

Reason in English Renaissance Humanism: Starkey, More, and Ascham

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Thomas Starkey's *A Dialogue between Pole and Lupset*, written sometime between 1529 and 1532, is receiving increasing attention from scholars of political history, Renaissance humanism and literary criticism.¹ The *Dialogue*, although remaining in a unique manuscript until 1878 and therefore exerting virtually no contemporary influence, has been called a schoolbook example of "Christian humanism" in England.² The work deserves its high reputation, written as it is in a time of political and religious upheaval by an unusually interesting humanist with close connections to the centers of power. A follower and friend of Reginald Pole, Starkey complemented his M. A. from Oxford with "a thorough grounding in civic humanism, rhetoric and dialectic" acquired on the Continent, mainly in Italy but also in France.³ But what does Starkey's humanism entail? More specifically, what is his view of human reason? Is he a follower, as some would argue, of the Florentine Neoplatonists, or has he been formed more by the evangelical movements (not necessarily Lutheran) that flourished both in England and on the Continent? Before trying to answer that question by investigating the *Dialogue*, it will be useful to draw a thumbnail sketch of the range of options available to Starkey. And we shall have to begin with an early patristic work that stands behind so much humanist thought: St. Augustine's *On Christian Doctrine*.

I

Soon after his consecration as bishop in 395 Augustine began writing the work that encapsulates his mature views on education: *On Christian Doctrine* (CD). The impact of this work on Western culture cannot be stressed enough; its shadow reached beyond both the Middle Ages and

the Renaissance. Erasmus, to take but one important example, depended heavily on it and constantly referred to it in his writings.⁴ The work drastically modified Augustine's educational theories as expressed in the early neoplatonic dialogue *On Order*, but without dismissing the classical heritage as Tertullian had done. In contrast to his earlier work, *On Christian Doctrine* in effect desacralizes human learning. As in *On Order*, Augustine goes through the arts systematically, but they are no longer rungs on a metaphysical ladder. Each art has an independent value based upon its usefulness for earthly living, or its service as a handmaiden to faith by equipping the Christian with the tools needed to understand the Scriptures. Augustine still has room for mathematics, music, and astronomy (*CD* 2.16-18, 29, 38), but they are included for their practical utility and not as part of a progression towards the unity of the One. His new emphasis is on the mutable language arts. In a program that was to permeate both the humanists' and the reformers' educational outlook, he especially pushes the study of Greek and Hebrew in addition to his own Latin (*CD* 2.11, 14, 26). He also introduces new terrestrial disciplines which had not fitted into his earlier intellectual program: natural history, geography, and the practical arts (*CD* 2.29-30). His change of heart is particularly felt in the strong endorsement of a discipline that was to take center stage in the humanist curriculum: history (*CD* 2.28). The changed perspective is most strikingly seen in the new view of dialectics: instead of treating it as an art of exact logic, Augustine transforms it into a probabilistic language art placed next to rhetoric, a combination that was to be characteristic of the humanist reform (*CD* 2.31-37, and the whole of Book 4). To sum up, the arts for Augustine have a twofold function: either they are useful for this present life, or they are preparatory for the understanding of the Scriptures (which, however, they can never replace as the only way to salvation).

It was Augustine's mature view, as expressed in *On Christian Doctrine*, that informed most Renaissance educational theories, yet in Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499), and to a lesser extent Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494), we find prime examples of the choices inherent in the young Augustine. Under the influence of Savonarola, however, Pico moved towards the position of the mature Augustine before his premature death, and his nephew Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola (1469-1533), by his

espousal of scepticism and fideism (the two almost always went together in the Renaissance), advanced even beyond the parameters of the aging Bishop of Hippo. Ficino was preoccupied with the same issues as the young Augustine, the twin concepts of "Soul" and "God."⁵ The liberal arts were to both rungs on a metaphysical ladder: "Philosophy," writes Ficino, "is the ascent of the mind from the lower regions to the highest, and from darkness to light. Its origin is an impulse of the divine mind; its middle steps are the faculties and the disciplines which we have described; and its end is the possession of the highest good."⁶ All along flashing his Christian credentials (and we have no reason to doubt his sincerity), he is at pains to show that nothing in his philosophy is contrary to the received dogma of the Church. Yet such is the power of his Platonic metaphors that they color every trait of his religion. Reason and Faith, like Philosophy and Religion, are simply different names for the same thing, since Plato, via Zoroaster, Hermes Trismegistus, and the other ancient theologians had learned from Moses, and the later Neoplatonists in turn had learnt from Dionysius the Areopagite, the supposed disciple of St. Paul.⁷

