More
Utopia

Edited by George M. Logan

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MORE
Utopia

This is a fully revised edition of one of the most successful volumes in the *Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought* series. Incorporating extensive updates to the editorial apparatus, including the introduction, suggestions for further reading, and footnotes, this third edition of More's *Utopia* has been comprehensively re-worked to take into account scholarship published since the second edition, in 2002. The vivid and engaging translation of the work itself by Robert M. Adams includes all the ancillary materials by More's fellow humanists that, added to the book at his request, collectively constitute the first and best interpretive guide to *Utopia*. Unlike other teaching editions of *Utopia*, this edition keeps interpretive commentary – whether editorial annotations or the many pungent marginal glosses that are an especially attractive part of the humanist ancillary materials – on the page they illuminate instead of relegating them to end-notes, and provides students at all levels with a uniquely full and accessible experience of More's perennially fascinating masterpiece.

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ROBERT M. ADAMS (1915-1996), who taught principally at Cornell University and U.C.L.A, was a prolific writer on literary figures from Milton to Joyce, a founding editor of *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, and a distinguished translator of works in Latin, Italian and French.

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THOMAS MORE

Utopia

EDITED BY
GEORGE M. LOGAN

TRANSLATED BY
ROBERT M. ADAMS
Third Edition

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Contents

Preface

Appearing by fortunate happenstance on the 500th anniversary of the
initial publication of More's masterpiece, this third edition of the
Cambridge Texts *Utopia* (first edition 1989) was undertaken to update
the editorial apparatus – 'Introduction', 'Suggestions for further read-
ing', footnotes – in the light of scholarship published since the appear-
ance of the second edition (2002) and also in response to my more recent
thoughts on the best way of presenting this endlessly provocative and
enigmatic little work of sixteenth-century Latin humanism to twenty-
first-century English readers. But while there are changes to the editorial
appurtenances, the translations of the texts they support – that of *Utopia*
itself and of the ancillary materials from the first four editions of the
work (1516–18) – are unchanged from the 2002 edition. That edition
incorporated the extensive changes to the Robert M. Adams translation
that were made for the 1995 Latin–English edition of *Utopia* that
I prepared with the late Professor Adams and, after failing health forced
him to withdraw from the project, with Clarence H. Miller. Especially
since the latter edition had become standard for most purposes, it
seemed desirable to incorporate the reworked translation into the
Cambridge Texts edition, and without further revisions.[1] For the same

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[1] I did, though, make five small changes for the 2002 edition, which thus included a
translation identical to that of the Latin–English edition except in the following places:
p. 12: 'man-eating' to 'people-eating' (*populivoros*); p. 20: 'cattle' to 'animals' (cf. 'other
kinds of livestock' two lines earlier); p. 26: 'tripped over themselves to get on his side' to
'sided with him' (*pedibus in eius ibant sententiam* – a common classical idiom); p. 110:
'completely useless to' to 'not especially necessary for' (*non ... magnopere necessarium*),
restoring More's litotes; p. 119 (middle): deleted extraneous comma after 'rule'.

reason, the present edition exactly reproduces the 2002 version of the translation.

In its original form, the Adams translation appeared in the Norton Critical Edition of *Utopia* that Adams published in 1975 (second edition 1992). I remain grateful to the late John Benedict, Vice President and Editor of W. W. Norton and Company, who secured the blessing of that estimable firm on the incorporation of a revised version of the translation into the Cambridge Texts edition. For that edition, Adams also made new translations of some of the ancillary letters and poems. I prepared the editorial materials, and Adams and I vetted each other's work.

The many 1995 revisions to the translation were almost all made for the sake of greater accuracy. Adams, who was a wonderful stylist, was sometimes inclined to sacrifice accuracy to grace; nor did he claim to be a Neo-Latin scholar. Many of the new renderings were suggested by Father Germain Marc'hadour, the paterfamilias of the international community of More students and admirers, who, with his usual generosity, at my request gave the 1989 edition a meticulous going-over; many other changes were suggested by Professor Miller, whose help and friendship, to 1995 and after, I cannot adequately acknowledge, any more than I can convey the depth of my admiration for his scholarship.

