



In his *Life of Pico*, More transforms three short prose texts written by Pico into his own original poetry. The following are paraphrases of More's stanzas.

The Twelve Rules of...Spiritual Battle (*EWTM* 86-88)

1. Virtue is difficult, but the way of “the world” is also difficult and entails suffering.
2. The “reward” of laboring for the world is more labor during life, and “fire and pain” in the afterlife.
3. It is folly to seek heaven amidst pleasure when Christ Himself attained heaven by “manly fight” and “bitter passion.”
4. Suffering should be embraced gladly because it helps make one more like Christ.
5. One should hope and trust in Christ above all worldly help.
6. One should keep continual “watch” against sin.
7. One should not only withstand temptation, but also perform good acts with the guidance of humility.
8. In time of battle, remember the victory of God; in time of peace, remember that battle is inescapable in this life.
9. One should remember one’s own weakness and avoid occasions of sin.
10. Temptation should not be entertained but rejected immediately.
11. The joy of a clear conscience outweighs all other pleasures.
12. One should guard against pride by remembering how Christ humbled Himself on the cross.

The Twelve Weapons of Spiritual Battle (*EWTM* 88-90)

1. Consider that worldly pleasure is “little and short.”
2. Consider that good deeds bring lasting happiness while evil deeds lead to regret and “heaviness of mind.”
3. Consider that a “mad merchant” purchases pleasure at the cost of his soul.
4. Consider that the present life is as fleeting as “a dream or a shadow.”
5. Consider that while one is busy seeking pleasure, death seeks him and catches him unawares.
6. Consider that time may run out for making amends for offenses against God.
7. Consider that the present life is “but a thoroughfare” and the afterlife is eternal.
8. Consider that God dignified man with reason; consider the shame of sin’s distortion of human nature.
9. Consider that “th’inward gladness of a virtuous mind” outweighs all the pleasures of worldly life.
10. Compare the benefits of God to men and the “unloving” response of men.
11. Consider Christ’s passion as a remedy against temptation.
12. Consider the example of the saints and martyrs to fortify oneself in temptation.

The Twelve Properties or Conditions of a Lover (*EWTM* 90-93)

1. Just as a lover sets his heart on “one alone,” so one should set his heart on God above all else.
2. Just as the sight of the beloved gladdens a lover, so the sight of God is “perfect joy and sure delight.”
3. Just as a lover adorns himself for the beloved, so one should adorn one’s soul with virtue to earn God’s favor.
4. Just as a lover willingly suffers for the beloved, so one should endure suffering and death rather than part from God.
5. Just as a lover desires to suffer for the beloved, so one should desire to share in the suffering that God endured for him.
6. Just as a lover longs for the presence of the beloved, so one should seek the presence of God in prayer at all times.
7. Just as a lover cherishes all traces of the beloved, so one should venerate relics and images of God.
8. Just as a lover desires to hear the beloved praised, so one should long for God to be praised and abhor blasphemy.
9. Just as a lover considers the beloved to be perfect, so one should consider God the greatest good he can possess.
10. Just as a lover deprives himself of food and sleep, so should one abstain from pleasure and remember God.
11. Just as a lover endures violent changes of emotion, so one should delight in the presence of God and grieve His absence.
12. Just as a lover delights in serving the beloved, so one should “studiously” serve God and consider service its own reward.

Study Questions

- How does More’s poetry engage the reason of the reader? What are the roles of reason (“wisdom”) and madness in the poetry?
- To what does “spiritual battle” refer? Who or what is the enemy, and how is victory achieved, according to More?
- What are the roles of judgment and choice in spiritual battle?
- What vision of the present life does More present in the poetry? What characterizes this “worldly” life?
- Why is pleasure a prominent theme? What other themes recur in the poetry? How do they compare with More’s other writings?
- What is the difference between “rules” and “weapons” of spiritual battle? How do these two series of poems compare?
- Why include these three meditations together? What do love and war share in common?
- How does the concluding “Prayer of Pico Mirandola unto God” relate to the earlier poems on spiritual combat and love?
- When you consider all the parts of More’s *Life of Pico* together as a whole, what do you think the purpose of the book is?