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Volume 36, Number 1, Winter 2013

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1091174ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v36i1.20019>

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Publisher(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (print)

2293-7374 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Cook, B. (2013). Prudentia in More's Utopia: The Ethics of Foresight. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 36(1), 31–68. <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v36i1.20019>

Article abstract

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Prudentia in More's *Utopia*: The Ethics of Foresight

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Because the original text is written in Latin—a dead language and relatively difficult to learn—translations of Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* have long been a necessary evil. Weighed against the number of readers who have explored the literature of the various European vernaculars without the mediation of a translator, those who have enjoyed *Utopia* in Latin are a privileged few. *Don Quixote* is often studied in Spanish, *Gargantua* in French, and *Hamlet* in English, but *Utopia* has been known largely through translation. Even in More's own England, this has been the rule from Ralph Robinson's vernacular rendering of 1551 to the academic translations of more recent centuries. To read *Utopia* is almost inevitably to read not More's own words, but a recasting of those words in an alien idiom. And since the study of Latin hardly seems to be reviving, such interpretations will continue. It is in the interest of future translations of *Utopia*, as well as a refined understanding of the Latin text, that the present essay has been written. If *Utopia* is rarely read in the original, it can always be studied with the original in mind, with the salient qualities of the Latin clearly illustrated. Among the various words deserving further scrutiny, the pages that follow will address the abstract noun *prudentia*, seeking to answer two related

questions. First, how does More understand the word in general terms? Second, what is its special significance for *Utopia*?

It requires only a glance at the Latin text of *Utopia* to realize that *prudentia* is an important term. If we include the adjectival and adverbial forms as well as their corresponding antonyms, we will discover that *prudentia* and its derivatives occur 25 times in this brief work.¹ And this should come as no surprise considering the word's etymology and the range of meanings it consequently suggests. *Prudentia* is a contraction of the closely related *providentia*, which is derived in turn from the preposition *pro*, a cognate of the English "for," and the verb *videre*, "to see."² Therefore the basic meaning of *prudentia* is "foresight."³ Like the English "foresight," *prudentia* is metaphorical rather than literal; it describes the perceptive powers of the mind and not the eye. *Prudentia* shares some semantic territory with *providentia*, but where the latter word is often associated with the supernatural vision and purpose known as "divine providence," the former is a very human quality, one attributed as readily to men as to gods.⁴ Perhaps most important, *prudentia* rarely describes the actual power of foresight; instead, it usually signifies the superior judgment such foresight can afford. This is why it may be rendered in modern English as "discretion," "wisdom," "intelligence," "practical judgment," and "prudence"—all associated with the fruits of foresight rather than the faculty itself.⁵ *Prudentia* can also describe "skill" or "proficiency" in a particular field of endeavour, such as law or warfare, reflecting the notion that previous experience assists us in foreseeing future eventualities.⁶ In his edition of the New Testament, More's friend and intellectual ally Erasmus of Rotterdam (1487–1534) often uses *prudentia* to translate the Greek *φρόνησις*, a word suggesting not only prudential common sense, but also intention and purpose.⁷ Erasmus equates the related adjective *prudens* with *φρόνιμος*, which is used to characterize someone who is "of sound mind," "wise," "prudent," or "sensible."⁸ In *The Renaissance Idea of Wisdom*, Eugene Rice interprets *prudentia* as a kind of practical, worldly wisdom, "the knowledge of mutable human things," in contrast with the more abstract and speculative forms of intelligence associated with other Latin terms.⁹ Rice argues that More's contemporaries saw *prudentia* as "the active managerial virtue, the characteristic of men who distinguish themselves in public life."¹⁰ It would appear only natural, then, for *prudentia* to occur so often in a book preoccupied, in the words of the full title, with "the best state of a commonwealth."¹¹

But if the significance of *prudentia* is clear in the original Latin, it must also elude any reader who would rely upon an English text of *Utopia*. With the partial exception of Paul Turner's brilliant but eccentric translation, every major edition has obscured the role of *prudentia* by entangling it with another term.¹² From Ralph Robinson in the sixteenth century, through Gilbert Burnet in the seventeenth, all the way to Robert Adams, G. C. Richards, and David Wootton in the last century, and to Clarence H. Miller in 2001, translators have conflated *prudentia* with *sapientia*, a word often rendered as "wisdom," "understanding," or "sound judgment."¹³ By translating both Latin nouns as "wisdom" and rendering their respective adjectival and adverbial forms with "wise" and "wisely," English versions of *Utopia* have blurred a distinction which is quite clear in the original.

This choice is not without justification—more on this later—but it also has two unfortunate consequences. The first is that the specific qualities of *prudentia*, those which distinguish it from *sapientia*, are obscured. In reading both Latin nouns as "wisdom," the English reader will overlook the tendency of each word to describe a very specific quality. It seems clear that More prefers *prudentia* to describe "the active, managerial virtue" mentioned by Rice. *Prudentia* is used to discuss the contracting of treaties, the hiring of mercenaries, the selection of government officials, the administration of public affairs, and the mysteries of international statecraft.¹⁴ It is absent in executives who make poor decisions and fail to govern effectively, as well as in individuals who act without weighing the consequences for themselves or for others.¹⁵ When *Utopia*'s principal speaker, the Portuguese mariner Raphael Hythlodæus, first enumerates the admirable qualities of the communities he has visited, his term is "recte prudenterque provisiva" (correct and prudent provisions).¹⁶ Speaking of the fictional Polylerites of Central Asia, Hythlodæus hails their nation as "neque exiguum, neque imprudenter institutum" (neither small nor governed without prudence).¹⁷ The island republic of Utopia receives praise for the *prudentia* of its laws and practices on more than one occasion, most notably when Hythlodæus calls the foundational laws of Utopia—we might say its constitution—"prudentissima atque sanctissima" (at once most prudent and most holy).¹⁸ Plato, the philosopher who most keenly understood the necessity of a society free, like Utopia, from private property, is referred to as "homo prudentissimus" (the most prudent of men).¹⁹ Turning to the problems of England, Hythlodæus declares that Cardinal John Morton, the mentor of the

young Thomas More, was distinguished as much by his *prudentia* and his virtue as by the dignity of his office.²⁰ He explains how Morton acquired a hard-won “*prudentia rerum*” (prudence in human affairs) through a long and perilous entanglement in the intrigues of the English court.²¹ *Prudentia* is attributed to Hythlodæus himself several times, a natural association considering his almost unrivalled familiarity with so many social systems and philosophies of government. In his capacity as a character in the dialogue, Thomas More congratulates Hythlodæus on speaking “*prudenter*” (prudently) about his conversations with Cardinal Morton.²² As the dialogue’s narrator, More declares that Hythlodæus has delivered his observations regarding politics, in Europe and beyond, “*prudentissime*” (with the utmost prudence).²³

It is worth noting here that More is not entirely consistent in his use of *prudentia*; it may be his favourite term for the practical wisdom of successful administration and sound governance, but he does not rely on it exclusively. Shortly before Hythlodæus makes reference to the prudent government of the Polylerites, More himself pairs the same verb, *instituere*, with the adverbial form of *sapientia*, referring to “*sapienter institutos cives*” (wisely governed citizens).²⁴ Somewhat later, Hythlodæus alternates between *sapientia* and *prudentia* with little difference in his meaning, using the two words interchangeably as he deplores the stifling effect of tradition upon European politics.²⁵ But while it is not impossible to find *sapientia* representing Rice’s “active managerial virtue,” there is no question that *prudentia* plays this role more consistently. It is also clear that *sapientia* is More’s preferred term for a different type of wisdom, one more contemplative and philosophical, one focused on personal satisfaction rather than public decision-making. *Prudentia* is associated more than once with the verb *administrare*, “to manage or perform,” but when Hythlodæus recalls Plato’s advice for “wise men” to avoid all involvement in public affairs, he uses the plural adjective *sapientes*.²⁶ The absence of *prudentia* leads captains to risk their ships in dangerous waters, and it drives a recent Christian convert into exile for rashly denouncing the religion of his neighbours.²⁷ Were it not for *prudentia*, the Utopians would engage in bloody battles against enemies who could have been bribed to betray each other for gold.²⁸ *Sapientia*, by contrast, guards against errors of a different kind. A man of *sapientia* values good character in a wife as much as physical beauty, and he understands that the highest physical pleasure is found not in self-indulgence but in good health and the absence of sickness or pain.²⁹ The Utopian people are said to be surprised to

hear that “*sapientes et bonos viros*” (wise and good men) can be enthralled by gold, as if they questioned whether a lover of precious metals was truly “wise,” just as they might doubt that a “prudent” person could behave recklessly.³⁰ *Sapientia* is contrasted at one point with *superbia* (pride) suggesting a humble self-knowledge far removed from the statesman’s arrogance.³¹ *Sapientia* may also be associated with a distinctly Judeo-Christian wisdom deriving from the study of the Holy Scriptures rather than the experience of life. While the pagan Plato is called “*prudētissimus*,” the biblical King Solomon is “*sapientissimus*” (most wise); and when Hythlodæus speaks of the surpassing wisdom of Jesus Christ, the noun he chooses is *sapientia*.³²

The first consequence of the practice followed by nearly all of More’s translators is to obscure the distinction discussed above. When *prudētia* and *sapientia* are both translated with “wisdom,” the first occasionally, the second consistently, the already uncertain line between these two terms is erased altogether. The *sapientes* who avoid political involvement in favour of philosophy and the *prudētes* who distinguish themselves in public office are alike called “wise,” and the philosophical “wisdom” that understands the nature of human happiness is equated with the more practical “wisdom” that foresees the immediate danger of a reckless act. When Plato is called “*homo prudētissimus*,” each of the translators mentioned earlier, with the notable exception of Turner, uses language that would be just as appropriate if the adjective were *sapientissimus*.³³ For Robinson, Plato is “the wise man,” for Burnet he is “so wise a man.”³⁴ Richards, who supplies the basis for the English text of the Yale edition, tries “this wise sage.”³⁵ Adams and Wootton agree on “wisest of men,” an expression which captures the superlative degree of the original; while Miller conveys More’s adjective with a noun, writing of Plato’s “great wisdom.”³⁶ Any suggestion that Plato’s very practical insight into the operation of human society might differ in qualitative terms from the divinely-inspired “wisdom” of Solomon, or indeed of Jesus, is lost.