I also remain grateful, as I was in 1989, to Richard Tuck and Quentin Skinner, for their valuable comments on the first version of the introductory materials; Skinner also vetted the 1995 introductory materials. His own published work is responsible for much of what I know about the context of *Utopia* in the history of political thought; and he has, on various occasions dating back some thirty years, given me comments on my work that have been invaluable both professionally and personally. Elizabeth McCutcheon's review of the 1995 edition was responsible for the first of the five changes I made to the translation in 2002; and I owe this exemplary scholar and friend far more than that. In general, my greatest reward for working on More has been the profit and pleasure of his company and that of the More scholars whom I have been privileged to know.

I am also grateful to Richard Fisher, the Press's former Executive Director for Humanities and Social Sciences Publishing, with whom I worked comfortably for three decades, and to a succession of very capable editors for the 1989, 1995 and 2002 editions as well as the present one.

G. M. L.

Textual practices

(1) *Documentation*. The paraphernalia of documentation have been kept to a minimum. Publication data for most of the works cited in the footnotes are given in 'Suggestions for further reading'; in the notes, these data are omitted. With the exceptions noted in 'Suggestions for further reading', all citations of classical works are to the editions of the Loeb Classical Library. Neither editors' names nor publication data are given for these editions. References to the Bible are to the King James Version – except for the Apocrypha, where references are to the Vulgate.

(2) *Abbreviations. CW* = Yale *Complete Works of St. Thomas More*; *CWE* = Toronto *Collected Works of Erasmus*; *CCTM* = *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas More*.

(3) *Names*. Names of historical figures of More's era are spelled as in *Contemporaries of Erasmus: A Biographical Register of the Renaissance and Reformation*. The sole exception is Pieter Gillis, for whom the familiar anglicised form, Peter Giles, is used.

(4) *Modernisation*. Whenever sixteenth-century English is quoted, spelling (sometimes also punctuation) is silently modernised.

(5) *Gendered language*. Where More uses nouns or pronouns that, in classical Latin, encompass not just males but human beings of either sex (for example, *homo*, *puer* and *nemo*), the translation employs similarly inclusive English equivalents. Gendered pronouns have also been avoided in passages where the Latin does not positively *forbid* one's doing so and where More may plausibly be thought not to have intended

to restrict his reference to males. But *Utopia* – like all other Renaissance works, and despite the fact that one of its notable features is the nearly equal treatment that the Utopian republic accords to women and men, in education, work, and military training and service – is the product of a culture in which intellectual and political life were generally regarded as almost exclusively male domains; and it is not unlikely that the translation imposes gender-neutral language upon some passages where More had in mind only males.

Introduction

The word 'utopia' entered the world with the publication of More's little book, in December 1516: it was coined by fusing the Greek adverb *ou* – 'not' – with the noun *topos* – 'place' – and giving the resulting compound a Latin ending. Within the book's fiction, 'Noplace' is a newly discovered island somewhere in the New World. The meaning that 'utopia' has come to have as a common noun – a perfect society, or a literary account of one – seems authorised by the full title of the book, which is (translating from the Latin) 'On the Best State of a Commonwealth and on the New Island of Utopia'. The same Hellenist readers who recognised the etymology of 'Utopia' would also have found this meaning suggested by the fact that the word puns on another Greek compound, *eutopia* – 'happy' or 'fortunate' place.

When we begin to read the book itself, though, the plausible supposition that *Utopia* is a utopia is rapidly called into question. First, the explorer whose account of the new island the book purports to record turns out to be named 'Hythloday' – another Greek compound, signifying 'nonsense peddler'. Second, the introductory, scene-setting pages are followed not by an account of Utopia but by a lengthy debate on whether or not it is worthwhile for Hythloday to enter practical politics by joining a king's council. Within this debate is another, recounted by Hythloday, on the problem of theft in More's England. Apart from a comic postlude to the latter one, these two debates seem entirely serious, and they are powerfully written: but what are they doing in a book on the ideal commonwealth? And when, at the beginning of the second part (or

'Book') of *Utopia*, we at last reach Hythloday's account of the new island, it is still not clear that we've reached eutopia.

