other considerations about publishing I will follow the advice of my friends, and especially yours. Farewell, my very dear Peter Giles; my regards to your excellent wife. Love me as you always have; I am more fond of you than I have ever been.
THE BEST STATE OF A COMMONWEALTH,
A DISCOURSE BY THE EXTRAORDINARY
RAPHAELE HYTHLODAYS, AS RECORDED BY
THE NOTED THOMAS MORE, CITIZEN AND
UNDERSHERIFF OF THE FAMOUS CITY OF
BRITAIN, LONDON

BOOK I

The most invincible King of England, Henry, the eighth of that name, a prince adorned with the royal accomplishments beyond any other, had recently some differences of no slight import with Charles, the most serene Prince of Castile, and sent me into Flanders as his spokesman to discuss and settle them. I was companion and associate to that incomparable man Cuthbert Tunstall, whom the king has recently created Master of the Rolls, to everyone’s enormous satisfaction. I will say nothing in praise of this man, not because I fear the judgement of a friend might be questioned, but because his integrity and learning are greater than I can describe and too well known everywhere to need my commendation — unless I would, according to the proverb, show the sun with a lantern.

Those appointed by the prince to deal with us, all excellent men, met us at Bruges by pre-arrangement. Their head man and leader was the Mayor of Bruges, a most distinguished person. But their main speaker

1 More had been an undersheriff of London since 1510. His principal duty was to act as a judge in the Sheriff’s Court (a city court that heard a wide variety of cases).

2 When he succeeded to the throne in 1509, at the age of seventeen, Henry appeared to be something very close to the humanist ideal of a cultivated, just and peace-loving monarch, and More had enthusiastically heralded his accession in several Latin poems (CIF, III, Part II, 101–17). By 1516, however, this view had been considerably undermined, especially by the king’s fondness for martial (not yet martial) adventure.

3 The dispute between the two nations were commercial ones, especially over tariffs. Charles was grandson of the Emperor Maximilian I, and was Duke of Bourgundy after his father’s death in 1506. He became, nominally though not formally, Prince of Castile after the death of Ferdinand II (23 January 1516), and Holy Roman Emperor in 1519.

4 A royal commission of 7 May 1515 appointed five commissioners, including More, with Tunstall as their chief. Tunstall (1474–1559) was created Master of the Rolls (principal clerk of the Chancery Court) and Vice-Chancellor of the realm on 12 May 1516.

and guiding spirit was Georges de Themsbecke, the Provost of Cassel, a man eloquent by nature as well as by training, also very learned in the law, and most skilful in diplomatic affairs through his ability and long practice. After we had met several times, certain points remained on which we could not come to agreement; so they adjourned the meeting and went to Brussels for some days to learn their prince’s pleasure.

Meanwhile, since my business required it, I went to Antwerp. Of those who visited me while I was there, no one was more welcome to me than Peter Giles. He was a native of Antwerp, a man of high reputation, already appointed to a good position and worthy of the very best: I hardly know whether the young man is distinguished more in learning or in character. Apart from being cultured, virtuous and courteous to all, with his intimates he is so open-hearted, affectionate, loyal and sincere that you would be hard-pressed to find another man anywhere whom you would think comparable to him in all the points of friendship. No one is more modest or more frank; no one better combines simplicity with wisdom. Besides, his conversation is so pleasant, and so witty without malice, that the ardent desire I felt to see again my native country, my home, my wife and my children (from whom I had been separated more than four months) was much eased by his most agreeable company and delightful talk.

One day after I had heard Mass at Notre-Dame, the most beautiful and most popular church in Antwerp, I was about to return to my quarters when I happened to see him talking with a stranger, a man of quite advanced years, with a sunburned face, a long beard, and a cloak hanging loosely from his shoulders; from his face and dress, I took him to be a ship’s captain. When Peter saw me, he came up and greeted me. As I was about to reply, he drew me aside, and indicating the man with whom I had seen him talking, said, ‘Do you see that fellow? I was just on the point of bringing him straight to you.’

‘He would have been very welcome on your behalf’, I answered.

‘And on his own too, if you knew him’, said Peter, ‘for there is no mortal alive today can tell you so much about unknown peoples and unexplored lands; and I know that you’re always greedy for such information.’

‘In that case’, said I, ‘my guess wasn’t a bad one, for at first glance I supposed he was a ship’s captain.’

5 On or before 21 July 1515. See Introduction, p. xvi.
"Then you're far off the mark," he replied, "for his sailing has not been like that of Palinurus, but more that of Ulysses, or rather of Plato. This man, who is named Raphael — his family name is Hythlodaeus — knows a good deal of Latin and is particularly learned in Greek. He studied Greek more than Latin because his main interest is philosophy, and in that field he recognized that the Romans have left us nothing very valuable except certain works of Seneca and Cicero. Being eager to see the world, he left to his brothers the patrimony to which he was entitled at home (he is a Portuguese), and joined Amerigo Vespucci. He was Vespucci's constant companion on the last three of his four voyages, accounts of which are now common reading everywhere, but on the last voyage, he did not return home with him. After much persuasion and expostulation he got Amerigo's permission to be one of the twenty-four men who were left in a garrison at the farthest point of the last voyage. Being left in this way was altogether agreeable to him, as he was more concerned about his travels than his tomb. He would often say, "The man who has no grave is covered by the sky", and "Wherever you start from, the road to heaven is the same length." Yet this attitude would have cost him dear, if God had not been gracious to him. After Vespucci's departure he travelled through many countries with five companions from the garrison. At last, by strange good fortune, he got to Ceylon to

Palinurus was Aegeus' pilot: he died at the helm and fell overboard (Iliad v.853–61, 11.337–83). Ulysses' reputation as a man who saw many cities and knew men's minds is based on the opening lines of the Odyssey. But Ulysses could also be regarded as in the opening of the 'True Story' of Lucian (Introduction, pp. xii-xii) — as a notable liar. According to the Life of Plutarch by Dioneus Laertius (fl. third century A.D.), Plutus travelled widely in the Mediterranean world (Lives of Eminent Philosophers II.4, 11–16).

This opinion is echoed in More's 1518 Letter to Oxford (CH, iv, 143). Seneca was a Stoic, and though Cicero styled himself an adherent of the philosophical school which associated with the latter phase of the Platonic Academy, his sympathies in ethical and political theory lay mainly with the Stoics, whose views he often rehearsed at length. Hythlodaeus' own views are permeated by Stoic ideas.

Hythlodaeus' nationality links him with several of the great explorers of the period, who were either Portuguese or sponsored by the King of Portugal. His reminiscence of his patrimony recalls the Italian philosopher Pietro della Mirandola (1465–94), whose biography More had translated, and whom he greatly admired. See Introduction, p. xxi.

Two Latin accounts (now of disputed authenticity) of the voyages of the Florentine explorer Amerigo Vespucci (1454–1512), who sailed for the King of Portugal, were published in the years 1500–7, New World and The Four Voyages of Amerigo Vespucci. Utopia exhibits parallelism with both. Four Voyages tells that Vespucci left twenty-four men at the farthest point of his last voyage.

"Calicut," where he opportunely found some Portuguese ships; and so, beyond all hope, he finally returned to his own country." When Peter had told me this, I thanked him for his great kindness in introducing me to a man whose conversation I hoped I would enjoy, and then I turned towards Raphael. After we had greeted each other and exchanged the usual civilities of strangers upon their first meeting, we all went off to my house. There in the garden we sat down on a bench covered with grassy turf to talk together.

He told us how, after Vespucci sailed away, he and his companions who had stayed behind in the garrison met with the people of that land, and by ingratiating speeches gradually made up to them. Before long they came to dwell with them not only safely but even on friendly terms. The prince also gave them his favour (I have forgotten his name and that of his country). He told how this prince generously furnished him and his five companions not only with ample provisions but with means for travelling — rials when they went by water, wagons when they went by land. In addition, he sent with them a most trusty guide, who was to conduct them to other princes they wanted to visit, and supplied them with strong letters of recommendation. After many days' journey, he said, they found towns and cities, and commonwealths that were both very populous and not badly governed.

To be sure, under the equator and as far on both sides of the line as the sun moves, there lie vast empty deserts, scorched with the perpetual heat. The whole region is desolate and squalid, grim and uncultivated, inhabited by wild beasts and serpents, and by men no less wild and dangerous than the beasts themselves. But as you go on, everything gradually grows milder. The sun is less fierce, the earth greener, the creatures less savage. At last you reach people, cities and towns which not only trade among themselves and with their neighbours but even carry on commerce by sea and land with remote countries. After that, he said, they were able to visit different lands in every direction, for there was no ship ready for a journey on which he and his companions were not welcome as passengers.

"Calicut is a seaport on the west coast of India. Portuguese ships landed there several times in the early sixteenth century.

Hythlodaeus was thus the first European to circumnavigate the globe. (Magellan's men completed the trip in 1522.)

The small woodcut of the scene in the 1518 editions shows the beach as a long wooden box filled with earth and covered on top with growing grass.
The vessels they saw in the first regions were flat-bottomed, he said, with sails made of stitched papyrus-reeds or wicker, elsewhere of leather. Farther on they found ships with pointed keels and canvas sails, in every respect like our own. The seamen were not unskilled in managing wind and water; but they were most grateful to him, Raphael said, for showing them the use of the compass, of which they had been entirely ignorant. For that reason they had formerly sailed with great timidity, and only in summer. Now they have such trust in that lighthouse that they no longer fear winter at all, and tend to be careless rather than safe. There is some danger that through their imprudence this device, which they thought would be so advantageous to them, may become the cause of much mischief.

It would take too long to repeat all that Raphael told us as he had observed in each place, nor would it serve our present purpose. Perhaps on another occasion we shall tell more about these things, especially those that it would be useful not to be ignorant of — above all, the wise and prudent provisions that he observed among the civilised nations. We asked him many eager questions about such things, and he answered us willingly enough. We made no inquiries, however, about monsters, for nothing is less new or stranger than they are. There is no place where you will not find Scyllas, ravenous Celaenae, people-eating Laestrygones and that sort of monstrosity, but well and wisely trained citizens you will hardly find anywhere. While he told us of many ill-considered usages in these new-found nations, he also described quite a few other customs from which our own cities, nations, races and kingdoms might take lessons in order to correct their errors. These I shall discuss in another place, as I said. Now I intend to relate only what he told us about the customs and institutions of the Utopians, but first recounting the conversation that drew him into speaking of that commonwealth. Raphael had been discussing very thoughtfully on the faulty arrangements both in that hemisphere and in this (and there are many in both places), and had also spoken of the wise provisions among us or among them, talking as shrewdly about the

4 Scylla, a six-headed sea monster, appears in both the Odyssey (xxviii.33–90) and the Aeneid (iv.110–123). Celaenae, one of the Harpies (birds with women's faces), appears in the Aeneid (iv.129–39). The Laestrygonians were gigantic cannibals in the Odyssey (v.165–135).

5 At this point the dialogue suddenly goes off on a different tack. The account of Utopia is postponed, and the ensuing conversation includes, among other things, precisely those matters that More has just said he won't relate: Hythloday's descriptions of the practices of other newly-found nations. As J. H. Hexter argues (More's 'Utopia': The Biography of an Idea, pp. 16–21; cit, viii, xvi–xx), it was almost certainly here that More opened a scan in the first version of Utopia to insert the additions that constitute the remainder of Book 1. See Introduction, p. xvi.

