Satirical Modes in Thomas More's "Utopia" and Erasmus of Rotterdam's in Praise of Folly

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the satirical apparatus of Thomas More and Erasmus of Rotterdam expressed in their works respectively. In *Utopia*and *In Praise of Folly*, authors offer their unique views on the problematic situations of that epoch, primarily focusing on the politics, religion and society. Since the two authors lived in the same time period and maintained a close professional rapport, the topics discussed in the work will be congruent.Their approaches to the same issues through satire will primarily be focus of the thesis. There will also be contextualization of the period to which More and Erasmus pertained so that the satirical references of the given pieces will be foregrounded.

Keywords: More, Erasmus, criticism, satire, irony, Christianity, politics, invective

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

For a true writer each book should be a new beginning where he tries again for something that is beyond attainment. He should always try for something that has never been done or that others have tried and failed. Then sometimes, with great luck, he will succeed. (Ernest Hemingway, 1954 Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech)

The extract from Hemingway's meticulous speech closely demonstrates a *modus operandi* of any writer. The strive for something different ignited the passion and resolution in both Thomas More and Erasmus of Rotterdam to try and shift the way people think in the new direction or to point out the flaws in the societal norms of the sixteenth century. By deploying satire, they could offer criticism while maintaining a distance between their sets of values and the ideals presented in their works.

Often described as a powerful instrument, satire offers many writers a chance to express their views. The term can be defined as *"a genre of literature,[…], in which vices, follies, abuses, and shortcomings are held up to ridicule, ideally with the intent of shaming individuals, corporations, government, or society itself into improvement."* (Elliot, 2004: 1) Analyzing the aforementioned definition, it is obvious that today's society is practically bombarded by satire, found in media through television shows, plays, song lyrics, commentary and even internet memes. In the past, to achieve the drive for social change, one would have to reach for the best possible solution at the time, pen and paper. Different time periods called for different levels of criticism. That criticism could have been conveyed through various features of satire such as irony (sarcasm), parody, exaggeration, double entendre, comparison, burlesque, juxtaposition…

Although there are many features that can fall under the umbrella of satire, this genre itself is very hard to categorize. However, a common categorization can be demarcated in:

Horatian, Juvenalian or Menippean. Horatian satire, named after Roman satirist Horace, prides itself on criticism through

> "[...] light monologues with a serious content, decorated with witticisms and other attractive devices; […] haphazard in structure; and that their humor is rather rough than delicate. […]deal with important ethical and social problems, which concern every thinking man; […]not discuss in a complex argument filled with technical jargon. […] plain to understand and easy to remember, so that they may bridge the gulf between philosophy and the general public." (Highet, 1962: 35)

Juvenalian, carrying the name of Roman satirist Juvenal, displays more contemptuous and abrasive style than Horatian, depicting itself as a *"[…] type [that] hates most people, or despises them. He believes rascality is triumphant in his world; or he says, […] that though he loves individuals he detests mankind. His aim therefore is not to cure, but to wound, to punish, to destroy."* (Highet, 1962: 40) Menippean satire, appellated after Greek cynic Menippus, is considered*"[…] as developed out of verse satire through the practice of adding prose interludes, but we know it only as a prose form, though one of its recurrent features […] is the use of incidental verse. The Menippean satire deals less with people as such than with mental attitudes."*(Frye, 1971: 309) Mikhail Bakhtin deems it as a classical example in*"[…] the realm of the serio-comical."* (Bakhtin, 1984: 60) as it describes world as having "carnival" attitude, where *"Carnival is past millennia's way of sensing the world as one great communal performance."* (Bakhtin, 1984: 78), while also *"[…] permeated with the pathos of change and the joyful relativity of all things, debates which did not permit thought to stop and congeal in one-sided seriousness or in a stupid fetish for definition or singleness of meaning– all this lay at the base of the original core of the genre."* (Bakhtin, 1984: 68)

The style of Menippean satire offered the framework for Thomas More and Erasmus of Rotterdam to write their eponymous works, *Utopia* and *In Praise of Folly*.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

THOMAS MORE

Thomas More (*Thomas Morus*) was one of the most prolific writers of the Renaissance. His style was reflected by previous authors of his generations. Even though he is recognized as an author, he was much more than that. In his career he was lawyer, statesman, social philosopher, council and a Renaissance humanist.

