

# *UTOPIA*

— & —

SELECTED EPIGRAMS

by

Thomas More

*Utopia* translated by

GERALD MALSARY

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Epigrams translated by

BRADLEY RITTER, CARL YOUNG, ERIK ELLIS

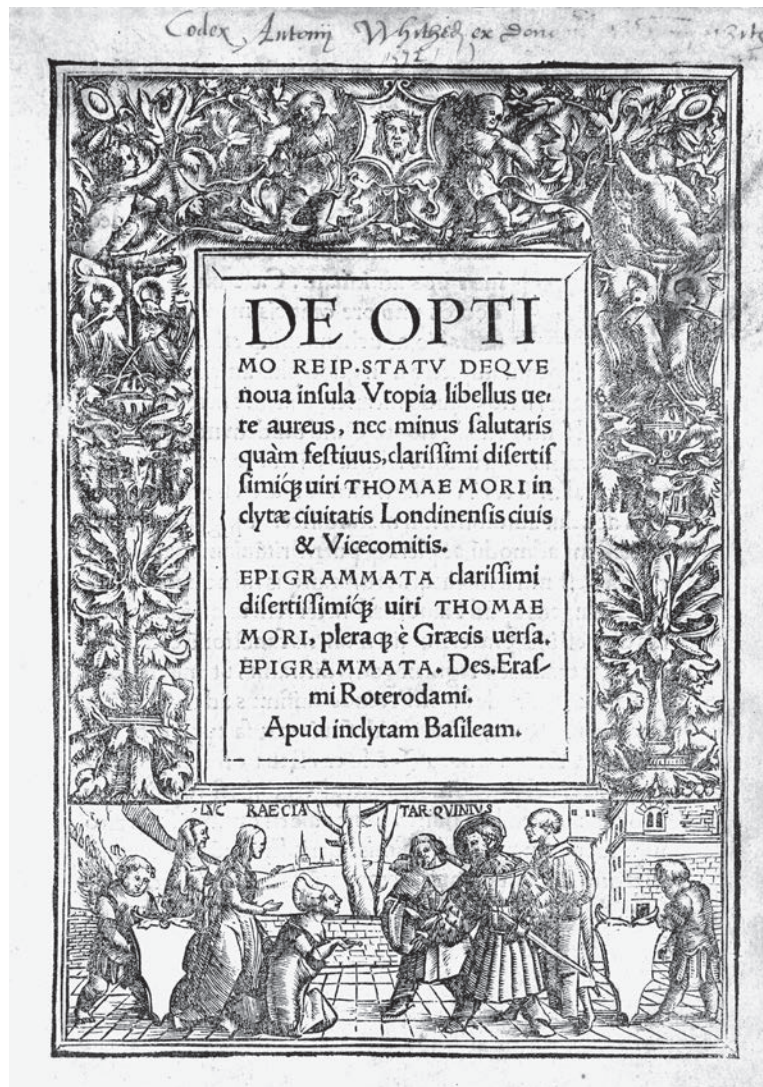
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General Editors

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The title page of the March 1518 *Utopia* shows the face of a thorn-crowned Christ at the top and the suicide of the Roman Lucretia at the bottom. Beholding the scene are Lucretia's father and husband, along with Lucius Junius Brutus. After this event, Brutus would lead Rome to exile the Tarquin tyrants and to found the Roman Republic, becoming one of its first two consuls. For the Lucretia story, see Livy 1.58. For other treatments of Lucretia's death, see Augustine, *City of God* (book 1, chapters 16–20), and Shakespeare's *The Rape of Lucrece*. In his "argument" before the poem, Shakespeare explains the significance of what followed Lucretia's death for Rome: "With one consent they all vowed to root out the whole hated family of the Tarquins; and bearing the dead body to Rome, Brutus acquainted the people with the doer and manner of the vile deed, with a bitter invective against the tyranny of the King: wherewith the people were so moved, that with one consent and a general acclamation the Tarquins were all exiled, and the state government changed from kings to consuls." On consuls, see More's Epigram 198, pp. 113–14.

CONCERNING THE BEST  
STATE OF A COMMONWEALTH  
and the new island of Utopia,  
a truly golden handbook,  
no less beneficial than entertaining  
by the most distinguished and eloquent man  
THOMAS MORE,  
citizen and sheriff of the famous city of London

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EPIGRAMS  
of the very famous and very learned man  
THOMAS MORE,  
in large part translated from the Greek



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The order and illustrations are from the March 1518 edition of *Utopia*.

\* “Paratexts” are the materials that surround the main published text. This is not a term used by More. Parerga (“something accessory to the main work”) is another term used for these supplementary materials. The Paratexts were translated by Dr. Bradley Ritter. The selected epigrams were translated by Drs. Bradley Ritter, Carl Young, and Erik Ellis.

## ERASMUS TO JOHN FROBEN

Erasmus of Rotterdam sends greetings to John Froben, his dearest fellow father.

Although everything of my dear More has always delighted me beyond measure, still, I myself doubted my judgment somewhat, because of the very close  
5 friendship between us. But, when I see all learned men subscribe to my vote with one accord, and more eagerly look up even to the man's divine talents, not because they love him more, but because they are more discerning, I seriously applaud my opinion, and I will not fear, afterwards, saying openly what it is I think.

What, finally, would that amazing, fortunate nature not have shown had Italy  
10 instructed this talent? If it were available in its entirety for the rites of the Muses, if it had matured to a full crop and, as it were, until its autumn? He played at writing epigrams while very much a young man, and most of them as a boy. He has never left his homeland of Britain, except once or twice, carrying out an embassy on behalf of his king near Flanders. Aside from the care of his wife, aside from household  
15 concerns, aside from his carrying out his public office, and waves of court cases, he is distracted by so many and such great business matters for the realm that you would be amazed there is any free time for even thinking about books.

And so we have sent you his *Progymnasmata* and the *Utopia*, so that, if you agree, they might be printed by your press and entrusted to the world and poster-  
20 ity, for such is the authority of your shop, that a book delights the educated by the name alone, if it is known that it has come forth from the house of Froben.

Be well, with your excellent father-in-law, your delightful wife, and your sweet, sweet children. See to it that you have Erasmus—the little son shared by me and you, who was born amongst letters—educated by the best of letters. Louvain.  
25 August 25, 1517.

## WILLIAM BUDÉ TO THOMAS LUPSET

William Budé to Englishman Thomas Lupset, greetings.

You are very much in favor with me, Lupset, most learned young man, who handed me the *Utopia* of Thomas More and brought to my attention a reading most pleasant and, at the same time, one which will be of use. For though you had 5  
pleaded with me for a long time, for what I would very much have longed for of my own accord, to read the six books *On Preserving Health* of Thomas Linacre, the doctor who very much excels in each of the two languages, to which, from among the great works of Galen, he recently gave Latinity, or, which he himself, rather, gave to Latinity, in such a way that if all the works of that author (which I think are 10  
tantamount to all of medicine) were to become Latin, at last, it would seem that then the school of doctors will not very much need a knowledge of Greek.

I ran through that book from among the writings of Linacre with such a haphazard reading — and I consider the use of these writings being granted to me by you for so long a time to be the pinnacle of favors — that I believe I made very much 15  
progress from that reading, but I would guarantee even greater progress for myself from the publication of that book which you are busily taking care of in the shops of this city. When I believed I was sufficiently obliged to you for this reason, look here, you have given me, as an addition or surplus to the prior favor, that *Utopia* of More, a man especially sharp, with a lovely talent, and very experienced in the ap- 20  
preciation of human affairs.

When I had that book in my hands, out in the country, constantly on the run, busy working, ordering the servants (for you know, in part, and partly you have heard, that I have spent a great deal of labor now for a second year on tasks at the 25  
farm), I was so very moved by reading it, once I learned of and thought over the character and institutions of the Utopians, that I almost interrupted and even cast aside my care for my private property, since I saw that the whole trade and work behind household management, and wholly all worry aimed at increasing one's riches, was nonsense.

There is no one who doesn't see and understand that the whole mortal race is 30  
harassed by this very thing, as if by some personal gadfly born with them. So I almost said it is necessary to admit that this is the goal of both legal and civic trades and fields, that, with an ingenuity as envious as it is exact, one person might always

take away something from another person, between whom there is a code of civil authority and sometimes kinship, or drag away, nibble away, deny away, squeeze out, beat out, carve out, twist out, shake out, strike out, pilfer, purloin, filch, carry off, and with the laws in part turning a blind eye, and in part themselves responsible, to take away and overturn.

And this happens so much more in those nations amongst whom law codes which are called civil and pontifical are more powerful in each of the two forums. Everyone sees that by their customs and institutions it has become the predominate opinion that men skilled in exceptions or, rather, in captiousness, and shrewd hunters after unaware fellow citizens, and workers of formulae, that is, of traps, most practiced in knotted law, and style consultants of lawsuits, and experts in debatable, perverted, inverted law, are all thought to be the high priests of justice and equity, and the only ones worthy to give a response on what is equitable and good, and even, which is much more important, to decide with the chief authority and power what each person may have, what he may not have, to what extent, and how long. And this according to the deliberation of an altogether commonly held view which is delirious.

Of course this is so, since most of us, blind with the thick sleep of ignorance in our eyes, think that each one has essentially the fairest case to the extent that he most demands his right or as he has relied upon right. Since if we want to demand rights according to the norm of truth and the prescription of gospel simplicity, no one is so stupid as to not understand, no one so mad as not to admit, if you press him, that what is right and sacred law today and for a long time in pontifical ordinances, and what is right and equitable in civil laws and the decisions of kings disagree just as much as the institutions of Christ, the founder of human affairs, and the customs of his disciples disagree with the decrees and decisions of those who think the heaps of goods of Croesus and Midas are the end and pinnacle of happiness. This is so much the case that if you should now wish to define justice as the earliest authors decided to, as what assigns to each one what is his own, you would find it nowhere in the public sphere, or (if I may allow myself to say this) we must admit it is some kitchen steward, whether you were to look at the character of those ruling now, or the mutual feelings of citizens and countrymen, — that is, if they did not really contend that it was a consequence of the justice which is authentic and as old as the universe (which they call natural law) that the right originated that the more power each person has, the more he has, and the more he has, the more eminent he should be among his fellow citizens.

And so it happens: we see it has already been accepted by the law of nations that those who can help their fellow citizens and countrymen neither by a trade nor any notable degree of hard work, if only they hold those knotted obligations and



pinched-like knots by which the inheritances of men are bound (and which the ignorant masses, and men devoted to more humane letters and far from the forum, acting for the sake of amusement or to investigate the truth, consider to be partly Gordian knots, partly the domain of quacks, and not very much worth wondering at), these people might be able to have the property of a thousand citizens, and often that of individual states, or even more; and these same people might be called, with great respect, wealthy, honest men, noble conquerors, of course, in those ages, by those institutions, by those customs, in those nations which have established the right that each person has the greatest trust and authority as he has built up his house with the greatest wealth, both he himself and his heirs.

And this all the more as their great-great-grandchildren, and the great-great-grandchildren of these, in turn, have taken the inheritances made by their ancestors and heaped them up in rivalry with splendid additions — that is, the more they have displaced their paternal relatives, their maternal relatives, their relations and blood relatives far and wide.

But Christ, really the founder and governor of possessions, after leaving a Pythagoras-like sharing and love between his followers, ordained it with a splendid example when Ananias was condemned to death for his violation of the law of sharing. By which institution, it seems to me Christ has annulled amongst his own, at least, all that belonging to that civil law and the argumentative volumes of the very much more recent pontifical law. This very law we see today holding on to the citadel of prudence and governing our fates.

But the island of Utopia, which I hear is also called Udepotia, by absolutely amazing circumstances, if we believe it, is said to have truly imbibed both publicly and privately Christian practices and an authentic wisdom itself, and to have preserved it unimpaired until this very day, as one might expect since it holds on, locked in combat, as they say, to three divine institutions: that is, equality of goods and evils between citizens, or, if you prefer, civility perfect in every detail; the consistent and determined love of peace and calm; and disregard for gold and silver — the three “overthrowings” (if I may say so) of all forms of deceit, fraudulent claims, cheats, cunning, and deceptive wickedness.

Were the gods by their own power to make it so that these three chief points of the Utopian constitution were fixed in the minds of all mortals with massive nails, solidly and fixedly persuasive, right away you would see arrogance, greed, insane competition and almost all the other wound-inflicting weapons of the Stygian foe collapse and grow weak, and that immense body of legal volumes, distracting so many extraordinary and strong talents all the way to the casket, as if ineffectual and unemployed, handed over to termites or assigned for wrapping paper in shops.

O immortal gods, what holiness on the Utopians’ part could earn from the

gods happiness, such that avarice and greed could not have burst in to that island alone, or snuck in over the course of so many centuries, and that their boldness and shamelessness could not hoot out and drive away justice, together with the sense of decency?

5 Had God, best and greatest, acted so kindly with those provinces which hold onto and embrace their designation given by his most holy name, certainly avarice, perverting and destroying so many minds which would otherwise be outstanding and lofty, would be departing once and for all, and the golden age of Saturn would return. For here, in fact, someone might have asserted that there is a danger that perhaps Aratus and the early poets were deceived in their thinking, since  
10 they placed justice in the zodiac, leaving the world behind. For it must be that she remained behind on the island of Utopia, and it has not yet reached heaven, if we trust Hythloday.

But I have investigated and discovered that Utopia is located outside the borders of the known world, of course, a Fortunate Isle, perhaps quite close to the Elysian Fields (for Hythloday has not yet given its location in a certain region, as More himself bears witness), itself divided into many cities, but all coming together or combining harmoniously into one state, namely Hagnopolis, satisfied by all means with its own ways and goods, happy in its innocence, leading a life in a certain sense  
20 heavenly, below heaven, but above the flotsam and jetsam of this known world, which is carried away with confusion and agitation into a headlong fall amidst so many mortals' interests which are as hasty and hurried as they are empty and worthless.

So we owe the knowledge of that island to Thomas More, who has made known  
25 the pattern of the happy life and a rule of life in our age, discovered by Hythloday, as he himself reports, to whom he ascribes everything he heard. Inasmuch as he planned the state for the Utopians, and founded the practices for them and their institutions, that is, he borrowed the subject matter of the happy life from them and introduced it, More of course has embellished the island and its sacred institutions  
30 through his style and speech, and polished the Hagnopolitans' very state according to square and ruler, and added all these things which allow for elegance and beauty to be added to the magnificent work — even if in the process of doing that work he has claimed for himself the part of a mere arranger.

Apparently, he was conscientious to not take the greater role in that work,  
35 so that Hythloday might not be able to rightly complain that the glory had been plucked by MORE before he could, and had its flowers removed, if at any time he himself decided to entrust his own productions to print, *since he was certainly being careful that Hythloday, who is now fond of living on the island of Udepotia, might*

*himself appear at some point and be annoyed and distressed at More's unkindness in leaving him the deflowered glory for his discovery. For to be persuaded in this way is so typical of men both good and wise.*

And the testimony of Peter Giles of Antwerp causes me to have complete trust in More, a man important on his own account, and relying on great authority, a  
5  
man never known known to me in person, whom I love (I pass over, for now, the excellence of his learning and character) for this reason, because he is a most trust-  
worthy friend of Erasmus, who is a most notable man and most deserving in every  
kind of writing when it comes to both sacred and profane literature, with which  
10  
very man I even entered into a friendship long ago with sealed letters on both sides.

Farewell, my most beloved Lupset, greet Linacre on my behalf, that pillar of the  
British name, as far as pertains to good letters, no longer any more your possession  
than ours, either in person or with a letter as a messenger, and this at the earliest  
possible moment. For he is one of the few whose approval I would have gladly won,  
if I could, since he himself also, while active here personally won my and my friend  
15  
John Ruelle's approval (a colleague in studies), and I look up to his excellent learn-  
ing and his precise attentiveness in particular, and I strive to equal it.

I would even like for you to send More my greetings, as I said, or give him my  
greetings, or both on my orders once and a second time, a man who was in my opin-  
ion and in my conversation registered in the rather sacred album of Minerva, and  
20  
as concerns Utopia, the island in the new world, I love him and regard him in the  
utmost. For our age, and later ages, will consider the account of it as a sort of seed-  
bed of choice and useful institutions, whence they might bring in customary habits  
and adapt them, each into his own city. Goodbye! From Paris, on the day before the  
Kalends of August. [July 31, 1517]  
25

#### ON UTOPIA

A poem on the island of Utopia by ANEMOLIUS,  
poet laureate and son of Hythloday's sister

Called Utopia ["No Place"] by the ancients for my under-population,  
Now, I am a rival to Plato's city, perhaps its victor:  
30  
What that city depicted with words, I alone have produced  
With men and resources and the best laws.  
I should be called, deservedly, by the name Eutopia ["Good Place"].





This woodcut by Ambrosius Holbein appeared in the March 1518 edition of *Utopia*.





## PETER GILES TO JEROME BUSLEYDEN

To the most celebrated Jerome Busleyden, mayor of Aire, councilor to the Catholic King Charles, Peter Giles of Antwerp sends greetings.

In the past few days, most distinguished Busleyden, Thomas More, the out-  
5 standing glory of this era of ours, and you are a witness, as he is quite well-known  
to you, sent me the *Island of Utopia*, still known to few mortal men, but especially  
worthy for all to want to learn of it as a more than Platonic commonwealth, first  
and foremost, expressed by a man most eloquent in such a way, described in such  
a way, set before the eyes in such a way that however many times I read it, I think  
10 I see a little more than when I heard Raphael Hythloday himself uttering his own  
words (for I was present for that conversation just as much as More himself was).

Even if that man, endowed with an eloquence which is hardly common, ex-  
plained the matter in such a way that it was quite apparent he was not reporting  
things which he had learned from others telling him, but which he had, as it were,  
15 drunk in at close quarters with his own eyes, and in which he had not been engaged  
for a short amount of time, the man, in my opinion, is superior even to Ulysses him-  
self in his experience of regions, men and affairs, and is like one, I would guess, who  
has never been born in the last 800 years, compared to whom Vespucci seems to  
have seen nothing. Now, besides the fact that we tell more effectively things we've  
20 seen than things we've heard, there was a kind of facility specific to him in explain-  
ing things.

But still, whenever I contemplate these same things painted with More's brush,  
I am so moved that I think, sometimes, I am located in Utopia itself. And, goodness,  
I would have believed Raphael himself saw less in that island through the whole  
25 five-year period he spent there than one may see in More's description. So many  
miracles are encountered from all angles that I hesitate regarding what I should be  
amazed at first or most of all, the trustworthiness of his very rich memory, which  
could render almost word for word so many things which were only heard; or his  
prudence, since he thus noticed the sources, commonly totally unknown, whence  
30 either all evils arise for a commonwealth, or goods could arise. Or his strength and  
skill in speech, with which he, with so great a purity of Latin language, such great  
powers of speech, embraced so many matters, especially one distracted by so many  
public affairs and, at the same time, household affairs. But you are less amazed at

all of these things, most learned Busleyden, since, with a relationship which is even familiar, you have come to know deeply the talent of the man, greater than a man and nearly divine.

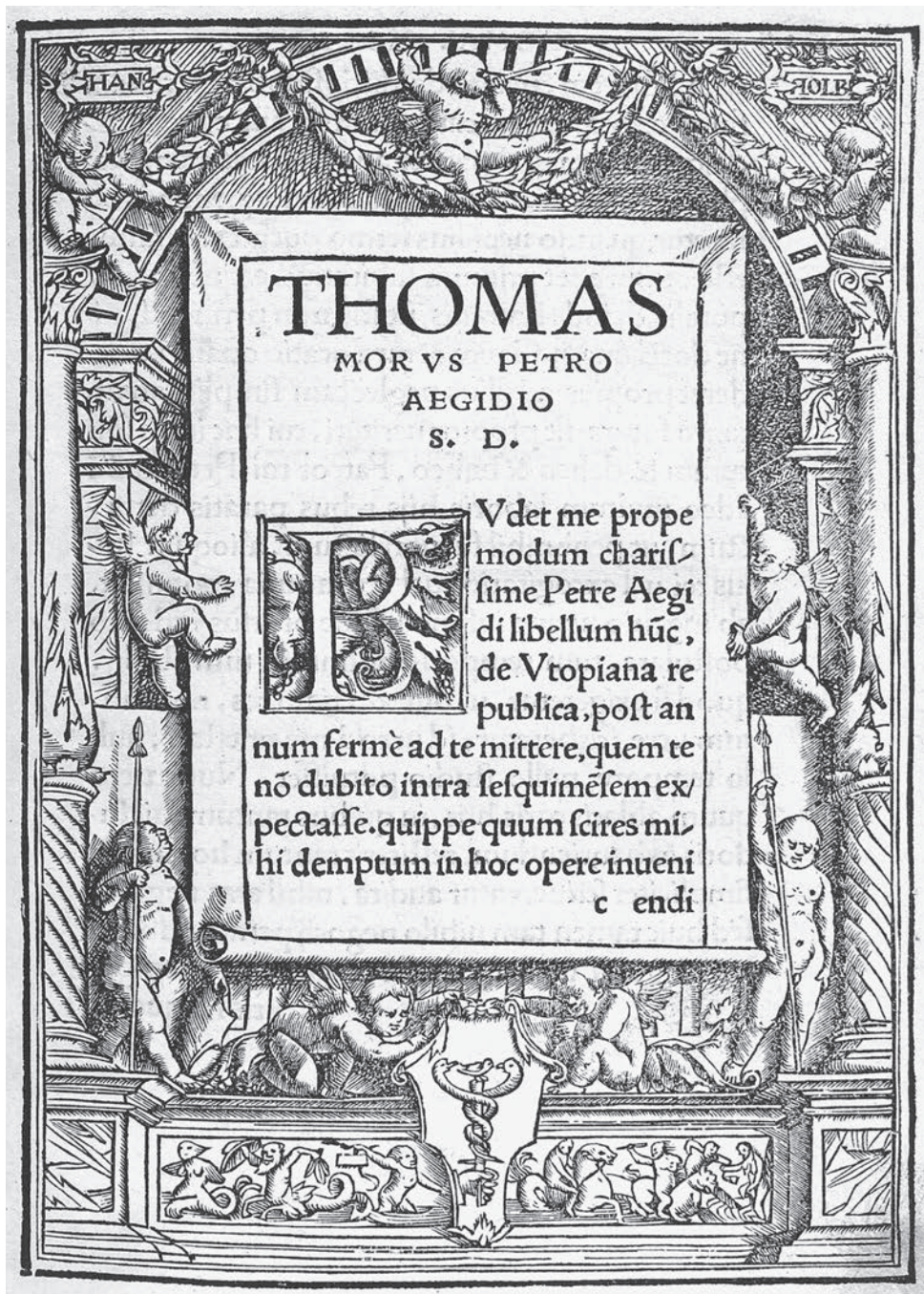
So, in other respects, there is nothing I can add to his writings. I just had the four-line poem written in the native language of the Utopians added, which Hythloday by chance showed me after More's departure, after putting the alphabet of the same people in front, then with some small notes added to the margins of the pages. 5

As for his distress over the location of the island, Raphael was not totally silent even on that point, although saying quite little about it, and he just touched on it, as it were, in passing, as if he were saving it for some other occasion. And, admittedly some kind of misfortune or other begrudged each of us in this. Since, when Raphael was saying these things, someone from his servants had come up to More, who was whispering something or other to him, and while I was listening so much more attentively, one of my companions, coughing rather loudly, from a cold fever caught on the sea journey, prevented my hearing some words of his as he spoke. But 15 I will not rest until I have found this aspect, as well, in full, so that I will give you, in precise detail, not only the island's location, but even the elevation of the pole, if only our friend Hythloday is safe and sound.

For a conflicting rumor is being reported about the man. Some assert that he was lost on a journey; again others that he returned to his native land, but partly 20 not able to endure the customs of his people, partly troubled and missing Utopia, he moved back there.

For as to the fact that the name of this island has not been found anywhere amongst cosmographers, Hythloday himself did a fine job dismissing this, seeing that it could have happened, he says, that the name which the ancients used was 25 afterwards changed; or this island escaped even their attention, since even today very many lands crop up, never once touched on by those ancient geographers. Although what is the point of supplying credibility with proofs here, since it is that More who is the author?

But, because he hesitates concerning publication, I praise and acknowledge the 30 man's modesty. But to me the work seemed in every way unworthy of being long repressed, and worthy, along with the best, of getting out into men's hands, and that after being recommended to the world by your name, most of all, either because More's gifts have been especially well-observed by you, or because no one is more capable of helping the commonwealth with the right counsels, which you have al- 35 ready been engaged in for very many years with the highest praise, first of your prudence, next for your integrity. Farewell, Maecenas of scholarship and glory of this age. At Antwerp. November 1, 1516.



Preface title page of the March 1518 *Utopia*, border by Hans Holbein the Younger (courtesy of Amici Thomae Mori)



## PREFACE

### THOMAS MORE TO PETER GILES

Thomas More to Peter Giles, greetings.

It shames me almost, dearest Peter Giles, to send you this little book about the Utopian Commonwealth after almost a year, when I have no doubt you expected it within a month and a half. Of course, you knew that I was spared any labor of invention in the work, and no thought needed to be taken for its disposition, since I only had to recite what I, right along with you, heard Raphael recount. Hence there was nothing to work out in the style nor could the man's conversation be polished, because, for one thing, it was improvised on the spur of the moment, and for another, the speaker, as you know, was not as learned in Latin as in Greek, so that the closer my language approached his careless simplicity, the closer it would come to the truth, and in this circumstance, truth alone is what I should care about, and in fact *do* care about.

I confess, my dear Peter, so much labor was taken out of my hands since these things were furnished, that practically nothing was left for me to do. Otherwise, either the devising or the internal arrangement of this matter could have demanded no little time and study from someone of no mean talent and of no little learning. But if it were required that the matter be written elegantly as well, and not just truthfully: that, to be sure, could not have been provided by me regardless of how much time or study I put into it. But since these concerns were removed which would have cost me so much sweat and toil, and since all that was left was simply to write down what I heard, it was really no trouble.

But nevertheless, my other business left almost less than no time for the completion of this non-business. While I constantly plead legal cases, hear others, close some as arbiter, settle others as judge, while I visit one person out of duty, another on business, while I share nearly the whole day out with others and the rest with my household, I leave for myself — that is, for letters — no time at all.

Of course when I return home, I must converse with my wife, chat with my children, talk with my servants. I count all these things as part of my business, since it is necessary that they be done (necessary indeed, unless you want to be a stranger in your own home) and you have to put some work into making yourself as pleasing

as possible to those whom nature has provided or chance has made or you yourself have chosen to be the companions of your life, provided you do not corrupt them by companionship or turn your servants into masters by your indulgence.

In the midst of such things, a day, a month, a year slips by. When, then, do I write? So far I haven't mentioned anything about sleeping or eating, which uses up  
5 no less time, for many, than sleep, and sleep takes up nearly half of life as it is. But for myself the only time I get is what I steal from sleeping and eating, which since it is little, the work has gone slowly, but because it is at least something, I have finished at last; and I send the *Utopia* to you, my dear Peter, that you may read it, and  
10 remind me if we have missed anything.

For even though I do not completely distrust myself in that respect (I only wish I could amount to something in inborn talent and learning, as I am not totally abandoned by my memory), I do not trust myself so much as to believe nothing could have escaped me. For my young John Clement—who was there with us,  
15 as you know: a person I never allow to be absent from a conversation in which there might be some fruit, since I hope for an excellent harvest some day from this fresh shoot of Latin and Greek letters—has put me into considerable doubt about something.

Because, by what I remember, while Hythloday related that the bridge at Am-  
20 aurotum, by which the river Anydrus is spanned, was five hundred paces long, John says that two hundred paces must be subtracted since the width of the river was not over three hundred paces. I ask you: can you recall the matter to your memory? For if you think as John does, I will also agree, and assume I have made a mistake; if you do not remember, I will write as I have done, that is, what I seem to remember, for,  
25 just as I am taking as much care as possible that there be nothing false in the book, so, if anything is in doubt, I would rather say what is false than speak falsely, preferring to be good rather than prudent.

*Note the theological  
distinction between  
lying and just saying  
something wrong*

And yet it would be easy to remedy this problem if you ask Raphael himself, either in person or by letter—and it is, in fact, necessary that you do this, on account of yet another misgiving which has occurred to me—whether more through  
30 my own fault or yours or even Raphael's, I do not know. For it never came to mind for me to ask, nor for him to say, in what part of that new world Utopia is located. I would pay no small amount of money now, not to have missed this; on the one hand, it embarrasses me somewhat not to know in what sea that island  
35 is located about which I have so much to say, and on the other, because there are one or another among us—one man especially: a devout man, and theologian by profession—who burns with a marvelous desire to go to Utopia, not out of a vain and curious passion to see novelties, but in order to foster and increase our religion,

so happily begun there already. In order to do this correctly, he decided beforehand to take care that he could be sent by the Pope, and what is more, that he be made bishop for the Utopians—he was not deterred by any scruple about having to ask for the office, since, of course, he considers ambition to be holy when it comes by reason of piety, and not through considerations of honor or monetary profit.

*A holy ambition*

For this reason I beg you, my dear Peter, that either in person, if it is convenient, or by letter, if you are away, to call on Hythloday and make sure that this work of mine does not contain anything false or lack anything true. It might be better just to show him the book itself. For there is no one else equally capable of making a correction, if any mistake has been made, nor can he do this without reading through all that I have written. In addition, by doing this, you will know whether he gladly accepts it or takes it hard that I have written it. For if he has decided to commit his own labors to writing himself, he might not want me to; and I certainly would not want, by publishing the Utopian commonwealth, to steal from him the flower and delightful novelty of his account.

And yet, to tell the truth, I still have not really decided whether I will publish it at all. The tastes of mortals are so various, the dispositions of some so peevish, their spirits so ungrateful, their judgments so absurd, that it seems to go better, by no small degree, for those who pleasingly and cheerfully indulge their own bent than for those who consume themselves with worry in order to publish something useful or pleasant for others who will only feel disdain for it or be ungrateful.