12 customs and institutions of each place he had visited as if he had lived there all his life. Peter was amazed. 'My dear Raphael', he said, 'I'm surprised that you don't enter some king's service; for I don't know of a single prince who wouldn't be very glad to have you. Your learning and your knowledge of various countries and peoples would entertain him while your advice and supply of examples would be helpful at the counsel board. Thus you might admirably advance your own interests and be of great use at the same time to all your relatives and friends.'

'About my relatives and friends', he replied, 'I'm not much concerned, because I consider I've already done my duty by them tolerably well. While still young and healthy, I distributed among my relatives and friends the possessions that most men do not part with till they're old and sick (and then only reluctantly, when they can no longer keep them). I think they should be content with this gift of mine, and not insist, or even expect, that for their sake I should enslave myself to any king whatever.'

'Well said', Peter replied; 'but I do not mean that you should be in servitude to any king, only in his service.'

'The difference is only a matter of one syllable', said Raphael.

'All right', said Peter, 'but whatever you call it, I do not see any other way in which you can be so useful to your friends or to the general public, in addition to making yourself happier.'

'Happier indeed!' said Raphael. 'Would a way of life so absolutely repellent to my spirit make my life happier? As it is now, I live as I please, and I fancy very few courtiers, however splendid, can say that. As a matter of fact, there are so many men soliciting favours from the powerful that you need not think it will be a great loss if they have to do without me and a couple of others like me.'

Then I said, 'It is clear, my dear Raphael, that you seek neither wealth nor power, and indeed I prize and revere a man of your disposition no less than I do the mightiest persons in the world. Yet I think if you could bring yourself to devote your intelligence and energy to public affairs, you would be doing something worthy of your noble and truly philosophical nature, even if you did not much like it. You could best perform such a service by joining the council of some great prince and exciting him to just and noble actions (as I'm sure you would) for a people's welfare or misery flows in a stream from their prince as from a never-failing spring. Your learning is so full, even if it weren't combined with experience, and
Book I

your experience is so great, even apart from your learning, that you would
be an extraordinary counsellor to any king in the world.2

‘You are twice mistaken, my dear More’, he said, ‘first in me and then
in the situation itself. I don’t have the capacity you ascribe to me, and if
I had it in the highest degree, the public would still not be any better off
if I exchanged my contemplative leisure for active endeavour. In the first
place, most princes apply themselves to the arts of war, in which I have
neither ability nor interest, instead of to the good arts of peace. They are
generally more set on acquiring new kingdoms by hook or crook than on
governing well those they already have. Moreover, the counsellors of kings
are so wise already that they don’t need to accept or approve advice from
anyone else—or at least they have that opinion of themselves. At the same
time they endorse and flatter the most absurd statements of the prince’s
special favours, through whose influence they hope to stand well with
the prince. It’s only natural, of course, that each man should think his
own inventions best: the crow loves his fledgling and the ape his cub.

‘Now in a court composed of people who envy everyone else and admire
only themselves, a man should suggest something he has read of in other
ages or seen in practice elsewhere, those who hear it act as if their whole
reputation for wisdom would be endangered, and as if henceforth they
would look like simpletons, unless they can find fault with the proposals
of others. If all else fails, they take refuge in some remark like this: “The
way we’re doing it was good enough for our ancestors, and I only wish we
were as wise as they were.” And with this deep thought they take their
seats, as though they have said the last word on the subject—implying,
of course, that it would be a very dangerous matter if anyone were found
to be wiser on any point than his ancestors. As a matter of fact, we have
no misgivings about neglecting the best examples they have left us, but
if on some point their deliberations could have been more prudent, we
immediately and eagerly seize the excuse of reverence for times past and
cling to it desperately. Such proud, obstinate, ridiculous judgments I
have encountered many times, and once even in England.’

‘What?’ I said, ‘Were you ever in my country?’

‘Yes’, he said, ‘I spent several months there. It was not long after the
revelry of the west-countrymen against the King had been put down with
the lamentable slaughter of the rebels.2 During my stay I was deeply

1Angered by Henry VII’s rapacious taxation, an army of Cornishmen marched on London in
1497. They were defeated at the Battle of Blackheath; estimates of the number killed vary
from 200 to ten times that many.

2More had greatly admired Morton (1420–1500) since serving as a page in his household
(Introduction, p. xii). There is a similar portrait of him in The History of King Richard III
(CNF, II, 96–1).

3Ralph Holinshed reports that, in the reign of Henry VIII alone, 72,000 thieves were hanged
(Holinshed’s Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland, 6 vols. (1587–88 New York, 1869),
I, 314).
rather whip their pupils than teach them. Severe and terrible punishments are enacted for theft, when it would be much better to enable every man to earn his own living, instead of being driven to the awful necessity of stealing and then dying for it.”

“Oh, we've taken care of that,” said the fellow. “There are the trades and there is farming by which men may make a living, unless they choose deliberately to do evil.”

“No,” I said, “you won't get out of it that way. We may overlook the cripples who come home from foreign and civil wars, as lately from the Cornish battle and not long before that from your wars with France.” These men, who have lost limbs in the service of the common good or the king, are too shagged to follow their old trades and too old to learn new ones. But since wars occur only from time to time, let us, I say, overlook these men and consider what happens every day. There are a great many noblemen who live idly like drones off the labour of others, their tenants whom they bleed white by constantly raising their rents. (This is the only instance of their tightfistedness, because they are prodigal in everything else, ready to spend their way to the poorhouse.) What’s more, they drag around with them a great train of idle servants, who have never learned any trade by which they could make a living. As soon as their master dies, or they themselves fall ill, they are promptly turned out of doors, for lords would rather support idlers than valids, and the heir is often unable to maintain as big a household as his father had, at least at first. Those who are turned out soon set about starving, unless they set about stealing. What else can they do? Then when a wandering life has taken the edge off their health and the gloss off their clothes, when their faces

20Since the dramatic date of the conversion is 1457 as shortly thereafter, Hitherto may be referring to the relatively small number of casualties suffered by the English during the sporadic hostilities in France in 1486–92. But More is probably thinking of the heavier casualties of Henry VIII’s French excursions of 1512–13.

21In the Republic, Socrates uses the same metaphor to describe the kind of minded individual who contributes nothing to society: “Though he may have appeared to belong in the ruling class, surely in fact he was neither ruling, nor serving society in any other way; he was merely a consumer of goods... Don’t you think we can fairly call him a drone?” (III.552a-c). In general, Plato’s characterization of oligarchy (whence the quondam passage) seems to have provided More with a framework for his observations on the condition of England. An oligarchy is “a society where it is wealth that counts... and in which political power is in the hands of the rich and the poor have no stake in it” (III.552c). The “worst defect” of such a society is that it generates functionless people (552a).

22Some of these retainers were household servants; others constituted the remnant of the private armies which, in a feudal society, followed every lord. In the reign of Henry VII, the latter kind of retaining was sharply curtailed.
Book I

often got the best of your raw recruits. I shall say no more on this point, lest I seem to flatter present company. At any rate, neither your town workmen nor your rough farm labourers—except for those whose physique isn't suited for strength or boldness, or whose spirit has been broken by the lack of means to support their families—seem to be much afraid of those flocks of idle retainers. So you need not fear that retainers, once strong and vigorous (for that's the only sort the gentry deign to corrupt), but now soft and flabby because of their idle, effeminate life, would be weakened if they were taught practical crafts to earn their living and trained to manly labour. However that may be, though, I certainly cannot think it's in the public interest to maintain for the emergency of war such a vast multitude of people who trouble and disturb the peace: you never have war unless you choose it, and peace is always more to be considered than war. Yet this is not the only force driving men to thievish. There is another that, as I see it, applies more specially to you Englishmen."

"What is that?" said the Cardinal.

"Your sheep", I said, "that commonly are so meek and eat so little; now, as I hear, they have become so greedy and fierce that they devour human beings themselves." They devastate and depopulate fields, houses and towns. For in whatever parts of the land sheep yield the finest and thus the most expensive wool, there the nobility and gentry; yes, and even a good many abbots — holy men — are not content with the old rents that the land yielded to their predecessors. Living in idleness and luxury without doing society any good no longer satisfies them; they have to do positive harm. For they leave no land free for the plough; they enclose every acre for pasture; they destroy houses and abolish towns, keeping the churches — but only for sheep-harms. And as if enough of your land were not already wasted on game-preserves and forests for hunting wild animals, these worthy men turn all human habitations and cultivated fields turned on their manners. The victims of the Syrians that Hydlesday has in mind are probably the Mandates, a military caste of foreign extraction that ruled, from the thirteenth century to the early sixteenth, a state that included much of the Middle East.  

"Past English victories over the French included Crécy (1346), Poitiers (1356) and Henry V's triumph at Agincourt (1415)."

"This enclosing has led to sharply rising food prices in many districts. Also, the price of raw wool has risen so much that poor people among you who used to make cloth can no longer afford it, and so great numbers are forced from work to idleness. One reason is that after so much new pasture-land was enclosed, not killed a countless number of the sheep — as though God were punishing greed by sending on the beasts a murrain that rightly should have fallen on the owners! But even if the number of sheep should increase greatly, the price will not fall a penny, because the wool trade, though it can't be called a monopoly because it isn't in the hands of a single person, is concentrated in so few hands (an oligopoly, you might say), and those rich, that the owners are never pressed to sell until they have a mind to, and that is only when they can get their price."

"For the same reason other kinds of livestock are also priced extortionately, the more so because, with farmhouses being turned down and farming in decay, nobody's left to breed the animals. These rich men will not breed calves as they do lambs, but buy them lean and cheap, fattening them in their pastures, and then sell them dear. I don't think the full impact of this bad system has yet been felt. We know these dealers hurt consumers where the fattened cattle are sold. But when, over a period of time, they keep buying beasts from other localities faster than they can be bred, a
Book I

gradually diminishing supply where they are bought will inevitably lead
to severe shortages. So your island, which seemed specially fortunate in
this matter, will be ruined by the cross avarice of a few. For the high cost
of living causes everyone to dismiss as many retainers as he can from his
household; and what, I ask, can these men do but rob or beg? And a man
of courage is more easily persuaded to steal than to beg.

"To make this miserable poverty and scarcity worse, they exist side by
side with wanton luxury." The servants of noblemen, tradespeople, even
some farmers — people of every social rank — are given to ostentatious
dress and gourmandising. Look at the cook-shops, the brothels, the bad
houses, and those other places just as bad, the wine-bars and ale-houses.
Look at the crooked games of chance like dice, cards, backgammon,
tennis, bowling and quoits, in which money slips away so fast. Don't all
these pastimes lead their devotees straight to robbery? Banish these blights,
make those who have ruined farmhouses and villages restore them or hand
them over to someone who will restore and rebuild. Restrict the right of
the rich to buy up anything and everything, and then to exercise a kind
of monopoly.\[39\] Let fewer people be brought up in idleness. Let agriculture
be restored, and the wool-manufacture revived as an honest trade, so there
will be useful work for the idle throng, whether those whom poverty has
already made thieves or those who are only vagabonds or idle servants
now, but are bound to become thieves in the future.

