DEAR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS—

This autumn 2003 issue of Criterion opens with William R. LaFleur’s Alumnus of the Year address, in which he reflects on the topic “Buddhism, Ethics, and the Heuristics of Fear.” Professor LaFleur received the Divinity School’s Alumnus of the Year Award for 2002 on May 1, 2003, in Swift Lecture Hall. On that occasion, President of the Baptist Theological Union Susan B. W. Johnson praised him for his seminal scholarship on Buddhism and culture in medieval Japan, and on the relationship between religious and social issues in modern and contemporary Japan. She also lauded his outstanding service as a teacher and mentor to aspiring young scholars in the field.

Following Professor LaFleur’s address is an essay by William Schweiker entitled “Religious Conviction and the Intellectual’s Responsibility.” Based on a number of lectures and articles Professor Schweiker has written previously on the subject, and which will appear in a final and extended version in his forthcoming book, Theological Ethics and Global Dynamics (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), the essay explores the challenge confronting today’s intellectuals, especially scholars of religion: to make the ambiguity of traditions into a resource for life rather than a force of destruction.

A Wednesday lunch talk by M. Cathleen Kaveny, who spent 2002–2003 as a Senior Research Fellow in the Martin Marty Center, follows. It was delivered in Swift Common Room on April 9, 2003, and is entitled “Complicity with Evil.” This is the subject of Professor Kaveny’s forthcoming book, which will draw on sources from a number of disciplines, including theology, law, philosophy, and literature, to explore when, how, and to what degree agents are morally responsible for contributing to or benefiting from the wrongdoing of others.

Concluding this issue are two sets of tributes, which were delivered last spring at the retirement celebrations of Anne Carr and Bernard McGinn. The first, by Martin E. Marty and David Tracy, honors Carr, a theologian who joined the Divinity School’s faculty in 1975. The second, by Michael Fishbane, Kevin Madigan, and David Tracy, honors Bernard McGinn, the Naomi Shenstone Donnelley Professor of Historical Theology and the History of Christianity, who joined the faculty in 1969. Both colleagues will be dearly missed. We are grateful to them for their exemplary service, and we wish them well in their future endeavors.

I hope you enjoy this issue,

JENNIFER QUIJANO SAX, Editor
CRITERION

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try to indicate how Chicago fit into my own intellectual trajectory and why I so value what I learned here in Swift Hall.

CHICAGO: ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES

Oscar Wilde asked rhetorically if it were really necessary to see Chicago in order to be educated. Although it might not be strictly necessary, many of us are decidedly pleased not only to have seen Chicago but also to have gained a key part of our education at this city’s premier university. There used to be a saying that you can’t get anywhere in this country without going through Chicago. I am truly grateful to have gone through Chicago, and know that Chicago still goes through me.

To take up my autobiography at an early point, I note that my ancestors were French-speaking Protestants who quite likely fled from either France or what in the late seventeenth century was the Spanish Netherlands. My forefathers settled in the Frisian portion of the Dutch Republic. My first clearly discernible relative, Jans Daniel LaFleur, shows up in a local record as having been born around 1715. I mention this not as gratuitous information but because it helps explain why someone with a French surname, such as mine, grew up in Paterson, New Jersey, among immigrants whose first language was Dutch or, more precisely, Frisian. My great-grandfather, who spoke scarcely anything I, as a child, could recognize as English, had moved there in 1892. But this, too, helps explain why my undergraduate years were spent at Calvin College, then overwhelmingly a school for persons with ethnic ties to the Netherlands. Calvin College, at least when I was there in the 1950s, was torn between those who wanted it to become more “American” by becoming evangelical, and others who worried that this evangelicalism was really fundamentalism in new garb. The latter wished to pursue the far more liberalizing course being pursued by their Reformed counterparts in the Netherlands of the post-World War II period.

During my years in Grand Rapids, I recognized early on that my own proclivities were definitely not evangelical; I leaned toward what was liberal and progressive, both in religion and politics. And, since fear is a theme to which I shall return later, I should note here that evangelical talk about fearing God left me unconvinced. I could not imagine that God would preoccupy Himself (and God was definitely a Himself during the 1950s) by instilling fear in His believers.

I am deeply honored to have been given the Alumnus of the Year Award, and wish to express my profound gratitude for it. To return to Swift Hall is itself a pleasure, but one surely enhanced by this occasion, and by the opportunity to share some of my thoughts with you today. From Dean Rosengarten, I understand that events such as these allow—even invite—persons receiving the Alumnus of the Year Award to indulge the autobiographical impulse. So, with embarrassingly little hesitation, I will take up that invitation. I will also

Professor LaFleur delivered his Alumnus of the Year 2002 address on May 1, 2003, in Swift Lecture Hall.
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— KEIJI NISHITANI

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— HENRY STOB
Tillich was from the University of Chicago, and Chicago, I intuited, was where someone like myself might reasonably continue his education some day.

In short, I felt rather fearless vis-à-vis any claim that I ought to be feeling the fear of God.

I know I benefited greatly from the emphasis on classical languages, rigorous work in philosophy, and sensitive attention to literature that were part of an education at Calvin College. But in religion, I found myself among the small cadre of students who, from time to time, went to what was then Fountain Street Baptist Church in Grand Rapids to listen with appreciation to Dr. Duncan Littlefair. (Littlefair, as I later discovered, had earned his Ph.D. right here in Swift Hall.) At that church, you could hear Littlefair bait the city’s Calvinists and fundamentalists. I think it was there that I first heard mention of the nemesis of John Calvin, Michael Servetus, a free-thinker who eventually went up in flames. It was there, too, that I heard a sermon by someone as eminent as Margaret Meade. But it was in the chapel of Calvin College that I, one day, had the opportunity to hear Paul Tillich speak. I recall him stating that he, too, was originally in the Reformed tradition, then seeing him look into the credal section at the back of the chapel hymnbook and declare that he now would be able to sing, but not recite, the old creeds. Since I, too, was balking intellectually at the contents of those creeds, that, to my young mind, was a moment of awe. Tillich was from the University of Chicago, and Chicago, I intuited, was where someone like myself might reasonably continue his education some day.

I started then to read about Buddhism, and I developed a longing to go to East Asia to explore for myself what religion might mean in such a context. Two of my most esteemed teachers at Calvin College, Henry Stob, a philosopher and ethicist, and Henry Zylstra, a superb teacher of English literature, had both spent time in Japan immediately after the end of World War II. Both men encouraged attention to the culture and history of Japan. Impressed by them as educators, I took this point seriously. Already in 1945, within weeks of Japan’s surrender, Zylstra had worried in print that the Japanese, who prize and imitate ethical achievement, might not find this in putatively Christian America.¹ Inspired to investigate this difference for myself, I went to Japan for four years during the 1960s under church auspices. I spent most of this time studying Japanese, but I also became acquainted with places like Hiroshima and a small rehabilitation center near there that provided prosthetic devices and vocational training for hibakusha, the people who had been severely damaged by the atomic bomb’s radiation.

My years in Japan, however, were also ones of intense war in Vietnam, not far away in Asia. Japan’s Christians were very critical of America’s military campaign there. And I became more deeply disillusioned with the way in which the church at home, now more and more evangelical, seemed generally reluctant to criticize the folly of America’s war and, beyond that, what Dwight Eisenhower had called the “military-industrial complex” that America was fast becoming. Japanese Buddhists I met, deeply chastened by the way they, too, had been co-opted during Japan’s fascist years, struck me then as far more committed to working toward a peaceful world.

It was during those years in Japan that I met Robert Ellwood, who was writing a dissertation in the history of religions for his degree at Chicago. Ellwood said: “If you wish to study the religions of Japan, the best place to do so in the United States is the University of Chicago.” It was at that same time that an article in Time about Mircea Eliade reached me in Japan, after which I acquired and read some of his books. I wrote to Professor Joseph Kitagawa, applied to Chicago, and found myself accepted.

Chicago was absolutely the right place for me. My very first meeting with Kitagawa during September of 1968 proved that—we settled on my dissertation topic in our first hour together. I said I wanted to work on a Buddhist poet—probably Bashō, the famous haiku poet of the seventeenth century. “No,” he said. “Bashō is too recent. Far better would be Saigyō, half a millennium earlier, a samurai turned monk, and a poet to whom Bashō later looked with deep respect.” That settled things! Kitagawa’s decision was to be my decision. I accepted it because it came from what in Japanese is called the sensei, the teacher. And, in fact, I have never once regretted the decision we made that day.

My three and a half years in Swift Hall were, even though brief by the standards of the day, some of the best of my life.
I had a chance to study with scholars such as Mircea Eliade, Charles Long, Jonathan Z. Smith, Frank Reynolds, and members of the East Asian faculty. With Anthony Yu as a superb tutor, I had a chance to read poetry of the Kaifûsô, an eighth-century collection of poems by Japanese who wrote in Chinese, their second language. And every once in a while, Tony would comment: “That’s actually a fine poem!” Those years also gave me a chance to establish long and valued friendships with persons such as Larry Greenfield. Kitagawa also brought Masao Abe to Chicago and Abe introduced some of us to the Japanese Buddhist philosophers’ critique of philosophical and religious dualism. It was heady stuff, which, to my own surprise, stayed with me. Even today, I notice, it is part of how some of Japan’s bioethicists critique their Western counterparts.

ETHICS WITHIN A LOOSE CANON

I wish now to tie together the first two terms of my topic for today—Buddhism and ethics. To me, this conjunction posed a dilemma since, at least on the surface of things, the Mahayana Buddhism of Japan that interested me most not only played loosely with the apodictic moral demands made in the Indian and Chinese scriptures attributed to Sakyamuni Buddha, but also seemed to lack the dimension of the prophetic. And from everything I had learned previously, I assumed one could not get much of an ethic without some sense of the prophetic, without being able to say “God requires thus!” With the exception of Nichiren, the acerbic and troubling prophet of the thirteenth century, Japanese Buddhism seemed to possess little of what could be classified as a prophetic dimension in that sense.

To me, personally, this was part of the appeal of Japanese Buddhism. By the time I arrived at Chicago, I had become distrustful of persons, institutions, and movements claiming to have private or inspired access to the mind and will of God. Contrary to the religions of revelation, Japan’s Buddhism takes all its cues from mundane and strictly human sources, but nevertheless claims to be fully religious. Its ethical dimension draws all its messages from what can be ascertained from what we already know of human history, human nature, and human folly. Many of the “scriptures” of Mahayana Buddhism are very late in their composition; some originated in China rather than India, many centuries after the life and death of the Buddha. Mahayana Buddhism has—if I may be permitted to borrow and twist a word spelled differently—a very loose canon. And, for a variety of reasons, lay Buddhists do not have as close a connection to their “scriptures” as most Christians have to theirs. Professor Kitagawa was right, I think, to insist that the study of Japanese Buddhism would miss its specificity if undertaken as a variant of biblical studies in the West. Chants, rituals, and even indigenous poetry often function as the Buddhist “texts” of normative importance for many Japanese—more so than the scriptures of Indian origin.

Where, then, do we find the ethical? I think it can be located in a variety of sources, more often presented as acquired and humanly transmitted wisdom, rather than as demands from an extra-mundane source. Allow me to provide an example: When Kitagawa suggested I study the twelfth-century monk Saigyô, he immediately pointed me toward an essay in Japanese by Saburô Ienaga (1913–2002), a Japanese historian with keen moral sensitivities. That essay concerned Saigyô and the religious values detectable in the natural world by Buddhists of his epoch. I focused on that topic, specifically the “Buddha nature” of plants and trees, in my dissertation. This allowed me to write about an early Buddhist valorization of the natural world, and to do so close to the beginning of what later we would call the ecological movement. Poetry, I realized at Chicago, can be a keen mentor for our ethical sensibilities.

Later, in 1992, I wrote a book on Buddhism and abortion in Japan, in which I argued, on the basis of materials scarcely used by the ordinary “buddhologist,” that Japan’s Buddhism has had important things to say through ritual about the religious aspects of intentionally interrupted pregnancies—without condemning the women who feel the need to have abortions. Interesting to me has been the rejection, explicitly based on sources in the Southern Theravada tradition, of the approach taken by many of Japan’s Buddhists. Damien Keown, who articulates an ethics based on the Theravada
Ryôkan was a poet of the people but also someone who detected and then subtly criticized what in his day was a nascent neo-Shinto nationalism...
the making of wars that, they seem to hope, will usher in the "millennium" of which they claim knowledge.

Aum Shinrikyô went only one step further, taking an active hand in world destruction. What seems clearly unethical in all these examples, however, is the violation of what the philosopher Hans Jonas referred to as the "imperative of existence" and "the unconditional duty for mankind to exist."8

READING JONAS IN JAPAN

Mention of Jonas allows me to move on to the third term of my title, the "heuristics of fear." I take this term, as some of you will recognize, from Jonas, one of the Jewish students of Heidegger who fled fascist Germany and settled eventually in New York, where he taught philosophy at the New School for Social Research until his death in 1993. During my student days at the Divinity School, Charles Long recommended that we students of the history of religions read Jonas's early work on Gnosticism. However, I paid virtually no attention to this advice until much later, when planning to do some heavy reading in Japanese bioethics during a stint in Kyoto in 1998–1999. Among the few items in English that I packed for that trip was The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age. Upon my arrival, to my surprise, I found that Japanese philosophers and religionists working in the field of bioethics were, far more than their counterparts in England and America, attentive to what Jonas had written. My inquiry into the reasons for this convergence has had initial publication, and will be part of an ongoing project that I hope to work on again this fall while in Kyoto. It is, of course, also significant that one prestigious American bioethicist who avowedly prizes the perspective and cautions provided by Jonas is the University of Chicago’s Leon Kass.

Here I focus only on what Jonas called the heuristics of fear. I confess that, given my liberal proclivities in both religion and social ethics, any introduction of an element of fear into such domains was something I had long been poised mentally to resist. However, as I read Jonas carefully, I could see him using the motif of fear very carefully, primarily as a corrective to unwarranted optimism and utopianism—especially in our Western dreams of technological miracles that will release us from all suffering and perhaps even from death itself. A "return to Eden" via science is today within the plans of some. Thus, importantly, it was not the fear of God that Jonas wanted to see revived. His was a concern with a far more terrifying being—namely, man. Jonas was most worried by, and demanded the closest possible scrutiny of, what we might do to future generations, largely through what he called "mega-technology."

The philosopher Lawrence Vogel, has been skillfully exploring the Jewish roots of an "image of God" theme in Jonas, something the latter seemed eager to protect against threats of the biotech transformation of our species. But I find it interesting that Japan's Buddhists, for whom the "image of god" theme is meaningless, can also readily grasp that something important may be put at great risk by the trajectory of our biotechnology.