*The ungrateful judgments of humans*

Very many people do not know letters; many despise them. The barbarian rejects as harsh whatever is plainly not barbaric; know-it-alls scorn as trivial whatever is not filled with obsolete words. Some people are pleased only with what is old; still more are only pleased by what they write themselves. One person is so severe that he does not allow jokes; another so tasteless, he cannot bear wit. Some people are so snub-nosed that they avoid all satire just as a man bitten by a rabid dog avoids water. Others are so fickle that they approve one thing when they are sitting and another when they are standing.

*He calls people without a nose "snub-nosed."*

They sit in taverns, and over their drinks they judge the talents of writers; they condemn every author out of his own writings with great authority, and however it pleases them, pulling them by the hair, all the while themselves staying safe, and, as is commonly said, "out of range." Indeed they are so smooth and completely shaven that they do not have even an honest man's hair by which they can be apprehended.

*A proverb*

There are also others who are so ungrateful that although they are hugely delighted by a work, they have not a whit more love for the author. They are not unlike those inhumane guests who, although courteously received with sumptuous feasting, at last depart for home, full, without giving any thanks to the one who

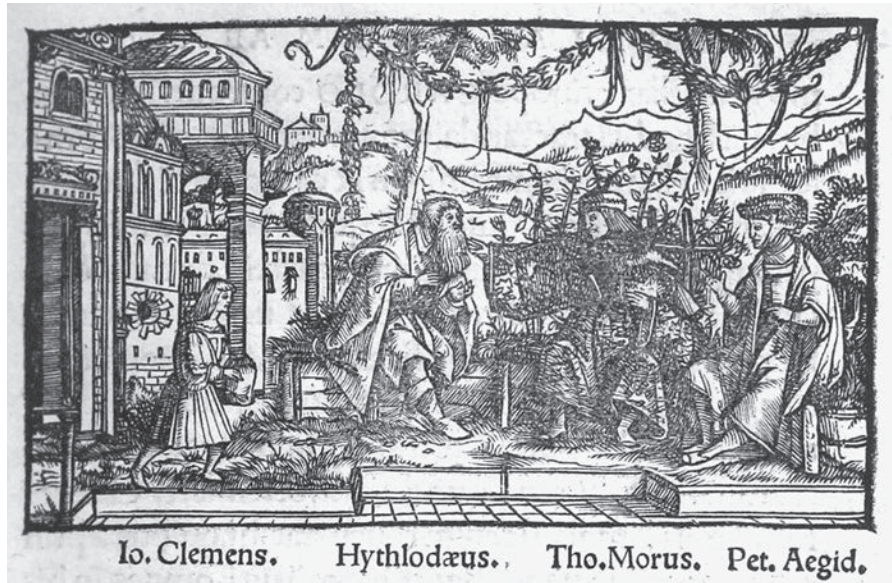
*A marvelous simile*

invited them. Go now and furnish a feast at your own expense for people — with their delicate palates, varied appetites, and such grateful and retentive minds!

But nevertheless, my dear Peter, you must do what I have said regarding Hythloday. Afterwards, it will be in my power to deliberate on the matter once more.  
 5 However, if he does consent, and now that I've finished the labor of writing, I would be "wise too late" [if he didn't]. In the future, I will follow my friends' advice on publishing, and yours in particular. Farewell to you, dearest Peter Giles, and to your most excellent wife: love me as you always have, since I love you even more than I have ever done.

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A Conversation Which  
 RAPHAEL HYTHLODAY, an Exceptional Man,  
 Held on the Best State of a Commonwealth,  
 As Reported by the Illustrious THOMAS MORE  
 Of Britain's Famous City of London,  
 Citizen and Sheriff

5

When recently, the most invincible King of England, Henry — the eighth of that  
 name, and adorned to the utmost with all the arts of an outstanding ruler — had cer-  
 tain business of no small importance to take care of in a dispute with the most se-  
 10 rene Charles, Prince of Castile, in order to discuss and settle the matter, he sent me  
 to Flanders as his orator and as the companion and colleague of that incomparable  
 man, Cuthbert Tunstall, whom the King had recently made Master of the Rolls, to  
 everyone's immense satisfaction, and to whose praises, of course, I shall add noth-  
 15 ing, not because I fear lest the testimony of a friend should be given little trust, but  
 because his virtue and learning are greater than can be told by me, and are every-  
 where too well-known and illustrious to need to be told anyway, unless I should  
 want to seem, as they say, to show off the sun with a lamp.

*Cuthbert Tunstall*

*Proverb*

They met us at Bruges, by prior arrangement: all outstanding men, to whom  
 their prince had entrusted the business. Their leader and head was the mayor of  
 20 Bruges, a magnificent man, but their voice and heart was Georges de Themsecke,

Provost of Cassel, eloquent by nature as well as by schooling; in addition, he is most learned in the law, and consummately skilled in his craft, thanks both to his natural genius for doing business and to his long experience in negotiations. When we had met once or twice and could not satisfactorily agree on certain points, they said good-bye to us for a few days and set out for Brussels to consult the oracular response of their prince [Charles]. Meanwhile, (since my business required it) I went to Antwerp.

While I stayed there, no visitor was more gratifying to me than Peter Giles, a native of Antwerp, highly trusted by his fellow citizens, holding a good position and deserving someday of the highest position; it is hard to say whether this young man is greater in learning or in character. For he is an excellent man and very well-educated, and also, while quite frank with everyone, toward his friends especially he has a sympathetic heart, is loving, trustworthy, and so sincerely affectionate, that you could hardly ever find one or two others to compare with him in all the aspects of friendship. He has a rare modesty; no one is farther from guile than he; in no one is there a more prudent simplicity. Moreover, he was so charming in his conversation, and so blamelessly witty, that my longing for my country, home, wife, and children whom I anxiously desired to see again (by that time I had already been away more than four months) was in large part alleviated by his most delightful companionship and sweet conversation.

*Peter Giles*

One day I went to the divine service at the temple of holy Mary—a structure most beautiful in workmanship and most frequented by the people—and when the sacred ritual was over, and I was preparing to return to my lodging, I happened to see Peter speaking with a certain stranger bent with age, his face sun-burned, his beard long, a traveling-cloak negligently hanging on his shoulder; by his face and clothing he appeared to be a ship's captain.

But when Peter caught sight of me, he came over to greet me, and drawing me aside a little as I was trying to return the greeting, says:

“Do you see this man?”—at the same time, he pointed at the man with whom I had seen him talking—“I was just about to bring him right over to you.”

“He would have been most welcome,” I said, “considering it was you who brought him.”

“No, if you knew him, you would think him welcome on his own merits,” said Peter. “For there is no mortal man alive today who can offer so great an account of unknown people and lands, the kinds of things I know you are most keen to hear about.”

“Well then,” I said, “my guess was not too bad. As soon as I saw him, I immediately took him for a ship's captain.”



“And yet,” he said, “you are really far off target: he did not sail as a Palinurus,  
 but as a Ulysses, or rather, as a Plato. Indeed, Raphael here (for that’s his name),  
 surnamed Hythloday, is not unlearned in Latin, but is very learned in Greek—to  
 which he was more devoted than he was to the Roman tongue, because he had com-  
 5 mitted himself completely to philosophy, in which subject he recognized nothing  
 of any importance extant in Latin except certain works of Seneca and Cicero. He  
 left the inheritance he had at home to his brothers (for he is Portuguese), and with  
 a desire to behold the whole world, joined Amerigo Vespucci and was his constant  
 10 companion on the last three of those four voyages which are now read about far  
 and wide, except that he did not return on the last one. For he went to much trou-  
 ble to have Amerigo let him be among those twenty-four who were left behind in  
 the garrison at the farthest point of their voyage. And so he was left behind as he  
 wished, a man more concerned with travel than with being laid to rest, who is al-  
 ways saying things like: “He who has no grave is buried under the sky,” and “the  
 15 road to the heavens is the same from all places.” And if God had not been favorable  
 to him, this mindset would have cost him all too dearly. And so, after Vespucci de-  
 parted, he traveled through many regions with five of his comrades from the garri-  
 son. At last, by some wonderful fortune, he was carried to Taprobane; from there he  
 arrived in Calicut where he conveniently found some ships of the Portuguese, and  
 20 finally sailed back to his homeland, contrary to all hope.”

*Aphorism*

When Peter related this, and after I had thanked him for being so obliging to  
 me as to consider it so very important that I myself enjoy a discussion with a man  
 whose conversation he anticipated I would like, I turned to Raphael, and when we  
 had greeted each other and had spoken those commonplace things which are usu-  
 25 ally said when strangers first meet, we left that place and went to my house, where,  
 sitting together in the garden on a bench covered with grassy turf, we conversed.

He then related to me how, after Vespucci had departed, he and his associates  
 who had remained behind in the garrison, began, through arranged meetings and  
 flattery, gradually to insinuate themselves among the peoples of that land, and to  
 30 interact with them not only safely but familiarly, until they became the favorites of  
 a certain ruler (whose country and name escape me). He related how, by this man’s  
 generosity, supplies and travel-provisions were abundantly provided for him and  
 his five companions, and how, for the journey—over sea on rafts or over land by  
 wagon—he provided a very trustworthy guide, who would take them to other rul-  
 35 ers, whom they sought out and to whom they had been diligently recommended  
 beforehand. For, after traveling many days, he said they found towns and cities and  
 not very badly established commonwealths, with large populations.

To be sure, at the equator, and on both sides to the north and south of it, about



as widely as the orbit of the sun embraces, vast deserts lie before one, scorched in a perpetual heat. Squalor and gloom are everywhere to be seen, and everything rough and without cultivation, inhabited by wild animals and snakes and finally, by humans no less wild than the beasts, and no less harmful. Yet when you have sailed farther, gradually everything becomes tamer. The climate is less harsh, the ground is more pleasing with its verdure, the innate dispositions of animals gentler; finally, peoples, cities, and towns appear, and amongst them there is constant commercial exchange by sea and land, not only locally and with neighboring lands, but also with far distant nations.

From then on, they acquired the means to visit many lands near and far, since there was not a ship equipped for any voyage that did not gladly take him and his companions aboard. He recounted that the ships which they observed in the first regions were flat-bottomed, with billowing sails made of papyrus and woven-wicker, or even of leather in other places. But later they found curved hulls and canvas sails — and everything was similar, in short, to our own.

The sailors were not unskilled with sea and sky. But, he recounted, he won marvelous favor when he taught them the use of the compass, of which they had been utterly ignorant. That was why they had been accustomed to entrust themselves to the sea only fearfully, and not easily at any time besides the summer. Now, however, with their new confidence in the magnetic compass, they scorn winter and are now more carefree than careful — so there is a danger that, through imprudence, what was thought would be a great benefit to them, might become the source of great evils.

To set out fully what he said he saw in each place would take too much time, nor is it the design of this work; perhaps it will be told on another occasion, whatever would be particularly useful to know — and in the first place, whatever right and prudent measures he noticed anywhere among people who were living together as citizens. For we too inquired most avidly about these things, and he discussed them most gladly; meanwhile, we left aside asking about monsters, since nothing is less novel. For you cannot go anywhere without finding Scyllas and greedy Celaenos and people-devouring Lastrygonians and immense fictions of that sort, but sensibly and wisely educated citizens you will hardly discover anywhere.

And yet, just as he noted many mistaken ideas among those unfamiliar peoples, he also recounted quite a few things that can be taken as examples fit for correcting the errors of our cities, nations, peoples, and kingdoms; which, as I said, I must recall on another occasion. For now, my only intention is to report what he related to us about the customs and institutions of the Utopians; adding, by way of preface, the conversation by which, through a sort of natural current, he came to mention that commonwealth.

For, once Raphael had very prudently recounted errors — some made in our part of the world, others made over there (and very many made in both places) — as well as more wisely planned things, both among us and among them, seeming to have grasped the customs and institutions of each and every people he had visited as if he  
 5 had lived his whole life among them, Peter in astonishment at him said,

“My dear Raphael, I really wonder why you do not attach yourself to some king—I am fairly sure that there is not one who would not be extremely pleased with you, since you would be in a position not only to entertain him with this learning and experience about places and people but also to instruct with examples and  
 10 assist with your counsel; at the same time, this is a way you could see to your own business excellently and be able to be of service to the interests of all your friends and relations.”

“As for my own people,” he said, “I am not very moved in their regard since I think I have pretty well fulfilled the obligations I have toward them. For the possessions that others do not let go of until they are old and ill, and even then only let  
 15 them go with an ill humor because they can’t keep them anymore anyway, I have distributed to my relatives and friends while I was still healthy and strong, and young, too. I think that they ought to be content with that kindness of mine, and not demand or expect that I put myself into the servitude of kings for their sake.”

20 “What a thing to say!” Peter said. “I meant, not that you would be ‘in servitude’ to kings but ‘in service’ to them.”

“*Servitude*,” he said, “has only one syllable more than *service*.”

“But I think,” answered Peter, “that no matter what name you use, it is nevertheless a way you can be of help to others, both publicly and privately, while rendering  
 25 your own condition happier.”

“Would I make my condition any happier,” Raphael said, “by a way of life my mind abhors? As it is, I live as I wish, which I certainly suspect is the case with very few royal courtiers. In fact, there are plenty of people who are ambitious for the friendship of the powerful, so you should not think it a great loss for them to do  
 30 without me and one or two others like me.”

Then I said, “It is very clear to me, Raphael, that you are desirous of neither riches nor power, and indeed, I have no less reverence and admiration for a man of your mind than for any of those in the highest positions of authority. But you will certainly appear to do something worthy of that so very noble and so truly philosophical mind of yours if you would prepare yourself—even with some inconvenience to your private life—to adapt your talents and industry to public affairs: something you could never do more effectively than by becoming an advisor to  
 35 some great ruler, and by persuading him, as I am certain you would, to do right and

honest things. Indeed, it is from the ruler—as if from some everlasting spring—that there flows a torrent of all goods and evils for the whole nation. But as for you, your learning is so complete, even aside from your practical experience, and your practical experience so great, even without the learning, that you would present yourself as an excellent counselor to any king.” 5

“You are twice mistaken, my dear More,” he said, “first about me, and second, about the business itself. For I do not have that ability you attribute to me, and even if I had it to the highest level, nevertheless, if I made my leisure activity into a business, I would not advance the public interest one bit. For, first of all, almost all rulers more gladly busy themselves with military endeavors (something about which 10 I neither have expertise nor want to acquire any), rather than with the good arts of peace, and they have far greater eagerness to learn the ways by which they can gain new realms for themselves, by fair means or foul, rather than to learn how to administer well what they have already.

“Besides, when it comes to those who counsel kings, they are all either so wise in 15 fact that they don’t need counsel, or else think that they are wise, so as not to enjoy having to accept someone else’s counsel, except when they all agree with, and free-load on the most absurd statements of the people who are most in favor with the ruler and whom they try to win over by agreeing with them. Certainly, it has been devised by nature that each one favors his own productions, just as the crow and 20 monkey delight in their own offspring.

“But if anyone in that assembly of those who envy others’ opinions and prefer their own, brings in something new either that he read was done in other times or that he saw being done in other places, the listeners act as if their entire reputation for wisdom were being put at risk, and as if they would afterwards be taken as utter 25 fools unless they managed to find some fault in the discoveries of others. If all else fails, they take refuge in saying: ‘These arrangements were pleasing to our ancestors, and would that we were their equals in prudence!’ And, having said that, they sit down and act as if the position had been fully and superbly argued, as if it would be very dangerous for someone to be considered wiser than his ancestors in any matter. 30 However, anything that has been well arranged by those ancestors, we ignore with the utmost indifference, but if there is something they could have planned more wisely, we seize eagerly on that like a kind of lever, and never let it go. I have encountered such proud, absurd, and peevish judgments often, both elsewhere and once even in England.” 35

“What,” I said, “have you been in our country?”

“Yes,” he said, “and I spent several months there, not long after that disaster in which the civil rebellion of western Englishmen against the king was suppressed

with pitiful slaughter. Meanwhile, I was very obliged to the most revered Father, John Morton, Archbishop of Canterbury and Cardinal, and then also the Chancellor of England: a man, my dear Peter (and More knows what I am going to say), respected for his authority but no less for his prudence and virtue. He was a man of  
 5 medium height, not yet giving in to his advanced age; a face you would revere, but not be frightened of; easy to talk to, yet earnest and serious. He enjoyed testing those who came to ask him for things by addressing them sometimes rather roughly, but harmlessly, to see what they were made of and what presence of mind they could show. He was delighted when he found it and welcomed it as a virtue akin to his  
 10 own — provided it was free of impudence — and as suited for administering public affairs. His conversation was polished and effective; he had great expertise in law and an incomparable genius, a memory so excellent it was astonishing. And he had developed these outstanding natural gifts through study and practice. It seemed, while I was there, that this man's counsel was greatly trusted by the king and much depended upon by the commonwealth. And this was because at just about the begin-  
 15 ning of his youth he was taken straight from school to the court, where he became involved all his life long with important business and was constantly tossed about by the changing tides of fortune until, by many and great dangers, he learned prudence in affairs — which, once acquired like this, does not easily slip away.

20 “By utter chance, when I was a guest at his table one day, a certain layman was there, who was an expert in the laws of your people. Having found some occasion or other, he began to praise in detail the strict justice that was being enforced at the time on thieves in England, who, he related, were being executed all over the place, sometimes twenty hanging on a single gallows, and he said that he wondered all  
 25 the more at what evil fate made it happen that, when so few escaped the penalty, so many were still everywhere on the increase. Then I (making bold to speak freely in the Cardinal's presence) said: ‘You should not wonder at all. For this punishment of thieves is both beyond what is just, and not for the public benefit. For it is too brutal for punishing theft, yet not sufficient for deterring it. Simple theft, in fact, is not  
 30 so great a crime that it deserves capital punishment, nor is there any penalty so great that it can restrain those from robbery who have no other trade for seeking their livelihood. So in this matter not only you, but a good part of the world as well, appear to imitate bad teachers, who would more gladly beat their students than teach them. For severe and fearful punishments are decreed for thieving, when in fact,  
 35 what should much rather be provided, is some means for making a living, so there would be no dire necessity first, to steal, and second, to die for it.’

“‘We have provided for this well enough,’ the man said. ‘There are practical arts; there is farming — by which they could earn a livelihood, if they did not of their own accord prefer to be evil.’

*Laws hardly equitable*

*A method for reducing  
the number of thieves*

“‘But you will not get off the hook so easily,’ I said. ‘First, let’s leave aside those who often return home maimed, either from foreign or civil wars, as recently from the war with the Cornishmen, and, not so long ago, from the war with the French. They sacrifice their limbs to the commonwealth or for the king, and their disability prevents them from practicing their first trades, while age does not allow them to learn a new one. Let us leave these men aside,’ I said, ‘since wars come and go. Let’s consider things which never fail to happen.’ 5

“‘There is, then, so great a number of noblemen, who pass their time idly like drones on the labors of others (such, you can imagine, as the tenant-farmers on their estates, whom they shave to the quick by raising their rents, and that’s the only frugality they know, being otherwise wasteful to the point of having to beg for money themselves); not only that, but they also take around with them an immense crowd of idle followers, who never learned the art of making a living. These, as soon as their master dies, or they themselves fall sick, are thrown out on the spot. For their lords more gladly support them idle than sick, and often the heir of the dying man is not immediately able to support his father’s entire household.’ 10 15

“‘Meanwhile they actively starve unless they actively steal. And what else are they to do? After wandering around a bit and wearing down both their health and their clothes, now squalid with sickness and covered in tatters, the nobly-born do not deem them worthy of acceptance, and the country folk do not dare to, for they are not unaware that the sort of person who has been brought up softly in idleness and luxury, who has become accustomed to wearing a sword and buckler, and to looking down threateningly on everybody in the neighborhood, and to condemning everyone in comparison with himself—such a man would scarcely be fit to serve a poor man faithfully with mattock and hoe, for stingy pay and a moderate livelihood.’ 20 25

“‘But this,’ the lawyer replied, ‘is the sort of men we should foster above all. For on them depend the strength and vigor of the army if a war has to be fought, since they have loftier spirits and are more nobly-born than craftsmen and farmers.’

“‘Actually,’ I said, ‘you could likewise say that thieves must be fostered for the sake of war, since no doubt you will never lack thieves, as long as you have these men. In fact, robbers make fairly energetic soldiers, and soldiers are not the most cowardly robbers, so nicely do these two arts agree with each other. But although this fault is widespread among you, it is not peculiar to England, for it is common to almost all nations.’ 30 35

“‘For there is yet another more pestilent pest infesting France: the whole country is filled with and besieged by mercenaries, even in peacetime (if you can call it peace), who have been brought in on account of the same conviction which has led you to think these idle attendants here should be supported. Indeed, this is because

*The ruin caused by  
standing military  
garrisons*

it has been decided by some ‘wise fools’ that public safety lies in always having ready-to-hand a strong and stable garrison, especially of veterans. For they do not entrust anything to unpracticed men, so they must even seek out war to avoid having inexperienced soldiers, and throats must be gratuitously cut, lest, as Sallust put it so wittily, “the hand or spirit begin to grow dull through idleness.” But how disastrous it is to keep such beasts, France has learned to its own detriment, and the examples of the Romans, Carthaginians, Syrians, and many other nations have also shown the same. In all of these countries, standing armies have at some opportunity or another, overthrown not only their government but also the countryside and the cities themselves.

“But how very unnecessary it is to keep such armies becomes clear from this: that not even the French soldiers, highly trained in arms from infancy, when compared to your [English] draftees, can boast very often that they have left the field as superiors (not to go into it in more detail, lest I appear to be flattering the present company). But neither your urban craftsmen nor your rude and rustic farmers (except for those with a body unfit for acts of strength and boldness or whose confidence has been broken by their own poverty) are believed to fear greatly the idle attendants of the nobly-born; so much the less is there any danger that these [idle attendants], whose strong and hearty bodies (the only ones the nobly-born deem worthy of corruption) now grow feeble with leisure and soft with almost ladylike activities, might become effeminate if they were instructed in the good arts of making a livelihood and exercised by manly labors.

“However this matter stands, I for my part certainly do not think that it benefits the commonwealth to prepare for the chance of war (which you never have if you do not want it) by supporting an unnumbered crowd of the sort that disturbs peace, when peace should be thought about so much more than war. And yet it is not this alone that necessitates thievery. There is another far greater reason, I believe, peculiar to you.’

“‘What is that?’ asked the Cardinal.

“‘Your sheep,’ I said, ‘that are usually so mild and so meagerly fed (as they say) become so ravenous and untamed that they devour the people themselves, and lay waste and ravage their fields, homes, and towns. For in whatever parts of the realm finer and therefore more expensive wool is produced, there also are nobles and nobly-born — and even some holy abbots — who are not content with the returns and annual profits which our ancestors used to reap from their estates, and do not consider it enough to live leisurely and lavishly and be in no way beneficial to the public, unless they harm it as well, leaving no land for plowing, closing off everything for pasture, demolishing homes, destroying towns, but sparing the

churches — if only for the purpose of stabling sheep, and as if woodlands and preserves for wild game took up too little land among you, those fine men turn all dwellings, and anything ever cultivated, into wasteland.

“Therefore, in order that one insatiable glutton — a dire pest to his country — may combine his fields and encircle so many thousand acres with one fence, tenant- 5 farmers are thrown out. Some, either entrapped by fraud or overpowered by force, are even stripped of their possessions or, wearied by injuries, are driven to sell. And so, by whatever method, there is an exodus of miserable people — men, women, husbands, wives, orphans, widows, parents with small children; and a household more numerous than wealthy, since farming has need of many hands — off they trudge, 10 I say, from the homes they knew and were used to, without having any place to go, and all their household equipment — scarcely worth much even if it could wait around for someone to come along who wanted to buy it — they sell off for the minimum price at the time when they are forced to leave.

“When they have spent what little they have after brief wanderings, what else 15 is left, finally, except to steal and be hanged for it? — so justly, of course! — or to become vagrants and beg? Of course, then also will they be thrown into prison for walking around idly like vagabonds since there is no one to hire them, although they very eagerly offer their labor. For when it comes to farm labor, which is what they are used to, there is nothing to be done once no land is left for sowing. Of 20 course, only a single shepherd or herdsman is needed for the land to feed herds, while many hands were needed to work that same land when it was used to produce crops.

“And so it happens that in many places grain is sold at a much higher cost. And in fact the price of wool, too, has increased to such an extent that it certainly can- 25 not be bought by the poor, who usually make cloth from it in your country, and for this reason many of them are banished from work into idleness. For, after the pasture lands were increased, a pestilence consumed a countless number of sheep, as though God were avenging greed by sending the infection on the sheep — which would have been more justly re-routed upon the heads of the landowners. But how- 30 ever greatly the number of sheep increases, the price still does not decrease. And if this cannot be called a monopoly because there is not only one seller, it is certainly an oligopoly. For the sheep have nearly all fallen back into the hands of a few, and these are the rich, who are pressed by no necessity to sell before they please, nor does it please them to sell before they can do so, and for as much as they please! 35

“The same issue affects other kinds of livestock, making them equally expensive, and even more so, because, once farms have been destroyed and the rural economy diminished, nobody is available there to care for the breeding of animals. For



those rich men do not rear the young of cattle as they do the young of the sheep, but buy them lean and cheap from elsewhere, and after they have fattened them on their own pastures, sell them back at a high price. And for this reason, I believe, the whole scope of the damage done by this situation has still not been felt. In fact, the sellers only make [the livestock] more expensive in the places where they sell them. But when they have removed them from there somewhat more quickly than they can be born, and when at last the supply also gradually diminishes where they are sold, it is necessary that in this place too there be suffering due to a noticeable scarcity.

10 “And so the very thing that made your island appear especially happy is now being transformed into a disaster by the shameless greed of a few. For the high price of food is the reason everyone sends away as many persons as possible from the household, and to do — What? I ask you — nothing but beg, or something else you could more easily persuade nobly-born spirits to do — like stealing.

15 “And then, what about the fact that with this miserable poverty and scarcity is combined an unrestrained luxury? For the servants of noblemen, the artisans, and even some farmers — in short, all classes alike — indulge in much extravagant dress and excessive luxury in food and drink. And now the dive, the brothel, and other places like them, such as taverns (another type of brothel, really), wine shops, ale-houses — and then, finally, so many wicked games: dice, card games, dice boxes, ball games, hunts, quoits — do not such things, once the money is gone, send their devotees straight off to practice robbery somewhere?

25 “Cast out these deadly pests; make laws that those who have destroyed the farms and country towns reestablish them, or else let them be given to those who will restore them or who are willing to rebuild. Put limitations on the buying up of lands by the wealthy, and their virtual license to exercise a monopoly. Let fewer be supported in idleness, let agriculture be restored, let wool-making be resumed so there is an honest business whereby that idle crowd can exercise itself usefully: whether those whom poverty has made, thus far, into thieves, or those who now are  
30 vagabonds and unemployed servants, both types being, no doubt, the thieves of the future. To be sure: unless you remedy these evils, you will boast in vain about justice being exercised in the punishment of theft; it is a pretense of justice, rather than really just or useful. For when you allow people to be brought up in the worst way and their characters to be corrupted little by little, starting from their tender years — to be punished, of course! when as grown men they finally do those shameful deeds  
35 that from their youth they have raised a constant expectation of committing — what else is this, I ask, but you making them thieves and you, the same ones, punishing them?’



“Now as I was saying this, that counselor of law, meanwhile, had been preparing himself to speak, and had decided to use that typical method of disputants who more diligently repeat things than actually respond to a question, since they put so much value on a good memory.

“Indeed,” he said, “you have spoken well, although you are of course a foreigner, 5 who has been able to hear about these matters more than understand them precisely. I will make that clear to you in a few words. For first, I shall review in order what you have said. Then I shall show in what matters ignorance of our affairs has misled you. Finally, I shall dissolve and destroy all of your arguments. Therefore, to begin with the first thing I promised, you seemed to me on four points. . . .” 10

“Quiet, please!” the Cardinal said. “You don’t appear to be responding ‘in a few words’ when you begin in that way. Therefore, let’s discharge you right now from the trouble of responding, and instead reserve the whole task for you until our next meeting, which (unless something hinders you or Raphael here) I would like to be tomorrow. 15

*He reports the Cardinal’s well-known habit of interrupting a loquacious speaker*

“But in the meantime, I would gladly hear from you, my dear Raphael, why you think that thieves should not be punished with the death penalty, and what other punishment you would set up yourself that would be more in the public interest. For not even you think that theft should be tolerated. But if people are now hurrying into thievery, even with the threat of death hanging over them, once a guarantee of life has been offered, what force or fear could frighten off criminals, who would understand, by a lessening of the punishment as if a sort of reward, that they were invited to crime?” 20

“It simply appears to me, most kind Father,” I said, “to be utterly unjust that a person’s life be taken just because someone’s money was taken. Indeed, I think that 25 with a human life nothing can be equated, not even all the goods of fortune. But if they were to say that injured justice or injured laws are restored through such a penalty, and not just someone’s money — what could such absolute justice deserve to be called but absolute injustice? For we should not approve such Manlian commandments of the law, so that whenever there is less than perfect obedience in the 30 most trivial matters the sword is immediately drawn, nor should we approve the decrees of the Stoics, who consider all sins equal to such a degree that they think it makes no difference whether someone kills a human being or steals a coin from him — between these two actions (if equity has any validity at all) there is absolutely no similarity or affinity. 35

*Manlian commandments, from Livy*

“God has forbidden anyone to be killed, and shall we so easily kill on account of a little stolen money? But if someone interprets that the power to kill is forbidden by God’s commandment except when human law decrees that someone must

be killed, what prevents human beings from deciding in the same way among themselves to what extent rape or adultery or perjury are to be allowed? Since, indeed, God took away the right not only over another's death, but even over one's own, if a consensus of men agreed with each other about mutual killing under certain  
 5 specified conditions, could such an agreement have the force to exempt its followers from that commandment? Could they, without any example set by God, kill anyone a human decree ordered to be killed? And then will not that commandment of God have only as much power as human laws permit it to have? And will it be any wonder that human beings end up establishing, in the same way, and in all circum-  
 10 stances, to just what extent divine laws need to be obeyed?

"Finally, the law of Moses, though merciless and harsh, and of course made for slaves and stubborn ones at that, nevertheless punished theft with fines, not death. Let us not think that God, in the new law of mercy where he commands his children like a father, has allowed us greater license for being savage to each other.