Born on 7 February 1478, being the second of six children and born into powerful family, it seemed that the destiny already had planned his life. His father, Sir John More, was a successful lawyer and later a judge. From his perspective, he wanted nothing but the best for his children when it came to their education. Subsequently, More was educated at St. Anthony School, then considered one of the prestigious London's grammar schools. From 1490 to 1492, More served John Morton, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Lord Chancellor of England as a household page. This is all attested by William Roper, English lawyer and a Member of Parliament, who married More's eldest daughter Margaret and later wrote a very thorough biography of his father-in-law:

> "This Sir Thomas More, after he had been brought up in the Latin tongue at St. Anthony's in London, was by his father's[…] procurement received into the house of the right reverend, wise, and learned prelate Cardinal Morton,[…] where, though he was young of years, yet would he at Christmas-tide suddenly sometimes step in among the players, and never studying for the matter, make a part of his own there presently among them, which made the lookers-on more sport than all the players beside. In whose wit and towardness […] the Cardinal, much delighting, would often say of him unto the nobles that divers times dined with him, "This child here waiting at the table, whosoever shall live to see it, will prove a marvelous man." " (Wegemer and Smith, 2004: 19)

More later expressed further interest in education so his father sent him to Oxford where he studied Greek and furthered his knowledge of Latin. Around 1496, More's father invited him back to London to study common law. There he was admitted to Lincoln's Inn *"[...] with very small allowance, continuing there his study until he was made and accounted a*

worthy utter barrister." (Wegemer and Smith, 2004: 19) While studying law, his devotion to literature and spiritualism didn't subside as he was reading the classics and the Holy Scripture.

Around this time began a close and professional rapport with Erasmus of Rotterdam, when Erasmus first visited England. Erasmus's next visit saw the two intellectuals working closely on the translation of the Syrian satirist Lucian of Samosata's works. In 1509, on his third visit, Erasmus wrote *In Praise of Folly* (*Laus Stultitiae)*, dedicating it to More (*Moriae Encomium*). The work in question focused heavily and primarily on criticizing the Church as an institution and their dubious practices.

While engaging in civil service giving public lectures in different Inns, he found intrigue to participate in the monastic calling. It was hard for him to decide whether to continue the civil service or to pursue the *higher calling*. The decision was made in 1503, when he moved to a monastery outside of London where he subjected himself to Carthusian lifestyle, as much as his legal career would allow him. The Carthusian discipline meant partaking in fasting, constant prayer, distancing oneself from the carnal pleasures to deepening his spiritual connections. The more bizarre aspects were wearing a hair skin close to the body and occasional flagellation. That didn't last long as his devotion to the country overpowered his desire to be in the monastery so in 1504 he left and entered the Parliament.

1504 was also the year he got married for the first time to Jane Colt, with whom he had for children: Margaret, Elizabeth, Cicely and John. Unfortunately, Jane died in 1511 but that didn't stop More from marrying Alice Harpur Middleton to be the head of the household and take care of the children only a month later after Jane's death. (Wegemer and Smith, 2004: 361)

While participating in the civil service, he also developed his literary skills. Among many of his works, *History of King Richard III* presents a case of a work being attributed to him even though no evidence is provided to support the fact that More actually wrote it (Wegemer and Smith, 2004: 364), while *Utopia* (*Libellus vere aureus, nec minus salutaris quam festivus, de optimo rei publicae statu deque nova insula Utopia*) is considered one of his most prominent and celebrated works. This work became a forerunner for the new open literary genre: the utopian genre. Even though *Utopia* describes the perfect society, its antonym, dystopia, garnered popularity and relevancy that follows it to this day. Some of the most celebrated dystopian works of literature include Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451,* Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and George Orwell's *1984*.

His writing skills came to prominence when in 1523, along with King Henry VIII wrote *Defence of the Seven Sacraments* as a response to the reformer Martin Luther's works against Catholic practices. This proved to be an asset, as More soon became King's "private counselor" on many occasions and subjects, as Roper testifies:

> "[…] a good part where of used the King upon holy-days, when he had done his own devotions, to send for him into his travers, and there sometime in matters of astronomy, geometry, divinity, and such other faculties, and sometimes of his worldly affairs, to sit and confer with him. And other whiles would he, in the night, have him up into his leads, there for to consider with him the diversities, courses, motions, and operations of the stars and planets. And because he was of a pleasant disposition, it pleased the King and the Queen, after the Council had supped, at the time of their supper, for their pleasure, commonly to call for him to be merry with them." (Wegemer and Smith, 2004: 22)

The friendship with King Henry ended around 1527, when More couldn't accept King's divorce with Catherine of Aragon and subsequently wouldn't swear to his Oath of Supremacy. When More didn't arrive to Henry's coronation and marriage to Anne Boleyn, the King accused him of treason and locked him in the Tower of London. He was beheaded on July 6 1535, his last words being: *"The King's good servant, but God's first."* (Wegemar

and Smith, 2004: 357) Almost 400 years after his death, the Church of England declared him a saint and named him the *Reformation martyr*.