Giovanni Pico is still primarily known as the youthful author of the *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, a work, however, much less read during the sixteenth century than its present day reputation would lead us to believe. Coming under the sway of Savonarola, Pico shows an increasing restraint in his encomium of human aspirations. Yet that is nothing compared to his nephew Gianfrancesco Pico's Savonarolan condemnation of philosophy in *An Examination of the Vanity of Pagan Teaching and the Verity of Christian Doctrine* (1520).⁸ As Charles B. Schmitt explains:

Pico saw Scepticism as a service to Christianity; it could serve the function of destroying the claims of dogmatic philosophers, thereby allowing Christian doctrine to become recognized as the one valid source of knowledge. Understanding for him, as for [the old] Augustine, came through faith and not through reason.⁹

Yet on the whole one must conclude that Gianfrancesco moved beyond the Bishop of Hippo to the uncompromising stance of Tertullian, who had wondered what Athens had to do with Jerusalem. No place whatsoever seems to be allowed for philosophy or for human reason.

I have briefly outlined the two extreme Renaissance positions concerning human reason: Ficino, influenced by the young Augustine, virtually makes religion out of philosophy; while Gianfrancesco Pico, going beyond the doubts of the old bishop, seems to assign no value whatsoever to reason. To trace the developments of the first extreme one can turn to the influential love treatises and sonnet sequences, with their simplistic expositions of the cult of beauty, that followed in the wake of Ficino's *De amore*. The acme of this tradition are Giordano Bruno's writings, yet the syncretistic and neoplatonic impulse can also be seen in Symphorien Champier, Francesco Giorgio, Agostino Steuco, Guillaume Postel, Jacques Charpentier, and Paul Scalichius.¹⁰ At the other end of the spectrum one finds a developing tradition of Christian scepticism that included in its ranks Cornelius Agrippa, Peter Ramus and his assistant Omer Talon, the publisher Henri Estienne, Montaigne, and (spilling into the next century) Pascal.¹¹ Yet if neoplatonism (with its reliance on reason) and scepticism (with its emphasis on fideism) define the extreme points of the intellectual spectrum, there was a broad middle ground that saw reason and faith as necessary though complementary categories, operating within distinct spheres. This was the mature Augustinian view, delineated not only in *On Christian Doctrine* but also in Book 19 of the *City of God*. Erasmus and his English friends More and Colet were strongly influenced by it. Yet the person that most successfully appropriated and spread this view of reason in northern Europe was not a humanist or a philosopher, but the reformer Martin Luther.¹²

In its broad outlines, Luther's theology was an elaboration of the mature Augustinian distinction between spheres. Luther's master distinction, according to Gerhard Ebeling, is that between "the law and the gospel."¹³ Yet this is only the most basic of a whole range of dichotomies that touch all areas of life: reason vs. faith, freedom vs. bondage of the will, or the distinction between the two kingdoms (or regiments).¹⁴ Each side of these dichotomies reflects the individual's position: before God (*coram Deo*) or before the world (*coram mundo*). *Coram Deo*, Luther is as suspicious of intellectual attempts to ascend to God as was his contemporary Gianfrancesco Pico. Grace is the key concept. Human kind has no free will, except to sin, and reason is "Frau

Hulda," the Devil's whore.¹⁵ Yet the situation is totally different *coram mundo*. On the earthly level Luther even allows for free will,¹⁶ and he waxes lyrical in his description of reason as "the best [of the things of this life] and something divine."¹⁷ Reason, together with the liberal arts, has a limited function even within the sphere of faith. Following Augustine, Luther sees the arts as necessary for the understanding of the Bible. In the "Letter to the Mayors and Aldermen of all the Cities of Germany in Behalf of Christian Schools" (1524) he sets out the twofold use of the arts: "The languages and other liberal arts, . . . [are a great] ornament, benefit, and honor . . . , both for understanding the Holy Scriptures and carrying on the civil government."¹⁸ Before God, the arts serve as a handmaiden to the gospel, but they have an equally important function *coram mundo*:

Society, for the maintenance of civil order and the proper regulation of the household, needs accomplished and well-trained men and women. . . . We have, alas! lived and degenerated long enough in darkness; we have remained German brutes too long. Let us use our reason, that God may observe in us gratitude for His mercies, and that other lands may see that we are human beings, capable both of learning and of teaching, in order that through us, also, the world may be made better. (Letter 68 and 73)