When I found that Jonas was being quoted with approval in Japanese periodicals such as Bukkyô, a transsectarian journal dealing with ethical and public policy issues from Buddhist perspectives, I realized it was because his warnings give new punch and relevance to the virtue of prudence (shinchô), an item of ethical importance in both the Buddhist and Confucian traditions.10 As noted above, I habitually used to classify fears as things that are negative and baseless—childish things we would do well to put away. Like most progressives, I assumed that fears are there to be overcome. Jonas, however, tells us...
We have no right, Jonas insists, to engage in any genetic modifications that could change either intentionally or unwittingly the nature of our species.

to reckon with the fact that our fears can, at least sometimes, be instruments for discovery. He insists that, in order to discern “what we really cherish” as human beings, our “moral philosophy must consult our fears prior to our wishes.” He writes further: “In our search after an ethics of responsibility for distant contingencies, it is an anticipated distortion of man that helps us to detect that in the normative conception of man which is to be preserved from it. And we need the threat to the image of man—and rather specific kinds of threat—to assure ourselves of his true image by the very recoil from these threats. . . . We know much sooner what we do not want than what we want.”

Although Jonas, who died in 1993, did not live to witness our public debates about the possibility of human cloning, we can conjecture about how he might have used the heuristics of fear to challenge the intellectual machismo present in a work such as Gregory Pence’s Who’s Afraid of Human Cloning? That work is a defense of human cloning in the mode of Joseph Fletcher’s much earlier, disdainful reference to the way we humans have, throughout our history, always made children, describing this as nothing more than “reproductive roulette.” Pence takes the reservations about cloning as “knee-jerk condemnations [that] stem from ignorance and fear.” Jonas would insist, I think, that the widespread sense of revulsion with regard to human cloning illustrates the type of fear that is instructive, heuristic—a signal to us concerning an “anticipated distortion of man.”

Jonas would turn the screws more tightly on what we—that is, the people of our era—now need to recognize as the range of ethical responsibility. Kant, he insisted, defined duty as extending laterally and to all contemporaneous fellow humans. Thus the goodness of the Samaritan lies in his readiness to jump outside his ethnic identity and give to another human being as human. The case for employing many of our medical technologies—from organ donation from putatively dead persons to stem-cell research—clearly and quite easily can be grounded in altruism and a Kantian sense of duty. To Jonas, however, Kant’s ethic limits the range of obligation; it reaches to one’s contemporaries but does not encompass our duty to future generations—specifically to pass on to them our own, inherited version of being biologically human. We have no right, Jonas insists, to engage in any genetic modifications that could change either intentionally or unwittingly the nature of our species. Despite the hype about the certain improvement of our kind, the likelihood of unintended consequences, almost always an accompaniment to our most ambitious projects, may not be ignored or downplayed.

Things have changed since Kant, who did not envision a time, such as our own, when humans could put at risk the viability of their own species. The possibility of an apocalypse is not limited to the one welcomed by religious fundamentalists. When writing about an “unconditional duty for mankind to exist” and the need to recognize fears that are heuristic, Jonas had in view “the apocalypse threatening from the nature of the unintended dynamics of technical civilization as such, inherent in its structure, whereto it drifts willy-nilly and with exponential acceleration . . .”

JAPAN AS HEURISTIC

I already noted that Japan’s ethicists, many of whom possess a Buddhist perspective, pay far more attention to Jonas than do their American counterparts, and, furthermore, that this happens in spite of there being no “image of god” tradition in Japanese Buddhism. My hunch—one I hope to pursue more closely in ongoing studies—is that it is not the imago dei motif but, rather, the strong emphasis in Jonas upon a responsibility to future generations that grabs the attention of many Japanese.

Hisatake Katô, one of Japan’s most eminent scholars of ethics and bioethics, and now the president of a new university focused on problems of ecology, has championed the Jonasian viewpoint. Katô, writing about our duty to bring diachronic and intergenerational considerations into our ethics, notes that “it is Hans Jonas who articulated a viewpoint concerning [the responsibility] that the present generation has for the conditions of later ones.” Likewise, in an op-ed on Jonas in one of Japan’s major newspapers, Osamu Kanamori cited him as an ethic of transgenerational responsibility. The number of such citations could be increased readily.

This gravitation toward Jonas will come as no surprise to
persons who know something of how Japanese Buddhism, having deeply absorbed the Confucian imperative for the family’s perpetuity, made a concern for future generations a central aspect of its ethics. Contrary to earlier assumptions made by observers and critics from the West, the Confucian and Buddhist respect for deceased ancestors was not merely a backward-looking kind of devotion. Rites for the dead have an ethical correlate, namely, the duty to preserve into the future the humanity of the progeny—a progeny that is an extension of both our ancestors and ourselves.

On this score, there is, I would argue, the closest possible fit between the central religious ethic of East Asia and what, as Richard Wolin points out, was for Jonas the “paradigmatic case of responsibility,” namely, the “parent-child relationship.”16 Of course, Jonas takes what had been deemed a duty of individual families to gain perpetuity, and widens this into a more generalized duty on the part of humanity today to guarantee that the humans of the future will be like ourselves—that is, not transformed by biotechnology into another, supposedly “improved,” species. The argument made years ago by Jonas is echoed by Bill McKibben in Enough, a recently published critique of germline bioengineering. Here, the author writes: “Faced with a challenge larger than any we’ve ever faced—the possibility that technology may replace humanity—we need to rally our innate ability to say no.”17

Japan has been struggling to specify when and why to say no to such things. It is a famously high-tech society, but one with reservations and fears concerning how far we should go in the technological “improvement” of the human body and core dimensions of our human experience. Something, perhaps something very valuable, from within the Confucian and Buddhist tradition is balking, and I suggest that this helps explain the enthusiasm in Japan for Jonas.

I find something telling in the fact that the insights and cautions offered by Jonas have, by comparison, been largely ignored or sidelined by America’s bioethicists, whose focus is primarily upon whether or not a specific, usually new, procedure or policy is ethical. Unfortunately, the seriﬁm way in which such issues arise and then get “resolved” seems to prevent most American bioethicists from glimpsing the far larger issue—namely, that in and through all these “improvements,” it may be that we are, even if only incrementally, putting our very humanity at risk.

Is it our American proclivity for making the individual the locus of every concern that makes it unusually difficult for us to see that procedures used to ameliorate the condition of an individual may turn out to be detrimental, even ruinous, to the larger society—especially if what is meant by “larger society” includes generations not yet born? If so, then I suggest we need, perhaps desperately, a truly internationalized bioethics. By this I do not mean merely the bringing of Anglo-American concepts, procedures, and ethical “solutions” to a larger world deemed from the outset to be both technologically and ethically less advanced than our own. To do that would be another version of the West’s ongoing missionizing of the world. Such a one-way transfer would mean we in the West would lose our chance to let the difference between our religio-ethical compositions and those of other societies serve as a fulcrum for looking under the implicit but contingent assumptions of our own ethos and tradition.

Decades ago, I was drawn to the study of the history of religions at Chicago by what Mircea Eliade, when launching the History of Religions journal in 1961, called the possibilities for a “new humanism.” I had come to feel that, if studied and written about with care, the religious and ethical experience of the Japanese people could contribute significantly

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My purpose in this essay is to clarify what I take to be a basic challenge now confronting intellectuals, especially scholars of religion. I believe that we are living amid a kind of rupture in human time—a moment in which we can deploy our greatest powers to humane purposes or allow our hopes and ideals to be swallowed whole. Of course, it is fashionable in this “postmetaphysical age” to claim that in the face of religious and cultural diversity, the intellectual must remain neutral. At best, he or she works for procedural justice and pragmatically validated truth claims. Unable to draw on substantive norms for comparison and judgment, the thinker “retires to a metalevel and investigates only the formal properties of processes of self-understanding, without taking a position on the contents themselves.” But in the light of recent world events, the thin air and moral neutrality of “metalevel” inquiry hardly bespeaks the task facing us. It is time for thought to be deployed in the service of what respects and enhances the integrity of life. No longer can we be complacent about the calling of the intellectual. There is, in fact, a demand and possibility that requires the best of our minds, hearts, and wills.

The inquiry that follows is an exercise in comparative religious ethics. I will try to isolate a shared pattern of moral thinking found in the so-called Religions of the Book that exposes the deepest moral impulse of these traditions as well as their vulnerability to distortion and violence. Of course, in order to carry out the comparison in full, much more needs to be done than I realistically can supply in these pages. Important and subtle differences between these traditions would need to be noted, as well as their complex and diverse strands of moral and legal reflection. What is more, I am not an expert in Islamic and Jewish ethics; my area of competence is Christian and Western philosophical ethics. And also a good deal more argument is needed in order to justify the moral stance that I adopt. Granting all of these limitations, it is important to see points of contact and areas of shared concern among these great religions if we are to meet the present global challenges.

As uncomfortable as it might be, I need to begin on a sobering note. No matter what beliefs and doctrines are held, it is a truism that every religion, as lived out by human beings, is profoundly ambiguous. Religions are forces of life, justice, creativity, and genuine spiritual empowerment. They are also forces of death, tyranny, ignorance, and moral failure. We cannot, and ought not, deny or ignore this fact. In my judgment, it does not help to exempt any tradition from the full range of examination about its expression in real life. People of good will have to confront and repent of the moral ambiguities and even failures of their own traditions, religious or not. What, then, are we to do? A partial solution would be to try to

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*This essay is based on a number of lectures and articles Professor Schweiker has written previously on the subject, and which will appear in a final and extended version in his forthcoming book, Theological Ethics and Global Dynamics (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).*
Something now is shifting in terms of how cultures and even civilizations are to be understood.

I
n all moral reflection it is important to grasp and assess the way a situation is defined. Something now is shifting in terms of how cultures and even civilizations are to be understood. Alfred North Whitehead once wrote that the “creation of the world—that is to say, a world of civilized order—is the victory of persuasion over force.” Yet ever since September 11, 2001, and surely with the recent war in Iraq, there has been much talk about a “clash of civilizations” and the triumph of force over persuasion. It is hardly obvious, except at a metalevel, to think that civilizational order is defined by persuasion. The allusion to a clash is meant to signal something about the social and moral reality in which we now live. While the movement of human life might be from force to persuasion within some civilizations, it is not at all clear that this is true among civilizations. There is some truth, at least intuitively, to the idea of a clash of civilizations, but there is also much, in my judgment, that is wrong with the idea.

The idea of a clash of civilizations is meant to stress that the forms of conflict we should now expect on the global scene are not just political and economic, but profoundly cultural or civilizational. Throughout the modern West, much conflict has been driven by political forces, ranging from civil wars and wars of liberation to colonial conquest, as well as by tumultuous economic revolutions, as seen in the industrial revolution, the former Soviet Union, China, and elsewhere. These kinds of conflict continue, of course. There are ongoing political confrontations around the world, as well as the endless plight of the world’s poor and the struggle for economic justice. But nowadays there is also culturally driven violence in the world. We know this all too well. The idea of a clash frees our thinking from rather shopworn patterns of analysis based on ideas about discrete political entities (“nations”) in a world of Realpolitik. It also frees us from any overly economistic accounts of the present situation, Marxist no less than capitalistic ones, which see the world in terms of the interaction and conflict between labor, market, and capital. Without denying the insights of political and economic analyses, we have to understand the global scene in new ways.

The real force of the new insight into the presence of civilizations on the global field is that we see human existence within a diverse “space of reasons.” As I use the idea, a space of reasons designates some context (real or imagined) that provides motivation and meaning for a variety of agencies, including human social action. For instance, cultures are spaces of reasons that provide motivations for actions in complex ways: persons’ lives are situated in diverse social subsystems (economics, law, politics, etc.) that operate with ends, values, rules, and norms; media, driven by the social imagination, are agencies that saturate human desires and motivate behavior; there are widespread values and convictions that shape the identities of those in a culture, a surrounding ethos. But there are many kinds of spaces of reasons. Myths and narratives (e.g., Cain and Abel; Gilgamesh) can also be spaces of reasons when they direct human actions and relations. We know better now than in the past that “the world” is simply a name for the conglomerate of diverse, conflicting, but also interacting, spaces of reasons, not all of which are defined by persuasion. The present age is one in which human beings are motivated to live and act and relate in and through reflexively interacting spaces of reasons. And the monotheistic Religions of the Book also motivate human behavior because they are complex means of making sense of life. As spaces of reasons, these religions must interact with other ways human beings are motivated to act, to make sense of life—political, economic, and the like.
Thus we can argue that beliefs and values bound to people's identities are what moves them to live in certain ways. These beliefs and values saturate human desires through the social imaginary, which gives rise to "the multiple worlds that are constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread around the globe." It is not so clear, despite Whitehead's contention, that we will see the triumph of persuasion over force. But the fact to grasp is that these worlds, persuasive or violent, are themselves spaces of reasons. Who can doubt this after watching terrorists fly jetliners into buildings in the name of their faith and hatred of "Western values"? Even such a horrific action shows that all human behavior is motivated by a variety of reasons. Presumably, the terrorists' actions were situated and motivated within many spaces of reasons: beliefs about cultures and histories of conflict; beliefs about technology, economics, and so on. The same is true of the American response, lethal and otherwise, to the event.

When we turn to explore the moral framework of the monotheistic religions, the aim will be to pinpoint where and why fanaticism is found within them. At this juncture, we must admit that the idea of a clash of civilizations—or collision of worlds—has some merit insofar as we understand worlds or civilizations from a practical point of view, that is, as conglomerates of spaces of reasons. Yet, the idea of a clash is not really adequate. First, as theorists of globalization say, there is currently a "compression of the world" that brings with it an awareness of global interdependence as well as increasing conflict. The idea of a clash of civilizations misses something found in forms of interdependence, namely, global reflexivity. By global reflexivity I mean the ways in which cultures or civilizations act back upon themselves with respect to information coming from other cultures or civilizations. Reflexivity is a term for entities that can observe themselves. It is rooted in the wondrous human capacity to be aware of oneself in the midst of action and to be able to make adjustments—to learn—in that very process. Human Rights' doctrine is a good example of how societies and religions are adjusting in various ways to ideals and values moving within global reflexivity. In light of the "war on terrorism," think how quickly every nation and religious community involved has had to respond to charges of the denial of human rights to women. The reflexive dynamic is increasingly present in terms of how cultures and traditions, themselves internally complex, adjust to others and to widespread human concerns, like human rights and the environment. Reflexivity can be a complex type of persuasion forming more humane worlds.

