Interpretation of *Utopia* as a Whole

with Drs. Nathan Schueter, Michael Foley, Samuel Bostaph, Jason Boffetti, Gabriel Bartlett, and Russell K. Osgood, Esq.

Gerard Wegemer: Throughout this weekend, Thomas More has been guiding our discussion about a central question of life and the central question of politics: What is justice? Of course, that is the subject of *The Republic,* the most famous book ever written on justice. As mentioned earlier in this weekend, there are claims within *Utopia* that *Utopia* surpasses *The Republic*. One way is that Socrates is on his way to dinner and he never gets there—he never eats. But Raphael eats twice. (Laughter) They all eat twice. Now, as Nathan has reminded us in his paper, Socrates is greedy for images, yet Socrates proposes to banish the most famous poet of his time from his imaginary city, because of Homer's *bad* images—bad images of the gods, bad images of heroes like Achilles, who can act like a spoiled child and can turn traitor to his people. Yet, Socrates also acknowledges that Homer is the one who influenced him most in his own education, and he indicates that Homer is the educator of the Greek-speaking people.

In this last session, helped by the fine papers prepared by this seminar panel, we have the opportunity to draw back from Friday's and Saturday's discussions and from individual seminar papers—since we have read them, thought about them, profited from them.

To open up this discussion, I would like to ask the seminar panel, what are the memorable images that More is giving us in this book? How are they meant to shape or reshape our reasoning about such topics as law, justice, economics, and religion in a way that Socrates' city of speech, myth of the cave, and ship of state have done for us for several thousand years? Any thoughts?

Nathan Schlueter: I was reminded of the noble lie in *The Republic*, and I was struck by the fact that there is no noble lie, at least on the surface, in the *Utopia* itself, and a noble lie is an image. Socrates doesn't simply excise images from his city. Instead he supplants one set of images with another set of images; so that began my inquiry.

Gabriel Bartlett: Why do you think there's no noble lie in *Utopia*—or at least, as you put it, on the surface of *Utopia*—whereas there is one very much so on the surface of the *Republic*?

Schlueter: Let's think about what necessitates the noble lie in the *Republic*. You have an erotic soul in Glaucon, who is tempted by tyranny, and tyranny is a main theme of the *Republic*. So the whole of the *Republic*, in a way, is to form Glaucon's soul, to channel his *eros* towards its proper object of transcendence. And that's what necessitates the noble lie as I see it, to some degree.

And what is a noble lie? Of course it's a big question, but the fact is that Hythloday says, "If you think philosophers should be lying, that's your business, but that's not for me." And so, part of the reason why Hythloday is giving us *Utopia* is to show us a regime that does not require *any* lying. There is also the property issue, which seems to be part of Hythloday's claim there can be a transparent political regime. Professor Boyle, however, suggested in his own paper that such claims may not in fact be true, that there may be some noble lies going on in *Utopia* itself. I would argue with that conclusion, but I won't take up the panel's time.

Jason Boffetti: That's a pretty provocative question, because there aren't images that leap to mind of what I would show to students, saying "here are things to look at as metaphors for other things." It's almost as though he's created such a vivid, such a detailed description of the place, that it starts taking on the quality of an actual place that holds together as a real city. Whereas, you don't have as many details in the narratives of Plato, so you don't see it as a real place. Here it is so vivid that I think it may detract from its being a metaphor. It becomes reality.

Schlueter: There's another big difference—and you remind me of it—is that, in the *Republic*, you have a founding, and the founding is hidden in *Utopia*. How did this thing happen? We don't get to see what King Utopos did; we're just told that he did, so the noble lie is a sort of foundational and forming myth for the people. We don't see it coming into being. All we see is its existence and its description. Why does More hide, then, the founding? It seems to me that foundings are essential to making sense of it.

Wegemer: Professor Foley, do we get an image of virtue and vice through the Utopian games you wrote about?

Michael Foley: You raised your question originally about the power of images. What strikes me about many of the images of *Utopia* is that they're not only vivid, but, perhaps in some respects they're left tantalizingly incomplete. They're powerful images because they're evocative. They invite the reader to fill in the gaps. That's definitely the case with that small paragraph that I had my students focus on, which was the fleeting reference to board-games, the chess-like board-games Utopians play. Hythloday gives a couple of vague parameters about how this is done, but he doesn't tell us which vices are opposed to which virtues. He doesn't tell us which vices *sneak* up, have the propensity for sneaking up, or which ones go up for the direct assault. All of this is left to the reader's imagination or powers of deduction. An interesting exercise, both for oneself and for one's students, is to say, "Well, how would you fill in the gaps?" That's definitely true for the board-games, and I would argue that it would probably also be true for other areas of *Utopia* as well, so you're right that More is extraordinary in his use of images, because on the one hand there is a sense of its completeness—the verisimilitude of Utopia: the fact that a geography is described and clothes are described, but on the other hand there is an incompleteness that is also attractive.