ERASMUS OF ROTTERDAM

Erasmus of Rotterdam, also known as *Erasmus* or even *Desiderius Erasmus Roterodamus* was a Dutch Christian humanist who was widely considered the greatest scholar of the northern Renaissance.

Interesting fact is that, unlike More, biographers and historians cannot determine the date of Erasmus's birth. However, the hint can be found in Erasmus's personal letters about his friend John Colet, an English churchman and educational pioneer. In one of the letters describing in detail John Colet's life, Erasmus states that when they first met, John was *"about thirty years old, two or three months younger than I."*(Gleason, 1979: 73) This can give an approximate year of birth to 1466. In many of his accounts, Erasmus had stated to have celebrated his birthday on the day of St. Simon (October 28), so it can be deducted that he was born on October 28, 1466. (Gleason, 1979: 73)

His birth is also shrouded in mysteriousness, or rather shamefulness, as his father is believed to have been a priest who had seduced Margaretha Rogerius, a daughter of the doctor of Zevenbergen called Geert. As a child born out of wedlock, it seemed his career would become exceptional. (Huizinga, 1957: 262)

Even though he has the name Rotterdam in his name, he spent only four years there. Deciding to adopt the name of that town, he brought fame to Rotterdam, back then considered only a fishing village. Couple of vague references in his writings puts his place of birth in the town of Gouda, in the south of Holland.

At the very young age he and his older brother were sent to monastery to receive classic education. Later, they were sent to one of the best grammar schools in Netherlands. There, Erasmus showed exceptional understanding of Greek and Latin and the ability of fast comprehension of knowledge. While attending the school, he took care of his parents until their deaths in 1483.

Couple of years later, forced by poverty, he decided to consecrate himself as a canon regular of the St. Anthony canonry in the south of Holland. After taking the vows, he never really used the powers of the priesthood, which later became one of the topics on which he based his attempts to reform the Church from within. He was given a temporary dispensation, later a permanent one to accept a job as a secretary to the Bishop of Cambrai, because of his skills in Latin and high education. (Galli, Mark and Olsen, Ted 2000: 343)

After perfecting his Latin, he started to express his attitude in literature and religion. Similarly to More, he cherished the religious background in which he grew up and insisted that the religious doctrines are returned to historic dogmas and abided by the Holy Scripture. With such compelling notions, it was no wonder that he managed to get rights on translating the New Testament in Greek, later translating it also in Latin.

That very same religious background made him friends and enemies. Thomas More shared the same passion and ideas as Erasmus, so it is no wonder the two became friends. As previously mentioned, Erasmus visited More on couple of occasions. On his last visit, he wrote *In Praise of Folly* and dedicated it to More. On the other hand, his ideas weren't met with applause by everyone. One of the initiators of the Protestant Reformation was Martin Luther, who used the Erasmus's Latin translation of the New Testament to make his own, German version of the Bible. Because of that, the two were in a disagreement over the religious doctrines, being especially harsh over free will.

As he began to lose strength, he accepted the call by the Queen Mary of Hungary, the Regent of the Netherlands to move to Brabant. Unfortunately, in 1536, while preparing to move, he visited Basel and died from an attack of dysentery. Basel is the also the place where he was buried. His last words were reported to be apparently: "Dear God!" (Huizinga, 1957: 266)

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The historical period which saw the life and work of Thomas More and Erasmus of Rotterdam, denominated as Humanism, was filled with advances in all walks of life. Although being more a scholarly movement, its ideals and teachings (*studia humanitatis*) (Saari and Saari, 2002: 1) benefited an all-around growth and influence of the following historical and cultural period: the Renaissance.