"Certainly, unless you cure these evils it is futile to boast of your
justice in punishing theft. Your policy may look superficially like justice,
but in reality it is neither just nor expedient. If you allow young folk to
be abominably brought up and their characters corrupted, little by little,
from childhood; and if then you punish them as grown-ups for committing
the crimes to which their training has consistently inclined them, what
else is this, I ask, but first making them thieves and then punishing them
for it?"

"As I was speaking thus, the lawyer had prepared his answer, choosing
the solemn style of disputants who are better at summing up than at
replying, and who like to show off their memory. So he said to me, "You
\[39\] "Extravagant display was not in fact characteristic of the reign of the parsimonious Henry VII
(the period in which Hithertoe is supposed to be addressing Cardinal Morton). More seems
to be projecting onto the earlier period the tax display associated with the reign of
Henry VIII.
\[40\] A number of laws to control gambling and ale-houses, restrict monopolies and provide
for the rebuilding of towns and the restoration of pastures to tillage were in fact passed, with
small result, in the reigns of both Henry VII and Henry VIII.

have talked very well for a stranger, but you have heard more than you've
been able to understand correctly, as I will make clear to you in a few words.
First, I will summarise what you said; then I will show how you have been
misled by ignorance of our ways; finally, I will refute all your arguments
and demolish them. And so to begin with the first thing I promised, on
four points you seemed to me —"

"Hold your tongue", said the Cardinal, "for you won't be finished in
a few words if this is the way you start. We will spare you the trouble of
answering now and put off the whole task until your next meeting, which
will be tomorrow if your affairs and Raphael's permit it. Meanwhile,
my dear Raphael, I'd be glad to hear why you think theft should not be
punished with the extreme penalty, or what other punishment you think
would be more conducive to the common good. For surely even you don't
think it should go entirely unpunished. Even as it is, fear of death does not
restrain the malefactors; once they were sure of their lives, as you propose,
what force or fear could withhold them? They would look on at a mitigation
of the punishment as an invitation to commit crimes, almost a reward."

"It seems to me, most kind and reverend father", I said, "that it's
altogether unjust to take someone's life for taking money. In fact, I think
that nothing in the world that fortune can bestow can be put on a par with
a human life. If they say the thief suffers, not for the money, but for viola-
tion of justice and transgression of laws, then this extreme justice should
properly be called extreme injury.\[41\] We ought not to approve of effects so
Manilian that they unsheathe the sword for the smallest violations.\[42\] Nor
should we accept the Stoic decree that all crimes are equal,\[43\] as if there
were no difference between killing a man and taking a coin from him. If
equity means anything, there is no proportion or relation at all between
these two crimes. God has forbidden us to kill anyone; shall we kill so
readily for the theft of a bit of small change? Perhaps it will be argued
that God's commandment against killing does not apply where human
law allows it. But what then prevents men from making other laws in the
same way, determining to what extent rape, adultery and perjury ought

\[39\] The phrase echoes the adage summo ius, summa iuria (quoted by Cicero, On Moral Obliga-
tions I.xxxii), which has a long history in discussions of equity.
\[40\] According to Livy, the Roman consul Manlius (fourth century BC) had his own son executed
for accepting a challenge to single combat (he won) after the consuls had forbidden any
engagement with the enemy (From the Founding of the City viii.11.2-3). 'Manilian edicts' was
therefore proverbial for inexorable decrees.
\[41\] Cicero ridicules this Stoic paradox (On the Supreme Good and Evil viii.21-3, xvii.75-
xxvii.77); it is also criticised by Hutches (Satires vi.596-624).
such equality can ever be achieved where property belongs to individuals. However abundant goods may be, when everyone, by whatever pretexts, tries to scrape together for himself as much as he can, a handful of men end up sharing the whole pile, and the rest are left in poverty. The result generally is two sorts of people whose fortunes ought to be interchanged: the rich are rapacious, wicked and useless, while the poor are unassuming, modest men, whose daily labour benefits the public more than themselves.

‘Thus I am wholly convinced that unless private property is entirely abolished, there can be no fair or just distribution of goods, nor can the business of mortals be conducted happily. As long as private property remains, by far the largest and best part of the human race will be oppressed by a distressing and inescapable burden of poverty and anxieties. This load, I admit, may be lightened to some extent, but I maintain it cannot be entirely removed. Laws might be made that no one should own more than a certain amount of land or receive more than a certain income. Or laws might be passed to prevent the prince from becoming too powerful and the populace too insolent. It might be made illegal for public offices to be solicited or put up for sale or made burdensome for the office-holder by great expense. Otherwise, officials are tempted to get their money back by fraud or extortion, and only rich men can accept appointment to positions which ought to go to the wise. Laws of this sort, I agree, may have as much effect as penalties continually applied to sick bodies that are past cure. The social evils I mentioned may be alleviated and their effects mitigated for a while, but so long as private property remains, there is no hope at all of effecting a cure and restoring society to good health. While you try to cure one part, you aggravate the wound in other parts. Suppressing the disease in one place causes it to break out in another, since you cannot give something to one person without taking it away from someone else.’

‘But I don’t see it that way’, I said. ‘It seems to me that people cannot possibly live well where all things are in common. How can there be plenty of commodities where every man stops working? The hope of gain does not spur him on, and by relying on others he will become lazy. If men are impelled by need, and yet no man can legally protect what he has obtained, what can follow but continual bloodshed and turmoil, especially when respect for magistrates and their authority has been lost? I for one cannot even conceive of authority existing among men who are not distinguished from one another in any respect.’

‘I’m not surprised that you think of it this way’, he said, ‘since you have no image, or only a false one, of such a commonwealth. But you should have been with me in Utopia and seen with your own eyes their manners and customs, as I did – for I lived there more than five years, and would never have left, if it had not been to make that new world known to others. If you had seen them, you would frankly confess that you had never seen a well-governed people anywhere but there.’

‘Come now’, said Peter Giles, ‘you will have a hard time persuading me that one can find in that new world a better-governed people than in the world we know. Our minds are not inferior to theirs, and our governments, I believe, are older. Long experience has helped us develop many conveniences of life, to say nothing of chance discoveries that human ingenuity could never have hit upon.’

‘As for the relative ages of the governments’, Raphael said, ‘you might judge more accurately if you had read the histories of that part of the world. If we are to believe these records, they had cities there before there were even people here. What ingenuity has discovered or chance hit upon could have turned up just as well there as here. For the rest, I really think that even if we surpass them in natural intelligence, they leave us far behind in their diligence and zeal to learn.

‘According to their chronicles, they had heard nothing of Ultracoccarania (that’s their name for us) until we arrived, except that once, some twelve hundred years ago, a ship which a storm had blown towards Utopia was wrecked on their island. Some Romans and Egyptians were cast ashore, and never departed.

‘Now note how the Utopians profited, through their diligence, from this one chance event. They learned every single useful art of the Roman empire either directly from their guests or by using the seeds of ideas to discover these arts for themselves. What benefits from the mere fact that

5) These objections to communism derive from the critique of the Republic in Aristotle’s Politics (1.6-7).
on a single occasion some people from this part of the world landed there! If in the past a similar accident has brought anyone here from their land, the incident has been completely forgotten, as our future generations will perhaps forget that I was ever there. From one such accident they made themselves masters of all our useful inventions, but I suspect it will be a long time before we adopt any institutions of theirs which are better than ours. This readiness to learn is, I think, the really important reason for their being better governed and living more happily than we do, though we are not inferior to them in brains or resources.‘

'Then let me implore you, my dear Raphael', said I, 'describe that island to us. Don't try to be brief, but explain in order their fields, rivers, towns, people, manners, institutions, laws—everything, in short, that you think we would like to know. And you can assume we want to know everything we don't know yet.'

'There's nothing I'd rather do', he said, 'for these things are fresh in my mind. But it will take quite some time.'

'In that case', I said, 'let's first go to luncheon. Afterwards, we shall have all the time we want.'

'Agreed', he said. So we went in and had lunch. Then we came back to the same spot, and sat down on the same bench. I ordered my servants to make sure that no one interrupted us. Peter Giles and I urged Raphael to fulfill his promise. When he saw that we were attentive and eager to hear him, he sat silent and thoughtful a moment, and then began as follows.

THE END OF BOOK I.
BOOK II FOLLOWS.

THE DISCOURSE OF
RAPHAEL HYTHLODY
ON THE BEST STATE OF A COMMONWEALTH,
BOOK II:
AS RECOUNTED BY THOMAS MORE,
CITIZEN AND UNDERSHERRIFF OF LONDON

The island of the Utopians is two hundred miles across in the middle part, where it is widest, and nowhere much narrower than this except towards the two ends, where it gradually tapers. These ends, curved round as if completing a circle five hundred miles in circumference, make the island crescent-shaped, like a new moon. Between the horns of the crescent, which are about eleven miles apart, the sea enters and spreads into a broad bay. Being sheltered from the wind by the surrounding land, the bay is not rough, but placid and smooth instead, like a big lake. Thus nearly the whole inner coast is one great harbour, across which ships pass in every direction, to the great advantage of the people. What with shallows on one side and rocks on the other, the mouth of the bay is perilous. At mid-channel, there is one reef that rises above the water, and so presents no danger in itself; a tower has been built on top of it, and a garrison is kept there. Since the other rocks lie under the water, they

1 Utopia is similar to England in size, though not at all in shape. For a detailed account of its geography, and the inconsistencies thereof, see Brian R. Goodey, 'Mapping "Utopia": A comment on the geography of Sir Thomas More', The Geographical Review, 60 (1970), 13-30.

The main topics and the order of Hythloday's account may owe something to Aristotle's treatment of the ideal commonwealth in Politics vii-viii. Aristotle's discussion of the optimal 'human material' and territory for a polis is followed by a checklist of the six 'services' that must be provided for: food, arts and crafts; arms; a certain supply of property, alike for domestic use and for military purposes; public worship; and a deliberative and judicial system (vi,vii-viii).

2 A number of the geographical features of Utopia recall the ideals of ideal-commonwealth literature. Aristotle, for example, says that the best territory for a polis is one that is 'difficult of access to enemies, and easy of access for its inhabitants' (Politics vii, 9). There are, though, some features in which the Utopians' territory is not ideal: on the shortage of iron, see p. 33; on the poor climate and soil, p. 74.
are very dangerous. The channels are known only to the Utopians, so hardly any strangers enter the bay without one of their pilots; and even they themselves could not enter safely if they did not direct their course by some landmarks on the coast. Should these landmarks be shifted about, the Utopians could easily lose a destruction by an enemy fleet, however big it was.

On the outer side of the island, harbours are found not infrequently, but everywhere the coast is rugged by nature, and so well fortified that a few defenders could beat off the attack of a strong force. They say (and the appearance of the place confirms this) that their land was not always surrounded by the sea. But Utopus, who conquered the country and gave it his name (for it had previously been called Abraxa), and who brought its rude, uncouth inhabitants to such a high level of culture and humanity that they now surpass almost every other people, also changed its geography. After winning the victory at his first assault, he had a channel cut fifteen miles wide where the land joined the continent, and thus caused the sea to flow around the country. He put not only the natives to work at this task, but all his own soldiers too, so that the vanquished would not think the labour a disgrace. With the work divided among so many hands, the project was finished quickly, and the neighbouring peoples, who at first had laughed at the folly of the undertaking, were struck with wonder and terror at its success.