And this was no empty rhetoric. Spearheaded by Luther's co-worker, the humanist Philip Melanchthon, Wittenberg "far surpassed every other German university,"¹⁹ and became a pattern for primary and secondary education throughout Germany, and the influence spread with the Reformation to England as well.²⁰

II

How does Thomas Starkey fit into this picture? Where along the spectrum from neoplatonism to scepticism should he be placed? For some, the answer has been simple: as close as possible to the Ficinian end.²¹ On the face of it, there is much to recommend such a judgement. Starkey spent a large part of the 1520s in Italy, where he received a thorough humanistic training. Furthermore, the *Dialogue* abounds with references to the "excellent dygnyte" of man, reminiscent not only of

Ficino but of Pico's *Oration*. Yet does Starkey's *Dialogue* really fit the Ficinian bill? First there are the biographical complications. Starkey showed evangelical interests, as T. F. Mayer points out:

Starkey may well have come under the religious shadow of Colet in Oxford as well as other Pauline Christians in Italy. Although evangelical religion would make only a brief appearance in the 'Dialogue,' it became Starkey's major preoccupation in the last years of his life.²²

Not that he was an outspoken or even crypto-Lutheran, but he was in favor of at least some of the ideas of the Reformation, such as the use of the vernacular in both liturgy and the Bible.²³ But if, as I will argue, Starkey had more in common with Luther's views on reason than with Ficino's, that can be explained as much by a general adherence to *On Christian Doctrine* as by any direct Lutheran influence. If Starkey came "under the religious shadow of Colet," as Mayer thinks likely, that only underscores my point. Colet corresponded with Ficino, and read some of his works with great interest. But as Sears Jayne concludes in his *John Colet and Marsilio Ficino*, Colet's annotated copy of Ficino's *Letters* reveals "the differences between the two men rather than their similarities." Colet's marginalia "emphasize his moral fervour, his Augustinian view of human frailty, and his acceptance of St. Paul as the pole star of his life."²⁴ It could be argued that this Augustinian (and Pauline) emphasis characterizes Tudor humanism as a whole, and that regardless of religious affiliation. Starkey, writing in the midst of the confessional and political turmoil of the first phase of the English reformation, and seemingly with one foot in each religious camp, will provide a good testing ground for these claims.

Starkey's *Dialogue* is not strictly a work on reason, nor an encomium of man; it is a political discussion of the best way to govern the English commonwealth. The fictional dialogue between Starkey's friends Reginald Pole and Thomas Lupset takes place over three days, where the first day is given to a discussion of the ideal commonwealth, the second enumerates the multitude of ills that afflict any real commonwealth, while the third day provides practical suggestions on how to alleviate the particular ills of the English commonwealth.²⁵ Starkey's views on "man" must therefore be extrapolated from a work that has a different

focus; furthermore, only by limiting the discussion of the work to the first day can it be presented as an unqualified encomium. On the first day Starkey lets Pole and Lupset affirm man's "excellent dygnyte": "He hath in him a sparkul of dyvynyte, & ys surely of a celestyal & dyvyne nature" (*Dialogue* 9). While Starkey is open to the possibility that God may permit an alternative route to salvation for Jews and Moslems, who live outside the pale of the Christian religion, the laws of a Christian commonwealth provide the superior way:

Our lawys & ordynancys be agreabul to the law of nature, seyng they are al layd by chryst hymselfe & by hys holy spryte, we are sure they schal bryng us to our salvatyon yf we gyve perfayt fayth & sure trust to the promys of god in them to us made, . . . let us be assuryd that our lawys by Chryst the sone of god, & by hys holy spryte incresyd & confyrmyd, schal bryng us to such perfectyon as accordyth to the dygnyte of the nature of man. (*Dialogue* 14)

While one must agree that Starkey seems to conflate religious with civic values in this passage, one also notes that provisions such as "yf we gyve perfayt fayth & sure trust to the promys of god in them" point to religious values beyond simply living a virtuous life. One should also note that the "dygnyty of the nature of man" in the last line acts as a *limit* on, rather than as a guarantee of, the perfectibility of man.

