



The Meaning
of More's
"Utopia"



By

George M. Logan

PRINCETON
UNIVERSITY
PRESS

first, is presumably the kind of foreword that Eric Erikson characterizes as enabling "an author to put his afterthoughts first. Looking back on what he has written, he can try to tell the reader what lies before him" (p. 15). Such considerations make it seem likely that examining the sections of *Utopia* consecutively—that is, in the order in which More meant them to be read—is the best critical procedure.

Chapter One



The Letter to Giles

What does the Letter to Giles tell us about the book it introduces? First, it suggests strongly, in every aspect of its substance and manner, that *Utopia* belongs to the tradition of Renaissance humanism. The letter is addressed to the humanist Peter Giles, a friend of Erasmus. Its Latin is humanist Latin; its informal, semi-fictional mode is characteristic of the humanist approach to philosophical topics. The letter takes much of its substance from standard humanist *topoi*. Claiming, especially in a dedicatory letter, that a work was composed in odd hours or inopportune circumstances had been a convention (sometimes corresponding to facts) of humanist prose since Petrarch's "Ascent of Mont Ventoux"—a virtuosic piece that Petrarch claims he scribbled while waiting for supper in an inn after a long day of mountain-climbing (p. 46)—and his treatise *On His Own Ignorance and That of Many Others*—supposedly written "quickly on a hasty journey" (p. 47). Erasmus begins his dedicatory letter to More in *The Praise of Folly* with the same *topos*—he composed the book on horseback—and later has Folly mock this convention, as she refers to "the common run of orators' . . . [who], when they bring out a speech they have been working on for thirty whole years, and sometimes not their own at all, will swear it was written in three days, for pastime, or even that they merely dictated it"

¹"Orators," like "rhetoricians" in the passage quoted below, refers particularly to humanists—as the allusion to these rhetoricians' knowledge of Greek confirms. On rhetoric as the central professional skill of the humanists, see Kristeller 1961, pp. 10-11.

(p. 9). More's highminded identification of himself with learning (*Ut.*, p. 39) and the corresponding elitist contempt of the views of the crowd (pp. 43-45) also embody favorite humanist *topoi*.² The humorous Greek coinages in the letter—*Utopia*, *Hythlodæus*, *Amnautotum*, *Anydrus*—constitute a stylistic feature associated specifically with the humanism of the later Renaissance, being an affectation that reflects the fact that knowledge of Greek was only in this period becoming widespread among humanists. Erasmus exemplifies this habit in *The Praise of Folly* and, through Folly, comments shrewdly on it:

It has seemed well, you note, to imitate the rhetoricians of our time, who believe themselves absolutely to be gods if they can show themselves bilingual (like a horse-leech), and account it a famous feat if they can weave a few Greekish words, like inlay work, ever and anon into their Latin orations, even if at the moment there is no place for them. (pp. 10-11)

At the same time that these Grecisms serve to establish More's affiliation with humanism, they clarify the nature of his intended audience. Greek coinages (like the constant indirect classical allusions in the body of *Utopia*) are included for the sake of those readers—exclusively humanists—who can understand them.³ The

² On other humanist elements in this self-characterization, see Weiner, pp. 4-6. See also Nagel, pp. 177-79. On More's humanism, see Nelson; Sylvester 1966; Schoeck 1967; Kristeller 1980.

³ Cf. More's elaborately ironic second letter to Giles (printed in the 1517 edition), where he says that "if I had determined to write about the commonwealth" in fictional form,

I should certainly have tempered the fiction so that, if I wanted to abuse the ignorance of common folk, I should have prefixed some indications at least for the more learned [*litterariis*] to see through our purpose.

Thus, if I had done nothing else than impose names on ruler, river, city, and island such as might suggest to the more learned that the island was nowhere, the city a phantom, the river without water, and the ruler without a people, it would not have been hard to do and would have been much wittier than what I actually did. (*Ut.*, p. 251)

Commenting on the Letter to Giles, Robbin Johnson observes that "unlike many 'political' treatises of the time . . . , *Utopia* is not intended ultimately

knowing, self-congratulatory approbation of the book embodied in the commendatory letters in the early editions confirms its impact on this audience. As Folly says, exotic antiquarian references "spread darkness" over the ordinary reader: but "those who understand will be vastly pleased with themselves" (p. 11).

The letter also contains evidence of another kind that *Utopia* is a book by a humanist directed primarily to his fellows. In this letter More has already adopted the pretense that *Utopia* records conversations with Hythlodæus. Modern readers have been so ready to effect the invited suspension of disbelief that they have failed to recognize that most of what is attributed to Hythlodæus here in fiction is to be attributed to More in fact. As a result, some of what More tells us about the book and his feelings about it escapes notice.

More says that

there was no reason for me to take trouble about the style of the narrative, seeing that his [Hythlodæus'] language could not be polished. It was, first of all, hurried and impromptu and, secondly, the product of a person who, as you know, was not so well acquainted with Latin as with Greek. Therefore the nearer my style came to his careless simplicity the closer it would be to the truth, for which alone I am bound to care under the circumstances and actually do care. (p. 39)

The main purpose of this passage is to acknowledge that the Latinity of the book does not come up to the highest humanist standards, a purpose that becomes clearer with a sentence a little farther on: "If it had been required that the matter be written

for the instruction of rulers. The subtle revelation of its fictional character through the names, and the consequent irony which develops, demand an audience of men trained in literature, acquainted with the classics, and profoundly sensitive to the elusive tone of many of its passages" (p. 12; cf. Herbrüggen, p. 252; Greene and Dolan, pp. 154-55; Manuel and Manuel, p. 131; Kinney 1979, p. 34). Judith Jones (1979) observes that "Erasmus's letters of 1516 and 1517 are full of comments encouraging—even begging—his friends to contribute letters to More's book, then to read it and share it with their friends" (p. 60).

down not only accurately but eloquently, I could not have performed the task with any amount of time or application."⁴ The remark that Hythloday was "not so well acquainted with Latin as with Greek," in addition to its function in characterizing Hythloday, offers a respectable excuse for the lack of polish of the book's style: the narrative really *was* "the product of a person who" had been immersed in Greek studies. In fact, More's only substantial publication (apart from the *Life of Pico*) before *Utopia* had been the translations from Lucian that were printed with those of Erasmus.

Deprecation of one's style is another humanist convention, and often an especially pained display of it is designed to call attention to the excellence of the style, as in the disclaimer that Poggio attaches to a collection of his letters: "This book, although it may seem to represent a man who is unlearned and of no great account, . . . may be . . . a sort of incentive . . . by which you may be stimulated to greater endeavors, that is, to imitating the literary style of the ancients from which I am very far away" (p. 22). But in More's case the deprecation surely reflects genuine anxiety. He was, after all, a provincial humanist in "ultima Britannia" (Catullus xxix.4) and nervous like all provincials in offering himself to the great world. His nervousness about the book (presumably on several scores) is also recorded in a number of letters written around the time of its issue (*Cor.*, nos. 20, 22, 26, 28-32, 34).⁵ Moreover, Erasmus' remark that there is some "unevenness" in the style of *Utopia* (Erasmus to Hutten, *EE*, 4:21), together with the list of More's solecisms and barbarisms compiled by his enemy Brixius, confirm that More had reason for uneasiness in this matter.⁶

⁴ These allusions to the ineloquent style of the book may also be intended, as Heiserman argues (p. 166), to suggest a link with satire, which traditionally employs a low style. But Surtz points out that in fact More "uses few 'low' words, and never without necessity" (*Ut.*, Appendix B, p. 582).

⁵ Cf., e.g., *Sol. Let.*, p. 73 (*EE*, 2:339): "I am sending you my *Novethers*, which is nowhere well written."

⁶ Erasmus offered another, more favorable, assessment of More's style in

The letter tells us, then, the kind of reader for whom *Utopia* was designed. This information is significant for interpretation in two ways. First, it suggests the range of learning we need in order to be adequate readers: familiarity with the classical, patristic, and Renaissance books that form the common intellectual property of humanism and with the ideas and concerns that characterize the humanists, especially those of More's generation and the immediately preceding period. Second, the fact that *Utopia* is addressed primarily to a humanist audience implies that we should anticipate and accept as themes of the book only those that More could plausibly be expected to address to such an audience, and that we should be correspondingly reluctant to accept any reading of *Utopia* that suggests that the book is designed to tell humanists either things that we cannot imagine them (or More) being interested in or things that they already knew (though, indeed, works of less serious humanists often simply repeat humanist commonplace).

Unfortunately, almost all criticism of *Utopia* embodies such implausibilities. In particular, the most influential recent commentators, the humanistic interpreters, tell us that More is rehashing, albeit in eloquent and mystifyingly indirect form, the shared political ideals of Erasmian humanists. *Utopia* is seen, that is, as essentially a *speculum principis*, a book more or less identical in substance to such works as Erasmus' *Education of a Christian Prince*—although in form it is (unlike the relentlessly simple and direct *specula*) obviously designed for an audience of sophisticated literary scholars. Seeböhm had in fact characterized *Utopia* as having "a very similar object" to that of *The Education*

Ciceronianus (p. 104). On More's style in relation to the humanist norm, and on Brixius' censures, see *Ut.*, Appendix B, pp. 579-82. "Three months before the completion of the *Utopia*, Erasmus had praised More's growing powers of expression . . . [*EE*, 2:243]. In his reply, More shows great embarrassment. His legal affairs allow him no time for thought or composition. Erasmus is inviting him to keep silent if he continues to weigh every word and to estimate his rhetorical abilities, that is, to count his solecisms and barbarisms [*ibid.*, 259]" (p. 579).

of a *Christian Prince* (p. 229; cf. p. 217), and there are like statements in the works of most of his successors. Caspari, for example, says that "in *Utopia*, More drew a picture clearer and fuller than anything his friend Erasmus had produced, of a humanistic state, of a society which was inspired by the central ideals they held in common" (p. 90; cf. pp. 91, 101, 117), while Schoeck tells us that the purpose of *Utopia* is "the creation of a model or mirror," "a model by reference to which reforms might be achieved" (1969, pp. 285, 287). Skinner says that the interpretation of *Utopia* "simply as a contribution to a more general 'programme' of humanist reform . . . helps to capture much of the spirit of More's book," although in some respects More's pattern of "a virtuous and harmonious commonwealth" differs from the prescriptions of other northern humanists (1978, pp. 255-56, 261; cf. Elton 1977, pp. 43-44; Bradshaw, p. 20).

It is a little surprising that these writers have been so pleased to conclude that *Utopia* is closely affiliated with the *speculum principis*, a genre that is accurately characterized by Hexter as "wretched and dreary" (1952, p. 103). In a period that witnessed the brilliant beginnings of modern positive theory, the late *specula* (except for Machiavelli's radical reformulation) appear, to historians of the development of political thought, as uninteresting survivals of an outmoded tradition. And indeed it is in this way that *Utopia* is usually regarded by these historians (with the notable exception of Skinner), who share with the humanistic interpreters the view that *Utopia* is only a sort of disguised *speculum*. J. W. Allen allots *Utopia* four pages in his *History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century*. He is impressed, as almost all readers are, by the descriptive and analytic power of Hythlodæus's account of England in Book I, but he views Book II as only a "fairy tale" (p. 154) pieced together of ideals that More knew would remain unrealized and whimsical elements "calculated rather to amuse than to suggest" (p. 156). George H. Sabine's admirable *History of Political Theory*, the standard survey, devotes two pages to More (as compared to twenty-two

to Machiavelli). Sabine also praises the account of England in Book I, but "this attack upon the economics of business enterprise . . . was really motivated by a longing for the past" (p. 436)—a view that reflects the influence of Chambers. Although *Utopia* embodies "a worthy moral idea," the book is (as to Allen) "pitiable," expressing "the reasonableness and open-mindedness of humanism, and withal the futility of a moral aspiration that cannot make its account with brute fact" (p. 437). *Utopia* is thus "an isolated and unimportant episode in the political philosophy of its time. It illustrated rather the dying utterance of an old ideal than an authentic voice of the age that was coming into being."