But the confusion of *sapientia* and *prudētia* is not the only problem presented by English editions of *Utopia*. The use of “wisdom” for *prudētia* in certain cases and not in others creates a second difficulty. Because translators render *prudētia* with several different terms—“prudence,” “discernment,” “intellect,” and “judgment”—English readers risk overlooking the contradictions within *prudētia* itself. Perhaps the most interesting of these involves the variable moral quality of the different individuals and institutions described in

terms of *prudentia*. There can be little question that in most cases, *prudentia* has very positive associations. Hythlodæus clearly means to pay the constitution of the Utopians a compliment in declaring it “prudentissima atque sanctissima”; this is in keeping with his effusive praise for most if not all aspects of their society. The same may also be said of his characterization of Plato as “homo prudentissimus” shortly afterwards. Hythlodæus is said to have “utterly dedicated himself to philosophy,” and given special attention to mastering the Greek language, so it is hard to doubt his admiration for the most distinguished of all Greek philosophers.³⁷ There can be little question, too, that the *prudentia* ascribed to Cardinal Morton is to be understood as something good. More commends Morton in his *History of Richard III*, and within the dialogue itself both More and Hythlodæus speak of the cardinal in the warmest terms.³⁸ The use of the adverbs *prudenter* and *prudentissime* in association with Hythlodæus himself seems meant to commend his insightful discussion of Utopian society. It is interesting, in the light of such passages, to discover that *prudentia* may not always be understood in such a positive sense. In the course of his discussion, Hythlodæus attributes the highest possible *prudentia* to a group of men who do not share the admirable character of Cardinal Morton or the “more prudent” among the Utopians, let alone the wise philosopher Plato. He uses the adjective *prudentissimus* in a passage in which the context, if nothing else, must give us pause.

The clearest example of *prudentia* as something less than praiseworthy occurs at what might be considered the turning point of *Utopia*'s first book. Thomas More, again the character rather than the author, has continued to insist that Hythlodæus should place his political expertise in the service of some European prince.³⁹ In order to convince More that his advice would be unwelcome, Hythlodæus asks him to imagine the circle of advisors who surround the king of France.⁴⁰ What would happen if he joined their deliberations? How would they respond to his advice? Hythlodæus's portrait of the French counsellors is unquestionably negative; he presents them as the perfect type of unscrupulous, grasping courtiers, hatching stratagems to expand their sovereign's power without any consideration for piety or morality. In foreign policy, they weave an elaborate web of intrigue; they consider “the methods and devices by which [their prince] may hold on to Milan and recapture Naples, which had escaped him, then overturn the Venetians, and reduce all Italy to obedience, next how he may establish his authority over Flanders and Brabant,

and finally over the whole of Burgundy.”⁴¹ Turning their minds to domestic politics, they devise endless schemes to swindle the unsuspecting people of France, whether by charging those who violate “certain ancient and moth-eaten laws, outdated from long neglect,” or by extorting money “under pretext” of preparing for a war that never comes.⁴² In the latter case, they argue that their prince may not only enrich himself, but also earn unmerited praise as a lover of peace.⁴³ In short, the French counsellors are a model for how subjects should not serve their sovereign: they tell him what he can do rather than what he should. And yet Hythlodæus describes them with the very same word that is praise when applied to others, including himself. In fact, he declares that the French counsellors exhibit *prudentia* in the superlative degree: like Plato, they are “*prudētissim[i] homin[es]*” (the most prudent of men).⁴⁴

It is an unfortunate consequence of the practice followed by nearly all of More's translators that the parallel between the *prudentia* of Plato and the *prudentia* of the French counsellors will be lost on the vast majority of English readers. An effect which is perfectly clear in Latin will not be preserved if a different word is used for each instance of the adjective *prudētissimus*, as in the majority of the translations discussed here. One word, usually “wisdom,” is employed for Plato's *prudentia*, and a different term is reserved for the supreme cunning of the French king's scheming advisors. Adams and Miller call the French counsellors “most judicious,” Richards prefers “most astute,” Turner, “expert,” while Robinson ignores the adjective altogether, or perhaps leaves a trace in the statement that the king's advisors “search the very bottoms of their wits.”⁴⁵ Only Burnet and Wootton, both of whom use words derived from “wisdom” to describe the *prudentia* of the politicians and the philosopher alike, allow the English reader to perceive the paradox at the heart of the situation: the terrible power of mind that lets the French counsellors perpetuate and even aggravate Europe's social and political ills is described in the same terms as the perceptive faculty that enables Plato to perceive the solution.⁴⁶ A situation which *prudentia* can alleviate is made more difficult by the actions of “prudent” men.

There can be no doubt, then, that in failing to preserve the parallel usage of *prudentia*, More's translators have lost something important. The more difficult question involves what they have lost: Is it merely a rhetorical flourish, or something more substantial? Verbal irony abounds in *Utopia*, as in so many of More's works, and it is important to proceed with caution here. In her 1971

article on More's use of litotes, Elizabeth McCutcheon notes literally dozens of instances in which this rhetorical device, often employed to bestow modest, measured praise, serves to deliver an ironically understated criticism—e.g., the claim that there are “not a few” practices that Europeans could adopt from the people of Utopia.⁴⁷ And while More has Hythlodæus praise the French counsellors without qualification, we have good reason to wonder whether he is any more sincere. In addition to the ironic understatement noted by McCutcheon, the various speakers in More's dialogue delight in the rhetorical figure known as *antiphrasis*, in which words are taken to signify the opposite of their plain meaning. In another passage from *Utopia*'s first part, Hythlodæus refers to the wealthy abbots who enrich themselves from the wool trade by destroying rural communities as “sancti viri” (holy men).⁴⁸ There is no question that the adjective *sanctus* is intended ironically here. Hythlodæus is not seriously suggesting that men so drunk with profit as to drive families from their land and turn churches into sheep-barns are actually “holy.”⁴⁹ And so it is unnecessary to reconcile this passage with the characterization of the Utopian constitution as “sanctissima,” or with the “eximia sanctitate” (exceptional holiness) attributed to the island republic's priests.⁵⁰ The greedy abbots are called “sancti viri” because it must be obvious that they are utterly profane. This might encourage the conclusion that something similar is at work in the case of the French counselors: they are described as “most prudent” precisely because they cannot withstand comparison with a true “prudētissimus homo” such as Plato. Nor must we choose between a flatly literal reading and the sort of simple antiphrasis presented above. It is equally plausible that Hythlodæus is practising what sixteenth-century rhetoricians termed *paradiastole*, the substitution of a closely related word to present a vice as a virtue—e.g., calling cowardice “caution,” or praising rashness as “courage.”⁵¹ Hythlodæus is not necessarily implying that the king's advisors are without intelligence in the same sense that the abbots are without holiness; he may merely be noting an ironic contrast between their low, political cunning and Plato's elevated, philosophical insight. In any case, it is easy to see why the instances of irony elsewhere in *Utopia* might lead a careful reader to suspect that something similar is at work here. Calling a scheming politician “prudent” may be slightly different, in rhetorical terms, from calling a grasping monk “holy” or calling a foolish person “less than wise,” but it is still ironic rather than sincere.

The best way to resolve this question—does Hythlodæus mean what he says?—is to look more closely at More's notion of *prudentia*. To find either antiphrasis or paradiastole in the application of the adjective *prudentissimus* to the French counsellors, it is necessary that their character be incompatible with the straightforward meaning of *prudentia* as More understood it. The claim that Hythlodæus does not intend the word sincerely depends on the assumption that *prudentia* is a good quality, indeed a virtue, and therefore unlikely to be manifested in such thoroughly villainous men. And there is certainly a wellattested tradition that treats *prudentia* in just such a positive sense; many of the authors who would have informed More's Latin usage present the word as an unqualified good. The Roman historian Livy, to give one closely-studied example, never uses *prudentia* as anything other than praise. In his study of Livy's "vocabulary of virtue," Timothy Moore contrasts Livy's *sapientia*, which often signifies "a blameworthy cleverness," with his *prudentia*, which is all but invariably presented as something admirable.⁵² Cicero too, for all his differences in style and outlook, can be said to have understood *prudentia* in consistently positive terms. A man of More's education would have recognized Cicero's role in establishing *prudentia* as one of the so-called "cardinal virtues," a concept ultimately derived from Plato's *Protagoras* and *Republic*.⁵³ Despite acknowledging the affinities to *φρόνησις* later noted by Erasmus, Cicero assigns *prudentia* to the place occupied by the Platonic virtue of *σοφία* (wisdom), associating it with *iustitia* (justice), *temperantia* (self-control), and *fortitudo* (courage).⁵⁴ Even those readers who had never studied Cicero's works themselves would have encountered his famous definition from *De inventione*, which establishes *prudentia*'s indispensability to ethical knowledge and invests it with the "foresight" known in Latin as *providentia*. "Prudence is the knowledge of what is good, evil, and indifferent; its components are memory, intelligence, and foresight."⁵⁵ This formula was repeated throughout the centuries of Latin literature that followed, first by the Latin fathers Ambrose and Augustine, and later in the ethical treatises of the High Middle Ages. Sometimes the terminology varies slightly—as in Augustine's "familiarity with things to be sought and shunned"—but the essence is consistent.⁵⁶

In addition to this distinguished pedigree in Latin literature, *prudentia* also enjoyed positive associations through translations from the Greek, specifically the ethical writings of Aristotle. This tradition began in Europe with the first, fragmentary version of the *Nicomachean Ethics* in the twelfth century, and

continued through the thirteenth-century translation of Robert Grosseteste, the commentary of Albertus Magnus, and Leonardo Bruni's edition of 1416–17. In humanist and scholastic translations alike, *prudentia* was invariably used to translate Aristotle's *φρόνησις*, which modern scholars often render as “practical wisdom.”⁵⁷ The consequence of this practice was that readers across Europe encountered a term which they already considered a cardinal virtue in passages where Aristotle seems to treat it as inseparable from moral excellence: “Therefore it is impossible to be possessed of prudence without being good.”⁵⁸ “All the virtues will be present together when the one virtue, prudence, is present.”⁵⁹ It is worth noting here that like the *prudentia* of *De inventione*, the “prudence” of the *Nicomachean Ethics* was better known than the book that inspired it. Students of theology had only to study the original works of Albertus or of Thomas Aquinas to see the Aristotelian virtue discussed and reaffirmed and even integrated, after a fashion, with the various Ciceronian definitions.⁶⁰ *Prudentia* also receives a very positive interpretation in the only other work of translation arguably as influential as the Aristotelian Corpus, the Latin Bible. While it is of course true that the collected scriptures of the Old and New Testament are hardly consistent, it is no difficult task to find passages that reinforce the status of *prudentia* as a virtue. The so-called “wisdom literature,” which includes the books of Wisdom and Proverbs, is especially rich in passages that make *prudentia* a spiritual sagacity incompatible with the low cunning of the French counsellors: “The wise at heart is called prudent.”⁶¹ “In the face of the prudent man, wisdom shines.”⁶² “Wisdom is greater than strength, and the prudent man greater than the strong.”⁶³ “My bones will speak wisdom and the meditation of my heart [will speak] prudence.”⁶⁴

There is ample precedent, then, for the understanding of *prudentia* as an unqualified good. The word's positive associations are so numerous and so unequivocal that they must certainly have influenced its interpretation by More and by *Utopia*'s first readers. There is also another conception of *prudentia*, however, one which presents a more ambiguous picture than Cicero and Livy, the Latin Aristotle, or the Book of Proverbs. Although it is not unprecedented in earlier literature, this conception of *prudentia* was expressed very directly several decades before More's birth by the Italian humanist Lorenzo Valla (1407–57). The extent of More's direct debt to Valla is uncertain; he certainly knew Valla's *Annotations to the New Testament* and *Elegancies of the Latin Language*, and he may well have been familiar with Valla's dialogue on ethics,

known under various titles as *On Pleasure*, *On the True Good*, and *On the True and False Good*.⁶⁵ It is certainly not impossible, then, and perhaps it is even likely, that Valla's treatment of *prudentia* in this last work may have helped inform More's use of the word in the pages of *Utopia*. At the very least, Valla gives us reason to hesitate before assuming that More must inevitably consider it a quality inconsistent with an evil character.