But more importantly, this picture of the *ideal* commonwealth must be balanced by the discussions of *actual* commonwealths found in the rest of the dialogue. When Starkey turns to "the state of chrystundome" he bluntly confesses that "hyt wantyth many thyngys requyryd to the most perfayt state" (*Dialogue* 40). Starkey notes Plato's ideal commonwealth, conceding what orthodox Christianity had always taught: if it had not been for the fall, humanity would indeed have been able to follow right reason, which is God-given: "gud hathe made man of al creaturys in erth most perfayt gyvyng un to hym a sparkyl of hys owne dyvynte that ys to say ryght reson" (*Dialogue* 109). From a pre-lapsarian perspective, the attainment of moral excellence would be easy enough: "Yf man wold folow ever ryght reson & the jugement therof[,] remembryng alway the excellence & dygnyty of hys nature, hyt schold be nothyng hard to bryng man wythout many lawys to true cyvylte" (*Dialogue* 97). Yet our post-lapsarian experience tells a different story:

Thys hath byn tryde by processe of thousandys of yerys, thys hath byn concludyd by the most wyse & polytyke men, that *man by instructyon & general exhortatyon can not be brought to hys perfectyon*, wherfor hyt was necessary to descend to the instytutyon & ordynance of lawys cyvyl & polytyke that where as man blyndyd by affectys & vanytes therof wold not folow the trade of ryght reson, he schold at the lest by feare of punnyschment be constraynyd to occupy hymselfe & apply hys mynd to such thynges as were convenyent to hys excellent nature & dygnyte, & so at the last by long custume be inducyd to folow & dow that thyng for the love of vertue, wych befor he dyd only for fere of the punnyschment prescrybd by the law, thys ys the end & vertue of al law, . . . but forbycause the multytude of men, be so corrupt frayle & blyndyd with pestylent affectys, we must consydur the imbecyllite of them & wekenes of mynd & apply our remedys accordyng therto. (*Dialogue* 97-98; emphasis added)

As this passage shows, Starkey is apprehensive about the perfectibility of mankind. Plato had "imagynyd only & dremyd apon such a commyn wele as never yet was found nor never I thynke schalbe" (*Dialogue* 108).

Significantly, Pole and Lupset begin their third day of discussion, dedicated to the *remedies* for a sick commonwealth, by asking God to send the Holy Spirit, "wythout the wych mannys hart ys blynd & ignorant of al vertue & truth," "to yllumynate & lyght our hartys & myndys" (*Dialogue* 95). The remedy turns out to be the traditional Augustinian answer (culled from Book 19 of the *City of God*): the job of the civil magistrate, and of the civil law, is to *restrain* the "pestylent affectys" caused by the fall. Starkey had earlier alluded to the equally traditional Augustinian topos of "usyng" the things of this life in preparation for the enjoyment of God (*Dialogue* 44). The law, accordingly, "ys the pedagogue of chryst" that "preparyth mannes mynd to the receyvynge of vertue" (*Dialogue* 137). Yet the law "ys not suffycyent to bryng man to hys perfectyon, but to that ys requyryd a nother more celestyal remedy, the wych our mastur chryste cam to set & stablysch in the hartys of hys electe pepul, he cam to make perfayt man, & supply the defecte of the law, by hys celestyal & dyvyne doctryne" (*Dialogue* 138). Here we are surely much closer to the Lutheran/Augustinian distinction between law and gospel than to any Ficinian intellectualism. Starkey's use of the law, furthermore, is analogous to Augustine's (and

Luther's) view of the liberal arts: they are needed for civil life and are preparatory for the gospel, yet they cannot take its place.

III

Starkey was a humanist with evangelical sympathies, even if we cannot class him as a Protestant. Yet when we consider the attitude towards faith and reason, no forced distinction between "humanist" and "Protestant" is tenable in Tudor England. In both groups, insofar as they can even be distinguished from each other, the mature Augustinian vision predominated. Of course, there were a few exceptions, like John Dee in a later generation.²⁶ Yet they remained just that: exceptions that proved the rule. To underscore this conclusion I shall end this essay by taking a brief look at two humanists that despite confessional barriers are united in a common Augustinian vision: the foe of Luther, Thomas More (1478-1535), and the Protestant educator Roger Ascham (1515-1568).

