

Designs in *Utopia* — Questions and Discussion Session

with Drs. John Boyle, Richard Dougherty, Jeffrey S. Lehman,
and Stephen W. Smith

Michael Foley: I heard that one theory about Hythloday is that More was offering an implicit critique of his friend Erasmus, and I was just wondering if you had heard of this thesis, and what you think of it?

Stephen W. Smith: Well, I've wondered that. If memory serves, Erasmus's praise for the work was slow in coming, and when it did come, it was rather limited. And I've heard from those who know that he was unusually slow in producing this letter about the *Utopia*, so perhaps there's something to that.

Gerard Wegemer: Clarence, any thoughts on that?

Clarence Miller: Well, number one, Erasmus put it out. Erasmus handled the publishing of it. It may have been a headache getting it through—they had to do some adjusting and whatnot. And I don't think that Erasmus would fill the bill of Hythloday in any very significant way.

Nathan Schlueter: I keep talking. Does someone else want to go? We've got plenty of time?—OK, so... (laughter.) I've got to come to the defense of Hythloday again, just because I think there's a tagteam up there now. Is there not danger in that More actually makes this pompous, stubborn intellectual actually convey certain truths about things? Is there not an alternative lesson to the more prosaic and incrementalist-type folks that they need to hear that voice, even if it comes from a proud, stubborn intellectual? That's one question.

But then, I'm not even sure; I'm not convinced yet. Before I write off Hythloday, I want to be sure. And I see the evidence there, but it's ambiguous. He says that he gets to live carelessly and free, but at the end of Book 1 he says he's on a mission to give a true image to the world. And he, in a way, plays a Socrates in his contentiousness. He is a gadfly. And he strikes me as a rather prophetic kind of person, more like a John the Baptist type, as it was raised earlier. He has a kind of righteous indignation, a kind of contempt—and this is the sort of thing where More and Giles and maybe some others are saying, "Yeah, there are some things wrong, the enclosure movement, etc." They're sort of tolerant of these injustices that they see—they know they're there, but they're satisfied with these incremental kinds of "maybe" changes. Sometimes you need a prophetic voice that actually rouses you to

an awareness that, if you cannot actually imitate Utopia, you ought not be complacent in assuming that your regime is somehow just because it is stable and because you can feel good about yourself in it. And so I would like to see a more ironical Hythloday, or at least be open to a reading which sees Hythloday in fact as the image-giver. I know there is counterevidence in fact, but More the writer puts him in there. He's got this imagination and More writes this imaginative work to convey it, showing a kind of sympathy with Hythloday and not with Morus. So I'm wondering again if Hythloday is not really our Augustinian figure. I'm troubled by the fact that the image he gives is a bit too secular, more classical, that it seems to operate outside the Christian dispensation. I'm disturbed by things like that, but I just am not ready to write him off yet — that is, I wonder if there is another level than this one going on.

John Boyle: I don't suppose I get to just say, "I agree"? (Laughter) (**Schlueter:** "Not now." Laughter.) It's part of the genius of the portrait of Raphael Hythlodæus, right? The guy is smart. He's got insight. He can see problems. He's got, potentially, some interesting *solutions*—ahh, I'm not so sure on that, but he sees problems and he sees problems deeply. And I think perhaps the fact that we have a discussion of enclosure in Book 1 is so important because it means you can't simply write off Raphael Hythlodæus. So that, when I put it, perhaps provocatively, "Don't be Raphael Hythlodæus," I know I *didn't* mean, "Therefore, be a mealy-mouthed temporizer." It's interesting that you picked Socrates and John the Baptist. Both of them died for what they took to be right, in defense of something. It's not clear to me that Raphael's prepared to do that. And there is that curious little thing: Raphael does say he's come back to tell about it; but More, when he's worried about the two puzzles in that letter to Giles,—how long is the bridge and where is this island—he basically says, "If you see Raphael, see if you can find out. And I probably should have seen whether he's going to write something about this anyway, but probably not..." Is Raphael all that interested in proclaiming it? It seems to me, when I say, "Don't be Raphael Hythlodæus," I think maybe the point is not, "Don't be inspired. Don't see the problem," but having done that, maybe there's still hard work to do. And it seems to me, you might say that that's the genius of *More's* life, who had this kind of prophetic eye. He could write the book—that beats Raphael. More has the prophetic eye; he can see the systemic problem with enclosure; and yet is going to do the ugly, unpleasant work of public service, king's service, all fairly hard and thankless, and die in the end for it. And I don't think that's being a temporizer either.