3 The Greek Geometric Muses (second century) counted 365 heavens, and gave the name "Abraxa" to the highest of them. The Greek letters that constitute the term have numerical equivalents summing to 365, but what "Abraxa" actually means nobody knows. Erasmus refers to it several times; for him, as Damiot Baker-Smith says, it "obviously means a false fantasy" (More's "Utopia," p. 551).

The prototype of Utopus is the legendary lawyer of Greek tradition — Socrates, Lycurgus, Pythagoras and others — who founded or regenerated politics. 4 The Isthmus of Corinth joins the Peloponnesian peninsula to the rest of Greece. The failure of various attempts to excavate a canal across it made this difficult task proverbial.

5 This is the first of several passages in Utopus stressing the dignity of labour. Frank and Frithian Manual observe that "more’s rehabilitation of the idea of physical labor was a milestone in the history of utopian thought, and was incorporated into all socialist systems" (Utopian Thought in the Western World, p. 171). The principal sources of this attitude are Christian; in particular, the Roman sons constituted a paradigm of a society in which all are workers. Aristocracy is the one European institution that the Utopians are said to admire (pp. 93-94), and such Utopian institutions as their uniform dress (pp. 49-53) and common meals (p. 60) — generally, their communal way of life — recall the monastic rules. By contrast, in classical political theory and practice manual labour was normally assigned to members of the lower orders (including especially slaves) and to women.

6 Although the primary reference here is to the cities themselves, the word More uses — cities — is the Latin equivalent of the Greek polite, city-state. In fact each of the fifty-four Utopian civitates is, like the Greek polite, constituted of a central city and its surrounding countryside. Though federated, they also resemble the Greek city-states in functioning as largely independent political units. Throughout Book II, the concentration on the civitas is the most striking indication of More’s debt to Greek political theory. In number, the Utopian cities match the number of counties in England and Wales — given as fifty-three in William Harrison’s 1577 Description of England (ed. Georgess Edelen (Ithaca, 1968), p. 88) — plus London.

7 From sunoaros, 'made dark or dim'.

8 Although Utopia exists in the present, the glosses repeatedly refer to it as if it belonged to the distant past, like classical Greece and Rome.

9 Greek phleboton, 'rice of a tribe'.
most worthy of all—since its eminence is acknowledged by the other cities that send representatives to the senate there; besides which, I know it best because I lived there for five full years.

Well, then, Amaurot lies up against a gently sloping hill; the town is almost square in shape. From a little below the crest of the hill, its shorter side runs down two miles to the river Anyder; its length along the river bank is somewhat greater. The Anyder rises from a small spring eighty miles above Amaurot, but other streams flow into it, two of them being pretty big, so that as it runs by Amaurot the river has grown to a width of about five hundred yards. It continues to grow even larger until at last, sixty miles farther along, it is lost in the ocean. In all this stretch between the sea and the city, and also for some miles above the city, the river is tidal, ebbing and flowing every six hours with a swift current. When the tide comes in, it fills the whole Anyder with salt water for about thirty miles, driving the fresh water back. Even above that, for several miles farther the water is brackish; but higher up it gradually becomes free of salt, and the river is fresh as it runs through the city. When the tide ebbs, the river runs fresh and clean nearly all the way to the sea.

The two banks of the river at Amaurot are linked by a bridge, built not on wooden pillars and piles but on remarkable stone arches. It is placed at the upper end of the city, farthest removed from the sea, so that ships can sail along the entire length of the city quays without obstruction. There is also another stream, not particularly large but very gentle and pleasant, that runs out of the hill on which the city is situated and, following the slope of the terrain, flows down through the centre of town and into the Anyder. The inhabitants of Amaurot have walled around the head and source of this stream, which is somewhat outside the city, and joined it to the town proper, so that if they should be attacked the enemy would not be able to cut off and divert the stream, or poison it. Water from the stream is carried by tile pipes into various sections of the lower town. Where the terrain makes this impractical, they collect rain water in cisterns, which serve just as well.

The town is surrounded by a thick, high wall, with many towers and battlements. On three sides it is also surrounded by a dry ditch, broad and

THEIR CITIES, ESPECIALLY AMAUROT

If you know one of their cities you know them all, for they're exactly alike, except where geography itself makes a difference. So I will describe one of them, and no matter which. But what one rather than Amaurot, the

9 It is not entirely clear what is meant here. Though artificial incineration is mentioned in Pliny's Natural History (II.xcvii.135), it was not practised in Mars's time.
10 I.e., they don't, like the English, use it to make beer and ale.

44

45
deep and filled with thorn hedges; on its fourth side the river itself serves as a moat. The streets are conveniently laid out both for use by vehicles and for protection from the wind. Their buildings are by no means shabby. Long unbroken rows of houses face each other down the whole block. The housefronts along each block are separated by a street twenty feet wide. 16 Behind the houses, a large garden — as long on each side as the block itself — is hemmed in on all sides by the backs of the houses.

Every house has a front door to the street and a back door to the garden. The double doors, which open easily with a push of the hand and close again automatically, let anyone come in — so there is nothing private anywhere. Every ten years they exchange the houses themselves by lot. 17 The Utopians are very fond of these gardens of their's. 18 They raise vines, fruits, herbs and flowers, so well cared for and flourishing that I have never seen any gardens more productive or elegant than theirs. They keep interested in gardening, partly because they delight in it, and also because of the competition among the blocks, which challenge one another to produce the best gardens. Certainly you will not easily find anything else in the whole city more useful or more pleasant to the citizens. And from that fact it appears that the city's founder must have made such gardens a primary object of his consideration.

They say that from the beginning the whole city was planned by Utopus himself, but that he left to posterity matters of adornment and improvement such as he saw could not be perfected in one man's lifetime. Their records began 1,760 years ago 19 with the conquest of the island, were diligently compiled, and are carefully preserved in writing. From these

16 Lavish, by sixteenth-century standards. Gossley observes that the layout of Amatour is reminiscent of Roman urban planning: "Twenty feet was the average width of Roman city streets, which, again like Amatour, were bordered by fairly high-density housing blocks that surrounded large courtyards used for exercise. In Amatour, the rectangular block pattern was the most evident feature of the Roman urban plan. In the Roman city this pattern was broken only by the insertion of major public buildings, again a feature of the Utopian city" ("Mapping "Utopia", p. 29). The notable difference from Roman arrangements lies in the fact that the Utopian courtyards are merged in the central gardens.

17 Cf. Plato, Republic V.416d: the Guardians 'shall have no private property beyond the barest essentials...none of them shall possess a dwelling-house or other property to which all have not the right of entry'. The Carthaginian ranks, among whom More sojourned for a few years, regularly exchanged dwellings.

18 Apart from its obvious practical advantages, the Utopians' fondness for gardens may hint at the connection of their way of life with Epicureanism. Early in life, Epicurus retired to a house and garden given him by his disciples; and his school was called the Garden.

19 In the Geography (VII.46-48).

20 Counting from 1796, this takes us back to 244 B.C., when Agis IV became King of Sparta; he was put to death for proposing egalitarian reforms. See Plutarch's 'Agis'; and R.J. Schoeck, "More, Plutarch, and King Agis: Spartan history and the meaning of Utopia", Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1970. The housing of modern Amatour is considerably more impressive than that of early sixteenth-century London, where dwellings were normally of timber and at most two storeys.

21 Glass windows were uncommon in England. Oiled linens, sheets of horn and tiles of wicker or wood were used instead.

22 "Siphon" appears to be derived from Greek siphos ('wine') or perhaps siphnos ('of the stream') - see pluvia (polypus). For 'siphon' (below), the etymology seems to be in siphon or in siphos ('siphon', 'plinth', 'distinct') plus hestia ('dwelling', 'plutus'). Although Pyle does observe that these terms have been displaced by the more unambiguously respectable 'phylarch' and 'prostophylarch' (translated as 'head phylarch'), in the remained of his account he invariably uses the 'older' terms. 'Phylarch' occurs twice before this passage, but never again; 'prostophylarch' occurs only this once. The Utopian form of government is republican: siphonarches are elected by the households, and the siphonarches of each city elect - and can remove - the governor (below), as well as the class of siphonarches, from which all high officials are chosen (p. 52). The particular republic that the Utopian arrangements would be most likely to call to mind was Venice, whose "mixed" constitution combined the institutions of Doge (the elected head of government), Senate and Grand Council. The famous stability of this constitution was thought to be owed to its embodiment of Plato's view (Laws 10.870-10.876; 11.712a-11.712b) that the fairest form of government was an amalgam of monarchy, aristocracy and democracy. See Skinner, The Foundations of Modern Political Thought, I, 439-47.

23 Because there are 6,000 families in each city (p. 24), with thirty families per siphonarch.
secret ballot they elect the governor from among four men commended to the senate by the people of the four sections of the city. The governor holds office for life, unless he is suspected of aiming at a tyranny. Though the tranibors are elected annually, they are not changed for light or casual reasons. All their other officials hold office for a single year only.

The tranibors meet to consult with the governor every other day, more often if necessary: they discuss public affairs and settle disputes between private parties (if there are any, and there are very few), acting as quickly as possible. The tranibors always invite two sphygors to the senate chamber, different ones every day. There is a rule that no decision can be made on a matter of public business unless it has been discussed in the senate on three separate days. It is a capital offense to make plans about public business outside the senate or the popular assembly. The purpose of these rules, they say, is to prevent governor and tranibors from conspiring together to alter the government and enslave the people. Therefore all matters which are considered important are first laid before the assembly of sphygors. They talk the matter over with the households they represent, consult among themselves, and then report their recommendation to the senate. Sometimes a question is brought before the general council of the whole island.

The senate also has a standing rule never to debate a matter on the same day that it is first introduced but to put it off till the next meeting. This they do so that a man will not blurt out the first thought that occurs to him, and then devote all his energies to defending his own proposals, instead of considering the common interest. They know that some men have such a perverser and preposterous sense of shame that they would rather jeopardize the general welfare than their own reputation by admitting they were short-sighted in the first place. They should have had enough foresight at the beginning to speak with consideration rather than haste.

THEIR OCCUPATIONS

Farming is the one job at which everyone works, men and women alike, with no exception. They are trained in it from childhood, partly in the schools, where they learn theory, partly through field trips to nearby farms, which make something like a game of practical instruction. On these trips they don't just observe, but frequently pitch in and get a workout by doing the jobs themselves.

Besides farm work (which, as I said, everybody performs), each person is taught a particular trade of his own, such as wool-working, linen-making, masonry, metal-work or carpentry. No other craft is practised by any considerable number of them. Their clothing – which is, except for the distinction between the sexes and between married and unmarried persons, the same throughout the whole island and throughout one's lifetime, and which is by no means unattractive, does not hinder bodily movement and serves for warm as well as cold weather – this clothing, I say, each family makes for itself.

Every person (and this includes women as well as men) learns one of the trades I mentioned. As the weaker sex, women practise the lighter crafts, such as working in wool or linen; the other, heavier jobs are assigned to the men. Ordinarily, the son is trained to his father's craft, for which most feel a natural inclination. But if anyone is attracted to another occupation, he is transferred by adoption into a family practising that trade. But both his father and the authorities take care that he is assigned to a grave and responsible household. After someone has mastered one trade, if he wants to learn another he gets the same permission. When he has learned both, he pursues the one he likes better, unless the city needs one more than the other.