15 "These, then, are the reasons why I think it is not allowed. How truly absurd, and even destructive to the commonwealth it is for theft and murder to be punished equally, I think there is no one who does not understand. Indeed, once a robber sees no less risk threatening him when convicted merely for theft than if convicted of homicide as well, this thought alone would drive him to murder anyone  
 20 whom he otherwise would only have robbed. Besides the fact that there is no further danger to him if caught, there is also greater security in murder and greater hope of concealing the crime when the witness has been done away with! And so while we try to terrify thieves too brutally, we incite them to the destruction of good people.

25 "Now as to what is usually asked: What punishment would be more advantageous? In my judgment, it is hard to find a worse punishment, but (in no small degree) easier to find a better one. For why should we doubt that a useful way for punishing crimes is the one which we know so long pleased the Romans, the greatest experts in administering a commonwealth? They, of course, used to condemn those  
 30 convicted of great crimes to the stone-quarries and to digging in the mines, guarding them in chains continuously.

"However, in regard to this matter, I approve the institution of no people more than what I found while I was traveling in Persia among a people commonly called Polylerites, a people not small in number nor with imprudently designed institu-  
 35 tions, and, except for paying yearly tribute to the king of the Persians, they are otherwise free and permitted to have their own laws. Yet since they are far from the sea, almost surrounded by mountains, and content with the fruits of their own land that is not at all barren, they neither visit others often nor are they visited.

Nevertheless, by an old custom of their nation, they do not strive to increase their territory, and what they have is easily protected from all injury, both by mountains and the tribute they pay to their powerful neighbor. They are completely unburdened by any military, and live not so much splendidly as suitably, and are happy, rather than noble or distinguished; In fact, I think that for this reason they are not known even by name except to their close neighbors. 5

“Now, in their country, convicted thieves return what they have stolen to its owner, not to the ruler of the state, as usually happens elsewhere, because they think he has no more right to the stolen item than the thief; but if the goods are destroyed, once their value has been settled and paid for out of the possessions of the thieves, the remainder is left intact for the wives and children of the thieves, while the thieves themselves are sentenced to public employment, and unless they have committed some more serious crime than theft, they are neither shut in a workhouse nor clamped in shackles, but are employed, free and unfettered, in public works. Those who avoid working, or work too sluggishly, are not bound in chains but urged on by whips. Those who do their work strenuously are dispensed from reproaches, and only at night, after roll has been taken, are they confined to their sleeping quarters. 10 15

*Something to be noted  
by us who do otherwise*

“Besides constant labor, there is nothing inconvenient about their life. For they who serve the public interest are supported, and not austere, by the public in various ways, in various places. In one place what is spent on them is collected from alms, and although that way of support is uncertain, nevertheless, since the people are merciful, no other way has been found more abundant. Elsewhere certain public revenue is designated for it. In another place the citizens individually contribute a certain tax for these uses. In a few places they do no public work, but when a private person needs hired hands, he hires the labor of one of them for that day, in the forum, at a wage set a little less than he would have paid a freeman. And in any case it is lawful to correct the laziness of a slave with whipping. Thus it happens that they never lack work; and besides their own support, something is daily brought into the public treasury. 20 25

“All of them — and only they — are dressed in one certain color; their hair is not shaved off but trimmed a little above the ears, and from one of the ears a small piece is cut off. It is permitted for friends to give them food, drink, and clothes of their own color; but giving any money is a capital offense, equally to the giver and receiver, and it is no less dangerous even for a free man, regardless of the reason, to take a single coin from a convict, and likewise for slaves (for that is what the convicts are called) to touch weapons. Each region distinguishes its own convicts with its own particular marking, and it is a capital offense to remove the marking, to be seen outside one’s own territory, and to have any conversations with a slave from 30 35

*But the servants of  
nobles today think this  
same thing beautiful*

another region. Planning escape is no safer than escaping itself: indeed, to be complicit in such a plan is death for the slave and slavery for the free man; on the other hand, rewards are decreed for an informer: for a free man, money; for a slave, freedom; and for either, pardon and impunity for their complicity so that it could never  
 5 be safer to follow through with a bad plan than to repent of it.

“In these matters, this is their law and this is their procedure, as I have said. How humane and beneficial it is, you can readily see, since public outrage acts in such a way as to remove vices while preserving human beings, who are treated in such a way that they have to be good. And however much harm they have done,  
 10 they repair it with the remainder of their lives.

“Furthermore, there is no fear they would slip back into their old habits, to such an extent that even travelers who have to make a journey do not suppose themselves safer on the road with other guides than with these slaves, continually changed at the border of each region. Of course they never have an opportunity to  
 15 commit robbery: they are unarmed; having any money at all would be an indication of crime; punishment is ready for anyone who is apprehended; and there is absolutely no hope of escaping anywhere. For how could a man conceal or cloak his escape, whose clothes are completely different from the rest of the population, unless he escaped naked! — and even in that case his ear would give him away.

“But of course, is there not a danger, finally, of them at least forming a plan to conspire against the commonwealth? As if any local group could entertain such hopes without first sounding out and winning over the slaves of many other regions (who are not even permitted to greet or talk to each other, let alone have the chance to conspire); meanwhile, can you believe they would fearlessly entrust a plan  
 25 to their co-conspirators which they know is dangerous to those who keep it silent, and of the greatest benefit to those who betray it? On the contrary, since no one of them gives up hope that by obeying and being patient and raising the expectation of living a more correct life in the future, he could by those means regain his freedom at some point. In fact, every year some are restored to freedom through recognition of their patience.’  
 30

“When I had said these words, and added that I saw no reason this way could not be used even in England with much greater benefit than the “justice” that that expert in law had praised so highly, the lawyer, as you would expect, replied, “That could never be established in England without leading the commonwealth into the  
 35 greatest crisis.” And as he said that he shook his head, twisted his lips, and, in this way, fell silent. And everyone there went over to his side.

“Then the Cardinal said, ‘It is not easy to foresee whether the matter would turn out advantageously or otherwise, when no trial at all has been made of it. But

once a death sentence has been announced, the ruler could order the execution deferred, and try this custom out, after withholding the privileges of sanctuaries; then if the practice proved useful, it could rightfully be established. If not, to punish those who were convicted before would neither hurt the commonwealth or be any more unjust than if the same thing were done now, nor does it seem that any danger would arise from the experiment. But it appears to me, certainly, that vagabonds would also not be too badly handled by this method, for although so many laws have been passed against them, we have still not made any progress.’

“When the Cardinal said this, there was no one there who did not rush to praise better than the next man the very points they had disparaged when I recounted them, and especially the bit about vagabonds, since the Cardinal added that himself.

“What happened next, I don’t know whether it would be better to be silent about, since it was rather ridiculous, but I will tell it nevertheless. For it was nothing bad, and did somewhat pertain to the matter.

“By chance, a certain hanger-on was present, who wanted to give the impression of playing a fool, but pretended so well that he was nearly the real thing—looking for laughs with such weak jokes that he himself was more often laughed at than his jokes. Nevertheless certain things fell from the man’s lips from time to time that were so far from being absurd that they proved the validity of the adage: ‘if the dice are thrown often enough, at some point they will come up Venus.’”

*An entertaining  
dialogue between a  
friar and a fool*

One of the guests was saying that now that my speech had made good provision for thieves and that the Cardinal’s had taken care of the vagabonds, there still needed to be a public policy for those whom sickness or old age had driven into poverty, and rendered unable to work at the jobs they could earn a living from.

“And then the wit said, ‘Let me do this. For I will see to it that this too is done rightly. I desperately desire to remove this kind of people somewhere out of my sight; they have so often badly annoyed me, demanding money with those plaintive cries, but they can’t sing well enough to squeeze a coin from me! One of two things always happens: either I don’t feel like giving, or I can’t, since there is nothing for me to give. But they have started to wise up: so as not to waste their effort when they see me coming along, they silently let me pass. And that’s why they hope for nothing more from me than if, by Hercules, I were . . . a priest! But I say we make a law, that all those beggars be distributed and dispersed into Benedictine monasteries and be made what are called lay monks, and the women, I say, should be made nuns.’

*A proverb commonly  
mentioned among  
beggars*

“The Cardinal smiled and approved it as a joke; the rest approved it seriously. But a certain theologian, a friar, was so delighted by what was said against priests and monks that now he too began to join in the fun, a man otherwise grave almost to the point of fierceness.

“But not even thus,’ he said, ‘would you be rid of beggars, unless you make some arrangements for us friars, too!’

“And yet’ said the hanger-on, ‘this has already been taken care of, since the Cardinal provided exceedingly well for you friars when he proposed that vagabonds  
5 should be corralled and set to work. *You* are the biggest vagabonds!’

*He alludes to that phrase  
of Horace, “Steeped in  
Italian vinegar”*

“Everyone’s eyes were on the Cardinal when this was said, and when they saw that he didn’t reject it, they all began to embrace it rather gladly, except the friar, who had now been so drenched with vinegar that (it was no surprise) he became indignant and ablaze with anger, and could not even restrain himself from insults:  
10 he called the man a scoundrel, a detractor, a gossip, and a ‘son of perdition,’ all the while citing terrible threats from Sacred Scripture. And then the other one, the clown, really began to play his part: he was clearly in his own element.

*How he preserves  
decorum in the  
narrative*

“Do not be angry, good friar,’ said he, ‘for it is written, *In patience you will possess your souls*.” In reply, the friar said (and I repeat his very words), ‘I am not angry, you  
15 villain, at least not so much as to sin. For the Psalmist says, *Be ye angry and sin not*.’

*It is clear the friar, on  
account of inexperience,  
misuses “zelus” [zeal]  
as if it were a neuter  
gender like “hoc scelus”  
[this crime]*

“Then, when the friar was gently admonished by the Cardinal to check his emotions, he said, ‘No, my Lord, I am only speaking out of good zeal, just as I ought. For holy men had good zeal, as it is said, *Zeal for your house has consumed me*; and it is sung in churches, *Those who scoffed at Elisha while he ascended the house of God*,  
20 *felt the zeal of the bald man*, as perhaps this scoffing, scorning, ribald person here may feel it.’

“Perhaps you are acting with a good intention,’ replied the Cardinal, ‘but you would seem to be acting in a holier way, or certainly a wiser way, if you would not put yourself into a ridiculous contest with a foolish and ridiculous man.’

“No, my Lord,’ he answered. ‘I would not be acting more wisely. For Solomon himself, the wisest of men, said, *Answer the fool according to his folly*, as I am now doing, and I am showing him the pit into which he will fall, unless he is very careful. For if the many scoffers of Elisha, who was only one bald man, felt the zeal of the bald man, how much more will this one scoffer feel the zeal of many friars, among  
30 whom there are many bald men! We even have a Papal bull, by which all who make fun of us have been excommunicated.’

“When he saw there would be no end to it, the Cardinal sent away the hanger-on with a nod, and tactfully changing the conversation to a different topic, a little later stood up from the table and, deciding to devote himself to hearing his clients’  
35 affairs, dismissed us.

“My dear More, with what a long talk have I burdened you! I would be ashamed to have made it so long if you had not demanded it so eagerly, and did not seem to be listening as if you did not want any part of that conversation to be omitted. And



although it ought to have been told somewhat more briefly, still it had to be recounted to show the judgment of those who had scorned those things I was saying, the very same things that they themselves approved as soon as they saw the Cardinal not disapproving, flattering him even to the point of fawning upon and almost seriously admitting that hanger-on's inventions, which his lordship was, by way of a joke, not rejecting. So from this you can tell how much courtiers would value me and my counsels." 5

"Really, my dear Raphael," I said, "you have given me great pleasure by all that you have said so prudently and, at the same time, with such charm. It seemed, while you spoke, not only that I was living in my native country again, but also, somehow, to have regained my lost youth through the pleasant memory of that Cardinal, in whose court I was brought up as a boy. And because you so fondly promote his memory, you would not believe, my dear Raphael, how much dearer to me you have become on this account, although you were already very dear to me beforehand. But I still cannot change my opinion in any way, as not to suppose that you could contribute a great deal of good to the public with your counsels, if you could only convince yourself to overcome your aversion to the courts of rulers. And that is why no duty is more incumbent upon a good man, such as you. Seeing that your friend Plato teaches that commonwealths will finally be fortunate only when philosophers rule them, or when their kings are philosophic, how far off will good fortune be, if philosophers do not at least deign to impart their counsel to kings?" 10 15 20

"They are not so ungrateful," he said, "that they would not do it gladly — in fact many have already done so by publishing books — if those in control of affairs were prepared to heed their good advice. But no doubt Plato foresaw this well: that, unless kings themselves philosophize, it will never happen that those steeped in perverse opinions from childhood and deeply tainted within will ever approve the counsels of philosophers; he had this experience himself at the court of Dionysius. Or do you not think, if I were to propose sound decrees at the court of some king and tried to eradicate the ruinous seeds of evil for him, that I would be immediately either thrown out or held in derision?" 25 30

"Come now, imagine me at the court of the French king, and seated in his council while, in a very secret place and the king himself presiding in a circle of the most prudent men, it is being discussed with great zeal by what arts and machinations the king might keep Milan and recover fugitive Naples; and then afterwards how he could overthrow the Venetians, and subject the whole of Italy to himself. Then how he could make Flanders, Brabant, and finally all Burgundy part of his dominion — and other nations besides, whose kingdoms he has already some time ago invaded in his mind. 35

*Cautiously he dissuades  
the French from  
obtaining Italy*

*Swiss mercenaries*

“At this point, while someone persuades him that a treaty should be struck with the Venetians, which would last only so long as convenient for the French themselves, and that the plan should be shared with the Venetians and some part of the spoils be deposited with them, which the King could reclaim once the business had  
 5 been accomplished to his satisfaction; while someone else advises him that Germans mercenaries should be hired, and another that the Swiss should be mollified with money; another disagrees, saying that the divine power of the Imperial Majesty should be propitiated with gold as if with a votive offering; while it seems to yet another that affairs should be settled with the King of Aragon and that the  
 10 kingdom of Navarre (which belongs to someone else) should be ceded to him as a guarantee of peace; and in the meanwhile someone else proposes that the Prince of Castile should be ensnared through some hope of a marriage alliance and that with a fixed payment several of the noble courtiers there should be drawn into the French king’s interest — until the most tangled knot of all appears: namely, what to  
 15 do about England in the meantime? — of course, peace ought to be negotiated anyway and the alliance, always weak, must be secured with the tightest of bonds (they should call them friends, but suspect them as enemies); and then the Scots ought to be held at the ready as if on guard duty, on the lookout for any occasion to be sent against the English immediately if the English make any move; and in addition  
 20 some exiled noble must be secretly groomed (treaties, after all, keep this from being done openly) to contend that the throne is rightfully his, and in this way the French king would have a lever to control that untrustworthy prince — now suppose at this point, amid such a great effort to move things, with so many outstanding men vying with each other in their counsels of war — suppose that I, a mere nobody, should  
 25 get up and call for the sails to be shifted to a new tack: let’s say I propose that Italy should be left alone, that the French should stay home, considering that the one kingdom of France is really too great for one man to manage suitably, so that the king should not think about adding other kingdoms to it; then, what if I were to propose to them what was decided by the Achorian people, a country opposite the  
 30 island of the Utopians to the south-east: once upon a time these Achorians waged war to obtain another kingdom for their king, which he claimed was owed to him as an inheritance on the grounds of an ancient marriage connection; once they finally had obtained it, when they saw that they were enduring no less suffering to retain it than they had in acquiring it, but that seeds were constantly germinating either  
 35 of rebellion on the inside or of foreign invasion from the outside of their newly-conquered people, so that they were always having to fight either against them or for them; that they never had the opportunity to dismiss their armies; that they meanwhile were being pillaged; that money was being exported; that their own

*A noteworthy example*



blood was being spilled for the petty glory of others; that their “peace” was no more secure than before; that moral character at home had been corrupted by the war; that a lust for robbery had been imbibed and recklessness encouraged by the slaughters of warfare; that the laws were held in contempt—and all because the king, distracted by having to care for two kingdoms, could not fix his mind on either—  
 5 when they saw that otherwise there would be no end to such great evils, at last they called a council and very humanely gave their king a choice: to decide which of the two kingdoms he wanted to keep, since he could not have both; they were too numerous a people to be governed by half a king (since nobody is happy even about having to share a mule driver with somebody else); and in this way, that good ruler  
 10 was forced to be content with his ancient kingdom and left the new one to one of his friends (who was driven out soon afterwards anyway); moreover, if I were to show the French King that all these war endeavors (throwing so many nations into confusion for his sake), once they had drained his treasuries and destroyed his people, would, by some misfortune end up coming to nothing anyway; that therefore  
 15 he should care for his ancestral kingdom, should equip it as much as he could, and make it flourish to the utmost; simply love his people and be loved by them, just live with them, rule them pleasantly, and say “farewell” to other kingdoms, since what has now fallen to his lot is more than enough for him already—with what kind of hearing, my dear More, do you think this speech should be received?  
 20

“Certainly not a very favorable one,” I said.

“Well then, let us continue,” he said. “If counselors were conducting business with some king and devising what schemes they could use to be able to heap up the treasuries, while one advises that the value of the currency should be inflated when the king himself has to pay out, and devalued below the just price when he must  
 25 collect, so as to *pay off* with a little and *get paid* with a lot; while another persuades him to feign a war and on that pretext raise money, and, when it seems like the right time, make peace, celebrating holy ceremonies to amaze the common people (sparing human bloodshed of course, as a pious ruler should); while another counselor puts into his mind certain ancient and moth-eaten laws, antiquated by long  
 30 disuse, and which, because no one remembers that they were ever passed, everybody has broken, and then suggests that the king order fines to be exacted since no other income is more plentiful or brings greater honor since it displays the character of justice; by another he is advised to prohibit many things under threat of heavy fines, especially the sorts of things which promote the public good by not  
 35 happening, and afterwards, in return for a payment, to dispense from the same laws those whose interests would be hindered by them, and in this way both the favor of the people be gained and a double profit be made, when the first group is fined

(whom greed for gain enticed into the snares), and when he sells privileges to the other group, and the more dearly he sells these privileges, of course, the better the ruler he will be, since he only reluctantly grants a private person something contrary to the people's welfare, and for that very reason only at a high price; another

5 counselor persuades him that judges should be put under obligations to himself so that they decide every case in favor of royal right, and should then be summoned to the palace and invited to argue about the king's affairs in the king's presence, and in this way there would be no case of his, no matter how unjust, in which some one of the judges (either in his zeal for contradiction, or shame at saying the same

10 thing someone else already said, or desire to find favor) would discover in his presence some loophole by which some false charge could be applied; thus, when the judges have a difference of opinions, a case perfectly clear in itself is disputed and the truth comes into question, so that a lever is conveniently given to the king for interpreting the law to his own advantage, while the others assent either from

15 shame or from fear — and then the judgement is afterwards boldly announced from the bench, because, for someone who makes a pronouncement on behalf of the ruler, no pretext can be lacking: it is enough for him that that equity be on his side, or the letter of the law, or the contorted sense of the text, or — what in the end outweighs all laws in the presence of scrupulous judges — the indisputable prerogative

20 of the ruler; while, then, all the counselors concur and agree with that saying of Crassus, 'no amount of gold is enough for a ruler who must support an army'; that besides, a king can do nothing unjustly even if he very much wants to, since everything belongs to him, even the people themselves, and what belongs to anyone is only what the kindness of the king has not taken away, and making sure that is as

25 little as possible is very much the king's business, since the king's safety depends on not letting the people run riot with wealth and liberty, because these are things that do not put up patiently with harsh and unjust commands, whereas poverty and scarcity, in contrast, blunts people's spirits, makes them patient, and takes away the haughty spirit of rebellion from them when they are oppressed — at this point,

30 let's say I stand up and contend that all these counsels are both dishonest and destructive for the king, whose honor and whose security both reside more in the wealth of the people than in his own; if I were to show that the people choose a king for their own sake and not for the king's so that, in fact, through his labor and zeal they may live well themselves and be safe from injustices, and for this reason it

35 is more the business of the ruler that his people be well off than that *he* be well off, no differently than it is the duty of the shepherd to pasture his sheep more than himself, insofar as he is a shepherd; as for the assumption that the poverty of the people is a safeguard of peace, the reality shows that this is very far from the truth:

*The saying of Crassus,  
a rich man*

where do you find more quarrels than among beggars? who more eagerly strives for  
 revolution than one who is dissatisfied with his current condition of life? whose  
 attempt, finally, to throw everything into confusion would be bolder, with hope of  
 making some kind of profit, than someone with nothing to lose? but if some king  
 were to be so despised or envied by his own people that he would be otherwise un-  
 able to keep them at their duties unless he went after them with false charges, plun-  
 der, and confiscation of goods, and reduced them to begging, it would be better for  
 him just to abdicate his kingship, rather than to keep it with these methods by  
 which, although he may keep the name of "commander," he certainly loses its maj-  
 esty; for it does not befit the dignity of a king to exercise command over beggars,  
 but rather over a prosperous and happy people; this is certainly something Fabri-  
 cius knew, a man of upright and lofty mind, when he replied that he would prefer  
 to exercise authority over rich people than to be rich himself; and certainly for  
 someone to be swimming in pleasures and delight, while everyone around him is  
 groaning and lamenting, is to be the overseer not of a kingdom, but of a prison; fi-  
 nally, since he is the most inexperienced of doctors who does not know how to cure  
 sickness except by another sickness, just so, he who does not know how to correct  
 the life of his citizens in any way other than by taking away the benefits of life,  
 ought to admit that he does not know how to govern free people; rather, he should  
 correct his sloth or his pride, for through these vices it usually happens that the  
 people hold him in contempt or hate him; let him live harmlessly on what already  
 belongs to him; let him match his expenses with his revenue; let him rein in crime  
 and by right education of his people prevent crimes from happening, rather than  
 allow them to increase and then punish them afterwards; let him not rashly bring  
 back into force laws that have been annulled by custom, especially the ones that  
 have been long neglected and never missed; and never let him seize as compensa-  
 tion for some crime a sum such as a judge would not allow to a private citizen who  
 was trying to swindle somebody; at this point, what if I were to propose to them  
 the law of the Macarians, who are also not very distant from Utopia, whose king,  
 on the first day he assumes command, is bound by an oath he takes, accompanied  
 by major sacrifices, that he will never at any time keep more than one thousand  
 pounds of gold in his treasuries, or an amount of silver to equal that price; this law,  
 they say, was established by an excellent king who cared more for the welfare of his  
 country than for his own wealth, a measure that would serve to prevent the heap-  
 ing up of so much money as to cause scarcity of it among his people, while he saw  
 that the treasury would still be enough, either for the king to fight against rebels,  
 or for the kingdom to fight against enemy incursions, while being too little to en-  
 courage anyone to invade; this was the most powerful reason for establishing the

*The marvelous law of  
 the Macarians*

law, the next strongest reason being, that the king thought it provided enough money to be in circulation for the daily exchange of the citizens, and when it was necessary for the king to disburse any surplus over the legal limit of the treasury, he considered that he would not be looking for occasions to commit injustice; a king  
 5 such as this will be dreaded by the bad and loved by the good — well then, if I were to keep repeating these ideas and others like them to men strongly inclined to the opposite point-of-view, how deaf would they be, do you think, to the story I have to tell?”

*A proverb*

“Very deaf listeners, no doubt,” I said, “and, by Hercules, it doesn’t surprise me,  
 10 nor, to tell the truth, do I think you should ever keep repeating this kind of talk or give the kind of advice which you can be certain will never be accepted. For how could it help? Or how could such extravagant words steal into their hearts when an opposite opinion already holds their minds captive, and has established itself deep within them? Among close friends, in private conversation, this academic philosophy  
 15 is rather pleasant. But in the councils of rulers, where great matters are deliberated with great authority, ideas like this have no place.”

*An academic philosophy*

“That is what I was saying:” he replied, “there is no place for philosophy among rulers.”

“Well, yes,” I said, “that’s true: no place for this academic philosophy, which  
 20 thinks all things suitable for all places. But there is another, more citizen-like philosophy, which knows the stage it plays on, and adapting itself to the play in hand, maintains its own part aptly and with decorum. This is the philosophy you should employ. Otherwise, let’s say some comedy of Plautus is being performed and while the household slaves are joking around, you enter the stage dressed as a philosopher, and reciting the lines in the *Octavia* where Seneca is disputing with Nero —  
 25 wouldn’t it be better to play a silent part, than to recite something strange and turn the play into a tragicomedy? For you will corrupt and distort the present play by mixing in things that don’t belong to it, even if what you add is better. Whatever play you are in, act in that one as best you can. Do not throw the whole play into  
 30 confusion just because another more charming one comes to mind.

*A marvelous simile*

*A silent rôle*

“So it is in the commonwealth, and in the deliberations of rulers. If you cannot tear out distorted opinions by the roots, if you cannot cure long-standing vices according to your liking, that is still no reason to desert the commonwealth: the ship should not be abandoned in a storm just because you cannot control the winds.

35 “But neither should you inculcate strange and extravagant arguments that you know will not carry weight with people of opposing views. Instead, you should try an indirect approach, and you must strive to manage everything beneficially to the best of your ability. And if you cannot make something good, at least make it the

least bad you can. For it is impossible for everything to turn out well, unless all human beings are good, and I don't expect that to happen for some years to come."

"By that method," he said, "nothing would happen except that, while trying to cure the madness of others, I would become insane along with them. For if I want to speak truthfully, I simply have to say such things. To say what is false may be a philosopher's duty, for all I know, but it is certainly not mine. Although my discourse may perhaps be disagreeable and annoying to them, I do not see why it should seem so unusual as to be tactless. But if I were to talk about the things Plato pretends in his *Republic* or what the Utopians actually *do* in theirs — although these latter would be, and in fact are, better, nevertheless they would appear strange, because here, individuals have private property, while over there, all things are held in common.

*The institutions of the  
Utopians*

"But apart from the fact that nobody who calls for retreat and warns of coming danger is ever pleasing to people who are determined to rush headlong in the opposite direction, what did my speech have in it that would not be fitting or even necessary to say anywhere? In fact, if we have to leave out, on the grounds of being 'unusual' or 'absurd,' everything that has only been made to *seem* strange by people's perverse habits, it would be necessary for us to dissemble, in the presence of Christians, almost everything Christ taught, and what he so very much prohibited his followers *from* dissembling that he even commanded them to proclaim openly from the rooftops what he whispered in their ears! The greatest part of his teachings are much stranger to their customs than my speech was — apart from the fact that preachers (those cunning men) have, I think, followed your own advice and by making it very hard for people to conform their behavior to what Christ expects of them, have instead accommodated his teaching to their behavior, like a ruler made of lead so there could be at least some sort of agreement, I suppose!

"For this reason, I do not see what they have accomplished except to allow evil-doers to live less anxiously, and that is just what I will accomplish in the councils of rulers. For either I would express different opinions, which would be just the same as if I had expressed no opinion at all, or I would express the same opinions they have, and be, as the character Micio says in the play of Terence, 'a helper of their own insanity.' For I do not see what that 'indirect guidance' of yours means, by which you are of the opinion that, if everything can't turn out good, one must strive for things to be handled advantageously, and turn out the least bad they can. But there is really no place for pretending or looking the other way: you have to approve the worst plans openly, and underwrite the most pestilent decrees. Anyone who gives inadequate praise to evil deliberations will be treated like a spy, almost a traitor.

"Furthermore, there is no opportunity for you to do good because you have

been cast ashore amongst colleagues who would corrupt even the best of men more easily than be corrected themselves, and their perverse habits will either corrupt you, or, while being pure and innocent yourself, you will only be a screen for others' wickedness and stupidity, so far from being able to make anything better with that 'indirect guidance.'

"For that reason, Plato declares with a most beautiful analogy why the wise rightly refrain from engaging in public affairs. For when they see the people rushing into the streets to be drenched with constant rain, they cannot persuade them to come out of the rain and come inside. And since they know that the only thing they would accomplish by going out to help, would be to have everybody get wet together, they stay indoors, considering it good enough, when you cannot cure someone else of foolishness, at least to stay out of the rain yourself.

"But actually, my dear More, to really speak my mind to you, it seems to me that, wherever there is private property, wherever everybody measures everything with money, there it can hardly ever happen that a commonwealth will be governed justly or prosperously — unless you think that there is just government when all the best things go to the worst people, or that there is prosperous government when everything is divided up only among the very fewest number, when not even these could be considered happy in every respect, with the rest plainly miserable.

"For this reason, when I contemplate the most prudent and holy institutions of the Utopians, among whom public affairs are administered so conveniently by so few laws that virtue is rewarded, and yet, because possessions are equalized, there is an abundance of all things for everyone; and then when I compare their customs with so many other nations that are always making regulations and are never well-regulated, all those nations where a person acquires what he calls his own private property, in which so many laws, passed every day, are never enough for someone to secure, protect, or even distinguish sufficiently what each person calls his own private property from what somebody else has — this is what those countless disagreements (constantly arising and never ending) clearly indicate. And so, the more I think about these things, the more I come to agree with Plato, and the less surprised I am that he disdained to make any laws for those who were opposed to legislation by which all persons shared all benefits equally.

"That most prudent man easily foresaw that there could be only one way to public well-being: by decreeing the equality of possessions — which I do not think could ever be observed when individuals have private ownership. For when each person, by a definite right and title, sweeps up as much as he can to himself, the entire supply of goods, no matter how large, is divided up among only a few persons, leaving scarcity for everyone else; it generally happens, then, that each group really



deserves the destiny of the other group, since the few are rapacious, shameless, and useless, while the many, by contrast, are modest and simple and by their daily industry more kindly disposed to the public interest than they are to themselves. And this is why I am fully persuaded that goods cannot be distributed in an equitable or just way, or that anything can turn out well in human affairs unless ownership is completely abolished; on the other hand, as long as it remains, so also will remain an anxiety-producing and inescapable load of hardships and poverty for the largest part—and the best part, by far—of the human race.