Richard Dougherty: I don't *simply* want to second, but I will second those comments. (Laughter.) In the opening letter, More says, "If you run into him, there are a couple of questions that I have: one about this bridge"—yeah, who cares?—"and the other: oh yeah, I forgot to ask—where is this place?" How could you forget to ask the one question you'd think anyone would want to know— i.e., where is this place? Then Giles tells the story in his letter afterwards. He says, "Where is this place? He did actually tell us, but at the time he told us, someone came into the room and there was a commotion, and then someone else was coughing over there and I couldn't really catch it, and I didn't really think to ask him again." Well, again, those are the things you'd think would be first on your plate. And then he says, "I'm going to draw us a map, so we can see how we'll get there." And then Hythloday tells us he's on this mission. Well what's he doing? Has he written a book about it? You'd think he'd want to tell everyone about how great this place is. Well, I do

think it's too sweeping just to say, "Dismiss him. He's a character." But I wonder if your problem isn't really with More's presentation of Hythloday, rather than Hythloday himself. More is the one who's giving us the character, and, in a peculiar way he gives us the character, making him a relatively unattractive person.

And in this, I think you have to go back to Jeff's concern about the dialogue formula. We of course don't *have* a dialogue. We have a *half* a dialogue: Book 1 is a dialogue; Book 2 is a monologue, but it's a monologue of Hythloday, told by somebody else. But I would say it *is* a dialogue. It's a dialogue with the world. It's a dialogue with the Church. It's a dialogue with classical philosophy. It's a dialogue with all the important elements of life, and certainly More does not want us to dismiss all those things as unimportant considerations. It may be that Hythloday is a character whom we might dismiss, but I think you're absolutely right: the issues he raises are absolutely fundamental to civil life.

Steven D. Smith: I had a question rising out of yesterday's lecture and this morning's first panel. Professor Logan said yesterday, and I think he quoted Hexter, who said that one of the really innovative things about *Utopia* in particular is the sort of social analysis of the underlying causes of crime. Rather than saying, "Why do we have thieves? Because some people just feel like stealing," we actually have some analysis of that in terms of underlying social causes—poverty, loss of property, enclosure, and that sort of thing. Well that seems right, and that is presented, I believe, by Hythloday, and it seems to be closely tied, not just in Book 1, but conceptually as well, to his notions of private property being a source of problems. Now this morning, I think Professor Dougherty in particular focused on this point in Aristotle's analysis, suggesting that maybe it becomes clear in Book 2 that Hythloday's views in *that* respect are probably superficial, mistaken. Abolishing private property is not the cure for lots of evils, and I just wonder whether you think that Book 2 would undermine our confidence in the social analysis of Book 1, or lead us to believe that we're *supposed* to regard that analysis with some skepticism?

George Logan: No, I don't at all think that Book 2 would retroactively undermine our confidence in the analysis of Book 1. Of course it couldn't really undermine it retroactively because Book 2 was written before Book 1, but that's a side issue. To continue with that, I guess I think that one reason Book 1 *was* written as it was after Book 2, was to implicitly explain how Book 2 was built. As I said last night, Book 2 is a grand example of the systemic method at its ultimate: "OK, let's redesign a whole damn polity. Let's start from scratch, from basic principles. And let's not just fix one problem by recognizing that all problems are interrelated because the state is a system, but let's start with a blank canvas and redesign the whole state from basic principles." And Book 2 illustrates this method, which surely More learned from reading Plato's *Republic* and *Laws* and Books VII and VIII of Aristotle's *Politics*. And of course, what does Book 1 do in general? One thing it primarily is is an introduction to Book 2, because More evidently decided at some point that he needed one. And that's why he put it *before* Book 2 instead of *after* Book 2, because it was written after Book 2. Simply by virtue of its position, it functions, willy-nilly—but I don't *just* think willy-nilly, I think it's intentional in some ways—as an introduction to Book 2. And one of the things he wanted to do in that introduction, it seems to me, is introduce his readers to this kind of approach to social problems, this systemic approach.