In many respects, Valla's treatment of *prudentia* in *On the True Good* might appear conventional enough. There are more than a few passages that seem to reaffirm the traditions that treat it as a virtue associated with justice, temperance, and courage. When one of the characters in his dialogue presents a treatment of the cardinal virtues, Valla is comfortable with having him cite the pseudo-Ciceronian *Rhetorica ad Herennium*: "prudence is a cleverness which is able to make a reasoned choice between goods and evils."⁶⁶ Nor does Valla leave much room to question the assumption that *prudentia* provides an indispensable foundation for virtuous conduct. The two later speakers in *On Pleasure* both assert that actions should be chosen according to their outcome, and they agree that *prudentia*, "the helper and forerunner of every other virtue," is necessary in order to foresee where a given choice will lead.⁶⁷ It is with this power of foresight in mind that the second of Valla's three major speakers defines *prudentia* in terms of the verb *prospicere* (to discern from a distance), calling it "the knowledge of how to anticipate what is to your advantage and to avoid what is not."⁶⁸

But while Valla's *prudentia* is an important quality, it is not reliably positive. Although he considers it indispensable to the achievement of every worthy end, Valla is reluctant to concede that *prudentia* is a virtue; he suggests that it has a worldly, calculating side, and it can be employed for evil as well as good. Valla's critique of *prudentia* is implied rather than stated in the pages of *On Pleasure*, largely by means of the second of the three principal characters, the spokesman for the ancient philosophy of Epicurus. Valla's "Epicurean" may praise *prudentia*, but he also associates it with a cold-blooded self-interest which seems inconsistent with any conventional understanding of virtue or morality.⁶⁹ It is the Epicurean who replaces the Ciceronian "good and evil" with the ethically ambiguous "what is to your advantage and what is not," and his examples of "prudent" conduct are all appropriately amoral and self-regarding. He commends the joys of adultery and declares that men who fail to foresee when an affair cannot be concealed are guilty only of *imprudentia* (insufficient

prudence).⁷⁰ He also insists that he will commit rape if the woman in question is sufficiently attractive and the consequences are easy to escape.⁷¹ He argues that even theft is acceptable to those denied any other source of income, and he follows this statement by commending the *prudentia* of Romulus “in seizing wives from the neighboring cities when he could not get them by treaty.”⁷² Even when he performs a seemingly generous action, such as returning a lost wallet, Valla’s Epicurean justifies it in terms of the benefits for himself; his “prudence” measures everything against his own well-being.⁷³ Valla’s ultimate intention in *On Pleasure* is easily disputed, but in his great apologetic letter to Pope Eugenius IV he offers a straightforward exposition which confirms such an interpretation of his dialogue. In explaining his basic argument to the leader of the Roman Church, Valla identifies *prudentia* with another less attractive quality, one that may elucidate the Epicurean’s more surprising statements. Valla calls this quality *malitia*, and while the word can sometimes be translated with the modern English “malice,” the best rendering in this context is probably “cunning.”⁷⁴ Considered purely in isolation, Valla explains, *prudentia* “is identical with cunning, which is nothing other than the knowledge of good and evil.”⁷⁵

There are several possible sources for Valla’s skepticism concerning the moral character of *prudentia*, and even more precedents. It is far from certain that they directly influenced Valla, who frequently declared his contempt for medieval dialectic, but it is still interesting to note that both Duns Scotus (d. 1308) and William of Ockham (d. 1347) presented a similar model of the relationship between *prudentia* and moral action.⁷⁶ As Rega Wood explains in *Ockham on the Virtues*, these philosophers were also reluctant to concede that *prudentia* was inseparable from virtue; they were inclined to consider it a necessary condition for ethical conduct rather than a sufficient one.⁷⁷ According to Wood, Scotus and Ockham stood against contemporary or near-contemporary thinkers, such as Aquinas and Albertus, who accepted the reciprocal connection between *prudentia* and virtue implied in Latin versions of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. “Essential to Albert’s theory,” Wood writes, “is that there is no moral virtue without perfect prudence and no perfect prudence without moral virtue.”⁷⁸ In contrast, “Scotus and Ockham ... saw Aristotelian prudence as exclusively intellectual and claimed that practical moral knowledge unaccompanied by virtuous acts is possible.”⁷⁹ The nominalists also anticipated Valla’s reluctance to classify *prudentia* as a virtue, or at least as what they termed “a moral virtue” in their specialized terminology: “Scotus and Ockham distinguish prudence

from the other cardinal virtues. Prudence is an intellectual habit of moral discernment; justice, temperance, and courage are moral virtues. Thus, for Scotus, prudence is not a moral virtue, but rather dictates the acts that effect moral virtue.⁸⁰

Valla does not refer to the arguments of Scotus or Ockham in his letter to Eugenius IV—he never mentions them anywhere except to ridicule them—but he makes a similar argument.⁸¹ Like the medieval nominalists before him, Valla argues that distinguishing right from wrong is logically separate from choosing it. His choice of *malitia*, a word which can mean “spitefulness” or “evil intention,” would seem fitting here in that it underlines his assertion that volition is necessary to convert the knowledge of right into right action.⁸²

If prudence is the knowledge of good and evil, how is it opposed to cunning? If it is employed in evil deeds, it will be active and not contemplative, and so it will be opposed to justice and indistinguishable from injustice. If it is occupied in evil thoughts, that is to say an evil will, it relapses into the same condition, since justice and injustice are determined by the inclination of the soul and not the motions of the body. And if it is occupied in the knowledge of evil, that is to say contemplation, on what grounds is it condemned? Indeed it cannot be evil to know evil, but only to desire it. For this reason, “cunning” is either an empty name, or indistinguishable from “prudence” or “injustice.” And this will seem less remarkable if we consider that prudence divorced from justice is rarely praised, since it is praiseworthy to desire the good, not to know it. For a man who knows what is best may desire what is worst. And since this is the case, I cannot perceive the distinction between a prudent man and a cunning man.⁸³

There is another possible precedent for Valla's ideas on *prudentia*, however, and in this case he does not hesitate to invoke it. In order to convince the pope that *prudentia* is ethically suspect, Valla appeals to the same Latin Bible which often presents it as an unqualified good. He offers two scriptural citations in which *prudentia*, in his words, “is attributed even to evil men.”⁸⁴ The first of these is Jeremiah 4:22, “they are prudent to do evil,” and the second is Luke 16:8, in which Jesus remarks that “the children of this world are more prudent in respect to their own generation than the children of light.”⁸⁵ The

latter passage is especially interesting, occurring as it does at the end of a parable in which God offers what might seem like ironic praise for the “unjust steward” on having acted “prudenter” (“prudently”), in betraying his master’s trust.⁸⁶ In addition to illustrating the sort of selfish “prudence” seen in Valla’s Epicurean speaker, the parable may also be read as an allusion to the specific conditions which render *prudencia* indistinguishable from *malitia*. According to *On Pleasure*’s final speaker, who presents himself as the defender of Christian orthodoxy, *prudencia* is only meritorious when it extends beyond what Jesus calls “this world” and looks forward to the life to come. Valla’s “Christian” insists that even the virtues themselves will prove worthless if they are separated from the religious expectation of the heavenly rewards that God has prepared for the faithful after death.⁸⁷ This is a consequence of the related premise, essential to Valla’s larger argument, that virtue is without intrinsic value and cannot provide a sufficient incentive for moral behaviour in itself. “What kind of virtue is it, or what kind of madness,” the Christian speaker asks at one point, “to go on working ... when you expect to gain nothing from your labors?”⁸⁸ “Not even God may be served without hope of reward.”⁸⁹ Virtue is a means rather than an end, and even the wisest person understands it as such and acts from that understanding. Valla summarizes this clearly in his letter to the pope:

And shall we suffer hunger, nakedness, ridicule, poverty, blows, and wounds for the love of virtue itself, or rather for the achievement of eternal life? We set the future goods [of Heaven] above present ones because they are better and indeed greater; we would not relinquish the latter without hope of receiving the former in return It is one thing to love God, another to love virtue, which is hard and whose hardships we are said not to love, but to bear for the love of God. This forbearance is virtue, and we should certainly not pursue moral conduct for its own sake. And so Paul says: “If we have hoped in Christ in this life alone, we are the most wretched of men.”⁹⁰

It follows quite naturally from these assumptions that those who doubt the promise of eternal life will be unwilling to make the sort of sacrifices that Valla describes here. Like the “unjust steward” in the parable, or the Epicurean from *On Pleasure*, they will pursue immediate, earthly advantages, since they foresee no others. Their conduct may seem short-sighted to anyone whose

vision extends to a future existence, but it is perfectly logical, indeed quite “prudent,” given the premise that the consequences of their actions end with the grave. “When we do not believe what is preached concerning the kingdom to come,” explains Valla’s Christian speaker, “we do not desire these rewards because we consider them false.”⁹¹ *Prudentia* will not necessarily be absent in non-believers, but neither will it lead them to act morally. Without the saving faith in a divine reward, it must become the sort of narrow, limited “prudence” in which “the children of this world” are said to surpass “the children of light.” In a word, it will be no different than *malitia*, no different than simple “cunning.”