“Although I admit that this burden can be made a little lighter, I nevertheless contend that it cannot be removed entirely. If, for instance, it be decreed that no one may possess more than a fixed measure of land and that there be a lawful wealth level for each person; if it were required by certain laws that a ruler may not be excessively powerful nor the people excessively insolent; that public offices not be solicited, nor offered for sale, nor require great expenses to be incurred by their holders (otherwise occasion is given for fraud and robbery in order to recoup the money, and it becomes necessary to appoint *rich people* to offices which should really be administered by *prudent people*)—through such laws, I say, these evils too might be lessened and mitigated, the way terminally ill bodies are sustained by the repeated application of warm lotions. But that they be *really* healed and restored to good condition, there is no hope at all, as long as people possess their own property. Rather, in your eagerness to care for one part, you will worsen the injuries of the other parts; one part’s sickness arises from another part’s healing when nothing can be added without the same thing being subtracted from another.”

“But, on the contrary,” I said, “it seems to me that life can never be lived with any convenience where all things are owned in common. For how could there be a good supply of things with everybody trying to get out of work, not being urged by the profit motive, and becoming lazy by relying on the work of others? But even if they are spurred to work by the scarcity, when nobody is able lawfully to protect as his own what he has acquired, is it not inevitable that everyone will suffer from perpetual murder and sedition? Especially when the authority and reverence of magistrates is gone—for how there could be any place for that when the people cannot be distinguished among themselves in any way, I cannot even imagine.”

“I do not wonder,” he said, “that you think that way, since either a false image or no image at all comes to your mind. But if you had been in Utopia with me and you had seen their customs and institutions at first hand, as I did—I lived there for more than five years, and never would have left except to make that new world known—then you would openly admit that you have never seen a people rightly governed anywhere else but there.”



“And yet,” said Peter Giles, “you would hardly persuade me that a people can be found in that new world any better governed than here in this world we know, because, I believe, our talents are not inferior and our commonwealths older than those over there, and long experience has discovered very many conveniences of life, even if I leave aside certain things we have acquired by luck, which not even a brilliant mind would have been able to think up.”

“As for the antiquity of those commonwealths,” he said, “you could speak more correctly if you had read through the histories of that part of the world, and if they ought to be trusted, cities were there before people were here. All the same, whatever intelligence has found out or chance has discovered until now, could have occurred in either place. But I certainly think that although we may be superior to them in natural intelligence, nevertheless we are far behind in eagerness and industry.”

“For (as their annals maintain), before we had ever landed there, concerning our affairs (they call us *Ultra-equatorials*) they had heard nothing, except that once, over twelve hundred years ago, a certain ship which a storm had carried there suffered shipwreck and was lost near the island of Utopia. A few Romans and Egyptians were cast onto the beach and never afterwards departed. But consider how much good their industriousness made of this one occasion! There was not a single useful art practiced in the Roman Empire that they did not either learn from the shipwrecked strangers or discover themselves through the starting points they received from them: so profitable was it for them that a few people from here had once been brought there.”

“But if any like fortune has ever driven someone from there to *here*, it has been thoroughly forgotten — just as thoroughly as the fact that I was once *there* will probably also be forgotten by our own descendants. And even though they immediately made their own from that one meeting whatever was advantageously invented by us, I think it will be a long time before we accept anything that was established better by them than by us. And this, I think, is the biggest single reason that, although we are not inferior to them in talent or wealth, their state is more prudently administered than ours and flourishes more happily.”

“Well then, my dear Raphael,” I said, “I ask and implore you to describe the island to us. Do not be brief, but explain to us in order the lands, rivers, cities, inhabitants, customs, institutions, laws, and, well — just everything you think we would want to know, and that means, please, think we want to know whatever we don’t know yet.”

“There is nothing,” he said, “I would rather do, and I’m ready to do just that. But it does require some leisure time.”

“Well, let’s go in, then,” I said, “and have lunch. Then right after we can spend as much time as we please.”

“So be it!” he said.

So we went inside and had lunch, and after that, we returned to the same place, sat down on the same bench, and ordered the servants not to let anyone interrupt 5 us. Peter Giles and I exhorted Raphael to fulfill his promise, and therefore he, seeing us attentive and eager to listen, sat for a little while in thoughtful silence, then began in this way...

END OF BOOK ONE



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A Conversation Which  
RAPHAEL HYTHLODAY  
Held on the Best State of a Commonwealth  
As Reported by THOMAS MORE,  
Citizen and Sheriff of London

BOOK 2

*Site and shape of the  
new island Utopia*

5  
10  
15  
The island of the Utopians is two hundred miles across in the middle where it is the widest, and throughout the greater part of the island is not much narrower, while it gradually thins towards the ends on both sides. These ends, as if drawn around by a compass with a circumference of five hundred miles, shape the island as a whole into the likeness of a crescent moon. A strait, flowing between the horns of the island, divides them about eleven miles apart, and, pouring into a huge empty space where the winds are blocked by the surrounding land, forms a kind of vast lake with calm rather than raging waters, turning nearly the entire hollow of the land into a harbor, which, to the great benefit of the people, allows the transport of ships across it in all directions.

*A place safe by nature is  
defended by one garrison*

20  
25  
The mouth of this harbor is rather terrifying by having shallows on one side, and rocks on the other. In almost the exact center one crag stands up from the water, harmless for that reason, on which they have built a tower for defense; the other rocks are hidden and treacherous. The Utopians alone know where the channels are, and it is not by chance that no foreign craft comes into this bay without a Utopian pilot, seeing how it is hardly safe even for Utopians to enter the bay without a set of signals from the shore to guide their way. If these signals were moved to different places, they could easily lead to destruction an enemy with no matter how large a fleet.

*The stratagem of shifting  
the signals*

On the other side of the island there are not a few harbors, but access to the coast is everywhere so well guarded by nature or human artifice that large numbers of invading troops can be held off by a few defenders.

*The island Utopia  
named for General  
Utopus*

30  
35  
But as it is reported, and as the appearance of the island itself shows, the land was once not surrounded by the sea. But Utopus—the island bears the name of its conqueror, for before then it had been called Abraxa—who elevated an uncivilized and rustic mob to a level of manners and humane conduct that now surpasses nearly all other mortals, gained a victory right on his first landing. He undertook to excavate fifteen miles on the side where the land was attached to the continent and brought the sea all the way around the land. And since he forced not only the

*This was greater than  
digging through the  
Isthmus*

inhabitants to perform that labor but all his own soldiers as well (so that they not consider the labor a kind of insult), the task, divided among so great a multitude, was completed with unbelievable speed, so that their neighbors (who had mocked the vanity of the project at first) were struck with admiration — and with terror — at their success.

*It is easy to bear what is common to all*

The island has fifty-four cities, all spacious and magnificent, with language, customs, institutions, and laws entirely identical, and all having the same basic design and the same appearance, as far as each location allows. Twenty-four miles separate those that are the closest to each other, while on the other hand, no city is so isolated from the rest as to keep anyone from reaching another city on foot in more than one day's journey. From each city, three elder citizens skilled in the affairs of state meet each year in Amaurotum to discuss the common business of the island. For this city, situated as it is in the very center of the country, where ambassadors from all directions can reach it as conveniently as possible, is considered the first and leading city.

*The towns of the island of Utopia*

*Similarity makes for concord*

*A moderate distance between cities*

The lands are so appropriately assigned to the cities that each of them has in every direction no less than twelve miles of territory. In some directions it can be much more, that is to say, in the areas where the cities are spread further apart. No city has a desire to enlarge its territory, since they consider themselves the cultivators, rather than the owners, of the lands they have.

*Land distribution*

In the countryside they have homes conveniently located throughout all the fields, and fully equipped with farming tools. These homes are inhabited by the citizens who move there in turns. No farming household has fewer than forty, counting both men and women in addition to the two slaves assigned to each household; over each of these a grave and experienced father and mother are appointed, and over every thirty households presides one phylarch.

*But today this is the root of the plague upon all commonwealths*

*The care of agriculture is first*

From each household, every year, twenty persons return to the city, i.e., those who have completed two years in the country. In their place the same number of new people are substituted from the city, in order to be instructed by those who have been there a year, and are therefore more experienced in farming matters; these new arrivals will instruct others the following year, to prevent any loss in the yearly harvest due to inexperience, if all of them there were equally new and untrained in agriculture. Although this practice of renewing farmers has become the norm so that no one may be forced unwillingly to continue a rather hard life for too long a time, nevertheless, many, who by natural inclination enjoy farming, request and obtain additional years of doing farm work.

25

The farmers cultivate the earth, raise animals, cut wood, and carry it to the city in the most convenient way, whether by land or sea. They rear an infinite multitude of chicks using a marvelous device. For the hens do not lie on the eggs, but instead

*Farm duties*



*A wondrous method of  
hatching eggs*

the farmers keep a great number of them alive in a kind of steady heat and tend them; as soon as they hatch from their shells, the chicks recognize and follow humans instead of their own mothers.

*Use of horses*

They raise as few horses as possible, and only if they are spirited, and for no purpose other than training the youth in equestrian matters. Oxen accomplish all the work of cultivation and conveyance, and though they acknowledge oxen as inferior to horses in power, they think them surpassing horses in endurance, and not as prone to diseases; in addition, they are easier to take care and cheaper to feed, and finally, once they have dutifully accomplished their service, are usable for food.

*Food and drink*

They sow grain only for bread, since they drink either wine made from grapes or cider made from apples or pears, or finally, water: sometimes straight, but often steeped with honey or licorice root, which they have in great abundance.

*The method of sowing*

Although they know (and know most exactly) how much grain each city and its adjoining territory consumes, they still grow much more grain and raise many more cattle than they need for their own uses, and distribute the rest to their neighbors. If they need anything which is not available in the countryside, they ask for everything from the city, and they get it all from the city magistrates without any exchange of goods without haggling, since they assemble there once every month, mostly on the festival day.

*How great the value of  
shared labor*

When harvest day approaches, the phylarchs of the farmers inform the urban magistrates of the number of citizens needed to be sent to them, and this crowd of harvesters, since they are all there on the right day, accomplish the whole task in practically one day of good weather.

## THE CITIES, ESPECIALLY AMAUROTUM

*A description of  
Amaurotum, the leading  
city of the Utopians*

Anyone who knows one of the cities knows them all; they are so entirely similar to each other (as long as the nature of the place does not prevent it). Therefore I might describe any one of them (for it makes no difference at all which), but what better one than Amaurotum? None is more worthy, since the rest defer to it for the sake of the Senate; nor is any other city better known to myself, having lived there continuously for five years.

*A description of the  
River Anydrus*

Amaurotum is located on the gentle descent of a mountain and is almost square in shape. On one side, beginning slightly below the crest of the hill, it measures two miles to reach the river Anydrus, but the side along the bank is somewhat longer.

The Anydrus rises eighty miles above Amaurotum from a modest spring, but, increased by the arrival of other tributaries, two of rather good size, it stretches out

to almost half a mile in width in front of the city itself; soon becoming still wider, it flows on further for another sixty miles until it is received by the ocean. Over this entire distance between the city and the sea, and even above the city for a few miles, the tide alternates, flowing in for six whole hours and flowing out again with a swift current. When the sea comes in, it fills the whole bed of the Anydrus with its waters for thirty miles, forces the river backward, even a little beyond that point tainting the river with its salt; but starting from here, the stream gradually becomes sweeter, and, gliding untainted past the city, fresh and unsullied, chases the retreating tide in reverse, almost to its very mouth.

5 *Exactly what happens  
on the River Thames in  
England*

The city is joined to the opposite bank of the river by a bridge made not of wooden columns and piles, but of stone work built into an extraordinary arch, and located where the city is farthest from the sea, so that ships can travel along the entire breadth of the city without obstructions.

10 *And in this, London is  
similar to Amaurotum*

In addition they have another river: not very big, but quite peaceful and pleasant, for, bubbling out of the same mountain on which the city is located, it flows downhill through the middle of the city and mixes with the Anydrus. The spring and source of this stream, which emerges a little way outside the town, the Amaurotans have surrounded with fortifications and connected to the town, in order to keep the water from being interrupted or diverted or poisoned by any attacking enemy force. From there, the water is drawn off in various directions through brickwork channels to the lower parts of the city, and where the lay of the land prevents this, rainwater collected in spacious cisterns performs the same service.

15

*Use of drinkable water*

20

A high and wide wall surrounds the town, with towers and battlements throughout; a moat that is dry but still deep and wide and made impassable by hedges of thorns, surrounds the walls on three sides. On the fourth side the river itself serves as the moat.

25

*Fortifications of the  
walls*

The streets are nicely laid out both for transportation and for blocking the winds, and the houses, by no means shabby in appearance, form a long, uninterrupted row along an entire block, in view of another row of houses opposite; a road twenty feet wide separates these fronts of the blocks. To the rear of the dwellings lies a wide garden extending the length of the block and enclosed on all sides by the backs of the neighboring houses. No house is without a front door to the street and a back door to the garden. And furthermore, these doors are the double-paneled type that easily open with a light pull of the hand and then automatically close again, and let anyone in — thus nothing is private anywhere: they even change their houses by lottery every ten years.

30

*The kind of streets  
The buildings*

*Gardens attached to the  
homes*

35

*These recall Plato's  
community*

They set a high value on these gardens: in them they keep vines, fruits, herbs, and flowers, and they look so bright and are kept with such care that I have never

*The usefulness of  
gardens made known  
also by Virgil*

seen anything more fruitful or more beautiful anywhere. And it is not only pleasure that ignites their enthusiasm for gardening but also competition with the gardens of the other blocks of houses. To be sure, you could not easily find anything else in the whole city more suitably arranged for the needs or the pleasure of the citizens.

5 And this is why there was nothing on which their founder appears to have taken greater pains, than for the care of these gardens.

The plan of the whole city, they say, was designed from the very beginning by Utopus himself, but since he saw that its development and complete furnishing would take more than one man's lifetime—that he left to posterity. And so they  
10 have it written down in their annals (a history they have diligently and religiously preserved, embracing the one thousand, seven hundred and sixty years since the very conquest of the island), that in the beginning the houses were low to the ground, like huts and cottages, and made from whatever wood was lying to hand, with mud-plastered walls and peaked roofs covered in straw.

15 But now the form of every house to be seen there is of three stories, with inside and outside wall surfaces constructed of stone, cement, or fired brick, with rubble packed into the spaces between. The roofs are flat and they cover them with some coarse material of no cost but forms a fire-resistant compound that is better than lead for preventing storm-damage. They keep wind from blowing through the win-  
20 dows by means of glass (the use of which is very frequent there). Sometimes they also use fine linen in the windows, smeared with clear oil or amber, for a twofold advantage, really: when treated this way, the linen allows more light—and less wind—to pass through.

*Glass or linen windows*

#### MAGISTRATES

25 Every thirty families chooses a magistrate for themselves each year, called in the older form of their language a *syphogrant*, in the more recent one a *phylarch*. To every ten syphogrants, each with their own thirty families, is assigned what used to be called a *tranibor*, but now a *protophylarch*. Finally, all two hundred syphogrants, after taking an oath to choose the one they think most useful, by secret ballot elect  
30 one city-ruler from among four candidates nominated by the people, since one person chosen from each fourth part of the city is recommended to the Senate.

*Tranibor in the lan-  
guage of the Utopians  
means "first officer"*

*A remarkable method  
for electing officials*

The office of city-ruler is permanent and for life, unless someone is blocked by the suspicion of seeking tyranny. They choose tranibors every year, but they do not lightly change them. All other offices are annual.

*Tyranny hated by  
the well-ordered  
commonwealth*

35 Every other day, and sometimes more often should the situation demand, the tranibors come to a council with the city-ruler, where they take counsel about the

commonwealth. The disputes between private persons (if there are any) are very few, and are resolved in short order. They always admit two syphrogrants into the Senate, a different two every day. Precaution is taken that nothing pertaining to the commonwealth be ratified that has not been discussed in the senate on three days before it is decided upon. To engage in counsels about public affairs outside the Senate or the public assemblies is considered a capital crime. They say that these measures were established so that it might not be easy, through a conspiracy of the ruler and the tranibors, after the suppression of the people by tyranny, to make a change in the state of the commonwealth. And for this reason whatever is considered of great importance is deferred to the assemblies of the syphogrant, who, sharing the matter with the families, afterwards take counsel among themselves and report their advice to the Senate. Sometimes the matter is brought before the council of the whole island.

*Disputes are settled quickly, which now are endlessly prolonged by design*

*Nothing passed suddenly*

Furthermore the Senate also keeps the custom that nothing is to be discussed on the same day as it is first proposed, but is put off for the next Senate meeting. This is to prevent anyone who rashly blurts out whatever first comes into his head, from thinking up ways to defend his own proposal rather than how to benefit the commonwealth, thus preferring a loss to the public well-being over a loss to his own reputation: an absurd, inverted kind of embarrassment at seeming to have spoken, at first, with too little foresight rather than have the foresight to speak with care rather than haste to begin with.

*If only the same would happen today in our councils!*

*This is what the ancient saying, "counsel at night" means*

## OCCUPATIONS

The one craft common to all, both men and women, and from which nobody is excused, is agriculture. This is what they are all taught from childhood, partly by lessons taught in school, partly by being taken out on recreational field-trips to the farms nearer the city, where they not only observe actual farm work, but also get some exercise by doing it themselves.

*Agriculture is shared by all, which we now thrust upon a few lowly people*

In addition to agriculture (which is, as I said, common to all) each one is taught a particular craft as his very own, and this is generally wool-working, or the making of linen, or masonry, or the crafts of building, with either metal or wood. And no other work there, in fact, occupies any number of persons worth mentioning. As for their clothing—apart from distinguishing male from female and single from married person, only one design is in use throughout the whole island, and has been in continuous use for ages: not unattractive to the eye, it allows free movement of the body, and can be adapted to both cold and hot weather—this clothing, as I was saying, each family makes for itself.

*They are taught the crafts for their needs, not for luxury*

*Similarity of clothing*

*No citizen without a craft*

*Let each learn the craft to which he is naturally inclined*

But regarding other crafts, each person learns one of them, and not only the men, but also the women, although the latter, being weaker, practice lighter tasks, for the most part working wool and flax. To the men are entrusted the other, more laborious crafts; for the most part everyone is trained in his father's crafts, since most are inclined that way by nature. But if someone has a mind to go in another direction, he is transferred by adoption into some household that practices the craft that has caught his fancy, care being taken not only by his father but also by the magistrates that he be assigned to a grave and honorable father-of-the-household. Further, if anyone who has learned one craft especially well desires to learn another also, he is likewise permitted to do that. Once he has acquired both, he practices whichever he wishes, unless the city has need of one sort of work more than the other.

*Idle persons driven out of the commonwealth*

*The work of craftsmen should be moderate*

The chief and practically only business of the syphogrants is to see to it that no one is idle, but that each applies himself industriously to his craft, and yet not be wearied by constant labor like cattle from earliest morning until late at night. For that is worse than servile labor, and yet it is the life of tradesmen almost everywhere, except among the Utopians, who, although they divide a day into twenty-four equal hours, with the night counted as part of it, assign only six hours to work: three before midday, after which they go to lunch, and once they have rested for two hours after lunch, they then close out the three hours then given to labor with dinner. Because they count the first hour from midday, they go to sleep by the eighth hour, and sleep lays claim to eight hours.

*Scholarly pursuits*

*Play at supper*

*But now dicing is the sport of rulers*

Whatever interval is left between the hours of working, sleeping and eating is allowed to the individual to use at his own discretion, not to abuse through debauchery or sloth, but to apply the time freed from one's own work to some other pursuit. Many spend these intervals reading good literature. It is traditional for public lectures to be held daily before daylight, which only those who have been specially assigned to study are compelled to attend, while a very large crowd, men and women alike, and drawn from every occupation, come together to attend the lectures, some to one and some to another, according to inclination. Nevertheless, if anyone prefers to spend this time at his craft (as is the case with many whose minds do not rise to the contemplation of a discipline), he is not prevented; in fact, he is even praised as useful to the commonwealth.

After supper they spend one hour at play: in summer in the gardens, in winter in those common halls where they eat. There they either practice music or refresh themselves with conversation. Dicing and similar kinds of silly and pernicious games they do not even know about, but have two games in use, not unlike chess. One is a fight between numbers, in which one number plunders the other. The

other is a game in which the vices contend in pitched battle against the virtues. This game cleverly reveals the discord of the vices among themselves but their harmony in opposing the virtues. It likewise shows what vices oppose what virtues, with what strength they attack in the open, with what machinations they attack indirectly, how the virtues defend themselves and break the power of the vices, with what arts they elude their attempts, and finally in what way either side can gain victory.

*Even their games are useful*

But here, in order that you not misunderstand me, a certain point must be looked at more closely. Since only six hours are spent working, you might think that a kind of scarcity of necessities would have to be the result. But that is so far from happening, that six hours of work not only suffices to supply whatever the necessity or the convenience of life requires, but in fact exceeds it—something you will understand when you consider how great a part of the population of other nations spends its life in idleness. First, almost all the women, half of the entire population—or, wherever women are busy working, the men usually take their place at snoring the day away. Add to these, the huge, idle crowd of priests and so-called religious, throw in all the rich, especially the lords of estates, the ones commonly called “the well-born and noble,” and include their household retinue, that whole morass of good-for-nothing swashbucklers; finally, join to these the strong and healthy beggars who disguise their sloth with some kind of illness: you will surely find that the people who produce with their labor all the things that human beings use are in fact far fewer in number than you had thought.

*Kinds of idle people*

*The bodyguard of the nobles*

*Very prudently said!*

Judge for yourself now, how few of these who do work are engaged in necessary tasks. In fact, wherever we measure everything by money, many completely useless and superfluous arts must be practiced that merely minister to excess and license. For if this same multitude which now is working were distributed into as few crafts as the fitting use of nature demands, in the great abundance of goods as is needed now, the prices would obviously be too low for the craftsmen to maintain a livelihood from that source. But if all those who are distracted by useless crafts—and add to them the whole crowd that languishes in leisure and sloth, any one of whom consumes as much of the goods supplied by the labor of others as two people who are the producers of the same things—if all these were placed in jobs that were all useful, you can easily see how small an amount of time would be quite plenty: enough and more than enough to supply fully everything that either need or convenience demands—(and including what pleasure requires, provided it is true and natural).

And the reality in Utopia makes this very point clear. For there, in a whole city with its adjacent neighborhood, barely five hundred out of the total number of men and women old and strong enough for work are allowed exemption from work. Among these are the syphogrants, who (although the laws have released them



*Not even the magistrates  
stop working*

from work) nevertheless do not exempt themselves, the more effectively to motivate the rest to work by their own example. The same freedom from work is enjoyed by those whom the people (at the recommendation of the priests, and persuaded by secret ballot of the syphogrants) have granted a perpetual exemption in order to  
5 master various disciplines. And if any of these disappoints the hope conceived of him, he is thrown back to the workers; on the other hand, it not infrequently occurs that some manual laborer, by industriously spending his extra hours in studying, advances so much by his diligence, that he is taken from his own work and promoted into the class of the learned. Out of this order of the learned are chosen the ambassadors, priests, tranibors, and finally the city-ruler himself, whom they call Barzanes  
10 in their ancient language, Ademus in their more modern one.

*Only the learned are  
designated for the  
magistracies*

Since almost all the remaining multitude are neither at leisure nor busy with useless tasks, it can quickly be estimated how few hours are needed to produce so much good work. To what I have already said this convenience should be added be-  
15 sides: they have less need of effort in most of the necessary crafts than other nations, where, first of all, either the building or the repairing of houses requires everywhere such continuous effort on the part of so many, since what the father has built, the insufficiently thrifty heir allows gradually to be ruined, so that, what could have been maintained at minimal cost, his successor must rebuild all over again with  
20 greater expense. Furthermore, it often happens, even though one man's house has been built at great cost to him, that another man with a very particular taste despises it, and once that has been neglected and, for that reason, has soon collapsed, he builds another house elsewhere with no less expense. But among the Utopians, where all things are in order and a commonwealth has been established, it very  
25 rarely happens that a new lot is chosen for the building of houses, and not only is a remedy swiftly found for present problems, there is also anticipation for future issues. This is why, for the least amount of work, their buildings last for the longest time, and craftsmen in this field hardly have anything to do sometimes, except to fill an order to cut the lumber of a house and to square and fit the stones, so it can  
30 go up more quickly if the need should arise.

*How house building  
costs could be avoided*

Now consider how few labors are needed for their clothing: first, while they are at work, they are clothed indifferently with hide or pelts which last for seven years. When they go out in public, they put on a cloak to cover those rougher clothes; there is one color used throughout the whole island, and that is the natural wool  
35 color. And so not only are they in much less need of woolen cloth there than elsewhere, but it also costs much less. But there is less labor involved in linen-making, which is therefore more frequently used; but with linen, only the whiteness matters to them, while with wool, it is only the cleanliness they care about; nor is any

*How to avoid cost in  
clothing*

greater value set on a finer weave. And so it happens that everywhere else in the world, four or five wool coats of different color and as many silk shirts are never enough for one man to have, while not even ten are enough for those with fussier tastes; there, everyone is content with one, which generally last for two years. In fact, there is no reason for trying to acquire more, since if you got them you would neither be any better defended against the cold, nor look even a bit more elegant in your dress. 5

Therefore, since they all practice useful occupations, and since fewer products are enough for them, it is no wonder that, with an abundant supply of everything, they sometimes lead a vast multitude out to fix public roads (if any are worn down), and very often, when there is no need even for such labor as this, they publicly announce a reduction in working hours. For the magistrates do not exercise the citizens in superfluous work against their will, insofar as the original organization of that commonwealth was directed to this one goal above all: that in so far as public necessities allow for it, as much time as possible should be reclaimed from the servitude of the body and redirected, for all citizens, to the freedom and cultivation of the mind. For here, they think, is where the happiness of life is to be found. 10 15

#### SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

But now it seems I should explain how the citizens deal with one another, what interactions the people have among themselves, and what method there is for distributing things. A city, then, consists of households, and the households, for the most part, are composed of blood relatives. Women (when they become adults) are placed with their husbands' families, and move into their houses. But male children, and the grandsons after them, remain in the household and obey the oldest male parent, unless he is not sound enough in mind by reason of old age, and in that case the next oldest takes his place. 20 25

But to keep the city either from becoming too sparsely populated or from growing larger than it should — each city comprises six thousand households, not including the surrounding territory — care is taken that no household has fewer than ten, or more than sixteen adults, for the number of children cannot, of course, be pre-established. This limit is easily maintained by transferring into the smaller households the excess growth of the fuller ones. But if the population of a single city ever becomes more numerous than it should, they repair the under-population of their other cities. 30

*Number of citizens*

But if, by chance, the mass of the population throughout the whole island swells more than it should, citizens taken from any city are appointed to settle the nearest 35

part of the mainland wherever the native inhabitants have a lot of extra land and it is without cultivation; the Utopians then plant a colony there under their own laws, admitting as citizens the natives of that land if they wish to live with them. Joining with such who are willing, they easily grow together to form the same way  
 5 of life and the same habits, and this is good for both peoples. By their institutions they make a land abundant for both peoples together, which had appeared barren and forbidding to them separately. Those who refuse to live by their laws, they drive off the territory they have marked out for themselves; against those who resist this, they clash in war. For they consider it a most just cause of war when a people, not  
 10 using land but keeping it empty and void, prohibits the use and possession of that same land by others who, as nature prescribes, ought to be supported by it.

If ever some misfortune reduces the population in any of their cities to such an extent that the loss cannot be repaired from other parts of the island while preserving the proper size of each city (which is said to have happened only twice in their  
 15 whole history, through a severe attack of plague), the cities are replenished by the return of citizens from the colony. For they would rather let colonies vanish than let any of the cities on the island be diminished.

But I return to the citizens' social life. The oldest male (as I have said) has charge of the household. Wives attend to their husbands, children to their parents, and in  
 20 general the younger in age to the older.

Every city is divided into four equal parts. In the middle of each part is a market for all commodities. Goods produced by each household are brought there to certain warehouses and the different types of goods are distributed into separate storerooms. From these, each master of the household requests whatever he and  
 25 his household needs, and takes away whatever he has requested without money or the payment of any compensation at all. For why should anything be denied, when there is more than enough of everything, and no fear that anyone would want to demand more than he needs? And why would anyone be suspected of demanding more than enough when he is certain that he will never lack anything? Indeed,  
 30 what makes creatures greedy and rapacious is either fear of want, present in all animal species, or pride, unique to humans, who think they acquire glory by excelling others with a superfluous show of possessions; but this type of vice can have no place whatsoever within the institutions of the Utopians.

Adjacent to the markets I have mentioned are the food markets. Into these  
 35 are transported not only vegetables, fruit, and bread, but also fish and whatever birds and four-footed beasts are good for eating, with places located outside the city where gore and filth can be washed away by flowing water. From this place they carry away the cattle that have been slaughtered and cleaned by the hands of slaves

*Thus it is possible to  
exclude the idle mob  
of servants*

*The cause of  
rapaciousness*

*Gore and filth carry the  
plague into cities*

(for they do not allow their citizens to become accustomed to slaughtering animals, a practice that they think gradually diminishes mercy, the most humane feeling in our nature, nor do they permit anything dirty or unclean to be carried into the city — the air, corrupted by its rotting, could bring sickness).

*From slaughtering  
cattle we learned to kill  
humans, too*

Further, each street has certain spacious halls, equidistant from one another, each identified by name (in these live the syphogrants) and to each of the houses are assigned thirty families to have food there, fifteen on each side. The food-provisioners for each hall meet at a fixed time in the market, and request food according to the number of persons they are provisioning.

But in this distribution first care is taken of the sick, who are cared for in public hospitals. They have four hospitals on the edges of the city, a short distance outside the walls, each of them large enough in capacity to equal a small town; both so that no matter how great the number of patients, they aren't crowded and uncomfortable, and so that those who have this sort of disease, infection from which usually creeps from one person to another, can be moved farther away from the mass of other people. These hospitals have been so well furnished and are bursting with all the instruments of medical care, and also so gentle and solicitous the care itself, so constant the attention bestowed by the most experienced doctors, that while no one is sent there against his will, yet in the whole city almost no one who suffers from poor health would not prefer to take a bed there than to stay at home.

*Care for the sick*

After the food-provisioner for the sick has received the food based on the doctors' orders, then all the best food is evenly distributed among the dining halls, according to the number in each, except that there is special regard for the city-ruler, the priest, and the tranibors; the same goes for the ambassadors and all the foreigners as well (if there are any, they are few and infrequent); but whenever foreigners are present, specially furnished residences are provided for them as well.

