

# Commonweal

A Review of Religion, Politics & Culture

MAY 19, 2017



## DEJA VOODOO

*Charles Wilber on the Return  
of Supply-Side Economics*

**Gary Gutting on**  
Roger Scruton

**Margaret O'Brien Steinfels on**  
France's Identity Politics

**Andrew Bacevich on**  
'Middle East Studies'



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Charles R. Morris, Mollie Wilson O'Reilly,  
Margaret O'Brien Steinfelds

*Subscription Information*  
845-267 3068  
subscriptions@commonwealmagazine.org

*Advertising Manager*  
Regan Pickett  
commonwealads@gmail.com  
540-935-2172

*Publisher*  
Thomas Baker

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## LETTERS

### *Growing up trans, victims of sin, Dante*

#### CHILD OF GOD

I was a transgender child raised in a very religious Catholic family. My life story shows what can happen when a boy like me is told to accept his biological gender and suppress the desire to be accepted and loved as a girl. In pre-school in the 1950s, I spent so much time in the girls' "dress-up corner" that my teachers wrote a letter to my parents about me. I don't know what they recommended (I couldn't read yet!), but my parents opted for punishment. I was not even allowed to talk or ask questions about gender difference, much less do anything that would be seen as "girlish."

I was in high school when sex-change operations first became available in the United States, but as a young adult I decided not to get one. It would have rendered me unable to have children, and my understanding of Catholic teaching back then was that I should do whatever I could to adjust to life as a heterosexual male. Now, approaching retirement, I can look back on a good life with a successful career, a loving spouse, and wonderful adult children. But the price of living "in the closet" has been high: hundreds of hours of psychotherapy and spiritual direction, a lifetime of eating disorders and psychological suffering, and very little experience of deep, fulfilling friendships. When interacting with people I am guarded, not myself. I feel as if I'm putting on an act, to spare other people from having to "freak out," as the people in my pre-school did.

What do I think about the issues now being debated across our country, and in a recent issue of *Commonweal* ("The Church and Transgender Identity," March 10)? My answer is that I don't know. I don't know what society or the church should do about children like me. I don't know if I would have been happier had I

decided to follow my dream. What I do know is that my transgender identity feels inborn: I knew it as soon as I was old enough to know anything. And I know there is nothing I could ever do to make the feelings go away. I've tried.

Over the years I have longed for better guidance from the church. Nowhere does the vast literature of Catholic spirituality ask how a transgender person can lead a Christian life. All I can do is cling to the faith that, if the Creator made the kind of universe in which transgender people are possible, then the God "who wills everyone to be saved and come to knowledge of the truth" must have a plan even for me. I just wish I knew what it is.

ANONYMOUS

#### HEALING FOR VICTIMS

Amen! Amen to Jerome A. Miller's article ("The Cry of Abel's Blood," April 14). I am eighty-eight years old, and I have felt the same as Miller since I was twelve or thirteen. The church has always taught that Christ's death on the cross forgives the sinner, but not much was ever said about restoring spiritual health to the victim of the sin. If one is betrayed by another, the church was never concerned about the one betrayed.

And when the clergy sex scandal became known to the public, I expected there would be more prayer services in churches for the victims, with prayers for their healing, but little ever happened. I know from experience that healing prayer is the only way that the victims of others' sins—whether involving sexual abuse or betrayal or any number of other wrongs—will ever find peace and wholeness.

The church definitely needs to rethink Christ's crucifixion and how it relates to all people.

TERESA MOTTET  
Fairfield, Iowa

# Commonweal

MAY 19, 2017 • VOLUME 144 • NUMBER 9

## UPFRONT

- Letters 2  
Editorial 5 *The King of Debt*

## COLUMNISTS

- Republican Heaven 6 *Charles R. Morris*  
La Nostalgie et l'Oubli 7 *Margaret O'Brien Steinfels*

## SHORT TAKES

- The Catholic Vision 8 *Joshua P. Hochschild*  
The Trump Touch 11 *Lubana Adi*  
Women & Children Last 13 *Agnes R. Howard*

## ARTICLES

- Free-Market Folly 15 *Charles Wilber*  
Is the Pope 'Anti-Jewish'? 19 *Philip A. Cunningham*  
What We Can & Cannot Fix 22 *Jeff Gubin*

## FILM

- Beauty and the Beast & Colossal* 26 *Richard Alleva*

## BOOKS

- On Human Nature* 28 *Gary Gutting*  
by Roger Scruton  
*Public Intellectuals in the Global Arena* 32 *Eric Miller*  
edited by Michael C. Desch  
*Marvellous Thieves* 34 *Celia Wren*  
by Paulo Lemos Horta  
*America's Dream Palace* 36 *Andrew J. Bacevich*  
by Osamah F. Khalil

## POETRY

- Pietà in the Living Room 10 *Kyle J. Bassett*  
Twice Last Night I Saw Eternity 14 *Peter Cooley*  
Hiking All Night, an Ode 25 *Timothy Murphy*

## LAST WORD

- The Door of No Return 39 *Richard Brown*

**PASSED OVER IN SILENCE**

I have been waiting fifty-two years to hear a theologian express the view Jerome Miller did in "The Cry of Abel's Blood."

I was eight years old in 1965, innocent, bright, and feisty. The priest chose me because of my looks and sensitivity. He knew my dad. I was chosen to carry a carton of milk to him before Mass.

He was grooming me and I knew it instantly. Terror crept up within, my throat closed, my jaw clenched. Caught, bound, controlled. The secret swallowed me up for years.

The priest was a young buck who challenged the rules of the church in the 1960s. Good-looking, creative, with a loud voice, he demanded notice everywhere he roamed. People liked him, mostly, while some cringed.

I hate what he did to me. I hate his lies that silenced me. I hate that, under the

auspices of love, he raped me over and over again.

Father T. carried on sexually abusing children for twenty-five more years until a victim was finally heard. The church officials reported to me in the early 1990s that his priestly faculties were removed and he was then sent for treatment.

We overlooked priests like this for far too long, and we continue to miss the suffering of the victims and their families. As Miller states, "Moral theology and soteriology have traditionally focused primarily, if not exclusively, on the impact sin has on the sinner and how the sinner is redeemed by Jesus' death. The victims of sin were passed over in silence, as if their salvation were an altogether different issue."

May we begin to recognize the suffering among us and invite those who have perpetrated pain and suffering to atone for their sins—including some of the leaders of the church. "The victims are treated as

extras, or even props, in the drama of our sin and redemption. The sinner, redeemed or unredeemed, remains alone at center stage. For the violated, this is another betrayal." Yes, it sure is!

PATRICIA GALLAGHER MARCHANT

Milwaukee, Wisc.

**SAVING VIRGIL?**

I thoroughly enjoyed Griffin Oleynick's finely crafted and perceptive review of Vittorio Montemaggi's *Reading Dante's Commedia as Theology: Divinity Realized in Human Encounter* (March 10). Oleynick captures the originality of Montemaggi's approach, permeated with autobiographical resonances and hymning litanies of gratitude to fellow toilers in the vineyards of Dante scholarship (a welcome gesture, but one whose proliferation can at times verge on the tedious).

Oleynick well sums up the central theme of Montemaggi's study in these words: "The *Commedia* insists that we are all called to divinization, to union with the living God, whom Dante invites us to discover within ourselves and, more importantly, in our loving relationships with each other."

The one lacuna I found in Oleynick's excellent exposition was the absence of what might be called the "Christological grammar" of Dante's divinizing journey. Commenting on lines from the *Purgatorio*, Montemaggi astutely affirms: "Christ is the center of the multiplication of love spoken of in these lines." Even more daringly, he writes of Dante's entire opus: "Dante fervently believes and hopes his work can be recognized as an embodiment of divinity—love—capable of nourishing the multiplication of love originating in—and unfolding as—Christ."

A considerable merit of the book is Montemaggi's ability to keep the particular and the universal in creative and imaginative tension. Thus, I find it plausible that the *Commedia* leads us legitimately to ponder the question (with a nod to von Balthasar): "Dare we hope that Virgil be saved?" But what is absolutely clear from the *poema sacro* is that salvation and divinization come only "through Christ."

REV. ROBERT P. IMBELL  
New York, N.Y.