Reflexivity can also be violent, of course. One way to react to information coming from another culture is to try to destroy that culture because of the fear that one's own identity will be essentially changed through interaction. But reflexivity can also be seen as part of the ongoing, complex way in which cultures define and understand themselves as spaces of reasons. And this is the second way in which the description of our situation as the clash of civilizations is ultimately not helpful. It assumes that cultures or civilizations or worlds are more or less block-like entities, homogeneous rather than internally complex and contested spaces of reasons. The idea of a clash of civilizations seems to suggest that the only way in which these cultures can and will respond to the infusion of information from other cultures is through conflict. Such an account fails to see that we have some choices to make and that it might be possible to work for more peaceful and creative forms of reflexivity.

The current world situation is difficult to describe. Ideas like the clash of civilizations and global reflexivity aid in trying to understand what is going on. If we value life, we must work in this context to bend the reflexive interactions among cultures toward non-destructive forms. Insofar as religions are major players defining the world as a space of motivating reasons, then in order to avoid ongoing systemic conflict, dedicated intellectuals and others need to foster humane reflexive interactions among religions. At least that is what I am arguing here. On the way to that conclusion, we need to shift from a diagnosis of our situation in order to engage in some ethical reflection. Comparative ethics, I would venture to say, must play a role in responding to our situation. Its work, in part, is to help transform clash into creative reflexivity.
. . . the very idea of “religion” is contested as a way to organize talking about these sociocultural or civilizational realities.

A SHARED PATTERN OF MORAL CONVICTION

We start with a paradox. It is helpful, even necessary, for the scholar to refer to the various religions, like Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, and yet one must always keep in mind that the very idea of “religion” is contested as a way to organize talking about these sociocultural or civilizational realities. Furthermore, each religion is itself wildly complex and internally contested. In a sense, it is doubly wrong to speak of (say) “Judaism”—wrong first because it is not at all evident that modern ideas of religion make sense of that community, and wrong second because there is no one thing that is Judaism, a kind of essential Judaism. That said, we must think about the interaction of these complex civilizational forces, these spaces of reasons, as they interact internally and with each other on the global field. And a scholar must also do so in such a way as to differentiate religions from other global agencies, like economies. So with all due caution, I am concerned to isolate a broad shared moral framework found among the various versions of these religions.

In this light, it is important to realize that the Christian, Jewish, and Islamic traditions share a great deal. They share some of the same textual lineage; they are Religions of the Book, as Muslims first put it;12 and they are monotheistic. These religions likewise insist on the goodness of creation and the special dignity and unique moral calling of human beings. To be sure, there are massive differences among these religions on just these points. Jews and Muslims reject Christian talk of the Trinity and Christ. Christian Trinitarian faith sounds a lot like a pantheon of deities or the denial, in some radical claims about God’s incarnation, of any deity at all. Christians too often imagine that Muslims obey Allah out of fear and the hope of eternal reward, even as they often think Jews stress God’s demands over God’s mercy. Further, the Religions of the Book are not religions of the same book. They have different canons. And these different canons have spawned diverse interpretive strategies and practices, ranging from commentary to allegory to hermeneutical methods, unique to particular expressions of each tradition. After all, Christians speak about theology while Muslims reason according to Sharia and Jews engage in diverse patterns of interpretation.11 What is more, these traditions understand the dignity and moral calling of human beings in different ways. Finally, there is the dismal history of conflict between these traditions—a story of hatred, blood, war, and conquest. Granting these differences, there are still some commonalities that come to light when we see these traditions together rather than against one another. It is a shared moral framework that we need to explore as the condition for the reflexive interaction among adherents. This framework is a profound, but also ambiguous, space of reasons for the conduct of life.

First, these traditions are versions of what moral theorists call moral realism. Christians, Jews, and Muslims do not believe that standards for good and evil, right and wrong, are simply and solely human inventions. Despite what modern Western intellectuals argue—from David Hume to Friedrich Nietzsche, from Sigmund Freud to Michel Foucault—and despite what cultural relativists claim, these traditions hold that moral standards are rooted in the nature of things, specifically in the will of the divine and the depth of human existence. To be sure, there has been a shift among some people within these religions from naïve realism—where the specific revelation or ideas in the mind somehow are at one with reality—to something like what I have called elsewhere “hermeneutical realism.”14 In that form of realism, one must interpret complex and wildly imaginative symbolic and narrative forms in order to understand the world in which we live and even the reality and will of the divine. But the intention of the interpretive act is to discover fundamental truths. The moral life so construed requires creativity and imagination in order to discover and live by the reality of moral claims upon us.

This means that for Muslims, Jews, and Christians, the point of our lives—if we are to be good people—is to live in conformity with that moral order, and in doing so our lives will be fulfilled. That is why Muslims speak of submission to Allah; it is why Jews seek to imitate God’s way; it is why Christians focus on discipleship to Christ. By conformity to the will of God, human life is right and rich. This is a
radical claim in our present situation. For members of these traditions, justice, for instance, is not just a matter of political expedience, rational procedure, or cultural preference; it is much more about living in conformity with what is most real, most true. This point about moral realism and the passion it ignites is misunderstood by contemporary Western policy makers, social critics, and cultural commentators, who too often assume that moral beliefs are just cultural constructs rooted in human preferences. It is why so many cultural critics are at a loss to understand religiously motivated acts of sacrifice and violence.15

The moral realism of these traditions brings us to a second point. How does one know the will of Allah or the purposes of God? Questions about the sources and character of moral knowledge, or debates in moral epistemology, are very complex. There are differences within and between these traditions on this topic, but also some commonality. The commonality is that each tradition, by and large, insists that there are basically two interacting sources of moral knowledge: (1) the decisive revelation of God's will, and (2) the disciplined use of human reason in moral matters.16 Each tradition has some conception of natural moral knowledge, say in ideas about Taqwa, the covenant with Noah, or conscience as the law written on the heart (cf. Rom. 2). But the traditions differ from each other in terms of what is the decisive revelation of God. While Muslims see Jews and Christians as People of the Book, it is the Qur'an, and the example of Muhammad and so too Sharia, that is decisive. Jews recognize kinship with Christians and Muslims, but it is, nevertheless, Torah—written, oral, and eternal—that is decisive for knowing the will of God. While Christians acknowledge a kinship with these other monotheistic religions, the decisive revelation for knowing the will of God is Jesus as the Christ. On exactly this point about sources and forms of moral knowledge, we uncover differences within each of these traditions that enable us to pinpoint matters of great import. As I understand it, within each tradition there are long and difficult struggles about the degree to which human reason can validly grasp moral truth and rightly address moral problems. There are those in each tradition who argue that human reason is so distorted, feeble, or impotent that, given the majesty of the divine will, one cannot make valid moral judgments about how to live rightly. Within Christianity one finds this outlook in thinkers ranging from Tertullian in the ancient church, who famously said, “I believe because it is absurd,” to some medieval nominalists, and further to theologians who insisted that any use of human reason outside of obedience to divine revelation is sin. Among Muslims there was the conflict between Traditionalists and the Mu'ātāzila, who held that if God is to judge action and reward the just, then human beings must be free and not determined. Consistent with that conviction, they also affirmed that since ethical norms have objective meaning, these norms could be grasped by reason—indeed independent of revelation. This school was not deemed acceptable and died out, thereby giving way to the Traditionalists, who focused on revelation as the ultimate source for the definition of good and evil. Analogous developments can be found in Judaism in debates among rabbis about the interpretation of Torah.

From beliefs about the transcendence of God's purposes and the poverty of the human mind flow strands of mysticism and authoritarianism. The Muslim thinker and Sufi mystic al-Ghazzali traces out in his Alchemy of Happiness the very limits of human thought and the importance of the Sufi life. Christian mystics, looking to the dark night of the soul, charted a relation to God through the negation of what we can say and think about God. The Kabbalists in Judaism focused on Torah and also the limits of thought in faith.17 Of course, strands of mysticism are exceedingly complex and there are many mystical forms of thought and practice in each of these religions. The point is that some Jews, Muslims, and Christians hold fast to a mystical vision of the religious life, and this entails some beliefs about human reason. An admission of the limits and even corruption of the human mind can take forms other than the mystical journey. An authoritarian mindset insists that one must utterly submit all thinking to those who can interpret authoritatively the decisive revelation of God's will.18 Those outside of the religious community lacking this revelation and authoritative teaching are cast in darkness, bereft of moral wisdom. They are infidels
Many modern Western people think morality is primarily about dos and don’ts, especially about sex.

or sinners or dwell in the way of death. Within Islam there is no official class of clergy endowed with the exclusive ability to explain the Qur’an to other Muslims. In principle, every Muslim can interpret the text, so long as he or she has the knowledge to do so. Thus, the power of imams and mullahs arises in a specific political milieu or from the fact that others, for whatever reasons, do not have the knowledge needed to engage in legal reasoning. As we have seen lately, those political conditions are all too readily present. Some imams and mullahs have claimed exclusive power to deliver fatwas, legal opinions, and to interpret text and tradition. Within strands of ultraorthodox Judaism, certain rabbis or rabbinic councils must make determinations about the legality of moral decisions. Orthodox Roman Catholicism requires submission to the teachings of the Church. Ultraconservative elements within the Roman Catholic Church resist even those changes the magisterium enacted at Vatican II in order to make Christian faith understandable to the world. This is because the world is fallen and bereft of any knowledge of God’s will and way. Fundamentalist Protestants attack free human inquiry and demand complete submission to a literal reading of the Bible. These kinds of religion are too easily the backbone of fanatical movements around the world and within each of these traditions. They rest upon a claim about the impotence and sinfulness of human reason.

It is vitally important to realize that there are other options in each of these traditions beyond the mystical and the authoritarian. These other positions insist that while human reason is indeed fallible and too often distorted, we can and must think about how best to lead our lives, interpret sacred texts and traditions, and bear the burden of responsibility. Those outside of the community might have valid moral insight that even the faithful need (cf. Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle in the ancient world.) This is why there have been Christian philosophers like Clement of Alexandria, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Erasmus, Schleiermacher, Tillich, and many others; Jewish philosophers like Maimonides, Mendelssohn, Martin Buber, Emmanuel Levinas, and many others; and Muslim philosophers from Averroës and Avicenna to modernists like Fazlur Rahman and many others. This “non-authoritarian” strand in each tradition makes the further claim—sometimes explicitly, most of the time implicitly—that when one interprets tradition, one must interpret it in the direction of what is most humane, most conducive to a way of acting and relating that respects and enhances the integrity of life. This strand in each tradition is measured; it seeks a reasoned faith, not the authoritarian imposition of belief. It expands the moral scope of the world through the reflexive interaction with the moral wisdom of other people who seek the flourishing of life.

Thus far I have argued that the monotheistic traditions (1) endorse some form of moral realism and (2) work with complex theories of moral knowledge. From beliefs about the sources of moral knowledge (reason and/or revelation) flow the possibility of extreme authoritarianism and also the possibility of a capacious account of moral conscience and its search for what is good, right, and fitting. How moral knowledge is defined has profound implications for the way the lives of those outside the community are seen and how they are to be treated. The third and final point to make is about the texture or domain of morals itself.

Many modern Western people think morality is primarily about dos and don’ts, especially about sex. And much modern ethics, insisting on postmetaphysical neutrality about world-views, has trimmed down the arena of moral responsibility to public demands for procedural justice. But Jews, Muslims, and Christians have resources for a much more complex picture. Morality in these religions has different dimensions. Morality, we might say, is not a special part of life—the part of onerous dos and don’ts—but rather a term for the space of reasons in which people, amid all their other actions and relations, must orient their lives through beliefs and practices about what is worthy of human dedication. One dimension is about a range of goods necessary for human life to endure and to flourish—goods like sexuality, family, economic production, social and political life, as well as goods of culture, say music or the arts. These “values” are necessary for the survival and flourishing of human beings and are rooted in the divine will. This is why each tradition has concern for the poor, the outcast, and the destitute. It is why these traditions

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have profound commitments to education and social policy. It is also why, in certain expressions of each tradition, like Calvinism in Christianity but also in Islam and Judaism, there is believed to be a need to establish a political order permeated with the religious vision—a theocracy. Only in this way, it is argued, will the real goods of human life and the moral order of reality exist in harmony. But the insight for us to grasp is not about a theocratic mentality. It is much more that these religions work with a multidimensional theory of value that helps demarcate the field of morality.

The second dimension of morality is about obligations that bear on how we live within spheres of value—obligations like truth-telling, fidelity, respect for property, prohibitions against murder, and the like. These obligations are intimately linked to basic goods, but distinct from them. For example, everyone needs some measure of economic well-being to survive. Economic behavior is simply about the production, distribution, and consumption of certain basic goods. But the duty or obligation that one ought to be honest in one's economic life is another matter. Obligations aim to protect and promote some domain of goods, but their meaning and validity are not reducible to those goods. The duty of truth-telling, for example, is not reducible to economic benefit. And this is why each of these traditions, as versions of moral realism, holds that duties and obligations are not just matters of social convention or preference; they are rooted in the divine will. Living by those obligations is to respect and enhance the domain of basic goods important for human and non-human life to endure and flourish.

Now, in addition to this picture of the extent of moral values and the importance of moral obligations, Jews and Christians and Muslims add yet a third dimension to morality. By living out one's moral obligations, by conforming to the will of God, there is a distinct kind of good, a human excellence, not definable just in terms of the spheres of value or sets of obligation. One becomes a righteous person, a person of moral integrity. Each of the traditions has long histories of saints, moral exemplars, and martyrs who are models of how one can, may, and must live the faithful life. Oddly enough, this kind of human excellence, this profound realization of human goodness, is not something one can seek directly. One cannot, for instance, simply decide to be a saint. Rather, a saint is someone whose total life is dedicated not to self-realization, but rather to serving the cause of goodness.

If we have some grasp of the complexity of each tradition's picture of dimensions of morality (goods, obligations, human excellence), then we can note another tension that introduces profound moral ambiguity into each of these religions: moral fanaticism. If one believes that life transpires under a demand for excellence and yet also that human reason is unable to grasp the moral order of life, unable to discern to some degree what is good and right, then the purpose of life aimed at righteousness is simply adherence to divinely sanctioned obligations interpreted by those in power. One cannot question those dictates since any question betrays fallen human reason. And so, one should be willing, if so commanded by those in authority, to sacrifice basic human goods that seem obvious to ordinary human beings precisely because one must obey a command in order to be faithful. Unquestioned obedience is believed to be the pathway to moral excellence, a saintly life, even in the act of martyrdom.

This train of reasoning is what makes the fanatic's mind almost unintelligible to others, certainly to most modern Western people. The fanatic cannot acknowledge that others have a valid grasp of those goods that moral obligations . . . are to respect and enhance. And given that, the fanatic is willing to sacrifice the whole range of natural, basic human goods—even to the point of killing innocent people—out of the obedience to a supreme moral demand. The mark of human excellence is obedience to an overriding obligation even to the destruction of obvious natural goods in the hope of reclaiming these goods as reward for obedience. This logic is found in each and every religion on this planet. Moral fanaticism, tragically enough, is a fact everywhere.