Do I think that he failed in the grand scale systemic thought experiment of Book 2? Au contraire, I think it's a brilliant success. It doesn't satisfy us for a number of

reasons, huh? One, suppose *Utopia* really were More's utopia, in the modern sense of the word—suppose it were his ideal state. It *still* wouldn't satisfy us because *his* ideals are not altogether *our* ideals. But it seems clear to me that it wasn't even *his* ideal state in every way. As I argued last night and I've argued before, for whatever complex of reasons, he decided not to compose it on the full range of his own values and principles, but purely on rational principles. He left out Christianity—he left out Christian revelation—as one of the building blocks, one of the starting points, of *Utopia*; *but*, given what he started to do—i.e. think about what a state would be like that was built simply on rational principles—my God, I think he's succeeded astoundingly brilliantly. And one of the great measures of More's genius, of his astonishing creativity and imaginary power, is that he could come up with all this. There weren't any examples of secular states around for him to observe and model his on. The closest he could come to it were these discussions of rational states—supposedly more or less rational states—in the ancient world, both theoretical discussions and legendary accounts of places like Lycurgus's Sparta and so on. He didn't have any range of secular states where there was religious toleration and so on. He didn't have any range of real examples in the world to look at, but we know he got it right on an astonishing number of things because we *do* have a number of such states to look at, huh? We can look at Scandinavia; we can look at various communist states and experiments of the twentieth century. And one of the things that I think is dazzling about Book 2 is how many of the actual institutions of states like that—and not just individual institutions but how the ensemble would work, how the institutions would fit together—with astonishing prescience and penetration he was able to see what states like that are like.

I don't know. Now I'm like Hythloday, I guess. I think Hythloday's been getting a little bit of a bum rap on the whole here. One of the things I jotted down, one of the words I wanted to mention if I spoke in defense of Hythloday—and this is what makes me think I've been reading *Utopia* too long, as it were—the one thing I love about Hythloday *is* his passion. It's funny. He's such a complex character; he's cold as ice in some ways. When More gets angry during the argument over the indirect approach, Raphael's stone-deaf, and I'm not surprised either. I don't think you should put ideas like this in front of a group like this. And Hythloday's response to that anger is not to get angry—well, he gets angry, I guess, but he doesn't express it with heat; he expresses it with a lowering of the temperature. His response is icy cold: "It may be the business of the philosopher to lie, but it's not my business." Then he goes on with a sort of icy contempt. And yet this is the same guy who, both in the conversation at Morton's dinner table, and then in the peroration, utters what are some of the best lines—out of the three most memorable things said in *Utopia*, Hythloday says two of them. The other one would be More's "Don't abandon the ship of state in a storm because you can't control the winds." The two of Hythloday are that impassioned stuff about the displaced and homeless and impoverished in England, and that whole passage is scintillating, scathing. The passion is remarkable, wonderful, memorable, epitomized above all in that example of putting people in the horrible position of having to steal, and then having to die for stealing. And then, of course, at the end, the peroration is white hot, it's seething, wonderful. And there I would say that the epitome is that sentence that reminds people of the thing in the *City of God*: "Looking at all the commonwealths flourishing anywhere today, so help me God, I see nothing but a conspiracy of the rich to defraud the poor." So, all that by way of a sort of parenthetical, partial defense of Hythloday. And also, I guess, at the same time, to excuse my own passion in talking about these things and to excuse the fact that, in that passionate state, I've lost track probably of what the

other parts of your question were.