It is difficult to be certain, as it was acknowledged earlier, if More was directly exposed to Valla’s arguments concerning *prudentia*. There is evidence that Erasmus, who oversaw the printing of Valla’s *Annotations on the New Testament*, had also seen *On Pleasure*, and he may have acquainted More with aspects of Valla’s thought.⁹² Several scholars have detected Valla’s influence in the pages of *Utopia*, but no decisive confirmation is possible.⁹³ It is important to stress that More might well have developed his conception of *prudentia* independently from Valla by reading the same sources; because, if More is even less likely to have made a careful study of the medieval nominalists, he would have been very familiar with the critique of *prudentia* in the Latin Bible. In addition to the passages that Valla cites to Pope Eugenius, More might have considered First Corinthians 1:19, in which Paul mentions God’s promise to “condemn the prudence of the prudent.”⁹⁴ Then there is Romans 8:6, which contrasts *prudentia spiritus* (spiritual prudence) with the less noble *prudentia carnis* (the prudence of the flesh). Another important scriptural source is mentioned, or at least alluded to, in the first pages of *Utopia*. At the beginning of his narrative, More praises his friend, the Dutch humanist Peter Giles, for his “most prudent innocence” (“nulli simplicitas inest prudentior”). This is almost certainly a reference to Matthew 10:16, in which Jesus instructs his followers to be “prudent as serpents and innocent as doves” (“prudentes sicut serpentes et simplices sicut columbae”). By itself, the association of *prudentia* with serpents is interesting in that it inevitably recalls the cunning snake of Genesis—the Latin adjective in that case is *callidior* (more clever).⁹⁵ This passage is especially notable, however, in that it seems to have been among More’s favourite scriptural quotations, one that he wields frequently in both his English and Latin works.⁹⁶ And while he never suggests that the serpentine prudence of Matthew 10:16 may be something sinister, More treats it as a useful capacity

rather than a virtue sufficient in itself. In his polemic against English heresy, the *Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*, More imagines “a good, honest, merchant’s wife,” who discusses Christ’s injunction to imitate serpents as well as doves.⁹⁷ For More’s fictional embodiment of common sense, *prudentia* is a practical shrewdness that can defend Christians against the deception of the Devil and his false prophets. It is also interesting to note that More requires not one word, but two, to express its meaning effectively in English.

For God biddeth us that we should not be light of belief, nor by and by believe every spirit, but prove the spirits whether they be of God. And then if we be not only simple as doves, but also prudent and wise as serpents, his inward unction will work with our diligence, but not if we be slothful, or will be willingly beguiled, and suffer the Devil make us mad fools. And therefore he sayeth not ‘believe at adventure’, but bidden us take heed and be well ware, that we be not beguiled by false prophets that will come to us in such wise that outwardly they shall seem sheep, and inwardly be ravenous wolves.⁹⁸

Regardless of whether Valla provided More with a direct model—and this is still quite possible—the understanding of *prudentia* which he represents offers an interesting interpretative possibility. Whatever its origin, the notion that *prudentia* is not a virtue and may be manifested in evil individuals allows the account of the French counsellors to be read without invoking either antiphrasis or paradiastole. It becomes possible to argue that Hythlodæus means exactly what he says when he hails the French king’s scheming advisors as “prudent” in the highest degree. It is certainly inconceivable that a cardinal virtue inseparable from moral conduct could be exemplified in men prepared to sanction every outrage and obscenity in the interest of their sovereign’s power. There can be no such objection, however, to the claim that these unscrupulous politicians excel in a quality indistinguishable from *malitia*, a selfish intelligence which is ultimately no different from “cunning.” Cicero’s *prudentia* cannot be found in such men, and Aristotle’s certainly cannot, but Valla’s *prudentia* is perfectly compatible with their character. As Hythlodæus describes them, the French counsellors may accurately be called “the most prudent of men,” albeit in the same sense that “the children of this world” are said to be “prudent in respect to their own generation,” and the people mentioned by Jeremiah are “prudent

to do evil." The use of the same superlative adjective, *prudētissimus*, to describe Plato still presents something of a paradox, but it is a paradox that would be familiar to a careful reader of the Latin Vulgate. A philosopher like Plato, associated in More's day with the explicitly religious teachings of the Italian Neoplatonists, might plausibly represent Paul's "spiritual prudence," but the French counsellors manifest only "the prudence of the flesh."⁹⁹ Their brilliant but ultimately destructive machinations are a perfect example of "the prudence of the prudent" condemned in First Corinthians. And while they are indeed "prudent as serpents," they have lost sight of the dovelike innocence that Christ also enjoined his followers to share.

It should be emphasized that this reading does not preclude a certain irony in Hythlodæus's statement; it is merely incompatible with a verbal irony arising from some sort of imaginative misdescription. Hythlodæus's characterization of the French counsellors as "the most prudent of men" can be read as ironic precisely because it is true; it is true and it is also irrelevant. The unethical courtiers may possess the same degree of *prudētia* as the wise Plato, but their prudence does not bear the same fruit. They exercise their gifts not in investigating the eternal mysteries of the soul, but in purely temporal matters of worldly power and influence. A similar irony is present when Hythlodæus refers to the French counsellors with the phrase "tot egregiis viris" (so many eminent men).¹⁰⁰ The adjective *egregius* literally means "removed from the crowd," and there is little doubt that Hythlodæus considers this description accurate.¹⁰¹ He is not suggesting that the counsellors are obscure, through antiphrasis, or implying, by means of paradiastole, that they are actually infamous or notorious. He calls them "egregiis viris" because they are just that: they are well-known and widely regarded among the French people. But while this epithet is sincerely bestowed, it still acquires a sort of irony within the larger context of Hythlodæus's question. Hythlodæus has asked More and Giles whether he would be heeded if he called for peace amid "so many distinguished men, all vying to share their plans for war."¹⁰² Like *prudētissimus*, *egregius* is ironic here not because it is inaccurate, but because it is irrelevant. The eminence of the French counsellors might be a good quality if it were combined with virtue, as in the case of Cardinal Morton, but like the prudence which also contributes to Morton's greatness, it is sadly wasted on such immoral and ultimately short-sighted men. It is from this sense of wasted potential and lost opportunity that

Hythlodæus's description of the French counsellors, and indeed much else in his discourse, derives its bitter irony.

It must be conceded, then, that while it might still seem possible that More understands *prudentia* in unequivocally positive terms, it is hardly inevitable. In fact there is a great deal within the pages of *Utopia* to support the alternate reading just mentioned. Much of what More's characters say recalls Valla's arguments in *On Pleasure* and the letter to Pope Eugenius. In addition to those passages where *prudentia* could be replaced with *malitia*—are the Utopians “prudent” or “cunning” in encouraging treason among their enemies?—there are more subtle indications.¹⁰³ The most intriguing such suggestion involves the attitude of the Utopian people to the limitations of their own legal code. Hythlodæus had called the constitution of the Utopians “at once most prudent and most holy,” and he explains that the citizens of the island republic share his admiration for their system. But while they believe that their laws are the best that human wisdom can devise, the Utopians do not trust that legislation alone can guarantee the good conduct of their fellow citizens. Although most religious beliefs are tolerated in Utopia, there is one doctrine that is specifically condemned, indeed punished very severely if it is publicly promoted.¹⁰⁴ No one in the Utopian republic is permitted to deny either the immortality of the soul or the reality of divine rewards and punishments after death.¹⁰⁵ The Utopians' argument for this exception to their general rule of tolerance will sound very familiar to the student of Valla's writings. They say that divine justice must be trusted to compensate moral conduct after death because “a virtue [which is] hard and difficult to pursue” cannot provide sufficient incentive in itself.¹⁰⁶ Virtue demands a reward, the Utopians explain, “and what reward can there be if after death you attain nothing, having drawn out the present life harshly, that is to say wretchedly?”¹⁰⁷ It follows that no reasonable person will forgo immediate happiness if he expects his spirit to expire along with his body; the Utopians concede that to do so would be “the utmost madness.”¹⁰⁸ It is with this in mind that the Utopian constitution discriminates against anyone who lacks even a rudimentary faith in the soul's immortality and accountability after death. Such an individual may understand what is right, but he has also ruled out the only consideration that can actually motivate him to act upon the moral imperative which he recognizes.

If anyone disagrees [regarding future rewards and punishments], they do not even reckon him a man... let alone account him among their citizens, whose laws and values he must all despise whenever dread does not compel him. Indeed who can doubt that a man with no fear beyond the law and no hope beyond the flesh must either connive in secret to avoid the public ordinances of the commonwealth, or strive to break them by force as he pursues his private gratification? For this reason, no man of this mind is awarded any title, entrusted with a magistracy, or promoted to public office.¹⁰⁹

Hythlodæus may describe the Utopian constitution as “prudentissima,” but as with many other uses of *prudentia*, this need not be taken as unqualified praise. The Utopians’ concern with the beliefs of those holding public office may well reflect a sense that in political systems as well as in individuals, *prudentia* is necessary rather than sufficient for goodness. Just as Valla warns that the *prudentia* of a single person may be “no different than cunning,” the Utopians seem to fear that even “the most prudent” model of government can be corrupted and subverted by cunning citizens whose foresight does not extend beyond their immediate self-interest. Hythlodæus makes this point directly when he reports the Utopian teaching that good citizens must combine *prudentia* with the sense of obligation to others known in Latin as *pietas*. “To look after your own interest without transgressing the laws is *prudentia*, to consider the public interest as well is *pietas*.”¹¹⁰ The fact that *pietas* also implies religious devotion, especially in post-classical Latin, only strengthens the affinity to Valla’s arguments that *prudentia* must be supplemented by faith.¹¹¹ A similar acknowledgement of *prudentia*’s limitations may even be evident in so simple a detail as the emphatic conjunction *atque* (at once ... and) in the phrase “prudentissima *atque* sanctissima” (*at once* most prudent *and* most holy).¹¹² If prudence co-existed naturally with holiness, a simple *et* (and) would be sufficient to join the two adjectives here. But when *prudentia* is interpreted as a crafty, sharp-sighted discernment, the sort of calculating *malitia* which is manifested in the French counsellors as easily as in Plato, the more forceful *atque* seems quite natural.¹¹³ The equivocal character of *prudentia* is revealed, too, in Hythlodæus’s later observations on the monks of Utopia. He explains that there are two orders; the more worldly are esteemed for their superior *prudentia*, the stricter for greater *sanctitas* (holiness).¹¹⁴ Like the use of *atque*, this seems to be another

tacit admission that prudence and sanctity are very different conditions, even if it is sometimes possible, indeed necessary, to unite them.

With all that has been said so far about the distinct character of *prudencia*, it may appear that More's translators have committed a serious error. To render both *prudencia* and *sapientia* with "wisdom," as even Turner sometimes does, would seem to compromise the distinct character of these two very different Latin terms. It is hard to imagine how any single English word could suffice even for the various meanings of *prudencia* in *Utopia*, let alone span the semantic gap between the divine "wisdom" of Christ and the "wisdom" of the self-interested individual. But while this impression is understandable, it may also be mistaken, or at the very least exaggerated. A further aspect of this question remains to be explored, and it shifts the balance of the decision in favour of rendering *prudencia* with the same English term that so often represents *sapientia* as well. This is nothing less than an account of More's own choices in attempting to express the meaning of *prudencia* in the standard English of his day.