Conversely, if one believes—as a faithful Muslim, Christian, or Jew—that all human beings do have some capacity to apprehend the tenor and task of the moral life, then obedience to a divinely revealed moral code is meant to serve human flourishing and the integrity of life. If one does claim a wide
For too long intellectuals around the world . . . have been complacent about their contribution to common life and the public good.

The notion of human reason, then the purpose of life is to respect and enhance the domain of goods. And that, too, is to live in conformity with God’s will. One acknowledges the folly of life and the fallibility of reason and yet also insists that the purpose of human existence is to live and act by the best insights and the deepest wisdom of one’s tradition so that life might flourish. And the believer will insist on freedom of conscience as a sacred right of every human being, the demand that authority alone does not determine what is good and true.

How a community or an individual person understands the sources and validity of moral reason and how they construe the multiple dimensions of value has a profound impact on what living a faithful life means. And the debate about reason and value explains why morally driven fanaticism and also a humane outlook are found within each religious tradition, and its moral realism, as motivating spaces of reason. This also shows why the labor of making the reflexive interactions among civilizations more humane is a pressing and constant demand even as we have isolated points for enhancing the persuasive interaction among communities.

The Intellectual’s Responsibility

I have indicated something about how we are to understand our current situation in terms of global reflexivity or civilizational conflict. I have isolated a complex structure of moral conviction found within the Religions of the Book that can serve comparison and mutual interaction. This included isolating a point of ambiguity within traditions that can, but need not, feed fanaticism. This ambiguity provides a clue for how I want to end these reflections on the responsibility of the intellectual in our time of global cultural flows.

I ardently believe that the current world situation and the horrific, murderous events of September 2001 are nothing less than an utterance of a moral demand from the midst of time. For too long intellectuals around the world, especially in the United States and Europe, have been complacent about their contribution to common life and the public good. But, in fact, all of us blessed with the chance to think and to study have a moral responsibility. First, we have the responsibility of being agents for creative reflexivity between cultures, rather than agents aiding the devolution of the world scene into a clash of civilizations. We must exercise good will and critical intelligence to show how the complex interactions among civilizations enriches the wide diversity of human existence on this planet and so can impede the most vicious and murderous tendencies. We have seen how the religions can be sources of profound insight to aid in this task. Second, I have indicated—in terms of claims about moral knowledge and also the dimensions of morality—how those dedicated to a humane outlook have the responsibility to curtail the possible fanaticism of their own traditions, and bend them to their most life-sustaining insights. For those dedicated to a tradition of faith, there is hard work to do. But the same holds for anyone committed to human flourishing. It is time to be about this work. We cannot do this work for others; mindful of global reflexivity, we must undertake this labor with others.

Thankfully, there have always been people within the religious traditions who labor for a humane life and seek to redress human and non-human woes. They have sought to think as deeply as we live so that our living might be less violent and all the more creative. These persons have staked their lives on the fragile resources of moral reason and the insights of their traditions. We can call them Jewish, Christian, and Islamic humanists. One might call them something else. But whatever they are called, the vocation of dedicated intellectuals as well as serious religious people is to join their ranks. We must expand the boundaries of moral concern in order to live responsibly in global times. The challenge is to labor to make the ambiguity of traditions—an ambiguity that lives in our own hearts and minds—into a resource for life rather than a force of destruction. That means we must start with some admission of our failings, humble about any grasp on truth and so open to learn from others, and be resolute in seeking to further the goods of life.
We must expand the boundaries of moral concern in order to live responsibly in global times.

ENDNOTES

1. This essay was originally given in a different form as “The Intellectual's Responsibility and the Ambiguity of Religions” for the series “9/11: Causes and Consequences: Beyond the Clash of Civilizations” at the University of Chicago on October 4, 2001. That lecture then appeared in Sightings as a three-part series on October 22, 24, and 26, 2001. Another version was given at the University of Chicago Alumni Dinners in New York City, Los Angeles, and San Francisco in January and February 2002. Those remarks were called “Comparing Religions—Comparing Lives: Laughter and Ethics After 9/11.” I was fortunate to speak at those events with my colleague Wendy Doniger. I benefited from her massive knowledge of the history of religions, and also from her own wise and human insight. The final and extended version of the essay, not published here, appears in my forthcoming book, Theological Ethics and Global Dynamics (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004). In sum, this is an essay with a history!


10. See John Tomlinson, Globalization and Culture (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999). Cultural reflexivity is actually an old phenomenon. Religions and cultures have been interacting and adjusting to each other for a very long time so that their own identities are constituted by these reflective interactions.

11. For an account of the internally complex and contested nature of any culture, see Kathryn Tanner, Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), and also Dwight N. Hopkins and Sheila Gavan, Changing Conversations: Religious Reflection and Cultural Analysis (New York: Routledge, 1996).

12. One finds this designation, as well as claims about the relation between the religions, in Sura 5 (The Table) in the Qur’an. See The Konan Interpreted, translated by Arthur J. Arberry (New York: Macmillan, 1955).


16. It is not possible in this essay to engage comparatively various accounts of what is meant by “revelation.” Suffice it to say that these are complex and contested issues within the Religions of the Book.


18. There are moral philosophers who make this argument about submission to authority in order to attain the capacity for valid moral reasoning. On this, see Alasdair MacIntyre, Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopedia, Genealogy, and Tradition (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990).


When asked what project I am working on while on leave at the Martin Marty Center during the 2002–2003 academic year, the short response I usually give is “complicity with evil.” That response is perfect for cocktail parties in the big city and receptions at large academic conferences. It appears to be glamorous, dangerous, sexy—and hopelessly vague. Unfortunately, like many phenomena at such parties and receptions, the surface impression is actually quite deceptive. The issues that I actually deal with are highly specific, and can range from the riveting and heart-breaking to the sadly mundane.

The topic of complicity encompasses the following dilemma: Should Sophie Zawistowska, the title character in William Styron’s unforgettable novel Sophie's Choice, have accepted the SS physician’s offer to allow her to decide which of her two young children would live (or at least have a chance at life) and which would face immediate death in a Nazi gas chamber? But it also encompasses the more everyday question: Should you lend your brother five bucks so that he can buy the cigarettes that you both know will kill him one day? While some questions of complicity have to do with sex, very few are actually sexy. For example, a fair amount of ink has been spilt in analyzing (in Latin as well as in English) whether or not a taxi driver ought to drive a customer to an address he knows to be a house of ill repute.

Braced by the cold clarity of a winter day in Hyde Park, I might offer the following, more theoretical elaboration of the problem of complicity: Suppose an agent is contemplating performing an action that will either contribute to or in some sense make use of the wrongful action of another agent or group of agents. How should one morally evaluate her contemplated action in light of its connection with the wrongful action of another? What considerations should be involved in her decision whether or not to go ahead with her action?

The more theoretical elaboration of the problem reveals a structural similarity between the two concrete dilemmas described above. As different as they are in terms of moral seriousness and historical moment, both involve an individual who must make a decision whether to contribute to the wrongful act of another agent. But there are also cases in which the agent facing the decision is not an individual, but rather a corporate agent, such as a company or a country. Should multinational corporations have continued their financial dealings with South Africa during apartheid? What sort of economic or military aid should the United States give countries known to be guilty of human rights abuses today? In addition, some complicity problems involve individual or corporate agents who must discern not whether to contribute to another agent’s wrongful act, but instead whether to make use of its fruits. Should a single mother struggling to support her family purchase inexpensive

Professor Kaveny delivered this talk on April 9, 2003, at a Wednesday Lunch in Swift Common Room.
CRITERION 2

CCTV Sequence Showing a Man Committing a Car Crime. Digital Vision
Once you have turned your attention to the problem of complicity, it is hard not to notice examples of it in nearly every realm of human life.

The Gaps in Moral Cartography

Once you have turned your attention to the problem of complicity, it is hard not to notice examples of it in nearly every realm of human life. Nonetheless, contemporary moralists, both religious and secular, are just beginning to give it the sustained theoretical attention it deserves. The quickest way to conjure my sense of the lacuna in the normative conversation today is by analogizing it to the MapQuest program on the Internet. The scope of MapQuest can range from the minuscule, focusing on only a few blocks, to the nearly limitless, highlighting the main arteries that transverse the continent. Much contemporary scholarship on ethical matters is clustered at either end of the spectrum. Not much attention has been given to the middle ground.

In the realm of “social theory,” on the one hand, the ethical MapQuest gauge is set very broadly. By social theory, I mean the many important discussions in theology, philosophy, and political theory that have analyzed the various structures and systems of human oppression. Marxist, feminist, and other types of liberationist theories expose and critique the dense relationship between highly flawed normative visions of human nature and human flourishing, the institutions that embody and propagate them, the “false consciousness” they generate, and the patterns of economic and social injustice they produce. The focus here is on “big picture” systemic analysis. But what should be done about the deep social problems they expose, and who should do what about them? Leaving aside nation states, powerful political parties, and large multinational corporations, it is not clear what any single individual or garden-variety corporate agent can or should do about the injustices exposed by such analyses.

There is, of course, always the possibility of joining a base community, or another community of resistance. But such communities rarely have a direct and substantial effect on the problem, unless the challenges of collective action are overcome. Moreover, it is unlikely that everyone who can join such a community is under a moral obligation to do so. What should be the criteria used by someone discerning whether or not to join? Here, our ethical MapQuest gauge begins to constrict noticeably, but not so the “social theory” discussion.

At the other end of the spectrum falls what I will call “moral theory,” where the MapQuest gauge can be wound very tightly. One large segment of contemporary moral theory, both theological and philosophical, focuses on the question of how to evaluate the action of a particular moral agent. The basic theories are introduced to students in most first-year ethics courses: utilitarianism and other forms of consequentialism, Kantianism and other deontological approaches, rights-based approaches (which in my view incorporate consequentialist and deontological elements), and virtue theory. Moralists making implicit or explicit use of these theories devote much attention to considering what sorts of purposes agents may legitimately pursue, and/or what sorts of results they may knowingly cause. The range of agents considered is fairly broad. With respect to individual agents, moralists have asked such questions as when, if ever, it is permissible to end another person’s life by euthanasia. With respect to corporate agents, they have considered such issues as whether it is legitimate for a corporation to close a less profitable or unprofitable plant that is of great economic importance to the community in which it is located. With respect to national agents, they have paid much theoretical and practical attention to the conditions under which it is just for one nation to wage war against another.

Needless to say, the discussion of all these issues is complex and difficult. The context of the action in question, its purpose, its foreseeable immediate and remote effects, the distribution of the harmful effects, and what would count as proper authorization in light of these effects are all crucial and interrelated issues that arise in evaluating any morally controversial topic. Boiled down to its essence, however, the schema of the moral problem presented is...
fairly straightforward: Is it morally permissible for one agent, whose moral agency is in some sense considered in the abstract, to engage in the action or course of action under discussion? Despite the range of problems and of moral agents under discussion, our ethical MapQuest is very narrow in its scope.

In concentrating on the question of complicity, I hope to outline a moral cartography at an intermediate level of detail. I have decided to begin by working from the tightest setting and expanding the focus, attempting to look at a set of issues that might be grouped together under the heading “interactional morality.” These issues are important because they point to a facet of human experience that is sometimes masked by American society’s emphasis on self-reliance and individuality: no one is an island; no one makes it alone; no one goes through life without affecting the course of someone else’s life. All of our actions both build on and contribute to the actions of other people.

This sort of interdependence of agents and their actions has always been the case, of course. But in my view, certain features of the contemporary world are prompting us to pay critical attention to the way our actions interact with those of other people, known and unknown. First, a higher degree of interdependence characterizes our lives, especially for those of us who live in developed countries. We need the work of a wide variety of other persons for our food, clothing, and shelter. Second, the production chain is characterized by a great degree of anonymity. We do not know the people and institutions that are contributing to making and distributing the necessities and accessories that support our lives. Third, we are acutely conscious of a great deal of moral pluralism in our interdependent world. We need the work of a wide variety of other persons for our food, clothing, and shelter. Second, the production chain is characterized by a great degree of anonymity. We do not know the people and institutions that are contributing to making and distributing the necessities and accessories that support our lives. Third, we are acutely conscious of a great deal of moral pluralism in our interdependent world. It is not only that some people have decided not to live by the tenets that they (and we) espouse, it is also the case that they have deep commitments to value systems that we believe to be unjust or dehumanizing. We are anonymously dependent in a deeply divided world.

Finally, I think it is fair to say that our age is characterized by an increased sense of moral responsibility. The reasons for this are complex and no doubt interrelated. I will mention only one here: In significant ways, many of us no longer think of ourselves as limited in our responsibility by the specific roles that we play in our public and private spheres of life (although we frequently think of ourselves as being burdened with additional responsibilities because of those roles). We are all potential Norma Raes or Karen Silkwoods. To some degree, this development is a by-product of our democratic social structure. But it is also a fruit of the war-crimes trials after the end of the Second World War. “I was just following orders” or “I was just doing my job” no longer count as sufficient answers to the charge that one knowingly performed an evil action, or, as is increasingly the case, an action that one knew would significantly contribute to the evildoing of another.

RESOURCES AND QUESTIONS

So what sources can we draw upon to help us understand the problem of complicity in the wrongdoing of others? An interdisciplinary approach is essential. Resources in literature, particularly that dealing with the horrors of the Nazi regime, are invaluable. In very different ways, both Sophie’s *Choice* and Christa Wolf’s *Patterns of Childhood* heighten our awareness of the pervasiveness of complicity, and the painful difficulties involved in recognizing it, not to mention avoiding it, in societies permeated with gross injustice.

Historical examples are also important. The practice of usury, defined as lending money at interest, was prohibited by the Catholic Church for centuries. A set of norms developed that regulated how intimately one could legitimately be involved with the practice, and the circumstances under which one could benefit from its fruits.

Legal sources are also key: conspiring to commit a crime and serving as an accessory to a crime are themselves criminal activities. The relevant case law and provisions of the penal code are worth mining for moral reflection, because the criminal law frequently reflects the bedrock moral commitments of a community.

Finally, the work of religious thinkers can be helpful. For example, the question of complicity has been treated in painstaking detail by the “manuals” of moral theology, composed
Formal cooperation takes place when the cooperator intends in her action to further the wrongdoing of the principal agent.

by Roman Catholic priest-moralists between the time of the Council of Trent and the Second Vatican Council. Because the manuals wrote primarily in order to guide priests hearing confessions in determining whether, and to what degree, the action confessed by a penitent was sinful, they were forced to take seriously nitty-gritty moral problems arising in day-to-day life.