The Renaissance, lasting from 14th to 17th century, can trace its origins to Italy from which it started gradually expanding onto the perimeter of the Western Europe, setting out to revive the Greek and Latin culture of the ancient Rome. The focus of their movement was the human being, more precisely the individual human spirit, but also secular (non-religious) subjects. (Saari and Saari, 2002: 1)

> "Leaders of the Renaissance believed that classical art, science, philosophy and literature had been lost during the "dark ages" that followed the fall of the West Roman Empire. They held that the ideals represented by the ancient arts and sciences were waiting to be rediscovered, and Italians in particular considered themselves the true heirs to Roman achievement. For this reason, it was natural that the cultural revival should begin in Italy, where the ruins of ancient civilization provided an ever-present reminder of the past." (Saari and Saari, 2002: 2)

In their efforts to invoke the classical period, they would read and/or study the works of the ancient Greek poets, prose writers, philosophers, thinkers so they could copy them but still bring their own style. They also believed that the human could be successful in more than one area of expertise. This later became the concept of the *Renaissance Man* (*l'uomo universale*),

a man of great or varied learning. The most prominent example of the *Renaissance Man* is Leonardo da Vinci. Showing considerable skills as a painter, he was also an architect, a writer, an engineer, an inventor, a philosopher, a mathematician and a musician. By those standards, it seemed anyone could be considered a *Renaissance Man*. (Saari and Saari, 2002: 5)

Even King Henry VIII is thought to be a *Renaissance Prince*. Educated in Latin and theology, he was willing to spend a lot of money on promoting learning and arts, which by standards of that time makes Henry VIII the personification of many attributes of the Renaissance. (Saari and Saari, 2002: 106)

The age of Renaissance brought change to the political and social circles. In the Middle Ages, feudalism cemented itself firmly in the base of Europe's society. However, with the rise of the individuality in the Renaissance, the feudalism went in decline and ultimately left the Europe. Unfortunately, that left a lot of Western Europe, specifically Holy Roman Empire, in shambles as there were a number of small city-states that were battling for the dominion. (Saari and Saari, 2002: 143) Another significant change that came with the Renaissance was the decline of the supremacy of the Church. In the Middle Ages, all the art, literature and scholarly activities were related closely to Catholic Church. They taught that God's work should be worshipped in preparation for the life in heaven after death. Even though in the beginning of the Renaissance Church was still being acknowledged, around 16th century, the influence of Church began to decline. The marketing of the purchase and sale for the salvation was one of major ways of profit for the Church at that time, which sparked outrage within and out of Church's confines. (Saari and Saari, 2002: 145)

The outrage brought forth a movement known as Protestant Reformation. Its most notable protagonist was Martin Luther, who opposed a lot of Church's ideals, writing his 95

thesis and nailing it to the church in Wittenberg. As a result, Protestantism was founded as a Christian faith separate from Catholic Church. It was prominently received in England, where King Henry VIII adopted the Protestantism establishing the Church of England to allow himself the divorce from Catherine of Aragon because the Catholic Church did not approve of the divorce since it contradicted with the foundations of marriage.

It is widely regarded that the Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation marked the beginning of the modern age; a time in history where people rejected the traditions that have governed their lives and the generations before them and found the way to express themselves and to discuss about the experiences the world is to offer them.

SATIRE

In the next segment, More's and Erasmus's ideas and rhetoric will be shown through satire, or rather its components. In their works respectively, both authors touch on or refer to the same subjects, which are either admired and supported or criticized and satirized. It is interesting to see how they tackle the subjects and approach them through their characters.

JESTER- A *FOOLISH* CHARACTER

One of the first instances that connects both More and Erasmus lies in the character of jester. While *"A man employed in the past by a king or a ruler to entertain people with jokes, stories etc."* (Longman, 1998: 362) would suffice as a general definition, at the same time it does not engird the broader actions the character of jester accomplishes in the given works.

Among many of the synonyms for jester, the word *fool* offers another layer in connection to characters or rather to authors who gave life to those characters. Erasmus, in his letter to More, explains the inspiration behind the book being More himself because of the similarity to the Greek word *moriae* meaning folly/foolishness.

> "And therefore, being satisfied that something was to be done, and that that time was no wise proper for any serious matter, I resolved to make some sport with the praise of folly. But who the devil put that in your head? you'll say. The first thing was your surname of More, which comes so near the word Moriae (folly) as you are far from the thing. And that you are so, all the world will cleat you." (Erasmus, 1511: 2)

Given the context, reading *Utopia* there seems to be given a little nod by More the author to the foolishness of More the character being unaware of the difference in cultures while listening to the Hythloday discussing the Utopians. Moreover, the character of Hythloday can also be attributed with an aspect of foolishness. As it is stated in book, his surname *"[...] Hythlodaeus (whose name, made of two Greek words [hythlos] and [daios], means 'knowing*

in trifles')"(More, 1516: 6) means *paddler of nonsense,* giving the reader the impression that this is not also a foolish character but also that this is work of fiction first and foremost.