*Common and mixed  
dining*

At the established times for lunch and dinner, each entire syphograncy, alerted by the sound of a brass trumpet, comes to meet in these halls, except for those who are lying in bed in the hospitals or at home. Nobody, however, is prevented from taking food home from the market as long as enough has already been distributed to the dining halls, since they know that no one does it without good reason; although nobody is forbidden to eat at home, still, no one does so gladly, since it is considered ignoble, and in fact it is foolish to spend effort on making an inferior meal when a sumptuous and splendid one is available at the dining hall, so close-by.

*How in every situation  
regard is had for  
freedom, so that nothing  
is done by compulsion*

In this hall all the chores which are somewhat dirty or laborious are undertaken by slaves. But the duty of cooking the food and preparing it, and finally of setting out and serving the whole banquet, is something only the women from each household perform, in rotation. They are seated around three or more tables, depending

*Women serve at feasts*

on the number of people dining. The men are seated along the wall, the women on the outside of the tables, so that, in case they feel any sudden pain, which normally happens at times to those who are pregnant, they can get up without disturbing the seating arrangement and go off to the nursing mothers.

5        These women sit apart with their infants nursing in a certain room designated for this, with a steady hearth fire and clean water, with cradles also nearby in the meanwhile, so they can put the infants down to sleep and, if they want, take off their swaddling bands and let them have some freedom to move around and play by the fire. Each nurses her own offspring, unless death or sickness prevents it. When  
10       that happens, the wives of the syphogrants quickly look for another nurse, and it is not difficult to find one. For those who can furnish this commit themselves to no duty more gladly, since everyone greets such compassion with praise, and the child who is reared this way looks upon his nurse as a parent. In the nurses' chamber, all the children under five sit together. The other minors, among whom they  
15       count those of either sex who are below marrying age, either serve those at table or, if they are not yet capable because of their age, just stand by in perfect silence. Both groups eat whatever is handed to them from the ones sitting at table, and have no other fixed time for eating.

In the middle of the first table, which is in the chief place, and from which the  
20       whole assembly is in view (for this table is placed cross-wise at the upper end of the room) is where the syphogrant and his wife sit. Next to them are two of the eldest, for they sit four by four at every table. If there is a religious shrine in the territory of the syphogrant, the priest and his wife sit with the syphogrant in order to pre-  
25       side. On either side of them are placed younger persons, then elders again, and so on throughout the whole house, contemporaries being joined with contemporaries and nevertheless also interspersed between those of different ages; a practice estab-  
lished, they say, so that the gravity and reverence of the older (since nothing can be done or said at table without being noticed by those neighbors on every side) will  
restrain the younger from a shameless freedom of word and gesture.

30       The dishes of food are not served first to the end of the table, working down, but the best of every kind food is offered to the elders first (who sit in specially des-  
ignated places), then the rest are served equally in turn. But any special delicacies (of which there was not going to be enough be distributed sufficiently throughout the whole household) the elders share as they see fit with those sitting near them.  
35       In this way, the older ones are respected, while an equal amount of benefit reaches everyone.

Every lunch and dinner is begun with a reading that is morally formative but still short enough not to be tedious. After this, the elders start conversations that

*By praise and duty  
citizens are best  
challenged to act rightly*

*Rearing offspring*

*The priest above the  
city-ruler, but nowadays  
even bishops act like the  
slaves of princes*

*Younger mixed with the  
elder*

*Respect for the elders*

*The monks hardly  
observe this custom today*

are on decent topics and yet not gloomy or humorless. And they do not occupy the entire lunchtime with long speeches; rather, they gladly listen to the younger ones, and for that matter, even draw them out on purpose so much so that they can get experience of each young person's natural disposition and talent, expressing itself in the freedom of a common meal.

*Talk at meals*

The lunches are a little shorter, the dinners more elaborate, because the former is followed by work, the latter by sleep and a night's rest, and they think rest more effective for healthy digestion. No dinnertime is spent without music, nor does the second course ever lack sweets. They burn incense and sprinkle perfumes. They leave nothing out that could put the company in good cheer. They are rather inclined in this direction, not to prohibit any kind of pleasure, provided no disadvantage is involved with it.

*Doctors condemn this practice today*

*Music at meals*

*Harmless pleasure should not be spurned*

In this manner, then, they dine together in the city; in the country, however, where they live further apart from each other, everyone eats in their own houses. No household in the country lacks any provisions, since everything that the city-folks eat comes from them to begin with.

#### UTOPIAN TRAVEL

But if the desire takes them to stay with friends in another city, or even just to see a place, they can easily get permission to do this from their syphogrants and tranibors, unless some necessity prevents it. Then a certain number of them are sent out together, with a letter from the ruler witnessing to their permission to travel, and stating a set day for their return. A wagon is provided, with a public slave to drive and take care of the oxen. If there are no women in the group, the wagon is returned, being considered a burden and a hindrance. On the entire journey they carry nothing with them, but do not lack anything, for they are at home everywhere.

If they stay longer than one day in any place, they each practice their own craft there and are treated with the utmost courtesy by their fellow tradesmen. If anyone should wander on his own initiative beyond his territory and be apprehended without an official letter from the ruler, he is held in disgrace, brought back like an escaped slave, and sharply corrected. If he attempts it a second time, his punishment is slavery.

But if anyone is struck with a desire to roam through the countryside of his own city, he is not prohibited, as long as he has his father's permission and his spouse consents. But at whatever estate he arrives, he is not given any food until he has completed a morning's work (or as much work as is customarily done before dinner). Under this law, one is permitted to go anywhere within the territory



surrounding his own city, for he will be no less useful to a city than if he were actually in it.

*O holy commonwealth,  
which even Christians  
should imitate!*

*Equality ensures that  
there is enough for  
everyone.*

*A commonwealth is  
nothing other than a  
kind of large family.*

*Utopian business  
activity*

*How mindful they  
always are of their  
community*

*With this method  
money would be  
considered worthless*

5 Now you see how there is no license in any place for idleness, or excuse for laziness, no wine-shops, no alehouses; nowhere a brothel, no opportunity for corruption, no hideouts, no small meeting places, but the ever-present, watching eyes of everyone else compel them either to do their customary work or pursue leisure activities that are not ignoble. From this national habit it necessarily follows that there is an abundance of everything. And since that abundance reaches everyone equally, it is no wonder that no one can be needy or a beggar.

10 As soon as it has been ascertained in the Senate at Amautorum (where, as I have said, three persons from every city assemble every year) in which places resources are plentiful, and where, on the other hand, the produce has been more scarce, the abundance of one place immediately compensates the scarcity of another, and they do this without charge, and without receiving anything in barter from those to  
15 whom they make the gift. But as the cities give from their own supply to any other city, and take nothing in return for it, just so, they receive what they lack from another city, to which they have paid nothing. Thus the whole island is like a single family.

20 But after they are sufficiently provided for (a goal they do not think they have reached until they have provided for two years in advance, due to the uncertainty of the year ahead), then they export to the other regions whatever is left over: a great supply of grain, honey, wool, linen, wood, scarlet and purple dyes, fleece, wax, tallow, hides, and, in addition to this, livestock. One-seventh of all this they give as a gift to the poor of the region; the rest they sell for a modest price.

25 And from this commerce they not only import into their country those goods which they lack at home (and they lack practically nothing but iron) but also a great quantity of silver and gold. Thanks to their long-lasting custom (it has lasted longer than one could believe) of acquiring these metals, they now abound in an unimaginable surplus of them everywhere. And so now they do not care whether  
30 they sell for cash or credit, and they have far the most part in promissory notes, and when they make them they look to the public trust of the city, never that of private citizens, by documents drawn up according to custom. When the day for payment comes, the city collects on the loan from the individual debtors, gathers the money into the treasury, and enjoys the interest on it until the Utopians ask for it back.

35 They never ask for the majority of it back. For it is a thing for which they have no use, and they think it unfair to take it away from those who have need of it. But if the situation so demands that they should give some part of it as a loan to another people, then they do at last demand it, or when they must wage war. The one reason

for which they keep at home that whole treasure which they have is for it to serve as a defense in the most extreme or sudden dangers. And they use it especially for hiring foreign soldiers for a generous stipend (whom they would more willingly put in harm's way than their own citizens), knowing that with a large amount of money their enemies can usually be bribed and set to fighting among themselves through 5 treason, or even in open battle.

*It is enough to avoid war through payment or craft rather than shedding a lot of human blood*

For this reason they keep an incalculable treasure, but not *as* treasure; they think of it in a way that makes me embarrassed to speak about it, for fear that what I say will not be believed, and that is something that worries me all the more, knowing that, if I hadn't first seen it with my own eyes, I would scarcely have been in- 10 duced to believe it, if another person had told me! For it is almost necessarily the case that, the farther something is from the customs of those who hear about it, the farther they will be from believing it to be real. Although a prudent examiner of things will perhaps be less amazed (since the rest of their institutions are so very different from ours) that their use of silver and gold is likewise more suited to their 15 style than ours; in fact, they do not even use money themselves, but reserve it for an event that can just as much happen as *not* happen.

*O what a crafty man!*

In the meantime, they regard gold and silver (from which money is made) in such a way that they are not valued by anyone higher than the nature of the things themselves deserves—and who cannot see how inferior they are to iron? Human 20 beings can no more live without iron, by heaven, than without fire and water, whereas gold and silver have not been endowed by nature with any advantage we could not easily do without, if only the stupidity of man had not put a premium on their rarity. On the contrary, like a most indulgent parent, nature has placed in the open all the best things, like air, water, and the earth itself, but vain and unbeneficial 25 things she has removed as far away as possible.

*Gold is inferior to iron, when it comes to usefulness*

So it is with these metals: if the Utopians hoarded them away in some tower, the ruler and the senate would come under suspicion (such is the stupid shrewd- 30 ness of the mob) of cheating the people by a clever trick, and themselves taking some kind of profit. Moreover, if they used the silver and gold to make goblets and other hand-crafted works, and an occasion ever arose that would require them to be melted down and spent on soldiers' pay, they see, of course, that in such a case they would hardly tolerate being robbed of what they had begun to take delight in using.

In response to these difficulties, they have devised a certain system that is as con- 35 sistent with the rest of their institutions as it is extremely abhorrent to our own (for whom gold is so valuable and is stored so carefully), and is therefore unbelievable except to those who have experienced it. For although they eat and drink from earthen and glass vessels (skillfully made, but not expensive), they use gold and silver for

*O magnificent contempt  
for gold!*

*Gold the accoutrement  
of the disgraced*

*Gems the delight of  
children*

*A very fine story*

making chamber-pots and all the lowliest containers everywhere in use, not only in public halls, but in private homes as well. In addition, the chains and thick shackles that bind the slaves are forged out of the same metals. Finally, anyone who has been made infamous by some crime has gold rings hanging from his ears, gold rings on his fingers, a golden necklace around his neck, and finally a gold band on his head. Thus by every means they ensure that among them gold and silver are held in ignominy, and therefore these metals, which other nations allow themselves to be deprived of no less painfully than their own guts, among the Utopians, if some circumstance demands that all gold and silver be taken away, no one thinks he has lost a penny.

They collect pearls on the beaches, and even some diamonds and rubies on some mountain crags; they do not go out in search for them, but if they chance upon them, they pick them up and polish them. They adorn infants with them, who, although in the very beginning of childhood boast and take pride in such ornaments, when they get a little older, notice that it is only children who use trifles like these, they put them away without a word from their parents, through their own sense of shame — no differently than our own children do when they cast aside their marbles, trinkets, and dolls when they grow up.

And so, how their institutions, so different from those of other nations, produce emotional attitudes that are likewise different, was never so clear to me as in the case of the Anemolian ambassadors. They arrived in Amaurotum when I was there, and since they had come to discuss important matters, three citizens from each city had gathered there in anticipation of their arrival. Now all the ambassadors of the neighboring nations, who had landed there before, were thoroughly acquainted with the customs of the Utopians, and knew that they gave no honor to fine clothes, that silk was despicable to them, and even gold a disgrace, and as a consequence these ambassadors were used to arriving in as modest a dress as possible. But the Anemolians, because they lived farther away and seldom had relations with them, upon hearing that the Utopians all dressed in the same, very simple bodily attire, assumed that what the Utopians did not wear, they did not even possess; so the Anemolian ambassadors, more proud than wise, decided to show themselves off as gods with the elegance of their finery, and dazzle the eyes of the sorry Utopians with the splendor of their apparel. So three ambassadors landed with a hundred attendants, each one with colorful clothes, and most in silk, and the ambassadors themselves, who were nobility at home, came in gold clothing, with large necklaces, gold earrings, gold rings on their hands, strings of sparkling pearls and gems hanging from their caps — in short, they came decorated with all the things the Utopians use in the punishment of slaves, to show disgrace for infamy, or to make into toys for children. And so it was well worth the trouble to see how smug the Anemolians

felt to compare their own finery with the dress of the Utopians who had meanwhile filled the streets. But there was no less pleasure in seeing how far their hope and expectation had deceived them, and how far short they fell from the high regard they had been expecting to get. For, to the eyes of all the Utopians, with the exception of a very few who had visited other nations for some reason or other, all that splendor of apparel seemed shameful, and they greeted with reverence all the lowliest among them as if they were the lords, but considered the ambassadors themselves to be slaves because of their gold chains, and let them pass by without any honor at all.

You would have even seen the children who had outgrown their gems and pearls, when observing the same toys fastened to the caps of the ambassadors, poking their mothers in the side and whispering, "Look mother, how the big dummy is still wearing pearls and little gems, just like he was still a little boy!"

But the mother in all seriousness replied, "Be quiet, son—I think he is one of the ambassadors' fools."

*Crafty rogue!*

Others found fault with the gold chains, saying that they were useless, being so thin that a slave could easily break them, and so loose besides, that whenever he wanted he could shake them off, and escape anywhere unbound and free.

But after the ambassadors had spent a day or two there, and saw how little their large amount of gold was valued, and held in no less disgrace there than held in honor in their own country, and, furthermore, that more gold and silver was put into the chains and shackles of one escaped slave than in the get-up of all three of them put together, they were crestfallen, and laid aside in shame all the finery on which they had so arrogantly prided themselves, especially after a few conversations with the Utopians had made them more familiar with their customs and beliefs.

Utopians are amazed that any mortal soul could be delighted by the dubious gleam of a tiny gem or stone, when he could simply look at any star, not to mention the sun; that there was anyone so insane as to appear in his own eyes more noble on account of the fine weave of his spun-wool cloth when this very same wool (no matter how fine a thread it has) had once been worn by a sheep, and the sheep at the time was still nothing other than a sheep.

*He calls the gleaming "dubious," because jewelry is an artifice, or surely because its shining is tiny and dim.*

Likewise they are amazed that gold, by its very nature so useless, is now so valuable everywhere in the world, that the human being himself, through whom, and for whose use, gold has gained so much value, be far less valued than gold, and to such a degree, that any blockhead with no more intelligence than a log, and no less shameless than stupid, could still keep many wise and good men in slavery to himself just because he happened to have a heap of gold coins, and if some change of fortune or some trick of the laws (which no less than Fortune herself confuses the highest with the lowest) transfers it from that master to the most abject fool of his

*How truly and aptly said!*

*How much wiser the  
Utopians are than  
common crowd of  
Christians!*

entire household, it is no wonder that a little later, that erstwhile master would slip into servitude to his own former servant, as some kind of appendage or small addition to his coins. But they are much more amazed and revolted by the madness of those who grant all but divine honors to wealthy persons, to whom they owe nothing, to whom they are not beholden for any reason other than that they are rich, and whom they well know are so despicable and greedy that nothing is more certain to them than that not even a single coin from that great heap of money will ever come their way while those wealthy persons are still alive.

These beliefs and others of the same kind they have partly received from their upbringing, having been brought up in a commonwealth whose institutions are so removed from such foolishness, and partly from their formal instruction and reading. For even if there are not many from each city who are exempted from other work and assigned just to learning (these of course are those in whom they detect from childhood an outstanding talent, a special genius, and a mind inclined toward liberal studies), nevertheless all children are well-trained in letters, and a good part of the population, both men and women, and throughout their lives, allocate to reading and study the free hours we have mentioned.

*Study and instruction of  
the Utopians*

They acquire their knowledge of the disciplines in their own language. It does not lack vocabulary, nor is it unpleasant to hear, nor is there any more faithful way to convey their thoughts. That same language is spread through almost the whole region of that hemisphere (except that everywhere it is a little corrupted, to different degrees in different places).

*Music, dialectic,  
arithmetic*

Of all the philosophers, whose names are well-known to us in this part of the world, before we came, not even a single name had reached there, and yet in music, dialectic, and in the knowledge of calculating and measuring, they have made almost the same discoveries as our own past great men. Although they have equaled our ancients in almost all things, they are nevertheless far from equal to the discoveries of our recent dialecticians. For they have not discovered even one of those rules about restrictions, amplifications, and suppositions which are so very carefully worked out in the "*Small Logical Treatises*" which our children here are everywhere made to master. Moreover, they are so far from being capable of researching secondary intentions that not one of them could see what is called *man in general*, although (as you know) he is plainly colossal and bigger than any giant, and even though we pointed him out clearly with our finger.

*There is clearly sarcasm  
here*

*Study of stars*

But they are very skilled in the motion of the stars, and in the movements of the celestial orbits. What is more, they have also cleverly engineered instruments of various forms, by means of which they have grasped the motions and locations of the sun and the moon, and likewise of the other stars which are visible in their horizon.

But as for the conjunctions and disjunctions of the planets, and in fact, that whole imposture of divination by stars, they do not even dream.

*But these rule among Christians today*

They forecast rain, wind, and other changes in the weather from certain signs observed after long practice. But on the causes of all those things, and the tides and the saltiness of the sea, and in short, on the origin and nature of heaven and earth, they say, in part, the same things as our own ancient philosophers, and in part, just as these disagree among themselves, so the Utopians propose new reasons for things, disagreeing with all of our philosophers, and not completely agreeing among themselves.

*Physics the least certain of all*

In the part of philosophy which deals with ethics they dispute about the same things as we do, inquiring after the goods of the soul, of the body, and of external goods, and whether the word “good” applies to all these goods or only to the gifts of the soul. They discuss virtue and pleasure, but the foremost and chief debate of all, is the following: in what one thing, or in what several things, they think human happiness consists. But in this matter they seem to lean too far to the school that advocates pleasure, because it is by pleasure that they define the whole or at least the most important part of human happiness.

*Ethics  
Order of goods*

And you should be all the more amazed, nevertheless, that they also seek support for so delicate a judgment from religion (which is serious and strict and almost sad and rigid). For they never debate about happiness without combining certain principles taken from religion with philosophical reasoning, thinking that without such principles, reason by itself is too defective and weak to investigate true happiness. The principles are of this sort: the soul is immortal, and, by the goodness of God, born to be happy; after this life, rewards are waiting for our virtues and good deeds, punishments for our wicked deeds. Although these are matters of religion, they nevertheless think that reason leads to believing and accepting them.

*Ends of goods*

*Utopians measure happiness by honest pleasure*

*Philosophical principles sought from religion*

*Theology of the Utopians*

*Immortality of souls — a thing that, today, not even a few Christians doubt*

If these principles were to be eliminated, the Utopians assert without the least hesitation that no one would be so stupid as not to conclude that pleasure should be sought by any means, whether good or evil. Only let him make sure, not to let a lesser pleasure get in the way of a greater one, and not to pursue a pleasure which pain would take vengeance upon. Indeed, they say it is the utmost madness to pursue harsh and difficult virtue, and not only drive off the sweetness of life, but also endure pain voluntarily if you expected no benefit from it (for what benefit would there be if you got nothing after death, after spending this life unpleasantly, that is to say, miserably?)

*Just as not every pleasure should be sought out, so pain should not be endured except for the sake of virtue*

Now they do not believe, in fact, that happiness resides in every pleasure, but in pleasure that is good and honest. They think our nature is drawn by virtue itself to pleasure as to the highest good, while the opposing school attributes happiness to



*This is according to the  
Stoics*

virtue alone. Now, the Utopians define virtue as living in accordance with nature, which is what we were designed by God to do. And they say that whoever obeys reason in pursuing and avoiding things follows the lead of nature.

Further, reason incites human beings first and foremost to love and revere the  
5 divine majesty, to whom we owe both that we exist and that we are able to have happiness; in the second place, reason advises and stirs us to live our lives with the minimum of anxiety and the maximum of joy allowed, and to offer ourselves as helpers to all others in acquiring the same, in accordance with our natural fellowship. For no  
10 one has ever been so sad and rigid a devoteé of virtue — and hater of pleasure — as to prescribe hard work, sleepless nights, and dirtiness, and not at the same time command you to do all in your power to ease the wants and difficulties of others; thinking it praiseworthy just for the sake of humane conduct, for one man to be a refuge and comfort of another, if indeed it is the most humane conduct of all (no virtue being more fitting for a human being than humanity) to relieve the difficulty of others,  
15 and, after taking away sadness, to return them to an agreeable life, that is, to pleasure. Why would nature not drive each person to do the same for himself as well?

*But now some invoke  
suffering as if religion  
was based on it; rather,  
it should only be put up  
with if it occurs in the  
course of duty, or simply  
happens by the necessity  
of nature.*

For it is one way or the other: either the joyful, i.e., the pleasurable life is evil, and if that is the case, not only should you not help anyone to have it, but, as something harmful and deadly for everyone, you should remove it as much as you are  
20 able; or else, if you not only can, but ought to, win others over to it as a good thing, why should you not do the same, especially for yourself? It is only fitting to be just as kind to yourself as to others. Since nature teaches you to be good to others, the same nature does not turn around and command you to be fierce and merciless toward yourself. Therefore, they say, nature herself prescribes the joyful life —  
25 pleasure, that is — as the end of all our operations, and they define virtue as living in accordance with nature's command.

However, since nature invites us mortals to help one another in leading a more cheerful life (and nature is surely right in this, for nobody is so far above the common lot of the human race as to be nature's sole interest and concern; she equally  
30 nurtures all those she embraces in a common species) certainly it is for this reason she commands you over and over again, not to consult your own welfare in such a way that you bring about others' troubles.

*Agreements and laws*

The Utopians therefore hold that not only should agreements entered into by private persons be honored, but also public laws for distributing essential commodities, i.e., the material for pleasure: the laws, that is, which a good ruler has justly  
35 promulgated or a people has sanctioned by their common consent without the oppression of a tyrant or the fraud of deception. Obeying such laws as these, it is prudence to look out for your own interest, and piety, to look out for the public

interest. But to seek to snatch away another person's pleasure while obtaining your own: that, indeed, is an injustice; on the other hand, to deprive yourself of something in order to give it to others: that is a work of humane conduct and kindness; such action never takes away as much good as it gives back. It is compensated by the exchange of benefits, and simply being aware of your good deed, the memory of the gratitude and good will of those whom you benefited, brings more pleasure to your soul than the pleasure of the body which you did without.

*Duties toward one another in life*

Finally (to which conclusion religion easily leads the mind of one who gladly agrees), God repays the loss of a small, brief pleasure with a huge, never-ending joy. And so for this reason they assert (after having discussed and pondered the matter carefully and thoroughly) that all our actions, and including in these our virtues themselves, have ultimately pleasure and happiness for their end.

The Utopians define as "pleasure" every motion and state of the body or soul which is delightful to have, provided nature is guiding us. They are not rash when they add an appetitive power to nature. For, just as anything enjoyable by nature (i.e., what is not striven for through injustice, does not involve the loss of something more pleasant, and is not followed by a struggle) is what not only the senses but also right reason seeks, just so, all those unnatural things that human beings through a most inane conspiracy pretend to be pleasant (as if it were in their power to change things as easily as it is to change the words for things) — all such things, the Utopians maintain, are so greatly non-conducive to happiness that they even hinder it most of all. This is because once they have become entrenched in people, they preoccupy the whole soul with an utterly false notion of pleasure and leave no place for true and natural pleasures. For there are very many things which in their own nature not only contain no sweetness: a good many of them even contain a great deal of bitterness, but through their perverse enticement of desires, are not only held to be the highest pleasures, but are also counted among the chief reasons for living.

*The definition of pleasure*

*False pleasures*

In the class of persons who seek counterfeit pleasure the Utopians include those whom I mentioned before, who think they are better, the better the coat they wear. In this one thing, they make two mistakes. For they are no less deceived in thinking their clothes are better, than in thinking that they themselves are better. For, when you consider the purpose of clothes, why should fine-spun wool be better than coarse? But they put on airs, as if they were superior by nature and not by a mistake in their judgment, and they think some worth is gained for themselves thereby. And for this reason, an honor which they would not have dared to hope for when dressed more cheaply, they demand for their more elegant coat, as if by their own legal right, and they are angry if they are passed over rather carelessly. But this very thing — to be impressed by vain and useless honors — is that not equally stupid? For

*The error of those who please themselves by their dress*

*Foolish honors*

*Empty nobility*

5 what natural or true pleasure does someone's baring his head, or bending his knees bring you? Will this heal the pain in your knees? Or cure the madness in your head? In this picture of false pleasure, it is amazing how they enjoy their own insanity as they plume and pride themselves on a belief in their own nobility, because they happened to be born from a long line of ancestors considered to be rich (for nobility now means nothing else), especially in landed property, and they think themselves not even a tiny bit less noble, if their ancestors left them nothing of that wealth, or if they themselves have squandered away what they did leave them.

*The most foolish pleasure is from gems*

10 To these they add those who are captivated by gems or stones (as I have said), and who seem to themselves to have become gods in some degree, if they ever get an extraordinary one, especially one of the kind that was considered the most valuable at the time and by the people they know; for the same kinds are not valuable at all times, or to all people; they will not have them unless they are taken out of their gold setting and laid bare. But not even then do they buy them, unless the seller guarantees on oath that it is a true gem and a true stone, so anxious are they lest a counterfeit gem deceive their eyes, instead of a true one. But why should a fake gem offer less delight when you go to look at it, when your eye cannot discern it from the true one? Both ought to be of equal value to you no less than to a blind man, by Hercules!

*The opinion of human beings increases or decreases the value of gems*

15 And then there are those who hoard their superfluous wealth, in order to be delighted, not by using their heap of gold, but only by its contemplation; do they know true pleasure, or are they not rather deceived by a false one? Or what about those, who, by a contrary vice, hide their gold which they will never use and perhaps not even see again, and are so anxious about losing it that they lose it. For what else do you do when you keep yourself and perhaps all other human beings from using it, but return it to the earth? But you, nevertheless, are beside yourself with joy over a treasure hidden away as though your mind were now free of care. And if anyone secretly takes it away without your knowledge, and ten years later you die, during that whole ten year period when you lived on without realizing you were missing the money, what difference did it make to you, whether your gold was stolen or safe? Certainly, it was just as much use to you either way.

*A wonderful and very apt fiction*

25 Dicing  
Hunting  
35 To these inept kinds of joy they associate gamblers (whose madness they know by hearsay, not experience), hunters, and fowlers. For, say the Utopians, what pleasure is there in throwing dice onto a board, which you have done so often that even if there were some pleasure in it, you would surely have had your fill of doing it by now? Or what sweetness could there be, instead of disgust, in hearing the bark and howl of dogs? Or what better sensation of pleasure is there, when a dog chases a hare, than when a dog chases another dog? Indeed, the same action is done either way, for running is involved, if you like running.

But if what grabs your attention is the hope of slaughter, the expectation of butchery being carried out under your eyes, you ought instead to be moved to mercy to watch a poor little hare be torn to pieces by a dog, the weaker by the stronger, the shy and timid by the ferocious, and, finally, the harmless by the cruel. And so the Utopians have relegated the whole activity of hunting to butchers, as a practice unworthy of free people (and this craft, as we said earlier, is performed by slaves). For they consider hunting the lowest part of the butcher's craft, while the other parts of it they consider more useful and honest, as contributing much more and killing animals only for the sake of necessity, while a hunter seeks nothing except pleasure from the slaughter and carnage of a poor little animal, and the Utopians consider that this lust for watching the slaughter even of mere beasts, arises from the passion of a cruel mind, or finally turns into cruelty, through the habitual experience of such a savage pleasure.

*But today this is the  
art of those gods,  
the courtiers*

Therefore although the common run of mortals considers these and other things like them (for they are innumerable) to be pleasures, the Utopians plainly determine that since there is nothing pleasant in them by nature, they have no business with true pleasure. For although the fact that they fill the senses of the common crowd with joy (which would seem to be the work of pleasure), the Utopians do not swerve from their opinion. For it is not the nature of the thing itself, but the perverse habit of those who practice it that is the culprit. And because of this vice they cherish bitter things instead of sweet. It is no different from pregnant women with their defective sense of taste thinking that pitch and tallow taste better than honey. Yet just as the nature of any other thing cannot be changed by a judgment distorted by sickness or habit, so likewise can the nature of pleasure not be changed.

*Unusual cravings in  
pregnant women*

The pleasures the Utopians acknowledge as true pleasures are of various types, since they attribute some to the mind, others to the body. To the mind they give understanding, and the delight produced by the contemplation of the truth. To these pleasures is added the fond memory of a life well-lived, and the confident hope of future good.

*Types of true pleasure*

Bodily pleasure they divide into two kinds: the first kind is held to be the sensation of being flooded with a clearly perceptible sweetness, a sensation that takes place at various times: whenever there is a renewal of the parts of us that have been used up by our natural energy (these are recovered by food and drink), or whenever things the body has too much of are removed; this comes when we purge our intestines of waste products, or when effort is given to the generation of children, or when an itch of any part is alleviated by rubbing or scratching. Sometimes, however, a pleasure arises neither to give anything back that our body needs nor to

*Bodily pleasures*

remove something that causes discomfort, but which still, through a certain hidden power, but a clear operation, tickles, affects, and attracts our attention, as with music.

They understand a second type of bodily pleasure which consists in a quiet, evenly balanced state of the body, and that is, of course, each person's own health, when not compromised by any malady. For this, if no pain is attacking it, is delightful in itself, even when not moved through any pleasure being added to it from the outside. For although it does not assert itself and is less obvious to the senses than the swollen pleasure of eating and drinking, nevertheless many maintain that it is the greatest of pleasures, and almost all Utopians say that it is a great one: the basis, so to say, and foundation of all pleasures: which even in itself alone makes life pleasant and desirable, and if it is taken away, there is no place left anywhere for any pleasure. For to be entirely free from pain, without the presence of health, they call stupor, in fact, and not pleasure.