# Commonweal

## CATHOLICS & POLITICS IN THE AGE OF TRUMP

**Couldn't make it to our event in Washington, D.C. on May 1?**

*Watch it all here:*

[commonwealmagazine.org/catholicspoliticstrump](http://commonwealmagazine.org/catholicspoliticstrump)

*Featuring: Leslie Tentler,  
Andrew Sullivan, John Gehring,  
and Matthew Sitman*

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*From the Editors*

# The King of Debt



In the last week of its first one hundred days, the Trump administration—desperate to pad its meager record of accomplishments—issued a flurry of executive orders and sketchy legislative proposals. Most of the orders amounted to little more than political theater: they called for reviews and reports, created new task forces, or directed federal agencies to comply with already existing laws. There was a frantic effort to breathe new life into Trumpcare, whose prognosis remains grim. And, finally, there was the president's long-awaited tax plan, which, after much fanfare, turned out to be a one-page outline offering even fewer specifics than the one he had released as a candidate.

Some have argued that the tax plan is yet more evidence that a man who campaigned as a populist is now governing as a plutocrat. In truth, the new plan looks almost exactly like the one he ran on. Whatever Trump may have said at his rallies or in his tweets (at one point he bragged that his plan would end up costing him “a fortune”), his campaign platform clearly promised massive tax cuts to the wealthiest Americans. No one should be surprised that he is now trying to keep that promise. It is, after all, the one promise Republican presidents have always tried to keep.

The president's new plan, billed as “the biggest individual and business tax cut in American history,” was hastily prepared and rapturously presented by Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and Gary D. Cohn, the director of the National Economic Council—both multimillionaires who used to work at Goldman Sachs. The White House has proposed to lower income-tax rates across the board, double the standard deduction, and reduce the number of tax brackets from seven to three. It would scrap the estate tax, the 3.8 percent tax on investment income that helps fund Obamacare, and the alternative minimum tax, which keeps the wealthiest Americans from using loopholes to pay little or nothing in federal income taxes. The corporate tax rate would fall from 35 to 15 percent, and companies would be offered a special one-time tax on money repatriated from overseas—at a rate yet to be determined.

Much else about the plan remains to be determined. For example, the income ranges at which the new tax rates—10, 25, and 35 percent—would apply. The plan vaguely promises to get rid of tax breaks that “mainly benefit the wealthiest taxpayers” or “special interests,” but the only tax breaks it mentions are the ones it would protect, like the one for charitable giving, which mainly benefits the wealthy.

It's impossible to say whether the plan's vagueness is the result of hurry or political calculation or both. But vague (and predictable) as it is, the outline is alarming in at least two ways. First, the Trump tax plan would have the convenient effect of saving Trump himself a lot of money—though, as long as he refuses to release his tax returns, no one can say how much. Because of a tax filing leaked in March, we do know that in 2005 he paid \$38 million in federal taxes on about \$150 million worth of income. Without the alternative minimum tax, which his plan would eliminate, he would have paid just over \$5 million. His plan would also allow so-called “pass-through” entities to be taxed at the new corporate rate of 15 percent instead of at the individual tax rate, as they are now. This would be a huge boon to real-estate developers like Trump. It would also encourage many high-income workers who are now salaried employees to reclassify themselves as consultants in order to cut their tax liability in half. Finally, the Trump family would obviously benefit a great deal from an elimination of the estate tax.

The worst thing about the tax plan, however, is not how much money it would save the Trumps, but how much it would cost the federal government. The nonpartisan Tax Policy Center estimates that it could add as much as \$7 trillion in debt over the next decade. And yet many of the same Republican lawmakers who routinely accused the Obama administration of fiscal recklessness have welcomed Trump's proposal. The lesson seems to be that, while the country can't afford to spend more money on entitlement programs or infrastructure, it can still afford a massive debt-financed tax break for the rich. Cohn and Mnuchin argue that their plan would pay for itself by spurring investment and creating millions of jobs. But, as Charles Wilber argues in this issue (“Free-Market Folly,” page 15), there has never been much evidence for their trickle-down theory. It persists mainly because it is still the best disguise for naked greed that politicians have been able to come up with. Trump, as we keep discovering, has a weakness for theories without evidence, so no one should be too surprised to find him latching on to this one. And if the tax cuts don't end up paying for themselves? He can probably live with that too. This is, after all, the man who once anointed himself the “king of debt” and promised to run the country the way he ran his businesses. ■

May 3, 2017



Charles R. Morris

# Republican Heaven

TAXES, INEQUALITY, AND THE RISE OF THE .01 PERCENT

One of President Donald Trump's critical action items is a "massive" tax reduction, especially for upper-income taxpayers. Understanding the workings of the current tax system will help progressives evaluate his proposals.

*Taxes and Inequality.* The American federal tax system is actually fairly progressive in the sense that, compared with most advanced countries, the rich pay more taxes per dollar of income than the poor. Conservatives love to point out that fact, of course, but they obscure the nature of federal taxing and spending practices. In the first place, American taxes of all kinds—federal, state, and local—are among the lowest of advanced countries. As of 2015, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), calculated that the total American tax bite, measured as a percentage of GDP, was 26.4 percent, the thirty-second lowest of the thirty-six countries in the OECD, above only Ireland, Chile, South Korea, and Mexico. The average tax burden in the organization's member states was 34.3 percent, and the top, in Denmark, was 46.6 percent.

The progressivity in most European financial systems is to be found in their spending patterns, not the incidence of tax levies. Sweden and Denmark, two of the highest-tax countries, have a fairly flat tax rate that runs from about 30 percent to 60 percent for the top brackets. That's acceptable, however, because government spending is primarily directed at improving the quality of life for the whole population—schools, excellent health care, readily available child care, generous leave provisions, and well-maintained public infrastructure.

The contrast with the United States is stark. Military spending consumes far more of the budget than in any other advanced country. After Social Security,

Medicare, and Medicaid, there is little left for public infrastructure and social spending. U.S. infrastructure investment is at a rate only about half that in Europe, and no other rich country has so mean an attitude toward its low-income citizens. Our government's cash transfers to the poor, besides their notable stinginess, actually reduce the progressivity of the system. The United States had the tenth-highest income inequality of the OECD countries before taxes and cash transfers, but was the fourth most unequal *after* taxes and transfers. Those data were compiled before the full rollout of the Affordable Care Act,



which would have ameliorated the skew in transfers, but those subsidies are clearly in danger under the Republicans.

It may seem implausible that major cash transfers to the poor could worsen inequality, but it may be related to the funding of the health-care system. Alone among major countries, the United States has ensured that health care is run to enhance the bottom lines of pharmaceutical companies, big hospitals, and the medical-equipment industry. Within just the past half decade, for example, the country has been blanketed with proton-radiation treatment centers, with price tags running from \$100 to \$200 million. Despite early hype, they

have proven superior in the treatment of only a very small segment of cancers. A number are now bankrupt or contemplating bankruptcy.

*The .01 Percent.* Government policy also needs to recognize how radically the profile of inequality has been shifting in recent years. The "one-percent" mantra may no longer be apposite. You get into the top 10 percent in income with pre-tax household earnings of \$112,000, which hardly qualifies as "rich." The top 1 percent threshold is \$372,000, which would sweep in many primary-care doctors and mid-level banking executives. The top 0.1 percent starts at \$1.5 million. Think top surgeons or thirty-something managing directors at Goldman Sachs.

The real action, however, has occurred in the top one hundredth of one percent, which comprises about twelve-thousand families. To cross the line into that happy few, you need to earn \$7.2 million a year. Even that would put you at the bottom of a very steep mountain of wealth, but near the heights attained by most of Trump's cabinet appointees. The 0.01 percent are different from the ordinary rich, for they are getting much richer, even as the rest of the 1 percent is stagnating or losing ground. The earnings of the ordinary rich come almost entirely from labor income. But the recent spectacular gains by the 0.01 percent have mostly come from "pass-through" arrangements—returns from private equity, drilling partnerships, trusts, and the like. This is murky territory, with a cornucopia of opportunities to fiddle taxes, exploit off-shore accounts, and jigger trust arrangements—like Mitt Romney's fabulous Bain IRA accounts. A final nasty twist is that since 2000, the slower the economic growth, the better the outcomes for the 0.01 percent. That's almost a description of Republican heaven. ■

Margaret O'Brien Steinfelds

# La Nostalgie et l'Oubli

WHAT LE PEN'S SUPPORTERS WOULD PREFER TO FORGET

**L**ike nearly every American not named Steve Bannon, I am relieved that Emmanuel Macron did better than Marine Le Pen in the first round of France's presidential election and, as I write, is expected to win the second. That prospect has gone some way in relieving my astonishment over identity politics *à la française*. If America's identity politics in November seemed to boil down to white resentment and an apparent nostalgia for coal mines, Le Pen's campaign to make France great again has been similarly peculiar.