The chief and almost the only business of the sphygors is to take care and see to it that no one sits around in idleness, and to make sure that everyone works hard at his trade. But no one has to be exhausted with endless toil from early morning to late at night like a beast of burden. Such wretchedness, really worse than slavery, is the common lot of workmen

48 Both Plato (Laws iii.351b-3, vii.787d-9) and Aristotle (Politics vii.1376a) stress the educational potential of games. In particular, Plato says that "a man who intends to be a good farmer must play in childhood at farming" (Laws i.643c).
49 One would have thought that considerable numbers would also have been employed making such things as pottery, harness, bread and books, or in mining or the merchant marine. Presumably all professionals – doctors, for example – are drawn from the class of scholars (p. 23).
50 The fact that all Utopians have at least two occupations (agriculture and one of the crafts), and in some cases three, brings them into implicit conflict with Plato, who strongly insists that in a well-ordered commonwealth each individual would have one and only one profession (Republic ii.379b-4, 379c-3. Laws vii.1346a-8).
Book II

almost everywhere except in Utopia. Of the twenty-four equal hours into which they divide the day and the night, the Utopians devote only six to work. They work three hours before noon, when they go to lunch. After lunch, they rest for two hours, then go to work for another three hours. Then they have supper, and about eight o'clock (counting the first hour after noon as one) they go to bed, and sleep eight hours.

The other hours of the day, when they are not working, eating or sleeping, are left to each person's individual discretion, provided that free time is not wasted in roistering or sloth but used properly in some chosen occupation. Generally these intervals are devoted to intellectual activity. For they have an established custom of giving daily public lectures before dawn, attendance at these lectures is required only of those who have been specifically chosen to devote themselves to learning, but a great many other people of all kinds, both men and women, gather to hear them. Depending on their interests, some go to one lecture, some to another. But if anyone would rather devote his spare time to his trade, as many do who are not suited to the intellectual life, this is not prohibited; in fact, such persons are commended as specially useful to the commonwealth.

After supper, they devote an hour to recreation, in their gardens during the summer, or during winter in the common halls where they have their meals. There they either play music or amuse themselves with conversation. They know nothing about gambling with dice or other such foolish and ruinous games, but they do play two games not unlike chess. One is a battle of numbers in which one number captures another. The other is a game in which the vices fight a battle against the virtues. The game is ingeniously set up to show how the vices oppose one another, yet combine against the virtues; then, what vices oppose what virtues, how they try to assault them with open force or undermine them indirectly through trickery, how the defences of the virtues can break the strength of the vices or skillfully elude their plots; and finally, by what means one side or the other gains the victory.

4 In England, for example, an Act concerning Artificers & Labourers', 1544-5, made exorbitant demands upon the time of workmen: daywork by nightfall from mid-September to mid-March; before 9 a.m. to between 7 and 8 p.m. from mid-March to mid-September (The Statutes of the Realm, iii (1883), 124-6).

5 In the universities of More's time, lectures normally began between 5 and 7 a.m.

6 Humanitas were pioneers in forwarding the education of women. Collyer Erasmus was greatly impressed by the erudite daughters of his married fellow humanists, including Margaret More. See 'The Abbot and the learned lady' among Erasmus' Colloquia, tr. Craig R. Thompson (Chicago, 1963), pp. 217-23.

But at this point you may get a wrong impression if we don't go back and consider one matter more carefully. Because they allot only six hours to work, perhaps you might think the necessities of life would be in scant supply. This is far from the case. Their working hours are ample to provide not only enough but more than enough of the necessities and even the conveniences of life. You will easily appreciate this if you consider how large a part of the population in other countries lives without doing any work at all. In the first place, hardly any of the women, who are a full half of the population, work; or, if they do, then as a rule their husbands lie snoring in bed. Then there is a great lazy gang of priests and so-called religious. Add to them all the rich, especially the landlords, who are commonly called gentlemen and nobles. Include with them their retainers, that cesspool of worthless swashbucklers. Finally, reckon in with these the sturdy and lusty beggars who feign some disease as an excuse for their idleness. You will certainly find that all the things which satisfy the needs of mortals are produced by far fewer hands than you had supposed.

And now consider how few of those who do work are doing really essential things. For where money is the measure of everything, many vain and completely superfluous trades are bound to be carried on simply to satisfy luxury and licentiousness. Suppose the multitude of those who now work were limited to a few trades and set to producing just those commodities that nature really requires. They would be bound to produce so much that prices would drop and the workmen would be unable to make a living. But suppose again that all the workers in useless trades were put to useful ones, and that the whole crowd of languid idlers (each of whom consumes as much as any two of the workmen who provide what he consumes) were assigned to productive tasks -- well, you can easily see how little time would be enough and more than enough to produce all the goods that human needs and conveniences call for -- yes, and human pleasure too, as long as it is true and natural pleasure.
The experience of Utopia makes this perfectly apparent. For there, in the whole city and its surrounding countryside barely five hundred of those men and women whose age and strength make them fit for work are exempted from it. Among these are the syphegrants, who by law are free not to work; yet they don’t take advantage of the privilege, preferring to set a good example to their fellow citizens. Some others are also permanently exempted from work so that they may devote themselves to study, but only on the recommendation of the priests and through a secret vote of the syphegrants. If any of these scholars disappoints the hopes they had for him, he is sent packing, to become a workman again. On the other hand, it happens not infrequently that a craftsman devotes his leisure so earnestly to study, and makes such progress by his diligence, that he is released from his craft and promoted to the order of learned men. From this scholarly class are chosen ambassadors, priests, translators and the governor himself, who used to be called Barzanes, but in their modern tongue is known as Ademus. Since almost all the rest of the populace is neither idle nor engaged in useless trades, it is easy to see why they produce so much in such a short working day.

Apart from all this, they have it easier because in most of the necessary crafts they need less labour than people elsewhere do. First of all, building and repairing houses everywhere demands the constant labour of many men, because what a father has built, his thriftless heir lets fall into ruin; and then his successor has to reconstruct, at great expense, what could have been kept up at a very small charge. Even more, when a man has built a splendid house at vast cost, someone else may think he has better taste, let the first house fall to ruin, and then build another one somewhere else for just as much money. But among the Utopians, where everything has been well-ordered and the commonwealth properly established, building a new house on a new site is a rare event. They are not only quick to repair deterioration but foresight in preventing it. The result is that their buildings last for a very long time with minimum repairs; and workmen of that sort sometimes have so little to do that they are set to shaping timber and squaring stone for prompt use in case of future need.

Consider, too, how little labour their clothing requires. Their work clothes are unpretentious garments made of leather or pelts, which last seven years. When they go out in public, they cover these rough work clothes with a cloak. Throughout the entire island, these cloaks are of the same colour, which is that of natural wool. As a result, they not only need less woollen cloth than people anywhere else, but what they do need is also less expensive. Even so, they use linen cloth most, because it requires least labour. They like linen cloth to be white and wool cloth to be clean; but they do not value fineness of texture. Everywhere else a man may not be satisfied with four or five woollen cloaks of different colours and as many silk shirts — or if he's a bit of a top, even ten are not enough. But there everyone is content with a single cloak, and generally wears it for two years. There is no reason why he should want any more garments, for if he had them, he would not be better protected against the cold, nor would he appear the least bit more fashionable.

Since there is an abundance of everything — as a result of everyone working at useful trades and the trades requiring less work — they sometimes assemble great numbers of people to work on the roads, if any need repairs. And when there is no need even for this sort of work, then they very often proclaim a shorter work day, since the magistrates never force their citizens to perform useless labour. The chief aim of their constitution is that, as far as public needs permit, all citizens should be free to withdraw as much time as possible from the service of the body and devote themselves to the freedom and culture of the mind. For in that, they think, lies the happiness of life.

SOCIAL RELATIONS

Now it would be well to explain how the citizens behave towards one another, the nature of their social relations and their system of distributing goods.

52

53
Each city, then, consists of households, the households consisting generally of blood-relations. When the women grow up and are married, they move into their husbands' households. On the other hand, male children and grandchildren remain in the family, and are subject to the oldest member, unless his mind has started to fail from old age, in which case the next oldest takes his place. To keep the cities from becoming too sparse or too crowded, they take care that each household (there are six thousand of them in each city, exclusive of the surrounding countryside) should have no fewer than ten nor more than sixteen adults. They cannot, of course, regulate the number of minor children in a family. The limit on adults is easily observed by transferring individuals from a household with too many into a household with too few. But if a city has too many people, the extra persons serve to make up the shortage of population in other cities. And if the population throughout the entire island exceeds the quota, they enroll citizens out of every city and plant a colony under their own laws on the mainland near them, wherever the natives have plenty of unoccupied and uncultivated land. Those natives who want to live with the Utopians are adopted by them. When such a merger occurs, the two peoples gradually and easily blend together, sharing the same way of life and customs, much to the advantage of both. For by their policies the Utopians make the land yield an abundance for all, though previously it had seemed too poor and barren even to support the natives. But those who refuse to live under their laws they drive out of the land they claim for themselves; and against those who resist them, they wage war. They think it is perfectly justifiable to make war on people who leave their land idle and waste yet forbid the use and possession of it to others who, by the law of nature, ought to be supported from it. 41

If for any reason the population of one city shrinks so sharply that it cannot be made up without reducing others below their quota, the numbers are restored by bringing people back from the colonies. This has happened only twice, they say, in their whole history, both times in consequence of a fearful plague. They would rather let their colonies disappear than allow any of the cities on their island to get too small.

But to return to the communal life of the citizens. The oldest of every household, as I said, is the ruler. Wives act as servants to their husbands, children to their parents, and generally the younger to their elders. 42 Every city is divided into four equal districts, and in the middle of each district is a market for all kinds of commodities. Whatever each household produces is brought here and stored in warehouses, each kind of goods in its own place. Here the head of every household looks for what he or his family needs, and carries off what he wants without any sort of payment or compensation. Why should anything be refused him? There is plenty of everything, and no reason to fear that anyone will claim more than he needs. For why would anyone be suspected of asking for more than he needed, when he knows there will be no shortage? Fear of want, no doubt, makes every living creature greedy and rapacious, and man, besides, develops these qualities out of sheer pride, which glories in getting ahead of others by a superfluous display of possessions. But this sort of vice has no place whatever in the Utopian scheme of things.

Next to the marketplaces of which I just spoke are the food markets, where people bring all sorts of vegetables, fruit and bread. Fish, meat and poultry are also brought there from designated places not far outside the city, where running water can carry away all the blood and refuse. Bondsmen do the slaughtering and cleaning in these places; citizens are not allowed to do such work. 43 The Utopians feel that slaughtering our fellow creatures gradually destroys the sense of compassion, the finest sentiment of which our human nature is capable. Besides, they don't allow anything dirty or filthy to be brought into the city, lest the air become tainted by putrefaction and thus infectious.