Dougherty: About the connection between Book 1 and Book 2 on the treatment of private property. It's not that the one disowns the other or compels one to reject the other; but rather, I think that what happens is something like this: when the question is raised in Book 1, More gives us a calming, settling feeling. "It's OK, private property is alright. You're going to get this radical view out of Hythloday, but it's OK. There's a necessity for it." But of course he's got to make an argument beyond, I think, the one that Aristotle makes, or an addition to the one Aristotle makes. Aristotle's argument, as I reported this morning anyway, is largely that property is necessary for the exercise of certain virtues. I don't think More's Christian conception of property would necessarily be tied to that. Rather, it's a more practical or philosophical analysis of what people actually do with their property: is it more productive to be held privately?

So, we get a sort of assurance in Book 1 that property is OK; but in Book 2, the point is: "Don't rest satisfied with that easy, comfortable feeling you have about private property, because there may well be abuses of any system of private property." And what Hythloday is doing is compelling us to think about them. And we may, of course, return to the same position we were in originally, but I think the point of it is to unsettle settled emotions. That is, we recognize after Book 1 that there is a kind of stability; so now that we have stability, now we can think a little unstably. Now we can think about how it would actually be if we had some other regime in place. So I think the point of Book 2 is, in part, to think about the problems that a system of private property might lead to, because More really leaves us with that, right? At the very end of Book 2, he says, "By the way, I do have some problems, and that property thing is one of them." So then you've got to go back to Book 1 and think about why it is a problem, and he articulates it there. But I think the point is, if you're going to raise questions about the system, this is the way you do it, in a kind of indirect way. And the question is not, then, in the end, whether private property is a problem, but whether the abuse of private property is a problem. And that, I think, is very much St. Augustine's concern.

Wegemer: To try to put a point on this question of what is the cause of crime according to the analysis of *Utopia*, which is very thoughtfully presented in Books 1 and 2, let me pose this question: If Book 2 is the best that reason can do, what are we to make of all the contradictions in Book 2? For instance, in the peroration Raphael says that money is the cause of injustice in society but then he also says pride is the cause. Well, which one is it? Money is not pride, and pride is not money, yet he seems to identify them. And then what are we to do with the apparent contradiction between Book 2, where he says that money is the source of all evil, but then in Book 1, he gives his money to his family so that he can travel? What are we to make of what seem to be contradictions of reason in the best regime of reason?

Logan: Why are you looking at me? (Laughter.) I'll say a couple of very brief things about this. First of all, I've had that very interesting list of contradictions in *Utopia* from you, and it is a very interesting list, and thought-provoking, which is what you meant it to be, and some of them are troubling. I guess I think that, first of all, some of the contradictions are there simply because it is tough to design a whole country and describe it in seventy or eighty pages without leaving some things out, and making some mistakes, and making some internal contradictions. You know, the contradiction I actually have thought most about in *Utopia* is not in Book 1 at all; it's

in Book 2, and it relates to this matter of Hythloday's character. Hythloday gives the account of the dinner table conversation at Cardinal Morton's and More has some other reasons for including this in the dialogue within the dialogue, but Hythloday's one and only reason is that it's supposed to prove by example that there's no point or use joining a royal council, because all the counselors are just sycophants, and there's no useful exchange of ideas that goes on there. And to a certain extent, the Morton episode does show that, because everybody there just wants to get on the good side of the most powerful person there, namely Cardinal Morton. But of course, the big flaw in this illustration as a confirmation of Hythloday's point about royal counselors, is that the only real royal counselor there, namely Cardinal Morton, doesn't respond in the way Hythloday says royal counselors respond at all. He takes the new ideas with exactly the right seriousness. He thinks about how they might be modified, extended, applied in the real world of England.