Fortunately for More's reputation as a political theorist, the view of *Utopia* as a disguised humanist *speculum* is untenable, not only because (as we shall find in Chapter Three) the reading of Book II that it entails is rendered insupportable by discrepancies between Utopian practices and humanist ideals, but also because it is incompatible with the fact that *Utopia* is addressed to a humanist audience. Why should More write a book to tell his fellow humanists what they already knew and to recommend to them what they already approved? Indeed, the very means used to establish that *Utopia* is a restatement of humanist orthodoxy—citing the numerous parallels between ideas in *Utopia* and those in other humanist works—is self-defeating, since the more these ideas are shown to be humanist commonplaces, the less plausible it appears that so serious and brilliant a thinker as More should write a book merely for the purpose of reiterating them. To be sure, the humanistic interpreters sometimes claim that More's intended audience is some other group, even though their own researches clearly imply that *Utopia* is designed primarily for humanists. Although Surtz at one point says that "*Utopia* is . . . addressed to humanists filled with dislike and disdain for the old order," and that "Hythlodæus is giving their common idealism classic utterance" (*Ut.*, pp. cxlvii, cxlviii), he also constantly echoes Chambers's thesis that *Utopia* is designed to move Europeans in general, and their leaders in particular, to reform

(e.g., 1957a, p. 199; 1957b, pp. 7, 19-20). Similarly, R. P. Adams says that *Utopia* is "a 'mirror' not merely for a magistrate but for all Englishmen" (1962, p. 141), while Skinner links *Utopia* with Italian "civic humanist" works addressed "not merely to the leaders of society, but also to the whole body of the citizens" (1978, p. 215). But if *Utopia* is addressed to this less erudite audience, why did More make it so difficult, so cliquish—in a word, why did he aim it so far over the heads of most Europeans and their rulers? Humanist rhetorician that he is, More is quite conscious of the need to choose a literary mode appropriate to his intended audience. When he addressed a more general audience, as in his defenses of humanist learning or in the English version of *The History of King Richard III*, he used a different style and often a different language—the vernacular (which is also employed, for the same reason, in the civic humanist treatises cited by Skinner).

Rejecting the idea that *Utopia* is a disguised rehash of humanist prescriptions, we are forced to confront afresh the fundamental interpretive question about the book: if it is political theory (and yet is not simply a summary of More's and other humanists' political ideals), what kind of political theory is it? The Letter to Giles, which presumably is designed to tell what lies before us, offers two clues, both, however, tantalizingly enigmatic.

First, just as the letter suggests an aspect of *Utopia* about which More was especially anxious (its Latinity), so also it suggests an aspect in which he took particular pride. To apprehend this suggestion, we must again apply what More says about Hythloday to himself.

The letter begins with an apology for More's delay in completing the book. Giles will be surprised that a book that he "looked for . . . within a month and a half" has arrived only after almost a year:

Certainly you know that I was relieved of all the labor of gathering materials [*inveniendâ labore*] for the work and that I had to give no thought at all to their arrangement

[*dispositione*]. I had only to repeat what in your company I heard Raphael relate.⁷ (p. 39)

Hexter argues that this passage tells us that Book II and its introduction were essentially complete when More returned from the Netherlands in 1515, and that Book I was an afterthought (1952, pp. 28-29; *Ut.*, p. xxii).⁸ But the primary intention of the passage is surely to remind Giles and other readers that a good deal of reflection and much collecting and arranging of materials from many sources *were* necessary in order to turn into a book the conversations with Giles that presumably gave rise to *Utopia*. More again alludes to this fact, in the same indirect fashion, a few lines farther on: if he were not simply reproducing Hythloday's remarks (which of course he is not), "the gathering or the arrangement [*uel excogitatio, uel oeconomia*] of the materials could have required a good deal of both time and application even from a talent neither the meanest nor the most ignorant." There is a related boast a little later. Asking Giles "to remind me of anything that has escaped me," More goes on to say that "in this respect I do not entirely distrust myself. (I only wish I were as good in intelligence and learning as I am not altogether deficient in memory!)" (p. 41). In addition to its function in establishing fictional verisimilitude (rendering it plausible that More should recall Hythloday's talk more or less verbatim), this

⁷ *Inventio* and *dispositio* are the first steps of rhetorical composition. "Exco-gitatio" and "oeconomia" in the passage quoted below are more or less equivalent to *inventio* and *dispositio*, though *oeconomia* includes style in addition to arrangement (Quintilian III.iii.9; Kennedy, pp. 304, 314).

⁸ Heiserman suggests that the passage implies that More did not actually write down any part of *Utopia* until he returned to London: "More's use of [*inventio* and *dispositio*] controverts the tradition that he wrote Book II . . . in Flanders; in fact, he claims to have explored the idea and outlined its 'disposition' in Flanders, and to have written it down in London" (p. 166). The letter does not, as Heiserman claims, demand this conclusion, but neither does it preclude it. In any case, it remains certain—from Erasmus' testimony and the existence of the compositional seam near the beginning of Book I—that the *order* of composition was as Hexter says (above, pp. 11-13).

remark is designed to call attention to the astonishing powers of memory that the eclectic and synthetic procedure of the book illustrates.⁹

At this point, it is impossible to know just what to make of these hints. Is More merely boasting about his accomplishment in two parts of rhetorical composition (having conceded his deficiency in the third—style), or is he, more interestingly, suggesting that there is something truly special about the way learning is used in his book? The latter possibility seems strengthened by the fact that the prefatory contributions of Giles, the commentator of greatest authority,¹⁰ clearly hint at the importance of *method* in *Utopia*. In his Utopian hexastich Giles emphasizes the connection between *Utopia* and the *Republic* and calls attention to an advance embodied in More's book: *Utopia* is "a rival of Plato's republic, perhaps even a victor over it," because "what he [Plato] has delineated in words" *Utopia* alone has "exhibited in men and resources and laws of surpassing excellence" (p. 21). This is praise, within the fictional decorum of *Utopia*, not just for More's conclusions but, especially, for his way of presenting them (cf. Fleisher, pp. 3-4). Similarly, in Giles's "translation" of a "quarain in the Utopian vernacular" the personified *Utopia* draws a distinction between the usual methods of political philosophy and More's method: "Alone of all lands, without the aid of abstract philosophy, I have represented for mortals the philosophical city" (p. 19). (Moreover, the poem acknowledges that *Utopia*, though

⁹ Sylvester demonstrates the power of More's memory, and quotes a contemporary tribute to it, in his Introduction to *The History of King Richard III*, pp. lxxxv-lxxxvii. Erasmus told Hutten that More "has a present wit, always flying ahead, and a ready memory; and having all this ready to hand, he can promptly and unhesitatingly produce whatever the subject or occasion requires" (trans. Flower, p. 238; *EE*, 4:21). See also Nagel, pp. 178-79.

¹⁰ The Letter to Giles and the opening pages of Book I suggest that *Utopia* grew out of conversations with Giles. In his letter commending *Utopia* to Busleyden, Giles says More's book sets the island of *Utopia* before his eyes more vividly "than when, being as much a part of the conversation as More himself, I heard Raphael Hythlodæus' own words sounding in my ears" (*Ut.*, p. 21).

a very good commonwealth, is not a perfect one: "Ungrudgingly do I share my benefits with others; undemurringly do I adopt whatever is better from others.")

Second, the letter indicates the literary mode of the book, which is a curious one. On the one hand, the book is a fiction, and one in which the author goes to such lengths to establish verisimilitude that it may appear for a moment not to be fiction at all. On the other hand, the elaborately-established verisimilitude is undercut even as it is established, so that the fiction mocks its own pretense of factuality.

The peculiar nature of the letter in this regard emerges when we compare it with the letter to More that prefaces *The Praise of Folly*. In this letter Erasmus has not yet assumed the pretense that the following oration is delivered by Folly. Discussing the ensuing work from outside, he acknowledges explicitly that it is a *declamatio*, a fictitious speech (p. 2). But in the Letter to Giles More claims that *Utopia* records an actual conversation and offers elaborate circumstantial details to reinforce this claim. Raphael has already a definite character: his speech is hurried and informal; he knows Greek (the language of philosophy) better than Latin; he may be irritated that More is publishing a book about a subject that is rightfully his own (*Ut.*, pp. 39, 43). Three real people—More, Giles, John Clement—heard his discourse. Two of them have different recollections about one point in it (p. 41). An English theologian is anxious to go as a missionary to the new island (p. 43).¹¹ Moreover, Raphael's comic surname is withheld in the first part of the letter, as is the name of the island he visited.¹² If it were not for the presence of these names on the title page and in the commendatory letters, the reader might well

¹¹ This detail should surely be taken as part of the fiction—a characteristic humanist gibe at scholastic theologians or an allusion to the joking proposal of some friend (cf. *Ut.*, p. 292n)—rather than (as it nearly always is taken) as a record of a real occurrence.

¹² On the thoroughly positive associations of his given name, which suggests, by linking him with the archangel Raphael, that he is a guide and healer, see McCutcheon 1969 (cf. Chap. 2, n. 85).

at first believe that the book recorded an actual conversation about a real place.¹³

Near the middle of the letter, however, we come to a curious passage that at once contributes to the circumstantiality that helps create the verisimilitude of the fiction and to undermining that verisimilitude. More and John Clement remember differently one point in Raphael's discourse: how wide did he say the river bridge is in the principal city of the new island? Is it three hundred paces or five hundred? But in the very sentence in which this question is introduced, we learn that Raphael's last name is Hythlodæus, that the island he visited is "nowhere," and that the city through which this "waterless" river flows is itself only a "mirage" (*Ut.*, pp. 41, 392n, 388n).

The mode of this work of political theory, then, is not merely fiction but self-mocking fiction. As in the case of More's oblique boasts about the invention and disposition of materials in the book, we cannot at this point know how to use what the letter tells us—in this case, what to make of More's choice of such an eccentric mode. To be sure, the very fact that the carefully-created and carefully-undermined verisimilitude produces an enigma suggests a partial explanation for this choice. Enigmatic indication was highly fashionable among More's fellow humanists and, apparently, constitutional in More himself.¹⁴ In the pref-

¹³ As Schoeck points out (1969, p. 629n), the careful establishment of verisimilitude was in accordance with Erasmus' advice: "If entirely fictional narratives are introduced as if they were true because they will help us to get our point across, we must make them as much like the real thing as possible" (*De copia*, p. 634).

¹⁴ Cf. the well-known remark in the *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, where the messenger says of More that "ye vse . . . to loke so sadly whan ye mene merely that many tymes men doubt whether ye speke in sporte whan ye mene good earnest" (pp. 68-69). See also Stapleton, p. 121.

Edgar Wind probes the significance of paradox and irony in humanist writing. "Unless we allow for a certain ingredient of deliberate paradox, which qualified the imitation of antiquity by Renaissance humanists, we may misjudge altogether the atmosphere in which the pagan mysteries were revived. They were sponsored by men of letters who had learned from Plato that the deepest things are best spoken of in a tone of irony" (p. 236).

atory letter of *The Praise of Folly*, Erasmus suggests that his own elaborately indirect book will be especially acceptable to More, who is "wont to enjoy to the full jokes of this kind, that is, those that are somewhat learned" (p. 1). The Letter to Giles includes a passage that makes the usual humanist distinction between the elite tastes of humanist readers and the variously crude palates of others, which include those incapable of savoring literary wit: "This fellow is so grim that he will not hear of a joke; that fellow is so insipid that he cannot endure wit" (*Ut.*, p. 45).

But the particular kind of joke that More chooses to indulge in in the letter acts not only to create a piquant enigma for sophisticated readers but also to dissociate him to some extent from his principal speaker and principal subject.¹⁵ More's fiction is detailed and careful, but he holds it at arm's length. The reader who perceives this distance is of course invited through it to adopt a similar attitude toward Hythlodæus and Utopia. The fact that Utopia is nowhere and its spokesman an expert in nonsense is bound to make us wary of that commonwealth. But the enigma of why More chooses to establish this distance must remain unresolved until we reach Book II.

¹⁵ On jokes in the letter and elsewhere in *Utopia*, and on various inconsistencies in Hythlodæus' account of Utopia (which, if intentional, must also have been designed to dissociate More from Utopia and its spokesman), see Heiserman, p. 171; Nagel; Kinney 1976, pp. 427-28; and R. M. Adams's annotations to the Norton edition, *passim*. It is unwise to lay much interpretive stress on inconsistent details, since they may reflect not intention but oversight. Plato's account of the Republic is full of them, but no one, as far as I know, has suggested that this fact implies that his design of an ideal *polis* is not seriously intended.

Chapter Two *Europe*

I

Book I of *Utopia* opens with a brief account of More's mission to the Netherlands. The passage serves to distribute compliments: to Henry VIII ("a model monarch" [p. 47]), Cuthbert Tunstal, and Georges de Themsecke, head of the delegation from the Prince of Castile. Considering what *Utopia* goes on to suggest about kings and councilors in general, More perhaps felt it especially important to compliment the particular king and councilors with whom he was personally associated. An opening in these terms also serves, like the Letter to Giles, to increase the verisimilitude of the ensuing fiction and thus to enhance its interest. Moreover, the passage, by prefacing the conversation with Hythloday with an allusion to actual European politics—"certain weighty matters" disputed between monarchs—helps to create a climate for serious political discussion.