Wegemer: President Osgood, as an experienced lawyer, how do you imagine law in a place where there is no law? What's your reaction to this?

Russell Osgood: Well, I was going to say that one of the problems I have is that I'm maybe too concrete to react to images, so I wanted to respond to the first question you asked because I think it's the most interesting question about the book, and about Sir Thomas' whole life. The question for me is what did he think was justice in the largest sense? If you read *Utopia* and think that the messages that he's giving about the Utopian order reflect his views, you would say that justice is an anti-recondite rules regime (that's a lawyer's way of saying it) and maybe an anti-rules regime. You decide things with a very broad conception of what justice is. This is also consistent with the ideology of the Chancery in England. The Common Law Courts, they apply these horrible, crabbed, narrow rules, and that isn't justice. Justice is when the chancellor comes in and says, "No-no-no-no-no, we are looking at justice in a broad sense." So, I think that what he says in *Utopia* matches up pretty well with what I would call the ideology of Chancery, which, interestingly, fits in very well with the ideology of Thomas Wolsey, who was the most dynamic, expansive, reforming lord chancellor of England. So that's step one, but people live whole lives, as we know, and Sir Thomas' life didn't end with *Utopia*. He then becomes lord chancellor, and though I don't say it in my paper because I don't have enough evidence to support it, my view is that, when he became chancellor, he oscillated to what I would call a second, more-refined position, which is: Justice is following just rules. It's hard to argue with that as a proposition. In other words, although some common-law rules may work, what is conceived to be injustice in one or two particular cases, overall, justice is better served by following rules. So, for instance, he did refuse to reform—that is to rewrite—certain deeds. People would come in and say, "Well, I didn't really mean what I said when I wrote the deed," and when he was lord chancellor, he would say, "Sorry, but if we can rewrite every deed, we'll have to change all the real estate in England because everyone in retrospect will come in and say, 'No, I didn't really mean that when I signed the deed.'" So I would say that his second position, which flows from his work as lord chancellor is that justice follows justice rules. I think that his end-of-life position, if one can even analyze it, is even narrower, that he came to believe that justice is in following rules, even if sometimes they're unjust rules. And I say that because Henry started sweeping away everything. You can just imagine the next statute being "Jesus Christ isn't the savior of the world," and so, I think that at *some point* he realized that in the sweeping away of things that Henry was doing, there was great solace in following some kind of settled order in which there are processes and rules that are set. And there's that great example—that great piece in *A Man for All Seasons*—where Roper says, "Oh my God, if I'm going to get the devil, I'll cut through any rule in England," and Sir Thomas says: "No. You cut down all the laws in England and the wind will sweep you away" – which is of course what happened to him, and to the things he believed in. So, I think he evolved a more sophisticated view of justice in his life, and this book was an early effort, consistent with the overall position of the Chancery, to articulate it, a view that he came later to be not totally in sympathy with. I think he would not have rejected what he said here, but he would have trenched it around more carefully later in life.

Samuel Bostaph: What strikes me about Book 2 of the *Utopia* is that there are so *many* rules—it's a planned society. Book 1 I can almost take on its face because it's critical of his existing society, and Book 2, then, is drastically different, where he's describing this existing, and—many people think—ideal society. And yet, as Travis Curtright noted, maybe he's praising the unworthy, because he can knock down his own society for its insufficiencies, and then as an alternative—an extreme

alternative, which he was well aware of—the communist or social society—he knocks that down too. And so Book 2 of *Utopia* might itself be a noble lie, and that's what caused me to be attracted to the view that it might be in irony.

I'm the tyro in this group; I'm not a More scholar—invited just because there don't seem to have been that many economists who have written on More, and as I found out when I tried to do some research, there *aren't* any economists who've written anything about More. That is, the best you can find is a one or two paragraph outline that treats it as if it were More's ideal society, without any particular critical remarks. And there are no references to the literature, the extensive literature on More, or on *Utopia*, by economists, which means that economists generally speaking are totally ignorant of the meaning of *Utopia*, of the place of *Utopia* in literature, of the place of Thomas More. And it's been quite stimulating to discover that there's something very important here.