More never translated *Utopia* himself, nor was any vernacular translation produced in his lifetime which he might have judged or assessed. It is nevertheless possible to speculate concerning More's interpretation of *prudencia* in the passages discussed above by considering the one exceptional work that he composed in both English and Latin, the *History of Richard III / Historia Ricardi Tertii*.¹¹⁵ It is important to begin by acknowledging that the *History* and the *Historia* are far from identical. Apart from the inconsistencies which are inevitable when a book is drafted and re-drafted in different languages, as the two versions probably were, there is the matter of their intended readership.¹¹⁶ While the English text is meant, naturally, for English readers, the Latin is "aimed," to quote the editor of the Yale edition, "at the wider European audience that so enthusiastically heralded the advent of *Utopia*."¹¹⁷ As a result, the Latin text includes certain passages that seem specifically intended to inform Europeans about unfamiliar aspects of English history, political traditions, and even architecture.¹¹⁸ Certain references to ancient history and mythology are omitted from the vernacular *History* too, possibly on the assumption that they would appeal only to the classically educated elite.¹¹⁹ In other cases, however, the English version is actually more expansive. Sometimes this consists in details of special interest to More's fellow citizens, but it also reflects the fact that More must often resort to a combination of words to help less sophisticated vernacular readers understand notions easily expressed in Latin. And while the

latter practice might seem to present a challenge, it may actually help clarify More's interpretation of *prudentia*. In writing his vernacular *History* for readers with little or no Latin, More cannot rely upon the associations that *prudentia* has acquired in Cicero, the Latin translations of Aristotle, or any of the other sources that might have been familiar to the better educated. He must render each instance of *prudentia* "in plain English," without expecting his readers to recognize the Latin term concealed behind a standard vernacular equivalent.

One interesting consequence of More's reinterpretation of *prudentia* for an audience with little or no Latin is his near avoidance of the French-derived cognate "prudence." In the entire English *History*, More uses a derivative of "prudence" only once, and in this case the adverb "prudently" has no parallel in the Latin text.¹²⁰ More uses "prudence" sparingly in several of his other English works as well, and it would seem that he has little confidence that the word will convey all that is implied by *prudentia*, at least to readers unfamiliar with Latin literature.¹²¹ Instead, More makes three uses of "wit," a word that he often employs to translate another Latin term for "mental acuity" (*ingenium*).¹²² "Discretion" stands for *prudentia* once, and since the former word is also used in place of *aetas* (age) and *usus rerum* (practical experience), this may be taken as an expression of *prudentia*'s opposition to abstract or speculative types of knowledge.¹²³ The adjective *prudens* is rendered once with "politic," a term out of use in recent centuries, but understood in much the same sense as "crafty" and "shrewd" in modern English.¹²⁴ The phrase itself, "more piteous than politic" ("magis misericordes quam prudentes"), serves as a pithy expression of the notion that *prudentia* is at odds with compassion and mercy, albeit quite compatible with Valla's *malitia*. Sometimes, More chooses to translate *prudentia* through circumlocution, expressing the force of the Latin term through several English words. In a passage discussing the possible complicity of Richard's supporters in the coming murder of his nephew, an entire phrase conveys the power of *prudentia* to recognize others' intentions. When Elizabeth, the queen mother, ponders whether those who surround the Duke of Gloucester are aware of the danger to her son, the entire English phrase "if... they should perceive toward the child any evil intended," corresponds to the Latin "si ... prudentes" (if they were prudent).¹²⁵ A very simple but revealing circumlocution, a variation on the formula from the *Confutation*, is applied to the malicious *prudentia* of Dr. Shaa, the Cambridge divine who advances Richard's schemes by asserting the illegitimacy of the late king's issue. The Latin description of Shaa, "tam

prudētis, ut melius nemo quid sit dicendum intelligat” (so prudent that no man better understands what to say), becomes the English “so *cunning* and so *wise* that no man better wotteth what he should say.”¹²⁶

There can be no question, however, that the most common equivalent for *prudētia* in the English *History* is the same term favoured by most translators of *Utopia*. In the majority of cases, More conveys *prudētia* to his English readers by means of the single word “wisdom.” Such uses are so numerous that it might almost be possible to equate *prudētia* with “wisdom,” albeit of a very specific kind. *Prudētia* is the Latin term for the cautious and prudential “wisdom” demonstrated by King Edward IV in withdrawing from battles he could not win.¹²⁷ It is the practical “wisdom,” a neighbour to “discretion,” which the Duke of Buckingham claims that Richard has acquired through age and long experience of human affairs.¹²⁸ *Prudētia* is the “wisdom” of politicians and administrators too; the “wise men” who might reform the laws relating to the right of sanctuary are called “prudētēs.”¹²⁹ In terms of demonstrating *prudētia*’s moral neutrality, it is especially noteworthy to see that it corresponds to *wisdom* in passages where the latter word does not automatically imply trustworthiness in those who possess it. Time and again, characters in More’s history express their confidence that others are not only “prudent” enough to know what is right, but also honest enough to act faithfully as well.¹³⁰ On some of these occasions, the *prudētia* which must be joined to *fides* (faithfulness) is expressed in English as “wit,” but in other passages it is “wisdom.”¹³¹ When Elizabeth surrenders her younger son to Richard’s agents, she hopefully declares: “Prudētiaē vobis multum inesse scio, fidei plurimum,” or “Faithful ye be, that wot I well, and I know well that you be wise.”¹³² Shortly before this, Buckingham asks whether the queen mother will fail to heed people “whose wisdom she knoweth, whose truth she well trusteth,” or “quorum neque ambigua prudētia est, neque incerta fides.”¹³³ But if the “wisdom” described in Latin by *prudētia* is not sufficient in itself to inspire trust, it is also needed to determine who is worthy of confidence. The adjective “wise” corresponds to *prudēs* in accounts of those who are undeceived by the cunning of others and capable of divining their real intent. When the newly-crowned King Richard pretends to make peace with one of his enemies, we read that “the common people rejoiced at [this] and praised [it], but wise men took it for a vanity.”¹³⁴ Somewhat earlier, a display of the armour of those implicated in a threat to the protector is said “[to have] made the matter to wise men more unlikely.”¹³⁵ The vulgar masses may

rush to false conclusions, but the “prudentes” are never alarmed without good reason; they can be trusted to read the signs that Richard is bent on seeking power for himself. “Thus many things coming together partly by chance, partly of purpose, caused at length not common people only that wave with the wind, but wise men also and some lords eke, to mark the matter and muse thereon.”¹³⁶

Considering the number of times that *prudentia* appears in the *History*, there is a certain irony in the fact that the best definition is found where the word's presence is conjectural rather than factual. Both versions of More's account end before Richard's story is complete, but the English text proceeds a little farther than the Latin. In consequence, several English passages are without a Latin parallel, and one of these contains what might have been More's clearest and most effective description of the sort of “wisdom” that he calls *prudentia* in the pages of *Utopia*. Despite the absence of anything corresponding to the English text here, the subject of the passage is enough to suggest that More would have employed *prudentia* in the Latin version, had it extended so far. Near the conclusion of the English *History*—the end of the text, not Richard's reign—More praises the intellectual powers of the same Cardinal Morton who is associated with *prudentia* not once, but twice in *Utopia*. In so far as Morton's “wisdom” is characterized as *prudentia* by Hythlodæus, the description from the English *History* may be compared with the corresponding passage from *Utopia*; it may be read as an attempt to convey a sense of Morton's *prudentia* to an audience with little or no Latin. Certainly, everything that More associates with *prudentia* elsewhere in his English *History* is present here: the shrewd and practical character, the gradual maturation through the vicissitudes of public life, the power to anticipate human behaviour and recognize deception. Even the individual words—“experience,” “insight,” “politic,” “worldly,” and of course “wisdom”—are those that More employs individually when *prudentia* appears earlier in the Latin *History*. There is even a parallel to the “storms of diverse fortune” through which the Morton of *Utopia* is said to have acquired his *prudentia rerum*.¹³⁷ “This man therefore, as I was about to tell you, by the long and often alternate proof as well of prosperity as adverse fortune, had gotten by great experience, the very mother and mistress of wisdom, a deep insight into politic, worldly drifts.”¹³⁸

Ultimately, the *History of Richard III* is a useful corrective to studying *Utopia* exclusively in the context of Latin literature. It is certainly important to recognize *prudentia*'s distinct qualities, but this may also contribute to a

reluctance to translate it with a word such as “wisdom,” which already enjoys such strong associations with *sapientia*. The *History* serves as a reminder that if we would criticize Robinson and later translators for using “wisdom” for both *prudentialia* and *sapientia*, it becomes necessary to criticize More for doing the same. The inescapable problem is that “wisdom” is an extremely broad word, not to say vague, and it straddles the meaning of several important Latin terms. Unless the translator deliberately invents a specialized terminology in which every significant Latin word has an exclusive English equivalent, it is necessary to recognize that “wisdom” can be the most appropriate choice for each word even in passages where neither could be substituted for the other.¹³⁹ In consequence, any translation that respects the standard literary usage will necessarily impose the imprecision of the English language onto the specialized vocabulary of More’s Latin, using one word where he expresses himself through at least two. And so it is not the conclusion of this paper that More’s translators should never give “wisdom” for *prudentialia*; it would be better to say that they should do so sparingly and judiciously. Care must be taken in understanding *prudentialia*’s various applications in order to determine when it demands “wisdom,” and when its meaning approaches “prudence,” “shrewdness,” “insight,” “discretion,” “foresight,” or even “cunning.” In the specific case of Plato and the French counsellors, a derivative of “wisdom” would seem appropriate in both instances. Plato’s insight, or rather foresight, concerning the social evils occasioned by private property is an expression of the practical, political side of *prudentialia*, and the same can be said for the French counsellors’ grasp of the intricacies of legislation, taxation, diplomacy, and warfare. To speak of “great wisdom” in these passages, or to use the phrase “the wisest of men,” would be consistent with More’s own practice in translating similar instances of *prudentialia* in the *History*. This is also effective in preserving the parallel usage by which Hythlodæus underlines the fact that Plato and the French counsellors are applying a similar power of mind to very different ends. In this respect Burnet and Wootton are united across the centuries in coming closest, through their respective choice of “wise” and “wisest” in both passages, to solving an insoluble problem. It is true that their rendering confounds the counsellors’ *prudentialia* with the *sapientia* of Christ and Solomon, but the English language is to blame for this rather than any translator.