While they share the aspect of the fool, they cannot be considered the only *foolish* characters. The aforementioned character of jester offers juxtaposition in both books. While its principal homework is to entertain, it engages in conversation and offers smart and logical solution. In *Praise of Folly* the character of Folly is dressed as jester lamenting her view on to the world. What gives her the opportunity to speak lies in the notion that foolishness as an emotion makes part of every human being, thus allowing her to connect with the audience. The character of jester in *Utopia* appears at the council for the sole purpose of entertainment only to later offer a solution to one council member's questions.

More and Erasmus wanted to let the readers know that in order to solve the problem, one has to incorporate emotions into decision making, thus enabling oneself to reach a perhaps simpler solution.

RELIGION

Religion is one of the thoroughly discussed topics by both More and Erasmus. Since both of them spent time in the monasteries and were devoted Christians living at a time when Church was going through its tumultuous stage, both authors voiced their opinions through their characters. While More takes a subtle approach describing in great detail the religious aspect of the Utopians, Erasmus directs it straight at the very institution of the Church, condemning their certain practices.

When describing the religion in Utopia, Hythloday highlights that the priests *"[...] are men of eminent piety [...]"*. (More, 1516: 166) In describing them he also points out that they are focused primarily on their ideology. Both of these statements should be considered a subtle criticism of Christian clergy considering that the Church liked to invest itself in other

parts of public life, but also because of the uproar against leniency and corruption among clerics in Europe. Another aspect that More outlines in *Utopia* that by standards of those days was not sought after: practice of other religions. Although majority of the Utopians believe in one being, there are others that want to practice other religions. It was down to King Utopus, the founder of Utopia, to declare *"that every man might be of what religion he pleased, and might endeavour to draw others to it by the force of argument and by amicable and modest ways, but without bitterness against those of other opinions"*. (More, 1516: 158) However, ironically, there is some bitterness as those who do not believe in immortality are *"scarce fit to be counted men, since they degrade so noble a being as the soul, and reckon it no better than a beast's: thus they are far from looking on such men as fit for human society, or to be citizens of a well-ordered commonwealth"*. (More, 1516: 160) They are still allowed to exist but they are forbidden to partake in the offices or in the public affairs.

Apart from this, Hythloday states that the Utopian priests can be married and their wives and women in general can be appointed as priests. In the sixteenth century, this notion was considered improbable, even paradoxical to a point, since at that time women were not equal to men and did not have the possibility to advance to higher positions on a social scale, occupied totally by their male counterpart. Being looked at it as a suggestion for the European priesthood or as a work of fiction just for the sheer improbability of it actually happening, the reader gets a sense of ambiguity of what More intended with that passage.

Coming for a more direct attack of the European priesthood, Erasmus directly criticizes people to seem to have *higher power*. He accuses priests of bending the mind of the believers and the messages of the Holy Scripture to their own will:

> " while hedged in with so many magisterial definitions, conclusions, corollaries, propositions explicit and implicit, they abound with so many starting-holes that Vulcan's net cannot hold them so fast, but they'll slip through with their distinctions, with which they so easily cut all knots asunder that a hatchet could not have done it better, so plentiful are they in their new-found words and prodigious terms. Besides,

> while they explicate the most hidden mysteries according to their own fancy--as how the world was first made; how original sin is derived to posterity; in what manner, how much room, and how long time Christ lay in the Virgin's womb; how accidents subsist in the Eucharist without their subject. But these are common and threadbare; these are worthy of our great and illuminated divines, as the world calls them!" (Erasmus, 1511: 33)

Folly comes after monks next in a harsh invective, discussing how monks abuse the power given them through confessions. Comparing that sacred part of the Christianity to *"being got drunk"* (Erasmus, 1511: 37), Erasmus through Folly almost angrily deducts what power monks have in the palm of their hands should one of the confessed get in quarrel with them, stating that *"if anyone should anger these wasps, they'll sufficiently revenge themselves in their public sermons and so point out their enemy by circumlocutions that there's no one but understands whom 'tis they mean, unless he understand nothing at all; nor will they give over their barking till you throw the dogs a bone."* (Erasmus, 1511: 37)

In Utopia the act of confessions is a more private ordeal. It is a family function. Before going to the temple to pray and celebrate life, *"[...] both wives and children fall on their knees before their husbands or parents and confess everything in which they have either erred or failed in their duty, and beg pardon for it. Thus all little discontents in families are removed, that they may offer up their devotions with a pure and serene mind;"* (More, 1516: 171) What More wanted to outline is that all can be kept in the family, while priests can be asked for advice on different religiously related subjects.