The following passage, on More's introduction to Giles and on Giles's character, serves not only to laud More's friend but also to introduce the first of the three speakers of the ensuing dialogue. Actually, this characterization of Giles does not correspond very well to his figure in the dialogue itself. Here More says of Giles that "in conversation he is so polished and so witty without offense that his delightful society and charming discourse largely took away my nostalgia and made me less conscious than before of the separation from my home, wife, and children" (p. 49).¹ But the Giles of the dialogue says little, and what he says

¹ Cf. the similar characterization of Giles in More's letter to Erasmus, c. 17 Feb. 1516 (*Correspondence of Erasmus*, 3:235; *EE*, 2:197). On Giles's role in *Utopia*, see Bevington, pp. 499-500.

is neither very witty nor very profound. The explanation of this discrepancy lies, presumably, in the fact that in the original version of *Utopia* the portrait of Giles was only the most elaborate of the opening compliments and not a characterization of an interlocutor in a dialogue: in the ur-*Utopia* there *was* no dialogue.

The characterization of the other two speakers involves the same kind of discrepancy. In the case of Hythloday, there is no hint of the problematic aspects of his personality that become apparent in the dialogue. Here, in fact, Hythloday is a completely attractive, if completely stock, figure. His credentials for speaking about politics are, from a humanist point of view, impeccable. Surtz points out that More characterizes Hythloday largely in terms of traditional attributes of the philosopher. The "careless simplicity" of his style, alluded to in the Letter to Giles (p. 39), may reflect Quintilian's recommendation that the philosopher avoid "most of the ornaments of oratory" (p. 290n; *Inst.* xi.i.33). In the present passage, the description of Hythloday shows him to be as unconcerned with appearance as with prose style: he is "a man of advanced years, with sunburnt countenance, a long beard, and a cloak hanging loosely from his shoulders,² while his appearance and dress seemed to me to be those of a ship's captain" (p. 49). This description fits Hythloday's actual experience as a voyager, and the long beard, as well as the contempt for externals that the passage suggests, is a stock attribute of the philosopher. His age, too, betokens wisdom. Giles's remarks confirm and supplement the visual image. Hythloday, Giles says, has been a voyager, but his voyaging has not been like that of Palinurus, Aeneas' sleepy pilot, but like that of those students of men and governments, Ulysses and Plato (cf. p. 301n; Baker-Smith, p. 4). We are then hardly surprised when Giles adds that Hythloday has "devoted himself unreservedly to philosophy" (p. 51).³

² The phrases about Hythloday's beard and cloak are from R. M. Adams's translation (p. 6). Yale has the beard also hanging from Hythloday's shoulder.

³ At the same time, More presumably does not mean us to forget entirely that Ulysses is also a notorious liar. As W.E.H. Rudat points out (1981a, pp.

Moreover, it is clear that Hythloday embodies a specifically humanist conception of philosophy, like that found in Erasmus' definition at the beginning of *The Education of a Christian Prince*: "By 'philosophy' I do not mean that which disputes concerning the first beginnings, of primordial matter, of motion and infinity, but that which frees the mind from the false opinions and the vicious predilections of the masses and points out a theory of government according to the example of the Eternal Power" (pp. 133-34). As the allusion to his travels tells us, Hythloday's career reflects the humanist ideal of combining contemplation with action and learning with practical experience (cf. Rice). We know from the Letter to Giles that Hythloday also exhibits the linguistic accomplishments of a humanist: he is "no bad Latin scholar, and most learned in Greek" (pp. 49-51). Various details, such as the allusions to Ulysses and to "certain treatises of Seneca and Cicero," suggest that Hythloday's particular field is moral philosophy—the branch of philosophy to which political theory is traditionally attached, and the branch included in the *studia humanitatis*.⁴

But the opening pages of *Utopia* hint at more specific models for Hythloday and his career. The clue to these models lies in Giles's remark that Hythloday's sailing has been like that of Plato. This comment suggests that More's philosophic traveler is based partly on Plato, who, according to Diogenes Laertius (III.6, 18-

41-42), this association is reinforced by the mention, in the same sentence, of Raphael's surname.

⁴ Cf. Kristeller 1961, pp. 9-10; 1980, p. 7. Later we learn that Hythloday is contemptuous of scholastic dialectic (*Ut.*, p. 159).

Hythloday's admiration for Cicero and Seneca suggests that some of his moral views derive from Roman Stoicism—a suggestion immediately confirmed by the fact that the "two sayings . . . constantly on his lips" (p. 51) are Stoic (see *Ut.*, p. 303n; Arnold, p. 278) and, as we shall see, confirmed in more important ways in what follows. His opinion that in philosophy "there is nothing valuable in Latin" except works of Cicero and Seneca is echoed in More's Letter to Oxford: "If you leave out Cicero and Seneca, the Romans wrote their philosophy in Greek or translated it from Greek" (*Sol. Let.*, p. 100; *Corr.*, p. 117). See Surtz 1957a, pp. 127-29; *Ut.*, p. 302n.

19), traveled to Cyrene, Italy, and Egypt, and three times to Sicily.⁵ Moreover, there are close parallels to the fictional situation of *Utopia* in Plato's *Sophist*, *Statesman*, and *Laws*. In the *Sophist* Theodorus and Theaetetus introduce an "Eleatic Stranger" to Socrates. The Stranger, whose opinions are clearly Plato's, is treated with great deference by the other speakers, and he entirely dominates both the *Sophist* and the ensuing *Statesman*. In the latter he discusses the best form of government. A similar figure dominates the *Laws*. Here an "Old Athenian," a visitor to Crete, is deferred to by two local sages, who question him as to his views on the perfect constitution. Hythloday is also a "stranger" (p. 49), newly returned to Europe. His resemblance to Plato's two travelers is obvious, as is the resemblance between the dramatic situation of *Utopia* and those of the *Statesman* and *Laws*.⁶ In sum, Hythloday seems designed for the role Plato's spokesmen play in these dialogues: that of a completely reliable commentator on comparative politics and a highly authoritative political theorist. Presumably this is the simple and straightforward role that he played in the original form of *Utopia*.⁷

⁵ Plato gives a detailed account of his Sicilian experiences in Epistle VII. (More would not, like many modern scholars [most recently, Ludwig Edelstein], have doubted the authenticity of this work.) Hythloday's career was obviously also influenced by Vespucci's account of his voyages to the New World (publ. 1507). Cf. Baker-Smith, p. 4: "for Raphael as for Plato, the most important feature of travel is its power to detach the mind from the pressures of normal life and focus it on essential forms. Travel to the Americas as described in Vespucci's *Mundus Novus*, travel to the ancient world made possible in imagination by the salvage operation of humanism, travel to a realm of pure ideas supported by a revived platonic philosophy: all these could serve to sharpen awareness of the discrepancy between individual aspirations and institutional facts."

⁶ For additional parallels between Hythloday and Plato and Plato's spokesmen, see below, pp. 100-2. Baker-Smith (p. 4) compares the opening of More's dialogue, where the speakers meet after Mass, with that of the *Republic*, where the speakers assemble after a religious festival in the port of Piraeus. He also argues plausibly (pp. 13-14) that More's admired Pico may have provided a model for Hythloday. Cf. *Ut.*, p. 310n.

⁷ It is, then, misleading to describe Hythloday as "a version of a conventional

If Hythloday is presented as a bundle of stock attributes, the characterization of More in this passage is much subtler. Since this third speaker in the dialogue is the narrator, he cannot be characterized by direct description. Instead, his character is established by the autobiographical disclosures in the Letter to Giles and the opening of Book I and supplemented by the nature of his responses to Hythloday in the passage just discussed. It is easy to overlook the fact that the passage on Hythloday also characterizes More, but we must remember that this passage, unlike the description of Giles, reflects not More's response to a real person but his imaginary response to a fictitious character: thus not only the terms of the description but also those of the response could be freely chosen and were presumably chosen in accordance with More's purposes.

The view of More that emerges from this passage is not entirely flattering and, as in the cases of Giles and Hythloday, not entirely consistent with the role that he plays in the dialogue. Nor does it consort well with the self-portrait in the Letter to Giles. Again the explanation would seem to lie in the fact that More did not, when he wrote this introductory section, contemplate a dialogue or an elaborate prefatory letter. The delicate self-mockery here, then, was only the kind of joke at his own expense that Erasmus several times inserts into *The Praise of Folly*.

More, says Giles, is "always most greedy to hear" accounts of unknown peoples and lands (p. 49)—indeed, the reception and recapitulation of such an account was his only function in the *Utopia*. But it is also suggested that More is somewhat worldly and snobbish, and that he is apt to leap to conclusions—characteristics not apparent in the dialogue. He responds coolly to Giles's offer to introduce him to this fellow who looks like a sea captain: "He would have been very welcome," said I, "for your sake." Unlike Hythloday, then, More is not uninterested in outward appearances. When Giles tells him that in fact Hythloday

satiric persona: the missionary who returns from a journey through strange places to report the unadorned truth about society, the court, the clergy, the times" (Heiserman, p. 167).

has, as More had inferred, been a voyager, More's response is self-congratulatory—and wrong:

"Well, then," said I, "my guess was not a bad one. The moment I saw him, I was sure he was a ship's captain."

"But you are quite mistaken," said he. . . .

But after Giles has clarified what sort of man Hythloday is, More is eager to talk with him, and, following an exchange of civilities, the three adjourn to a garden—the *locus amoenus* of the humanist dialogue—where they sit down to converse.⁸

The dialogue is prefaced by a detailed summary of Hythloday's account of his travels (pp. 51-55). The title page tells us that the book deals with "the best state of a commonwealth"; this passage makes clear that More is particularly interested in the bearing of customs and institutional arrangements on the attainment of that state (cf. Fleisher, p. 8). Hythloday and his companions found "towns and cities and very populous commonwealths with excellent institutions" (p. 53: "oppida atque urbes aiebat reperisse, ac non pessime institutas magna populorum frequentia respublicas"). It is precisely such "wise and prudent provisions"

⁸ Cicero's *De oratore* is the prototype of the dialogue in which the speakers are seated in a garden. Cf. Huizinga, *Erasmus of Rotterdam*, p. 104: "The whole Renaissance cherished that wish of reposeful, blithe, and yet serious intercourse of good and wise friends in the cool shade of a house under trees, where serenity and harmony would dwell. . . . In Erasmus's writings that ideal wish ever recurs in the shape of a friendly walk, followed by a meal in a garden-house."

Kinney (1976, pp. 430-31) discerns darker shades in this garden. Hythloday's "discussion with the character-More is . . . surreal: amidst sickness and starvation, poverty and disease, they hold a teatime conversation in a garden which, given the darker tones surrounding their talk and the immensity of the issues at hand, cannot help but remind us of other gardens in literature: Eden, where the language of persuasion initiated the Fall of Man; Vergil's pastoral gardens, unreal because enclosed, shut off from life; medieval gardens, where man's vision of the City of God proved to be only a dream." This is a considerable improvement on More, who says only that "we went off to my house," where "in the garden, on a bench covered with turfs of grass, we sat down to talk together."

("ea . . . recte prudenterque prouisa") that interest More and Giles, because these institutions contribute to the development of civic virtue:

on these subjects we eagerly inquired of him, and he no less readily discoursed; but about stale travelers' wonders we were not curious. Scyllas and greedy Celaenos and folk-devouring Laestrygones and similar frightful monsters are common enough, but well and wisely trained citizens are not everywhere to be found.

Raphael "compared the wiser measures which had been taken among us as well as among them [i.e., the inhabitants of the New World]; for he remembered the manners and customs [*more* *atque instituta*] of each nation as if he had lived all his life in places which he had only visited" (p. 55). In particular, "he told us of the manners and customs of the Utopians" ("de moribus atque institutis narrabat Vtopiensium"). It is also clear that these studies in comparative politics take their primary interest from their possible bearing on the improvement of European society: "just as he called attention to many ill-advised customs [*multa . . . perperam consulta*] among these new nations, so he rehearsed not a few points from which our own cities, nations, races, and kingdoms may take example for the correction of their errors."

The emphasis in this passage on the bearing of institutions on the state of the commonwealth provides a clue both to the nature of the instruction More is directing to his humanist audience and to the position of *Utopia* in the tradition of political theory. For, as we shall see, the institutional approach to the problem of securing good government had been, up to More's time, almost wholly foreign to humanist political thought. Humanists, and especially the northern humanists with whom More was affiliated, were strongly committed to a personal rather than an institutional view of politics. They characteristically regard the welfare of the polity as a function of the virtue of its citizens and especially its leaders, and they infer from this principle that moral instruction and moral examples are the crucial factors in achieving good

government—hence the heavy emphasis in their political writings on the education of the prince, the importance of his choosing virtuous subordinates, and the exemplary role of leaders. If More is going to stress instead the importance of nonpersonal factors—"mores and institutions"—in securing good government, his book will indeed tell members of his humanist audience things they do not already know.

The summary of Hythloday's travels constitutes the final part of the introductory segment of *Utopia*. When we move into the dialogue—into the later-written segment of the book—we find that it immediately confirms the suggestion of a radical discrepancy between More's approach to the problem of securing good government and that of his fellow humanists.