What, exactly, is the matter with complicity? How should we evaluate it, drawing distinctions among its many forms? In many of the more analytical resources I have encountered, particularly the Roman Catholic manualist tradition and the Anglo-American legal tradition, the second question has received far more attention than the first. This is not surprising, since both give a prominent place to case-based, analogical reasoning. Consequently, the need to give consideration to fundamental principles is less pressing than in more systematic accounts of problems and issues.

But, given the goals of my project, I do not have the same luxury. I need to deal with the first question, “What is the matter with complicity?” in order to give a comprehensive account of the issue that hooks up in appropriate places with the narrow and broad moral MapQuest discussions already in place. But that does not mean I can leave the second question entirely to one side; there is a dialectical relationship between the two. The plausibility of my theoretical account of the moral issues involved in complicity will depend in large part on its ability to account for—or persuasively discount—the ways in which particular cases of complicity do or do not seem morally problematic. Rawls’s norm of “reflective equilibrium” is a powerful way to call ourselves to account in the realm of applied ethics, as well as in the context of political philosophy.

In the remainder of this essay, I would like to do two things. First, I would like to outline briefly the different approaches taken by the moral manuals and the criminal law to the question of how to evaluate cases of complicity. Their concrete judgments will constitute one pole of the reflective equilibrium. Second, I will sketch a few theoretical possibilities for accounting for the problem of complicity—for constituting the other pole of the reflective equilibrium.

I will suggest that two of these are inadequate, and one holds some promise for future investigation.

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC MANUALISTS

The manuals tended to concentrate on one aspect of the problem of complicity: cooperation with evil, which refers to those situations in which the cooperator’s action would contribute to (rather than benefit from) the wrongdoing of another agent (frequently called the “principal agent”). In other words, its focus was forward-looking, calling the cooperator to reflect upon how his or her action would interact with the actions of other persons. At first glance, the scholastic categories used by the manuals to parse the problem of cooperation can seem too arcane to be useful in the contemporary world. In my view, however, that superficial impression is mistaken. The manuals took seriously the complexity of cooperation cases; the framework they developed is best viewed not as a “computer program,” designed to spit out answers to complex moral problems, but rather as a guide to deeper moral discernment. What are the components of that framework?

The most important question is whether the cooperation is formal or material. Formal cooperation takes place when the cooperator intends in her action to further the wrongdoing of the principal agent. The manuals considered formal cooperation always to be wrong, because it is never permissible intentionally to perform a morally evil act, even for a good end. A clear example of formal cooperation, according to the rationale of the manuals, is an intern who cooperates in an abortion procedure in order to receive a necessary medical certification.

This judgment of complicity obviously depends upon a prior judgment about the morality of abortion that is not universally shared today. Deeper reflection on the example demonstrates that the questions of pluralism and moral disagreement are likely to be quite acute in complicity problems. First, the very existence of a complicity problem depends upon the judgment that the act of the principal agent is morally wrong. For example, the intern will not see herself as facing a cooperation problem if she does not believe that
abortion is always morally wrong, or at least morally wrong in this particular case.

Second, the fact of deep and principled moral disagreement means that potential cooperators must consider what weight, if any, should be given to the fact that the principal agent may not understand herself as doing anything morally wrong. For example, the intern who does believe abortion to be morally wrong is likely to be confronted with the fact that both the doctor performing the procedure and the woman who obtains it take a different moral view of the matter. It would be safe to say that the questions surrounding moral disagreement did not preoccupy the manualists, who assumed the existence of an objective moral reality upon which there was a substantial consensus. But today, these issues are neither easy nor rare; think also of a request to participate in the surgical circumcision of a baby girl, or dangerous and medically unnecessary cosmetic surgery.

Material cooperation is defined negatively: all cooperation that is not formal cooperation is by definition material cooperation. In other words, in a case of material cooperation, the cooperator foresees, but does not intend, that her action contributes to the wrongful action of another. Stepping back now from their technical scholastic vocabulary, we can say that the framework developed by the manualists for evaluating material cooperation is five-dimensional in nature. Taking the perspective of a third-party observer, it looks at the overlap, in the matrix of space, time, and causality, between the act of the cooperator and the wrongful act of the principal agent. All things being equal, the greater the overlap between the two, the harder the act of cooperation is to justify.

At one end of the spectrum, cases of cooperation where the overlap is virtually complete (which the manualists called immediate material cooperation) were generally held to be impermissible except in cases of duress. The reasons for this judgment are not entirely clear. No doubt, one reason is that the manualists saw themselves as facilitating the work of confessors, who were charged with judging the nature and degree of a sinner's wrongdoing. In most cases, it would be hard for an objective third party to believe a penitent's claim that she did not intend the wrongdoing in which she cooperated so intimately if there were no external force coercing her will. Consider, for example, the Patty Hearst case. Viewed from the perspective of an external observer, it looked like Hearst was intentionally facilitating the bank heist orchestrated by the Symbionese Liberation Army. In fact, it would be very difficult for an objective third party to believe otherwise, absent a compelling case of duress.

At the other end of the spectrum, cooperation entailing little overlap or intimacy between the act of the potential cooperator and the wrongful act of the primary agent was viewed by the manualists as easier to justify, all else being equal. This sort of case (which the manualists called remote mediate material cooperation) would be permissible given a sufficiently important reason. For example, consider a pharmaceutical company that manufactures a drug that will be helpful to many people, knowing, however, that some people will abuse it.

As these examples suggest, the matrix of overlap and intimacy is not the only factor in the manualists' evaluation of cooperation cases. Other factors include whether the wrongful act would occur without the act of cooperation...
Under the common law, it is the agreement itself that constitutes the crime . . .

(i.e., “but for” causality), the gravity of the evil involved (including whether it would harm innocent third parties), and the gain that the cooperator hoped to realize (or the loss that the cooperator hoped to avert). Another influential factor is the potential of the cooperator to cause scandal by her act of cooperation. In this context, the term "scandal" refers not to the hushed whispers and veiled looks of community busybodies, but instead to the potential for misleading others to believe that the principal agent’s wrongful act was morally acceptable.

Unfortunately, the manualists’ enthusiasm for categorizing an almost endless variety of cooperation problems was not matched by a similar concern to explain precisely why they were morally problematic, or to demonstrate how the matrix they developed appropriately sorted cases according to their moral seriousness. In my view, this lacuna in their analysis was an almost inevitable drawback of the genre in which they were writing. The strength of the moral manuals was that they took seriously the details of the moral problems faced in ordinary life. Their weakness was that they frequently failed to transcend those details. They were, after all, manuals, written for fellow priest-confessors who were assumed to be of one mind about the nature and purpose of the Christian life. I sometimes think that their authors would have responded to a request for broader reflection with much the same bemusement that the technical writers of an operator’s manual for a new car would respond to a request to justify the importance of having a car in good working order. From their perspective, the request would simply fall beyond the purview of their project.

The Criminal Law

The criminal law generally prohibits behavior that society believes is detrimental to the common good—behavior that either attacks the good of one of the members of the community (e.g., criminal assault), or undermines the conditions necessary for the just and orderly pursuit of common aims (e.g., insider trading). Two areas of the criminal law deal extensively with complicity problems: the law of criminal conspiracy and the law pertaining to accomplice liability.1

A criminal conspiracy is defined by common law as “an agreement by two or more persons to commit a criminal act or a series of criminal acts, or to accomplish a legal act by unlawful means.” The law of accomplice liability identifies “the circumstances under which a person who does not personally commit a proscribed harm may be held accountable for the conduct of another person with whom he has associated himself.” Being indicted for either crime is no small matter, because the elements of the crime are vague and the penalties for someone found guilty can be extreme.

For example, consider the crime of conspiracy. Under the common law, it is the agreement itself that constitutes the crime, although some states also now require an overt act in furtherance of the agreement. Furthermore, the agreement at stake is defined loosely. It does not even require a “meeting of the minds,” to borrow a phrase sometimes used to define an “agreement” under contract law. In fact, it is possible to be in a single vast conspiracy with people one does not even know. In United States v. Bruno, for example, the conspiracy to import and distribute, sell, and possess narcotics was found to include both retailers in New York and retailers in Texas/Louisiana, although no communication was proven between the two groups. From the point of view of the hapless, low-level conspirator, such a scenario is highly undesirable, because it means that jail time can be racked up quickly. Under common law, the basic rule is that, first, a conspirator is guilty of every offense committed by every other conspirator in furtherance of the unlawful agreement and, second, the crime of conspiracy does not merge into the substantive offense the parties to the conspiracy were planning to commit. A defendant, therefore, can be found guilty of both conspiracy to commit a crime and the crime itself. (The Model Penal Code eliminates this “double counting.”)

From a defendant’s point of view, being indicted for accomplice liability is not much better. Here, the issue is the crime of assisting someone else to commit a crime. “Assistance,” like “agreement” in the context of conspiracy law, is defined very broadly. It encompasses “aiding, abetting, encouraging, soliciting, and procuring the commission of
the offense.” Moreover, an act of assistance does not need to be particularly helpful in order to qualify. “Any aid, no matter how trivial, suffices.” Applauding someone’s criminal activities, or being a supportive presence at a crime scene in a way that encourages the principal agent, can count as sufficient assistance to make one an accomplice. Furthermore, as with conspiracy, liability has a way of ballooning for someone found guilty of being an accessory to a crime. A secondary party or an accessory is accountable for the conduct of the primary party. This accountability includes not merely the crime itself, but also the natural and probable consequences of the crime. For example, if you encourage me to rob a bank, and in the course of doing so I intentionally kill a guard, you are liable as an accessory to the crime of murder, even though you did not encourage me to commit that crime and you did not contemplate that anyone would die during the caper.

What mental state is required of the defendant charged with conspiracy or liability as an accomplice to a crime? A key issue here is whether “purpose” is the required mental state, and whether, or when, mere “knowledge” that one’s action will further a crime ought to suffice for criminal liability. This realm is analogous to what the manualists would consider material cooperation. Suppose, for example, you rent your house to someone who you know is running an illegal gambling operation there. Are you an accomplice? Are you in a conspiracy? Suppose that someone comes into your sporting goods shop, buys a hunting rifle, and casually mentions that he will be using it to kill his wife. What result then? Suppose he just says that he is looking forward to freedom from that “old ball and chain”? In the context of the conversation, you are pretty sure that he meant his wife, although he did not say so explicitly. What should happen to you if you do nothing and she is murdered one week later, or one month later, or one year later? Where is the line between doing your job while minding your own business, on the one hand, and culpable indifference to the plight of other individuals, or to the welfare of the community as a whole, on the other?

Two federal cases, both of which were eventually heard by the Supreme Court, set the legal context for much American reflection on the matter. In United States v. Falcone, the suppliers of sugar and other lawful materials to those operating an illegal still were indicted, tried, and convicted of conspiracy. Their convictions were reversed on appeal. In Direct Sales Co. v. United States, the defendant, a drug wholesaler, sold large quantities of legal drugs to one particular physician, who was illegally reselling them. In this case, the defendant’s conviction was upheld. The Supreme Court distinguished it from Falcone on the grounds that the goods supplied in that case were items of free commerce,
while those in Direct Sales were commodities whose sale was restricted by law.

Finally, one case from the state of California has garnered some attention. In People v. Lauria, the operator of a telephone message service was indicted for conspiracy on the basis of the fact that he took messages for known prostitutes. Affirming an order setting aside the indictment, the California Court of Appeal identified a number of factors that could affect the outcome in a particular case: whether the purveyor of legal goods for illegal use has a stake in the venture, whether there is a legitimate use for the goods or services, and whether the volume of business with the buyer is grossly disproportionate to any legitimate demand. Finally, the court also indicated that the nature of the criminal act is also at issue: facilitating prostitution is one thing, facilitating murder is quite another.

ACCOUNTING FOR THE PROBLEM OF COMPLICITY

The relevant materials from sources as diverse as moral theology, literature, and law make it clear that something is the matter with complicity in the wrongdoing of another. But what is it? What normative account of the moral life makes sense of the problem? This is an extremely difficult and complicated question, and I can only provide the roughest guide to my thinking on this matter here.

Can a pure consequentialist approach account for the problem of complicity, including the factors that have been considered relevant by those charged with dealing with it in concrete cases either as a sin or as a crime? In my view, probably not, for two reasons. First, both the manualists and the criminal law give significant weight to the complicit party’s intention or purpose in performing the action that facilitates the wrongdoing of another. This weight would be difficult to account for in a consequentialist theory, the major concern of which would not be the agent’s purpose in acting, but the consequences she foresaw resulting from that action. This is not to say, of course, that foreseen consequences are irrelevant from the perspective either of the moral manualists or the criminal law. As we saw above, this is very far from the case. Nonetheless, factors other than the causal nexus between the complicit agent’s action and the wrongful act of the primary agent enter prominently into both frameworks for analysis. Second, my general sense is that a consequentialist approach would dissolve, rather than solve, the problem of complicity, whose essence is the connection between the complicit agent and the evildoing primary agent. Ultimately, I doubt that a consequentialist would be able to acknowledge the moral relevance of the fact that my action does not cause certain harmful consequences to come about directly, but only indirectly, by “running through” the agency of another person.

What about rights theory? Again, I will have to be cursory in my assessment. It strikes me that a rights-based approach would lead one to focus upon either the right of the complicit agent to act, on the one hand, or upon the right of the victim to be free of the harmful effects caused by the principal agent, on the other. The first focus would view the act of the wrongdoing primary agent as an intervening cause, relieving the complicit agent of responsibility for the harm caused. The second focus would emphasize the fact that the complicit agent foresaw the harm to the victim’s rights, and deny the relevance of the fact that the harm was caused primarily by another party. From either vantage point, the fact that the agency of the complicit party and the primary wrongdoer are in some way intermingled in bringing about the harm at issue would not be considered relevant, let alone important, to the proper moral analysis of the situation.

Yet the intermingling of agency, and the intimacy with wrongdoing that it entails for the complicit agent, is precisely what renders complicity uniquely morally problematic. Consider, again, the novel Sophie’s Choice. The narrator attempts to explain what was at stake for the concentration-camp physician who invited Sophie to choose which of her children would live and which would immediately be sent to the gas chamber. Entering into the Nazi physician’s mind in order to describe his motivations, the narrator speculates: “Was it not supremely simple, then, to restore his belief in God, and at the same time to affirm his human capacity for evil, by committing the most intolerable sin that he was
able to conceive? Goodness could come later. But first a great sin. One whose glory lay in its subtle magnanimity—a choice."