Every square block has its own spacious halls, equally distant from one another, and each housed by a special name. In these halls live the

---

41This principle finds strong support in innumerable classical, Biblical and later texts. See, for example, Aristotle, Politics I.12,1-2, and Ephesians 5:1-6. The Utopians are perhaps especially interested in reinforcing it as a way of countering the disruptive effects supposed to be entailed in communism (cf. pp. 38-39).

42This word is Latin, and should be distinguished from the slave (Latam servus) who are referred to several times. But on p. 71, Hylleberg notes that the Utopians have assigned hunting to their 'servi servit'.
Book II

Syphograns. Thirty families are assigned to each hall – fifteen from each side of it – to take their meals in common.43 The stewards of all the halls meet at a fixed time in the market and requisition food according to the number of persons for whom each is responsible.

But first consideration goes to the sick, who are cared for in public hospitals. Every city has four of these, built at the city limits slightly outside the walls, and spacious enough to appear like little towns. The hospitals are large for two reasons: so that the sick, however numerous they may be, will not be packed closely and uncomfortably together, and also so that those with contagious diseases, such as might pass from one to the other, can be isolated. These hospitals are well ordered and supplied with everything needed to cure the patients, who are nursed with tender and watchful care. Highly skilled physicians are in constant attendance. Consequently, though nobody is sent there against his will, still there is hardly anyone in the whole city who would not rather be treated for an illness at the hospital than at home.

When the hospital steward has received the food prescribed for the sick by their doctors, the best of the remainder is fairly divided among the halls according to the number in each, except that special regard is paid to the governor, the high priest and the triarchs, as well as to ambassadors and foreigners, if there are any. In fact, there are very few; but when they do come, they have certain furnished houses assigned to them. At the hours of lunch and supper, a bronze trumpet summons the entire syphogrant to assemble in their hall, except for those who are bedridden in the hospitals or at home. After the halls have been served with their quotas of food, nothing prevents an individual from taking home food from the marketplace. They realise that no one would do this without good reason. For while it is not forbidden to eat at home, no one does it willingly, because it is not thought proper; and besides, it would be stupid to work at preparing a worse meal at home when there is an elegant and sumptuous one near at hand in the hall.

In this hall, slaves do all the particularly dirty and heavy chores. But planning the meal, as well as preparing and cooking the food, is carried out by the women alone, with each family taking its turn. Depending on

43 According to Plutarch, Lycurgus instituted the common messes of Sparta as part of his plan 'to attach luxury... and remove the thirst for wealth' (Lycurgus 46). For similar reasons the institution was incorporated into the ideal commonwealths of Plato and Aristotle (Republic III.416E; Politics VII.1190).

the number, they sit down at three or more tables. The men sit with their backs to the wall, the women on the outside, so that if a woman has a sudden qualm or pain, such as occasionally happens during pregnancy, she may get up without disturbing the others and go off to the nurses.

A separate dining room is assigned to the nurses and infants, with a plentiful supply of cradles, clean water and a warm fire. Thus the nurses may lay the infants down, or remove their swaddling clothes before the fire and let them renew their strength by playing. Each child is nursed by its own mother, unless death or illness prevents. When that happens, the wives of the syphograns quickly find a nurse. The problem is not difficult: any woman who can volunteers more willingly than for any other service, since everyone applauds her kindheartedness, and the child itself regards its nurse as its natural mother.

Children under the age of five sit together in the nurses' den. All other minors, among whom they include boys and girls up to the age of marriage, either wait on table, or, if not old and strong enough for that, stand by in absolute silence. Both groups eat whatever is handed to them by those sitting at the table, and have no other set time for their meals.

At the middle of the first table sits the syphogrant with his wife. This is the place of greatest honour, and from this table, which is placed at the highest level of the hall and crosswise to the other tables, the whole gathering can be seen. Two of the eldest sit next to them – for the seating is always by groups of four. But if there is a church in the district, the priest and his wife sit with the syphogrant so as to preside. On both sides of them sit younger people, next to them older people again, and so through the hall: thus those of about the same age sit together, yet are mingled with others of a different age. The reason for this, as they explain it, is that the dignity of the aged, and the respect due to them, may restrain the younger people from improper freedom of words or gestures, since nothing said or done at table can pass unnoticed by the old, who are present on every side.

Dishes of food are not served down the tables in order from top to bottom, but all the old persons, who are seated in conspicuous places, are served first with the best food, and then equal shares are given to the rest. The old people, as they feel inclined, give their neighbours a share of those delicacies which were not plentiful enough to go around. Thus due respect is paid to seniority, yet everyone enjoys some of the benefits.
They begin every lunch and supper with some reading on a moral topic," but keep it brief lest it become a bore. Taking their cue from this, the elders introduce proper topics of conversation, but not gloomy or dull ones. They never monopolise the conversation with long monologues, but are eager to hear what the young people say. In fact, they deliberately draw them out, in order to discover the natural temper and quality of each one's mind, as revealed in the freedom of mealtime talk.

Their lunches are light, their suppers more generous, because lunch is followed by work, supper by rest and a night's sleep, which they think particularly helpful to good digestion. No evening meal passes without music, and the dessert course is never scented; they burn incense and scatter perfume, omitting nothing which will cheer up the diners. For they are somewhat inclined to think that no kind of pleasure is forbidden, provided harm does not come of it.

This is the pattern of life in the city; but in the country, where they are farther removed from neighbours, they all eat in their own homes. No family lacks for food since, after all, whatever city-dwellers eat comes originally from those in the country.

THE TRAVELS OF THE UTOPIANS

Any individuals who want to visit friends living in another city, or simply to see the place itself, can easily obtain permission from their physicians or translators, unless there is some need for them at home. They travel together in groups, taking a letter from the governor granting leave to travel and fixing a day of return. They are given a wagon and a public slave to drive the oxen and look after them, but unless women are in the company they dispense with the wagon as a burden and a hindrance. Wherever they go, though they take nothing with them, they never lack for anything, because they are at home everywhere. If they stay more than a day in one place, each one practices his trade there, and is kindly received by his fellow artisans.

Anyone who takes upon himself to leave his district without permission, and is caught without the governor's letter, is treated with contempt, brought back as a runaway, and severely punished. If he is bold enough to try it a second time, he is made a slave. Anyone who is eager to stroll

48 Humanitas were fond of this ancient social custom — which, as the gloss implies, lingered longest in the monasteries. Thomas Stapleton says it was the practice at More's table (The Life and Illustrious Martyrdom of Sir Thomas More, p. 89).

58

about his own district is not prevented, provided he first obtains his father's permission and his spouse's consent. But wherever he goes in the country-side, he gets no food until he has completed either a morning's or an afternoon's stint of work.49 On these terms he may go where he pleases within his own district, yet be just as useful to the city as if he were in it.

So you see that nowhere is there any chance to lose or any pretext for evading work; there are no wine-bars, or ale-houses, or brothels; no chances for corruption; no hiding places; no spots for secret meetings. Because they live in the full view of all, they are bound to be either working at their usual trades or enjoying their leisure in a respectable way. Such customs must necessarily result in plenty of life's good things, and since they share everything equally, it follows that no one can ever be reduced to poverty or forced to beg.

In the senate at Amoura (to which, as I said before, three representatives come every year from each city), they first determine where there are shortages and surpluses, and promptly satisfy one district's shortage with another's surplus. These are outright gifts; those who give get nothing in return from those who receive. Though they give freely to one city asking for nothing in return, they get what they need from another to which they gave nothing. Thus the whole island is like a single family.48

After they have accumulated enough for themselves — and this they consider to be a full two-years' store, because next year's crop is always uncertain — then they export their surpluses to other countries: great quantities of grain, honey, wool, flax, timber, scarlet and purple dyestuffs, hides, wax, tallow and leather, as well as livestock. One seventh of all these things they give freely to the poor of the importing country, and the rest they sell at moderate prices. In exchange they receive not only such goods as they lack at home (in fact, about the only important thing they lack is iron) but immense quantities of silver and gold. They have been carrying on trade for a long time now, and have accumulated a greater supply of the precious metals than you would believe possible. As a result, they now care very little whether they sell for cash or on credit, and most payments to them actually take the form of promissory notes. However, in all such transactions, they never trust individuals but insist that the foreign city become officially responsible. When the day of payment comes, the city

48 The Utopians, in this role, agree with St. Paul: 1 Thessalonians: 3:10.
49 According to Pausanias, Lycurgus, returning from a journey just after harvest, and seeing the heaps of grain standing parallel and equal to one another, said to them that was why: "All Laconia looks like a family estate newly divided among many brothers" (Lycurgus, vni.4).
people would not want to give up articles on which they had begun to fix their hearts—only to melt them down for soldiers’ pay. To avoid these problems they thought of a plan which conforms with the rest of their institutions as sharply as it contrasts with our own. Unless one has actually seen it working, their plan may seem incredible, because we prize gold so highly and are so careful about guarding it. While they eat from earthenware dishes and drink from glass cups, finely made but inexpensive, their chamber pots and all their humblest vessels, for use in the common halls and even in private homes, are made of gold and silver. Moreover, the chains and heavy shackles of slaves are also made of these metals. Finally, criminals who are to bear the mark of some disgraceful act are forced to wear golden rings in their ears and on their fingers, golden chains around their necks, and even golden headbands. Thus they hold up gold and silver to scorn in every conceivable way. As a result, if they had to part with their entire supply of these metals, which other people give up with as much agony as if they were being disembowelled, no one would feel it any more than the loss of a penny.

They pick up pearls by the seashore, and also diamonds and garnets from certain cliffs, but never go out of set purpose to look for them. If they happen to find some, they polish them and give them as decorations to the children, who feel proud and pleased with such ornaments during the early years of childhood. But when they have grown a bit older and notice that only small children like this kind of toy, they lay them aside. Their parents don’t have to say anything; they simply put these trifles away out of shame, just as our children, when they grow up, put away their marbles, babbles and dolls.

These customs so different from those of other people also produce a quite different cast of mind: this never became clearer to me than it did in the case of the Amemolian ambassadors, who came to Amurath while I was there. Because they came to discuss important business, the national council had assembled ahead of time, three citizens from each city. The

44 Tacitus reports of the ancient Germans (whose ‘primitive’ society he admires in various respects) that ‘One may see among them silver vessels... treated so as no more value than earthenware’ (Germania 4). Vespucci notes the native American’s indifference to gold and gems (Four Voyages, p. 98), as does the explorer Pierre Martine d’Angivilliers (1477–1526), who tells of a tribe that ‘used kitchen and other common utensils made of gold’ (Die Orient Neue [On the New World], trans. Francis A. MacNutt, 2 vols. (New York and London, 1912; rpt New York, 1926), i, 221).

45 Similarly, Tacitus reports of the ancient Britons that although the sun produces pearls, ‘they are gathered only when thrown up on shore’ (Agricola 12).

From amemolian, ‘shiny’.

More expresses the same view in propea possum (in two works 1534; A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation (CW, XII, 207); A Treatise upon the Passion (CW, XIII, 8).
ambassadors from nearly nations, who had visited Utopia before and knew the local customs, understood that fine clothing was not respected in that land, silk was despised, and gold a badge of contempt; therefore they always came in the very plainest of their clothes. But the Anmometians, who lived farther off and had had fewer dealings with them, had heard only that they all dressed alike and very simply; so they took for granted that their hosts had nothing to wear that they didn’t put on. Being themselves rather more proud than wise, they decided to dress as elegantly as the very gods, and dazzle the eyes of the poor Utopians with the splendour of their garb.

