

UTOPIA DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (BOOK I)

DIRECTIONS: In groups of 3-4, discuss each of the following questions and quotes from *Utopia*.

1. "We did not ask [Raphael Hythloday] if he had seen any monsters, for monsters have ceased to be news. There is never any shortage of horrible creatures who prey on human beings, snatch away their food, or devour whole populations; but examples of wise social planning are not so easy to find."

What is More saying here? Have things changed any since the 16th century?

2. "...Most kings are more interested in the science of war...than in useful peacetime techniques. They're far more anxious, by hook or by crook, to acquire new kingdoms than to govern their existing ones properly."

What would Machiavelli say about this? How would Machiavelli feel about a philosopher-king?

3. "...You create thieves, and then you punish them for stealing!"

Relate this to American society today. Is Hythloday correct? Does our society perpetuate criminal activity? If so, how?

4. "...In Tallstoria a convicted thief has to return what he's stolen to its owner, not, as in most other countries, to the King.....If the stolen goods are no longer in his possession, their value is deducted from his own property, the rest of which is handed over intact to his wife and children. He himself is sentenced to hard labour."

Is this a viable alternative to the death penalty?

5. "There's a delightful image in Plato, which explains why a sensible person is right to steer clear of politics. He sees everyone else rushing into the street and getting soaked in the pouring rain. He can't persuade them to go indoors and keep dry. He knows if he went out too, he'd merely get equally wet. So he just stays indoors himself, and, as he can't do anything about other people's stupidity, comforts himself with the thought: 'Well, I'm all right, anyway.'"

Is Hythloday correct in this analogy? Or is More right when he says, "If you can't completely eradicate wrong ideas, or deal with inveterate vices as effectively as you could wish, that's no reason for turning your back on public life altogether. You wouldn't abandon ship in a storm just because you couldn't control the winds?"