During the 1960s, when I lived in France for a year, French identity was not an issue. I never had any trouble knowing who was French and who was not. I was not. But I tried. I learned how to pee in one of those holes in the ground that passed as a toilet. I was happy to let shopkeepers archly tutor my vocabulary and grammar (my Chicago-shaped accent was clearly beyond redemption). The bakery, the milk store, the butcher, the *charcuterie*, and the *blanchisserie* were veritable Berlitz classes. I learned to greet with appropriate deference and politesse their proprietors as well as my neighbors and the man who ran water down the curb and swept it twice a day. He, of course, was Arab—i.e., not French. Like me. Identity was never in doubt.

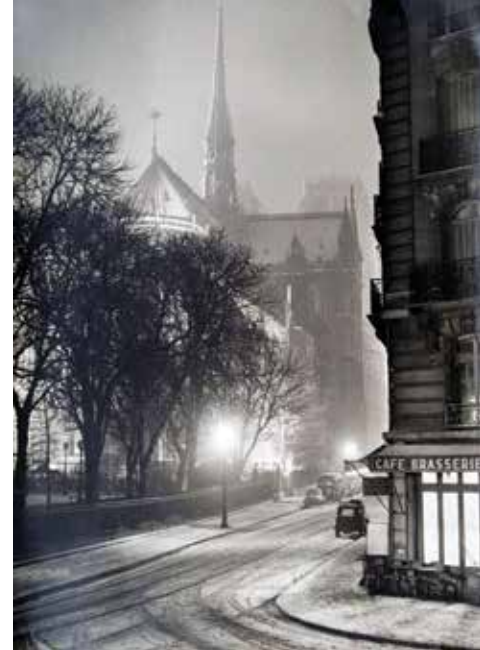
So I was surprised to find Roger Cohen of the *New York Times* reporting that the French were now in a veritable stew (probably *boeuf bourguignon*), suffering “from cultural and civilizational insecurity.” The villains: immigrants; open borders; the euro; and the EU's heavy-handed regulations. At the heart of these complaints are the charming French villages “stripped of life,” as one of Cohen's interlocutors puts it. “Small stores had been replaced by huge ‘hypermarkets’ on the outskirts of town.

Human contact was almost forgotten. ‘In the shopping malls the cashiers are lined up like cattle for the slaughter,’ he said. Old people without cars were treated like human refuse.”

I wondered: Did this sense of loss include nostalgia for those holes in the ground I remember from my limber youth? Had the three-hour lunch and naptime that closed those charming small stores and other machines of commerce gone the way of the “Deux Chevaux,” Citroen's 2CV—a masterpiece of automotive minimalism and environmental low-impact, lacking only in comfort, speed, and safety? Haven't laundromats finally replaced the *blanchisseries* that needed a week to wash and dry (and fold origami-like) the family clothes? With standard-sized refrigerators now a staple of the French kitchen, has weekly, instead of daily, shopping cast a shadow on domestic cuisine? In my time, there were no “hypermarkets” anywhere; small stores dotted the urban landscape no less than the villages.

Back when I unsuccessfully tried to be French, women dressed to their fingertips, gloves, hats, stockings, impeccable jackets; skirts, shirts, and dresses that fit perfectly. Madame was always elegantly turned out. French women would never do the daily grocery shopping in anything less than what looked their Sunday best. In recent years, during short vacations in France, I was astonished to find that the elegant and the impeccable had succumbed to something more practical: perfectly fitting blue jeans and tee shirts, shapely sweat shirts, and snazzy running shoes. Tailoring, ironing, mending, and dressing had been reduced by hours. *Quel dommage*.

When Marie Le Pen's supporters chant “On est chez nous” as a lament for French identity and a plea to bring back the glory days, what do they really remember? Even she has dressed down for



the campaign. Do they long for the daily domestic routine tied to the timetable of the bakery, the milk store, the butcher, the *charcuterie*, whose restricted hours and limited choices were as dictatorial as anything the EU has dreamed up? Do they imagine that the Napoleonic Code governing every aspect of daily life—or perhaps the *dirigiste* mentality the Code symbolized—was more liberating? Don't the stagnant economy and youth unemployment have something to do with France's very own work rules? In 1968 you practically had to take a blood test to use the Bibliothèque Nationale and have formal permission to conduct a riot.

What else have the French forgotten? Le Pen's recent remarks on the French police's notorious July 1942 round-up and deportation of Jews to German death camps neatly exonerated the French people: “If there was responsibility, it is with those who were in power at the time, it is not with France. France has been mistreated, in people's minds, for years.” When I was in France, the French were just beginning to acknowledge their role in the Holocaust. Now some of them are trying hard to forget it. They are also trying to forget that the immigrants Le Pen promises to expel are the children of France's *mission civilisatrice*, colonial governance in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.

Identity is a two-edged sword. The French, and certainly those who support Le Pen, seem to have forgotten—the charming village stores notwithstanding—a great deal about France's past. ■

Joshua P. Hochschild

# The Catholic Vision

## HIRING FOR MISSION IS ABOUT MORE THAN 'COUNTING CATHOLICS'

**I**t is time to demystify “hiring for mission.” Faculty and administrators can be understandably uncomfortable about overt efforts to hire for mission. Faculty candidates applying for positions at Catholic colleges can receive conflicting messages about what “mission fit” means. All parties—candidates, hiring committees, and university administrators—deserve help in reflecting on how a prospective employee can engage, support, and advance a Catholic college’s mission.

Recent reflections in *Commonweal* make a solid case for the need of Catholic universities to hire Catholics (“Hiring for Mission,” February 10). John Garvey sensibly explains that a Catholic scholarly culture presumes a population of Catholic scholars, and that, far from being contrary to academic freedom, this is analogous to many other examples of building excellent academic culture through selective hiring. Mark W. Roche offers practical advice, based on admirable firsthand experience, about effectively recruiting “mission hires.”

One obvious criticism of all this was well articulated in a response by David O’Brien (“Mission before Identity,” March 24): “hiring Catholics” seems like a glib answer to a complex question about discerning, articulating, and embodying the mission of a Catholic university. O’Brien’s criticism doesn’t so much undermine the arguments of Garvey and Roche as point to a different question: With or without “hiring Catholics,” how can a Catholic university genuinely hire for mission?

In fact, it is widely agreed that Catholic colleges don’t just want to “count Catholics.” Current and prospective faculty members, whatever their religious convictions, can contribute to the mission of a Catholic university in diverse ways, and different institutions will have their own ways of articulating mission fit and their own strategies of “hiring for mission.”

One thing is sure: institutions that take their mission seriously should do more than ask candidates vague questions like, “Are you comfortable with our Catholic mission?” or “How would you support our Catholic mission?” It’s only somewhat better if candidates are asked to engage with a Catholic college’s mission in a written statement, or at a designated stage of the interview process. Ideally, attention to mission should be thoroughly integrated with the entire process of recruiting and hiring. Instead of making sure to include “a mission question” somewhere in the interview schedule, hiring committees and administrators should use every stage of the hiring process to evaluate, at least implicitly, a candidate’s ability to contribute to mission.

A prepared candidate will find ways to display thoughtfulness in engaging mission even when that is not explicitly solicited. Broadly speaking, we can distinguish three areas of discernment about potential to contribute to Catholic mission, and how that can best be articulated in the application process. Because this is a matter of discernment, I formulate them below as questions from a first-person perspective—that is, as questions that candidates can ask to help honestly evaluate, and effectively articulate, their capacity to contribute to mission. But these questions could easily be reformulated from the perspective of a hiring committee or university administrator—not necessarily questions to pose directly to candidates, but at the very least questions for interviewers to pose to themselves about candidates, to help notice and appreciate relevant qualities in the process of interviewing and recruiting.

**H**ow well do I understand the fundamental relevance of Catholicism to a university’s academic mission? This is a general question, but it is important to reflect seriously on the ways in which Catholic mission can’t be thought of as something merely superadded to a university mission. Of course, every institution will have its own ongoing conversation about mission, and a suitable hire will be someone willing to join this conversation, learn from it, and help advance it. So a prepared candidate will understand first of all that there are different models and expressions of Catholic identity, that healthy Catholic colleges sustain ongoing conversations about mission, and that it is important to learn more about this particular school’s distinctive character.