It is clear that by directing criticism and describing the ideal religious system, both authors wanted to influence the change in one of the widespread aspects of public life of that period.

WEALTH AND PROPERTY

Hythloday accentuates that in Utopia there is no private property, everybody working to benefit themselves but at the same time to benefit the state. The money that they earn from selling the extra supplies to foreigners is saved for the extreme cases of war, since citizens do not use the money. (More, 1516: 93) The Utopians are grateful for the materials provided by Nature, while metals like gold and silver that would usually involve other people to fight over it for the purpose of displaying the wealth, have no primary function in their lives so they use

> "[…]chamber-pots and close-stools of gold and silver, and that not only in their public halls but in their private houses. Of the same metals they likewise make chains and fetters for their slaves, to some of which, as a badge of infamy, they hang an earring of gold, and make others wear a chain or a coronet of the same metal; and thus they take care by all possible means to render gold and silver of no esteem; and from hence it is that while other nations part with their gold and silver as unwillingly as if one tore out their bowels, those of Utopia would look on their giving in all they possess of those metals (when there were any use for them) but as the parting with a trifle, or as we would esteem the loss of a penny!" (More, 1516: 96)

While in Utopia there is no need for excess, or rather that excess is saved for future notions; Folly closely describes the idea of wealth, reverting back to the European priesthood. As previously mentioned the Church was heavily criticized for asking money in exchange for forgiveness and angered a lot of people inside and outside of the Church's inner circle. Although monks and priests should be considered guilty, Folly states that it begins with the pope, *"[…] the most diligent of all others in gathering in the harvest of money, refer all their apostolical work to the bishops, the bishops to the parsons, the parsons to the vicars, the vicars to their brother mendicants, and they again throw back the care of the flock on those that take the wool."* (Erasmus, 1511: 43) The irony here is that while someone as influential as pope should condemn those actions, he is more than prepared to take the money, but then

proceeds to extend the blameworthiness to bishops and that continues down the line. Nobody wants to be directly associated, but directly acquire the money.

When it comes to the idea of wealth and property and how one can use it, there is a universal agreement by both More and Erasmus on the topic, specifically (ab)use of such. While More offers an unassertive solution, Erasmus brings forth the sheer absurdity of the fact that God's word bearers can shift the tenents of their religion so they can benefit themselves.

PHILOSOPHY

A pertinent, influential Renaissance work would not have been achievable without an underlining philosophical note. More and Erasmus discuss in their works the school of Stoicism and Plato's *Republic*.

Stoicism, in its core, wants to achieve clear judgment meaning that one has to get rid of all emotions and to allow logic to guide the decision making. It is also based on respecting the Nature and understanding its process, simply putting it as universal reason.

The key idea of stoicism, asceticism, is the turning wheel for More, who was an avid practitioner of it while in the monastery, Asceticism presented a way for some stoics to achieve clarity in judgment. Some of those ideas are skillfully integrated in *Utopia*. When describing the religion in Utopia, Hythloday points out to the people who believe that by abstaining from certain pleasures and dedication to hard and persistent labor they will come closer to the deity of their preferred worship.

> "Of these there are two sorts: some live unmarried and chaste, and abstain from eating any sort of flesh; and thus weaning themselves from all the pleasures of the present life,[…] Another sort of them is less willing to put themselves to much toil, and therefore prefer a married state to a single one; and as they do not deny themselves the pleasure of it, […]nor do they avoid any pleasure that does not hinder labour; and therefore eat flesh so much the more willingly, […] the Utopians look

> upon these as the wiser sect, but they esteem the others as the most holy." (More, 1516: 164/165)

Even though presenting general outline of asceticism, a subtle comparison to the religious orders of the Christian Europe, such as monks, friars and others is interwoven between the lines, although not explicitly saying whether or not they have taken the vows or participated in a ritual that would enable them to be categorized as a religious sect. However, in true More's style, a satirical note enriches the lines. While analyzing the hard laborers, Hythloday describes them further *"[...]but by their stooping to such servile employments they are so far from being despised, that they are so much the more esteemed by the whole nation."* (More, 1516: 164) There is almost simultaneous equation with the slaves, whose job is to be obedient and contemplate their actions through hard work and the elevation of their selfless actions being not revered but rather appreciated by all.