The commonwealth of Utopia turns out to be a highly attractive place in some ways, but a highly unattractive one in others. No one goes hungry there, no one is homeless. The commonwealth is strikingly egalitarian. On the other hand, personal freedom is restricted in ways large and small. The authorities maintain the population of households, cities and the country as a whole at optimal levels by transferring people between households, between cities and between Utopia and its colonies; and even those citizens who are not uprooted in this fashion must exchange houses by lot every ten years (though all the houses are essentially identical). There is no opportunity to pass even one's leisure hours in unsanctioned activities: there are no locks on doors; 'no wine-bars, or ale-houses, or brothels; no chances for corruption; no hiding places; no spots for secret meetings' (p. 62). A citizen must get permission from the local magistrates to travel, and from spouse and father even to go for a walk in the country. In general, if Utopia anticipates the welfare democracies of our own time in many respects, the elaborate constraints imposed on its inhabitants also frequently put us in mind of modern totalitarian regimes. More's own society was rigidly hierarchical and highly regulated, so Utopia may not have seemed, relatively speaking, as restrictive to him as it does to us. Still, it is difficult to believe that he would have regarded as ideal all the features of Utopia that we find unattractive. Moreover, every Utopian proper noun embodies the same kind of learned joke as 'Utopia' and 'Hythloday'; and a few, at least, of the Utopian exploits and customs we are told about are hard to take seriously. Finally, at the end of the book More partly dissociates him-self – or at least the character who goes by his name – from Utopia, saying that many of its laws and customs struck him as absurd, though there are many others that he would 'wish rather than expect' to see in Europe.

These observations suggest three fundamental questions about *Utopia*. First, why did More invent a flawed commonwealth? It is easy to understand why a writer might want to create a fictional account of an ideal commonwealth, or a satire of a bad one. But what could be the point of inventing a commonwealth that is partly good and partly bad? Second, what do the debates of Book i have to do with the account of Utopia in Book ii, and with the subject of the best condition of the common-wealth? Third, how are we to understand the fact that More represents

himself as disapproving of much of what Hythloday says – and that, by peppering the book with jokes, he even seems to deny its seriousness?

This introduction offers readers one set of possible answers to these questions. But doing so is secondary to its main purpose, which is to provide the necessary *preliminaries* for interpretation of *Utopia*, by setting More's book in its contexts in his life, times and literary milieu, and in the history of Western political thought. In this process, the introduction provides the broad outlines, and the footnotes to the translation fill in details; in turn, these materials, together with the 'Suggestions for further reading', point the reader to a range of texts on which a fuller and deeper understanding of *Utopia* depends.

II

More was born in London, probably on 7 February 1478.[1] His father, John More, hoped his eldest son would follow him into the legal profession. For a few years, Thomas attended St Anthony's School, in Threadneedle Street, learning the fundamentals of Latin grammar and composition.[2] At the age of about twelve, he was placed as a page in the household of Henry VII's Lord Chancellor, John Morton. (Morton was also Archbishop of Canterbury and, from 1493, a cardinal.) This placement was ideally suited to exposing More to the ways of public life, and to securing him a powerful patron. After two years at Morton's, and probably at his instigation, the precocious boy was sent to further his education at Oxford. Two years later, though, John More brought him back to London, to begin legal training in the Inns of Court.

During his years at Oxford and as a law student, however (and reportedly to his father's chagrin), More came increasingly under the influence of a group of literary scholars, central figures of the emerging tradition of Renaissance humanism in England. As modern studies have made clear, the term 'humanism', when applied to the Renaissance, is

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[1] See Thomas Mitjans, 'The date of birth of Thomas More', *Moreana* 47, no. 181–2 (2010), 109–28, and 'Reviewing and correcting the article on the date of birth of Thomas More', *Moreana* 49, no. 189–90 (2012), 251–62: together, these essays constitute an exhaustive study of the long-running controversy about More's birthdate (the other possible dates are 6 February 1478 and 7 February 1477) consequent on a small inconsistency in the memorandum of it by his father.