Perhaps the most important consequence of a study of More’s *prudentialia* must simply be a renewed awareness of the limitations of translation. It serves

as an admonition to search for other means of providing the English reader with a deeper awareness of the original term, for which every other word is inevitably only a substitute. Just as certain English editions of *The Prince* include a parenthetical *virtú* wherever the word appears in Machiavelli's original, so a translation of *Utopia* might benefit from indicating the different instances of *prudentia* to the reader even as the translator makes use of a range of English equivalents.¹⁴⁰ This would have the advantage of illustrating all of the word's potential meanings without compromising the assorted parallels and contradictions which make it so fascinating. Such an edition of *Utopia* might also be accompanied by an appendix or an introductory essay on *prudentia*, summarizing the basic facts about the word.¹⁴¹ This last measure would be especially helpful in that even readers of the Latin *Utopia* can profit from a greater awareness of the rich and varied meanings of this term, whose traditions and associations are so easily overlooked. In one sense, reading is always an imperfect process, whether the text at hand is an original or a translation. And to the extent that this is true, the preceding observations may prove useful not only for the interpretation of *prudentia* in future English editions of *Utopia*, but for the better appreciation of More's Latin original as well.

Notes

1. There are 25 instances of words derived from *prudentia* within *Utopia* itself; the supplementary materials included in the fourth volume of the Yale Edition contain eight further uses. *Thomas More's Utopia, a Concordance*, based on *Utopia*, The Yale Edition of the Complete Works of St. Thomas More, Volume 4, ed. Edward Surtz and J. H. Hexter, English text revised from the translation of G. C. Richards (Cambridge, MA: Yale University Press, 1965). The *Complete Works* will henceforth be referred to as *CW* followed by volume, page, and line number as appropriate. The online concordance is prepared by the Center for Thomas More Studies, accessed December 28, 2012, <http://www.thomasmorestudies.org/UtopiaConcordance/framconc.htm>.
2. The etymology of *providentia* is supplied by Lewis and Short's *A Latin Dictionary: A Latin Dictionary, Founded on Andrews' Edition of Freund's Latin Dictionary*, ed. Charlton T. Lewis (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), henceforth referred to as Lewis and Short.

3. For the various definitions of *prudentia* and all other Latin words discussed here, both Lewis and Short and the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* were consulted. *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, ed. P. G. W. Glare (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), henceforth referred to as *OLD*.
4. “Prudence,” “practical judgment,” and “discretion” are supplied only by Lewis and Short. Only the *OLD* gives “wisdom.” Both sources supply “intelligence.”
5. The *OLD* notes that *prudentia* can be applied to gods or indeed be embodied as a sort of divinity (the *OLD* supplies a citation from *Tusculanae Disputationes*, 3.37). In the vast majority of the citations offered, however, *prudentia* is human rather than divine. The *OLD* presents far more numerous example of *providentia* serving as “a prescient force exercising powers of creation and direction, providence.”
6. The *OLD* gives “proficiency (in a given field),” while Lewis and Short has “skill in a matter.”
7. There is nothing radical in Erasmus translating *φρόνησις* with *prudentia*—this is often the rendering in the Vulgate—but he is more consistent in equating the two words. Erasmus often “corrects” passages where the Vulgate translates other terms, such as *σύνεσις* or *φρόνημα*, with *prudentia*. In First Corinthians 1:19, Luke 2:47, and Ephesians 3:4, he replaces *σύνεσις* with *intelligentia*. He changes the two instances of *φρόνημα* in Romans 8:6 from *prudentia* to *affectus*. The 1519 edition of the *Novum testamentum* was digitized by the Princeton Theological Seminary Library, and can be accessed at <http://archive.org/details/novumtestamentum00eras>. All references from the Latin Vulgate are taken from the Clementine Edition: *Biblia Sacra vulgatae editionis iuxta pp. Clementis VIII decretum*, ed. Gianfranco Nolli (Milwaukee: Roman Catholic Book Agency, 1955). Definitions of Greek words are supplied by *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*, ed. H. G. Liddel and Robert Scott (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), henceforth referred to as Liddel and Scott.
8. Liddel and Scott actually suggests “prudentia” in its entry on *φρόνιμος* as a translation of Plato’s “το φρόνιμον.”
9. Eugene Rice, *The Renaissance Idea of Wisdom* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), p. 78.
10. Rice, p. 45.
11. “De optimo reipublicae statu,” in *CW 4*, title page.
12. While it is easy to admire Turner’s translation in literary terms, he also takes greater liberties than any other modern translator and employs deliberately anachronistic language. The countries that do not follow the Utopian model are

- called “capitalist,” for example. Thomas More, *Utopia*, trans. Paul Turner (New York: Penguin, 2003), p. 44.
13. Thomas More, *Utopia*, trans. Ralph Robinson, ed. David Harris Sacks (Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 1999); Thomas More, *Utopia*, trans. and ed. Clarence H. Miller (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001); Thomas More, *Utopia*, trans. Robert M. Adams, ed. Adams and George M. Logan (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Thomas More, *Utopia*, trans. G. C. Richards (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1923); Thomas More, *Utopia*, ed. and trans. David Wootton (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999). In addition to the three definitions of *sapientia* mentioned here, the *OLD* also gives “reason.”
 14. For *prudentia* in public administration, see *CW* 4, 52/28–29 and 58/11–12. For the selection of public officials, see 196/7–10. For *prudentia* in international politics, see 86/22–31. For *prudentia* in the hiring of mercenaries, see 204/13–24.
 15. For the lack of *prudentia* in the contracting of treaties, see *CW* 4, 198/20–25. For a lament of offices being assigned to those who are not *prudentes*, see 104/25–28. The “imprudence” (*imprudencia*) of navigators who recklessly abuse the newly acquired compass is described by Hythlodæus early in his discussion, at 52/23–24. Near the end of his account, Hythlodæus mentions a recent convert to Christianity who was arrested and exiled when *prudentia* did not restrain him from aggressively proselytizing on behalf of his new faith, at 218/20–30.
 16. *CW* 4, 52/28–29.
 17. *CW* 4, 74/21–22.
 18. *CW* 4, 102/27–28.
 19. *CW* 4, 104/7.
 20. Hythlodæus declares that Morton was “non auctoritate magis quam prudentia ac virtute venerabili.” *CW* 4, 58/21–22.
 21. *CW* 4, 60/4.
 22. *CW* 4, 84/31.
 23. *CW* 4, 54/8.
 24. *CW* 4, 52/33.
 25. *CW* 4, 56/33–58/10.
 26. *CW* 4, 102/13–15.
 27. *CW* 4, 52/18–24 and 218/20–30.
 28. *CW* 4, 204/13–24.
 29. For the attitude of the *sapiens* to marriage, see *CW* 4, 188/15–20. For the pleasure found by the wise in the absence of illness or pain, see *CW* 4, 176/5–6.

30. *CW* 4, 156/18–24.
31. *CW* 4, 154/6.
32. For the reference to Solomon's *sapientia*, see *CW* 4, 84/11. For Christ's *sapientia*, which Hythlodæus says "ensured that he must know what was best," see *CW* 4, 242/21–23.
33. While his translation is quite free in certain respects, Turner is also sensitive to the unique character of *prudentia*. His rendering of *homo prudentissimus* with "a powerful intellect" captures the moral ambiguity of *prudentia* very nicely. Turner, p. 44.
34. Robinson, p. 124. Burnet, p. 41.
35. Richards, p. 40. Plato remains a "wise sage" in the Yale edition's adaptation of Richards's translation. *CW* 4, 105/8.
36. Miller, p. 47. Wootton, p. 86. Adams, p. 37.
37. *CW* 4, 48/29–50/1. "... totum se addixerat philosophiae..."
38. For the full account of Morton's excellent qualities, see *CW* 4, 58/18–60/6. More also praises Morton near the end of the English version of his *History of King Richard III*. Thomas More, *The Collected Works of St. Thomas More, Volume 2: The History of King Richard III*, ed. Richard S. Sylvester (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1963), 91/17–20.
39. *CW* 4, 86/6–10.
40. *CW* 4, 86/22–23. "Age, finge me apud regem esse Gallorum, atque in eius considerare consilio."
41. *CW* 4, 86/24–30. "... magnis agitur studiis, quibus artibus ac machinamentis Mediolanum retineat, ac fugitivum illam Neapolim ad se retrahat: postea vero evertat Venetos, ac totam Italiam subiiciat sibi. Deinde Flandros Brabantos, totam postremo Burgundiam suae faciat ditionis."
42. *CW* 4, 90/28–92/8.
43. *CW* 4, 92/2–3.
44. Hythlodæus's exact words are "in corona prudentissimorum hominum." *CW* 4, 86/24–25.
45. Richards, p. 26. Robinson, p. 114. Adams, p. 28. Miller, p. 36. Turner, p. 36. It should be noted that none of the translators discussed here, with the possible exception of Burnet, renders *prudentia* with a word that would suggest any irony on More's part. All of them render it here as something morally ambiguous, and therefore quite compatible with the character of the scheming counsellors.

46. Burnet, p. 29. Wootton, p. 77. Wootton keeps the superlative "wisest," while Burnet prefers "wise."
47. Elizabeth McCutcheon, "Denying the Contrary: More's Use of Litotes in the *Utopia*," *Moreana* 31–32 (Nov. 1971), pp. 107–122.
48. *CW* 4, 66/4.
49. *CW* 4, 64/31–66/24.
50. *CW* 4, 226/19.
51. Quentin Skinner, "Paradiastole: Redescribing the Vices as Virtues," in *Renaissance Figures of Speech*, ed. Sylvia Adamson, Gavin Alexander, and Katrin Ettenhuber (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 148–61. Skinner notes that while *paradiastole* had a broader sense in earlier Roman literature, Renaissance critics adopted Quintilian's more narrow definition, which describes the presentation of a vice as a virtue and not the reverse. Skinner, p. 51.
52. Timothy J. Moore, *Artistry and Ideology: Livy's Vocabulary of Virtue* (Frankfurt am Main: Athenaum, 1989). For Moore's discussion of the dark side of *sapientia*, see pp. 114–15: "When Livy uses the word in reference to diplomacy, *sapientia* is cleverness rather than wisdom, and is not praiseworthy." For Moore's treatment of *prudentia*, see pp. 100–13. In all the uses of *prudentia* in *Ab urbe condita*, Moore finds only one passage, 40.6.7, in which *prudentia* is arguably presented in less than positive terms. In this passage, the "prudentes amici" (prudent friends) of King Philip of Macedon assist him in hatching a plot against his half-brother Demetrius. Considering how consistently Livy presents *prudentia* as a virtue elsewhere, this might be an example of the ironic use of what Quintilian and the critics of the Renaissance would call *paradiastole* (see n. 51).
53. For a brief account of the changing uses of *prudentia* in Cicero's work, see Robert W. Cape Jr., "Cicero and the Development of Prudential Practice in Rome," in *Prudence: Classical Virtue, Postmodern Practice*, ed. Robert Hariman (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), pp. 35–66.
54. Cicero, *De officiis*, trans. Walter Miller (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1913), 1.153. This passage also includes a definition of *sapientia* as "rerum... divinarum et humanarum scientia" (the knowledge of things human and divine), which serves as an interesting parallel to the other Ciceronian formulas for *prudentia*.
55. Cicero, *De inventione*, trans. H. M. Hubbell (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 2.160.