Did More mean that to happen? Hythloday's example, really, in this deep sense, is a counter-example to what he intends it to prove. Did More mean this to be the case? Are we supposed to notice? Inevitably, once we *do* notice, this is one of the principal things that undermines the initial confidence that we might have in Hythloday. Did More intend this, or was it that he was just distracted, because he's trying to do other things in the episode too? And one of the other things he was trying to do was convince people that Morton was the great, wonderful man that More clearly believed he was. Is it just accidental, as it were, that these two purposes of the episode run into each other? And I guess to me that's the clearest striking example of contradiction in the book of *Utopia* as a whole, but the kind of questions that one raises about it are the same that I would raise about the various contradictions in Book 2. Are they intentional? If they are, then they probably say something about Hythloday, or at least they say something about the construct of *Utopia*. Are they just accidental, really? It's like a miss-take in a movie, when in one scene somebody's got the coffee cup in the one hand, and in the other they've got it in the other hand. Not because the director meant to signal anything, but because, in simulating reality, you're almost bound to make mistakes in your simulation, because you don't actually have reality that you're copying directly from.

And as for pride and money, I don't see that that really is a contradiction. Because I think the fundamental problem, as Hexter especially argued, of course, is pride. Human nature is the problem. Again, we've talked a little bit about the depiction of human nature in the book. It seems to me that it's completely unillusioned. Again, in the section on Utopia and moral philosophy, the Utopians take it for granted that, left to their own devices, people are completely self-interested, selfish creatures, and all of Utopia is designed to channel that self-interest. Utopia's designed to make self-interest identical with the public interest. And so, basically the seven deadly sins, or the Fall, is the problem that More's dealing with in *Utopia*; the foremost of the seven deadly sins is pride. And so many of the Utopian institutions, as Hexter argued, are ways to subdue pride, keep pride under, channel pride in successful ways. And that's where the connection with money surely is. Money is the greatest, as we know from looking around us at any time in our own society. Money provides the single greatest outlet, the single greatest place to manifest pride, so if you do away with money, then in one stroke, as Hythloday says, you do away with a lot of the opportunities for pride.

S. W. Smith: Regarding your first point about the contradiction—i.e., whether it's intentional or not—it seems that it would be. Thinking back to Nate Schlueter's point about Raphael being a man on a mission—well, the motive for telling the tale

of Book 2 is to demonstrate or respond to this charge that “you should serve.” It’s right after that specific argument that *Utopia* is introduced. He’s going to show a state where private property is held in common, etc., etc. This is one of these ideas he has that no one would listen to. But doesn’t More imitate Morton’s action at the end of Book 2 by taking him to dinner, by not rejecting him, by continuing the conversation? It seems to me that the book leaves us having to imagine how to intellectually and imaginatively act as Morton would act. What’s that dinner like? That last conversation between Raphael and More? So it seems to me that there’s a pattern in the book, that Raphael responds to challenges with these stories, and they may really be counter-examples. Morton’s response and More’s response seem similar.

The second point, too, on contradictions: I was struck by a line from *Rasselas*, “the monument to human insufficiency.” I was wondering—there are no monuments in *Utopia*, but could Book 2, or an attempt of one mind to imagine an ideal regime, be something like a “monument to human insufficiency”? I’m thinking of More, who had a great reverence for common law and experience. I haven’t studied law, but I would imagine one of the benefits you gain from studying common law is that you gain all this experience precisely from studying more than one mind. So I wonder if the contradictions—especially reason alone—aren’t part of the design of the book as well.

Jeffrey S. Lehman: We all want to avoid maintaining that the injustices brought up by Hythlodæus in Book 1 are not injustices. We recognize that. On the other hand, no one is willing to endorse *Utopia* Book 2 *carte blanche*, no exceptions, no reservations whatsoever. Where the disagreement lies is in assessing exactly what it is about *Utopia* that is troubling, and to what extent it is troubling. Is it a picture that could be modified, could be tinkered with, and could end up producing a regime that would be acceptable? Or does it have systemic problems that would lead you to be looking in another direction altogether? Either way, it seems that when you read Book 1 and then you read Book 2, you’re forced into a kind of dialectic between unacceptable states of affairs that presently exist in England and their supposed solution in *Utopia*. And so what we all do is try to come to terms with where we should go dialectically from there. I personally *do* make a lot of that one contradiction, as you know from my essay. It seems to me to be a turning point in the dialogue. Before, I see a great deal of incredible insight into existing problems, and I’m right there with Hythlodæus. I find myself saying, “Yes, you’re right! What are we going to do about this?” But then, as I read it, what happens—and this is why I pay such attention to the dialogical details—what happens in the encounter with Morton is a turning point where you do see the contradiction. As a reader, you’re meant to see the contradiction, and then you start to see something unfolding—as I outlined in my essay, this progressive movement away from historical regimes and into the imagination.