The dialogue is launched by Giles's recommendation that Hythloday "attach . . . [himself] to some king": "you are capable not only of entertaining a king with . . . [your] learning and experience of men and places but also of furnishing him with examples and of assisting him with counsel. Thus, you would not only serve your own interests excellently but be of great assistance in the advancement of all your relatives and friends." After Hythloday's first brief reply, Giles repeats the suggestion, this time making it clear that service to a king is commendable because it amounts to service to the community as a whole: "this mode of life . . . is the very way by which you can not only profit people both as private individuals and as members of the commonwealth but also render your own condition more prosperous."

These remarks serve to introduce, in a way that accords with More's fictional decorum, what Hexter calls the "problem of counsel" (1952, p. 111; *Ut.*, p. lxxxiv)—the problem of ensuring that rulers receive and follow appropriate advice. Counsel is, as Skinner shows, a standard topic of humanist, especially northern humanist, political writing. It may be approached either from the point of view of the ruler, in which case the focus is on "the importance of choosing good councillors and learning to distinguish between true and false friends," or from the point of

view of the prospective counselor, in which case the focus is on the advisability of the scholar's entering practical politics in this way (Skinner 1978, pp. 216-17). One may note that the prototypical treatments of the problem from each side are found in two of Plutarch's *Moralia*: "How to tell a Flatterer from a Friend"; "That a Philosopher ought to converse especially with Men in Power." Viewed in the second perspective, it is an aspect of the ancient question of the relative merits of the active and contemplative lives.⁹ Since, as Skinner says, humanists "tended to see themselves essentially as political advisers" (1978, p. 216), the problem of counsel is, inevitably, the single most interesting political topic to them. Its introduction as the first topic of *Utopia* is well-calculated to engage the attention of More's humanist audience.

Giles's remarks embody the two possible reasons for becoming a counselor: personal profit (whether in terms of honor and power or in terms of financial gain) and public profit. Hythloday's response concentrates exclusively on the first: he himself is not attracted by the prerequisites of office, and neither he nor his family is in financial need (pp. 55-57). A response in these terms signifies that More is using the exchange between Giles and Hythloday to clear away those aspects of the problem that he has no interest in discussing. It evidently seems obvious to him that a philosopher not constrained by financial considerations would be foolish to sacrifice his liberty purely for the sake of the personal rewards of office.¹⁰

⁹ Cf., e.g., Cicero, *Off.* I.xx.69-xxi.73. Hythloday's declaration that he now lives as he pleases (p. 56: "Atqui nunc sic uiuo ut uolo") echoes the oft-quoted definition of philosophic liberty in this passage ("sic uiuere, ut uelis"). The declaration and the passage in which it is embedded should hardly be taken as evidence of Hythloday's bad character—as by Sylvester (1968, p. 297) and Johnson (pp. 33-34). See also pp. 100-4 below.

¹⁰ Cf. Bevington, p. 500. Hexter says that Hythloday "may be taken as a sort of ideal type of Christian humanist: he personifies the literary interests, the educational views, and the moral and religious commitments of the group, free of all the limitations that the circumstances of actual living Christian humanists imposed on the perfect expression of those interests, views, and commitments" (*Ut.*, p. lxxxiv).

The question whether Hythloday should become a counselor is thus reduced to that whether a philosopher serves the public interest by taking such a course. After the exchange between Giles and Hythloday has cleared the ground for an unencumbered discussion of this topic, the suggestion that Hythloday should affiliate himself with a king is pressed again, this time by More. More acknowledges that the argument from personal profit has no force with Hythloday, and that this fact confirms his "truly philosophic spirit" (p. 57). But at the same time he suggests that the very fact that Hythloday is a true philosopher should impel him to join a council, since the highest duty and privilege of such a philosopher is to counsel princes:

you will do what is worthy of you . . . if you so order your life as to apply your talent and industry to the public interest, even if it involves some personal disadvantages to yourself.

This you can never do with as great profit as if you are counselor to some great monarch and make him follow, as I am sure you will, straightforward and honorable courses. From the monarch, as from a never-failing spring, flows a stream of all that is good or evil over the whole nation.

This position is in all respects the orthodox humanist one. In the first place, the general insistence that learning, in order to be justified, must be brought to bear on the improvement of human life is a central part of the legacy of Petrarch.¹¹ In ad-

¹¹ See Logan, pp. 21-31. Petrarch's views on the proper relation of learning to life are perhaps most powerfully expressed in *On His Own Ignorance and That of Many Others*. See also the selections from *De remediis utriusque fortunae* translated by Conrad Rawski as *Four Dialogues for Scholars*—e.g., p. 51 (1.44): "A knowledge of literature is useful only when it is translated into action and proves itself through deeds and not through words. Otherwise, we often discover to be true, as it is written, that *knowledge puffeth up*. To grasp clearly and quickly many things and especially those that are noble, to remember them firmly and to expound them brilliantly, to write with skill and to recite agreeably—unless all these relate to our life, what else are they but tools of empty ostentation, of useless work and clamor?" Cf. More's letter to Gonelli: "Among all the benefits that learning bestows on men, I think there is none more excellent than that by study we are taught to seek in that very study not praise, but

dition, More's remarks embody standard themes of humanist political writing. From its beginnings in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Italy, humanist political thought had stressed the importance of the pursuit of the public interest in preference to private interests, the crucial relation between the virtue of the ruler and the health of the city, and the importance of good counsel in fostering that virtue (see Skinner 1978, pp. 38-48). The conclusion that the philosopher should offer himself as a counselor is also completely orthodox. In the dedicatory epistle of *The Education of a Christian Prince* Erasmus cites Plutarch: "not without reason did Plutarch say that no one serves the state better than he who imbues the mind of the prince, who provides and cares for everyone and everything, with the best of ideas and those most becoming a prince" (p. 134; "That a Philosopher ought to converse especially with Men in Power," 778D). Skinner notes that humanist debates on counsel were normally "resolved in favour of the idea of involving oneself actively in the business of government" (1978, p. 218).¹²

Hythloday's position, however, is the opposite. By joining a king's council, he states flatly, "I should not promote the public interest." It is important to note that he does not deny that a criterion of public utility should govern the philosopher's application of his learning. The ensuing debate is intramural, conducted within the framework of shared humanist values. Hythloday simply denies that the criterion of utility has, in this particular case, the application that More claims.¹³ Again More's rhetorical

utility" (*Sol. Let.*, p. 104; *Cor.*, p. 121). This utilitarian criterion for evaluating works of the mind has Roman Stoic as well as Biblical sources. Cf., e.g., Cicero, *Off.* I.vi.19.

¹² More's fellow humanist Elyot is perfectly clear on this point. "The end of all doctrine and study is good counsel, whereunto as unto the principal point, which geometricians do call the centre, all doctrines (which by some authors be imagined in the form of a circle) do send their effects" (*Governor* III.xxix). The passage is quoted and discussed by K. J. Wilson in his edition of Elyot's letters, p. x.

¹³ Cf. Fleisher, p. 125. What Hythloday thinks the application of the criterion of utility is in this case becomes clear later. See p. 102 below. On the

strategy is clear. It is difficult to imagine a more effective way to open a book directed primarily to humanists than by the assertion—by such a man as Hythloday, a humanist moral philosopher of impeccable credentials—of a position diametrically opposed to the orthodox position on a matter of central interest to humanists.

Most of the remainder of Book I is devoted to Hythloday's defense of his position. His argument is based on two propositions, which he immediately states:

In the first place almost all monarchs prefer to occupy themselves in the pursuits of war—with which I neither have nor desire any acquaintance—rather than in the honorable activities of peace, and they care much more how, by hook or by crook, they may win fresh kingdoms than how they may administer well what they have got.

In the second place, among royal counselors everyone is actually so wise as to have no need of profiting by another's counsel, or everyone seems so wise in his own eyes as not to condescend to profit by it, save that they agree with the most absurd saying of, and play the parasite to, the chief royal favorites whose friendliness they strive to win by flattery. . . .

If anyone, when in the company of people who are jealous of others' discoveries or prefer their own, should propose something which he either has read of as done in other times or has seen done in other places, the listeners behave as if their whole reputation for wisdom were jeopardized and as if afterwards they would deserve to be thought plain blockheads unless they could lay hold of something to find fault with in the discoveries of others. (pp. 57-59)

In sum, both the nature of kings and the nature of counselors preclude the possibility of an individual's doing much for the public good as a member of a council.

precedent for Hythloday's disengagement provided by Pico, see Baker-Smith, pp. 13-14.

Exhibiting the usual humanist distrust of mere dialectics, Hythloday attempts to establish the validity of these claims primarily through vivid examples rather than formal argument.¹⁴ The first of these is a lengthy account of a dinner conversation at the table of More's mentor, Cardinal Morton. It is followed by a pair of additional examples, two imaginary meetings of the privy councils of European monarchs.

For Hythloday, the function of the account of the conversation at Morton's table is to support his claims about the nature of councilors. He identifies this function explicitly at the end of the episode: "Though I ought to have related this conversation more concisely, still I felt bound to tell it,¹⁵ to exhibit the attitude of those who had rejected what I had said first yet who, immediately afterward, when the Cardinal did not disapprove of it, also gave their approval. . . . From this reaction you may judge what little regard courtiers would pay to me and my advice" (p. 85).

It is the *structure* of the conversation that illustrates this point, which in no way depends on the particular *subject* discussed. Even before Hythloday had concluded his first speech (on the causes of theft), the lawyer with whom he was arguing was "busily preparing himself to reply and had determined to adopt the usual method of disputants who are more careful to repeat what has been said than to answer it, so highly do they regard their memory" (p. 71). When at the conclusion of his next speech Hythloday suggests that the Polylerite system of criminal justice might be adopted in England, the lawyer replies in equally self-serving and vacuous fashion, and the collective response of the other members of Morton's entourage is of the same pompous, mindlessly conservative kind:

"[Never [says the lawyer] could that system be established in England without involving the commonwealth in a very

¹⁴ For a detailed exploration of More's characteristically humanist (i.e., rhetorical) methods of argument in his political writings, see Fleisher, pp. 71-121.

¹⁵ For the first part of this sentence, I have substituted Miller's more accurate translation (1966, p. 60) for the version in Yale.

serious crisis." In the act of making this statement, he shook his head and made a wry face and so fell silent. And all those who were present gave him their assent. (p. 81)

As soon as the Cardinal suggests that the Polylerite system might in fact be workable, however, and that its application might be extended to include vagrants in addition to thieves, "they all vied in praising what they all had received with contempt when suggested by me, but especially the part relating to vagrants because this was the Cardinal's addition." The curious following episode of the friar and the clownish hanger-on illustrates the same point: the company flatters the Cardinal "so much that they even smiled on and almost allowed in earnest the fancies of the hanger-on, which his master in jest did not reject" (p. 85). The account thus illustrates both aspects of Hythloday's second reason for thinking that joining a council would not be useful: the vain and self-serving nature of councilors, and their consequent lack of interest in the sincere intellectual give-and-take of true counsel.

There is, however, a problem with this example as an illustration of Hythloday's claims. Although the behavior of Morton's "councilors" supports these claims, the figure of Morton himself seems to undermine them. Morton, after all, is the only actual royal councilor present, and Hythloday's account of his nature and his part in the conversation hardly tends to support the contention that "among royal councilors everyone is actually so wise as to have no need of profiting by another's counsel, or everyone seems so wise in his own eyes as not to condescend to profit by it" (cf. Sylvester 1968, p. 298; Weiner, pp. 13-14). Instead, as Hythloday acknowledges, Morton was a man "who deserved respect as much for his prudence and virtue as for his authority" (p. 59). This truly wise man is perfectly willing to profit from the advice offered him. Eager to learn what punishment Hythloday would suggest for theft, Morton cuts off the lawyer and returns the floor to Hythloday. He is receptive to Hythloday's claim that the Polylerite system of criminal justice is superior to the English, and, describing how this system might with proper safeguards be experimentally implemented, he ex-

hibits what is surely the ideal response to a new idea. At the same time, the fact that this wise student of domestic affairs is the principal counselor of the English king, who "placed the greatest confidence in his advice," indirectly undermines Hythloday's first proposition, which includes the claim that rulers are relatively uninterested in "how they may administer well what they have got."

It may be that this problem arose because More wanted an illustration that would perform several functions. First, he required an English example here, because he wished to use the episode to discuss the problem of theft and poverty in England as well as the general European problem of counsel. But, having begun by calling Henry VIII a "model monarch"—a characterization that More could perhaps still intend sincerely in 1516 (see R. P. Adams 1962, pp. 120-22)—he could hardly use a contemporary English example to illustrate the folly of kings and councilors. (No such restrictions inhibit Hythloday's later scathing descriptions of the councils of other kings.) The substitution of the conversation at Morton's table for a council meeting appeared to provide a good solution.¹⁶

Moreover, this choice allowed the episode to perform another function: to pay tribute to a man whom More greatly admired. That this is one of its purposes is clear from More's response to Hythloday's speech:

"To be sure, my dear Raphael," I commented, "you have given me great pleasure. . . . while listening to you, I felt not only as if I were at home in my native land but as if I were become a boy again, by being pleasantly reminded of the very Cardinal in whose court I was brought up as a lad.