No matter what a school’s particular culture, however, Catholic mission has distinct intellectual content and thus academic relevance. It is a mistake to think of Catholicism as a strictly moral phenomenon or a matter of personal spirituality. The Catholic vision of the person is often summarized in terms of the *imago Dei*, which means at least that human beings have an intrinsic dignity, with the gifts of free will and intelligence; that we are creatures instilled by God with a natural orientation to truth, goodness, and beauty. Such a conception of human nature is at the heart of the Catholic worldview, and has consequences for every dimension of human culture, politics, and society. A discerning candidate can thus ask further: *Do I understand that Catholic mission cannot be limited to particular moral or practical issues, or just to matters of “personal faith”?* *Do I understand the mission of a Catholic university in terms of engagement with a tradition of deep reflection on fundamental questions about the human condition?*





The University of Notre Dame

It is not uncommon that a candidate's entry to Catholic mission is through the church's social teaching. This is well and good, but Catholic social teaching is only one manifestation of the broader Catholic intellectual tradition rooted in a distinctive view of the person. At a healthy Catholic university, mission will never be reduced to social teaching, and the institution will look for ways that the intellectual work of teaching and research are informed by this whole tradition. A discerning candidate can thus also ask: *Do I recognize that the social teaching of the Catholic Church is rooted in a rich, comprehensive vision of the human person? Do I appreciate the Catholic intellectual tradition, not as a dead canon, but as a living conversation about deep and universal questions? Am I eager to engage with other faculty in advancing the institution's ongoing embodiment of Catholic mission through learning from, engaging, and enriching the Catholic intellectual tradition?*

This last question leads to the next main area of discernment: *Does Catholic mission animate my desire to collaborate with faculty peers and engage the research community?* The particular ways in which Catholic mission can enhance the academic work of a Catholic university will vary by institution. For an undergraduate liberal-arts college, it may be primarily through collaborating in core-curriculum development and teaching. For a research university, collaboration, especially interdisciplinary collaboration, may seem more difficult, but (as Garvey argued) the Catholic mission can inspire distinctive research questions and projects, and even highly specialized research can show awareness of the Catholic notion of the unity of truth. A discerning candidate can thus ask: *Do I have a strong desire to be part of an intellectual community that takes seriously the project of pursuing greater integration of knowledge, motivated by the ideal of the unity of truth? Do I have a desire to converse with faculty both in my own discipline and across disciplines about how our work is part of a common project? Do I see how the Catholic intellectual tradition can help me pose more interesting research questions and pursue more interesting inquiry as a scholar?*

One proof of the richness of the Catholic vision of the per-

son is its relevance to any academic field, not just philosophy and theology. Humanistic disciplines most obviously pose questions about the human person, but even disciplines like mathematics and chemistry can help us appreciate the role of rationality, order, and beauty in human life and knowledge; and practical disciplines like business or social work make assumptions about human nature, human motivation, and human fulfillment. An obvious question for discernment is therefore: *Do I appreciate how the Catholic vision of the person is particularly relevant to my discipline, its methodology, and its relation to other disciplines?*

Likewise, different disciplines—and trends within disciplines—can make methodological (and sometimes metaphysical) assumptions about human nature, which may highlight or occlude different dimensions of the Catholic vision of the person. Examples include: materialistic assumptions in physical sciences, determinism in psychology, social constructivism in sociology and communication studies, Marxism or post-structuralism in history or literary studies. We should expect well-trained scholars not only to be familiar with the trends and assumptions of their discipline, but to be aware of how these might conflict with, or could be complemented by, a Christian anthropology and the narrative of redemption from sin. While every discipline is responsible for finding its own way of addressing such questions, a candidate might ask: *Do I recognize the assumptions and limitations of my own discipline, or of trends within my discipline? Can I help model how the discipline can be complemented by, and integrated with, other disciplines, especially in light of the Catholic vision of the person?*

Of course the ultimate manifestation of Catholic mission is in service to students. Thus a third general question to help discern potential contribution to mission: *Can I advance Catholic mission in the teaching and mentoring of students?*

Personal attention to students is often a hallmark of Catholic universities. This personal attention needs to be informed not only by goodwill but also by formation in a certain kind of intellectual culture. It is rare that a discipline does not have some area that touches on Catholic teaching, and

Catholic schools should nurture especially those students eager to integrate their faith with their academic interests. Someone who would teach at a Catholic college should thus ask more specifically, *Can I help students appreciate the reasonableness and relevance of Catholic teaching? Could I help a student understand and appreciate the relationship between his or her faith and my academic discipline?*

Beyond these intellectual questions, there are even more personal ones. Whether we intend to be or not, teachers are mentors and models. Even apart from important, overt occasions where faculty can exemplify Catholic mission (prayer before class, attending weekday Masses with students, or even a non-Catholic's demonstrated commitment to religious observance), all our interactions with students will model—incarnate—ideals and commitments. So a discerning candidate would also do well to ask, *Can I personally model, and share with students, an integrated understanding of human nature and the universe? As a mentor and model, can I help students grow in faith and spiritual maturity?*

These three general areas of discernment, and the example questions I've proposed, are not meant to be an exhaustive catalogue of qualities that contribute to mission. Nor is it expected that any new faculty member would necessarily embody all the characteristics suggested by these questions. Different candidates will bring different personal and intellectual strengths. The point is that faculty contribution to mission means that the work of faculty is recognized as having a fundamental significance, contributing to a larger and noble project. Just insofar as faculty are informed by and serve the Catholic mission, a Catholic university fosters a more coherent and robust academic endeavor than most secular schools can boast.

Notably, one does not have to be a Catholic in order to address such questions well. Indeed, once a campus community gets used to discerning mission fit in terms of questions like this—instead of the more vague and abstract questions that can either seem like meaningless formalities or threatening litmus tests—it becomes clear that very different kinds of people, of various faith backgrounds, can be excited about and contribute to Catholic mission. At the same time, such questions can help recruit very high-quality candidates, including but not limited to well-formed Catholics. Such people, who may have opportunities to teach at different kinds of schools, will take keen interest in a Catholic college confident enough to take its mission seriously.

Finally, while many of these questions are quite specific to faculty hiring, with appropriate adjustments and elaborations they could also apply to other areas of university employment. Suitably reformulated, such questions could be used

## PIETÀ IN THE LIVING ROOM

Mothers possess no gland, no loom of muscle that makes oxygen  
So you covered my face with a clear-plastic breast,  
And mechanical as that breathing-treatment, you tended  
To the droplets on the inside of my mask.

I can still feel you untucking me from sheets,  
Sweat sticking like burial shrouds as you carried me  
To your lap, draped me across armrests to make me  
Comfortably some part of you, an overflowing limb.

My dreams were the legs of that rocking-chair  
Infinitely arcing toward their current location,  
And as we moved love was weight on the loose  
Wooden joints that sang like the choking bird I was.

But your hopes were steadier. They had to be  
Something closer to the moon moving the tide  
Of breath within me, whiter than the towel  
You used to wipe away all the life I wouldn't swallow.

—Kyle J. Bassett

*Kyle J. Bassett earned his MFA at Arizona State University and is currently a PhD student at Texas Tech. His work has previously appeared or is scheduled to appear in The Unrorean, The McNeese Review, Texas Poetry Review, and elsewhere. Kyle is the Web Editor for Hayden's Ferry Review and is currently working on a book-length project centered around the cult-classic television show, Red Dwarf.*

for discernment in hiring coaches, student-life professionals, development officers, marketing and admissions staff, diversity officers, student-services staff, and others. Indeed, analogous questions can be used to assess candidates for any management and leadership position, including president and trustee.

Personnel is policy. Hiring is of utmost importance for the health and integrity of an institution. At a Catholic institution, discerning who will occupy positions will always involve asking what characteristics candidates bring to help their areas of responsibility achieve distinctive excellence in light of Catholic mission. This doesn't mean just hiring people who can "check the Catholic box." It means hiring people able and eager to engage some dimension of the Catholic worldview and thereby enrich their work and their institution. ■

**Joshua P. Hochschild** is Monsignor Robert R. Kline Professor of Philosophy and former dean at the College of Liberal Arts at Mount St. Mary's University in Emmitsburg, Maryland.