[2] For compact and authoritative overviews of More's education, see Caroline Barron, *CCTM*, pp. 8–16, and James McConica, *CCTM*, pp. 25–7.

best used not to designate a particular philosophical position – for no single position is shared by all those Renaissance figures whom we are accustomed to regard as humanists – but to designate a particular scholarly orientation. 'Humanism' is a nineteenth-century coinage; but 'humanist' (like its cognates in other European languages) is found in the Renaissance itself, where it derived, first as Italian university-student slang, from *studia humanitatis*, a Ciceronian phrase that came to designate a family of disciplines comprising grammar, rhetoric, history, poetry and moral philosophy.[3] In the Renaissance as in the Middle Ages, Latin was the normal language of learning. Beginning in the fourteenth century, humanists like Petrarch attempted to revive the classical form of that language; by the early fifteenth century, they had undertaken a parallel attempt for classical Greek. More was well acquainted with the grammarian of humanistic Latin John Holt, and he studied Greek with the first Englishman to teach it, William Grocyn, and later with the eminent physician and scholar of medicine Thomas Linacre. He also fell strongly under the influence of John Colet. Like Grocyn and Linacre, Colet had studied in Italy, the homeland of humanist learning. After his return to England, in 1496, he gave several series of lectures at Oxford on the epistles of St Paul, lectures that constituted the earliest English application of some of the exegetical and historiographical techniques of Italian humanism; later, in London, he became Dean of St Paul's Cathedral, and founded there the first of the humanist grammar schools in England. And, in 1499, More made the acquaintance of the great Dutch humanist Erasmus, who in that year first visited England.

Indeed, at this period More seems to have been as intent on the pursuit of literary scholarship as of the law. He may also seriously have considered becoming a priest. According to a biographical sketch of More that Erasmus wrote in 1519, for a time 'he applied his whole mind to the pursuit of piety, with vigils and fasts and prayer and similar exercises preparing himself for the priesthood' (*CWE* 7:21). In fact More seems to have tested his vocation not merely for the priesthood – a calling that, as Cardinal Morton's example shows, need not have precluded a career in law (and politics) – but also for a life of religious withdrawal. The biography by his son-in-law William Roper says that at

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[3] See especially Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought: The Classic, Scholastic, and Humanist Strains* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961), pp. 8–23.

about this time More lived for four years with the Carthusians, the strictest of the monastic orders.[4]

Eventually More made his choices. By early 1505, he had closed the door to the priesthood and monasticism by marrying Joanna Colt, the daughter of a wealthy landowner; nor is there any sign, in the years following his marriage, that he thought of abandoning the law. Given the necessity of supporting a growing family – Joanna bore him four children before her death, in 1511, at twenty-three; shortly afterward, More married a middle-aged widow, Alice Middleton – he could in any case scarcely have afforded to entertain such thoughts.

In the decade following his first marriage, More rose rapidly in his profession. Roper reports that he was a member of the Parliament of 1504, and he represented the City of London in that of 1510. In the same year, he began to act as a city judge, having been appointed an Undersheriff of London. Increasingly he won assignments that drew on his literary and rhetorical as well as his legal skills. In March 1518, he entered Henry VIII's council.[5] His duties in this role spanned a broad range of activities, but his central employment, before he became Lord Chancellor, in 1529, was as secretary to the King. He also served frequently as the King's orator. And after Henry decided to write against Martin Luther (in 1520), More acted as his literary adviser and editor.

In the earlier part of his professional life, More also managed to carry out a substantial amount of independent scholarship and writing. It is striking how precisely his works of this period conform to the five associated disciplines of the *studia humanitatis*.[6] As grammarian (in the Renaissance understanding of the term), he translated (into Latin) many Greek poems, as well as four short prose works of the late-classical Greek ironist Lucian. As rhetorician, he wrote a declamation in reply to Lucian's *Tyrannicide*. (The declamation was a standard rhetorical exercise, a speech on a paradoxical or otherwise ingenious topic, often

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[4] *The Life of Sir Thomas More*, p. 198. Roper says that More 'gave himself to devotion and prayer in the Charterhouse of London, religiously living there without vow about four years'. The biography by his great-grandson Cresacre More, however, says he dwelt 'near' the Charterhouse: *The Life of Sir Thomas More*, ed. Joseph Hunter (London, 1828), p. 25. On this phase of More's life, see John Guy, *A Daughter's Love: Thomas & Margaret More*, pp. 83–7, and Barron, *CCTM*, pp. 13–14.

[5] See Guy, *Thomas More*, pp. 52–3.