¹⁶ We can see More preparing this route in the formulation of Hythloday's second proposition. Hythloday's claim about the nature of councilors would seem to call for illustration from a royal council. But More phrases the proposition in such a way as to render the episode at Morton's table an acceptable substitute. Councilors "agree with the most absurd saying of, and play the parasite to, the chief royal favorites whose friendliness they strive to win by flattery"—one would expect "king" here rather than "chief royal favorites."

Since you are strongly devoted to his memory, you cannot believe how much more attached I feel to you on that account, attached exceedingly as I have been to you already. . . ." (pp. 85-87)

Again we must remember that much of what is applied to Hythloday in fiction applies to More in fact. It is More who is "strongly devoted to" Morton's memory.¹⁷

The trouble is that the intention to pay tribute to Morton clashes with the intention of illustrating Hythloday's claims about councilors. Of course this problem disappears if we decide that the passage has yet another intended function, that of raising a counterargument to Hythloday's claims. The passage suggests, in fact, the most appropriate counter: even if kings and councilors are for the most part as Hythloday characterizes them, does not the fact that a man like Morton can, if only occasionally, rise to power mean that it is worthwhile, in at least some cases, for an intellectual to enter the political arena? This is one part of the truth about the problem of counsel, even as Hythloday's claims, which certainly apply to most cases, are the other. To be sure, if More intended Hythloday's example to undermine itself in the way I have described, then he is deliberately undermining Hythloday's authority. In view of the wholly favorable way in which Hythloday is introduced, this would be a surprising thing for him to do. But in fact we will find that other items in the later-written segment of *Utopia* have this same effect (a circumstance that is clearly significant for interpretation), so that it is not implausible to attribute such an intention to More in the present passage. One may, however, feel that it is likelier that More, trying to do too much at once, simply lost track of one of the implications of the passage. This explanation gains plausibility from the fact that Hythloday's other major examples in Book I (the imaginary privy council meetings) constitute perfect illustrations of his claims.

¹⁷ The episode also begins with a eulogy of Morton (pp. 59-61).

II

Up to this point we have considered only the functions of the structure of the episode at Morton's table, those that could have been performed in the same way whatever the particular subject of discussion. Meanwhile, other functions are performed through the substance of the episode, the treatment of theft and poverty in England.

The treatment of this subject opens with the lawyer's wonderment at the failure of the harsh English method of dealing with thieves:

he began to speak punctiliously of the strict justice which was then dealt out to thieves. They were everywhere executed, he reported, as many as twenty at a time being hanged on one gallows, and added that he wondered all the more, though so few escaped execution, by what bad luck the whole country was still infested with them. (p. 61)

From its beginning in this stark imagery of multiple executions,¹⁸ the episode moves, in Hythloday's first speech, into a scathing indictment of a system of "justice"—found not only in England but also in "a great part of our world"—in which the poor are "under . . . [the] terrible necessity first of stealing and then of dying for it." Exploring the causes of this state of affairs, the indicting voice ranges over all the estates. Noblemen "live idle themselves like drones on the labors of others" and "also carry about with them a huge crowd of idle attendants who have never learned a trade for a livelihood" (p. 63).¹⁹ These retainers think themselves "far above everybody" and too good for honest work—nor is it the case, as the lawyer claims, that such fellows make

¹⁸ Cf. p. 59, where Hythloday dates his visit to England by saying that it took place "not long after the disastrous end of the insurrection of western Englishmen against the king, which was put down with their pitiful slaughter."

¹⁹ Donald W. Hanson describes the "depredations of roving armed bands" that plagued England in this period. Some of these were "collections of brigands, ruffians, and poor folk driven from their land," while others were "the armed retainers of those who could afford them" (p. 182).

good soldiers. The custom of keeping retainers "is common to almost all peoples"; in France, moreover, there is a related plague. The mercenaries that the French keep for war gravely endanger France itself in peacetime. England has its own special plague: "noblemen, gentlemen, and even some abbots, . . . not content, by leading an idle and sumptuous life, to do no good to their country[.] . . . must also do it positive harm" by the enclosure of land for pasturage. This practice results in a situation in which "your sheep, . . . which are usually so tame and so cheaply fed, begin now, according to report, to be so greedy and wild that they devour human beings themselves and devastate and depopulate fields, houses, and towns" (pp. 65-67). The withdrawal of land from cultivation drives up the price of food. Even the price of raw wool has risen, "for all sheep have come into the hands of a few men, and those already rich, who are not obligated to sell before they wish and who do not wish until they get the price they ask" (p. 69). Finally, a taste for luxury pervades society: "all classes alike . . . are given to much ostentatious sumptuousness of dress and to excessive indulgence at table." In sum, however difficult it may be to determine what More thinks of Utopia, it is perfectly clear what he thinks of the present condition of England and Europe. The heavy ironies of this section are not the kind that obscures meaning but the mordancies of the harshest social criticism. The indictment is important in itself—witness its frequent citation by historians²⁰—and, by underlining the gravity and urgency of European problems, it forms a perfect starting point for an exploration of the possibilities for reform.

Another function of the discussion of theft is to introduce a particular claim about the relation between politics and morality. Both Hythloday's speeches in the episode heavily emphasize the point that, in a true view, the English system of criminal justice is not only immoral but also inexpedient. His first speech begins

²⁰ This is not to say that Hythloday's analysis is wholly accurate. For some points where his assessments differ from those of twentieth-century historians, see *U.*, pp. 335-36n, 339-40n; Elton 1977, pp. 44-45; Kinney 1979, p. 28.

with a triple iteration of this claim. One should not be surprised that hanging does not reduce theft, Hythloday says,

for this manner of punishing thieves [1a] goes beyond justice and [1b] is not for the public good [supra iustum est, & non ex usu publico]. [2a] It is too harsh a penalty for theft and yet [2b] is not a sufficient deterrent. Theft alone [3a] is not a grave offense that ought to be punished with death, and [3b] no penalty that can be devised is sufficient to restrain from acts of robbery those who have no other means of getting a livelihood. (p. 61)

At the end of the speech he restates the point: "Your policy may look superficially like justice, but in reality it is neither just nor practical."²¹ Moreover, Hythloday's second speech, in which he suggests an alternative system of punishment, begins with an elaborate restatement of the same contention:

"Certainly," I answered, "most reverend and kind Father, I think it [I] altogether unjust that a man should suffer the loss of his life for the loss of someone's money. . . . If they say that this penalty is attached to the offense against justice and the breaking of the laws, hardly to the money stolen, one may well characterize this extreme justice as extreme wrong [quid ni merito summum illud ius, summa uocetur iniuria]. . . ."²²

"God has said, 'Thou shalt not kill,' and shall we so lightly kill a man for taking a bit of small change? But if the divine command against killing be held not to apply where human law justifies killing, what prevents men equally from ranging with one another how far rape, adultery, and perjury are admissible? . . .

"These are the reasons why I think this punishment un-

²¹ The translation is from R. M. Adams's edition (p. 16). Yale has "Such justice is more showy than really just or beneficial" (p. 71). Cf. the Latin: "iustitiam, nempe speciosam magis, quam aut iustam aut utilem."

²² The adage "summum ius, summa iniuria" has a long history in discussions of equity. See *Ut*, p. 341n. Cicero quotes it in *Off.* 1.x.33.

lawful. Besides, surely everyone knows [2] how absurd and even dangerous to the commonwealth it is that a thief and a murderer should receive the same punishment. Since the robber sees that he is in as great danger if merely condemned for theft as if he were convicted of murder as well, this single consideration impels him to murder the man whom otherwise he would only have robbed. In addition to the fact that he is in no greater danger if caught, there is greater safety in putting the man out of the way and greater hope of covering up the crime if he leaves no one left to tell the tale. Thus, while we endeavor to terrify thieves with excessive cruelty, we urge them on to the destruction of honest citizens. . . ." (pp. 73-75)

Hythloday argues, then, that accurate analysis shows that the English policy, which certainly cannot be justified on moral or religious grounds, also cannot be justified on the ground of expediency. From the heavy emphasis on this theme in his speeches in this episode, we gather that for Hythloday this was the main point of his remarks at Morton's table, even as his point in *recapitulating* to More and Giles the conversation that included these remarks is to illustrate the validity of his claims about counsel.²³

The theme of the relation between the moral and the expedient recurs, in one form and another, throughout *Utopia*, and it is evidently one of More's central concerns. The seminal treatment of this theme is found in Book III of Cicero's *De officiis*, where, however, it is treated primarily on the individual—ethical—level rather than on the political level. The relation of *honestas* and *utilitas* is also a key issue in discussions of the deliberative oration in the classical rhetorical manuals: the function of this type of oration is to advise as to the advantages or disadvantages of a particular policy; fundamental topics are the relation of the policy

²³ It is noteworthy in this connection that Hythloday's opening tribute to Morton praises him for his combination of "prudence and virtue" (p. 59; above, p. 45).

to *honestas* and *utilitas*.²⁴ The fact that the relation of the moral and the expedient loomed so large in works of central importance to humanists meant that this had always been a standard topic of humanist writing. It was a particularly lively topic—thus especially appropriate in a book addressed to humanists—in the early years of the sixteenth century, both because some Italian humanists had embraced the notion of a political necessity that sometimes demands immoral policies, and because northern humanists, to whom such claims were detestable, were interested in ways of

²⁴ My student John Tinkler called my attention to the relevant passages in the manuals (Aristotle, *Rh.* I.1358b-1360a; Cicero, *Ino.* II.I.156-58; *Part. Or.* xxiv.83-89; *De Or.* II.lxxxii.334-36; *Rhetorica ad Herennium* III.II.3; Quintilian III.viii.1, 14, 22-25) and pointed out to me the centrality of *honestas* and *utilitas* in “the fundamental grid of issues upon which deliberative oratory was plotted” (unpubl. paper). Hythloday’s speeches at Morton’s table constitute, in effect, a deliberative oration advising against the English policy for punishing thieves on the ground that it is inconsistent with both *honestas* and *utilitas* (and advocating a different policy—that of the Polylerites—as being consistent with both). As we shall see, his imaginary privy council speeches are plotted on the same grid. It is also clear that considerations of *honestas* and *utilitas* inform the positions of all three speakers in the debate on counsel.

According to Augustine, Cicero treated the question of the relation of the moral and the expedient on the political level in *De re publica*: “Philus . . . puts in a plea for a more detailed treatment of the subject of justice because it was at that time popularly supposed that some injustice was inevitable in the government of any country. Scipio . . . [maintains] the falsity of the statement that injustice is inevitable in government, and, further, the truth of the assertion that complete justice is the supreme essential for government. . . . Philus . . . contends energetically for injustice against justice, asserting its superior utility for the country, and striving to prove his point by plausible arguments and illustrations. Then Laelius, by general request, undertakes the defence of justice, and asserts with all possible emphasis that nothing is so inimical to a community as injustice, and that a country cannot be governed, and cannot continue in being, without a high degree of justice” (CG II.21, summarizing *Rep.* II.xlivff.). This account, in which the authority of Cicero is reinforced by that of Augustine, would also help to draw humanists’ attention to the question. (*De re publica* itself was not recovered until 1820.) Cf. Chap. 3, n. 52. More lectured on *The City of God* about 1501, treating it, according to Stapleton, “not . . . from the theological point of view, but from the standpoint of history and philosophy” (pp. 7-8).

countering them.²⁵ Indeed, at about the same time that he wrote *Utopia*, More was also protesting against nonmoral statecraft in his *History of King Richard III*, which constitutes a powerful object lesson in the destructive and self-destructive nature of the pursuit of supposedly expedient immoral policies.

Some commentators have concluded that More means to suggest in *Utopia* that there is (as Cicero argues in *De officiis*) complete identity between the moral and the expedient. Marie Delcourt claims that “l'éthique politique de l'*Utopie* rejette précisément toute distinction entre la morale privée et la morale publique” (p. 102; cf. Caspari, p. 104). As we shall see, this is in fact Hythloday’s position. But Hythloday did not write *Utopia*: More did, and he uses Hythloday for purposes that transcend Hythloday’s own. We must reserve judgment as to More’s position on this matter.

Hythloday supports his claims about the real in expediency of the supposedly expedient English criminal justice by a sophisticated analysis of the problem of theft. This circumstance brings us to the final function of the episode at Cardinal Morton’s table, which is the provision of an object lesson in the proper method of social analysis. We are, I believe, meant to infer several principles from this lesson; that is, features of the method that Hythloday employs are emphasized so strongly that one feels that it is not merely *means* but *subject* in the book.