Schlueter: In Book 2 Hythloday is saying, "This is an image I'm giving you—this is a true image." So, going back to the opening question about the controlling images of *Utopia* as a whole, Book 2 *is* a powerful image. But why do you think, if that's true that it is a noble lie, or whatever we want to call it? What do you think was More's intention behind giving us this image? And economic questions are central to that image as well—they seem to be a central part of that critique.

Bostaph: Well, that's the whole problem, is it not? What is a just society? More clearly viewed his own society as unjust in many respects, and if Book 2 of *Utopia* is another depiction of an unjust society, a drab existence of rules, even though, as I pointed out at the end of my essay, he's well aware of how money economies—market economies—work, perhaps his view was that there is a society that's better than the one in which he exists, but certainly not the one which Plato envisioned, if you take Plato as envisioning a society rather than the idea of "this is how you remake yourself." And if you can clear the brush away, so to speak, there might be an opportunity for you to build. Certainly it seems as though, in his life, his desire was to make more just the society in which he lived, and following the rules certainly goes along with that—also with the hope of reshaping and changing the rules. As you point out in your paper, Russell, his attempt to widen the jurisdiction of the court of Chancery, so that it would remedy some of the bad decisions of the other courts with respect to property in particular, would seem to show a desire to reshape the way in which the rules were carried out.

Wegemer: Travis, is Morton the image of a just man, or of *the* just man. You bring in complications because you show two different images of Morton, when you compare *Richard III* and *Utopia*. So, what is your general impression of that?

Travis Curtright: Well, I looked at Morton in *Richard III* and tried to think about why Morton would ostensibly bear such resemblance to Richard's own machinations, because at the end of the history—I was questioning Professor Logan about it Friday night—More writes something to the effect that Morton tempted Buckingham to his own destruction, and I think it's Alastair Fox who says that Morton is open to the providential changes that he sees. He's an Augustinian political philosopher who notes that certain ages are given over to certain tyrannies, but other ages can be ruled by people who provide peace or good leadership. And so he recognizes Morton as someone who cagily recognizes a time for change that will ostensibly then be wrought by Providence, but then the problem is that, in More's

depiction, Morton really is the agent of change. His means are dissimulation, and how do you balance that with the image of Morton in Book 1 of *Utopia*, where he is so highly praised? (**Wegemer:** "This is another ambiguous image?!") We have an equivocation here, because some of us wrote on images—if you like justice within a polis or in *Utopia*—and others of us looked at lying, and not speaking with complete authenticity and candor. So there's the issue of a political fiction wherein we find certain truths about how we ought to live together in society, and then there's the issue of Raphael saying that the indirect approach constitutes lying. As opposed to, say, some of Erasmus's ideals about the philosophy of Christ and how it ought to be implemented in society.

Then we have Cardinal Morton in the *History of Richard III*, who applies indirect methods, thereby raising the question, "Do indirect methods entail some form of dissembling?" And I think the answer can partially be looked at in light of rhetoric: the note about praising the unworthy comes from Thomas Wilson's 1650 *Art of Rhetoric*, and he records there about Thomas More as a great dissembler, and one of the reasons is that he was known for praising the unworthy, and at the end of the *Utopia* Book 2, More says that he finds many of the customs of *Utopia* absurd, but then he says to Raphael "with praise for the Utopians"—he sort of pats him on the back and has him come in—because I don't think the man could handle contradiction. You see, we would like to have complete authenticity in speech, or complete candor from our politicians, but it seems to me that More had a more fluid sense of what he had to say, and to whom he had to say it. That business of the indirect approach involves adaptability to one's audience, it involves the business of litotes. The affirmation of something by denying its contrary doesn't exactly specify what it is you think about a thing: "How did your Thomas More conference go?" "It didn't go badly." (Laughter.) "Well, how did you specifically do?" My wife will ask some questions for me here, and there are lots of ways you can dissemble a reply, and More seems to have a good grasp of these ways, of giving an answer, but not really giving an answer. That's an indirect method that, I think, has a certain moral component to it—that is to say, we wouldn't want to have complete candor—it doesn't depend upon your definition of the word "is". (Laughter.) Or who knew about a leak? We wouldn't want to have complete transparency. There's a book by Richard Lanham that was called *The Motives of Literary Excellence*, where he distinguishes what he calls "rhetorical man," or a dramatic, sophistic, social self that emphasizes adaptability and capacity to play with words, against what he calls the "serious man." That may be the difference, really, between Hythloday's and More's approaches. Raphael is Lanham's "serious man". He has a serious self, one interested in ideals, a philosopher. And More's character involves this approach of rhetoric, of adaptability, of turning things toward particular ends given the circumstances that you have. And you use speech creatively in order to do so. And how that political philosophy or use of rhetoric corresponds with standing up for one's convictions at the end of one's life, saying what you really think about the king's marriage in Bolt's depiction, or calling for an arrest of judgment to talk about what it is you really believe with regard to the Act of Supremacy—how those things fit together, it seems to me, is an interesting conundrum.