Now, do we need political images? I think yes, but I think the very structure of Book 1 leads us to look into them with a very critical eye, and ask if—especially regarding the first one—they might not prove something other than what Hythlodæus thinks they’re supposed to prove. It reaches its full manifestation in Book 2. Maybe this doesn’t prove exactly what Hythlodæus thinks it’s supposed to prove. He’s got legitimate concerns, but how ought we as readers respond? This is part of what I take to be the genius of *Utopia*—that More just draws you in, and he makes you consider these questions. You must ask, “Well, what *do* you do? How do you avoid the extremes? How do you avoid the problems of existing regimes and

their acknowledged injustices? And at the same time how do you avoid what, for all its greatness, is not acceptable to many of us, namely the whole package deal of *Utopia*?

Logan: Just very—I swear—very briefly: I don’t disagree with anything you’ve said at all. And I thought, when you were talking, in fact: what’s going on here, not just now but in these two days, is exactly the kind of response that More wanted to have from the book. Yes, bring them into the dialectic. If you had to force *Utopia*, which is a very hard book to force into a nutshell, and had to say two things about *Utopia*, I would want to say that, one, in Book 1, it impresses upon us how urgent these problems are, how desperate the problems of society are, how disgraceful, how disgusting, how un-Christian, how immoral they are. And then two is this: here is how to think about them; I don’t pretend to have solutions, but here is how you go about thinking about developing solutions, and here is how you go about thinking about the conditions necessary to implement the solutions once you’ve got them. Can you do it only if you’ve got a *Utopia* to come and conquer the country?

Elizabeth McCutcheon: I think it helps if we remember that Raphael’s first name seems to be some sort of echo of the angel Raphael, who is linked with opening eyes and also healing. He was the angel of heavenly medicine, and he’s also, in a sense, the sociable angel. There’s a paradox, because Hythlodæus can be very antisocial, and yet he’s concerned with society. So it’s almost like playing a game of chess sometimes. But his last name means something like “the speaker of witty nonsense,” so these contradictions exist on every level, and one of the fascinating things is that, actually, geographers have sat down and mapped *Utopia*, and it couldn’t exist in the world as we know it—it literally could not—because the mathematical directions given are self-contradictory. At the same time, he locates it somewhere in the southern hemisphere in the New World, so this play with “how long is the bridge?” is kind of weird for similar reasons.

But we didn’t talk about the very end. After all those objections Morus gives, he says, “Well, I didn’t want to tell him exactly how I felt.” This is after he’s objected to these basic things. “So I praised him and his talk,” and he generously takes him in for supper. And then the last statement just opens up everything that we’ve been talking about here, it seems to me: “I hardly agree with everything he said, yet I freely confess that in the Utopian commonwealth there are very many features that in our own societies, I would wish, rather than expect, to see.” And at this point, it’s an explosive statement. To what extent is that Morus? To what extent is that More, reopening the dialogue, and, as you said, we’re kind of invited to play the game, or however you want to put it, do the dialectic, and keep on moving it, because it does open up these desperate questions from Book 1.

John Kaiserstat (lawyer): Just to let you know where I’m coming from, I approach *Utopia* with a lawyer’s mind. I read it for the first time this week, so I definitely have more ignorance than knowledge of this subject. But I can identify with More as a lawyer and read his work as a lawyer and draw some conclusions that unite the work in my mind in terms of understanding Hythlodæus. To be brief: just having read it for the first time, and not having a large background in the classics myself, I’m very impressed with the pedagogical nature of the work. It makes sense to me because I know enough of More’s life to know that he was highly pedagogical. He was a teacher in many respects throughout his life, and there was a statement that you made—that Hythlodæus’s speech was a monologue, but becomes a dialogue with

us, the readers—and then the other statement also, pointing out that Book 2 was written before Book 1. So it started out as a monologue, but it's a dialogue. So that makes sense, to me, of who Hythloday is going to be: he's going to be a vehicle through which More presents the issues, presents solutions—some good, some questionable—and then he presents a lot of contradictions. He does it in Hythloday.