At the core of this method is the realization that social problems

²⁵ Like the question of the relation between *honestas* and *utilitas*, the idea that necessity overrides other political considerations has important sources in rhetorical theory. In *De partitione oratoria*, Cicero says that necessity “must take precedence in public policy of all the remaining considerations, alike of honour and of profit [et *honestatibus* . . . et *commodis*]” (xxiv.83; cf. Quintilian III.viii.22-25). On Italian and northern humanist attitudes to political necessity, see Anglo, pp. 172-94; Skinner 1978, pp. 248-54; and below, pp. 107-10. Schoeck says that the “view of *Utopia* as a reaction against the ideas of Machiavelli in *Il Principe* was first put forth by Hermann Oncken in his lecture on *Utopia* [1922a, p. 12] . . . and is supported by . . . Chambers . . . , p. 132” (1956, p. 627n). But cf. Seebohm, pp. 230-31 (above, *ProL.*, n. 7). See also Mackie, pp. 264-65; Caspari, p. 103.

have causes that may lie at some distance from the actual manifestations of the problems, and that these causes can be ascertained by rational analysis. The lawyer with whom Hythloday argues has a shallow conception of the problem of theft: he takes it for granted that the cause lies in the thief's wickedness, and that the solution of the problem therefore lies in capital punishment, which eliminates actual thieves and should deter potential ones. Accordingly, he is surprised that the energetic application of this policy has not in fact reduced the magnitude of the problem. Hythloday, on the contrary, finds the immediate cause of theft in poverty, which places many Englishmen under the "necessity . . . of stealing" (p. 61; my emphasis: "furandi primum, dehinc pereundi necessitas"). In turn, poverty is the product of a number of social factors. Wars leave many disabled, and "their disability prevents them from exercising their own crafts, and their age from learning a new one" (p. 63). The existence of a great number of idle rich people produces poverty in two ways. First, these people support their extravagant lives by reducing others to extreme poverty, whether by extracting as much as possible from their tenants or by reducing the number of opportunities for employment through the practice of enclosure. Second, noblemen retain large numbers of idle men who, when they are turned off, are disinclined and even unable to support themselves by honest labor. Finally, another cause of poverty lies in the spread downward through the social scale of the luxurious tastes of the upper classes:

Not only the servants of noblemen but the craftsmen and almost the clothoppers themselves, in fact all classes alike, are given to . . . sumptuousness of dress and to excessive indulgence at table. Do not dives, brothels, and those other places as bad as brothels, to wit, taverns,²⁶ wine shops and alehouses—do not all those crooked games of chance, dice, cards, backgammon, ball, bowling, and quoits, soon drain

²⁶ Yale omits "taverns." See Miller 1966, p. 58.

the purses of their votaries and send them off to rob someone? (p. 69)

In short, Hythloday finds the root causes of theft not in the bad character of individual thieves but in defects in the social system.²⁷

The systemic view of the problem of theft implies that in order to work solutions must also be systemic. By applying a topical remedy at the point of the symptom, one may be able to block the manifestation of the causes at that point, but, as Hythloday later says, such a blockage will only result in the causes producing another manifestation somewhere else: "while you are intent upon the cure of one part, you make worse the malady of the other parts" (pp. 105-7). A real solution of the problem will be achieved not by applying remedies to its symptoms—the actual thefts—but to its causes. These true remedies will take the form of legal and institutional changes designed to eliminate the causes:

Cast out these ruinous plagues. Make laws that the destroyers of farmsteads and country villages should either restore them or hand them over to people who will restore them and who are ready to build. Restrict this right of rich individuals to buy up everything and this license to exercise a kind of monopoly for themselves. Let fewer be brought up in idleness. Let farming be resumed and let cloth-working be restored once more that there may be honest jobs to employ usefully that idle throng, whether those whom hitherto pauperism has made thieves or those who, now being vagrants or lazy servants, in either case are likely to turn out thieves. Assuredly, unless you remedy these evils, it is

²⁷ In this connection, we can see why he deemphasizes war as a cause of theft: of those reduced to poverty by disabilities incurred in military service "we shall take no account because wars come sporadically, but let us consider what happens every day" (p. 63). War, that is, is only an occasional, incidental cause of poverty and theft rather than a cause that is entailed in the quotidian functioning of the social system, and it is the latter kind of cause that concerns Hythloday here.

useless for you to boast of the justice you execute in the punishment of theft. (pp. 69-71)

But theft is not the only systemic problem. We should by this point realize that Hythloday is saying the same kind of thing about counsel to More and Giles as he said about theft to the lawyer at Morton's table. In justification of his refusal to attach himself to a king, Hythloday does not offer a condemnation of individual kings or courts, or even a general condemnation of present-day courts as contrasted to those of a better past time. Instead, he justifies his refusal in terms of claims that, so he thinks, apply to all courts at all times. The problem of counsel, like that of theft, is not traceable to the bad character of individual kings or councilors, and it cannot be solved by sending individual wise men such as Hythloday to court (in fact, Hythloday offers *no* solution), any more than the problem of theft can be solved by hanging individual thieves. Like theft, that is, the problem of counsel is systemic, a product of flaws in the structure of society.

Indeed, More presumably means to suggest the same about serious social problems in general. This presumption in turn allows us to infer some considerations that governed his choice of particular examples. Theft is a good example not only because it is a major current problem in More's England, but also because an analysis of its roots, which extend throughout the social system, provides such a striking illustration of the fact that an elaborate causal network may underlie the actual manifestations of a social malaise. Similarly, counsel is discussed in *Utopia* not merely because of the interest of this topic to a humanist audience or (as Hexter suggests) because More was personally concerned with the problem during these years, but also—something that is more important in understanding the book—because he recognized that counsel is the most serious of all systemic problems. For, as the Morton episode (together with Hythloday's following examples) clearly demonstrates, the malfunctioning of councils nearly precludes the implementation of solutions of other problems.

The fact that the significance of the episode at Morton's table resides largely in its analytic method has occasionally been a theme of recent criticism. Ames says that More offers, in Hythloday's speeches in this episode, "a scientific explanation of the causes of poverty, crime, and injustice," and that this part of the book, "rather than his invention of Utopian society, is More's highest artistic and intellectual achievement":

He does not find the causes of human misery in the mind or soul, in Fate, in fallible and unchanging "human nature," or in the mental and moral weaknesses of the workers. Instead, More finds the causes of human misery in material conditions. Human beings do wrong under social *compulsion*. (p. 176)

R. P. Adams, taught by McKeon (1935) and Albert Duhamel (1953) to look for the defining achievements of Renaissance culture in methodological advances, follows Ames's lead. In Hythloday's first speech at Morton's table "a historic cape of the mind was turned, one which divides the medieval from the modern world. In it we may see at work that scientific spirit for which More stands pre-eminent among the humanists":

Not for a moment does Hythloday agree that sin is the basic cause of crime. Instead in his analysis such social evils as crime, poverty, and war are all man-made.²⁸ These are effects, which can be traced to their man-made sources, if men will but use their wits rightly. In other words, these causes are within the power of the human mind to discover. Then the social processes by which these causes produce their necessary effects can be studied. Finally, the most practical (or, as we would now say, scientific) way to cure such a social symptom as crime or war, insofar as it is curable, is to take the necessary realistic action required to alleviate or eliminate the ascertained cause. (1962, pp. 125-26)

²⁸ Why sin does not qualify as "man-made" is not clear.

These assessments call attention to the fact that Hythloday's early speeches embody the recognition that in order to cure a social evil one must eliminate its root causes, which may lie at some distance from their effect. But both treatments are flawed by the projection of their authors' own secular values onto More (as well as by vague use of the term "scientific"). Hythloday does find the root of social evil in the "mind or soul"—specifically, in the sins of sloth (p. 63), greed (pp. 67, 69), and (as he makes clear later) pride (pp. 243-45; cf. Hexter, *Ut.*, p. ci). It is simply that he locates the cause of most theft not in the sins of the thief but in those of his social and economic superiors, and accordingly the remedies he proposes are designed either to inhibit the pernicious actions or to improve the character of members of the upper classes.

A much more accurate and precise statement of More's method and its significance is found in Hexter's several passages on the subject. The crucial aspects of the method come into focus, Hexter notes, when we compare the treatment of social problems in *Utopia* with that in the works of other northern humanists. Erasmus, for example, is a pungent critic of social abuses, but his efforts in the formulation of solutions to the problems he identifies are "invertibrate":

The Praise of Folly, *The Complaint of Peace*, and the long satirical adages are inadequate as social criticism because they point to the sickness of early sixteenth century Christendom but scarcely ever penetrate inward to discover the roots of the disease. Therefore their prescriptions, in the rare instances when anything so specific is suggested, are mere analgesics and plasters, not radical remedies. (1952, p. 64; cf. Caspari, p. 76; Fleisher, p. 8)

Erasmus' observations are "unconnected, particular responses to social malaises, because he has only a very slight awareness of the interpenetration of social institutions and social structures" (*Ut.*, p. c). In particular, Erasmus, like other northern human-

ists, treats the problem of counsel with "bland banality, skipping all the hard parts":

He says that the prince ought to be uncorrupt and see to it that his whole household is uncorrupt, since the hatred aroused by his followers' vices falls on him. He feels that this part of a prince's task is easy, since it can be accomplished by summoning only good men to the royal service. He further states that councilors should be sagacious and trustworthy; and this is about the sum of the advice that Erasmus has to offer princes on one of the most pressing practical questions that they had to cope with. (1952, pp. 110-11)

Such advice reflects no sense of the fact that the problem of counsel is a function of "the internal structure and management of royal councils[,] . . . that power pressures from without and power tensions from within the conciliar structure prevent it from ever being the totally disinterested symposium of virtuous men of the humanist dream" (p. 111).

By contrast, More's treatment of social problems is characterized by "his capacity to see past the symptoms to the sources of trouble, . . . his grasp of the intricacy and ramification of social structure and social action, . . . his skill at working out expedients to meet particular social problems" (p. 64). He sees "in depth, in perspective, and in mutual relation problems which his contemporaries saw in the flat and as a disjointed series" (*Ut.*, p. ci). *Utopia* embodies the awareness that "in politics, general principles usually operate through specific institutional structures, when they operate at all," and More's recommendations for reform normally take the form of suggestions for institutional changes: "he traces the ills of the realms of Christendom to identifiable institutional defects and proposes institutional remedies for some of them" (1973, pp. 14, 15). These remarks apply, moreover, not just to Hythloday's speeches in the Morton episode but to *Utopia* as a whole.

Hexter's insights embody a great advance in the understanding of *Utopia* and its significance, and I am deeply indebted to them.

Hexter fails, however, to draw one obvious inference from his insights. Like the other humanistic interpreters, he argues that *Utopia* is in effect simply a restatement of Erasmusian ideals. But in fact his comparison of *Utopia* with other northern works suggests that More's purpose may be not to restate traditional prescriptions but to explore a particular approach to social analysis and the modification of traditional prescriptions that this approach entails. The accurate observation that More's book is methodologically far more sophisticated than the works of his fellow northern humanists suggests, that is, that one aim of this book directed to humanists is to instruct them in a subject in which they badly needed instruction, the proper method of social study and the substantive consequences of that method. In particular, More would appear to be concerned to show how political facts impose constraints on the possibility of realizing political ideals.

Moreover, the episode at Morton's table makes some other points about method that neither Hexter, Ames, nor Adams notices. The most salient fact about the systemic view of social problems is that it suggests that they are complex, often having a number of causes, some of which may be at considerable distance from the manifestations of the problem. Accordingly, the process of solving them is also likely to be complex, involving not only practical difficulties but also (and this is our present concern) theoretical ones. Since the solution is usually not simply a matter of applying a local remedy to the symptom of the problem but one of effecting legal and institutional changes in diverse parts of the social system, it is as necessary and as difficult to trace the ramifications of proposed solutions as to trace the roots of the problem. And in tracing these ramifications, one does not, as in the case of analyzing a problem, have actual situations to deal with: tracing the ramifications of proposed solutions is a purely mental exercise, where errors are not subject to correction by reference to social fact. There are, however, ways to minimize the risks of theoretical error. These ways constitute the additional methodological points embodied in the Morton episode, points

that amount to corollaries of Hythloday's conclusions about the nature of social problems and their solutions.

The first of these corollaries is the proposition that comparative political study is highly instructive in the formulation of solutions. Since problems are complicated, it is a good idea not simply to reason about solutions but also to look for examples of successful solutions of similar problems in other polities. We should recall that Hythloday's unusual capacity for providing such examples, which derives from his great learning and wide experience, constitutes one of Giles's reasons for suggesting that Hythloday attach himself to some king: "I am sure there is none of them to whom you would not be very welcome because you are capable not only of entertaining a king with this learning and experience of men and places but also of furnishing him with examples and of assisting him with counsel" (p. 55). Asked by Cardinal Morton to supplement his criticism of English criminal justice with proposals for an alternative system, Hythloday does not offer a speculative reply but refers instead to solutions of the problem found in other societies:

Why should we doubt that a good way of punishing crimes is the one which we know long found favor of old with the Romans, the greatest experts in managing the common-wealth? When men were convicted of atrocious crimes they condemned them for life to stone quarries and to digging in metal mines, and kept them constantly in chains.