On the other hand, Erasmus leaves that train of thought and in a parodied manner through Folly underlines why Stoicism would not be constituted as beneficial. She marks stoics throughout the entire oration as beings of certain emptiness, stating that without involving emotions, some of their decisions would be in clouded judgment. Elaborating on their appearance, there is a juxtaposition of them thinking they are gods and Folly comparing them to animals. *"[...] that conceive themselves next to the gods, yet show me one of them, nay the veriest bigot of the sect, and if he do not put off his beard, the badge of wisdom, though yet it be no more than what is common with him and goats;"* (Erasmus, 1511: 7) *"And here again do those frogs of the Stoics croak at me and say that nothing is more miserable than madness."* (Erasmus, 1511: 22) Folly further questions what happens if they want to have offspring. As the act of conceiving offspring mandates the presence of emotions, folly first of all, stoics must be "mad" to engage in such an activity.

> "[…] that wise man whoever he be, if he intends to have children, must have recourse to me. But tell me, I beseech you, what man is that would submit his neck to the noose of wedlock, if, as wise men should, he did but first truly weigh the inconvenience of the thing? Or what woman is there would ever go to it did she seriously consider either the peril of child-bearing or the trouble of bringing them up? So then, if you owe your beings to wedlock, you owe that wedlock to this my follower, Madness;"(Erasmus, 1511: 7)

For Folly, stoics represent a paradox *"[…] that so severely cried down pleasure did but handsomely dissemble, and railed against it to the common people to no other end but that having discouraged them from it, they might the more plentifully enjoy it themselves."* (Erasmus, 1511: 7) Being able to discuss their teachings to the point that others find it hard to follow supports Folly's continuous undermining of that philosophical movement.

For stoics, the cardinal virtues that enable them to achieve universal reasoning, wisdom, temperance, courage and justice are derived from the teachings of another great philosopher, Plato. (Plato and Bloom, 1991: 103-114) His most popular book, *The Republic*, is a point of reference for both More and Erasmus. That book represents, to a certain degree a form of literary genre called "mirror for princes" (*specula principum).* It serves as an instructional manual for the rulers on how to rule. That is the philosophical aspect both More and Erasmus discuss when mentioning Plato's *Republic*, but it is Erasmus who discusses it more philosophically, having had experience in that literary genre writing *The Education of the Christian Prince* (*Institutio principis Christiani*) in 1516 as a set of instructions to Habsburg Emperor Charles V.

Right at the beginning of *Utopia*, More the character questions Hythloday, as a well-traveled and experienced man, but also as a philosopher, why would he not accept the position of the king's adviser, stating *"[…] for your friend Plato thinks that nations will be happy when either philosophers become kings or kings become philosophers. It is no wonder if we are so far from that happiness while philosophers will not think it their duty to assist kings with their counsels."* (More, 1516:41) Hythloday gives a satirical account of a hypothetical

meeting of the French council in which he states that the advisers would offer plan to the king on how to expand the territory of the country, but the philosopher (Hythloday) would propose the idea of starting the expansion on themselves, implying that it wouldn't be well received. Further supporting the idea, Hythloday says that kings are only focused on war rather than promoting the higher goals. Such rhetoric can be connected with Machiavelli's *The Prince*, but since that book was published in 1532, and *Utopia* in 1516, there is no way More could have been influenced by Machiavelli. It appears as though More express his views of expanding the knowledge of an ordinary in the Renaissance England rather than expanding the territories and going to wars.

While More is concerned with deepening the social knowledge, Erasmus in a short passage comments on the sentence in *The Republic* where Plato states that

> "Until philosophers are kings, or the kings and princes of this world have the spirit and power of philosophy, and political greatness and wisdom meet in one, and those commoner natures who pursue either to the exclusion of the other are compelled to stand aside, cities will never have rest from their evils — no, nor the human race, as I believe — and then only will this our State have a possibility of life and behold the light of day." (Plato and Bloom, 1991:153)