Osgood: Just a couple of thoughts: I think there's a horrible tendency—we do it to our politicians and we do it to our deceased politicians such as Sir Thomas More—it's the horrible tendency to say, "Oh my gosh, someone dissembled" because he didn't reply flatly or directly. People's apprehension of their situation is dynamic, and it changes constantly, so if my wife said to me—which she will after this panel—

"How did it happen? Did you survive?"—I usually say, "It went OK," and I'm not lying or dissembling, because I'm still processing what went on, so I think you have to be really careful about what he said, and when he said it, not to read too much into it as dissembling.

That's one side of me. The other side says, "This was one of the ablest lawyers in Britain. His father was a common-law judge. His wife's father was a judge. He sat there in courtrooms. It's near the end of his life; he sees a horrible thing coming maybe. We always look at it in terms of what actually happened, and never in terms of what might have happened. He was dodging and filling as a lawyer representing himself for a large part of the period right up until he said, "Wait a minute: now I'm going to tell you what I really think." But you shouldn't assume that he always had that same opinion that he spoke of at the end. People's understanding of what's happening to them changes, and life is a kaleidoscope. You don't suddenly see things black and white, and then hold those views forever.

Schlueter: Just a response to Travis' observations. I am struck by the fact that More wrote Book 2 first, and maybe even intended to publish Book 2 by itself before designing Book 1. And Book 2 does not seem to deal so obviously with these questions of suppleness of language, of fitting speech to the occasion. So it seems that he might have had two purposes: he wrote the *Utopia* as an exercise of the imagination, of thinking about justice, and then rethought and wonderfully situated within it a dialogue about the application of truth to politics. I'm reminded again that I somehow see in this book both a prophetic idealism and a practical rhetorical politics of Aristotle. I'm as disinclined as I was on Day 1 to favor one over the other, but rather to see them both as having tremendous, and maybe unresolvable, merit. I think More the author does want to deliver this image of this Utopia to us on its own. Why would he spend the bulk of these pages just giving us one big image? If he just wanted to show us what a pompous ass Hythloday was in forcing his tyrannical ideas on everyone, he wouldn't waste our time with this big image. So I just throw it out as a thought again: Jeff suggested that this book itself is a kind of dialectical reasoning, and this is what I just don't know how to resolve: Is this Aristotle vs. Plato going on in this book? It's not quite Plato and it's not quite Aristotle, but it's Platonism and Aristotelianism going at it in strange forms, and why does More want to give us both of those?

Bostaph: With respect to *Utopia,* perhaps there isn't that much difference between Plato and Aristotle, because there are two important points in *Utopia* where Plato and Aristotle disagree. One of them is at the end of Book 1, where there's the argument about communal property. The other one is on the family, because, as Hythloday is arguing, the whole island is like a single family, and if you look in *Politics*—I just noticed this last night, by the way—*Politics* 1261, Aristotle criticizes Plato's argument that if citizens have all things in common, including wives, the state will have greater unity. He asserts that the nature of the state is to be a plurality, and if it attained great unity, it would no longer be a state, but it would be a family, or an individual, and the state would have been destroyed. I think that's an important contrast there, as well as the property issue, that shows—and More must have been aware of that when he wrote *Utopia*.

Wegemer: At this point, let's open turn to the audience.

Stephen W. Smith: In his lecture, Dr. Logan indicated More's preoccupation with

tyranny. If we have a portrait of the tyrant in Richard, what would rule out a kind of tyrannical portrait, or an exploration of tyranny in the *Utopia*? Is there an exploration of tyranny in the *Utopia*? (**Bartlett:** "Is Utopus a tyrant?") Well, yes. The absence of a founding points to the whole drama of the book: how do you get from image to reality?