Lubana Adi

# The Trump Touch

## WHAT IT'S LIKE TO TRAVEL AS A MUSLIM

One of the happiest days in my life was the day in 1999 when I became a U.S. citizen. Born in Italy while my Syrian father, then a medical student, was doing his residency there, I later met and married a Syrian-American U.S. citizen, Rashid Jijakli, the father of my three American-born children. Three years after our marriage, I became eligible for citizenship, passed the citizenship test, proudly took the oath of allegiance, sang the “Star-Spangled Banner,” waved my little souvenir flag, and—with a few tears—began a wonderful new life.

One of the things a prospective citizen studying for that citizenship test learns about is the Bill of Rights—a powerful testament to the American love of freedom, especially so, for me, in the Fourth Amendment:

The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by oath of affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

Have you perhaps heard about the “checkpoints” that are so familiar in the Arab Middle East? A “checkpoint” is nothing more or less than an unreasonable search, always with the risk of arrest by the *mukhabarat*, or secret police. How grateful I was, how liberated I felt, to be at last the citizen of a free country where such searches and seizures were forbidden by the most basic law of the land.

But does the Fourth Amendment apply to me, a Muslim-American citizen in a simple hijab? Does it apply at Los Angeles International Airport?

On February 23, 2016, I arrived at LAX booked on a Turkish Airlines flight to Istanbul and then to Gaziantep. Gaziantep is a city in south-central Turkey, near the Syrian border, where my aged mother and two brothers are living as refugees from the Syrian wars. Having re-injured my already injured back a few days before, I arrived at security in a wheelchair kindly provided by the airport. But when I was given my boarding pass, I immediately noticed the fateful letters SSSS, which meant, as I knew from my one and only prior trip to Turkey, that I would be “randomly selected” for extra screening.

Sure enough, at the security checkpoint, I was shunted to a separate line where my purse and carry-on were emptied out and inspected and where I was required to remove my back brace and undergo both the usual full-body scan, twice, and also an aggressive body search, again twice. The first body-searcher reached between my legs and roughly



groped under my hijab. I had asked her to please be gentle with my injured back. When I repeated this request to the second body-searcher, she saw fit to give me a sharp jab in the back, making me cry out, lurch forward in pain, and demand to speak to her supervisor.

The supervisor came. I assured him that I was cooperating, only asking for reasonable care with my injury. He apologized, returned my passport to me, and released me to proceed to the gate with my friendly wheelchair pilot. Alas, my problems were only beginning.

After waiting at the gate for some minutes, I heard a voice over the loudspeaker: “Lubana Adi, come to the counter!” I went. Several armed men plus one woman were waiting for me. I was required yet again to show my visa and passport, yet again to undergo a body search, and yet again to have my purse and carry-on emptied out and worked over. This time, in addition, my hands and feet were checked with a kind of bomb paper that, as they coldly explained to me, would reveal whether I had recently worked with explosives.

Then commenced a rapid-fire cross-examination with the agents taking turns. I was asked for my name, my husband’s name, my children’s names, and my destination, which was Gaziantep.

“Where else?” came the skeptical response, but given my injury and the winter weather in a snowy region of Turkey, I truly had no other destination in mind. Later in the interrogation, I would have to deny an agent’s gratuitous claim that I planned to visit Syria. The questions continued:

“Is your father still practicing medicine?” (Yes.)

“Are you bringing in supplies for refugees?” (No.)

“Why do you have so much money?”



I had several thousand dollars, which they required me to count out in front of them. Some was for my mother, to help her pay her rent. Some was against the possibility that I might again need to be hospitalized in Turkey as I had been on the earlier trip when I suffered the initial injury. By law, I should add, any American citizen may bring as much as \$10,000 with her on a trip abroad. I was well under the limit.

I was required to provide my mother's and my brothers' addresses in Gaziantep. I was asked where I worked (I don't work outside the home). I was asked about my volunteer activity (I help out at my children's school).

Finally, an especially sullen agent asked the rudest question of all as he waved my passport in front of my face: "Where did you get this?"

As this interrogation went on, I had begun to sense that its purpose was to goad me to anger or sarcasm or some other outburst that could be construed as a refusal to cooperate. They came closest with this insulting question, but as I wanted only to continue with my family visit, I let the question pass with only:

"Where do you think I got it?"

At length, they seemed to give up, and I was allowed to board, but my troubles were not over. I was barely settled in my seat when two armed men approached from the front of the plane, and another two from the back. I was required to leave the plane and undergo a last interrogation in the small open area where the boarding ramp meets the aircraft. This time, one of my interrogators had studied Arabic and asked me, with a non-Arabic accent:

"Do you have Daesh [ISIS in Arabic] in your city?"

The intrusion of bad Arabic seemed a way to serve notice that for him I was not an American, despite my passport, but an Arab whose city was Hama, Syria, my family's city of origin. I have not laid eyes on Hama since 1993. I know nothing at all about ISIS activity there, and I said so. Finally, grudgingly, they allowed me to re-board but with the parting promise:

"We'll be waiting for you when you come back."

And indeed they were.

My trip to Gaziantep was fully the warm and caring reunion with my mother and brothers that I had hoped it would be. My back continued to hurt, however, and I did make one trip to a local hospital where an MRI was taken of my back. The image was provided to me on a CD for my doctors to view on my return.

For the agents waiting for me on my March 19 return, that CD was highly suspect. Why was the hospital's name not on it? What else was recorded on it? Why had I attempted to open a bank account in Gaziantep? (I had indeed tried, in the hope of facilitating later assistance to my mother.) Why had I left the country with only \$500? (Much had gone to my mother, some to the hospital, some to fancy restaurants for large family gatherings, a good deal on a large number of expensive gifts for stateside family and friends, and so on. But in any case the money was mine!

Does an American traveler have to account to government agents for every dollar she spends?)

Arriving at LAX exhausted after a thirteen-hour flight, I was subjected this time to three-and-a-half hours of interrogation. Every souvenir was scrutinized and challenged. Again, my itinerary was called into question:

"You went to Syria!"

Again, I said that I had not. At one point, near the end of the ordeal, one of the agents pounced, as if catching me out at last in some deception:

"You went to Gaziantep—Gaziantep, a border city! Why Gaziantep?"

Why Gaziantep? Where else would I go? I was visiting my mother and brothers, and Gaziantep is where they live! I was not allowed to phone my husband, who was waiting with our children to meet me. Instead, my phone was seized by an agent with U.S. Customs and Border Protection; and when it was returned, nothing worked as it had previously. My assumption can only be that its contents were copied.

Toward the end of the three-and-a-half hours, I could barely stay awake, and I put my head down on the table in exhaustion. Then, suddenly, it was over. My wallet was returned to me with its credit cards in a jumbled stack, and I was ordered to leave. To the agents' annoyance, I carefully replaced each card in its previous slot in the wallet before walking out to meet my distraught family.

Is America safer because a dozen or more agents spent hours interrogating an American citizen with no criminal record and no terrorist associations? Like any loyal citizen, I want my country protected from any and all terrorist threats. But such "unreasonable searches" are a waste of taxpayer money.

I intend to file no lawsuit, seek no apology. My only hope—as a Muslim, of course, but primarily as a citizen—is to alert my fellow citizens to what is happening to our constitutional protections. The so-called border-search exemption means that the Fourth Amendment's requirement of probable cause does not apply to customs officials, the *Los Angeles Times* discovered when editing the shorter version of this story that they published on April 7, 2017. And President Trump did not begin the practice of "detaining" cellphones. That practice began under George W. Bush. But as the *Times* discovered, cellphone searches by the Department of Homeland Security have skyrocketed in 2017—DHS officials searched more phones in February of this year than in all of 2015.

President Trump's new security regime is wasting even more of our time and money and, I submit, scorning the spirit if not the letter of the Fourth Amendment of our treasured Constitution. ■

**Lubana Adi** cares for her three children at home in Los Angeles County and volunteers in the neighborhood school. She was assisted in writing this account by members of Church of the Messiah, Santa Ana, California.



*Agnes R. Howard*

## Women & Children Last

### WHY REPUBLICANS ARE WRONG TO TREAT PRENATAL CARE AS A LUXURY

**T**hough their recent failure to repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and replace it with the American Health Care Act (AHCA) still stings, Republicans have not given up on health-care reform. As in the final days before the Republican bill was pulled in March, contention persists over continuation the Affordable Care Act's list of "essential health benefits" that insurers are required to cover. These include outpatient and laboratory services, preventative and pediatric services, and maternity care.