Folly gives a thorough explanation of how that statement would not suffice for the current political economy. Firstly, there would not be an influx of emotions into their ruling, which Folly believes needs to exist. Secondly, in another harsh invective, Folly mentions that philosophers consider themselves all-knowing omnipotent beings, almost as descendants of gods, but in reality they are a complete opposite and *"[…] chiefly do they disdain the unhallowed crowd as often as with their triangles, quadrangles, circles, and the like mathematical devices, more confounded than a labyrinth, and letters disposed one against the other, as it were in battle array, they cast a mist before the eyes of the ignorant. Nor is there wanting of this kind some that pretend to foretell things by the stars and make promises of*

miracles beyond all things of soothsaying, and are so fortunate as to meet with people that believe them." (Erasmus, 1511: 32)

In itself, the notion of the philosopher being a ruler or an adviser to the ruler should be taken with a grain of salt, as both authors indicate it would not yield the positive outcome.

VOLUNTAS VIVENDI

During the sixteenth century in England and the Netherlands, death penalty was classified as the most severe type of punishment for a crime. Though many of the crimes were not as severe, that did not stop the judicial bodies to sentence those guilty of committing minor crimes to death. Both More and Erasmus tackle the subject of capital punishment and death, each in their own accord and with a satirical twist.

For More, the juxtaposition of life and death lies in the arrangement of death penalty. Hythloday accounts for a meeting he participated in at the Cardinal Morton's house, where the subject of a record number of hanging was brought up. Hythloday criticized that the death penalty was not an appropriate tool to equate robbers and murderers implying that *"[...] for, since death does not restrain theft, if men thought their lives would be safe, what fear or force could restrain ill men? On the contrary, they would look on the mitigation of the punishment as an invitation to commit more crimes."* (More, 1516: 29) An alternative is to sentence those accused of robbery to hard labor. The point raised gives an indicative of what is later confirmed in Utopia where those that had not committed the heinous crime of murder were forced to hard labor and are consequently considered slaves.

In Erasmus's case, capital punishment does not appear as an explicit discussion point, but rather the idea of death. It is mentioned as men's final frontier once stepping over into the old age. Folly discusses that men when they reach that stage *"[...] by so much they grow*

backward into the likeness of children, until like them they pass from life to death, without any weariness of the one, or sense of the other." (Erasmus, 1511: 8)

While *Utopia* criticizes death penalty as punishment for different levels of severity and offers a more prominent solution, *In Praise of Folly* portrays death as a natural process, to the point where the lines between life ending and death beginning can become blurred.

CONCLUSION

After Hythloday's detailed account of Utopia, More the character professes his very interest in understanding more about Utopia, but ultimately abandoning the idea, concludingthat *"cannot perfectly agree to everything he [Hythloday] has related. However, there are many things in the commonwealth of Utopia that I rather wish, than hope, to see followed in our governments."* (More, 1516: 183)

Erasmus ends the oration of Folly on a more cheerful note. After the lengthy monologue, Folly ironically admits that she forgot what she said. *"[…] if you think I remember anything of what I have said, having foolishly bolted out such a hodgepodge of words. 'Tis an old proverb, "I hate one that remembers what's done over the cup." This is a new one of my own making: I hate a man that remembers what he hears. Wherefore farewell, clap your hands, live and drink lustily, my most excellent disciples of Folly."*(Erasmus, 1511: 53)

In the age of Renaissance and Reformation, where the higher goal was a reflection upon the old and the attempt of reinventing, literature was one the most effective means of transporting those ideas to an audience. Erasmus and More, being influential pioneers, decided to call attention to the problems of the sixteenth-century Europe. The voices of More and Erasmus resonated through their works, achieving it through the characters' mediation of both authors attitudes..

More the character shared similarities with More the author, while Hythloday channeled More's reasoning. In addition, the work itself presented a way for More to express his inner conflicts. The ambiguity of the criticism of the political and social circumstance of England and complete opposites in *Utopia* do not only enliven the reader, but make the criticism itself more poignant. The subtle but nonetheless present satire accentuates the desire to reform the society and the European continent.

For Erasmus it was an outlet whereby projecting himself onto Folly, he could offer a different, more direct criticism of the sixteenth-century Europe. Having been part of the religious circles, ironically writing *In Praise of Folly* as an oration while attacking the orators gave Erasmus the unprecedented right to criticize and expose the European priesthood.

Learning how to use it and control it, satire becomes an instrument that can affect people, crumble governments and instigate vicissitudes beyond our control. Both Thomas More and Erasmus of Rotterdam resorted to that idea and ultimately, succeeded to push for a change to a better understanding and a higher standard of living.

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