What was this new “intolerable sin”? Clearly, it was not violating the rights of the child who was murdered in the gas chamber—he had already committed that intolerable sin many times over. Rather, it was conscripting Sophie’s will in the murder of her own child. The novel chronicles Sophie’s inability to deal not only with the material consequences of her choice, but also with its moral consequences for her own character. Did she betray her obligations as a mother? Sophie reflects, “In some way I know I should feel no badness over something I done like that. I see that it was—oh, you know—beyond my control, but it is still so terrible to wake up these many mornings with a memory of that, having to live with it.” The “subtle magnanimity” of the choice lay precisely in its appeal to consequentialist reasoning: why let two children die when you can save one? The “sin” was in the deliberate deceitfulness of the choice; its attempt to equate acting to ameliorate a natural threat with acting complicitously with a human one, even for a good end. But Sophie’s anguish, I think, is not the same as that which she would have suffered had she simply chosen which child to save from a burning building.

My hunch is that virtue theory is the approach most likely to account for Sophie’s anguish, as well as the concerns of the manualists, and even a significant portion of the criminal law. The fundamental problem raised by cooperation with evil is what it does to the acting agent when she knows that in some sense her will is to be taken up into and incorporated by the will of a wrongdoer. How close to evil can one get without being contaminated by it? What does it mean to be tainted by evil? What are the implications for the agent, for her future actions, and for the society in which she lives? In my view, these questions can only begin to be addressed with an approach that holds together reflections upon the act, the acting agent, and the normative vision of the community in which the agent’s actions are intelligible.

So I have no ending to this essay, only the beginnings for my book. I have begun to reread classical, medieval, and contemporary virtue theory, turning to Aristotle, Aquinas, MacIntyre, and Nussbaum with a very different set of questions than the ones I had when I read them in graduate school. What has been wonderful to experience, during this year at the Divinity School, has been the joy and excitement of addressing a new set of pressing questions to texts of enduring value.

ENDNOTES


2. Dressler, 423.

3. Ibid., 459.

4. Ibid., 469.


6. Ibid., 538.
Anne Carr retired from the University of Chicago faculty on June 30, 2003. She taught modern theology, with special interests in Catholic thought and feminist theology, in the Divinity School and in the College for thirty years. A reception was held on Monday, May 12, 2003, in Swift Common Room, at which colleagues, students, and friends gathered in her honor. Following are two of the remarks delivered on that occasion by Divinity School colleagues Martin E. Marty and David Tracy.

— MARTIN E. MARTY —

The text for our evening meditation is from the sacred 1974–1975 book of Announcements of the University of Chicago Divinity School. There is no way to make my first point in tribute to Professor Carr without reading a list of names, thus letting the medium be the message, at least in part. Herewith is a list of the first names of the whole Divinity School faculty that year: James, James, Barnett, Jerald, Carsten, Mircea, Brian, Langdon, Robert, James, Joseph, Martin, Norman, Paul, Nathan, Gibson, Gösta, Don, Peter, Bernard, Spencer, Alvin, Frank, Jonathan, David, Richard, Jay, Anthony, Alan, Bernard, Larry.

The next year, 1975–1977, the lineup is substantially the same, but now listed after Bernard is Anne. This is Anne Carr, A.M., Ph.D., listed as “Assistant Professor in Christian Theology and also in the Humanities Collegiate Division” and, on the page before, as “Assistant Dean of the Divinity School.” It should have read “Associate Dean,” because she succeeded an Associate Dean, and did more associating than he had done.

Her list of credentials could also have included the acronym B.V.M., to indicate Professor Carr’s commitment as a sister of the Blessed Virgin Mary order. But the identification with a religious order may have been a stumper to the linotypist, since while Anne was the first permanent woman appointment, she was also the first member of a religious order on the faculty; the only earlier Catholic appointments, Bernard McGinn and David Tracy, lacked order-ly acronyms after the listing of their degrees.

Continuing reading in these sacred scriptures, we find in the 1977–1979 Announcements that the curricular catalogers had begun to catch up with Professor Carr’s work in the classroom; there is “CT 415. THOMAS MERTON. CARR.”

Continuing in the 1979–1981 volume, she is now “Associate Professor” and “Associate Dean”—it was a very good year!—and she was still the most succinct titler of courses. Here is “CT 481. RAHNER. CARR,” though by now she was getting wordy enough to use two words: “CT 430. CHRISTOLOGY-CONTEMPORARY. CARR.”

That mode of designating courses left little room for error of the sort you will find if you track down the University of Chicago registrar’s Time Tables from my first quarter here, where a course reads “HC 303. MUSLIM CHURCH HISTORY. MARTY”—the only such course ever advertised anywhere, I am sure. I made the mistake of phoning in my proposed course names to the registrar, and must have not spoken the word “modern” clearly.
Anne Carr is a real survivor, a “living history” candidate for any Studs Terkel or other oral historian who would deal with this place . . .

Anne Carr is a real survivor, a “living history” candidate for any Studs Terkel or other oral historian who would deal with this place, since she has inside stories on our doings here. She is a most faithful student of, and teacher about, the ways religious figures or scholars of religion connect their personal lives with their substantive work. Many of her courses focused on that.

Of the thirty-one names of men that I read above, after June 30, 2003, only David and Anthony will remain on the active preemeritus faculty. Among the growing list of emeriti, some of us have much longer perspective than does Carr, having passed the seventy-five year mark. That age is cited in Desmond Morris’s Book of Ages as “the start of the period of ‘confirmed senescence or primary old age.’” It ends the period that is called ‘quiescent presenescence.’” So I, as a confirmedly senescent, primarily old-aged, noisy postpresenescent emeritus, am honored to be asked to provide a particular angle of vision on Anne Carr’s vocation, profession, career, work, and life among us.

That Anne Carr has so many “firsts” in her record here—first woman, first woman religious, first religious to be a professor and a dean—makes her retirement a landmark occasion. But those firsts etched onto her landmark would soon be eroded were it not for the way she filled those roles, the substance of her work. She was the first among us to be affirmative in her actions, but was never here as a result of affirmative action.

Let me point to a few of her contributions.

She came to the Divinity School from undergraduate teaching at Indiana University and the now defunct Mundelein College, and from the start was recognized for her ability to relate serious theological and religious work to the world of undergraduates. I have no doubt that through her (almost) three decades among us, no other faculty member has contributed as much as she to teaching in the College and keeping our ties to pedagogy in the College vital. By concentrating on figures such as Thomas Merton and Dorothy Day, tracking autobiographies and biographies, she found ways to draw students into the larger world that such figures have represented. My forays into teaching in the College were regrettably rare, but from the students we shared I learned much of how she turned many toward serious inquiries in the field of religion.

Couple that with her ability to connect in another context: she has been a significant Catholic voice and presence in our pluralistic mix from the first. Before she and a cohort of “Bernie Cooke M.A. protégés” arrived from Marquette in 1966, I think there had been only one or two Catholic students enrolled in the school. The Critic magazine asked me to write about these newcomers, and I recall a pleasant evening with eleven of them in our home, and then what I learned doing follow-up research. Anne Carr stood out among these students. By the way, about two years later, Langdon Gilkey, swarmed over by Catholic Ph.D. students, told me that he thought about ninety of them were enrolled in that swollen student body.
What Carr, the Marquette cohort, and their pioneering contemporaries brought that not all their immediate successors did, was a critical loyalty to the Catholic tradition, something that stood her and them in good stead in the decades ahead. Some of those successors were in the mood of young people in Theodore Roszak’s The Making of a Counter Culture; they brought a utopian sense that they could throw away the legacy of the past and start over. They had their moment and faded away, whereas those who, like Carr, have rethought and reworked the tradition gained a readership far beyond Catholic and Christian circles and can more readily address the crises of Catholic and “organized” religious life today.

I recall that when the search committee approached Carr, we went over her previous academic work, especially her thesis that was becoming a book on Karl Rahner’s theology, with a molecule-by-molecule-of-ink analysis of her theological method and its workings-out. Those were the high years of Rahner studies, to which she contributed so significantly. When Scott Appleby and I were directing the Fundamentalism Project, we drew on her understanding of Rahner to prepare heuristic tools for analyzing what fundamentalists reject and what non-fundamentalists were trying to put to use.

It is easy to take for granted today Anne’s contribution to feminism, The Special Nature of Women? (a book she coedited), and so many other aspects of the unfolding role of women in the academy, the church, and especially theology and religious studies. No doubt others who appraise her career will give this the attention it deserves. I can only say that she brought a voice that commanded and commands respect, a theological depth, and a bid for conversation that was heard much more than that of her more strident contemporaries, and that will outlast them.

Hidden from view of most students have been Professor Carr’s struggles for health, her at least three bouts with very serious illness, her patience in suffering the setbacks, her appreciation and acceptance of the grace of recovery, her tending with care for others (including retired members of her religious order in Dubuque)—but those of us who have glimpsed it have had our own lives enriched.

Tucked into the memory books, in the category of what Willa Cather calls “the incomunicable past” of events shared along the way, are recalls of good times, such as when much of our faculty was airlifted to Tübingen to propose “new paradigms” for the study of theology, and where Anne made some proposals. There “on the road,” just as at home, Anne has always made good company, combining as she does seriousness of purpose with the ability to laugh and show friendship. Sharing an affective life is a major element in forming affection among humans. We have shared much with Anne, and hope to experience more in the years ahead. I can only sign off with, “Affectionately, Marty.”
We have been blessed to have her among us for so many years—a singular theological scholar of Christianity who is also, mirabile dictu, a real live Christian.

— DAVID TRACY —

The New Testament parable of the talents has always haunted me, for it reminds me that there are persons of only one talent. If the talent is good, with effort, one may develop it, as have most scholars. We of one talent admire and envy those of many talents, like Professor Anne Carr. As a scholar, her analytical care, her judiciousness, and her constructive work as a major Christian feminist theologian, indeed one of the founding “mothers” of that singularly important discipline, are justly famous. Her theology has been recognized by her peers in many ways: her receipt of the John Courtney Murray medal for excellence in theology and her honorary degrees, the most recent degree having been bestowed upon her by Loyola University. Her scholarship among us at the Divinity School and the College has been exemplary. In this room, we can find three generations of students who are witness to her thoughtfulness and critical care as a teacher, adviser, and dissertation reader.

Professor Carr also has other talents that those of us who possess a single talent sadly lack: administrative skills, as proved in her term as Associate Dean during the deanship of Joseph Kitagawa; her role as coeditor of the Journal of Religion, a position she excelled in for many years; her work as president of the Catholic Theological Society of America; and her work, for numerous years, as the first feminist theologian on the international progressive Catholic journal Concilium.

Anne Carr also possesses an even rarer talent than scholar and administrator: her unpaid, but widely praised, talent as a counselor for the academic and personal needs of too many students to count, as well as not a few of her colleagues. She has also, outside these halls, played a major role in the continuing post-Vatican II reforms of her splendid reforming order, the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Like so many members of her religious community, Anne has been tireless in her work for justice in a society and economy too often cruel to those it dares to name “losers,” as well as in the Catholic church community, with special attention to the deeply painful crises it has experienced over the years since Vatican II. In Hyde Park alone, Anne Carr, for many years, has had a ministry to the elderly (including my mother) at St. Thomas the Apostle parish, and she has labored in the soup kitchen for the homeless at St. Ambrose on Forty-seventh Street.

In sum, Anne Carr has developed all her talents: scholarly, administrative, and those related to counseling and to working for justice in our local, national, and international communities. She is, by any measure, a most remarkable person. We have been blessed to have her among us for so many years—a singular theological scholar of Christianity who is also, mirabile dictu, a real live Christian. Anne Carr’s theological vision and her way of life are one. This union of vision and way is rare for a modern thinker, and clearly Professor Anne Carr is one of those rare modern thinkers.
Consider her published books. Her first was on the most influential and probably most complex and difficult modern Catholic theologian, Karl Rahner. Her careful analysis of his complex method is still the best study of Rahner in anglophone scholarship.

Her book on Thomas Merton was one of the first to insist that the separation of spirituality and theology impoverished both. She also insisted that the kind of spiritual position needed today should be like that of Merton: contemplation in action for justice. In Merton’s struggle as a Trappist monk, he became more and more involved in the civil rights movement and anti-Vietnam War campaign, and, at the end, he lived a deep Christian involvement in Buddhism. It is Anne Carr who helped the rest of us understand how a prophetic and mystical spirituality and theology might be reconciled in the modern world.

Above all, of course, Professor Carr demonstrated her analytical and constructive skills, as well as her demand for justice, in her groundbreaking work on Christian feminist theology, published in 1988. In that amazing book, she never hesitated to expose the sexism of the Christian tradition, as well as to retrieve overlooked resources of the experience and theology of women.

In recent years, Professor Carr has studied and written on one of the most difficult and puzzling of Christian doctrines—the doctrine of providence. Simone Weil once wrote that we should be more attentive to the word we use when referring to what happens to us in life: do we say chance, fate, or providence? For postmodern thinkers, chance seems to rule; for others, fate illuminates the tragic dimensions of what happens to us (as in Nietzsche). But what does the word providence—once so central a teaching to Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and Stoic thought—mean now? Can we use it again carefully and meaningfully? If so, what is the relation of providence to chance and fate? With her sure instinct for a central issue of our present time, Anne Carr has proceeded to rethink providence. In her articles thus far, this much-needed study promises to illuminate our decade as much as her earlier studies illuminated earlier decades: Rahner in the seventies, the union of spirituality and theology in the eighties, constructive feminist theology in the eighties and nineties, and now the doctrine of providence.

For these singular works of scholarship we are all deeply grateful. I cannot claim to understand the puzzling theology of providence as well as Anne Carr, but this much even I can see: her presence among us and in modern theology has been not merely chance, or even fate, but providence.

Let me end with a brief tale—one both timely and parabolic. The shy Victorian poet Christina Rossetti (now considered one of the best lyric poets in English) once attended a dinner party in literary Victorian London. Almost every major poet was there—all of them anxious to meet the reclusive Rossetti. However, she said nothing until halfway through the meal, when she stood, moved to the center of the room, stated “I am Christina Rossetti,” and returned to her silence. No one ever forgot it.

So may I suggest, Anne, that at the next faculty dinner—conversation lively, opinions sharp, and perhaps egos flailing—that you stand up, go to the center of the room and simply state “I am Anne Carr.” Like Christina Rossetti, you have earned it.