56. Augustine, *De diversis quaestionibus ad Simplicianum*, ed. Almut Mutzenbecher (Turnholt: Brepolis, 1970), 61.4. Augustine's "cognitio rerum appetendarum et fugiendarum" may simply be a variant reading of the definition of *De officiis* 1.153: "rerum expetendarum fugiendarumque sapientia."
57. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Leonardo Bruni (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959); *Aristoteles: translatio Roberti Grosseteste Lincolniensis sive Liber ethicorum, a Recensio pura*, ed. Renatus Antonius Gauthier (Leiden: Brill, 1972); Albertus Magnus, *Super ethica: Libros VI-X*, ed. Wilhelm Kübel (Münster in Westfalen: Aschendorff, 1987).
58. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Joe Sachs (Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing Company, 2002), 1144b. 1. The only change made to Sach's translation is to exchange his preferred term, "practical wisdom," with "prudence."
59. *Ethics*, 1145a. 2.
60. In addition to Aquinas's commentary on Aristotle's *Ethics*, there is the "Prima Secundae" of the *Summa theologiae*, in which he discusses *prudencia* with his customary thoroughness.
61. Proverbs 16:21. "Qui sapiens corde est appellabitur prudens." All references to the Latin Bible are to the edition of the Clementine Vulgate cited earlier (n. 7).
62. Proverbs 17:24. "In facie prudentis lucet sapientia."
63. Wisdom 6:1. "Melior est sapientia quam vires et vir prudens magis quam fortis."
64. Psalms 48:4. "Os meum loquetur sapientiam et meditatio cordis mei prudentiam."
65. *On Pleasure / De voluptate*, trans. A. Kent Hieatt and Maristella Lorch (New York: Abaris Books, 1977), pp. 16–26. For More's possible familiarity with *On Pleasure*, see nn. 92 and 93 below.
66. "Prudentia est calliditas quae ratione quadam potest delectum habere bonorum et malorum." *On Pleasure*, 3.4.6. *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, trans. Harry Caplan (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956), 3.3.
67. "Prudentia ... quae quadammodo ministra et precursoria est ceterarum." *On Pleasure*, 2.14.1.
68. "Ut commoda tibi prospicere scias, incommoda vitare." *On Pleasure*, 1.33.1.
69. In addition to extolling certain crimes, the "Epicurean" also seems to doubt the value of personal sacrifice. He ridicules dying for the sake of one's country. *On Pleasure*, 2.1.5.
70. *On Pleasure*, 1.38.1, and 1.42.1-2.
71. *On Pleasure*, 2.26.9-10.

72. *On Pleasure*, 2.27.2. "Et ut fortiter ita prudenter et recte Romulus matrimonia vicinarum civitatum cum impetrare non posset, extorsit."
73. *On Pleasure*, 2.27.1.
74. Only Lewis and Short gives "cunning" as a meaning of *malitia*. The *OLD* supplies "wicked character, disposition or conduct," "a vice," "a fault," "a malicious act."
75. "Prudentiam non distare a malitia; quia tantum est cognitio boni et mali." Lorenzo Valla, *Lorenzo Valla de falsa in eundem haeresis obiectione ad summum pontificem libellus*, ms. Vat. Ott. Lat. 2075 in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Rome, 242v. The *OLD* seems to imply a certain kinship between *malitia* and *prudentia* in the following passage from *De inventione*, 2.108: "Nihil imprudenter, sed omnia ex crudelitate et malitia facta dicet" (He will say that nothing was done without prudence, but rather that all things were done out of cruelty and malice).
76. See for example, Valla's contemptuous reference when boasting about his own work, the *New Foundation of Dialectic and Philosophy*: "I have just finished my book *On Dialectic and Philosophy*, which must be universally approved, apart from the few that regret wasting their time on dialectic." ("Opus *Dialectice et philosophie* iam absolvi, nullis improbandum nisi qui perdidisse operam in dialectica dolere possunt.") Lorenzo Valla, *Laurentii Valle epistole*, ed. Ottavio Besomi and Mariangela Regoliosi (Padua: Antenore, 1984), letter 17. All translations from Valla's letters are the author's own. They are based on his translation of Valla's correspondence, which will be published in November 2013 by Harvard University Press.
77. Rega Wood, *Ockham and the Virtues* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1997), p. 53.
78. Wood, p. 47.
79. Wood, p. 47. For Albert it is not *prudentia* but *sapientia* which functions as an intellectual rather than a moral virtue. Albert sees a parallel between *prudentia*'s relationship to the moral virtues and *sapientia*'s relationship to the intellectual virtues. "Et ideo hoc modo se habet sapientia ad intellectuales sicut prudentia ad morales." *Super ethica*, 457/36–39.
80. Wood, p. 57.
81. See the 1440 letter in which Valla lists a number of names, including Ockham's, before he declares: "As God is my witness, I would rather be illiterate than be their peer, so far am I from deeming any of them learned." ("Quos omnes tantum abest ut existimem doctos fuisse, ut (deum testor) mallet me illitteratum quam parem alicuius illorum esse.") *Laurentii Valle epistole*, letter 13. For an overview

- of the superficial similarities, as well as the deeper differences, between Valla and Ockham, see Lodi Nauta, “William of Ockham and Lorenzo Valla: False Friends. Semantics and Ontological Reduction,” in *Renaissance Quarterly* 56, no. 3 (Autumn, 2003), pp. 613–51.
82. Both of these uses are given in Lewis and Short, which cites *De natura deorum*, 4.15.34: “Est enim malitia versuta et fallax nocendi ratio” (Indeed cunning is a shrewd and deceptive method of doing harm). The *OLD* gives “wicked disposition” as one meaning, which also seems to imply an association with intention or volition.
 83. “Si prudentia est cognitio boni et mali, quomodo contraria erit malitie? Que si in male agendo versatur, erit activa, non contemplativa, et ob id contraria iustitie nihilque differens ab iniustitia. Si in male cogitando, hoc est in male volendo, in idem recidet iustitia enim atque iniustitia, ex animi inclinatione, non ex corporis actione perpenditur. Si in cognitione rerum malarum, quod est contemplationis, quo pacto reprehendatur? Quum haud dubie non malum sit mala nosse, sed velle. Quocirca relinquitur malitiam aut inane nomen, aut idem quod prudentiam vel iniustitiam esse. Quod minus mirabitur qui cogitabit prudentie sine iustitia non solere tribui laudem, quoniam laus est in boni voluntate, non in boni scientia; et in hominem optima scientem cadere potest voluntas pessimorum. Quod quum fit, quid prudens a malitioso differat, non intelligo.” *Ott. Lat.* 2075, 242v.
 84. “... et alia loca multa ubi prudentia sive sapientia (nam idem grece in his locis sunt) etiam malis attribuitur.” *Ott. Lat.* 2075, 242v.
 85. “Ideoque, ut aliquid de theologia perstringam, dicitur: ‘Prudentes sunt ut faciant mala.’ Et: ‘Filii seculi huius prudentiores sunt filiis lucis.’ Et villicus iniquitatis sapienter fecisse iudicatus est.” *Ott. Lat.* 2075, 242v. Compare Valla’s Vulgate text to the Clementine version, in which the quotation from Jeremiah has *sapientes* for *prudentes* and which gives *prudenter* for *sapienter* in the passage from Luke.
 86. See n. 85 above.
 87. *On Pleasure*, 3.8.1. See as well the final section, from 3.21.1. to 3.25.25., in which the “Christian” creates a vivid verbal picture of salvation.
 88. “Cuius virtutis est aut cuius potius dementiae, cum nullum pro laboribus fructum speres, tamen elaborare et bonis praesentibus te fraudare.” *On Pleasure*, 3.8.2.
 89. “Ne Deo quidem sine spe remunerationis servire fas est.” *On Pleasure*, 3.8.2.
 90. “Nunquid nos ieiunia, nuditatem, contemptum, egestatem, verbera, vulnera patimur, num pericula et quod summum putatur mortem subimus, ipsarum dumtaxat amore virtutum? An ad finem vite eterne? Preponentes futura bona

presentibus, ut multo meliora atque maiora; alioquin non relicturi hec nisi pro ipsis illa redderentur. Quod si dicant benefaciendum esse etiam si nulla remuneratio preponatur, quia Deus propter se amandus est. Audio; licet de hoc etiam posterius. Sed aliud est amare deum, aliud amare virtutem, que laboriosa est; quos labores ferre propter amorem dei dicimur, non amare. Et haec tolerantia virtus est, et benefacere suapte causa nequaquam expetendum. Unde Paulus: 'Si in hac vita' inquit, 'tantum in Christo sperantes sumus, miserabiliores sumus omnibus hominibus.'" *Ott. Lat. 2070, 240v.*

91. "Itaque, cum non credimus ea quae de futuro regno praedicantur, non optamus illa quae pro falsis ducimus." *On Pleasure, 3.20.2.*
92. Carlo Vecce argues that Erasmus must have encountered both *On Pleasure* and *On Free Will*, since they can be found in a manuscript which Erasmus consulted in preparing his 1505 print edition of Valla's *Annotations on the New Testament*. "Erasmus dunque ebbe di fronte un manoscritto del *De vero bono e De libero arbitrio*." Carlo Vecce, "Tradizioni valliane tra Parigi e le Fiandre dal Cusano ad Erasmo," in *Lorenzo Valla e l'umanesimo Italiano*, ed. Ottavio Besomi and Mariangela Regoliosi (Padua: Editrice Antenore, 1986), p. 405. In suggesting that *On Pleasure* may have shaped Erasmus's *De contempu mundi*, Edward Surtz speaks in very generalized terms about "the great effect of Valla upon the northern humanists." Edward Surtz, *The Praise of Pleasure: Philosophy, Education, and Communism in More's Utopia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), p. 34.
93. Surtz goes so far as to suggest that "Thomas More may have seen ... Valla's book." Surtz further argues that if More did not encounter Valla's ideas about ethics first-hand, he might have become familiar with similar ideas through exposure to Erasmus's *De contemptu mundi* (p. 34). George Logan is more confident: "Considering the importance of Valla to humanists in general and particularly to Erasmus, as well as the resemblances between Valla's argument and that of the Utopians, it seems certain that More's passage is indebted to *De vero falsoque bono*." See George Logan, *The Meaning of More's Utopia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 146.
94. "Prudentiam prudentium reprobabo." This is a reference to the Septuagint's rendering of Isaiah 29:14, a reference that is not apparent from the Vulgate, which makes the latter passage "intellectus prudentium eius abscondetur."
95. "... serpens erat callidior cunctis animantibus terrae quae fecerat Dominus Deus..." Genesis 3:1.