The basis for More's educational program is *On Christian Doctrine*. Given the work's centrality in the Renaissance, this of course should not surprise us, in particular when we remember what importance More's good friend Erasmus had given it. More's "Letter to Oxford" contains the clearest enunciation of these Augustinian tenets. Defending the study of classical languages from the attacks of the "Trojans," More begins by admitting the validity of their main charge: education is no guarantee of salvation: "Now then, as for secular learning, no one denies that a person can be saved without it, and indeed without learning of any sort."²⁷ He then turns around and explains what beneficial role education does have:

Not everyone who comes to Oxford comes just to learn theology; some must also learn law. They must also learn prudence in human affairs, . . . And I doubt that any study contributes as richly to this practical skill as the study of poets, orators, and histories. Indeed, some plot their course, as it were, to the contemplation of celestial realities through the study of nature, and progress to theology by way of philosophy and the liberal arts . . . , thus despoiling the women of Egypt to grace their own queen [i.e., theology]. But since theology is the only subject he [i.e., the

"Trojan"] seems to allow (if he actually allows even this), I do not see how he can pursue it without any skill in either Hebrew or Greek or Latin.²⁸

While progressing "to theology by way of philosophy and the liberal arts" may at first sound like pure Platonism, the context shows that More is thinking rather of Augustine's Egyptian treasures (*CD* 2: 40): pagan learning as a handmaiden to faith, in addition to its utility in earthly matters.

The Augustinian stamp on the developing *Protestant* educational vision, on the other hand, is revealed in a fascinating letter that Roger Ascham wrote from Cambridge in 1545 to Archbishop Thomas Cranmer. "If you would like to know how the University flourishes and what harvest of learning we reap," Ascham begins, "I shall give my opinion in a few words. Many pursue the road to a knowledge of sacred learning, but different men have different ideas."²⁹ He then contrasts those at Cambridge that follow the Catholic polemicist Pighius with those that "follow the right way with St. Augustine." He then delineates this "right way," which unsurprisingly turns out to be derived from *On Christian Doctrine*:

In connection with the daily reading of God's word, others follow Augustine's thinking above all, and go as far as they can in bringing to it the full range of their knowledge of languages, as though calling in the reserves. Everywhere languages are taught by those who are considered the best teachers of both knowledge and understanding, so that no thought is silent for want of speech and no language swells loquaciously for want of wisdom. We bring in Plato and Aristotle . . . ; from the throng of Latins Cicero is almost the only one we add to them.

Ascham is primarily interested in the training of the clergy, and is less favorably disposed than Luther to those who "use their thin and superficial knowledge to get themselves more easily into some government position."³⁰ Yet he confirms what was to become the pattern at Elizabethan Oxbridge: the faculty of arts functioned as the training ground for the later study of theology. In other words, the educational program of the mature Augustine had become English university policy. But what is most striking about Ascham's views on

education is how similar they are to those of More, or to those of More's arch-enemy, Luther. This congruence is caused not by any influence between the three (except perhaps from Luther to Ascham), but by the general acceptance of Augustine's synthesis of sacred and secular values.

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NOTES

¹Most recently, T. F. Mayer has produced an authoritative edition of the *Dialogue* (Thomas Starkey, *A Dialogue between Pole and Lupset*, Camden fourth series, vol. 37 [London: Offices of the Royal Historical Society, 1989]), complemented by a study of Starkey's life: *Thomas Starkey and the Commonwealth: Humanist Politics and Religion in the Reign of Henry VIII* (Cambridge: CUP, 1989). I shall cite Starkey from Mayer's edition (but without its detailed scribal apparatus), with page numbers given in the text.

²Robin Headlam Wells, *Spenser's Faerie Queene and the Cult of Elizabeth* (Totowa, NJ: Barnes and Noble, 1983) 35.

³Mayer, Introduction to *A Dialogue*, vii.

⁴Charles Béné documents in great detail Erasmus' borrowings from *On Christian Doctrine* throughout his career, from the *Antibarbarorum liber* of 1494 to the *Ecclesiastes* of 1535 (*Érasme et Saint Augustin* [Geneva: Droz, 1969], esp. 59-95, and the appendices on 433-48).

⁵See Paul Oskar Kristeller, *The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino*, trans. Virginia Conant (New York: Columbia UP, 1943) 204. For additional examples of Augustinian influence in such important areas as the will and esthetics, see Kristeller, 24, 206, 211, 213, 257, and 306. Yet as Michael Allen points out, "Ficino seems never to have been particularly inspired by the problems of sin, the infected will, the necessity of prevenient grace, and other dogmas associated with Pauline and/or Augustinian views on the Atonement and its theology" (*The Platonism of Marsilio Ficino* [Berkeley: U of California P, 1984] 182).