This last category has drawn fire from critics of Obamacare, for whom it symbolizes the folly of forcing people to pay for insurance provisions they will never use. Pressed by Rep. Mike Doyle (D-Pa.) to explain which essential health benefits he found objectionable, Rep. John Shimkus (R-Ill.) replied, "What about men having to purchase prenatal care?" Shimkus compared this requirement to "buy[ing] a cabin in Montana that you're never going to use." And he was not the only one to question the wisdom of requiring all health insurance to cover maternity care. Columnist Charles Krauthammer advised, "Best to mandate nothing. Let the customer decide. A sixty-year-old couple doesn't need maternity coverage. Why should they be forced to pay for it?" Krauthammer added, "I don't know about you, but I don't need lactation services." On Twitter and Facebook, people wondered aloud whether Shimkus understood men's part in occasioning the need for maternity care. Some said that if men should not have to pay for care that only women need, then women should not have to pay for Viagra.

Those who view prenatal care as an essential benefit have grounds to protest. But prenatal care isn't like Viagra. Men's interest in prenatal care is not primarily about sex. They have an interest in prenatal care because they wouldn't be alive without it. Each of us exists because some woman nurtured us for the first nine months of our lives, the ones before our birth—and ideally she received some help with that. Prenatal care offers medical oversight of a woman during the period of her pregnancy, encouraging her to take care of herself and watching out for possible complications. Good maternity care prevents needless suffering, as well as the high costs associated with preterm births and low birth weights. Both the pregnant woman and the fetus are the recipients of prenatal care. Caring for the former is the most effective way of caring for the latter.

While prenatal care relies on medical oversight, much of its success depends on the actions of pregnant women themselves. What they eat, how much rest they get, how they protect themselves from harm—all can bear in powerful ways on the future health of their children. Regrettably, such actions often go unnoticed except when they receive negative attention, as when women are blamed for harms indirectly brought to the fetus through poverty, addiction, or exposure to disease. Upholding the value of prenatal care should prompt us to appreciate how much good mothers do for their children before birth. A woman who takes good care of herself during pregnancy presents a compelling combination of goods, two (or more) parties flourishing because of that care.



To object to having to pay for insurance that covers prenatal care because one knows one will never use it is to misunderstand how health insurance works and what it's for. Health insurance is not an arrangement where payers choose only the services they know (or, rather, think) they will need. Buyers may have some choice when it comes to premiums, deductibles, and coverage, but the system assumes, first, that buyers cannot know in advance all the services they might need one day and, second, that risks are properly shared by a pool of people, some of whom will need more medical care than others. If essential health services were not covered by all insurance plans but were instead offered separately only to those likely to need them, the costs of maternity care would be borne entirely by prospective moth-

## TWICE LAST NIGHT I SAW ETERNITY

after Henry Vaughan

The second time it was that smaller light  
a flashlight flickers, battery almost dead  
but these mazurkas lit up the Western sky  
each instant panoramic, grace dechained from asking,  
the declaration of a wish fulfilled  
such as the full moon scatters with its silence  
on the darkest dark waters at summer's end.

The first time I experienced it in Braille  
though I'm 20-20 with glasses and the shell  
I stopped to reach along the beach stood still  
seconds before the ground under my step  
curved outward, the surface of another world.

I was the shell and on the shell.  
In the interior I whorled, my own echo  
my soul, the shell. There was an angel,  
a fistful of wings. I'll have to tell you  
the rest tomorrow. When you're more receptive.

—Peter Cooley

ers. Such an insurance system would make childbearing enormously—and, for some, prohibitively—expensive. This would be both bad policy and bad PR; it would imply that Republicans have little regard for mothers or motherhood.

Disparagement of maternity coverage is particularly glaring in light of the history of prenatal care. Popularized in the early twentieth century, prenatal care was a new approach applied to an old and distressing problem: the death and sickness of women and infants. Progressive reformers and child-health advocates, as well as obstetricians, noticed that if several factors were monitored before birth, disasters during birth could be prevented. By the middle of the century, prenatal-care proponents were pressing this approach not just for a few women likely to have problems but for all women, to encourage their health and that of their children.

Reformers often appealed to the national interest: the whole country had a stake in helping women foster the health of babies. Julia Lathrop, the first director of the U.S. Children's Bureau from 1912 to 1921, lamented America's high infant-mortality rates and looked to prenatal care as one of the chief remedies. In the wake of World War I, Lathrop oversaw a 1918–19 "Children's Year," which she promoted with the slogan "The health of the child is the power of the nation." The 1921 Sheppard-Towner Act helped fund prenatal care and educate women about it. President Herbert

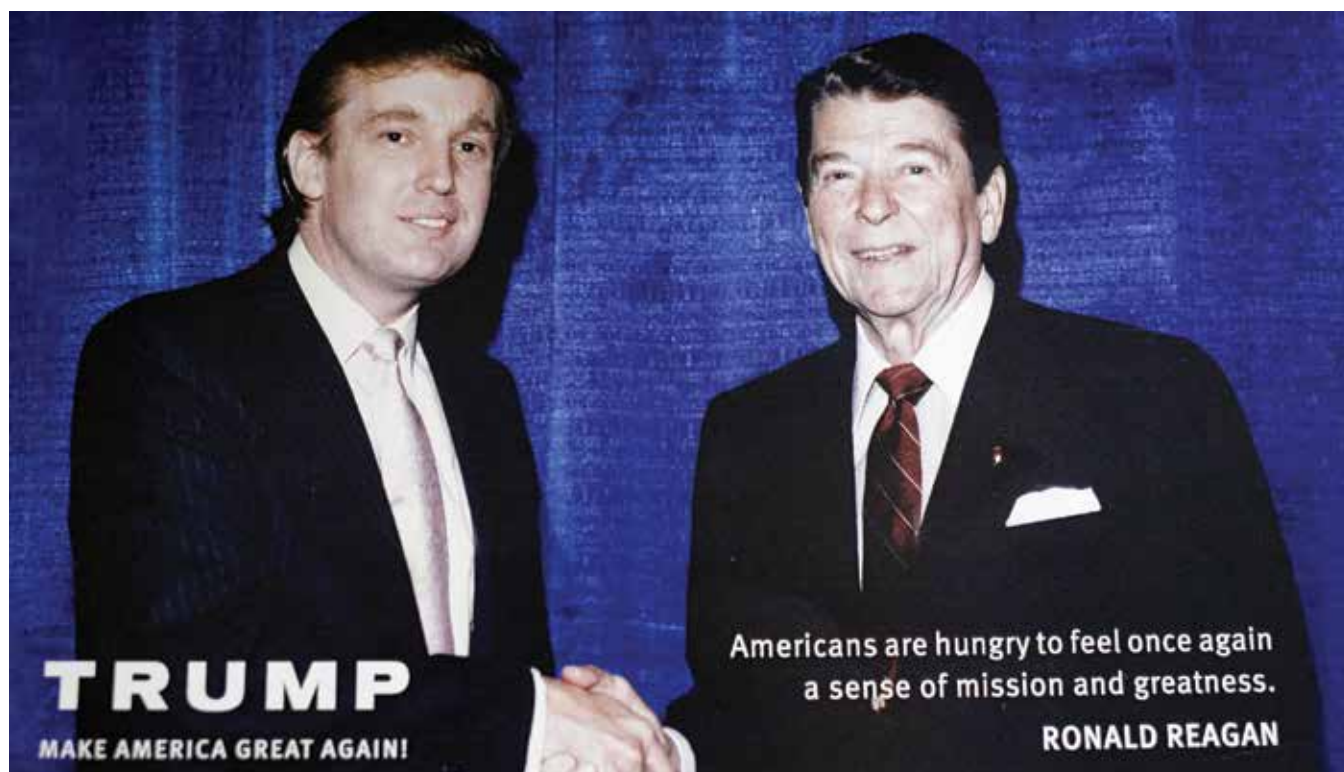
Hoover hosted a 1930 conference on children's health at the White House, whose proposals included: "for every child full preparation for his birth, his mother receiving prenatal, natal, and postnatal care." In a maternity manual published during World War II, Dr. Mario Castallo and Audrey Walz told mothers that if they gave the fetus "the right start," they would "benefit untold generations," for "upon that mite rests our whole system of government. Nowhere is it so important as in a democracy that its citizens should be capable of shouldering their share in a 'government of the people'.... The procreation of healthy children and the protection of the mother-to-be and her unborn child is of vital importance to your country."