Yet, as concerns this matter, I can find no better system in any country [nullius institutum gentis magis probo] than that which, in the course of my travels, I observed in Persia among the people commonly called the Polylerites. . . . (p. 75)

The Cardinal's response (p. 81) suggests another important point: such borrowed solutions must be carefully adapted to suit the conditions of one's own country. In England, a precondition for the adoption of the Polylerite system (which does not involve incarceration) would be the limitation of the privilege of sanc-

tuary. Given Morton's reputation and his highly favorable treatment in *Utopia*, anything that he says carries special weight.

The second corollary asserts the utility of carefully controlled experiment in testing solutions. This point is also embodied in the Cardinal's response to Hythloday's suggestion that the Polylerite system be adopted in England. The lawyer whose views Hythloday has been disputing had immediately concluded that the Polylerite system could never "be established in England without involving the commonwealth in a very serious crisis" (p. 81). Morton, however, justly observes that it is impossible, purely on the basis of ratiocination, to decide either that the proposal would not work or that it would. The question can only be resolved empirically: "It is not easy to guess whether it would turn out well or ill inasmuch as absolutely no experiment [*periculum*] has been made." Morton goes on to outline an experimental test, one that includes safeguards based on calculating the ramifications of such a solution. These safeguards—the prior pronouncement (and postponement) of the death sentence for the thieves involved and the limitation of sanctuary—are designed to ensure that the experiment does not result in some criminals escaping punishment:

If, after pronouncement of the sentence of death, the king were to order the postponement of its execution and, after limitation of the privileges of sanctuary, were to try this system, then, if success proved its usefulness, it would be right to make the system law. In case of failure, then and there to put to death those previously condemned would be no less in the interest of the commonwealth and no more unjust than if execution were done here and now. In the meantime no danger can come of the experiment.²⁹

²⁹ The phrase "in the interest of the commonwealth" replaces Yale's "for the public good." The Latin is "e republica." See Skinner 1967, p. 167.

Like other features of the episode, Morton's proposal testifies to his open-mindedness. Lee Cullen Khanna sees "the importance of experimental attitudes . . . [as] the real subject" of *Utopia* (p. 94). It is certainly one of the real subjects. See below, pp. 206-7. Brendan Bradshaw calls attention to the fact

The third methodological corollary is not introduced in the direct fashion of the other two. As a result, it easily escapes notice; yet it is the most important of all for understanding More's proceedings in the rest of *Utopia*. We can infer this corollary by considering the nature of the comparative examples that Hythloday offers. The first of these is an actual, historical example: Rome. More could have explored this one at greater length, but he chooses instead to explore that of the Polylerites. And this example is crucially different from the Roman one. For the Polylerite case, though offered by Hythloday as an example from a real contemporary society, is fictitious.

The fiction is, however, of a special kind. Just as Hythloday, the expert in nonsense, says many things that are eminently sensible, so the Polylerites, the "people of much nonsense" (*Ut.*, p. 343n), have a system for the punishment of theft that is worthy of serious consideration. This is the case, first, because the system embodies a sensible view of the legitimate aims of punishment (cf. Fleisher, pp. 21-23, 36), which are, the Polylerites think, to rehabilitate the criminal and to redress the damage done by his crime: "The object of public anger is to destroy the vices but to save the persons and so to treat them that they necessarily become good and that, for the rest of their lives, they repair all the damage done before" (p. 79). This view may reflect Plato's *Lezus*, where the Athenian stresses that the purposes of punishment are to deter crime, reform the criminal, and redress the injury to his victim (ix.862C-D). Second, the Polylerite system embodies a series of plausible means for achieving these ends.

The Polylerites force thieves to "repay to the owner what they . . . that More also stresses Hythloday's open-mindedness: "Hythloday . . . embodied this attitude in his qualified approval of the political arrangements which he encountered in the course of his philosophical voyage to Utopia. That we are here concerned with a major polemic of the work is clear from the way in which Hythloday emphasizes the closed and hidebound mentality which he observed everywhere in the west [*Ut.*, pp. 57-81, 107-9], as well as by the fact that Peter Giles . . . drew attention to it in his prefatory verse [*Ut.*, p. 19]" (p. 27).

have taken from him," or, "if the object is lost, the value is made up out of the thieves' goods, and the balance is then paid intact to their wives and children" (p. 77). The thief is sentenced to a life of hard labor, so that "each one, besides earning his own living, brings in something every day to the public treasury." Moreover, "no one is quite without hope of gaining his freedom eventually if he accepts his punishment in a spirit of obedience and resignation and gives evidence of reforming his future life" (p. 79).³⁰ The Polylerites do not make the mistake of the English, who encourage the thief to add murder to robbery by making the penalty for both crimes the same. In general, their "purpose is never to make it safer to follow out an evil plan than to repent of it."

The Polylerite example, then, differs both from a pure fiction and from a real comparative example. More constructed it by developing a theory of punishment and then imagining and describing a society in which the theory has been implemented; that is, the Polylerite example is a *model* of the theory that informs it.³¹ Such a model constitutes a concrete and vivid embodiment of a theory, and it accordingly has as one of its possible functions the *testing* of theory. Strengths or weaknesses that may not be apparent when a theory is presented only through the reasonings

³⁰ Thomas I. White observes that the treatment of Polylerite (and Utopian) slaves recalls Aristotelian recommendations: the "practices of rewarding them with liberty or an easier servitude and the generally humane treatment of slaves . . . parallel Aristotle's idea that slaves should be treated well and always should have the hope of emancipation" (1976, p. 661n; cf. *Pol.* vii.1330a, and the pseudo-Aristotelian *Economics* I.v). Surtz points out that some of the Polylerite practices reflect those of actual states, especially (as More hints via Hythloday's other example) Rome (*Ut.*, pp. 342-44n).

³¹ On models, and the variety of senses in which the term is now employed by social scientists, see Apostel; Kapiian, pp. 258-93; Isaak, pp. 135-54; Golembiewski et al., pp. 427-48. Models are primarily associated with positive theory. The model is usually offered as an isomorph of some system in the real world and its validity measured in terms of its capacity to generate accurate predictions about real-world events. See also Chap. 3, n. 8.

that create it may become obvious when it is realized as a model.³² A model of the kind presented here, that is, has a function analogous to that of social experiment, and, like the kind of safeguarded experiment suggested by Cardinal Morton, it reflects the awareness that social problems are often so complex that theoretical solutions to them cannot be evaluated simply by ratiocination.

Of course More did not think in terms of theoretical models. But the fact that this twentieth-century term so precisely fits the Polylerite example suggests that it is correct to regard the episode

³² Cf. Van Dyke, p. 105: "models may . . . have a good deal to do with explanation and prescription. . . . the engineer who makes a model for flood control purposes . . . builds his model on the basis of a theory about the cause of floods, and he can check his theory through tests [on the model]." See also Apostel, p. 11. Discussing the functions of the physical model, Kaplan says that "it allows for experimentation that would otherwise not be feasible. And by varying its construction or operation we can use it to trace out the consequences of alternative sets of assumptions, and so calculate an outcome or assess a theory" (p. 273).

Perhaps it is in this connection that we should note that, despite its attractive features, the Polylerite system hardly seems perfect to modern readers. In particular, this system does not fully embody Hythloday's point that the severity of punishment ought to be proportional to the degree of heinousness of the crime: all thefts of whatever kind or size appear to be punished by perpetual bondage. (This objection does not apply to Utopian criminal justice [*Ut.*, p. 191; see below, p. 204].) Moreover, the Polylerites utilize capital punishment (so forcefully opposed by Hythloday in his condemnation of the English system) for various offenses related to the attempt of a slave to escape. As in the case of the dissonance between Hythloday's claims about councilors and the portrayal of Morton, there are several possible explanations. More may not have noticed the flaws; he may have intended them to undermine Hythloday (see Woodden 1977, pp. 40-41); or (what seems to me most plausible) he may have wanted to make sure that readers would think the Polylerite system preferable to the English (as it certainly is) by substituting for that exceedingly harsh system one only a little less harsh. We think the Polylerite punishments shockingly harsh because we are accustomed to milder ones; More's early readers might, for the corresponding reason, have thought lesser punishments than those employed by the Polylerites shockingly mild.

as embodying an anticipation of this powerful methodological concept. Moreover, the notion that one of the purposes of the dialogue of Book I is to illustrate and recommend the use of such models in the assessment of proposed solutions to social problems gains support from a consideration of the nature of Hythloday's paired examples of the meetings of royal councils. These examples in fact model, for the purpose of testing, the theoretical solution of the problem of counsel that is standard in humanist political theory.

The fictional occasion for the introduction of the examples is the exchange between Hythloday and More that follows Hythloday's account of the conversation at Morton's table. This account leaves the character More unconvinced of the justification of Hythloday's refusal to join a council: "I cannot change my mind but must needs think that, if you could persuade yourself not to shun the courts of kings, you could do the greatest good to the public³³ by your advice" (p. 87). Hythloday takes this remark to mean that More espouses the blandly banal approach to the problem of counsel embodied in such works as *The Education of a Christian Prince*. To be precise, he takes it that More espouses the implementation of one half of the theory of counsel found in such works—the half that it is in the power of humanists to implement. In these works, as Hexter says, we read that kings should be uncorrupt and that wise men should go to court to offer disinterested advice. Given that the first of these recommendations is not within the power of humanists to implement, should they nonetheless implement the second? Hythloday assumes that More believes that they should, and he undertakes to refute this view by offering a pair of models in which this half of the theory is applied in the setting of two realistically-described councils. (The irony of the situation—in which Hythloday attributes to the character More a theory that, as Hexter points out, the author More regards as naive—is highly characteristic.)

³³ I have substituted "public" for Yale's "common weal." The Latin is "in publicum." See Skinner 1967, p. 167.

These examples are masterpieces, brilliantly conceived and executed. The first offers a meeting of the French privy council, engaged in a discussion of foreign policy. What foreign policy turns out to mean is a collection of stratagems through which the French king can get his hands on as much of other rulers' territory as possible. The extent of his ambition is satirized by means of a tumbling, Rabelaisian catalog of intended gluttonies. Just as Picrochole and his advisers enlarge in imagination his prospective victory over Grangousier to Alexandrian exploits that will carry his victorious armies at least as far as the Euphrates (*Gargantua and Pantagruel* I.xxxiii), so Hythloday's French king and his councilors are

setting . . . [their] wits to work to consider by what crafty machinations . . . [the king] may keep his hold on Milan and bring back into his power the Naples which has been eluding his grasp; then overwhelm Venice and subjugate the whole of Italy; next bring under his sway Flanders, Brabant, and, finally, the whole of Burgundy—and other nations, too, whose territory he has already conceived the idea of usurping. (p. 87)

The toadying councilors compete with each other in offering nefarious schemes for effecting these ends: treaties meant to be broken; the hiring of German mercenaries; the bribing of the Swiss and of the Emperor; the propitiation of another greedy monarch, the King of Aragon, by ceding him "someone else's kingdom of Navarre"; a prospective marriage alliance to catch the Prince of Castile and the suborning of some of his nobles by pensions; false assurances of friendship to the English, combined with attempts to stir up the Scots and covert sponsorship of a pretender to the English throne (pp. 87-89).