And so the three ambassadors made a grand entry with a suite of a hundred attendants, all in clothing of many colours, and most in silk. Being noblemen at home, the ambassadors were arrayed in cloth of gold, with heavy gold chains round their necks, gold earrings, gold rings on their fingers and sparkling strings of pearls and gems hanging on their caps. In fact, they were decked out in all the articles which in Utopia are used to punish slaves, shame wrongdoers or entertain infants. It was a sight to see how they strutted when they compared their finery with the dress of the Utopians, who had poured out into the streets. But it was just as funny to see how wide they fell of the mark, and how far they were from getting the consideration they thought they would get. Except for a very few Utopians who for some good reason had visited foreign countries, all the onlookers considered this splendid pomp a mark of disgrace. They therefore bowed to all in the humblest of the party as lords, and took the ambassadors, because of their golden chains, to be slaves, passing them by without any reverence at all. You might have seen children, who had themselves thrown away their pearls and gems, nudge their mothers when they saw the ambassadors’ jewelled caps and say, ‘Look at that big lord, mother, who’s still wearing pearls and jewels as if he were a little boy!’ But the mother, in all seriousness, would say, ‘Quiet, son, I think he is one of the ambassadors’ fools.’

Others found fault with the golden chains as useless because they were so flimsy any slave could break them, and so loose that he could easily shake them off and run away anywhere he wanted, foot-loose and fancy-free.

But after the ambassadors had spent a couple of days among the Utopians, they saw the immense amounts of gold which were as thoroughly despised there as they were prized at home. They saw too that more gold and silver went into making chains and shackles for a single runaway slave than into costuming all three of them. Somewhat ashamed and crestfallen, they put away all the finery in which they had strutted so arrogantly—especially after they had talked with the Utopians enough to learn their customs and opinions.60

They marvel that any mortal can take pleasure in the dubious sparkle of a tiny little jewel or gemstone, when he has a star, or the sun itself, to look at. They are amazed at the madness of any man who considers himself a nobler fellow because he wears clothing of specially fine wool. No matter how fine the thread, they say, a sheep wore it once; and still was nothing but a sheep.61 They are surprised that gold, a useless commodity in itself, is everywhere valued so highly that man himself, who for his own purposes conferred this value on it, is considered far less valuable than the gold—so much so that a dufferhead who has no more brains than a post, and who is as vicious as he is foolish, should command a great many wise and good men, simply because he happens to have a big pile of gold coins. Yet if this master should lose his money to the lowest rascal in his household (as can happen by chance or through some legal trick—for the law can produce reversals as violent as Fortune herself), he would soon become the servant of his servant, as if he were personally attached to the coins, and a more appendage to them. Even more than this, they are appalled at those people who practically worship a rich man, though they neither owe him anything nor are under his thumb in any way. What impresses them is simply the fact that the man is rich. Yet all the while they know he is so mean and grasping that as long as he lives not a single little penny out of that great mound of money will ever come their way.

These and the like attitudes the Utopians have picked up partly from their upbringing, since the institutions of their commonwealth are completely opposed to such folly, partly from instruction and good books. For though not many people in each city are excused from labour and assigned to scholarship full-time (these are persons who from childhood have given evidence of excellent character, unusual intelligence and devotion to learning), every child gets an introduction to good literature, and

---

60 The story of the Anmometian ambassadors owes something to Lucian’s ‘The Wisdom of Nigerinus’, in which a visiting millionaire makes a fool of himself by strolling around Athens in a purple robe: ‘with his crowd of attendants and his gay clothes and jewelry, . . . he expected to be looked up to as a happy man. But they thought the creature unfortunate, and undertook to educate him . . . His gay clothes and his purple gown they stripped from him very neatly by making fun of his flowery colours, saying “Spring already?” “How did that please you, sir?” “Perhaps it’s his mother’s” and the like’ (sect. 13).

61 The source is Lucian’s ‘Demonax’ (sect. 41). More repeated the idea years later (1534) in A Treatise upon the Passion (CH, xiii, 8).
throughout their lives many people, men and women alike, devote the free
time I’ve mentioned to reading.

They study all the branches of learning in their native tongue, which
is not deficient in terminology or unpleasant in sound and adapts itself as
well as any to the expression of thought. This same language, or something
close to it, is diffused through much of that part of the world, except that
everywhere else it is corrupted to various degrees.

Before we came there the Utopians had never so much as heard about
a single one of those philosophers whose names are so celebrated in our
part of the world. Yet in music, dialectic, arithmetic and geometry they
have found out just about the same things as our great men of the past.
But while they equal the ancients in almost all subjects, they are far from
matching the inventions of our modern logicians. In fact they have
not discovered even one of those elaborate rules about restrictions,
amplifications and suppressions which young men here study in the Peri
Logica. They are so far from being able to speculate on ‘second intentions’
that not one of them was able to see ‘man-in-general’, though we
pointed straight at him with our fingers, and he is, as you well know,
colossal and bigger than any giant. On the other hand, they have learned

Perhaps More intends an implicit contrast with Europe, where Latin rather than the vernac-
lars was the language of schools.

As the following sentences indicate, ‘philosopher’ is used here in the old, broad sense that
includes those learned in the natural and mathematical sciences as well as students of meta-
physics and moral philosophy.

Music, arithmetic and geometry, together with astronomy (below), constitute the advanced
division—the quadrivium—of the traditional Seven Liberal Arts. Dialectic joins with grammar
and rhetoric to constitute the elementary division—the trivium. Grammar and rhetoric would
be encompassed in the Utopians’ study of ‘good literature’.

Probably the Peri Logica (Little Logicians) of Peter of Spain (c. 1277), though more than
one textbook bears this name. More means a sustained attack on the ‘modern logicians’
(i.e., scholastic dialecticians) in his long open letter to the Dutch theologian and philosophe
Maarten van Dorp, composed in the same year (t315) in which he wrote Book 2 of Utopia.
In the letter, More suggests that the Peri Logica is ‘so called probably because it contains
little logic’; it is worth having a look at its chapters on so-called suppressions, on amplifica-
tions, restrictions, and applications, and everywhere else, to see all of the pointless and even
false little precepts it does contain’ (CIF, v. 20). On the technical term, see the discussion in
Daniel Kline’s introduction to the letter (xv, xvii-xviii).

First intentions are the direct apprehensions of things; ‘second intentions’ are purely abstract
conceptions, derived from considering the relations of first intentions.

The Utopians’ blinding to ‘man-in-general’ (i.e., man as a ‘universal’) makes them just
opposite to the scholastic philosophers mocked by Erasmus’ Folly, who, though ignorant
of themselves and sometimes not able to see the ditches or stony lying in their path, either
because most of them are half-blind or because their minds are far away...still boast that
they can see ideas, universal, separate forms, prime matters, qualities, societies’ (CET, wXVIII, 856).

$\text{Book II}$

to plot exactly the courses of the stars and the movements of the heavenly
bodies. To this end they have devised a number of different instruments
by which they compute with the greatest exactness the course and posi-
tion of the sun, the moon and the other stars that are visible in their
area of the sky. As for the conjunctions and oppositions of the planets and
that whole deceitful business of divination by the stars, they have never
so much as dreamed of it. From long experience in observation, they
are able to forecast rains, winds and other changes in the weather. But
as to the causes of the weather, of the tides in the sea and its saltiness,
and, finally, the origins and nature of the heavens and the earth, they
have various opinions. To some extent they treat of these matters as our
ancient philosophers did, but they are also like them in disagreeing with
one another. So too, when they propose a new theory they differ from our
ancient philosophers and yet reach no consensus at all among themselves.

In matters of moral philosophy, they carry on the same arguments as we
do. They inquire into the goods of the mind and goods of the body
and external goods. They ask whether the name of ‘good’ can be applied
to all three, or whether it refers only to goods of the mind. They discuss
virtue and pleasure, but their chief concern is what to think of human
happiness, and whether it consists of one thing or of more. On this point,
they seem rather too much inclined to the view which favours pleasure,
in which they conclude that all or the most important part of human
happiness consists.

And what is more surprising, they seek support for

$\text{Book II}$

Yet these
astronomers
are secretly
aliens to
the sky

Physics
the most
urgent
study
of

$\text{Book II}$

Etic
(thought and
inner

$\text{Book II}$

Logic

$\text{Book II}$

the Super-

$\text{Book II}$

the Utopians

$\text{Book II}$

Ethics

$\text{Book II}$

the

$\text{Book II}$

the

$\text{Book II}$

the

$\text{Book II}$

the

$\text{Book II}$

the

$\text{Book II}$

the

$\text{Book II}$

the
Book II

think you would have to be actually crazy to pursue harsh and painful virtue, give up the pleasures of life, and suffer pain from which you can expect no advantage. For if there is no reward after death, you have no compensation for having passed your entire existence without pleasure, that is, miserably.85

To be sure, they think happiness is found, not in every kind of pleasure, but only in good and honest pleasure. Virtue itself, they say, draws our nature to pleasure of this sort, as to the supreme good. There is an opposing school which declares that virtue is itself happiness.86

They define virtue as living according to nature; and God, they say, created us to that end. When an individual obeys the dictates of reason in choosing one thing and avoiding another, he is following nature.86

Now above all reason urges us to love and venerate the Divine Majesty to whom we owe our existence and our capacity for happiness. Secondly, nature prescribes that we should lead a life as free of anxiety as possible, and that we should help all others – because of our natural fellowship – toward that end. The most hard-faced eulogist of virtue and the grimmest enemy of pleasure, while he invites you to toil and sleepless nights and mortification, still admonishes you to relieve the poverty and distress of others as best you can. It is especially praiseworthy, they think, when we provide for the comfort and welfare of our fellow creatures. Nothing is more humane (and humanity is the virtue most proper to human beings) than to relieve the misery of others, remove all sadness from their lives, and restore them to enjoyment, that is, pleasure.

the first and native good, for that reason we do not choose every pleasure whatsoever, but often pass over many pleasures when a greater annoyance comes from them (Lives of Eminent Philosophers X.124). The Utopians accept these rules of selection, but recognize that their application leads to quite different conclusions about the good life depending on whether religious principles are factored into the individual’s calculations.

The Utopians, that is, reject the claim that purely rational and mundane considerations provide sufficient sanction for moral behaviour. In this respect, too, they differ from Epicurus, who thought that the mental pleasure of moral actions and the fear of detection in wrongdoing provided adequate incentives to virtue (cf. Diogenes Laertius VIII.131–3).

This second position is that of the Stoics, who declared that virtue constitutes happiness, whether it leads to pleasure or not – indeed, that a man who is enduring great misery may derive happiness from his knowledge of his own virtuous behaviour. As the following marginal gloss points out, the Utopians’ definition of virtue is also Stoic. See, for example, Cicero, On the Supreme Good and Evil III.13.31.