We need not endorse the overzealous pronatalism threading through some of that language to affirm that the health of the next generation is a concern of the present one, and that assistance provided to women engaged in childbearing is a worthwhile investment. Prenatal care is about as striking an example of the harmony of interests as can be found: a woman taking care of her own health in the process of taking care of someone else's, a branch of medicine devoted to the intersection of those health concerns and to bringing long-term benefits out of more intensive short-term treatments.

This is not a blanket endorsement of prenatal care as it is currently practiced. As with health care overall, there are troubling disparities between the kind of prenatal care available to the rich and the kind available to the poor. Rates of fetal and maternal mortality and morbidity remain alarmingly high in the United States. A 2015 study by the World Health Organization found U.S. maternal-mortality figures higher than those of most other rich countries, and half of these deaths were declared preventable. Rates of preterm birth in the United States are more than 40 percent higher for black women than for white women, earning this country a "C" on the annual March of Dimes report card in 2016. And there are better and worse ways to devote resources to pregnancy care. Advocates of midwifery have long supported more personalized approaches to the care of pregnant women, with greater focus on maternal nutrition. A community-based arrangement like CenteringPregnancy, which offers peer-supported and patient-centered care, could improve outcomes while costing less than more conventional medical approaches.

So, like everything else, prenatal care could be improved. But to fail to recognize it as a common good—to identify it as a peculiar benefit just for women or, worse, as the female equivalent of Viagra—is to misunderstand something crucial about both health care and humanity. Motherhood should not be understood as just a luxury or a lifestyle choice. No country can survive without it. It's lamentable that some lawmakers and pundits should now need to be reminded of this.

**Agnes R. Howard** is lecturer in humanities at Valparaiso University in Valparaiso, Indiana.



# Free-Market Folly

## *Trumponomics vs. Catholic Social Teaching*

Charles Wilber

**P**resident Donald J. Trump's economic program, at least what we know of it, fits comfortably with free-market ideas but conflicts with Catholic social thought as embedded in a number of social encyclicals and the U.S. bishops' 1986 letter on the economy, "Economic Justice for All." The bishops' pastoral letter argues that concern for human dignity in social solidarity is at the core of Christian faith. Catholic social thought reflects a communitarian conception of society that prioritizes the common good. Because economic institutions and policies have a major impact on human dignity they raise not only technical but moral concerns as well. Therefore, the bishops argue, every perspective on economic life that

**Charles Wilber** is emeritus professor of economics at the University of Notre Dame. He is the author of *Economics and Ethics: An Introduction* and *Catholic Spending and Acting Justly*.

is human, moral, and Christian must be shaped by three questions: What does the economy do for people? What does it do to people? And how do people participate in it? In addition, the bishops argue that in pursuing the common good special concern must be given to the economy's impact on the poor and powerless because they are particularly vulnerable and needy.

Free-market thought, by contrast, is the child of an eighteenth-century liberalism that repudiates the very idea of a common good: society is merely a collection of individuals who enter into voluntary exchanges driven by self-interest. Individual liberty is the highest good, and, if individuals are left free to pursue their self-interest, the result will be the maximum material welfare. Advocates of this approach argue that the best way to deal with economic problems is to rely on the individual's pursuit of self-interest in a private-property system, regulated by the forces of market



competition; the government, in this view, should act as the neutral umpire of the rules of the economic game. In order to have an income each person has to provide something (a product, a service, or their labor) that others want and are willing and able to pay for, and through a process of voluntary exchange, overall production will be maximized while at the same time protecting individual freedom.

Stefano Zamagni has elaborated the differences between Catholic social thought and free-market approaches to the common good:

Freedom has three dimensions: autonomy, immunity and empowerment. Autonomy has to do with freedom of choice. Immunity has to do with the absence of coercion. It is, in brief, the negative freedom (that is to say the “freedom from”) cited by Isaiah Berlin. Empowerment, in the sense given to it by Amartya Sen, has to do with the capability to choose—that is to say to reach goals that are set, at least in part, by the person himself. One is not free if one is never (at least partially) able to fulfill one’s own life plan.

Free-market thought focuses on autonomy and immunity while neglecting empowerment. But the concept of the common good within Catholic social thought is the connective tissue that binds these three dimensions of freedom together: autonomy, immunity, and empowerment. The bishops’ three questions—what does the economy do for people, what does it do to people, and how do people participate in it—reflect these three dimensions of freedom.

The Trump administration has not embraced free-market policies on every issue, but the core tenets of free-market thought are central to his economic program: that markets work well; that government controls are seldom effective; and that investors, who are the driving force of the economy, must be given incentives such as lower taxes and fewer regulations to perform their magic. These are dubious assumptions, and putting them into practice is unlikely to “make America great again.” Catholics attentive to our tradition of social and political thought especially should be wary of such policies. Taking the examples of tax cuts and deregulation, both at the heart of Trump’s economic vision, will show why.

**T**rickle-down economics rests on the idea that policies that benefit the wealthy will ultimately help everybody, even the poor. The term was coined by Will Rogers, who observed of President Herbert Hoover’s 1928 tax cuts: “The money was all appropriated for the top in the hopes that it would trickle down to the needy. Mr. Hoover...[didn’t] know that money trickled up.”

The term is probably most associated now with former president Ronald Reagan. His defenders claim he was successful in rescuing the economy from stagflation by cutting taxes on the rich, setting off a boom. At the same time, government programs established during the previous forty-five years were attacked because they supposedly reduced any number of important “incentives.” Free up the economy

and all would be well, the mantra went. Reduce welfare, lower minimum wages, and cut unemployment benefits so that the poor would have greater incentives to work; lower taxes and remove regulations on business so that the resulting higher profits would be an incentive for corporations and wealthy individuals to save and invest. Do all that, and productivity would increase and the GDP grow. Eventually, this largesse would trickle down so that even those at the bottom would be better off than before.

These promises proved to be more ideology than reality. The facts of Reagan’s trickle-down policies tell a different story. His administration conquered the inflation “half” of stagflation at the cost of what was then the deepest recession since the 1930s. The subsequent recovery after 1982 covered up a number of problems that continue to challenge policymakers: the record budget and trade deficits; an unprecedented increase in consumption expenditures and decline in savings; a tragic deferral of infrastructure maintenance; the deindustrialization of the U.S. economy and with it the growth of a two-tiered wage system; and expansion of a chronically poor “underclass” trapped inside the lowest-wage sectors of the economy or pushed outside the economy altogether, hungry and homeless.

These changes generated increasing income inequality, and labor’s share of personal income fell by three percentage points between 1980 and 1990, while the share of payments (profits, interest, rents) to owners of assets increased from 22.7 percent to 26.1 percent—a dramatic change in such a short period of time. In addition, inequalities within wage and salary incomes grew, as hourly wages stagnated or even declined while executive pay for managers dramatically increased. When changes in family income between 1977 and 1989 are looked at, the results are even more dramatic—the top 1 percent of families captured 44 to 70 percent of the total increase, depending on the definitions used, resulting in their share of total after-tax income jumping from 7 to 12 percent. In contrast, the bottom 40 percent of families actually lost income, both relatively and absolutely.

Changes in the employment structure of the economy created a situation where the poor became both more numerous and poorer, and where getting a job was no longer a way out of poverty—31.5 percent of all jobs in 1987 paid less than was necessary to support a family of four above the poverty line. The number of Americans living below the official poverty line increased from 26.1 million in 1979 to 32.5 million in 1987, moving from 11.7 percent to 13.5 percent of the population. The rate was not higher because most poor households have multiple wage earners. This was the basis for talk about the “new poor” and the “underclass.”

The 1992 election of Bill Clinton changed little. As the economy recovered from the Bush recession, unemployment and the budget deficit were reduced but most of the other problems remained. Clinton took some steps to reverse Reagan’s policies, such as increasing taxes on the wealthy in 1993. This resulted in better macroeconomic performance



and somewhat greater responsiveness to the ethical dimension of economic policy. The 1996 reform of welfare laws may or may not have helped the poor. It removed many families from welfare and sent some to paying jobs, but it is not clear what the final result will be. Certainly there has been an increase in poverty among the very poorest families.

The George W. Bush administration pushed the economy further along the Reagan path. An examination of the data on the Bush administration's performance regarding income distribution and poverty shows a deteriorating performance in these areas. Poverty rates rose from 11.3 percent in 2000 to 12.7 percent in 2004, or an increase from 31.6 million to 37 million living in poverty.

