



*In his Life of Pico, More includes 3 letters written by Pico along with More's own prefatory comments and additions to the text.*

### **First Letter to John Francis** (EWTM, 74-77)

*In this letter, Pico exhorts his nephew John Francis to persevere in his pious efforts as a public servant, even in the face of opposition.*

- In a letter that recommends perseverance, why does More's preface emphasize temperance, the virtue that overcomes obstacles posed by one's own appetites or "the flesh"?
- What other virtues does the letter recommend, and in what kind of life are they most useful? What role do they play in Pico's own way of life, as seen both in this letter and in the biographical portion of More's *Life of Pico*?
- Pico commends the "holy pride" of good men who refuse to be "mastered" by the wicked. What point is he making about leadership? What point is he making about freedom?
- Pico recommends 2 great remedies against the temptations of the world: almsgiving and prayer. What role does almsgiving play, and what kind of prayer does Pico recommend?

### **Letter to Andrew Corneo** (EWTM, 77-79)

*In this letter, Pico refutes his friend's position that philosophy must be made "useful" in a life of public service. The letter raises the perennial issue of the relationship between the active life and the contemplative life.*

- What virtues does Pico attribute to the contemplative life? What is Pico's understanding of "sure and steadfast" happiness, and why is this truth lost on worldly princes?
- What do More's additions suggest about his own position on the question?
  - More adds the following to Corneo's exhortation, "I am content ye study, but I would have you outwardly occupied also...Love them and use them both: as well study as worldly occupation." Why does More amplify this position?
  - When Pico speaks about transitioning from the contemplative to the active life, More adds that such a transition is "from the better to the worse." Why does More amplify this position?
  - When Pico describes the life of philosophers More adds, "They love liberty." What kind of liberty is sought by philosophers who flee public life?
  - More adds that Pico prefers the "rest" of private life to the "glory" of public life. How does More intend for readers to evaluate these goods?
- Is Pico's answer to Corneo satisfying?
- How does Pico's defense of his way of life in this letter relate to the biographical portion of the *Life*? How does it relate to the way of life More endorses in the devotional poetry?

### **Second Letter to John Francis** (EWTM, 79-81)

*In this letter, Pico counsels his nephew not to fear the opinions of the wicked and not to seek their estimation. He describes the standards of the world as being opposed to the standard of truth.*

- What is More's evaluation of public life in the preface?
- What is Pico's understanding of happiness in this letter; why are the apostles "joyful and glad"? How does this view relate to the view of happiness in the letter to Andrew Corneo?
- What view of virtue does Pico advance in this letter and how does it relate to his own virtues as described in the biography, and in his previous letters? What threatens virtue?

### **Additional Questions:**

- What themes are present in all 3 letters? Out of Pico's many letters, why choose these 3?
- Are the views in each letter consistent, or are there tensions between them?
- To what extent do the views of the letters reflect More's own views as expressed in his other writings? What do More's additions suggest throughout?