Throughout the ensuing discussion, “reason” has the sense of “right reason” – the faculty that, according to a conception passed on by the Stoics to the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, enables human beings to distinguish right and wrong with instinctive clarity; that is, to apprehend the natural law.
Well, then, why doesn't nature equally invite all of us to do the same thing for ourselves? Either a joyful life (that is, one of pleasure) is a good thing, or it isn't. If it isn't, then you should not help anyone to it – indeed, you ought to take it away from everyone you can, as being harmful and deadly to them. But if you are allowed, indeed obliged, to help others to such a life, why not first of all yourself, to whom you owe no less favour than to anyone else? For when nature prompts you to be kind to your neighbours, she does not mean that you should be cruel and merciless to yourself. Thus, they say, nature herself prescribes for us a joyous life, in other words, pleasure, as the goal of all our actions; and living according to her rules is to be defined as virtue. But as nature bids mortals to make one another's lives cheerful, as far as they can, and she does so rightly, for no one is placed so far above the rest that he is nature's sole concern, and she cherishes equally all those to whom she has granted the same form – so she repeatedly warns you not to seek your own advantage in ways that cause misfortune to others.

Consequently, they think that one should abide not only by private agreements but by those public laws which control the distribution of vital goods, such as are the very substance of pleasure. Any such laws, when properly promulgated by a good king, or ratified by the common consent of a people free of tyranny and deception, should be observed. So long as they are observed, to pursue your own interests is prudent; to pursue the public interest as well is pious; but to pursue your own pleasure by depriving others of theirs is unjust. On the other hand, to decrease your own pleasure in order to augment that of others is a work of humanity and benevolence, which never fails to reward the doer even above his sacrifice. You may be repaid for your kindness, and in any case your consciousness of having done a good deed, and recalling the affection and good will of those whom you have benefited, gives your mind more pleasure than your body would have drawn from the things you forfeited. Finally, as religion easily persuades a well-disposed mind to believe, God will require the loss of a brief and transitory pleasure here with immense and never-ending joy in heaven. And so they conclude, after carefully considering and weighing the matter, that all our actions, including even the virtues exercised within them, look toward pleasure as their happiness and final goal.²⁹

²⁹This is Epicurus' view, as reported by Diogenes Laertius: "we choose the virtues too on account of pleasure and not for their own sake" (X.138).

By pleasure they understand every state or movement of body or mind in which we find delight according to the behests of nature.³⁰ They have good reason for adding that the desire is according to nature. By following our senses and right reason we may discover what is pleasant by nature: it is a delight that does not injure others, does not preclude a greater pleasure, and is not followed by pain. But all pleasures which are against nature, and which men agree to call 'delightful' only by the emptiest of fictions (as if one could change the real nature of things just by changing their names), do not, they have decided, really make for happiness; in fact, they say such pleasures often preclude happiness. And the reason is that once they have taken over someone's mind, they leave no room for true and genuine delights, and they completely fill the mind with a false notion of pleasure. For there are a great many things which have no genuine sweetness in them but are for the most part actually bitter – yet which, through the perversity enticement of evil desires, are not only considered very great pleasures but are even included among the primary reasons for living.

Among the pursuers of this false pleasure, they include those whom I mentioned before, the people who think themselves finer folk because they wear finer clothes. On this one point, these people are twice mistaken: first in supposing their clothes better than anyone else's, and then in thinking themselves better. As far as a garment's usefulness goes, why is fine woollen thread better than coarse? Yet they strut about and think their clothes make them more substantial, as if they were exalted by nature herself, rather than by their own fantasies. Therefore, honours they would never have dared to expect if they were plainly dressed they demand as rightfully due to their fancy suit, and they grow indignant if someone passes them by without showing special respect.

Isn't it the same kind of stupidity to be pleased by empty, merely ceremonial honours? What true or natural pleasure can you get from someone's bent knee or bared head? Will the creaks in your own knees be eased thereby, or the madness in your head? The phantom of false pleasure is illustrated by others who are perfectly content with delight over their own blue blood, flatter themselves on their nobility, and glut over all the long line of rich ancestors they happen to have (and wealth is the only sort of nobility these days), and especially over their ancient family estates.

³⁰Both Plato (Phaedrus 360c–320) and Aristotle (Nicomachean Ethics 1103b11) acknowledge the importance to the good life of physical as well as mental pleasures and distinguish between true pleasures – which are "pleasures by nature" – and false ones. The ensuing discussion relies heavily on their arguments.
Even if these ancestors have left them no estates to inherit, or if they've squandered all of their inheritance, they don't consider themselves a bit less noble.\textsuperscript{24}

In the same class they put those people I described before, who are captivated by jewels and gemstones, and think themselves divinely happy if they get a good specimen, especially of the sort that happens to be fashionable in their country at the time — for not every country nor every era values the same kinds. But collectors will not make an offer for a stone till it's taken out of its gold setting, and even then they will not buy unless the dealer guarantees and gives security that it is a true and genuine stone. What they fear is that their eyes will be deceived by a counterfeit. But why should a counterfeit give any less pleasure, if, when you look at it, your eyes cannot distinguish it from a genuine gem? Both should be of equal value to you — no less so, by heaven, than they would be to a blind man.\textsuperscript{25}

What about those who pile up money, not for any real purpose, but just to look at it? Do they feel a true pleasure, or aren't they simply deluded by a show of pleasure? Or what about those with the opposite vice, who hide away gold they will never use and perhaps never even see again? In their anxiety not to lose it, they actually do lose it. For what else happens when you deprive yourself, and perhaps all other people too, of a chance to use your gold, by burying it in the ground? And yet, when you've hidden your treasure away, you are overjoyed, as if your mind were now at ease. Suppose someone stole it, and you died ten years later, knowing nothing of the theft. During all those ten years, what did it matter to you whether the money was stolen or not? In either case, it was equally useless to you.\textsuperscript{26}

To these foolish pleasures they add gambling, which they have heard about, though they've never tried it, as well as hunting and hawkng. What pleasure can there be, they say, in throwing dice on a playing-table? If there were any pleasure in the action, wouldn't doing it over and over again make one tired of it? What pleasure can there be in listening to the barking and howling of dogs - isn't that rather a disgusting noise? Is any

\textsuperscript{24}This passage — like the catalogue of false pleasures as a whole — is closely in substance and tone to The Prairie of Folly. Folly comments on "those who are not better than the humblest worker but take extraordinary pride in an empty title of nobility" (CIF, xxviii, 116).

\textsuperscript{25}There are similar sentiments in More's Treatise upon the Passion (CIF, xxviii, 8) and The Last Things (c. 1532) (CH, 1, 150). Erasmus' Folly tells how More "made his new bride a present of some jewels which were copies, and... persuaded her that they were not only real and genuine but also of unique and inestimable value" (CIF, xxviii, 116).

\textsuperscript{26}There is a very similar passage in More's Dialogue of Comforts (CH, 30, 210).
Pleasures of the body they also divide into two classes. The first is that which fills the senses with immediate delight. Sometimes this happens when bodily organs that have been weakened by natural heat are restored with food and drink; sometimes it happens when we eliminate some excess in the body, as when we move our bowels, generate children, or relieve an itch somewhere by rubbing or scratching it. Now and then pleasure arises, not from restoring a deficiency or discharging an excess, but from something that affects and excites our senses with a hidden but unmistakable force, and attracts them to itself. Such is the power of music.

The second kind of bodily pleasure they describe as nothing but the calm and harmonious state of the body, its state of health when undisturbed by any disorder. Health itself, when not oppressed by pain, gives pleasure, without any external excitement at all. Even though it appeals less directly to the senses than the gross gratifications of eating and drinking, many still consider this to be the greatest pleasure of all. Most of the Utopians regard it as the foundation and basis of all the pleasures, since by itself alone it can make life peaceful and desirable, whereas without it there is no possibility of any other pleasure. Mere absence of pain, without positive health, they regard as insensibility, not pleasure.

Some have maintained that a stable and tranquil state of health is not really a pleasure, on the ground that the presence of health cannot be felt except in contrast to its opposite. The Utopians (who have considered the matter thoroughly) long ago rejected this opinion. Quite the contrary, they nearly all agree that health is crucial to pleasure. Since pain is inherent in disease, they say, and pain is the bitter enemy of pleasure just as disease is the enemy of health, then pleasure must be inherent in quiet good health.

Whether pain is the disease itself or just an accompanying effect makes, they think, no real difference, since the effect is the same either way. Indeed, whether health is itself a pleasure or simply the cause of pleasure (as fire is the cause of heat), the fact remains that those who have stable health must also have pleasure.

When we eat, they say, what happens is that health, which was starting to fade, takes food as its ally in the fight against hunger. While our health gains strength, the simple process of returning vigour gives us pleasure and refreshment. If our health feels delight in the struggle, will it not rejoice when the victory has been won? When at last it is happily restored to its original strength, which was its aim all through the conflict, will it at once become insensible and fail to recognize and embrace its own good? The idea that health cannot be felt they consider very far from the truth.

What man, when he's awake, can fail to feel that he's in good health—except one who isn't? Is anyone so torpid and dull that he won't admit health is agreeable and delightful to him? And what is delight except pleasure under another name?

Among the various pleasures, then, they seek primarily those of the mind, and prize them most highly: The foremost mental pleasure, they believe, arises from practice of the virtues and consciousness of a good life. Among pleasures of the body, they give first place to health. As for eating, drinking and other delights of that sort, they consider them desirable, but only for the sake of health. They are not pleasant in themselves, but only as ways to withstand the insidious encroachments of sickness. A wise man would rather escape sickness altogether than have a medicine against it; he would rather prevent pain than find a palliative. And so it would be better not to need this kind of pleasure at all than to be assuaged by it.

Anyone who thinks happiness consists of this sort of pleasure must confess that his ideal life would be one spent in an endless round of hunger, thirst and itching, followed by eating, drinking, scratching and rubbing. Who can fail to see that such an existence is not only disgusting but miserable? These pleasures are certainly the lowest of all, as they are the most adulterated—for they never occur except in connection with the pains that are their contraries. Hunger, for example, is linked to the pleasure of eating, and by no equal law, since the pain is sharper and lasts longer; it precedes the pleasure, and ends only when the pleasure ends with it. So they think pleasures of this sort should not be highly rated, except insofar as they are necessary to life. Yet they enjoy these pleasures too, and acknowledge gratefully the kindness of Mother Nature, who coaxes her children with enticing delight to do what in any case they must.

62 The formulation is from Cicero, who in *On Old Age* maintains that 'the most suitable defenses of old age are the principles and practice of the virtues, which, if cultivated in every period of life, bring forth wonderful fruits at the close of a long and busy career, not only because they never fail you even at the very end of life... but also because it is the most delightful to have the consciousness of a life well spent and the memory of many deeds worthily performed' (7.49).

The idea that pleasures can be ranked is found in both Plato (*Philebus* 57b-59a, 62b-64a) and Aristotle (*Nicomachean Ethics* X.16-17). Both assert the superiority of mental pleasures to bodily ones (as does Epicurus: *Deoenae Lactantius* X.135), but differ from the Utopians in regarding philosophic contemplation as the highest mental pleasure (*Republic* X.1583a; cf. 1583a-1586b; *Nicomachean Ethics* X.1-8, VIII.8).

63 There is a similar passage in More's *Utopia* (1516) to the *Points of View* (1415, section 32). The idea that the restorative pleasures are contaminated by being mixed with the opposite pain comes directly from the *Philebus* (56c-57c), as does the notion of a life given over to itching and scratching (470a, 471b; cf. *Cicero* 49.4.49-50).