⁶Marsilio Ficino, "On the Platonic nature, instruction and function of a philosopher" *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, vol. 2, trans. by members of the Language Dep. of the School of Economic Science, London (London: Shephard-Walwyn, 1978) 31.

⁷See Frances Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1964) 1-20, esp. 15-16 and 15n1.

⁸See Eugenio Garin, "Gian Francesco Pico della Mirandola: Savonarolan Apologetics and the Critique of Ancient Thought," *Christianity and Renaissance*, ed. Timothy Verdon and John Henderson (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse UP, 1990) 523-32. On Savonarola, see Donald Weinstein, "Explaining God's Acts to His people: Savonarola's

Spiritual Legacy to the Sixteenth Century," *Humanity and Divinity in Renaissance and Reformation*, ed. John W. O'Malley et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1993) 205-25.

⁹Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola (1469-1533) and His Critique of Aristotle (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1967) 6-7.

¹⁰See Charles B. Schmitt, "Perennial Philosophy: From Agostino Steuco to Leibniz," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 27 (1966): 505-32.

¹¹The standard work is Richard H. Popkin, *The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Descartes* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1960), see also the two works by Charles B. Schmitt *Cicero Scepticus* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1972), and *Reappraisals in Renaissance Thought*, ed. Charles Webster (London: Variorum Reprints, 1989).

¹²On Calvin, who followed Luther (and Augustine) in this, see my companion piece "Reason in Luther, Calvin, and Sidney," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 23 (1992): 115-27.

¹³Gerhard Ebeling, *Luther: An Introduction to His Thought*, trans. R. A. Wilson (1970; rpt. London: Collins-Fontana, 1975) 111.

¹⁴On the two kingdoms, see my article "Between Eusebius and Augustine: Una and the Cult of Elizabeth," forthcoming in *English Literary Renaissance*.

¹⁵See B. A. Garrish, "Luther's Belief in Reason," *Luther: A Profile*, ed. H. G. Koenigsberger (London: Macmillan, 1973) 203. The article, an unsurpassed overview of Luther's views on reason, is excerpted from Garrish's *Grace and Reason: A Study in the Theology of Luther* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1962).

¹⁶See *On the Bondage of the Will*, in *Luther and Erasmus: Free Will and Salvation* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969) 143.

¹⁷Martin Luther, *Disputation Concerning Man* (1536), as cited in Lewis W. Spitz, *The Religious Renaissance of the German Humanists* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1963) 247.

¹⁸Trans. F. V. N. Painter, in *Early Protestant Educators*, ed. Frederick Eby (1931; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1971) 57-58.

¹⁹Ebeling 18.

²⁰See Lewis W. Spitz, "The Importance of the Reformation for the Universities: Culture and Confession in the Critical Years," *Rebirth, Reform and Resilience: Universities in Transition 1300-1700*, ed. James M. Kittelson and Pamela J. Transue (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1984): 42-67. On Melancthon's influence in England, see my "Melancthon and Tudor England," *Cultural Exchange between European Nations during the Renaissance*, ed. Gunnar Sorelius and Michael Strigley (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1994): 85-95.

²¹According to Wells, for example, Starkey's work was "the most complete statement by an Englishman of the central tenets of Christian humanist thought" before Hooker. By "Christian humanism" Wells means something very close to the Ficinian position: "The Christian humanist asserts, at the same time, the potential dignity of man and claims that, with divine assistance, he is capable of realizing an ideal of perfection through virtuous self-discipline" (35).

²²Mayer, Introduction to *A Dialogue*, vii-viii.

²³See *A Dialogue* 88-91.

²⁴Sears Jayne, *John Colet and Marsilio Ficino* (Oxford: OUP, 1963) 77-78. See also Leland Miles, *John Colet and the Platonic Tradition* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1961).

²⁵See Mayer's introduction to the *Dialogue*, xv. For my purposes it will not be necessary to distinguish between the two fictional speakers (their positions are not really at variance), and I shall throughout refer to Starkey as the originator of the statements.

²⁶On Dee, see Nicholas H. Clulee, *John Dee's Natural Philosophy: Between Science and Religion* (London: Routledge, 1988).

²⁷Thomas More, "Letter to the University of Oxford," *The Yale Edition of the Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, vol. 15, ed. Daniel Kinney (New Haven: Yale UP, 1986) 139.

²⁸More 139-41.

²⁹*Letters of Roger Ascham*, trans. Maurice Hatch and Alvin Vos (New York: Peter Lang, 1989) 68.

³⁰Ascham 69.