*It is fitting that the  
possessor be in good  
health*

The Utopians long since rejected the verdict of those who decree (since this question too was seriously debated among them) that stable and tranquil health should not be considered a pleasure because they said that it could not be perceived as present unless by means of some external movement. But now, by contrast, there is almost unanimous agreement that health belongs above all to pleasure. For, they say, since there is pain in sickness, and pain is no less the implacable enemy of pleasure than sickness is of health, why should pleasure not be within the tranquil enjoyment of health? For they think it makes no difference to the question whether one says sickness equals pain, or that pain exists within sickness, for the same thing follows in either case. Indeed, whether health *is* pleasure, or necessarily produces pleasure as fire generates heat, it is no wonder that in either case it of course follows that those to whom stable health is present, are those from whom pleasure cannot be absent.

Furthermore when we eat, they say, what else is happening but that health, which began to be deposed, is in combat with hunger (with food there, fighting as an ally), and during this battle, as health gradually recovers its strength, this very progress back to its wonted vigor brings about the pleasure of our being refreshed. So then, will health that delights in the struggle not likewise rejoice in the attainment of victory? Will health having at last happily regained its former strength (the only thing she had sought through the whole struggle) be suddenly senseless? Will she not recognize her own good and embrace it? For the Utopians think it very far from the truth to say that health cannot be felt. For, they say, who, while awake, does not feel that he is well, except the one who is not? Who is overtaken by so much stupor or lethargy as to deny that health is enjoyable and delightful? And what is delight, except pleasure by another name?

Therefore they especially welcome the pleasures of the mind (for they consider these the first of all the others and the leading ones) and they think that the most significant of them arise from the exercise of the virtues and the awareness of a good life. Of the pleasures that the body supplies, they give the highest award to health. For they determine that the pleasure of eating and drinking, and anything else that brings delight of the same kind, are to be sought after, but only for the sake of health. For such things are not agreeable in and of themselves, but only in so far as they resist ill health, secretly sneaking up on us. And therefore, they say, just as a wise man should pray to be free of sicknesses rather than wish for medicine, and cast off pains rather than adopt comforts, so it is better not to need this kind of pleasure at all than to be soothed by it, and if anyone thinks he is blessed because of this kind of pleasure, he would have to admit that he would only be really happy when he lives a life spent in perpetual hunger, thirst, itching, eating, drinking, scratching, rubbing, and who does not see not only how disgusting, but also how miserable such a life would be? Indeed these are the lowest pleasures, since they are the least self-standing, for they never occur without being connected to opposing pains. Hunger, obviously, is connected to the pleasure of eating, though not in a sufficiently balanced way, for the sharper the pain of hunger, the longer it lasts, and in fact it arises before the pleasure and is not extinguished unless pleasure dies along with it. Therefore they think that pleasures of this sort should not be highly valued except to the extent that necessity demands. But they still rejoice in them, and gratefully acknowledge the indulgence of Mother Nature, who entices her young by the most agreeable allurements to do what they must constantly do anyway. For how tedious would it be to live if these daily sicknesses of hunger and thirst had to be driven away by drugs and medicines like the other discomforts which afflict us only occasionally?

But the Utopians gladly cherish beauty, strength and nimbleness, as the proper and agreeable gifts of nature. Moreover they pursue those other pleasures which come through hearing, sight, and smell, which nature wanted to be particularly proper to the human being (for no other species of animals looks up to the form and beauty of the world, or is moved by any charm of smells, except to distinguish its food, nor does one distinguish harmonious and unharmonious intervals of sounds) and the Utopians pursue these, I tell you, like the agreeable seasonings of life. In all things, however, they keep this rule: a lesser pleasure should not get in the way of a greater one, and pleasure should never produce pain, which they judge necessarily happens whenever the pleasure is dishonorable.

But of course: to refuse the honor due to beauty, to wear down your strength, to turn agility into sloth, to exhaust the body with fasting, to do injury to one's



health, and to despise all the other favors of nature unless someone neglects his own interests while more eagerly securing the interests of others or of the public, awaiting a greater pleasure from God in return for his labor; otherwise, to afflict oneself for the sake of an empty shadow of virtue, and for no one's profit or in order to endure adversity with less difficulty — an adversity which may never come — this indeed they think the utmost madness of a mind cruel to itself and ungracious toward nature. As if he disdained to owe it anything, he renounces all its benefits.

*This too must be  
carefully noted*

This is their opinion of virtue and pleasure; and they believe that, unless a religion were to be sent down from heaven and inspire man with something more holy, no truer opinion can be found out by human reason, and whether they think rightly or not in this matter there is no time for us to examine the question, nor is it necessary anyway. After all, I have undertaken to tell of their institutions, not to defend them as well. But I am certainly convinced of this, that whatever the validity of their judgments, there is no more outstanding people or happier commonwealth.

*Happiness of the  
Utopians and a  
description of them*

Physically they are nimble and vigorous, with more strength than you would expect from their stature, and yet they are not too small; and although they do not have fertile soil everywhere, nor a really salubrious climate, they so fortify themselves against the weather by the moderation of their diet, and so amend the ground by their industry, that nowhere on earth is there a richer yield of crops and cattle, or human bodies more vigorous or less subject to disease. And so you would see being diligently done there not only the things that farmers commonly do to improve a naturally barren soil by art and effort; but you would also see forests pulled up from one place and transplanted to another by the hands of the people, the purpose being not quantity of production but transportation, so that the timber is closer to the sea or rivers or cities, since crops are carried overland with less effort, and to a greater distance, than lumber.

*Usefulness of the Greek  
language*

They are an easy-going, courteous people, skillful, and fond of leisure, quite patient when it comes to corporeal labor (when called for), but otherwise not exactly seeking it out, tireless as they are in the pursuits of the mind. And when they heard us speak about the literature and learning of the Greeks (for in Latin, apart from histories and the poets, nothing was likely to win their approval very much) it was wonderful how eagerly they strove for the chance to be taught Greek thoroughly by our instruction.

*The extraordinary  
'teachability' of the  
Utopians*

Therefore we began to teach them, at first in order not to seem unwilling to make the effort, more than for any hope of getting results. But when we proceeded a little, their diligence immediately made us anticipate that our diligence would not be spent in vain. For they began copying the shapes of the letters so easily, pronouncing the words so readily, committing them to memory so quickly, and

repeating them so faithfully, that we would have taken it for a miracle, except that the majority of them had taken up the study not only because they were fired up by their own will, but also because they had been ordered by a decree of the Senate. They were from the class of scholars, with the choicest mental talents and maturity of years. And so in less than three years there was nothing in the language which they lacked for reading good authors all the way through without any obstacle, as long as there was no faulty reading in the texts. My guess is that they also learned that literature rather easily because they were somewhat akin; I suspect that the nation originated from the Greeks, because their language, in other respects nearly Persian, preserves some traces of the Greek language in the names of the cities and magistrates.

*But now blockheads and  
dimwits are assigned  
to learning; those with  
the most favorable  
talents are corrupted  
by pleasures*

The Greek authors they have, they have from me (for when I was setting off on the fourth voyage I took on board a medium-size chest of books instead of merchandise, since I had clearly decided never to return, rather than return quickly): most of Plato's works, and many of Aristotle's, also Theophrastus' work on plants, which, I am sorry to say, was mutilated in many places. For, during our voyage, a monkey came upon the book where it had been carelessly laid and wantonly and playfully tore out some of its pages here and there and shredded them. Of those who wrote grammars, they only have Lascaris, for I did not bring Theodorus with me, nor do they have any dictionary except those of Hesychius and Dioscorides; Plutarch's works they hold very dear, and are captivated by the humor and charm of Lucian. Of poets they have Aristophanes, Homer, and Euripides; and Sophocles, too, in the small type of Aldus. Of historians they have Thucydides and Herodotus; and Herodian as well.

But in the medical field — since my companion Tricius Apinatus had carried with him certain shorter works of Hippocrates, and the *Microtechnē* of Galen — these works are very valuable to them. For, even if, compared with almost all other nations, the Utopians have the least need for the medical art, nevertheless it is nowhere held in greater honor, and just for this reason, that they count a knowledge of medicine among the noblest and most useful parts of philosophy, by the aid of which, when they scrutinize the secrets of nature, they think that they not only obtain a marvelous pleasure for themselves from the activity, but also gain the highest favor of the Author and Craftsman of that nature, who, they suppose, in the manner of other craftsmen, has put the mechanism of this universe on exhibit to be seen and observed by the human being (the only creature he had made capable of such a thing); and they think that for this reason the Creator holds dearer the careful and concerned observer and admirer of His craft than one who, like an animal devoid of mind, stupidly and with no emotion neglects so great and wondrous a sight.

*Medicine the most useful  
craft*

*The contemplation of  
nature*

Thus, too, the natural genius of the Utopians, trained in letters, is marvelously capable of discovering techniques that make some progress toward a more convenient way of life by saving labor. But they still owe to us two skills—printing and paper-making—and a good part of that they owe to their own efforts and not only to us. For when we showed them literature printed by Aldus on paper in books, and spoke of the material for paper-making and the ability to print letters, they themselves immediately inferred the matter very astutely somewhat more than we explained (for none of us was an expert in either craft), and although before that time they had written only on animal skins, bark, and papyrus, they immediately tried making paper and printing letters on it; and although at first they did not get very far, by trying out the same things over and over again, they soon acquired both skills, and accomplished so much that, if there had been copies of Greek texts among them, printed books would not be lacking. But as it is, although they now have nothing more than what I have listed, what they do have, they have already re-produced in thousands of copies by printing books.

Whoever has come there to visit the country is eagerly received, especially one who arrives with the recommendation of having some remarkable talent or who, having experience of a lengthy period of travel, is recommended by the knowledge of many lands (the latter was the reason our landing was welcome). For they are glad to hear what is happening everywhere in the world. But people do not land there all that frequently for commerce. What would traders bring besides iron, or else gold and silver—metals anybody would rather take back with themselves anyway! The things that they must export they think it a better idea to ship out themselves, rather than to be sought after by others from there, in order both to have a better knowledge of foreign nations on every side and not to set out to forget their knowledge and experience of sea-going.

## SLAVES

*The wondrous fairness of  
this nation*

They do not hold as slaves just any captives in war, but only those captured in a war the Utopians fought themselves, nor do they keep the children of slaves as slaves; nor, finally, someone they could purchase already serving as a slave in a foreign nation; but either if someone's shameful deed among them is turned into slavery, or those whom a crime committed in foreign cities (which kind is much more frequent) has marked out for punishment. For many of these they carry off, sometimes having been assigned a low price, more often acquired for free. Both kinds of slaves they keep not only in constant labor, but also in chains, treating their own people more harshly, whom they think more of a lost cause and deserving worse

punishment because they had been so excellently equipped for virtue by so excellent an upbringing, and were not able to refrain from crime even then.

There is another kind of slave: when some average worker, hard-working and poor from some other people voluntarily chooses to be a slave among them. They treat these people honorably and (except that a little bit more work is given them because they are used to it) they regard them not very much less mildly than their own citizens; when one wants to leave (which does not happen often) they neither keep him against his will nor send him away empty-handed. The sick, as I said, they very lovingly care for, and omit nothing whatsoever which can restore them to health, whether by exact care in medicine or diet. And even those suffering with an incurable illness they console, by sitting and talking with them and applying what comforts they can. But if an illness is not only incurable but is also causing continual vexation and torture, then the priests and the magistrates exhort the person as follows: since, unequal to all life's duties, an annoyance to others, and a burden to himself, he has now outlived his own death, he should not make a unilateral decision to keep on feeding the illness and the decay, nor, since life is a torment for him, should he hesitate to die; why, he should rely on good hope and either remove himself or by his own choosing allow himself to be snatched away by others from his bitter life, as if taken from a prison or off some hook; they say that he would be prudent to do this, since he would be putting an end not to good things but to torture, and what's more, since he would be obeying the advice of the priests in this matter (and they are the interpreters of God), they say that he would be acting piously and in a holy way.

*The sick*

*Voluntary death*

Those whom they persuade about this either end their life by voluntarily fasting or, made senseless, are set free without a sensation of death. But they do not dispatch anyone against his will nor do they diminish their duty toward him in any way. It is honorable to be persuaded and die under these conditions. On the other hand, someone who decides to commit suicide without the approval of the priests and the Senate is deemed unworthy of burial or pyre, and is shamefully tossed unburied into a swamp.

*Marriages*

A woman does not marry before eighteen, a man not until four years later than that. Before marriage, if a man or woman is convicted of intercourse secret passion, a serious punishment is brought against him or her: they are totally forbidden to marry, unless the city-ruler's clemency pardons the offense; both the father- and mother-of-the-household where the disgrace was committed are subject to great public humiliation for not being sufficiently careful in their roles as parents. The Utopians punish this crime so severely because they foresee that without being carefully kept from promiscuous intercourse, few couples would unite in married

love who see that a whole life must be spent with one person, and that all the annoyances, besides, which that brings must be endured to the end.

*And if not modestly yet  
not incautiously done*

Now, in choosing spouses they seriously and solemnly observe what is to our way of thinking a most absurd ritual. For the woman, whether a virgin or a widow, is shown naked to her suitor by a serious and respectable matron, and in turn some highly respected man stands the naked suitor in front of the girl. Although we laughed at this custom as absurd and did not approve it, the Utopians for their part were amazed at the clear foolishness of all other nations, who, when it comes to obtaining a new horse, are so cautious over a matter of a little money, that although the animal is already almost bare, customers still refuse to buy it unless the saddle has been taken away and all the clothes stripped off to expose some hidden sore; when it comes to choosing a wife (from which situation either pleasure or disgust will accompany one through all of life) they act so carelessly, that — the rest of the woman's body being covered with clothes — they judge the whole woman by the space of one span (since nothing is seen but her face) and they unite her to themselves at no small risk (if anything offensive appears afterwards) of not sticking together.

For all are not so wise as to regard only character: even in the marriages of wise persons, the charms of the body do make a small addition to the virtues of the mind; certainly, so foul a deformity may lie hidden under those coverings as to absolutely estrange a man's mind from his wife, when he can no longer be separated from her in body. If this kind of deformity happens to be acquired after the marriage has been contracted, everybody has to bear his misfortune as best he can, but beforehand, there should be steps taken by the laws so that no one is taken in by a trap, and they had to see to this all the more zealously since they are the only people in those regions of the world who are content with one spouse; marriages are not very often dissolved there by any way other than death, unless by reason of adultery, or intolerably annoying character traits. In this case, of course, the offended person is granted permission by the Senate to change spouses; the other partner leads a disreputable and permanently celibate life. Otherwise, they under no condition allow someone to repudiate a wife against her will who with no fault of her own has been beset by some physical impairment: they judge it cruel for someone to be abandoned at the very moment when she is especially in need of support, and they think that the protection for old age, since it brings diseases and is itself a disease, will be weak and uncertain.

*Divorce*

But sometimes it happens that when the characters of the husband and wife are not enough in agreement with each other and they have both found other persons with whom they expect to live more pleasantly, they separate by mutual consent and contract new marriages; not, however, without the authorization of the Senate,

which does not allow divorces unless the case has been carefully investigated by the senators and their wives. And even then they do not easily give consent, because they know that holding out an easy hope for remarriage is of little practical value toward strengthening the mutual affection of the spouses.

Violators of marriage are punished with the harshest slavery, and if neither party was single, those who suffered the injury reject their adulterous spouses and the two injured spouses themselves (but only if they wish to) join in marriage with each other or with whoever seems best. But if one of the injured parties nevertheless holds fast in love to the undeserving spouse; he or she is not denied use of the marriage contract, if he or she is willing to follow one condemned to public works; sometimes it happens that the repentance of the one and the dutiful persistence of the other moves the ruler to pity, and wins them back their freedom. But on one who has relapsed into crime, however, death is imposed.

For other crimes, no fixed penalty has been established by any law; but the Senate judges the punishment for each crime, according as each crime has seemed to them savage, or the opposite. Husbands correct their wives, and parents their children, unless they have committed a crime so big that it is in the interests of public morality for it to be publicly punished. But almost all the most serious crimes are punished with the nuisance of slavery, since they believe that is not any less harsh to the criminals, and of more benefit to the commonwealth, than if they hurried to put the offenders to death and be rid of them. For they are of more use with their labor than from their execution, and, by their example, they deter others longer from a similar crime. But if they are treated in this way and are rebellious and uncooperative, then, finally, they are slaughtered like untamable beasts that cannot be held by prisons or chains. But hope is not entirely lost for those who are submissive: indeed, if they are tamed by their long-lasting punishments and display a repentance which proves that they are more displeased by their wrongdoing than by their punishment, then sometimes at the ruler's discretion, sometimes by popular referendum, their slavery is mitigated or cancelled altogether.

There is no less criminal liability for attempting to seduce someone than in succeeding with the seduction. In every disgraceful act they consider a definitely intended attempt equal to the completed deed. For they do not suppose that a failure to accomplish some deed should benefit someone who did nothing to keep the deed from happening.

They are delighted by fools, and while it is a great dishonor to insult them, they also do not forbid anyone from taking pleasure in their silliness. In fact they consider this to be of the greatest benefit to the fools themselves, and if anyone is so severe and sober as not to be able to laugh at anything said or done by a fool, such a

*Magistrates determine  
the amount of  
punishment*

*The penalty for  
seduction*

*Pleasure from fools*



person, they believe, must not serve as a guardian to the fool, fearing that he would not be cared for graciously enough by someone to whom he would not only be of no use, but not even a source of delight, which is the only quality they are really effective at.

5 To mock a disfigured person or one missing a limb is considered mean and deformed, not for the person who is laughed at, but for the one who does the mocking, who is stupidly insulting someone for what was not in the person's power to avoid instead of for a fault. While they consider it the characteristic of a lazy and indolent person not to care for inborn beauty, so also is it disgraceful arrogance, 10 in their opinion, to seek help from cosmetics. For they know from their own experience that there is no attractive feature of a wife's appearance that can win over a husband so much as her goodness and reverence. For although some men are caught by beauty alone, no man is held permanently, except by a woman's virtue and obedience.

*Counterfeit beauty*

15 Not only do they deter from disgraceful deeds with punishments, they also invite to virtuous deeds by proposing rewards, and for this reason they place statues in the city center for famous men and for all those who have performed outstanding service for the commonwealth, in recollection of great achievements and, at the same time, for the glory of the ancestors to serve their descendants as a spur and 20 motivation for their own virtue.

*Inspiring citizens to duty even by rewards*

*Campaigning condemned*

*Magistrates' honor*

*City-ruler's dignity*

25 Anyone who campaigns for a magistracy is automatically disqualified for any of them. They live together amiably, since, of course, no magistrate is haughty or fearful; they are called Fathers, and show themselves to be so. Honor is conferred on them, as it should be, by the willing, not demanded from the unwilling. Even the ruler is not distinguished by special garment or crown, but is identified by a bundle of grain that he carries in his hand, just as a high-priest's insignia is the candle carried before him.

*Few laws*

30 They have very few laws. For only a very few suffice for them, trained as they are, and indeed this is something they especially disapprove among other people, that an infinite number of volumes of laws and of interpretations of laws are still not enough. The Utopians think it most unfair that any human beings should be bound by these laws which are either too numerous to be read, or too obscure to be understood by anyone who does read them.

*The useless mob of lawyers*

35 Moreover, they keep out all lawyers whatsoever, since they treat legal cases craftily and dispute the laws cunningly. For they deem it useful for each to plead his own case and to tell the judge the same things he would tell his lawyer. In this way, they think, there will be less evasion and the truth more easily drawn out. While the one who speaks has not been instructed by his lawyer how to deceive, the judge weighs

each point skillfully, and helps those with more simple understanding against the calumnies of the crafty. It is difficult for this to be maintained among other nations, with their great heaps of the most perplexing laws. But among the Utopians, each person is an expert in the law. For the laws (as I said) are very few, and they judge that all the interpretations which are most unrefined are the most fair.

For, since all the laws are promulgated (they say) for this reason alone, that each Utopian may be reminded by them of his duty, a more subtle interpretation admonishes very few (for there are few that comprehend it), whereas a simpler and more obvious meaning of the laws is open for everyone to grasp; otherwise, when it comes to the common people, who are both the most numerous and have the greatest need of admonition, what difference would it make whether you made no law in the first place, or whether you interpreted some already-made law to have a meaning so obscure that no one could draw it out without being extremely smart and making a very long argument? Neither the unrefined judgment of the common run of men would succeed in tracking it down, nor would a life busy with earning a living be sufficient.

Their neighbors have become inspired by these virtues, who, although they are free and operate autonomously (for the Utopians themselves had in times past freed many of them from tyranny), get their magistrates from the Utopians (some for a one-year term, others for five years), and when these magistrates have completed their terms of authority, they conduct them back to Utopia with honor and praise, and bring new Utopian magistrates with them back to the home country. And indeed these nations take care of their commonwealth in the best and most beneficial way. Since both its well-being and corruption depends upon the character of the magistrates, whom, after all, could they have chosen more prudently to be magistrates than Utopians—since they can by no bribe ever be dissuaded from what is honorable (since it is useless for those who are going to be moving back shortly), nor, being unknown to the local citizens, can they be influenced by an improper favoritism for anyone, or a feud? Wherever these two evils—favoritism and greed—have oppressed the law courts, they immediately destroy all justice, the strongest sinew of the commonwealth. The Utopians call “allies” the peoples for whom rulers are requested of them; others, whom they have enlarged by their benefits, they call “friends.”

Treaties, which other nations so often enter into with each other, and then break and renew, Utopians do not create with any nation. For what is the purpose of a treaty, they say: it’s not as if nature doesn’t already unite one human being to another well enough—and if someone scorns nature, do you really think they would care about words?

*Treaties*

They are drawn to this opinion mostly because in those regions of the world, the treaties and agreements of rulers are usually observed with too little good faith. But in Europe, and especially in those areas where the faith and the religion of Christ holds sway, the majesty of treaties is sacred and inviolable everywhere, partly by the justice and goodness of the rulers, partly through reverence and fear of the Supreme Pontiffs, who, just as they undertake nothing that they do not discharge with the utmost scrupulousness, just so they bid all other rulers to abide by their promises in every respect, and those who renege they compel with pastoral reprimand and sternness. They are surely right in thinking it a very shameful thing if there is no “faith” in the treaties of those who are called by a term specific to them the “faithful.”

But in that new world, separated from our world not so much by the equator as by differences in life and customs, there is no trust in treaties. Each of these, the more numerous and holy the ceremonies it has been entangled with, the more quickly it is broken — some misrepresentation easily being found in the words which people cleverly dictated on purpose — so that treaties can never be tied up with any bonds strong enough to keep people from slipping out somewhere, and violating both the treaty and their faith at the same time. And if they were to find this craftiness (or really, fraud and deceit) interfering with the contract of private parties, they would very sternly deplore it as a sacrilegious thing, worthy of the gallows — the very people, of course, who glory in having developed just such a plan for rulers!

By this it happens that all justice seems either nothing but a plebian virtue, and lowly, coming to rest a great distance below the royal heights; or at least that there are two kinds of justice: one fit for the common people, pedestrian, creeping on the ground, and, to keep it from leaping any fences, tied down all over with many chains; the other a virtue of rulers, as if it were more venerable than the peoples’ kind, so is it a great deal more free as well, as is natural for one to whom nothing is not permitted except what he doesn’t feel like doing.

So, this character of rulers over there, who, as I said, keep treaties so badly, is the reason I think the Utopians do not strike any treaties; perhaps they would change their opinion if they lived here. Even though treaties may be kept very well, it nevertheless seems to the Utopians unfortunate that the habit of making treaties ever became ingrained, by which it happens that people suppose they are born rivals and enemies of each other (as though no fellowship of nature joined one people to another whom just a hill or a stream separates by the smallest space), and justifiably lie in wait for mutual destruction unless prohibited by treaties; in fact, they think, once treaties are set up, friendship does not grow up between the parties, and the license to plunder remains so long as an imprudently drafted treaty has left something insufficiently covered in the terms of the agreement to prevent it.

The Utopians, by contrast, think that no one should be considered an enemy from whom no harm has been received. The community of nature, they say, does what a treaty does, and human beings are more effectively and surely connected to each other by good will than by contracts, by the heart more than by words.

## THE MILITARY

5

War, clearly a bestial thing, but nevertheless not practiced by any species of beasts as persistently as by man, they absolutely abominate and, contrary to the custom of almost all nations, consider nothing so inglorious as glory gained from war. And so, although they train themselves in military discipline on scheduled days, not only men but also women, in order not to be unready for war when need requires it, they nevertheless do not wage war rashly, but only to defend their own territory or to drive off enemies who have invaded their friends' lands or, taking pity on some nation oppressed by tyranny, to employ their forces to free them from the yoke and slavery of the tyrant (and this they do for the sake of humane conduct).

10

Although they give help as favor to their friends, not always just so the friends can defend themselves, but sometimes so they can requite and avenge injuries that have been done to them, even then the Utopians only do it at long last — provided they themselves have been consulted before any hostilities begin and the cause has been approved, and if, demands for restitution having been asked and refused, someone must be brought in to start a war — they decide to do it, not only if their friends' goods have been taken away by an enemy's incursion, but also, and much more keenly, when merchants of their friend-nations, in any part of the world, have suffered unjust calumny in the guise of justice (i.e. through the pretext of bad laws or by the false interpretation of good ones).

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Nothing other than this caused the war that the Utopians waged for the Nephelogetans against the Alaopolitans shortly before our time: namely, when some Nephelogetan merchants suffered a certain injustice (as it seemed to them) while sojourning among the Alaopolitans, under the pretext of law; now, whether it was just or unjust, the injury was, of course, vindicated in a savage war, as each side's power and hatred were enlarged by the passions and wealth of nearby nations, shaking some very flourishing countries to their foundations and afflicting others most grievously; one disaster followed another, until it all finally ended with the surrender and enslavement of the Alaopolitans; in this way, and since the Utopians were not fighting for their own interests, the [Alaopolitans] passed under the power of the Nephelogetans, a nation that previously could hardly be compared with the once mighty Alaopolitans.

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So fiercely do the Utopians prosecute wrongs done to their friends (and to themselves, not so much) even in financial matters — since, if the Utopians are constrained to lose their goods, provided there is no violence done to their persons, their anger extends only to the avoidance of trade with that people until restitution is made; not that they care less for their citizens than for their allies: rather, they are more ag-  
 5 grievied when others have money stolen than themselves, because the businessmen of their friend-nations, losing their private funds, feel a heavy wound from their loss. But for their own citizens, nothing is lost, unless from the public store, which was, besides, in abundance and, extra, as it were, otherwise not needing to be sent abroad.  
 10 By this it happens that loss occurs without anyone noticing it. And for this reason they judge it too cruel to avenge that loss by the death of many, when none of their people detects an inconvenience to their life or livelihood from the loss.

But if anyone of their people is ever wrongly maimed or killed, and whether the injustice was done by public or private action, once the matter has been ascertained  
 15 through ambassadors, unless the responsible perpetrators are handed over to them, the Utopians cannot be appeased and will declare war right away. Those who are handed over for punishment they punish with either death or slavery.

*Victory won at great cost*

A bloody victory they consider not only grievous but shameful, thinking it stupidity to buy wares however precious at too great a price, and they greatly exult  
 20 whenever they have conquered enemies by skill and treachery, conducting a public triumphal parade on account of the victory and erecting a trophy, just as if they were celebrating some vigorous achievement. For it is then that they boast that they have conducted themselves in a manly way and with virtue, as often as they have won in a way no animal but a human being could — by the power of intellect. For,  
 25 the Utopians say, bears, lions, boars, wolves, dogs and other beasts contend with the power of their body, and as most of these outdo us in strength and ferocity, so all are surpassed by us in intelligence and reason.

Their one goal in war is to obtain that which, if they had acquired it beforehand, they would not have started the war, or failing that, they carry out such severe punishment on the ones they consider responsible that terror frightens them from dar-  
 30 ing the same thing ever again. These are the aims of their undertakings, and they pursue them quickly, but only in such a way that their care to avoid danger takes precedence over their desire to win praise or fame.

And so, as soon as war is declared, they prepare handbills certified with the Uto-  
 35 pians' public seal to be posted in the enemy land, all at once and in especially conspicuous places, with which they promise huge rewards for anyone who does away with the hostile ruler, followed by lesser, though still substantial rewards decreed for each head of the other persons whose names are proscribed on the same notice,

these being the ones they believe to be responsible (in second place after the ruler) for forming a plan against them. Whatever reward they specify for an assassin they offer double that sum to anyone who brings them one of the proscribed persons alive, in which case they invite the proscribed persons themselves with the same rewards and with impunity in addition, to betray *their* allies. 5

And so it quickly happens that their enemies become suspicious of all other human beings, even of themselves, and neither trusting nor trusted, live in the utmost fear and in no less danger. For it is well known that it has often happened that a good part of the enemies and especially the ruler himself have been betrayed by the very persons in whom they had placed their greatest hope, so easily do bribes, 10 on which the Utopians place no limit, drive them to any crime at all. But, keeping in mind the greatness of the peril to which they thus urge their enemies, the Utopians take particular care that the magnitude of the danger is counterbalanced by an abundance of benefits. And for this reason they promise not only an immense amount of gold, but also very profitable estates to be held by them in perpetuity in 15 the most secure locations amongst friends, and the Utopians make good on these promises with the utmost fidelity.

This custom of bidding for and purchasing the life of an enemy, condemned by other countries as the cruel deed of an ignoble mind, they consider worthy of great praise, as if they were prudently ending the worst wars in this way, without 20 any battle whatsoever, and being humane and even merciful, since they are ransoming, with the assassination of a few guilty people, numerous lives of the innocent (partly of their own, partly of their enemies), who would have died fighting: the crowd of masses whom they pity hardly less than their own people, knowing full well that they did not willingly go to war, but were only driven to it by the madness 25 of their rulers.