Louis Karlin (lawyer): In the classical tradition, there are many examples of the philosopher who is educating people away from tyranny, and I think that the *Utopia* is designed, at least in part, to be an education for the reader against becoming a tyrannous person. In twentieth century political theory, we talk a lot about tyranny, but it's always political, and I think, to More, tyranny was a defect of virtue in the person, and I think that the person who can read *Utopia* intelligently, who can be willing to give up private property for a while, for a number of pages, not with smug satisfaction, but really give it up for a while, and then say, "Now that I take it back, am I going to use it in the same way?" That would be a central metaphor. But I do think that *Utopia* is meant for an intelligent reader to read and to come away a better person.

Wegemer: What makes us a better person? Having an open mind?

Karlin: I think that's a large part of it. That you have to be able to be taken up by Hythloday and given over to him for a while, and you come out changed. You see it all the time in Shakespeare: You have to go to this other world—in *The Tempest* especially—but you come out different. You're willing to give of yourself, and somehow this transformation occurs. It's clear from everyone here that the transformation requires a lot of thought, and for a lot of us laymen, who are really grateful that we have people who have actually read Cicero and can remember anything about Aristotle's *Politics*, it helps us to get ready to go back in time to read the *Utopia* intelligently.

Schlueter: I agree. As I think about it, there are two real threats to political life: there are the fanatics who take justice way too seriously, and they are closely connected to the tyrannical souls; then you have the expedient types who are willing to compromise on everything in order to maintain stability. One of the great images I get out of *Utopia*—it's not an image, but a controlling impression—it's that the healing More is giving is "take politics seriously, but not *too* seriously." That is, that's why he gives us Utopia, that actually is a critique of political life, but it's also kind of absurd so that you don't get too caught up in the expedient things; you're still informed by justice but you don't become a fanatic or a Machiavel; you have both of them there. That's what I take away from the book.

Curtright: In terms of final impressions of the conference, partially occasioned by the talk on *A Man for All Seasons*: the conference was unique because we had so many different looks at how to take Thomas More—a saint, or a lawyer in light of his public career where he enacted several important reforms, as a political theorist, or as a humanist. More could be all of those, a man for all seasons. My hunch is that he is not necessarily a political theorist; that he doesn't give us a political teaching, if you like, or that we can point to something and say that this is Thomas More's teaching on liberty. If you want to do a presentation of political theorists, you could say, "What is Thomas Aquinas's teaching on political liberty?" Well it's "freedom to follow the precepts of the natural law." What's liberty for Aristotle? Well, it's something like "freedom to pursue the flourishing way of life, either by way of contemplation or activity." It seems to me that More is not laying out a prescriptive political theory. He is a saint, obviously, and his public career has been fruitful, but I've been most interested in this humanist line of thought. People are interested in Thomas More as a comic—"merry More"—and this sort of seriousness of play, *that* could be the point of *Utopia*, which is to say that there isn't a concrete point we can derive from it, a theory about the good life, the pious way of life, or the best kind of regime, etc. But that it's this Tudor play of mind, as the book is entitled, this playing of possibilities, making arguments on both sides of an issue to see things.

But I'll also add this, and I'll put it provocatively: Thomas More is a liberal in a certain sense. Part of humanism enables you to sympathize with those with whom you ought to sympathize. I'm thinking of the passage from *The History of Richard III* on Jane Shore, and the way he does these character sketches. He does a character sketch of Cardinal Morton at the beginning; he does a character sketch of Hythloday at the beginning—a sunburned guy with a long beard; and he does a great character sketch of Jane Shore, a discarded woman, but there's a little peroration at the end of her description: "whenever somebody does us a good turn, we write it in dust, and whenever they do us a poor turn, we write it in marble, and this is not the worst proved by her, who at this day begs from those who in previous days benefited from her petitions in their behalf." And he has these little minuets, these little passages in which he shows compassion, in this case for a bona fide harlot. Nevertheless, he's very sympathetic toward her, and this is going on when Richard III is enacting his machinations to appear as if he's been attacked or unfairly treated, and moving on toward becoming king.

So what is More trying to do? If *Utopia* is trying to get us to see, if you like, the fundamental questions through this dialectic of play, *Richard III*, the other work we've been talking about—what's the line from *Lear*? "To see feelingly?"—*The History* teaches us to see feelingly.