96. Apart from the *Confutation* (see n. 97 below), More discusses this quotation in his apologetic letter to the reformer Johannes Bugenhagen, in his letter to an anonymous monk in defense of Erasmus, and in his last work, *De tristitia Christi* in *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More, Volume 7: Letter to Bugenhagen, Supplication of Souls, Letter against Frith*, ed. Frank Manley, Clarence H. Miller, and Richard C. Marius (Cambridge, MA: Yale University Press, 1990), 44/29. See also *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More, Volume 15: In Defense of Humanism: Letters to Dorp, Oxford, Lee, and a Monk*, ed. Daniel Kinney (Cambridge, MA: Yale University Press, 1986), 260/5–6; *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More, Volume 14: De tristitia Christi*, ed. Clarence H. Miller (Cambridge, MA: Yale University Press, 1976), 59/3.
97. Thomas More, *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More, Volume 8: The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*, ed. Louis A. Schuster, Richard P. Marius, James P. Lusardi, and Richard J. Schoeck (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1973), 883.
98. CW 8, 889/32–890/11. Here, and in all further citations from More's English works, spelling has been modernized.
99. As the translator of a biography of the Italian Neoplatonist Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, and a friend of the English Neoplatonist John Colet, More would certainly have been well aware of Neoplatonism and its religious orientation. For More's relationship with Colet, see Jonathan Arnold, *Dean John Colet of St. Paul's: Humanism and Reform in Early Tudor England* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007), pp. 40–44.
100. CW 4, 88/19.
101. Lewis and Short notes that *egregius* can simply function as “a title of public officers in high station.” In the case of the French counsellors, this is self-evidently true and suggests nothing about their moral character.
102. “... tot egregiis viris ad bellum sua certatim consilia conferentibus...” CW 4, 88/19–20.
103. CW 4, 204/13–24.
104. CW 4, 218/30–220/21.
105. CW 4, 220/21–25.
106. “... virtutem asperam, ac difficilem sequi...” CW 4, 162/10–11/.
107. “Quis enim potest esse fructus si post mortem nihil assequeris quum hanc vitam totam insuaviter hoc est miserum traduxeris?” CW 4, 162/13–15.
108. “... id enim dementissime ferunt.” CW 4, 162/15.

109. "Contra sentientem, ne in hominum quidem ducunt numero... tantum abest ut inter cives ponant, quorum instituta, moresque (si per metum liceat) omnes, floccifaturus sit. Cui enim dubium esse potest, quin is publicas leges, aut arte clam eludere, aut vi nitatur infringere, dum suae privatim cupiditati serviat, cui nullus ultra leges metus, nihil ultra corpus spei superest amplius. Quamobrem sic animato nullus communicator honos, nullus magistratus committitur, nulli publico muneri praeficitur." *CW 4*, 220/25–222/5.
110. *CW 4*, 164/24–25. "Hiis inoffensis legibus tuum curare commodum, prudentiae est; publicum praeterea, pietatis."
111. Lewis and Short supplies a relatively early example of "religious" *pietas*, Cicero's definition in *De natura deorum* 1.41.115: "Est enim pietas iustitia adversus deos" (Indeed piety is justice towards the gods).
112. *CW 4*, 102/27–28.
113. Lewis and Short gives this as the primary meaning of *atque* when the word is used in joining individual words.
114. *CW 4*, 226/11–12.
115. *The History of King Richard III*. The argument that More did not translate the Latin *Historia* from the English History, or vice versa, is outlined by Richard Sylvester in his introduction to the Yale edition. Sylvester argues that More engaged in "a simultaneous composition of both narratives." *CW 2*, lviii.
116. For a discussion of the relationship between the two texts, see *CW 2*, l–lix.
117. *CW 2*, lvi.
118. For example, the English phrase "by the authority of parliament" is expanded in Latin to "ex parlamenti senatusconsulto, cuius apud Anglos summa atque absoluta potestas est" (by the decision of parliament, which has supreme and undivided authority among the English). *History*, 6/18–19; *Historia*, 6/13–14.
119. Sylvester helpfully cites two examples of this practice. The first is an explication of the name "Agrippa," and the second mentions "what fables tell of Medea." *CW 2*, 7/12 and 26/1–2.
120. Compare the English "the amity and peace that the king her husband so prudently made" with the Latin "cuius maritus ipsius moriens author sanciendae fuisset." *History*, 16/28–29; *Historia*, 16/23–24.
121. In the interest of comparison, it should be noted that More's 1533 *Apology* uses "prudent" twice and "prudently" only once. There is one use each of "prudence" and "prudently" in the *Dialogue of Comfort*, while the *English Poetry* collected in Volume 1 of the Yale Edition includes no words derived from "prudence." By

- contrast, the word “wise” is found 88 times in the *Dialogue of Comfort* alone. All of the concordances employed here have been provided by the Center for Thomas More Studies, and they are all based on the Yale edition of More’s works: *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More, Volume 9: The Apology*, ed. J. B. Trapp (Cambridge, MA: Yale University Press, 1979); *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More, Volume 12: A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*, ed. Louis L. Martz and Frank Manley (Cambridge, MA: Yale University Press, 1976); *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More, Volume 1: English Poems, The Life of Pico, The Last Things*, ed. Anthony S. G. Edwards, Katherine Rogers, and Clarence H. Miller (Cambridge, MA: Yale University Press, 1976). See the Center for Thomas More Studies, accessed December 28, 2012, <http://thomasmorestudies.org/ApologyConcordance/framconc.htm>; <http://thomasmorestudies.org/DialogueComfortConcordance/framconc.htm>; <http://thomasmorestudies.org/EPconcordance/framconc.htm>.
122. Instances of *prudencia* as “wit” are found in *History*, 40/19, 40/20, 41/15, and *Historia*, 40/17, 40/18, 41/15. “Wit” for *ingenium* can be found at *History*, 7/17, 43/2, 45/28, 56/2, 57/24 and *Historia*, 7/13, 43/3, 45/27, 56/2, 57/20.
123. For *prudencia* as “discretion,” see *History*, 10/17 and *Historia*, 10/19. “Discretion” as *rerum usus* is found in *History*, 15/5 and *Historia*, 15/4; “discretion”/*aetas* is found in *History*, 32/18 and *Historia*, 32/16.
124. *History*, 31/21; *Historia*, 31/22.
125. “... in which she thought that he and all other also save herself, lacked either wit or truth. Wit if they were so dull, that they could nothing perceive what the protector intended; truth if they should procure her son to be delivered into his hands, in whom they should perceive toward the child any evil intended.” *History*, 40/18–23. “... in eam rem in qua vel prudentiam eorum suspectam illa vel fidem habeat. Prudentiam si rerum ignari et nimis creduli, fidem si prudentes alienae perfidiae administri putarentur.” *Historia*, 40/17–20.
126. *History*, 73/5–6; *Historia*, 73/5.
127. “Whose wars who so well consider, he shall no less commend his wisdom where he voided, than his manhood where he vanquished.” *History*, 4/14–16. “Cuius res bellicas quisquis recte aestimet, is profecto non minus prudentiam eius admirabitur, sicubi cessit, quam laudabit audaciam, ubi vicit.” *Historia*, 4/11–13.
128. “Wherefore so much the more cause have we to thank God, that this noble personage which is so righteously entitled thereunto, is of so sad age, and thereto of so great wisdom joined with so great experience.” *History*, 74/18–21. “Eoque magis et

- vestrae fortunae gratulandum, et superis habenda est gratia, quorum benignitate provisum est, ut is quem ipsi regno destinaverunt non aetatis modo matura sit, verum admirabilem quoque prudentiam, magno cum rerum usu ac summa domi forisque parta virtute coniunxerit." *Historia*, 74/19–23.
129. "... if wise men would set their hands to, it might be amended..." *History*, 31/18–19. "Quanquam, si viri prudentes instituerunt, bona pars huius mali facile tolli posset..." *Historia*, 31/19–20.
130. Mistrust is a recurring theme in More's account. "For the state of things and the dispositions of men were then such that a man could not well tell whom he might trust or whom he might fear." *History*, 43/26–28.
131. For instances of "wit"/*prudentia* being discussed in conjunction with "truth"/*fides*, see *History* 40/18–23 and 41/13–16 and *Historia* 40/17–20 and 41/14–17. "Wit"/*ingenium* receives the same treatment in *History* 45/28–29 and *Historia* 45/27–28.
132. *Historia*, 42/1–2; *History*, 42/2.
133. *Historia*, 29/10; *History*, 29/10–11.
134. *History*, 82/1–2. "Rem vulgo acceptam ac iactatam laudibus, prudentes pro vana habuere." *Historia*, 81/30–31.
135. *History*, 24/11. "... tametsi prudentibus rem suspectiorem reddidit." *Historia*, 24/11–12.
136. *History*, 45/6–10. "Sic ubi multa signa concurrere, partim casu, quaedam industria ad ultimum efficere, uti non plebs modo (quae temere quovis agitur) sed prudentes quoque, atque aliquot etiam proceres expergiscerentur ac rem notarent." *Historia*, 45/6–9.
137. "... variis fortunae aestibus assidue iactatus..." *CW* 4, 60/3.
138. *CW* 4, 91/17–20.
139. For the translator who would consistently delineate *prudentia* and *sapientia* at the expense of the established convention of using "wisdom" for both, Christopher Lynch's recent translation of Machiavelli's *Arte della guerra* provides an interesting model. Lynch deliberately associates all of Machiavelli's most important terms with a single, exclusive English equivalent, allowing readers to note contrasts and parallels for themselves. Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Art of War*, ed. and trans. Christopher Lynch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).
140. For an example of this practice, see David Wootton's version of *The Prince*: Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, ed. and trans. David Wootton (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing, 1995).

141. Lynch's translation of *The Art of War* (see n. 139) might provide a model here. It includes a glossary discussing not one but several of Machiavelli's key terms.