If this method is not effective, they cast seeds of dissension and nourish them, while drawing the ruler's brother or some other of the nobles into the hope of possessing the kingdom. If internal factions have lost their strength, they incite and engage the nations adjacent to the enemy, unearthing some ancient title to rule 30 (something kings are never short of) and, promising their financial support for the war, supply money lavishly, while supplying Utopian citizens very sparingly, whom they consider so singularly valuable, and they value each other so greatly that none would willingly exchange one of their own even for the enemy ruler. But since they keep all gold and silver for this one purpose, they have no problem in parting with 35 it, seeing that they would live no less comfortably even if they paid out every ounce of it they had.

But besides their domestic riches, they also have an unlimited treasure abroad



*A nation not that  
different from the  
Swiss*

in so far as very many nations, as I said earlier, are in their debt. In this way they send soldiers hired from all parts to war, especially the Zapoletes. These people live five hundred miles east of Utopia: terrible, rustic, fierce, preferring the forests and rugged mountains where they were raised. They are a hardy nation, enduring heat,  
5 cold, and labor, without experience of delightful things, not practiced in agriculture, and, having no interest in building houses or making clothes, the raising of cattle is their only concern. For the most part they live on hunting and plunder. Born only for war, they zealously seek an opportunity to wage it, and when they find an opportunity, they eagerly embrace it and go out in great numbers to offer themselves at a cheap rate to anyone needing soldiers. This is the one craft they know in  
10 life, and by it they seek death.

They fight bitterly and with uncorrupted loyalty on behalf of those under whom they serve. But they do not commit themselves to fight for any set period, taking up their partisan role on condition that the next day they will stand even on  
15 the side of the enemies, if higher pay has been offered, and on the next day after, return to the same side again, if offered a little more still.

There is hardly ever a war in which a large part of them are not in each army. And so it happens daily, that blood relatives who were completely familiar with each other when hired for the same side, meet as enemies a little later when separated into opposing camps, and, with souls full of hatred, forgetful of kinship,  
20 mindful of their friendship, they stab each other, incited to each other's destruction for no other reason than that they were hired by different rulers at a small pittance, of which they keep such an exact account, that they can easily be driven to change sides with the addition of one penny to the daily wage. So eagerly have they  
25 imbibed this avarice, though it is no benefit to them! For what they seek at the price of their blood they straightway consume through luxury, and that too is miserable.

These people fight for the Utopians against any one at all, because no one anywhere pays them better for their efforts. Just as the Utopians seek out good persons in order to enjoy their company, so also do they seek out these very bad men to exploit them. And when need requires, motivated by great promises, they go forth to  
30 face the greatest dangers, from which most of them never return to demand what was promised, but the Utopians render the goods that were promised on good faith to the survivors, who by this means may be roused to further, similar ventures. For they do not give a thought to how many of them they destroy, thinking they would  
35 deserve the greatest favor from the human race, if they managed to purge the world of all the filth of that foul and nefarious people.

In second place after these, the Utopians use the troops of the nations for whose sake they are fighting, followed by the auxiliary squadrons of their other friend-

nations; finally they add their own citizens, from whom they select a man of proven virtue to be put in charge of the whole army. Two men are placed under him on the understanding that both will remain private individuals if the general is unharmed, but if he be captured or killed, one of the two inherits his place, as it were, the third succeeding the second if necessary. This has been arranged in consideration of the changing hazards of war: to prevent the whole army from being disorganized if the general is in danger. 5

Recruitment is carried out in each city from those who submit their names of their own accord. For no one is forced against his will to fight abroad, since the Utopians are convinced that if anyone is naturally rather timid, not only would he do nothing with any promptitude, but fear would also overtake his companions. But if any war breaks out against their homeland, they place such cowardly sorts (provided they are physically able) in ships, mixed in with better soldiers, or scatter them here and there along the walls, where there is no place to escape. Thus, shame before their peers, the enemy at close quarters, and the removal of any hope of flight, overcomes their fear, and often extreme necessity is turned into virtue. 10 15

But while no one from among them is unwillingly dragged off to fight a foreign war, on the other hand any wives who are willing to accompany their husbands into battle are not only not prohibited from doing this but are actually encouraged and incited up to do so, by means of praise. Each of those who have set out with their own husbands they put together with them in the battle line. Then each man's children, relatives by marriage and blood relatives stand around him, in order that those persons may be close at hand to assist who are by nature most driven to offer their help. It is a great disgrace for a spouse to return from war without the other spouse, for a son to come back without his parent. And so it happens that, if it comes to hand-to-hand combat, and if the enemy stands his ground, they will fight to the death in a long and disastrous battle. 20 25

Indeed, as they take every precaution not to have to fight a war themselves when they can take care of it by a substitute band of mercenaries, just so, when their entrance into battle cannot be avoided, they are just as fearless in undertaking it as they were cautious (as much as they could be) in refusing it, and they are not so much fierce in their first attack, as rather increasing their strength slowly through delay and endurance, and with hearts so stubborn that they can sooner be killed than put to flight. Indeed, the security of the livelihood each has at home, and the release from anxious concern about the support of his survivors (this is a worry that breaks the hearts of noble persons everywhere) gives them a spirit both lofty and disdainful of defeat. 30 35

In addition, their experience in military training gives them confidence, and

lastly, they have additional courage from their right beliefs (in which they were steeped from childhood, both by their education and by the good institutions of their commonwealth). By this virtue they neither consider life so cheap as to want to spend it rashly, nor so inappropriately dear as to grasp it greedily and dishonorably when their own sense of integrity persuades them to give it up.

*The commander to be  
aimed at most of all,  
to end the war more  
quickly*

When the battle is everywhere raging fiercely, a most carefully chosen band of young men, sworn and devoted to the purpose, demand the enemy general for themselves, and they rush against him openly, they spring upon him in a surprise attack; the same is sought out at a distance, the same in hand-to-hand combat, and is attached by a long, persistent wedge formation, with fresh troops constantly dispatched in place of those tired out. And it rarely happens (unless he has prepared an escape-plan beforehand) that the general does not either die or get taken alive into the enemy's power. If the victory goes to the Utopians, they do not proceed to the slaughter, for they would rather capture those routed than kill them. Nor do they ever pursue enemies on the retreat without keeping one battle line still drawn up under standards, To such an extent is this the case that, after they have defeated the remaining parts, unless the Utopians gain victory with their very last contingent, they would just as soon let the whole enemy slip away rather than get into the habit of pursuing those in retreat and risk putting their own ranks into confusion. Mindful that it has happened more than once in their experience that when the bulk of their whole army was defeated and crushed, and the enemy, exulting in victory, was pursuing them as they fled this way and that, a few Utopian soldiers, placed among the reserves and waiting for the right moment, advanced against these scattered enemy troops who had grown careless in presuming their victory was safe, and changed the outcome of the whole battle. By wresting such a certain and indisputable victory from their hands, the conquered, in turn, conquered the conquerors.

It is not easy to say whether they are more clever in laying ambushes or more cautious in avoiding them. You would suppose they were preparing to flee, when that's the last thing they have in mind; but, when they do have such a plan, that's the last thing you would think they are planning. For if they believe they are ill-matched in numbers or position, then they either move camp at night by a silent march or they escape by some stratagem, or slowly withdraw by day with their ranks kept intact, so that there is no less danger in attacking them while they are retreating than while they are advancing. They fortify a camp very carefully, with a very deep and wide ditch, and throw the excavated dirt back into the camp, nor do they use the efforts of common laborers for this work. The affair is managed by the hands of the soldiers themselves. The whole army takes part in the work, except

those who keep watch in front of the rampart against sudden attacks. And so, with so many contributing to the work, they complete a high and vast fortification for the place with incredible speed.

They use armor sturdy enough to receive blows, and suitable for every movement or stance, to such an extent that they do not feel uncomfortable even when swimming in it. For one of the rudiments of their military training is to become accustomed to swimming in armor. Their long-range weapons are arrows, which they cast very forcefully and at the same time very precisely, whether standing on the ground or riding on horses; for hand-to-hand fighting, however, not swords but axes, deadly both in sharpness and weight, deliver the blows by striking or chopping. They have very cleverly devised siege engines, and when they have made them they conceal them very carefully so that they are not revealed before they are actually needed (and thereby become more the object of jokes than useful); in constructing them they take special care that they are easy to transport and maneuver.

*Types of arms*

They enter into and observe truces with an enemy so religiously that they do not violate them even if they are provoked. They do not pillage an enemy's land, nor do they burn their crops; in fact they take as much care as they can to not let their men and horses tread on them, with the idea that the crops are growing for their own use. They harm no one who is unarmed, unless he is a spy. They protect surrendered cities, and they do not plunder them after they storm them, but they execute those who prevented the surrender, and consign the other defenders to slavery. The whole civilian population they leave alone, untouched. If they discover anyone who encouraged the surrender, they share some part of the goods of the condemned with them, and give the remaining portion to their auxiliaries. For no one of their people takes anything from the booty.

*Truces*

But when the war is finished, they do not charge the expenses to the friend-nations for whom they undertook them, but to the conquered, and for this account they demand partly cash which they reserve for similar uses in war, partly estates in order to gain no little annual income in perpetuity in the enemy's land for themselves. They now have revenue of this sort in many nations, arising little by little from various reasons, and exceeding 700,000 ducats a year, and for the purpose of collecting this revenue, they send out some of their citizens with the title of "financial officer," to live magnificently and represent, for others, the role of nobles, but even then there is a surplus for the treasury unless they prefer to credit it to the same nation, which they often do until such time as the Utopians need to use it, and it hardly ever happens that they demand it all back. Part of these estates they designate for those who undertake at their own urging the sort of danger that I mentioned before.

*But today the victors pay the largest amount*

If any enemy ruler has taken up arms against them and is preparing to invade their domain, they meet him immediately with great strength outside their own territory, for they do not rashly wage war in their territory, nor is the need ever so great as to force them to bring foreign auxiliaries onto their island.

5

## THE RELIGIONS OF THE UTOPIANS

Religions vary, not only throughout the whole island, but even within each city: some worship the sun as a god, others the moon, still others one of the planets; there are some who honor some particular human being, whose virtue or glory was once distinguished, as not only a god but as even the highest god. But the very largest majority, and by far the wiser group, believe nothing of the sort, but instead believe there is a kind of single divinity, unknown, eternal, immeasurable, inexplicable, above the comprehension of the human intellect, and diffused throughout this whole universe, not in material mass but by energy. They call him their parent. To him alone do they ascribe all beginnings, growth, progress, changes, and ends of all things, and do not ascribe divine honors to others.

And even though all the others believe various things, they still agree with these last mentioned Utopians in holding that there is in fact one supreme being responsible for the making and present governance of the universe, whom they all alike call Mithras in their native language, but they differ in that the same deity is conceived differently by different groups. While each person asserts that, whatever it is which he considers the supreme being, it is absolutely the same nature, to whose divinity and majesty the supreme authority over all things is ascribed by the agreement of all nations. But all of them are now gradually deserting their variety of superstitions, and uniting into that one religion that seems to be more reasonable than the rest. Nor is there any doubt but that the other religions would have long since disappeared, if their fear were not interpreting whatever unlucky event that chanced to befall anyone who was thinking about changing his religion as chance, but sent from heaven, as if the divine power whose worship he was abandoning were punishing the impious plan against it.

But after they heard from us the name of Christ, and his teaching, character, and miracles, and the no less wondrous constancy of so many martyrs, whose blood freely shed has drawn so very many nations far and wide into their way of life, you would not believe with what eager affections they too gave way to it, either by the secret inspiration of God, or because it seemed closest to that sect which is most prevalent among them, although I believe this also was of no small importance, that they had heard that the communal way of life of his own people was pleasing to

Christ, a way of life still in use, they heard, among the most genuine communities of Christians. But whatever the impulse was for this to take place, not a few joined our religion and were washed in the sacred water of Baptism.

*Common life*

But since among the four of us (for only so many of us were left, since two had yielded to fate) there was, I am sorry to say, no priest, though they have been initiated in all the other matters, they still lack those sacraments which no one among us except priests confer; nevertheless they understand them, and they wish for nothing more earnestly. They are even debating this question carefully among themselves, whether someone chosen from their number can receive the priestly character without the commission of a Christian pontifex. And it really seemed that they were about to choose one, but when I left they had not yet done so.

And those also who do not profess Christianity do not nevertheless deter anyone from pursuing it or attack someone initiated—except for one person from our community who was punished while I was there. When he was newly baptized, although we advised him against it, he was lecturing on the religion of Christ publicly with more zeal than prudence, and he grew so passionate that he not only preferred our rites to others, but went so far as to condemn all other rites right away. He loudly proclaimed them to be profane, and their followers as impious, sacrilegious people, doomed to everlasting fire. They apprehended him after he had been preaching such things for a long time, and brought charges against him, not for rejecting religion, but for inciting the people to riot, and when he was found guilty, they sentenced him to exile, since they count it among their oldest institutions, that no person's religion should be a source of injury to him.

*Human beings must  
be drawn to religion  
by praise*

For from the very beginning, when Utopus had heard before his arrival that the inhabitants were fighting constantly with each other over their religions, and when he realized that the very fact that the individual sects were fighting for their homeland while disagreeing in general presented him with an opportunity to conquer them all: once he had gained the victory, he ordained first of all, that each be allowed to follow any religion he wished, but that, if he strove to win others to it, he would be permitted to do so just so long as he supported his view calmly, modestly, and with reasonable arguments, and not bitterly demolish other views, if he failed to be persuasive; nor use any violence and refrain from insults. They punish someone arguing too aggressively about it with exile or slavery.

Utopus instituted these measures not only out of a regard for peace (which he saw being thoroughly undermined by constant strife and implacable hatred) but because he thought that by making this decree he would be acting on behalf of religion as such, concerning which he did not want to lay down any rash definitions, not sure, in a sense, whether God did not in fact wish to have various and multiple



forms of worship, and therefore inspired different people with different ideas of it; certainly, he judged it was truly arrogant and absurd to demand by violence and threats that what you believe to be true also appear true to everyone else. And then, he easily foresaw, if one religion were the truest, and all the others false (provided  
 5 the debate was conducted with reason and modesty), it would come about that the power of truth itself would at some point emerge on its own and prevail. But if the matter were contested with arms and mob violence, since all the worst people are the most obstinate, the best and holiest religion would be overwhelmed by the falsest of superstitions, like a good crop of wheat among the thorns and brush.

10 And so he made the matter accessible to all, and left each person free to decide what he should believe — except for solemnly and severely forbidding anyone from departing so far from the dignity of human nature as to think that the soul is destroyed with the body, or to think, removing providence, that the world proceeds by chance. And for this reason they believe that, after this life punishments are de-  
 15 creed for vices, and rewards await virtues. Someone who thinks otherwise — as one who casts aside the sublime nature of his soul for the worthlessness of a merely bestial carcass — they do not even consider human, let alone allow to be classed among citizens, whose institutions and customs he will treat as worthless (if fear did not prevent him). For who would doubt that he would strive either to evade the public  
 20 laws of the country secretly through craft, or violate them openly, so long as he was serving his own desires privately with nothing to fear besides the laws and no hope for anything beyond his bodily existence? Therefore no honor is conferred on one who thinks this way, no magistracy is entrusted to him, he is assigned no responsibility of public office. In this way he is scorned everywhere as having an inactive and  
 25 indolent nature. But they do not punish him in any way, because they are convinced that a person cannot really help what he believes; nor do they compel him with any threats to hide his thoughts, nor allow any pretenses and lies, which, as if they are closely akin to criminal fraud, they hate to an amazing degree. They do, however, prohibit him from arguing for his own opinion, for, all the same, in isolation, they  
 30 not only allow this in the presence of the priests and other important men, they even encourage it, trusting that his madness will at last give way to reason.

There are others also, and not a few (since they are not prohibited, being neither altogether without reason for their view nor wicked) who believe, with a very different error, that the souls of the brute animals are eternal, although their souls  
 35 are still not comparable in dignity to ours, nor born for equal happiness. For almost all consider it certain and proven that the beatitude of human beings will be so immeasurable, that they mourn for everyone's illness, but for no one's death, unless they see someone being torn from life anxiously and against his will. Of course, this

*Wondrous belief about  
the souls of brute  
animals*

they consider a very bad omen, as if the person's soul, in despair and with a guilty conscience, were dreading death through some inkling of imminent punishment. Besides, they think someone's arrival would not be pleasing to God, who does not come gladly running, though summoned, but is dragged off unwilling, and fighting against it. Those therefore who look upon this kind of death are horrified, and the bodies of anyone dying this way they sadly and silently carry away, and, beseeching God to be kind to their departed shades and mercifully pardon their weaknesses, bury the corpse in earth. 5

On the other hand, whichever people die cheerfully and full of good hope, no one mourns them at all, but perform the funeral rites with a song, and, entrusting their souls to God with great enthusiasm, cremate their bodies with more reverence than grief, and erect a pillar on the site, inscribed with honors to the deceased. Returning home, they recount his character and deeds, and they discuss no part of his life more often or more gladly than his happy death. 10

They think that this recollection of goodness is the most effective incitement to virtues for the living, and the most pleasing tribute to the dead, whom they believe to be present at conversations about themselves, though unseen (since the vision of human beings is dim). 15

For it would not be fitting for the state of the blessed to lack freedom to move wherever they wished, and it would have been a mark of ungrateful souls to cast off immediately any desire to visit the friends to whom they were bound in life by mutual love and affection, which, just like other good things, the Utopians believe increases rather than diminishes for good men after they die. Therefore they believe that the dead move among the living, as observers of their words and deeds, and that the living undertake their tasks the more confidently, relying on such defenders, while being restrained from doing shameful things in secret, by their belief in the ancestors' presence. 20 25

Augury and the other divinations of empty superstition, the observance of which is so widespread among other nations, they completely disregard and deride, but miracles that happen with no assistance from nature they revere as the works of one present and witnesses to a divine power; they say that such occurrences frequently take place there, and from time to time on the occasions of great events or decisions, they arrange for them in public ceremonies with great confidence, and obtain them. 30

They think that the contemplation and the praise of nature consequent on it is an act of worship pleasing to God and deserving of praise. Nevertheless there are some, and these are, again, not a few, who, led by religion, disregard letters, do not strive for knowledge of things, and take no time out for leisure, only tasks, and they 35

resolve to earn a future happiness after death in other good deeds. And so some serve the sick, others fix the roads, clean ditches, repair bridges, dig up sod, sand, or stones, cut down and chop up trees, carry wood, crops, and other things like that into the cities on carts, acting as assistants and super-servants, not only for the public, but also for private individuals.

For wherever there is any task that is harsh, difficult or filthy, that would deter most others by reason of toil, disgust or futility, they gladly and cheerfully take it upon themselves to accomplish the whole job, providing others with leisure, and busying themselves in constant work and labor, and, still, do not claim credit for it, nor do they scorn their way of life, or boast of their own. The more these people act as servants, the more they are honored.

But there are two sects of these persons: one celibate, who not only abstain from all sexual activity, but also from eating meat, some of them from all animal products too; and entirely rejecting all pleasures of the present life as harmful, they long for the future life through toils and vigils, in the hope of obtaining it very soon. In the meantime, they are cheerful and active.

The other sect, no less eager for work, prefers marriage, and since they do not spurn the comfort it brings, so they also think they owe to nature, in return, the work of procreation, and children to their country. They avoid no pleasure unless it detains them from work. They like the flesh of four-footed animals perhaps for this reason, because they reckon that they are made stronger for any work by this sort of food. The Utopians deem adherents to this latter sect more prudent, but the former more holy. And because the former prefer celibacy to matrimony, and a harsh life to a peaceful one, they would deride them if they relied on rational arguments, but as it is, since they confess that they are led by their religion, the Utopians respect and revere them. For they take more care about this than anything else: not to speak rashly about any religious observance. These, then, are the sort of persons they call *Buthrescae*—a special word in their own language, a word that could be translated *religiosi* in Latin.

They have priests of outstanding holiness, and for this reason there are very few of them. For they do not have more than thirteen in each city, equal to the number of shrines, except when they go to war. For when seven of them have set out with the army, seven are meanwhile substituted for them; when the priests return from the war, each takes back his own position, and those who are left over are the attendants of the high priest, until by succession of rank they replace the other priests who have died. For one priest is appointed high priest above the rest. The priests are elected by the people, and, in the manner of the other magistracies, by a secret vote, in order to avoid the forming of factions.

Priests preside over divine services, see to religious matters, and function as inspectors of character; it is considered very shameful for anyone to be summoned or rebuked by them for living a life that is not upright enough. But it is the priests' role to encourage and remind, while it is the role of the city ruler and the other magistrates to check and inflict punishment on criminals, except that the priests prohibit from participating in religious rites those whom they find especially wicked; there is almost no punishment the Utopians fear more. For they are stunned by the ultimate disgrace, and are lacerated by hidden fear from their religious observance; while not even their bodies will be safe for long, since if they do not quickly demonstrate their repentance to the priests, they are arrested and punished for impiety by the Senate.

Children and youths are educated by them, nor is the concern for letters given priority to the concern for character and virtue, and they apply the utmost industry to instilling the tender and impressionable minds of the children at the outset with beliefs that are good and beneficial for the preservation of the commonwealth; once these are deeply rooted in the children, they stay with them throughout their whole adult lives, and are most useful for protecting the integrity of the commonwealth (which only declines by the moral vices that spring from erroneous opinions).

Wives for the priests are very carefully chosen from the people (unless the priests are women; for that sex is not excluded from the priesthood, though rarely chosen, and not unless she is a widow and advanced in years).

There is not any magistrate among the Utopians for whom there is greater honor, so much so that even if they commit a disgraceful deed, they are subject to no public trial, but are left to God and themselves. For they do not think it is right to pollute with mortal hand someone, no matter how wicked, who has been dedicated to God in such a special way, as a sacred offering. And it is easier for them to observe this custom because the priests are so few and so carefully chosen.

For it does not readily happen that an excellent person, chosen out of many good people, and elevated to such high dignity by reason of his virtue alone, would degenerate into corruption and vice; and if it even happened at all (considering how fragile human nature is), nevertheless, as few as they are, and because they are not entrusted with any power other than their honor, there would certainly be no cause to fear any great harm to the public coming from such as these. And this is exactly the reason why they have priests so few and far between, to prevent the dignity of the order, which they now revere so highly, from being cheapened through sharing the honor with many, especially since they think it is difficult to find very many people who are good enough to match the dignity of the office, ordinary virtues not being sufficient.

*Female priests*

*Excommunication*

*But among us they are a greedy multitude*

*Priests far holier than  
ours!*

And they are not held in higher estimation by their own people than they are by foreign nations. And this is readily clear to see from what I also take to be its origin. For when their troops are fighting a battle, the priests kneel in a separate place not very far away, clothed in their sacred vestments; they lift up their hands  
5 to heaven, praying for peace in the first place, in second place for a victory for their own troops, but a victory without bloodshed to either side; if their troops are winning, they rush into the battle-line, and prevent cruelty toward the losers. Merely to catch sight of them when present and call out to them is enough to save one's life, while grasping their flowing vestments defends one's remaining fate from every injury from wars.

As a result of this they have acquired so much reverence and genuine majesty in the sight of all nations everywhere, that they have often brought no less safety to their fellow citizens from the enemy than they brought to the enemy from their fellow citizens. Indeed it has sometimes happened, when their own battle line had  
15 given way and they were in retreat and despairing of success, while the enemy was hastening to plunder and kill, that their destruction was interrupted by the intervention of the priests: the armies were separated, and fair terms for peace were arranged and agreed upon. For there was never so fierce, cruel, and barbaric a nation as not to hold the bodies of the Utopian priests as sacrosanct and inviolable.

*Observance of holy days  
among the Utopians*

They celebrate the first and last day of each month, and the first and last day of each year, as a holy day; a year is divided into months, measured by the orbit of the moon, just as the course of the sun marks the year. In their language the first days are called *cynemerni*; the last days, *trapemerni*; and these words mean the same as "first-feast days" and "end-feast days."

*What their temples  
are like*

Their temples are outstanding sights, not only because for their workmanship, but because they are capable of holding an immense number of people, which is necessary since there are so few of them. Yet they are all a bit dark, and they say this happened not through ignorance of architecture, but by the design of the priests, who believe that too much light scatters thoughts, while minds become collected  
25 in more sparing, uncertain light and reverence is strengthened.

And since the religion there is not the same for them all, nevertheless all the forms of religion, despite being varied and manifold, enter in by a variety of paths, as it were, to a single end: the worship of the one divine nature. For this reason, nothing is ever seen or heard in the shrines which is not considered to accord with  
35 all the religions together. If there is any ritual particular to one denomination, each carries it out within the walls of his own home; they conduct public rituals in such a way, that they do not in any way detract from private ones. Consequently, no images of the gods are seen in any shrine, so that each is free to conceive of God with

whatever form he wishes with the greatest reverence. They invoke God by no particular name except Mithras, a word they all agree upon for the one nature of the divine majesty, whatever it is, and no prayers are composed which anyone at all could not utter without offense to his own denomination.

And so they meet at their temples in the evening for End-feast days, having fasted all day, to give thanks to God for their prosperity during the year or month for which that holy day is the last day; on the next day, for it is the day for the First-feast, they flock to the temples in the morning to pray for favor and success during the next year or month beginning with that holy day.

But on End-feast days, before they go to place of worship, wives throw themselves at the feet of their husbands, children at the feet of their parents, and confess that they have sinned, either by commission or some duty negligently performed, and beg pardon for their offense. In this way if a small cloud of a quarrel in the house had overspread them, it is dissipated by such apologies, that they may be present at the sacrifices with a clear and tranquil mind. For there is a religious taboo against attendance with a troubled mind. And for this reason, those who are conscious of hatred or anger towards anyone do not attend the sacred rites without first being reconciled and having their ill feelings purged away, in fear of swift and heavy punishment.

*Confession of the  
Utopians*

*But with us those who  
are the most corrupt vie  
to be closest to the altar.*

When they arrive, they separate, the men to the right side of the temple, the women to the left. Then they seat themselves in such a way that males of each household sit together in front of the father of the household, and the mother of the household closes the ranks of the female members. In this way it is assured that all the actions of all people are observed outside the home by those by whose authority and instruction they are governed at home; moreover they assiduously take care also to place a younger person next to an older person wherever they are, in order that children not rely on other children and spend that time in childish foolishness, when they are supposed to be conceiving a most religious fear toward the gods, which is the greatest and practically the only incitement to virtues.

They do not slaughter any animal in their sacrifices, nor do they think that divine mercy, who bestowed life on animate beings for this very reason, that they might live, delights in bloodshed and carnage. They burn incense and other kinds of perfumes, and display many candles, not because they are ignorant of the fact that this, and even the prayers of human beings, add nothing to the divine nature, but because this harmless kind of worship is pleasing, and they think that human beings are in a way elevated by means of these odors, lights, and other ceremonies, and rise to the worship of God with more eager minds.

In the shrine the congregation is clothed in white, while the priest wears multi-



colored vestments, wonderfully wrought and designed, though not of very expensive material. For they are not woven with gold thread or studded with rare stones, but are decorated with various plumages so skillfully and artistically, that the value of no material would equal the price of the workmanship. In addition, they say certain  
 5    secret mysteries are contained in the feathers and plumage of birds, and in their fixed patterns, which are distinguished on a priest's vestments, and by their correct interpretation (carefully handed down by those who carry out the rites), they are reminded of God's benefits toward them, of their pious duty toward God, and their mutual duty toward each other.

10    As soon as the priest dressed in this way presents himself from the sanctuary, all immediately fall prostrate to the ground in reverence, with such profound silence in every direction, that even the sight of this ritual inspires a certain terror, as if from the presence of some divine power. They remain on the ground for a little while until the priest gives a sign and they arise.

*Music of the Utopians*

15    Then they sing praise to God, accompanied by musical instruments, most of them different from the kinds which are seen in our hemisphere. Just as most of them far surpass in sweetness those in use among us, so certain kinds cannot even be compared to ours. But in this one matter it is obvious that they are far superior to us: all of their music, whether instrumental or sung with the human voice, imi-  
 20    tates and expresses natural emotions and fits the sound to the reality; whether it is a prayer of petition, whether happy, conciliatory, troubled, sorrowful or angry, the form of the melody so represents the a certain impression of the reality that it stirs up, penetrates, and inflames the minds of those listening.

25    Lastly, the priest and the people together repeat solemn prayers with set words, written in such a way that what they all recite together, each applies privately to himself. In these prayers each person recognizes God as responsible for creation, and governance, and all the other goods besides, and gives thanks to him on account of so many blessings received. In particular, however, that by God's favor he has found himself in the commonwealth that is the happiest, and has been allotted  
 30    the religion that he hopes is the truest. And if he is wrong about this matter, or if there is any better commonwealth or religion, and more approved by God, he prays that God in his goodness will lead him to the knowledge of it; for he is ready to follow in whatever direction God may lead him, but, if this Utopian form of commonwealth is the best, and its religion the most correct, then he prays that God may  
 35    make him steadfast, and lead all other human beings to the same ways of life, and to the same belief about God, unless, in fact, in this variety of religions there is something that delights his inscrutable will.

Finally, each prays that he may die easily and be received by him, how quickly

or late he certainly does not venture to determine. Nevertheless, if it would not disturb God's majesty, it will be much more agreeable to him, to meet a very hard death and to reach God, rather than to be separated from God too long even by a very prosperous span of life.