The comedy of the council becomes somewhat chilling when one realizes, as More's intended audience certainly did, that the reconstruction is essentially factual: this model, like that of the Polylerites, is based largely on the contemplation of actual examples. The ambitions attributed to the French king recapitulate

the real ambitions of the monarchs of France in the decades leading up to the publication of *Utopia*. In summation of his detailed matching of items in the passage with examples of French policy, Surtz writes that

More's portrayal . . . does justice to the territorial ambitions of the French kings from 1461 to 1559. Those ambitions were not limited by motives of defense, by calculation of internal gain, or by patriotic considerations but were the expression of greed for glory and for territory curbed only by the ready exhaustibility of their military and fiscal resources and by the resistance of other rulers. (*Ut.*, pp. 353-54n)

Moreover, the stratagems proposed for fulfilling these ambitions constitute an accurate list of some of those actually pursued by France in this period. The French really did buy an alliance with the Emperor Maximilian, cede "someone else's kingdom of Navarre" to the Aragonese, support the Scots in order to diffuse English military energies, sponsor pretenders to the English throne, and so on (*Ut.*, pp. 354-57n; Surtz 1957b, pp. 291-93).³⁴

The council on domestic affairs is similar. The sole domestic concern of the king and councilors of this nameless country is to determine "by what schemes they may heap up treasure" for the king (p. 91). Hythloday's claim that kings concern themselves only with war is not quite true: they are willing to look homeward if the financial prospects are tempting enough. Again the range of stratagems offered by the councilors is impressive. It includes several that ingeniously combine fleecing the citizenry with enhancing the king's reputation for virtue. The value of monies can be raised or lowered according as the king has money to pay or to receive; a "make-believe war" can serve as a pretext to raise money and to raise the king's reputation when later he compas-

³⁴ It has been pointed out that some of the practices enumerated by Hythloday also find parallels in the policies of Henry VIII (Ames, pp. 11-12; Surtz 1957b, p. 292).

sionately decides for peace; "old and moth-eaten laws" can be enforced in order to extort fines while increasing the king's reputation for justice; prohibition of "many things and especially such as it is to the people's advantage not to allow" can be coupled with the sale of dispensations "to those with whose interests the prohibition has interfered"; a corrupted and intimidated judiciary will assure that cases are decided in the king's favor (pp. 91-93). Finally, a blanket justification of the king's extortions can be derived from political theory:

the king, however much he wishes, can do no wrong; for all that all men possess is his, as they themselves are, and so much is a man's own as the king's kindness has not taken away from him. It is much to the king's interest that the latter be as little as possible, seeing that his safeguard lies in the fact that the people do not grow insolent with wealth and freedom. These things make them less patient to endure harsh and unjust commands, while, on the other hand, poverty and need blunt their spirits, make them patient, and take away from the oppressed the lofty spirit of rebellion. (p. 95)

Philosophy has a role in government after all.³⁵

Again the policies recommended correspond in detail to the practices of European monarchs. In particular, as Ames and Surtz show, they are reminiscent of the machinations of Henry VII. Bacon, for example, says that "in his secret intentions . . . [Henry] had no purpose to go through with any war upon France. . . . he did but traffic with that war, to make his return in money" (*The History of the Reign of King Henry VII*, p. 140, quoted *Ut.*, p. 362n). Of Dudley and Empson, Bacon says that "their principal working was upon penal laws, wherein they spared none great nor small; nor considered whether the law were possible or impossible, in use or obsolete, but raked over all old and new statutes, though many of them were made with intention rather

³⁵ For the philosophical positions perverted here, see *Ut.*, p. 365n.

of terror than of rigour" (p. 223, quoted *Ut.*, p. 363n). The Spanish ambassador to Henry's court reported that "the King himself said to me, that it is his intention to keep his subjects low, because riches would only make them haughty" (quoted *Ut.*, p. 365n).³⁶

These councils, then, form persuasive examples of Hythloday's initial points about kings and councilors. Despite their satirical quality, they strike any reader as essentially accurate representations: describing governmental councils is, after all, one of those cases where it is difficult *not* to write satire.

In turn, the verisimilitude of the councils makes them devastatingly effective as theoretical models. In the midst of such councilors and such counsels, Hythloday imagines himself, an exemplary humanist moral philosopher, rising to offer a different kind of advice—deliberative orations pervaded, we note, like Hythloday's speeches at Morton's table, by the claim that accurate analysis shows that the expedient is identical to the moral.

In the meeting of the French privy council,

when so many distinguished persons are vying with each other in proposals of a warlike nature, what if an insignificant fellow like myself were to get up and advise going on another tack? Suppose I expressed the opinion that Italy should be left alone. Suppose I argued that we should stay at home because the single kingdom of France by itself was almost too large to be governed well by a single man so that the king should not dream of adding other dominions under his sway. (p. 89)

He goes on to cite the example of the Achorians, "who live on the mainland to the south-southeast of the island of Utopia" (Hythloday's first mention of Utopia). After their king secured a second realm, it was found that, "being distracted with the charge of two kingdoms, [he] could not properly attend to either"

³⁶ For other parallels, see Ames, p. 12, and *Ut.*, pp. 362-65n. Surtz cites several passages from Erasmus and other humanists that suggest that such practices were common among European monarchs.

(p. 91). In consequence the Achorians "took counsel together and most courteously offered their king his choice of retaining whichever of the two kingdoms he preferred. He could not keep both because there were too many of them to be ruled by half a king. . . ."³⁷ And Hythloday imagines himself arguing what is of course true, that "all this warmongering, by which so many nations were kept in a turmoil on the French king's account, would, after draining his resources and destroying his people, at length by some mischance end in naught"³⁸ and that therefore he had better look after his ancestral kingdom and make it as prosperous and flourishing as possible, love his subjects and be loved by them, live with them and rule them gently, and have no designs upon other kingdoms since what he already possessed was more than enough for him."

Similarly, in the council on domestic policy, Hythloday pictures himself rising to

maintain that these counsels are both dishonorable and dangerous for the king, whose very safety, not merely his honor, rests on the people's resources rather than his own. Suppose I should show that they choose a king for their own sake and not for his—to be plain, that by his labor and effort they may live well and safe from injustice and wrong. For this very reason, it belongs to the king to take more care for the welfare of his people than for his own, just as it is the duty of a shepherd, insofar as he is a shepherd, to feed his sheep rather than himself. (p. 95)

³⁷ The sensible proceedings of the Achorians ("without place" [*Ut.*, p. 358n]), like those of the Polylerites, again underline the inadvisability of assuming that More's joking names signal his disapproval of the ideas associated with them. Contrast Sylvester 1968, p. 298: "The names of these strange lands chart the mental course upon which we are sailing. Beginning with 'much nonsense' (Hythlodæus' own name and his misreading of his own story), we progress to a countryless people. . . ."

³⁸ Cf. *Ut.*, p. 360n: "The disaster which Hythlodæus predicted for the French King's conquest struck at Pavia in 1525 when Francis I lost Milan and was taken prisoner by the army of Charles V."

He imagines himself going on to say that "the blunt facts reveal that they are completely wrong in thinking that the poverty of the people is the safeguard of peace." Moreover, "to have a single person enjoy a life of pleasure and self-indulgence amid the groans and lamentations of all around him is to be the keeper, not of a kingdom, but of a jail." Finally, he puts before the council "the law of the Macarians, a people not very far distant from Utopia," who force their king to swear "that he will never have at one time in his coffer more than a thousand pounds of gold or its equivalent in silver" (p. 97).

If the policies recommended by the other councilors correspond in detail to the actual practices of European monarchs, the policies that Hythloday imagines himself espousing are, as Surtz's Commentary makes clear, equally close to the humanist *specula* and other humanist political writings. Hythloday's advice that the king "look after his ancestral kingdom and make it as prosperous and flourishing as possible [ornaret quantum posset, & faceret quam florentissimum]" (p. 91) seems to echo the proverb "Spartam nactus es, hanc orna," which Erasmus discusses at length in the 1515 edition of the *Adages*, and which he says in *The Education of a Christian Prince* "is worthy of being engraved on the devices of every prince" (pp. 247-48, quoted *Ut.*, p. 360n). Like Hythloday, Erasmus says, in his discussion of this adage, that "the proper field, and the finest, for the high deeds of princes is within the frontiers of their own realm" (*Adages*, p. 307). Similar advice is found in *specula* from Isocrates to Budé (*Ut.*, pp. 360n, 361n). The idea that the prince should "see to it that he is loved" (*ECP*, p. 206) had been a commonplace of political thought at least since Cicero (*Ut.*, pp. 360-61n). Similarly, the sentiment that the people "choose a king for their own sake and not for his" is, as Surtz says, immemorial (p. 366n). Erasmus says that the prince should remember that his children are "born for the state and are being educated for the state, not for his own fancy" (*ECP*, p. 142). The idea that an impoverished people is most apt for revolution finds parallels in several classical sources as well as in Patrizi and Erasmus (*Ut.*, p. 367n). Hythloday says that a king

who "cannot reform the lives of citizens in any other way than by depriving them of the good things of life must admit that he does not know how to rule free men" (p. 97). Similarly, Erasmus asks: "And who, now, would swell with pride because he rules over men cowed down by fear, like so many cattle?" (*ECP*, p. 178, quoted *Ut.*, pp. 367-68n). Like Hythloday, Erasmus believes that a king should "think himself great in proportion as his people are good; . . . estimate his own happiness by the happiness of those whom he governs; . . . deem himself glorious in proportion as his subjects are free; rich, if the public are rich; and flourishing, if he can but keep the community flourishing, in consequence of uninterrupted peace" (*Complaint of Peace*, p. 46, quoted *Ut.*, p. 369n).³⁹

Similar views are also found in More's other writings. Several of the Latin epigrams, for example, provide close parallels to Hythloday's imagined speeches. "De cupiditate regnandi" says that "Among many kings there will be scarcely one, if there is really one, who is satisfied to have one kingdom. Among many kings there will be scarcely one, if there is really one, who rules a single kingdom well" (*Epigrams*, no. 227). "Populus consentiens regnum dat et avfert" tells us that "Any one man who has command of many men owes his subjects this: he ought to have command not one instant longer than his subjects wish" (no. 103). "Regem non satellitium sed virtus reddidit tvtvm" warns that "Fear (accompanied as it is by hatred) does not protect a king from a plundered people, nor do towering palaces and wealth. . . . He will be safe who so rules his subjects that they judge none other more suitable to their interests" (no. 102). The epigram on the coronation of Henry VIII boldly contrasts the good qualities of the new king with the harshness and avarice of his father (no. 1).

³⁹ Surtz offers a number of additional parallels from antiquity and the Renaissance (*Ut.*, pp. 368-69n). Augustine describes the truly happy ruler in *The City of God* v.24 (and see XIX.19). For an account of the views of northern humanists on all these matters, and the relation of their views to Italian humanist thought, see Skinner 1978, pp. 222-48.

Hythloday's imagined speeches, that is, embody precisely the kind of traditional moral advice that More and his circle thought kings should get and take. Eloquent restatements of this advice, these speeches are convincing and even moving, especially since they contrast so violently with the preceding representations of the kind of scurrilous and, as Hythloday argues, self-deceptive and self-defeating advice that, as every reader knows too well, rulers normally *do* follow. Hythloday (or the author), that is, does not at all mean to mock the traditional wisdom of the *specula*. He means only to drive home its total inapplicability in the existing political context, the absolute futility of enacting this part of the humanist solution to the problem of counsel as long as one is powerless, because of the structure of the institutions of kingship and council, to enact the other part. The point is well made. Even as Hythloday convinces us that such advice *should* be offered and followed, he entirely convinces us that it is folly to offer it in such councils. The model proves, in this case, to be a powerful instrument for the testing of theory.

III

Having analyzed the method that More employs in Book I, we may pause to consider the question of the antecedents of this method. In this way we can begin to clarify the relationship between *Utopia* and the tradition of political theory, and the nature and significance of More's own contribution to it.

We may first consider the views on this question of those few critics who are aware that Book I *has* an important methodological dimension. Ames and R. P. Adams appear to think that More's method has no source but is simply a benefaction of the Spirit of Science. This view of course implies that *Utopia* is a work of the utmost importance, in which "a historic cape of the mind was turned, one which divides the medieval from the modern world" (see above, p. 57). Hexter, too, feels that Book I represents a new departure in political theory, but he sees that More's breakthrough is paralleled in the works of a few of his immediate

predecessors and contemporaries: Fortescue, Commynes, Seyssel, Machiavelli, and Guicciardini (1952, pp. 64-65, 111-12; *Ut.*, p. ci). The fact that all these men, including More, "both wrote about politics and actively engaged in the management of affairs of state at a high level" (1952, p. 64) suggests to Hexter that the source of the methodological breakthrough lies in experience rather than learning, in practical politics rather than political philosophy.

We have seen that Hexter supports his point by contrasting the "invertibrate" analysis of humanist political theory with More's holistic approach. Despite the general validity of this contrast, however, it is possible to discern methodological parallels between *Utopia* and earlier works of political theory. Indeed these parallels also obtain in the cases of the other "statesman-writers" cited by Hexter and thus suggest that the method that characterizes these works was in part derived from the tradition of political theory.

As Quentin Skinner has shown, the Renaissance segment of that tradition originated in the independent cities of northern Italy in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, in the responses of a number of writers to the external and internal problems of those small polities. These writers are divided into two distinct groups: scholastically-trained legal theorists, and the so-called "pre-humanists," the professional rhetoricians whose attempt to produce a classicized rhetorical culture marks the beginning of Renaissance humanism (Skinner 1978, pp. 27-65).⁴⁰ Skinner shows that this dichotomization of political theory persisted through the end of the fifteenth century and that the problems and approaches established by the early theorists provided the conceptual framework of subsequent Italian Renaissance political theory and, with some modification, of northern theory.

Scholastic and humanist theorists agree that the principal danger for the city lies in the pursuit of private or sectional interests in place of the public interest. Most writers in both groups concur

⁴⁰ On the origins of humanism, see, in addition to Skinner's brilliant synthesis, Weiss 1947; Kristeller 1961, pp. 12-13, 100-11; 1964, pp. 147-65; Bouwsma 1973, pp. 7-18; Logan, pp. 15-31. Cf. below, pp. 262-63.