Foley: Perhaps that makes him a compassionate conservative? (Laughter.)

Elizabeth McCutcheon: I wanted to pick up on something that a lot of you have been talking about, and it doesn't solve the problem, but there are two images toward the end of Book 1 that collide, and More simply puts them next to each other in typical fashion, and they touch on this issue of the play of mind. One is that, if you're in rough weather, you don't abandon the ship—you try to steer; you keep on going. And then Raphael Hythlodaeus's answer is that, if he followed that kind of advice, he would be doing nothing else, and "sharing the madness of others as I tried to cure their lunacy." And I read, for example, how, in Russia, people who were opponents of the political regime were treated with psychiatric drugs as if they were lunatics who simply couldn't see what the state wanted them to see. This issue of how you see when you're blinded seems to me to come back to one of the things that Raphael, or More through Raphael, is trying to open our eyes to, but we never can forget that, when we're in that ship, we can speculate, but we're also in the real world, and we're always going between these two metaphors which I can't resolve except in my head, and that we need to go in both directions somehow. So you have Morus' metaphor, and then you have Raphael's metaphor, and I think they're both crucial in this work.

Osgood: My own view of the book, in the aggregate, is that it's an effort to provoke us to think about social organization and I think that was his overall theme,

or that's what he ended up with. And I think that two things you have to be careful about in the book—and I've said them both—are (a) the tendency to playfulness, and what I would call rhetorical zeal, and so you can't quite go down every single pathway, obviously, and believe every single word, because that's one facet of his writing. And the other facet (b) flows from his lawyerly existence, which is this tendency to appose arguments seemingly inconclusively, which also makes it puzzling, but, I think, still fits in well with the overall theme, which is to get all of us, or any other reader, to think hard about issues of social organization without making any kind of treatise of answers.

Bostaph: The economist Carl Menger, in the late nineteenth century, made the statement that "all men are communists wherever possible," meaning that we don't want scarcity; we want to have everything completely abundant, and not to have to worry about such things. When you think about it, however, I'm not sure that's true: that would eliminate the basis for most people's lives, because they do concentrate on the struggle over possessions, and struggle over the domination of others by the amassment of material things, and so I think we're provoked to think about social order and more serious things by reading a book like *Utopia*.

Boffetti: It's interesting to me that we actually haven't been talking about those things this whole time; we actually didn't do what I think he wanted us to do—we didn't actually look at the individual cases and say, "Well, could this be applied?" We've talked *about* talking about that, but we never actually did it, which is either a failure on our part or a failure on More's part, not to provoke us enough to take seriously the things that he was advocating, perhaps playfully. So maybe, if we have another conference, it would have to be "we're not going to talk anymore about what his purposes are, but only about what he suggested, and whether it would work?" In your paper, you actually did that, while the rest of us were so caught up in what his purposes are, so that we never talked about his social theory.

John Boyle: That draws the difference between economists and humanists. (Laughter.)

John Dimitri: I'm going to follow in that line, and this is primarily for Dr. Bostaph: the imagery that he uses with regard to wealth, the gold which is melted down into chains for prisoners or various trifles that the children play with; and that all the adults are focused on the actual goods themselves, having surplus—what do you make of that? He seems to have some powerful images about greed, and the slavery metaphor. How do you reconcile that with the things he says in Book 1, with regards to "well this will never work," when he hears the description about holding property in common and everything else?

Bostaph: In the tradition of Catholic thought, the criticism of what's now called consumerism seems to me appropriate here: that is, people concentrate on the trivial, the satisfaction of their physical desires; they don't put the effort into considering the perfection of their own virtue, the attempt to realize their nature as a transcendent being—and perhaps he's trying to help us put this in perspective. Most people consider, especially in his time, that amassing gold and jewels and so forth is a worthy, important thing to do—it insulated one from the life that, by far, the great majority—90-some-odd percent—of the population were actually living. But that's not the purpose of life, to amass gold and jewelry, so let the children play with things that are appropriate for children—toys—and let the adults concentrate on necessaries. You must have a minimum of subsistence, but then, beyond that, he gives a big role to the cultivation of the mind. And who rules in society but those who are chosen from among the intellectuals to rule the society, those who are dedicated to the cultivation of the mind.

Judge Jennie Latta: The best line in *Mary Poppins* is "Enough is as good as a feast." And that's the message of *Utopia*, isn't it: enough is as good as a feast. Once you've got all that you need, everything else is extra.

