Much previous scholarship on the social and political thought of the Spanish humanist Juan Luis Vives has focused on the question of his ‘paciﬁst’ and his conception of European unity in the face of the Turkish threat to the integrity of Christendom. Rather than discuss whether Vives was an “absolute” paciﬁst or not, I wish to concentrate on the development of his conceptions in relation to the writings and diplomatic milieu of the English and Erasmian humanists, and their precursors. It is well recognized that Vives developed his philosophy concerning peace and war with reference to the thought of Erasmus and others within his circle. I will suggest that the Italian and earlier English origins of many of the ideas of Vives have not been sufﬁciently recognized; the key concepts of concord and discord, which are tethered to a psychological understanding of the passions of individuals and nations, find direct inspiration not only in Erasmus, but in the orations surrounding the Universal Peace of 1518—which in turn have their origins in Marsilius of Padua’s Defensor Pacis, orations delivered to

1 I am grateful for the generosity of the Australian Humanities Research Council in offering a Travelling Fellowship to research this study, and to Charles Fantazzi, Conal Condren and Jean Pretorius for their very helpful criticisms. My study is greatly indebted to the Vives scholarship mentioned herein: Juan Luis Vives. De Europae dissidiis et republica. Translation and notes by Francisco Calero and María José Echarte (Valencia, 1992); Obras políticas y paciﬁstas, trans. and notes by Francisco Calero, María José Echarte, Luisa Arribas and Pilar Usábel, (Madrid, 1999), pp. 16–21, pp. 32–53. I refer to the Vives edition, Joannis Ludovici Vivis Valentini opera omnia, (hereafter Majansius), ed. Gregorio Majansius, 8 vols. (Valencia, 1782–90; London: Gregg Press, 1964). I use the male pronoun throughout, in accordance with Vives’s usage.

2 José A. Fernández-Santamaría, The State, War and Peace: Spanish Political Thought in the Renaissance, 1516–1559, (Cambridge, 1977) has compared Vives’s thought on war to that of Valdés in particular, and other Spanish thinkers such as Vitoria. Vives mentions Vitoria in a letter to Erasmus (Allen, ep. 1836) but he knew him only by report from Spanish acquaintances. He makes several unsubstantiated statements about him in this letter. José L. Abellán, El pacifismo de Juan Luis Vives, (Valencia, 1997).

the Papal Court and in the peace discourse post The Hundred Year’s War.

The main argument of this chapter is that Vives insisted on the need for freedom of speech in the admonition of princes, and indeed all the estates of civil and ecclesiastical society; wise counsel was crucial for the health of the Christian respublica. Vives himself adopted the role of counsellor in the period under discussion, although as one who retained more independence and acted more indirectly than others employed in the service of a pope or European prince—than, say, Thomas More. Vives’s reforming voice continued to express his belief in a Christ-centred political ethos based in love, benevolence and peace when others became more constrained by the difficulties of courtly and diplomatic life.

The chapter moves from a initial brief presentation of the chronology of the texts under examination to the European and particularly English context in which they were composed, before pursuing a more detailed consideration of Vives’s highly significant contribution to early modern thought on peace and war, tyranny and liberty, and the psychological origins of discord. The chapter concludes with an indication of some avenues for exploring the rich and under-used legacy of Vives. It is often held that Vives’s message in his peace writings fell on unreceptive ears in the early sixteenth century and effected no change in the leaders to whom it was directed. In this regard there are two points to be made at the outset. First, Vives attempted to persuade all who held offices in the respublica Christiana, even at the level of family relationships, towards concord and away from discord. Second, in the later sixteenth century and into the seventeenth century, aspects of the thought of Vives may arguably be discerned in writers and monarchs—in, for example, Thomas Elyot, Elizabeth I, Justus Lipsius, Montaigne, James I and VI, Hugo Grotius, Descartes, Spinoza, Robert Burton, and Thomas Hobbes.

I. Vives’s Socio-political Publications, 1522–1529

Vives’s political interventions, considered here, date from 1522 to 1529. The humanist epistle to leading secular and ecclesiastical leaders across Europe was a favored genre. Vives’s satire, De Europae dissidiis et bello Turcico (On Europe Divided and the Turkish War) was first published