After saying this prayer, they prostrate themselves on the ground again, and, rising after a little while, depart for lunch, and spend the remainder of the day in games and training in military exercises. 5

I HAVE DESCRIBED FOR YOU as accurately as I could the form of commonwealth that I myself certainly think is not only the best, but also the only one, which can deservedly claim the name commonwealth for itself. Since, in other places, the people speak everywhere about the public interest but take care of their private interest; here, where nothing is private, they seriously conduct public business; with good reason, certainly, in both places. For elsewhere, who doesn't know that unless someone provides for himself separately, however much the commonwealth is flourishing, he will perish from hunger; and this is why necessity urges him to think he must take account of his own interest instead of the people's — that is, others' — interests. But here, where everything belongs to everyone, no one doubts that nothing at all private will ever be lacking for anyone (provided care is taken to keep the public granaries full). For the distribution of goods is not meager, nor is anyone here a poor man or a beggar. And although no one has anything, all are still rich. 10 15 20

For how can you be wealthier than to live free of absolutely all anxiety, with a happy and tranquil mind? No one is fearful for his livelihood, or vexed by the querulous demands of his wife, in fear of poverty for his son, or anxious about the dowry of his daughter, but instead, each feels secure about the livelihood and even prosperity both of himself and of his family — wife, children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, great-great-grandchildren, and as long a line of descendants as any aristocrat foresees having. Furthermore, no less provision is made for those who have already worked, but are now unable, than for those who are working now. 25

Here I would like someone to dare to compare this fairness with the justice of other nations, where I would be damned to find any trace of justice and fairness. For what kind of justice is this, that any noble, or goldsmith, or usurer, or any other kind of person who does either nothing at all or, what they do is the kind of thing that is not very necessary for the commonwealth, achieves a lavish and splendid life from idleness or unnecessary work, while meanwhile, a laborer, cart-driver, smith, farmer work so hard and so long that beasts of burden could hardly stand to do the same, but whose work is so necessary that without it no commonwealth could survive even 30 35

a year; yet they earn such a paltry living and lead so miserable a life that the condition of beasts of burden seems better by far, whose labor is actually not as constant, quality of life is not much worse, but actually more pleasant for beasts, who have, meanwhile, no fear about the future. But these people are goaded in the present by sterile  
 5 and profitless labor in the present time, and wearied by recalling a poor old age, for their daily wage is too little even for that one day, never mind it growing and there being something extra which can be set aside every day for use in old age.

Is this not an unfair and ungrateful commonwealth that squanders such gifts on the so-called aristocrats and goldsmiths, and the rest of this sort, or the indolent, or  
 10 just flatterers and makers of empty pleasures? For farmers, on the other hand, coal-workers, laborers, cart-drivers and smiths, without which there would be no commonwealth at all, it makes no kindly provision, but, once the labor of their productive years has been used up, and they are heavy with age and sickness, and in want of everything, the commonwealth, without a thought for their sleepless nights and  
 15 forgetting their so many great services, ungratefully repays them with the most miserable death.

What about the fact that from the daily allowance of the poor the wealthy scrape away something every day, not only by private fraud, but also by public legislation, so that what seemed unjust before — to give the worst repayment for their  
 20 favor to those who deserved the most from the commonwealth — these people have made this distorted, and then, by the promulgation of law, justice. And so, as I consider and contemplate all these commonwealths which are everywhere in prosperity today, nothing else, so help me God, meets my eyes but a certain conspiracy of the rich acting in their own interests, in the name and pretext of the common-  
 25 wealth. And they contrive and devise all ways and means, first, to keep without fear of losing whatever they have amassed by evil schemes, and secondly, to buy the work and labor of the poor as cheaply as possible, and abuse the poor themselves. Such devices, once the rich have decreed them to be observed in the name of the public — that is, of the poor — at last become laws. But when these worst of people  
 30 have divided among themselves with insatiable greed all those things which should have been enough for all, how far away are they, even so, from the happiness of the Utopian Commonwealth? Since, along with the use of money, all greed for money has been entirely removed from there, what a mass of troubles was cut back, what a crop of crimes was torn out by the roots! For who does not know that fraud, theft,  
 35 rapine, quarrels, mob violence, disputes, rebellion, murder, treachery, poisonings (all which things daily punishments do not prevent but only take vengeance on) would all die away, once money is done away with; and not only that, but at the very moment money disappears, so would fear, anxiety, worries, toil, and sleeplessness

*Note this, reader*

likewise? Even poverty itself, which alone seemed to lack money, would itself immediately decrease once money were completely removed.

To see this more clearly, imagine for yourself some barren and unproductive year: a year in which hunger has carried off many thousands of people. I firmly maintain that, if the storehouses of the rich were emptied out at the end of that time of scarcity, you would be able to find so much food, that, if it had been distributed to those taken off by starvation and disease, no one at all would have felt the dearth of the weather and the soil. A livelihood could be acquired so easily if only that blessed money, which was, of course, so nobly invented for the purpose of opening an access to livelihood, were not the only thing that closes off for us the way to that livelihood.

No doubt the rich also know this, nor are they unaware how much better that condition would be of lacking no necessary thing than to abound in many superfluities, and how better it is to be rid of countless evils than to be besieged by great riches. Nor am I, at least, overcome with doubt that either reasoning about one's own interest or the authority of Christ the Savior (who neither in his wisdom could fail to know what is best, nor in his goodness advise what he knew to be not best) would have long since easily brought the whole world under the laws of this commonwealth if one single monster, the ruler and parent of all plagues, pride — were not fighting against it.

*A wondrous thing to say*

Pride does not measure prosperity by her own advantages, but by the disadvantages of others. She would not even wish to become a goddess if there were not others in misery that she could not rule over and scoff at; her happiness shines forth when compared with their misery; by displaying her wealth, she torments and exacerbates their poverty. This serpent of Hell creeps through the hearts of human beings and like a suckfish pulls them back and delays them from taking up a better way of life. And since pride is too firmly fixed in humans to be plucked out easily, I rejoice that this form of commonwealth, which I would gladly wish for all, has at least been the good fortune of the Utopians to have, who have followed the institutions of life by which they have not only most successfully laid the foundations of a commonwealth, but also, as far as human conjecture can foresee, one that will last forever. For, because they have thoroughly removed the roots of factionalism along with all the other vices of ambition, they are not threatened by the danger of being worn out from domestic discord, the one thing that has ruined the outstandingly well-protected prosperity of many cities. But if harmony is preserved at home, and the institutions are sound, the envy of all the neighboring rulers combined (which have all too often made the attempt before, though always beaten back) could not shake or disturb that power.

WHEN RAPHAEL HAD TOLD US all these things, even though not a few things were coming to mind that seemed very absurdly established in the customs and laws of that people, not only in their manner of waging war, in their religious practices and beliefs, and in other of their institutions besides, but most of all in that which  
 5 is the greatest foundation of the whole system, namely, their common life and livelihood without any exchange of money: by this one institution all nobility, magnificence, splendor, majesty are profoundly overthrown — the true (according to public opinion) glories and ornaments of a commonwealth; nevertheless, I knew he was worn out from speaking, and I was not certain that he could endure to be disagreed  
 10 with especially when I remembered that he had reproached certain people for this reason, as if they would not be considered smart enough unless they discovered some way to criticize other people's discoveries. For this reason I praised their system and his speech, took him by the hand, and led him in to dinner, but only after saying that there would come another time for us to think about these same matters  
 15 more deeply and to discuss them with him more fully, and wished that that would happen someday!

Meanwhile, while I cannot agree with everything that was said by the man, who is without doubt both extremely learned and quite experienced in human affairs, at the same time, I readily confess that there are very many things in the common-  
 20 wealth of the Utopians, that I would wish for in our states rather than hope for.

## END OF BOOK TWO

The end of the afternoon conversation  
 of Raphael Hythloday  
 on the laws and institutions of the island of Utopia  
 25 previously known to a few,  
 according to a most illustrious and well-educated man  
 Sir Thomas More,  
 citizen and sheriff of London

## JEROME BUSLEYDEN TO THOMAS MORE

Jerome Busleyden to Thomas More, greetings.

It was not enough, most distinguished More, to have bestowed for so long all your care, labor, study to the benefit and advantage of individuals, unless you were dedicating even these things (which is so characteristic of your sense of duty and your generosity) to the whole, thinking that this favor of yours, for what it might be worth, the more it will benefit more people (since it has been more widely extended and bestowed on more people), it earns the greater favor from this, hunts out the greater gratitude, catches the greater glory. Which, even if you have striven to offer always at other times, still, you have in fact obtained this with an amazing success recently, obviously with that afternoon conversation reported, by you, to the world of letters, which you have published concerning the rightly and well established commonwealth of the Utopians, one to be desired by all people.

In the successful description of this most beautiful institution, there is nothing in which the utmost learning or absolute expertise in human affairs is found lacking, since both of these meet in it with such equality and such uniform agreement that neither “extends the grass” to the other; each strives for glory with “equal Mars,” since you shine with such multi-faceted learning, and again with so much, and that with a considered expertise in affairs, that, by experience, you affirm whatever you have written; you write most learnedly whatever you have decided to affirm. The success is in fact amazing, and clearly all the rarer to the extent that it, begrudging itself to most people, only offers itself to a few people, mostly to the sorts of people who just as they want to, through their goodness, so they know how to through their learning, are able to by their trustworthiness, can through their authority so dutifully, rightly, providently take thought for the common good, just as you already do well, since you — because you think you were born not only for yourself, but even for the whole world — considered it worthwhile to oblige the whole world by this most splendid meritorious service of yours, which you could have provided in no other way more correctly or better than to lay down that form of the commonwealth, that system and most perfect representation of character.

No institution has even been seen which is healthier than it, or which seems more desirable, since it is much more excellent and leaves behind it, by a great interval, so many quite celebrated commonwealths, so much praised, of Lacedaemonians,



Athenians, Romans. If they had been undertaken with the same auspices, governed with the same institutions (as this commonwealth of yours), laws, decrees, character, certainly these would not have fallen yet and been razed to the ground. Oh, what a pity, would they now lie snuffed out without any hope of restoration? But,  
 5 on the contrary, they would be active, still safe and sound, happy, successful, quite fortunate, meanwhile masters of affairs, having as their lot their own power broadly held on land and sea.

You, having pitied the pitiable lot of these commonwealths, you wanted to see to it, ahead of time, that others which have gained control of affairs may not, like-  
 10 wise, suffer the same plight, obviously with this most perfect commonwealth of yours, which has taken the most pains not so much in establishing laws as in forming the most acceptable of magistrates. Nor is this beside the point, since otherwise all (or the best) laws, if we believe Plato, are judged dead without these. It is precisely with reference to the representation of these magistrates, the picture of  
 15 uprightness, the pattern for character, the image of justice that the whole state and right trajectory of any perfect commonwealth is to be shaped. In this, there should be agreement, primarily, between the prudence of the ruling class, fortitude in the soldiers, temperance in individuals, justice in all.

Since your (which we celebrate so much) commonwealth has been so wonder-  
 20 fully balanced with these, as is clear, it is no wonder if it should, as a result, arrive on the scene not only as a thing to be feared by many, but even to be revered by all nations, and, at the same time, proclaimed in all ages. And the more so because, with disagreement of all ownership out of the way, no one has anything of his own. Moreover, to the common advantage itself, all things are common to all, so much  
 25 so that every matter, whichever the action, either public or private, should not have reference to the desire of many people, not to the whim of a few, but the whole of it should be related to maintaining justice alone, fairness, and sharing (for whatever it might be worth). When it has been wholly related to this, any and all wood, torch and kindling which contributes to corruption, wasteful luxury, envy, injustice must  
 30 necessarily depart. It is into these that sometimes, either the private possession of goods or the burning thirst to have, and the most wretched ambition for all things pushes mortals (even as they wrestle against it), to their own very great injury, and that beyond any compare, since from this, dissensions between minds, the taking up of arms, and wars more than civil often suddenly arise. It is by these that not  
 35 only the quite flourishing state of the happiest of commonwealths is utterly sunk, but their glory long ago obtained, their celebrated triumphs, their noble trophies, their glorious spoils on so many occasions, brought back from conquered enemies, are entirely wiped away.

But if in these matters this piece of writing of ours has not achieved, by chance, as much credence as I would like, certainly witnesses will be ready to whom I might send you, quite reliable, namely the numerous and great cities long ago destroyed, states ripped apart, and commonwealths laid low, villages burned and destroyed. As scarcely any remains or traces of their great calamity are seen today, so history, 5 however old and long drawn out, does not remember any of their names. Our commonwealths, if there are any, will easily avoid these remarkable instances of ruin, destructions, utter defeats and other disasters in war only by ordering themselves precisely in accord with the sole standard of the commonwealth of the Utopians, so that they don't withdraw from it one inch. Doing so at long last, they will finally 10 realize quite abundantly in actual practice how much this favor of yours bestowed on them has helped, and, most of all, how much, as a result of this coming to them, they have learned to preserve their commonwealth safe, sound and triumphing, hence, who will owe to you, their most excellent savior as much as he, with good reason, deserves, since he not only has saved some citizen from the commonwealth, 15 but even the whole commonwealth itself.

In the meantime, farewell, and continue to ever practice, carry out, work out something with success which, conferred on the commonwealth, might add permanence to it, and immortality to you. Farewell, most learned and most humane More, the glory of your Britain and of this world of ours. From our house in 20 Mechlin, 1516.

ON UTOPIA

by Gerard Geldenhauer

Reader, do you love sweet things? Here are all the sweetest things,  
If it is what is useful that you seek, you will read nothing more useful.  
5 Or if you will want each, with each this island overflows,  
With what you can bedeck your speech, with what you can instruct your mind.  
Here the eloquent one opens up the sources of right and wrong,  
More, the chief glory of his London.

TO THE READER

by Cornelis de Schrijver

10

Do you want new marvels, since a new world has just now  
a little while ago been found,  
Do you want ways of living in a varied way?  
Do you want what are the sources of virtues? Do you want  
15 to know where the causes of evils are from?  
And to know how much lies empty in the midst of things?  
Read these, which that well-known More has given with a varied coloring,  
More, the honor of the London nobility.

## THOMAS MORE TO PETER GILES\*

Thomas More to his friend Peter Giles, greetings.

I was delighted, very much so, my dear Peter, at the criticism which you are aware of, the criticism of that very sharp man who used this dilemma against our *Utopia*: if the matter has been reported as it really is, I see there a few somewhat ridiculous things; but if it is made up, then, in some matters I miss the very precise judgment of More. I am very much thankful to this man, my dear Peter, whoever he was (whom I both suspect is learned and see is a friend). With his extremely frank judgment, he has done me as great a favor as perhaps as anyone else since the little book's publication. 10

For first, whether enticed by an interest in me or in the work itself, he seems not to have grown tired of the labor, so as not to read the whole book or to do this as a matter of routine or too hastily, as priests are accustomed to do the Liturgy of Hours, that is to say, those who are accustomed to, but so cautiously and diligently that, meanwhile, he weighed out individual matters astutely, then, after criticizing certain passages, and that in a sparing way, he states that he very much approved of the rest, not haphazardly, but through considered judgment. Finally, with the very words he gets his licks in with, he still bestows more praise than those who praised me on purpose. For he easily indicates what a splendid opinion he has about me since if he has read anything not precise enough he is complaining that there he missed what he had hoped for, though for me, at the same time, it is more than I had hoped if I can even publish at least a few things, from a great number, not utterly ridiculous. 20

Although, so I myself may plead with him, in turn, no less frankly, I do not see why he ought to seem to himself so perceptive and what the Greeks call *ὀξύδερκῆς* either since he caught a few somewhat ridiculous things among the institutions of the Utopians or caught me, as I shaped the commonwealth, thinking up some things with too little utility, as if there were nothing ridiculous anywhere else in the world, or any of all the philosophers had ever arranged a commonwealth, a ruler, or, finally, a private house such that he instituted nothing which would be better off changed. In which matter (if the memory of those who are for me the greatest 30

\* This letter Thomas More published only in the 1517 edition of *Utopia*.

men were not hallowed, as they are consecrated by age) I certainly would be able to bring forward some things from each, in condemning which I would, without doubt, plan on reporting a detailed accounting of all things.

Now since he doubts whether the matter is real or made up, here I actually miss  
 5 the precise judgment of this very man. Still neither do I deny, if I had decided to write about a commonwealth, and, still, had such a story occurred to me, that I perhaps would not have shrunk from that pretense by which the truth, as if it were smeared with honey, might flow a little more pleasantly into minds. But, still, I would certainly have moderated it in such a way that if I wanted to misuse the ig-  
 10 norance of the vast majority of people, for those a little more educated I would have put out front some tracks by which they might have easily traced my plan.

And so, if I had put nothing other than the names of the ruler, at least, of a river, a city, an island such as could warn the more experienced that the island was nowhere [*nusquam*], that the city is vanishing, the river without water, the ruler was  
 15 without a people, which would not have been difficult to do, and would have been much more charming than what I did, and, unless the faithfulness of history had forced me, I am not so stupid that I would have wanted to use those names which are barbarous and mean nothing, Utopia, Anydrus, Amaurotum, and Ademus.

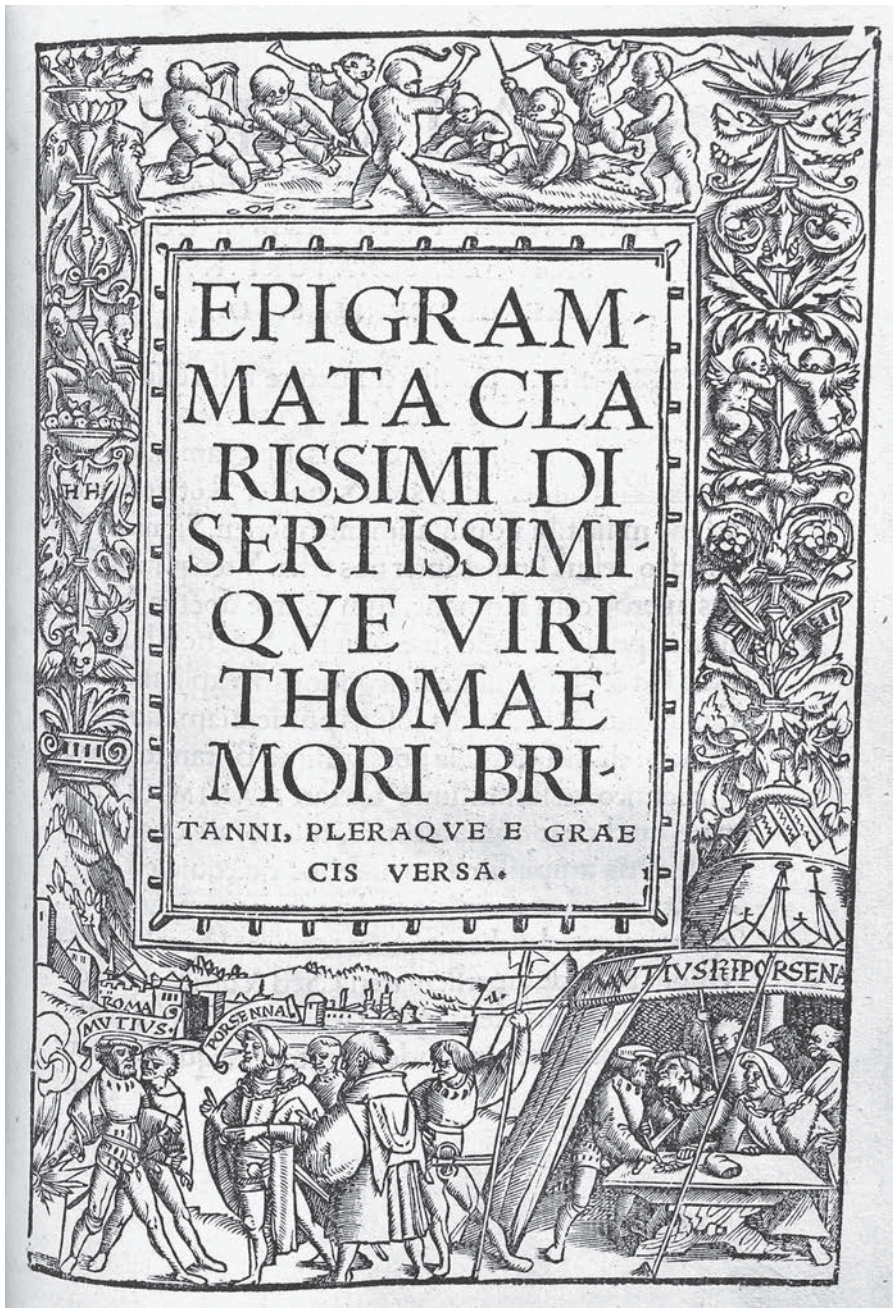
Otherwise, my dear Giles, since I see there are some so cautious that they, as  
 20 guarded and wise men, are hard to bring to believe the things I, a simple and gullible man, wrote out as Hythloday reported it, so that my credibility in their eyes cannot be endangered, together with the credibility of history, I am glad I am permitted to say, on behalf of my offspring, what Terence's Mysis says concerning the boy of Glycerium, who, so that he is not regarded as fraudulently introduced into  
 25 the family SAYS, "I thank the gods that there were several free women present at the birth." For this too has happened to me, quite conveniently, that Raphael not only told these things just to me and you, but to many quite honorable and very serious men besides, probably even more and greater things, and certainly neither fewer nor less important things than he told to us. But if those unbelievers were not  
 30 to believe even these people, it is possible for them to approach Hythloday himself. For he is not dead yet. I just heard from some people recently arriving from Portugal, last March on the first of the month, that he was as healthy and strong as he has ever been at any time. So let them ask the truth of him, or dig it out of him with arguments if they like. Just have them understand that I must present my work alone,  
 35 not the credibility of another.

Goodbye, my dearest Peter, with your most charming wife and clever little daughter, whose long-term well-being my wife prays for.



This illustration by Hans Holbein the Younger is the last page of the 1518 editions of Thomas More's *Utopia*. The Greek at the top and bottom is Matthew 10:16: "so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves." The Latin at the left is from Martial 10.47 (regarding what constitutes a happy life): "shrewd simplicity and love of doing right." The Hebrew at the right is from Psalm 125:4: "Do good, O Lord, to those who are good, to those who are upright in their hearts."





This title page of More's *Epigrams* first appeared in the 1518 *Utopia*. At the bottom, left, is pictured the Roman hero Gaius Mucius Scaevola holding his right hand in the fire while defiantly opposing King Porsenna, who is invading Rome. See Livy 2.12.

## SELECTED EPIGRAMS BY THOMAS MORE

Thomas More's 260 Latin epigrams were first published with *Utopia* in 1518. Below is a selection from his series of epigrams related to ruling and to the character of the *princeps* or "leading citizen." The art of the epigram depends especially on wit and brevity: putting as much content, wordplay, and rhetoric into the smallest possible space. The reader should bear in mind that More crafts his Latin poetry with more artfulness than an English translation can convey. The Yale editors of More's *Epigrams* call More's collection "incomparably the best book of Latin epigrams in the sixteenth century" (CW 3.2, 63). They further point out that More's poetry is "never inflated or pompous, and almost always endowed with the virtues of his prose—logical energy, muscular realism, and penetrating intelligence" (41).

### 32. ON TWO BEGGARS, ONE LAME, ONE BLIND

There's nothing more helpful than a trusted friend,  
 Who by his ready service<sup>1</sup> alleviates your hurts.  
 Two beggars formed together a treaty<sup>2</sup>  
 Of real friendship—a blind man with a lame.  
 The blind beggar says to the lame: "You will ride on my shoulders."  
 The lame<sup>3</sup> replied: "By my eyes will you be guided,<sup>4</sup> blind friend."  
 Love<sup>5</sup> flees from the lofty courts of proud kings,  
 And rules<sup>6</sup> in the humble dwelling of the poor.

<sup>1</sup> ready service (*officiis*): More uses this term often in *Utopia*. <sup>2</sup> formed... a treaty (*foedera contraxere*): For this legal phrase, used in formal treaties alliances, see also the section in *Utopia* on "Treaties," pp. 81–82. There Raphael explains why the Utopians make no treaties, although they "observe... religiously" truces made with enemies at p. 89. <sup>3</sup> The lame beggar, having the power of sight, can guide or rule. <sup>4</sup> guided (*regere*): This is the passive form of *rego*, meaning to be guided or ruled. The verb "rules" (*regnat*) in line 8 is from the same root as is the word *rex* or king in line 7. <sup>5</sup> Love (*amor*): In the original, *amor* is the last word of the poem, giving it the place of strongest rhetorical effect. The first word in the original poem is *Utilius* (helpful, useful, advantageous.) See *Utopia* p. 37.16–18 and Epigram 112.1 for holding that a ruler should love his people. See Epigram 120.6 and *Utopia* 28.33, 30.27, 52.29, 95.17, 106.4, 107.27 for utility and the *res publica*. <sup>6</sup> rules (*regnat*): See note 4 above.

109. HOW A TYRANT AND A RULER<sup>7</sup> DIFFER

Between a legitimate king and the most  
 savage tyrants is this difference:  
 Those whom a tyrant governs as slaves,  
 the king thinks of as his own children/free persons.<sup>8</sup>

111. THAT A GOOD RULER IS A FATHER, NOT A MASTER

A dutiful ruler<sup>9</sup> will never lack children/free persons.  
 He is the father of the whole realm.  
 The ruler abounds, then, most fortunate,  
 in as many children/free persons as citizens.

112. ON THE GOOD KING AND THE PEOPLE

The whole kingdom is one person, and it holds itself together through love.  
 The king is the head, the people forms the other limbs.  
 However many citizens the king has (so he is pained to lose anyone)  
 he himself accounts as parts of his own body.  
 5 The people leaves itself exposed for the king and anyone at all  
 thinks the king is the head of his own body.

115. ON THE GOOD AND BAD RULER

What is a good ruler? He is a dog, a defender of the flock,  
 hence the one who drives away wolves with his voice.  
 What is a bad one? The wolf itself.

<sup>7</sup> RULER (*princeps*): Here and hereafter *princeps* is translated as “ruler.” The Latin word *princeps* [literally: “taking first place”] means “chief or leading ruler.” The ruler of each of the fifty-four Utopian cities is called a *princeps*. For the historical and cultural controversies involved with this term, see David Baker’s “First Among Equals: The Utopian *Princeps*,” *Moreana* nos. 115–16 (Dec. 1993): 33–45. <sup>8</sup> children/free persons (*liberos*): The Latin term used here and in the following epigram is *liberos*, which can mean “children” or “free persons” — making a striking contrast with “slaves” or *servos* in the previous line. <sup>9</sup> dutiful ruler (*pius princeps*): The Latin phrase *pius princeps* would lead More’s contemporary readers to think of Virgil’s Aeneas, the leader who is regularly described as *pius* — a term for the Romans that combines loyalty, constancy, public service, and devotion to the gods.

## 120. NOT A HENCHMAN BUT VIRTUE RENDERS A KING SAFE

Hateful fear does not protect a king, nor do lofty palaces,  
 Nor wealth (if pillaged from the people),  
 Nor a stern bodyguard, hired for low pay,  
 Who would serve one man just as easily as another.  
 He will be safe, if he rules his people in such a way 5  
 That the people believe no man to be more useful to them.

121. THE PEOPLES' CONSENT<sup>10</sup> CONFERS OR REVOKES RULE<sup>11</sup>

Any man who presides<sup>12</sup> over many men  
 Owes<sup>13</sup> this to those over whom he presides:  
 He owes it not to preside any longer  
 Than they want him to preside for them.  
 Why then are powerless<sup>14</sup> rulers so proud that 5  
 They hold power at the people's request?

198. WHAT IS THE BEST FORM OF COMMONWEALTH?<sup>15</sup>

You ask whether a king or a senate governs better.  
 Neither (which is often the case) if each were to be bad.  
 But if each were to be good, I think a senate is better, by superior numbers,  
 and that there is more good in many good men.  
 It is difficult, perhaps, to find a number of good men. 5  
 Similarly, it is easy, more often, for one to be bad.

<sup>10</sup> Consent is rooted in the long tradition of classical political thought. See Plato's *Republic* 432a, *Statesmen* 291e, *Laws* 684a-b; Aristotle's *Politics* 1294b; Polybius 6.4-7; Cicero's *Republic* 1.39, *On Invention* 1.2-3, *Laws* 2.14. <sup>11</sup> The Latin title is *POPULUS CONSENTIENS REGNUM / DAT ET AUFERT*. Instead of translating *REGNUM* as "rule," others have given "authority to rule," "sovereignty," "office of rule," and "power to rule." <sup>12</sup> Four times in four lines this poem uses the verb *praeesse*. Literally it means "to be in front of" or "to be preeminent in (a certain quality or characteristic)." By extension it has come to mean "to be in charge (of)" or "to rule." <sup>13</sup> Repeating "owes" (*debit*) in lines 2 and 3 emphasizes the ruler's debt to the people and the duty to rule well. <sup>14</sup> Part of the humor of this epigram comes from the surprising conjunction of *impotentes* with *princeps*, and the adverb *precario* with *imperant* ("hold power") in the concluding line. <sup>15</sup> The Latin title of this epigram is *QUIS OPTIMUS REIPUB[LICAE] STATUS* — close to the Latin title of *Utopia*: *DE OPTIMO REIPUBLICAE STATU DEQUE, nova insula UTOPIA*...



- And often a senate will have been midway between each,  
     but hardly ever will you have a middling king.  
 A bad senator is guided by more virtuous advisors,  
 10     but the king himself leads his own counselors.  
 As the one is chosen by the people, so the other is born.  
     Here, blind chance rules; there, sure deliberation.  
 The one thinks he was made for the people; the other that the people were made  
     for him,  
     of course so that there might be people that he himself might govern.  
 15 A king is, in his first year, always very agreeable.  
     Well then, a consul will be a new king every year.  
 A greedy king, over a long lifetime, will have chewed up his people.  
     If a consul is evil, there is hope for a better one.  
 Nor does the well-known fable convince me, that bids us to put up with a  
     well-fed fly,  
 20     so that a badly-fed one not cruelly take its place.  
 He is deceived, whoever believes a greedy king can be satisfied;  
     this bloodsucker will never let go of skin when it is not empty.  
 But, you say, "The plans of the fathers are disturbed by serious disagreement;  
     with a king, no one disagrees." This is the more serious evil.  
 25 For whenever there is a difference of opinion about important matters —  
     But all the same, why do you ask this question?  
 Is there a people anywhere whom *you* yourself can put a king or a senate  
     in charge of by your decision?  
 If you can do this, you reign: Consider no longer to whom you should hand over  
 30     supreme command; the more important question is "Would it be useful?"

243. ON THE LUST FOR RULE<sup>16</sup>

Out of all the many kings, there will be hardly one king,  
     If there's even one, for whom one kingdom will suffice.<sup>17</sup>  
 Out of all the many kings, there will be hardly one,  
     If there is even one, who could rule a single kingdom well.

<sup>16</sup> The Latin title is *DE CUPIDITATE REGNANDI*. See Augustine, *City of God* 5.26, where Augustine describes a Christian ruler who was *not* motivated by *regnandi cupiditate*. For the danger of *libido dominandi*, see *City of God* 3.14 and Sallust, *Catalina* 2.2. <sup>17</sup> The same idea is expressed in *Utopia* at pp. 36–37 and at p. 23.12–14.