Osgood: On the gold chains: the thing I like about it is that this is a concrete example that is just so much more effective than if Plato says "wealth is a horrible thing"—to say that the chains of the prisoners are made of gold is just much more effective rhetorically. The other things it that, when I read it, I remember thinking most recently that it's a play on Christ's words when he says that "the last shall be first and the first shall be last," so you've got the most valuable thing chaining together the prisoners, and being used by children as toys, so he has made the first the last.

Fr. Joseph Koterski: One of the things I come away with from these discussions of both books has been the theme of friendship, and the way that theme of friendship lived out, not so much as an abstraction but lived out in the dialogue and lived out in our dialogue, does enable us precisely to do what Russ Osgood was talking about, urging that we not crib, cabin, and confine some of the public officials as if right away they were dissembling. You have to realize that there are moments, and different points in the process, and I just find that to be so much the case in terms of what friends can do for one another. We don't expect in the conversation of friends that we're always stating ourselves in the most perfectly precise public fashion, but that we're working this out, and yet we're working this out mindful of certain common goods. It is precisely by virtue of the fact that we have a trust for one another that we ascertain the various parts of the project and the various stages along which progress is made. And that struck me again as one of the beauties of this conference, because most of the conferences I go to are purely academic conferences, where it's all at the same level, where here we have the academics, and the lawyers, and people who just have a great devotion to Thomas More for other reasons. There are perspectives that opened up even as we sought one another's friendship and trusted one another in this friendship that maybe is not unlike Peter Giles and Thomas More and Raphael. And the question that I would pose from that is, Where does one go from here? My question to the text would be, What happens to Raphael after this? Is he affected by More? We don't know that, but I would love to imagine—maybe somebody would be inspired to compose a Book 3.

Smith: Yes, I'd like to agree with these comments. To offer a variation on Genesis, it's not good that a thinker be alone. And I think that that really comes out strongly by the end of Book 2 of *Utopia*. Also I'm reminded of these poems that More composed about a blind man and a beggar forming an alliance of firm friendship, precisely based on insight into the limitations of the mind thinking alone. It's something that I think Dr. Logan pointed out, that the *Utopia* was More entering the conversation with the humanists, a sort of publication party. He places himself, and if the work is something like an image of his thought, which may be a way of redeeming Raphael from the general flogging, it's put precisely into contact with

Erasmus and Peter Giles, and all these humanists. And there's hope there, in that friendship.

The other thing is a very small point on gold. Something that really struck me this time through, of course, is that *Utopia* is the golden handbook, and so if children play with toys, I guess we play with utopias. (Laughter.) That's an interesting title, "a truly golden handbook," given what's said in Book 2.

Richard Dougherty: I want to say something about this seriousness and playfulness, and whether people take this too seriously or not seriously enough. And Travis's comment about how More is a liberal: I'm not *exactly* sure how you mean that, Travis, but we can talk about it *later*. (Laughter.) I think it's connected to that question in the comments earlier about the effect of the book: the book is meant to be part of an education, of a liberal arts education. And what that means is that the playfulness of it is meant for us to suspend for the moment our prejudices, which we're bringing all the time to things, and to get us to start thinking about something in a cleaner, clearer fashion. And so, one way of doing that is precisely to talk about something that on the one hand may seem so absurd that it's impossible, and we can imagine other possibilities than the one that we're living right now. And so there's a utility to that playfulness which I think is clearly there, but the end of playfulness can't be playfulness, can it? One of my favorite quotes from Chesterton is that "some people open their minds the way a plant opens its leaves, to soak in the atmosphere. I open my mind like I open my mouth: to close it again on something solid." (Laughter.) There's got to be something that comes out in the end, and I think that playfulness plays the role of bringing about a serious conclusion. I think, for instance, in reading Book 1, the effect is that each of us looks at ourselves: which one of these characters am I? But we may be able to think about that by looking at someone else's life and depiction of life, rather than by looking at ourselves. And the conclusion in the end for the political arena is: "Don't expect improvement in the political order if you don't get improvement in your personal life." You can't expect to establish a perfect polity based on imperfect human characters. And so this is meant to be, in part, an introspection and an improvement of persons' lives, which are then played out on a larger scene.

Clarence Miller: In a way we can't end better than by bringing in Erasmus. A good parallel of this book is *Praise of Folly,* because it has the same paradoxical character of being double-sided.