It is Anne Carr who helped the rest of us understand how a prophetic and mystical spirituality and theology might be reconciled in the modern world.
Bernard McGinn, the Naomi Shenstone Donnelley Professor of Historical Theology and of the History of Christianity in the Divinity School and in the Committees on Medieval Studies and on General Studies, retired on June 30, 2003, after thirty-four years of service on the University of Chicago’s faculty. To celebrate his scholarship and teaching, a conference entitled “Spirituality and Mysticism” was held from May 6 to 7, 2003, in Swift Hall. Papers were delivered on this occasion by Richard Kieckhefer (Northwestern University), Niklaus Largier (University of California, Berkeley), and Amy Hollywood (University of Chicago Divinity School), concluding with a panel discussion with the presenters and Professor McGinn, moderated by Richard K. Emmerson (Medieval Academy of America). The conference culminated in a reception at which colleagues, students, and friends presented Professor McGinn with tributes. Following are those delivered by Divinity School colleagues Michael Fishbane and David Tracy, and by former student Kevin Madigan. The musical score, “Mystical Suite,” featured on page 37, was composed for Professor McGinn by Anthony J. Elia, a doctoral student in the Divinity School.

— MICHAEL FISHBANE —

It is now many years since I first met Bernie McGinn at a conference on spirituality and world religions at the United Nations. It was in his company, on that occasion, that I also met Langdon Gilkey and Charles Long, and in the course of several intense conversations came to realize the unique ethos of passionate intellectuality that characterized these colleagues of the Divinity School. Over the years, my conversations with Bernie have covered a great range of issues. I have never failed to regard his friendship as a special blessing, and I have been the grateful beneficiary of his profound and compendious learning. The ancient rabbis stressed that even for the most minute teaching that one receives from another, it is obligatory to regard that person as one’s teacher and to accord him the respect that is due a master. How then can I—how can we—properly acknowledge our debt to Bernie, who has taught us all so much? Certainly the greatest praise for Bernie McGinn would be to sustain the ideals and topics of scholarship to which he has devoted his life. But this will not stop me, on this happy occasion, from adding a few words of public appreciation. And since a leprechaun’s face is marked by a merry twist, let me begin in the spritely spirit.

All praise to our friend named McGinn, Who has mastered St. Thomas d’Aquinn; And with an Eriu-ogenous heart, Has sought to impart— The “gruntlœsen grunt” of Eckhart.

In the spirit of Catholic theology, I would venture to suggest that the great range of Bernie McGinn’s work is marked by a triune structure—three distinct dimensions that form one interlocking whole. The first of these dimensions, and perhaps the father of them all in Bernie’s development,
All too rare is the person who represents the true calling of academic learning, which Max Weber rightly called a “Beruf.”

is the philosophical theology of the Latin west, and in particular the patrimony marked by Augustine and Aquinas. These sources are characterized by scriptural exegesis and scholastic dialectics, and may be said to reveal the fixed and transtemporal truths of Christendom. The second dimension of Bernie’s labor is his lifelong fascination with the apocalyptic imagination, and the prophetic anticipation of an in-breaking moment of revelation. This focus on the person or event that is coming emphasizes some of the more dynamic and temporal truths of Christian hope. Finally, there is Bernie’s profound interest in the mystical spirit and the ever-present reality of the eternal and cosmic God. This focus may be said to center on the hic et nunc of divine Presence—a here and now that is the womb and child of time itself. Surely these three dimensions are part of one religious whole? At least in Bernie’s lifelong work they are three that are one. Or in the words of the Preacher, Ecclesiastes, they form a three-fold cord that cannot be broken.

There is another triad that I would like to mention at this time, and this involves a series of terms that the Talmudic sages employed to characterize certain human ideals. The first ideal is the person known as a “Sinai” or a “Mount Sinai,” which refers to one who has mastered the tradition (both its written and oral aspects), and who appears to the community as the very embodiment of its learning and practice. The second ideal is known as an “uprooter of mountains,” which refers to a person of deft and subtle intelligence, who can penetrate the foundations of the tradition and reground them through the power of intellect and the hermeneutical strategies of the tradition itself. The third ideal is the person who “deals with the needs of the community,” which refers to one who understands the living aspects of faith and is committed to the spiritual and material welfare of the people-at-large. And having mentioned these three ideals, can we not readily acknowledge their applicability to Bernie McGinn? He is at once a master of the tradition of Latin Christendom, embodying this as a new Sinai, and also a scholar of penetrating distinctions, of the sharpest intellectual discernment, fully capable of drawing the finest lines and outlines. (Who, indeed, has not marveled at the schemas of thought that appear in the handouts to his classes, that form the basis of his crystalline lectures, and that appear in elegant variations in his numerous expository and analytic writings?) Finally, he is a man who is the “eminence grise” behind the Classics of Western Spirituality series, which has brought the primary texts of the spiritual masters of several faiths to the attention of scholars and lay persons alike—benefiting the study of religious wisdom in the academy, in faith communities, and in the privacy of one’s heart. In all these labors, Bernie has worked with integrity and with an inspired sense of purpose and dedication.

I say this as the highest praise, for the integrity of scholarship is an ideal that cannot be taken for granted. All too rare is the person who represents the true calling of academic learning, which Max Weber rightly called a “Beruf.” This is a vocation at once spiritual and priestly, at once dedicated and self-transforming—and one that is so much at odds with the rampant values that consume the world around us. Jewish sources often refer to the ideal of talmud Torah, or Torah study, as an act of worship, and to the students’ attachment to the letters of the texts as a form of spiritual devekut, or “attachment,” to God. In the Latin west this ideal has also been manifest in the medieval monastery, whose culture was characterized by what has been called “the love of learning and the desire for God.” This is a sublime form of devotion where scholarship and prayer meet. The transformation of this ideal within the
modern academic setting is rare, but in our friend Bernie we have an exemplar from whom we can learn.

In Jewish tradition it is often the case on special occasions to refer to the numerological counterpart of letters that mark something significant with respect to the person being praised. On this occasion, since the name McGinn is a bit of a problem for the Hebrew alphabet, I thought to single out the fact that Bernie has recently turned sixty-five. The Hebrew letters equivalent to this sum are samekh (ס) and heh (ה). If inverted, these can indicate the word has, which is used in connection with the spiritual call to silent reverence before the majesty of God by the prophet Habbakuk: “The Lord is in His holy temple, be silent (הס) before His Presence all the earth” (2:20). In keeping with the tripartite dimension of Bernie's work mentioned above, I wish now to conclude this tribute with something of a triune midrash—giving a three-part theological rereading of this verse.

At the outset, the prophet directs our spiritual attention upward, to the transcendent majesty of God, hidden within the cosmic shrine of His holiness. Yet, at the same time, he speaks to us of the manifestation of that divine presence to the human heart, here below, and advocates its celebration in silence—for then God's Presence, and our acceptance of it, become our truest praise. If and when this religious reality comes to consciousness, we may also, perhaps, sense that the transcendent One does not have the whole earth as His object, but that He is, in truth, the very fullness of “all the earth”—the transcendent divinity revealed as the inmanent and pervasive mystery, the “All” of all-being. This new reading of the verse thus moves from a theology of transcendence to a mysticism of God's cosmic presence: The Lord is in His holy temple; be silent! For He is the All of all-being on earth.

But lest we end solely on this note of divine praise, let us recall the man in whose honor we have gathered, and for whom I have offered these words of theology. And in doing so, let me invite you to join now in happy celebration of our friend and colleague, Bernard McGinn:

So give glory to Bernardo bravissimo,
And his scholarship tanto magnifico—
With a discipline most Ignatius,
And dear Pat as mulier and matrix,
May you flourish in God's love most gracious.

— KEVIN MADIGAN —

In the late 1980s, Bernie and Pat asked me and my wife, Stephanie, if we would babysit their kids while they were away, heroically attempting to tolerate the food, wine, and sun of southern Italy. At that time, Bernie was serving as adviser to both of us. Like most graduate students, we were anxious to please in every way, so Stephanie and I agreed to move out of our handsome basement janitor's digs at 54th and Woodlawn into the scholarly palace that was, and is, 5701 South Kenwood Avenue.

As Pat will, perhaps wearily, acknowledge, it also was a palace of boys. Not only did Bernie live there, so did Daniel and John, who, we couldn't help but notice as we pondered the task of keeping two adolescent boys under wraps for two weeks, had been named after men of apocalyptic dispositions. As it turned out, the boys were great, and we had a wonderful time. It was magical to poke around Bernie's bookshelves, to work at his desk, to rub my non-existent beard with great solemnity, to inhabit in imagination the role of the great Chicago medievalist. For the most part, the boys took care of themselves, and I was able to indulge my summer fantasy.

But one night, halfway through our stay, Stephanie and I were startled from sleep by the sound of someone charging down the hall. Whoever it was rapped urgently on our door. It turned out to be John, the one named after the author of the Apocalypse. He roared a terrible roar: "I'M THROWING UP!" Opening the door gingerly, we perceived that, like a good pupil of Bernie, he was not exaggerating.

After we got John back to bed, Stephanie and I began to clean up. We allowed ourselves to wonder, why? Why hadn't John proceeded straight to the latrine instead of heralding his eruption to us first? Did he think he was doing us a favor? We never did figure it out. But no matter, this was Bernie's son. It was not for Job to question why God had smote him. Was it for us to wonder why the son of our adviser had incommoded us? We didn't think so. Like our friends, we

It was not for Job to question why God had smote him. Was it for us to wonder why the son of our adviser had incommoded us?
Bernie's mythical monastic career was obviously doing some important psychological work for a lot of people.

had profound respect for the Divinity School faculty. But for Bernie we reserved something like awe. In his presence, we experienced the mysterium tremendum et fascinans. So we thought it best not to complain about, nor even to mention, John's unfortunate nocturnal eruption.

Besides, once Bernie and Pat returned, we had a good story to tell and questions from curious students to entertain. Is it true, we were asked, that there is a hair shirt in the closet? No, we didn't see one. Apparently, Bernie wore it all the time, even on vacation. Others asked if there were any stigmata of Bernie having once been a monk. He was a Cistercian monk, right? This is probably the question I have been asked about Bernie more than any other. I told them that, though once ordained a diocesan priest, he had never, save perhaps in his dreams, donned the white wool robe. That, I tried to explain, was the other Bernard. But usually I only received stares of disbelief or skepticism. What about the great beard, or the near-tonsured perfection of the hair? I could have saved myself a lot of trouble getting the story right, because most people thought or wanted to believe Bernie was once a monk, if not a crypto-monk. Bernie's mythical monastic career was obviously doing some important psychological work for a lot of people.

For me, the monastic trope, whatever its historical limitations, actually does a lot of descriptive work. I am not thinking of the prodigies of scholarship, though being prodigies, one rightly stands in awe of them. I have in mind, rather, qualities of character, moral and scholarly habits of soul and mind that made him who he is and made us want to be like him.

There is, first of all, the fact that Bernie loved and loves the material on which he works. Crescat scientia, vita excolatur—let knowledge grow that life may be enriched. Bernie would surely agree. But his attitude toward work made explicit what Chicago's wonderful motto only implied: fruatur scientia—take delight in learning; let learning be relished. Bernie may seem—any monk may seem—an unlikely poster child for the pleasure principle. Still, if I know anything about Bernie, it is that he took deep and abiding pleasure in time travel, in inhabiting the world of the past, in uniting his soul with the soul of his literary heroes, in deciphering the intricacies of a marvelous sacred language. Pat put this more plainly and pleasingly to me once when she observed that Bernie liked nothing better than—I quote verbatim here—"to sit on his ass all day." This love of laborious sitting made a deep impression. For me, Bernie has always exemplified the life of a scholar whose learning was motivated by love and whose discipline was happily maintained by desire. He thus led an ideal life in two senses: supremely satisfying for him, it also held out a powerful ideal for those of us who came to perceive how desirable was the allure of a life anchored in passion for the past.

We are told that Paul, or one of his body doubles, once designated charity the greatest of virtues. With all due respect to the Apostle, he never experienced the contemporary American academy. Actually, in our context it is not charity but humility that is the supreme virtue. It also happens to be a virtue that Bernie has consistently exemplified and, incidentally, is another way in which he is a faithful son of St. Benedict. Never have we seen Bernie get in the way of the material whose meaning he is attempting to communicate or whose greatness he is trying to evoke. Never has he suggested that Bernard McGinn was more interesting or likely to be more enduring than Bernard of Clairvaux. (Ironically, though, and partly for that very reason, his work—Bernard of McGinn's—is likely to last for a very long time.)
has he been anything but transparent to the material. Bernie's work is not about self-glorification; it is about something that now seems sadly quaint: the pursuit of truth. And this aspiration to the true is rooted, I think, in his humility. Bernie took us on a great many intellectual journeys. Happily, they were always voyages away from the center of the self, outward, toward some more interesting locus of reflective activity.

If he was humble, Bernie was occasionally and fruitfully humbling. If you handed him the bad, the false, or the lazy, he was not likely to mistake it for the good, the true, or the beautiful, nor to say it was so. In response to some would-be clever display of learning, Bernie would tolerantly respond in the margin with two letters: "OK." This parsimony with praise was, I think, a function of Bernie's incapacity to lie or even to shade the truth, as well as his commendable aversion to cant. If it stung momentarily to be told our intellectual stunts were only OK, we were all the more gratified and elevated when we learned something had so pleased Bernie as to be judged "A-minus work," or to have earned the honorific "interesting" or "good." And we knew to take it seriously. In other words, we knew something was good if Bernie said it was. Like George Washington, he not only did not tell a lie, he could not.

This commitment to truth pervades all of Bernie's speech, whether it be in reaction to student writing or speaking, in book reviews, or in his own writing. Bernie's work, all of it, contains an implicit vow: to deliver the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. If Bernie says it, you can put it in the bank. His scholarship is so profound, so meticulous, so precise that his merely having said something guarantees its veracity. His word was, and is, truth. In a world of weightless words, his have achieved a kind of specific gravity, weight, and mass.

One of the déformations professionelles I have gratefully inherited from Bernie and happily cultivated is the pleasure taken in reading and occasionally writing Latin, that glorious, elegant, grand language of classical and Christian Rome. As I wrote these reflections, certain words kept springing to mind: amor, humilitas, veritas, probitas, and, inevitably, gravitas. These are the qualities of soul whose manifestation in Bernie's character, life, and career I have tried to give some expression. If they sound better than their modern English equivalents when applied to Bernie, I think it's because the subject to whom I have applied them has embodied so many of the virtues of the ancient and medieval figures to whom he has dedicated his life. As with Socrates or Augustine or Thomas, Bernie's has been a life in which character and career are barely distinguishable.

— DAVID TRACY —

I suspect I was invited to speak today because I have known Bernie for fifty-one years. So I shall use the occasion to share some personal memories.