Then, when he comes back to do Book 1, it's an introduction—in my mind—of how to read Book 2. I see the contradictions. I see the debate going on here. I see good things coming out of the same mouth from which come ridiculous sounding statements. OK, this is giving me a taste of what's to come. Then I jump into the monologue, which was written first, which is now a dialogue, which is meant to wake up my intellect in a pedagogical manner. (One side note is that, for a lawyer, contradiction is a big sin, and so, for a lawyer of the stature and mind and background of Thomas More, clearly, all the contradiction that you see in this book is intentional. He's not going to accidentally overlook these things because his entire career and professional life is to not accidentally overlook details of argument). And to bring that to a head, Hythloday has one job, one monologue that's going to incite a dialogue for the reader, which means he's got to get the fire going, get the pot and the ingredients, and then start stirring the pot with these contradictions. So you're going to see things that you identify with, you're going to see things you want to disagree with, you're going to see things that make sense, you're going to see things that don't make great sense. And I just wanted to submit that—from a lawyer's perspective—there are a lot of great things that he's got to say; but then, where he draws us in, More draws us into the dialectic to say, "What does a practical lawyer have to learn from this book?" Well, it's that we, in order to be good lawyers—remember in Book 1, the lawyer comes out and puts his foot in his mouth because he's so direct—that lawyers, who are supposed to be so good and so direct in communicating, need to enter into this intellectual dialogue, and with Hythloday and the entirety of Book 2, he sets up the dialogue for us to get us to learn and make our own conclusions. And, by the way, now I want to read the classics. (Laughter.)

Russell Osgood: Yes, just one little dissent from what you just said, and that is that, if you read the cases of the Court of Common Pleas, the lawyers argue both sides of the cases. They are not bound by any sense of being coherent, and the judges jump positions. Our modern legal system, I think, does press lawyers to be coherent and consistent, but that was not seen to be the job of the advocates in the Court of Common Pleas. That's the court and King's Bench that More's father was in; and More would have probably been witness to arguments there. So I think the book sounds a little bit like an argument in the Court of the Common Pleas on various issues. And there would be no resolution. It's also true that in the Common Pleas, they never said what the judgment was. They would just argue back and forth. You can find an answer when the jury would enter a verdict six months later on the Plea Rolls, but it's not even shown in the court argument.

Gabriel Bartlett: I want to go back to something that was said in this morning's session. Christianity actually doesn't fare very well in *Utopia*. There are a number of examples of that: from the first mention of the priest who is yearning with ardent zeal to convert the Utopians or to finish the job of converting the Utopians by being appointed as bishop there; to the friar who gets extremely indignant during the conversation between the fool, Morton, and Hythloday in Book 1; to the Utopian who is converted to Christianity in Book 2, and who zealously starts condemning all of the other Utopians, telling them that they are going to go to Hell, and who

therefore has to be exiled. It just doesn't seem to me that Christianity actually gets this lovely treatment that one would think it would get given the rest of what we know about Thomas More. So it just doesn't seem to me that that point is being addressed properly. So I'm throwing it out there for everyone, and for the panelists in particular.

S. W. Smith: Well, while it's true that the friar, and the would-be bishop of the Utopians look negative, there is the example—and I hate to focus in on this again, but—of More's behavior at the end of Book 2, which would seem to be some image of charity or friendship. Now whether that has its roots in a biblical or classical tradition or both, I think, is a good question. (**Bartlett:** "It doesn't invoke anything Christian.") Well, it's amazing: I was thinking to myself, a four hundred word sentence, a nine hundred word sentence, one meal with the guy, then Book 2, and another meal with the guy. I think that's a pretty amazing amount of patience and willingness to continue the discussion. He clearly can't think that Raphael is contemptible or not worth discussion. So More's behavior may be a counter to your point about the friar and the priest.

