

Preface

Research does not always follow a straight path. In my case, two years travelling by motorcycle from the Arctic Circle to the tip of South America and throughout Africa as an undergraduate (1952–5), led to an interest in the impact of the intellectual history of Europe on the larger world. Ford Foundation grants later allowed me to spend two years in Europe researching in the Archive of the Indies (Seville, Spain) the influence of Thomas More and Erasmus in the Spanish New World, particularly on Vasco de Quiroga – resulting in a dissertation on this subject (1975). In the 1530s Quiroga built two communities for Indians based on *Utopia* and wrote about *Utopia*, all of which forced me to look long and hard at the book. In the process I became convinced that something is fundamentally wrong (leaving aside Quiroga) with accepted interpretations. What I wanted to understand, first of all, was how More's mind worked as he went about composing the work. And was there somehow a connection to the thinking of his friend Erasmus?

Against all odds I eventually came to see that More's *Utopia* and Erasmus' war writings, free-will writings, and *Praise of Folly* are not built from rhetoric, as everywhere believed, but from a set way of thinking. And yet, for years I was unable to discover the basis of this thinking. Ultimately, however, all the uncertainty vanished when I uncovered in certain early books of Erasmus a learned and pervasive employment of the unitary two-dimensional way of thinking found in classical Stoicism – detailed in my book *The Stoic Origins of Erasmus' Philosophy of Christ* (Toronto, 2017). Further research revealed not only the Stoic methodology employed in composing *Utopia* but also the step-by-step manner in which that work had come about. While More before late 1504 had seen Christianity in dichotomous, either/or, non-worldly versus worldly, terms, and therewith had been in deep despair as to whether he should choose the monastery or the world, his outlook was

radically transformed when Erasmus introduced him to the Stoic unitary two-dimensional mindset – and related this mindset to Christianity. The book at hand shows that More’s work on *Lucian* (1506), Erasmus’ *The Praise of Folly* (1511), and More’s *Utopia* (1516) systematically work out – in social/political terms – More’s new way of seeing himself and the world.

Along the way I have profited from positions at the University of Wisconsin-Marinette, Brown University (one year as Curator of Books in the John Carter Brown Library and one year as Visiting Scholar), and St John’s University in New York City. I am particularly indebted to St John’s in that those in charge overrode various countervailing forces and allowed time to continue research, including a research leave. As for individuals, no one has influenced my interest in research more than Professor Gerald Strauss at Indiana University. Not of little importance has been the enduring support of my life partner, Ruth Englhart Dealy, whom I met so memorably in her hometown, Aschaffenburg, Germany.

The professionalism and good will of Suzanne Rancourt, Manager, Humanities Acquisitions, and her team are deeply appreciated, as are the helpfulness of two anonymous readers.