We were both born and raised in the city of Yonkers, New York. Bernie was a year ahead of me at the Cathedral School in Manhattan, and was always there to prepare me for the next step in life. I remember well his kindness to me on my first day at that school, in September 1952. We had taken the bus together from Yonkers, and, thoughtfully, he waited for me afterwards to show me how to take the subway downtown. He let me know what to expect and was, even then, clear, accurate, and precise: he assured me that Cathedral provided a good classical education in Latin and Greek and related topics, and indeed it did.

More importantly, on that first subway ride we also both discovered a common obsession—books. We talked and talked about them, and still do: then it was D. H. Lawrence; now it is Meister Eckhart.

In 1959, Bernie went to study in Rome at the Gregorian University. And, in 1960, I followed him again.

It is difficult to express to a younger generation what the early sixties meant: at home, John F. Kennedy, a sign of youth and new hope, was elected, thus ending the fifties—a decade so conformist and repressive that only John Ashcroft could feel nostalgia for it.

Our church—the Roman Catholic Church—had resisted and openly fought modernity for three centuries. By 1960, all that was finally over. A new pope, John XXIII,
initiated the Second Vatican Council. All in all it was an unusual, perhaps even a unique, time and place to study theology. Everything seemed to change overnight. Moreover, there were some excellent professors at the Gregorian (above all, Bernard Lonergan), and it seemed that every other theologian was in town speaking in the Council: Hans Küng, Edward Schillebeecks, Karl Rahner, Henri de Lubac, Oscar Cullernann, Karl Barth, Albert Outler, and many others.

The early sixties were a time of authentic freshness and hope almost everywhere, especially for anyone young. As Wordsworth famously said, remembering his own youth in Paris during the Revolution:

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive
But to be young were very heaven.

Bernie and I were young then, and everyone in the world, for those few years, seemed to be young with us.

At that same time, Bernie continued to teach his friends. Over the next three years, he took us to what seemed every ancient ruin, every early Christian and medieval church, every Renaissance and Baroque palace, and much else besides. I have long since forgotten many a lecture of those years, but I can still tell you—at least when at the site—exactly what Bernie, with his already impressive erudition, taught our small group. For example, one day he walked us around the ancient walls of Rome and explained what every gate meant, where every siege had occurred. Another time, he shared with us his latest enthusiasm: the Etruscans. Surely there could not be a tomb, a burial mound, even an Etruscan piece of jewelry we missed. In case there was, he gave us each a bibliography in several languages.

After detours to graduate school (he to Brandeis), we met again in 1967 as lecturers at the Catholic University of America. That first year of teaching was very fine indeed. Then came 1968—that incredible year where all the hopes of the early sixties either evaporated or exploded. The great Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated, and the city of Washington erupted all around us in riots and flames. Next came Robert Kennedy, followed by the Democratic convention in Chicago, the Prague Spring ending with Soviet tanks, the “Events of May” in Paris, the massacre of students in Mexico City, the new pope (Paul VI) and his anti-birth-control encyclical. Thus began the implosion of post-Vatican II Catholicism that is still with us. For the first time in modern Catholic history, many laity and clergy rejected the teaching of a papal encyclical. So did many theologians, including me and Bernie and nineteen other young professors at Catholic University. We were all fired. Lawyers from the ACLU came to defend us. There was a civil trial.

In the midst of all this, a telephone call came from Jerald Brauer, then dean of the University of Chicago Divinity School. He asked whether Professor McGinn and I would each come to give a lecture and seminar. There were many Catholic students at Chicago since Vatican II, and they needed professors in the area. Our trial did not worry the dean, who predicted, rightly, that we would win it anyway.

And so, thirty-four years later, here we both are—older, perhaps wiser, and still delighted to be at this special place.

Another major change—in fact the change—occurred in Bernie's life a few years after we came here. This event can be entitled “And Then Came Pat”—the companion and love of Bernie's life, and he of hers. And then came Daniel and John, and, most recently, Daniel's wife, Gina.

And, as the entire scholarly world knows, Bernard McGinn's scholarship in medieval thought is exemplary. He is clearly one of the most distinguished medievalists in the world, an expert on the Scholastics, the apocalyptic writers, the monastic theologians, and, above all, the mystics. One can only salute this stunning achievement and keep reading (and rereading, as I do) all his books, articles, and series.

And now Professor McGinn is retiring. It is right that he should do so, I think, so that he can have more time to write further volumes. Write, write, write, Bernie! We all want and need more. Indeed, so singular is your achievement that I hereby propose that you no longer be named merely Professor Bernard McGinn, but now the more distinguished medieval title, Bernard of Yonkers.

Ad multos annos.
CATHERINE ALBANESE, Ph.D. 1972, professor of religious studies at the University of California at Santa Barbara, received a fellowship for 2003–2004 from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation and a University of California Presidential Fellowship in the Humanities to complete her new book, A Republic of Mystics and Metaphysicians: A Cultural History of U.S. Metaphysical Religion.

LEE BARKER, M.A. 1976, was appointed president of Meadville Lombard Theological School in Hyde Park, which trains Unitarian Universalist ministers.

REV. SCOTT BARRON, M.A. 1978, was ordained to the Episcopal priesthood in December 2002 at St. James Cathedral in Chicago. He currently serves as priest-in-charge at St. John's Episcopal Church in Mount Prospect, Illinois. Previously, he served in two UCC parishes and as a nursing home chaplain.

W. SHEPHERD BLISS, Th.M. 1969, D.Min. 1971, was appointed assistant professor of communication in the Humanities Division of the University of Hawaii at Hilo.


DENNIS CASTILLO, M.A. 1982, Ph.D. 1990, announces that Christ the King Seminary of the Diocese of Buffalo, New York, where he serves as academic dean, has been reaccredited by the Association of Theological Schools for a period of ten years with no notations. Mr. Castillo returned to full-time teaching in the seminary's Department of Church History this fall.

LAI CHI-TIM, M.A. 1991, Ph.D. 1995, was promoted to full professor in the Department of Religion at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

RABBI JOSEPH EDELHEIT, D.Min. 2001, former senior rabbi at Temple Israel in Minneapolis, was appointed to lead new Jewish studies and outreach programs at St. Cloud State University, effective this fall.


THOMAS FINAN, M.A. 1991, visiting assistant professor in the Department of History at St. Louis University and director of the Settlement and Archaeology of the Medieval Diocese of Elphin Research Project Company in Roscommon, Ireland, will publish A Nation in Medieval Ireland? An Examination of Gaelic Identity and Ideology, 1200–1400 (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, November 2003).

DANIEL GOLD, professor of South Asian religions at Cornell University, published Aesthetics and Analysis in Writing on Religion: Modern Fascinations (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).


DAVID HEIN, M.A. 1977, professor in and chair of the
Department of Religion at Hood College in Maryland,
coauthored, with Gardiner H. Shattuck, Jr., The Episcopalians
(Westport, Conn.: Praeger Publishers, 2003), a volume in
Praeger's Denominations in America series.

REV. DR. VIRGINIA KNOWLES, M.A. 1976, is a retired min-
ister living in Mitchellville, Maryland. She performs various
services, including preaching, marrying, conducting services of
union, memorializing, and counseling at a prison.

KEVIN P. LEE, M.A. 1998, was appointed assistant professor of
law at Ave Maria School of Law, where he will teach contracts
and business organizations. For the last two years, he served
as an adjunct instructor in the Department of Religion at
DePaul University.

RICHARD B. MILLER, Ph.D. 1985, professor in the Depart-
ment of Religious Studies at Indiana University, published
Children, Ethics, and Modern Medicine (Bloomington: Indiana
University Press, 2003). Mr. Miller also stepped down from
his role as chair of the Department of Religious Studies at
Indiana University to assume the directorship of that institu-
tion's Poynter Center for the Study of Ethics and Amer-
ican Institutions.

STEPHANIE PAULSELL, M.A. 1986, Ph.D. 1993, was appointed
associate dean for ministerial studies and senior lecturer of
ministry at Harvard Divinity School.

DAVID L. PERRY, M.A. 1982, Ph.D. 1993, was appointed pro-
fessor of ethics at the U.S. Army War College in Carlisle,
Pennsylvania.

STEPHEN G. POST, Ph.D. 1983, professor in the Department
of Bioethics in the School of Medicine at Case Western
Reserve University, and a member of the Episcopal Church
for twenty years, served as editor in chief of the third edition
of The Encyclopedia of Bioethics, 5 vols. (Macmillan Reference,
2003); author of Human Nature and the Freedom of Public
Religious Expression (Notre Dame University Press, 2003);
and coeditor, with Robert H. Binstock, of The Fountain of Youth:
Cultural, Scientific and Ethical Perspectives on a Biomedical Goal
(Oxford University Press, 2003). With a generous grant
from the Templeton Foundation, Mr. Post founded an institute
to study altruism and agape in 2001. For more information
about this institute, visit www.unlimitedlove_institute.org.

MAC LINSCLASS RICKETTS, M.A. 1961, Ph.D. 1964, professor
emeritus of religion at Louisburg College, published Former
Friends and Forgotten Facts (Norcross, Ga.: Criterion
Publishing, 2003), and six articles about Mircea Eliade,
including essays, critical reviews, and an interview with
Eliade's former dentist.

REV. RICHARD W. SCHEIMANN, Ph.D. 1963, professor emer-
itus of philosophy at Valparaiso University, published two
websites: one entitled "Resource Page for the Windheim Kirch-
spiel" (http://freepages.history.rootsweb.com/~scheimann),
the other containing an assortment of his essays and writ-
ings (http://personal.myvine.com/~gebhard/essays). He also
published "Family History and German Church Records,
Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly 69:2 (summer 1996).

STEPHEN A. SIMMONS, Ph.D. 1995, was appointed director
of continuing education at Moravian Theological Seminary
in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

DOUGLAS STURM, B.D. 1953, Ph.D. 1959, professor emeritus
of religion and political science at Bucknell University,
edited a collection of essays entitled Belonging Together:
Faith and Politics in a Relational World, the inaugural publi-
cation of P&F Press, a recent initiative of the Center for
Process Thought in Claremont, California. The collection can
be ordered online at www.ctr4process.org/pandf/bookstor.htm,
or by phone at 800-626-7821 (ext. 2559). Contributors to
this text are joined in their commitment to a progressive
form of political action derived from process thought. They
focus on diverse issues, such as political responsibility,
restorative justice, sexual and racial identity, environmental
concern, and global democracy. Other Divinity School
alumni among the essayists are WARREN COPELAND (M.A.
1971, Ph.D. 1977) and FRANKLIN I. GAMWELL (M.A. 1970,
Ph.D. 1973). In the past year, Mr. Sturm has also served as a
columnist on questions of social justice in Creative Trans-
formation, a quarterly journal sponsored by the Process and
Faith program at the Center. He and his wife, MARGIE
JEAN ANDERSON (M.A. 1955), celebrated their fiftieth wed-
ing anniversary in September.

RALPH L. UNDERWOOD, M.A. 1971, Ph.D. 1975, began serving
as the interim academic dean of Austin Presbyterian Theo-
logical Seminary in Texas in August 2003. A member of the
seminary's faculty since 1978, he retired at the end of 2001.
ANGELINA WAI-CHING WONG, M.A. 1991, Ph.D. 1997, was promoted to associate professor with tenure in the Department of Religion at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

MARK WALLACE, Ph.D. 1986, chair and associate professor of religion at Swarthmore College, received an Andrew W. Mellon New Directions Fellowship for Teacher-Scholars.

GEORGE WECKMAN, Ph.D. 1969, who has taught in the Department of Philosophy at Ohio University since 1968, joined with faculty in the Department of Classical Languages to create a new Department of Classics and World Religions. A major in world religions will be instituted in winter 2004.


LOSSES

ROWLAND ANTHONY SHERRILL, M.A. 1971, Ph.D. 1975, professor of religious studies and director of American studies at Indiana University-Purdue University in Indianapolis, passed away on May 31, 2003, after a yearlong bout with cancer. He was fifty-nine.

Tony Sherrill was a highly regarded member of both the religious studies and American studies communities. He received his B.A. from Eckerd College in 1966, his M.A. in English from the University of Kentucky in 1968, and his Ph.D. in religion and literature from the Divinity School in 1975. He joined the Department of English at IUPUI in 1973, and immediately helped found that institution's Department of Religious Studies.

Mr. Sherrill's scholarship and teaching centered on religion and American cultural expression, especially on the ways that unexpected religious energies and implications can be discerned in cultural forms and systems. He was the author of two books: *Road-Book America: Contemporary Culture and the New Picaresque* and *The Prophetic Melville: Experience, Transcendence, Tragedy*; editor of one: *Religion and the Life of the Nation: American Recoveries*; and coeditor of another: *Religion, the Independent Sector, and American Culture*, with Conrad Cherry. He wrote over one hundred articles, book chapters, reference work entries, and reviews, leaving his mark on several scholarly communities. He was, since 1990, coeditor of *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation*, published by the Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture, which he was instrumental in founding.

Mr. Sherrill received numerous prizes for his teaching and service, including the Indiana University Amoco Foundation Award for Distinguished Teaching in 1986, the School of Liberal Arts Distinguished Faculty Award in 1991, and the IUPUI Irvin Experience/Excellence Award for Service in 1994. He was chair of the Department of Religious Studies for fifteen years, and director of the Center for American Studies for six years. Mr. Sherrill was named Chancellor's Professor of Religious Studies in 2001 and, in 2003, the first Millennium Chair for his contributions to liberal arts across the country. He was awarded an honorary doctorate from his alma mater, Eckerd College, just one week prior to his passing.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Rowland A. Sherrill Religious Studies Prize, in care of the IU Foundation, 50 South Meridian Street, Suite 400, Indianapolis, Indiana 46202.

Survivors include his wife, Joy Justice Sherrill; children, Amy Sherer and John Rowland Sherrill; mother, Elise Rowland Sherrill; and three grandchildren.

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to the articulation and implementation of such a “new humanism.” That project, begun as a scholarly endeavor to recover humankind’s religious history, may now also be needed, I would suggest, to help provide valuable materials for dealing ethically and responsibly with our future.

ENDNOTES


William Schweiker, Continued from page 19

21. For an insightful comparative study of the emergence of kinds of fundamentalism, see Martin Riesebrodt, Pious Passion: The Emergence of Modern Fundamentalism in the United States and Iran (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).
22. In this essay, I have not been able to explore the insights and oversights of these traditions for the treatment of non-human animals and the rest of the environment. The form of religious humanism presented in these pages sees human beings within, and not against, the wider compass of life on this planet. Given this fact, it is important to insist on the distinctive responsibility and dignity of human beings without thereby adopting in any way a simple instrumental relation to other forms of life.

William LaFleur welcomes comments, criticisms, or suggestions via email at lafleur@sas.upenn.edu.
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