[6] See Kristeller, 'Thomas More as a Renaissance humanist', *Moreana* 17, no. 65–6 (1980), 5–22.

involving the impersonation of some historical or mythical figure.) Erasmus reports a lost dialogue, evidently in the spirit of a declamation, defending the community of wives advocated in Plato's *Republic*. Several of More's longer, polemical letters of these years belong to the rhetorical genre of invective. As poet, he wrote, in addition to a few English poems, a large number of Latin epigrams. As historian, he practised the humanist genre of historical biography, in Latin and English versions of his unfinished *History of King Richard the Third* (a splendid, sardonic work that became the main source of Shakespeare's play) and in his translation of a biography of the fifteenth-century Italian philosopher Pico della Mirandola. As moral and political philosopher, he wrote *Utopia*. The publication of *Utopia* came near the end of this phase of More's literary career. Apart from four lengthy open letters in defence of Erasmus and humanist learning, for several years after 1516 he wrote little other than what was required of him in his profession; and when, in the 1520s, he resumed writing books – works opposing the Lutheran 'heresy', and a series of devotional works – they no longer fitted the humanist categories.

<div style="text-align:center">III</div>

Utopia was conceived in the summer of 1515. In May of that year, More left England for Flanders, as a member of a royal trade commission. The negotiations conducted by this commission and its Flemish counterpart, at Bruges, were stalled and recessed by 21 July, but More did not return to England until 25 October. In the three months from late July to late October, he enjoyed a rare period of leisure; it was during this period that *Utopia* began to take shape.

At some point in the summer More visited Antwerp, where he met Peter Giles (Pieter Gillis), to whom Erasmus had recommended him. Giles (*c.* 1486–1533) was a man after More's own heart. A humanist scholar and an intimate of Erasmus and his circle, he was also a man of practical affairs, chief clerk of the Antwerp court of justice and as such deeply involved in the business of that cosmopolitan shipping and commercial centre. Book 1 of *Utopia* opens with a brief account of the trade mission, which leads into an account of More's acquaintance with Giles. At this point, the book glides from fact into fiction. After Mass one day, More says, he encountered Giles speaking with one Raphael

Hythloday, with whom, following introductions, they proceeded to have the conversation that is recorded in the bulk of *Utopia*. This fictional conversation is presumably a transformation and expansion of actual conversations between More and Giles.[7] Be that as it may, More's visit to Antwerp served to crystallise and fuse a range of concerns most of which had (on the evidence of his earlier writings) been in his mind for years.

We have no direct information as to when he began writing. In the biographical sketch referred to above, Erasmus reported that More wrote the second book of *Utopia* 'earlier, when at leisure; at a later opportunity he added the first in the heat of the moment' (*CWE* 7:24). As J. H. Hexter argues, if More wrote Book II first, it seems probable that he initially regarded it as a complete work; presumably this version of *Utopia* was well in hand by the time he returned to England.[8] Back in London, though, he found reason to add the dialogue of Book I and, finally, the letter to Giles that serves as the book's preface; on 3 September, More sent the completed manuscript to Erasmus, who had evidently agreed to see to its publication, on the Continent.[9]

Hexter points out that the first version of *Utopia* must have included not only the account of Utopia that now occupies all of Book II except its last few pages but also an introduction something like the opening of the present Book I. Otherwise it would not be clear who is speaking in the monologue on Utopia, and under what circumstances. The second phase of composition is likely to have begun, then, not with the narrative account of the embassy to Bruges and the diversion to Antwerp but with the dialogue that now follows this introductory section. Indeed the precise point where More, as Hexter says, 'opened a seam' in the first version of *Utopia* to insert the dialogue can be identified with some confidence (see below, p. 13n.). After writing the dialogue, More must also have revised the conclusion of the work as a whole. In the final paragraph of Book II, as Hexter points out, the narrator recalls that Hythloday 'had reproached certain people who were afraid they might not appear knowing enough unless they found something to criticise in

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[7] Giles seems to hint as much in the commendatory letter he wrote for the first edition of *Utopia*: below, p. 126.

[8] See *More's 'Utopia': The Biography of an Idea*, pp. 15–30; *CW* 4:xv–xxiii.

[9] On the ancillary materials that Erasmus collected – at More's request – to buttress the early editions, see p. 116n., and on the 203 marginal glosses that Giles and/or Erasmus supplied for *Utopia* and its prefatory letter, p. 127 and note.