Bartlett: Well, again, isn't that pretty oblique? Hythloday himself, although in a way that one might want to take with a huge grain of salt, claims of the Gospel that it has to be shouted from the rooftops, not subtly, not indirectly mentioned in the most oblique way possible, without explicit mention.

Boyle: A couple points. One: it is interesting, and perhaps it's one of those exquisite complexities in Hythlodaeus, that he's not always in high prophetic mode. Once, he does say, "Trim your sails—it would be good not to be blunt," and that's the case of the Christian in Utopia. "He's not meant to be proclaiming from the housetops; he's not meant to state the truth at whatever cost. In fact, he deserves everything he got." I don't know what that means, but it's interesting.

Christianity explicitly fares very oddly in Utopia, and the question is whether there's even a reason to have a "Christian take" here. Of course, as a theologian, I have to say "Yes," because otherwise I don't have a job. (Laughter.)

As I tried to suggest this morning, Augustine's *City of God* provides a fascinating vantage point for considering *Utopia*. Recall that Augustine raises a number of critiques against Rome and its pagan religion — arguments of internal contradiction and failed promises. What's interesting—and it gets back to George's point—is that a comparison of the arguments of the *City of God* with the portrait of Utopia shows just how carefully constructed, what a work of genius, *Utopia* is. Not a one of Augustine's charges works against Utopia—not a one of them *except* the one I hit on this morning: happiness. More has systematically safeguarded Utopia against every critique Augustine has against the Roman Empire's paganism, except one: happiness. Now, is that coincidence? It could be, but it seems to me, what a remarkable coincidence that he's constructed a pagan island that can withstand every critique of Augustine's critique of the Roman Empire but one. So it's a peculiar bit of absence, but it's a remarkable bit of absence. Let's not forget that More himself had publicly lectured on *The City of God* at the turn of the century and Vives' commentary on *The City of God* will be published by Erasmus in 1522. I agree that the role of Christianity in *Utopia* is a puzzle, but I'm not prepared to say that Christianity is positively a non-issue in More's mind, in writing *Utopia*.

Bartlett: Oh, I'm not saying it's a non-issue. I'm just saying it's not treated well.

Dougherty: I wanted to go back on this earlier discussion about money and pride. That is an argument that Augustine makes in *The City of God* in Books 11-14, when he talks about the Fall. His comment on the Pauline argument about money being the root of all evil is that it is pride. Pride is the catch all—it's the desire for more than what you're doing. Pride is lust. It's a lust of money, it's a lust of food, it's a lust of power, and it's a lust of knowledge; so I think that one reason for mentioning pride is that it does open up a much larger arena of human failure than just money. What I get out of it is that, after having made the argument, that if we just meet the necessary conditions of human beings, we'll get rid of evil. Then, when you talk about pride, I think you can see that that's not sufficient. There's got to be something more.

S. W. Smith: The line that caught my attention is when Raphael says the Utopians are distinguished by their readiness to learn. He comes back to this a few times. And it may be that the *Utopia* itself is an example of the indirect approach that More counsels in Book 1. It may be that it uproots, exposes false images. You can look at it in many ways; and it may be that, when we're left to imagine that conversation after dinner, we're ready to learn, because of what we've seen through the dialogue.

Miller: On the question of how the Christians appear in Utopia: not to worry about the friar. The humanists and More himself in other places satirize stupid friars who don't know Latin. (Laughter.) Later on, for example, in the *De Tristitia* in the Thirties, he cancelled a friar joke, because this was not the time. Luther hadn't arrived in 1516, and afterwards he was around.

Now, the over-enthusiastic Christian in *Utopia*: I don't know. There were lots of over-enthusiastic—not converts but *condemners* among the Catholics. They did one thing or another that the Humanists didn't like. What was the third example? Oh, the bishop—again, the satire against corrupt clergy is nothing unusual in that time....

Boyle: No, actually I'm with you on that: the great thing about being a medievalist is that there's nothing untrue in what he says. It may be funny, but it's all true. He's describing the real world.