Over the past few decades, there has been a shift in the distribution of income, with a continual decline in the share of total income going to the lowest income groups and increases in the share going to the highest since 1970. For example, the functional distribution of income has shifted heavily in favor of profits and away from wages. Between 1980 and 2004, the share of income that was wages declined by close to 4 percent, though it rose in 2005. The share of profits increased by 5.6 percent, and proprietors' income increased by 2 percent. During that same period, real wages in manufacturing decreased 1 percent, while the real income of the richest 1 percent increased 135 percent. These are large shifts. As the *New York Times* reported in August 2006, "wages and salaries now make up the lowest share of the nation's gross domestic product since the government began recording data in 1947, while corporate profits have climbed to their highest share since the 1960s." In addition, median household income actually declined in the United States over the decade prior to 2016 and has been stagnant since the 1970s. Wages for men with a high-school education have fallen substantially over the same period.

Between their narrow technical training and their bias toward free markets, most economists failed to see the coming perfect storm of economic recession and financial crisis at the end of President Bush's second term. In fact they paved the way for it by urging the deregulation of financial markets, under both Clinton and Bush. That enabled the creation of all manner of dubious new debt instruments, the wildly increased leverage of bank capital, and undetected Ponzi schemes. Add to this the extremely low interest rates

set by the Federal Reserve and the "bubble" created in the housing industry, and the crash was inevitable.

The most astonishing admission of the failure of the free-market model came from former Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan in autumn 2008. He confessed that the Fed's regime of monetary management had been based on a "flaw." The "whole intellectual edifice" their reasoning was based on had "collapsed in the summer of last year," he said.

The rising tide of wealth has conspicuously failed to lift all boats. Contrary to the cherished beliefs of most Americans, the United States has less social mobility than any other developed country. The Brookings Institution's Ron Haskins and Isabel Sawhill show in their book *Creating an Opportunity Society* just how poorly the United States fares in this regard. For example, only 6 percent of those born into a family in the bottom fifth of the income distribution

ever climb to the top fifth as adults, and a remarkable 42 percent of those born in the bottom fifth remain there as adults. That latter number shows that the United States has significantly less mobility than a host of countries in Europe, dreaded land of social democracy. In Denmark only 25 percent of those born in the bottom fifth of the income distribution never escape, with Sweden at 26 percent, Finland at 28 percent, Norway at 28 percent, and Britain at 30 percent.

Despite all this evidence, an idea as convenient to the rich and powerful as trickle-down economics is impossible to keep down for long—and it's found advocates in the Trump

White House. Trump's proposals for cutting taxes on the wealthy are at the core of his economic policy, and central to the failed health-care reform bill was the elimination of heavy taxes the Affordable Care Act imposed on the well-off. The coming "tax reform" bill aims to reduce corporate tax rates and the top income tax rates. There is no reason to believe that the outcome of these massive tax cuts proposed by Trump and his allies will be any different this time than in the past. The rich will get richer and everyone else will lose or gain only a pittance.

All this is incompatible with Catholic social thought. Pope Francis strongly criticized trickle-down economics in his apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii gaudium*:

Some people continue to defend trickle-down theories which assume that economic growth, encouraged by a free market, will

**There is no reason to believe that the outcome of the massive tax cuts proposed by Trump and his allies will be any different this time than in the past. The rich will get richer and everyone else will lose or gain only a pittance.**

inevitably succeed in bringing about greater justice and inclusiveness in the world. This opinion, which has never been confirmed by the facts, expresses a crude and naïve trust in the goodness of those wielding economic power and in the sacralized workings of the prevailing economic system. Meanwhile, the excluded are still waiting.

**T**he second element of free-market thought to consider is deregulation, the idea that government regulations usually hinder the efficiency of markets. The boundaries between the private and public sectors have always been fluid, but the general tendency since the late nineteenth century has been for the state's role to expand in order to correct for the limitations and failures of market outcomes. Beginning in the late 1970s and early '80s, with the rise of Margaret Thatcher in Great Britain and Reagan in the United States, there has been a concerted global attempt to reverse this process.

Trump has made it clear he wants to dismantle many government regulations that he believes create disincentives for investors. Deregulation got top billing in his "100 day action plan" issued last November. On the Monday of his second week in office, Trump signed an executive order requiring every federal agency to cut two existing regulations for every new regulation they implement. He stressed that small businesses had been hampered by regulations and now they would be able to expand and create new jobs, despite the paucity of evidence suggesting that regulations really hamper small businesses. In early February he met with executives of some of the largest corporations in the United States and promised to cut regulations by 75 percent.

Another executive order from Trump proposes to eliminate or sharply cut back the Dodd-Frank legislation regulating the financial sector. It directs agencies and policymakers to study ways to eliminate virtually any regulation that curbs banks' ability to lend or that supposedly undermines brokers' role in advising and selling shares for clients. That order further directs agencies to review "all existing laws, treaties, regulations, guidance, reporting and record keeping requirements" that might hinder U.S. firms from becoming more competitive. The results of all this could be disastrous. Even former Secretary of the Treasury Lawrence Summers attacked these policies, saying such sweeping deregulation was setting the stage for the next financial crisis. "The deregulation in some areas like finance is hugely dangerous," he said in an interview on the Fox News Channel. "Who wants to go back to the era of predatory lending? Who wants to go back to the era of vastly over-leveraged banks?"

In remarks, memoranda, and a number of other executive orders, Trump has gone after specific regulations that he believes reduce economic growth and the creation of new jobs, including the "Waters of the U.S. Rule" designed to protect rivers and wetlands and the Environmental Protection Agency's "Clean Power Plan," which limits carbon pollution from power plants. The president and congressional Republicans have suggested rolling back

other key regulations governing the FDA's drug-approval system; their promises to repeal the ACA, which so far have been stymied, are also driven by a desire to deregulate the health-care industry. Already the Republican-led Congress has passed a law rolling back Obama-era internet-privacy rules. Trump appointments for key cabinet posts, including Scott Pruitt for the Environmental Protection Agency and former congressman Tom Price for Health and Human Services, further signal the Trump administration plans for aggressive deregulation.

Those with a rage for deregulation argue that the results of a perfectly competitive market cannot be improved upon. In reality, these conditions seldom exist and we know government can and must step in to correct for what economists call "market failures." Market failures include: monopolies and other departures from perfect competition that result in high prices; externalities, such as pollution, in which people and firms affect others adversely without paying for the harm they cause; and the problem of imperfect information (about such things as whether a medicine actually works).

At its most basic, the case for government regulation focuses on correcting these market failures by breaking up monopolies, imposing fines for pollution, supplying public goods, and by certifying that medicines work. In fact, markets require these regulations to function efficiently.

Sensible proponents of the mixed economy have never argued that deregulation should be opposed in all cases. As circumstances change, government involvement in some areas of the economy becomes more desirable, in others less so. But the idea that change should always be in the direction of less regulation needs to be subjected to careful scrutiny, not simply trusted as an *a priori* dictate of ideology. So far, we've gotten too much of the latter from the Trump administration.

We need to shift from the view that efficiency is the primary goal of our economic policies to one that sees equity as equally important. Proponents of "free markets" who have pushed policies based on claims of their supposed efficiency have not produced much in the way of improved economic performance, but they have led to drastic increases in inequality. We know who that empowers, and it's not the poor, workers, or even those struggling to stay in the middle class. To cite Pope Francis again:

While the earnings of a minority are growing exponentially, so too is the gap separating the majority from the prosperity enjoyed by those happy few. This imbalance is the result of ideologies which defend the absolute autonomy of the marketplace and financial speculation. Consequently, they reject the right of states, charged with vigilance for the common good, to exercise any form of control. A new tyranny is thus born, invisible and often virtual, which unilaterally and relentlessly imposes its own laws and rules.

It seems clear Trump and his GOP allies will not pursue and defend the common good "with vigilance." For now, that falls to the rest of us. ■



Pope Francis poses with Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz during a private audience at the Vatican, December 5.

# Is the Pope ‘Anti-Jewish’?

*No, but Here’s Why His Critics Think So*

Philip A. Cunningham

**A**lthough great progress has been made in the past fifty years in Catholic-Jewish relations, there remains an underlying fragility. Not surprisingly, reflexes that developed over centuries of estrangement do not disappear after a few decades. Two distinct but interrelated Italian controversies demonstrate this.

Tensions flared when the Italian Biblical Association (ABI) publicized two conferences to be held this coming September. The title of the first was announced as “Israel, People of a Jealous God: Consistencies and Ambiguities of an Elitist Religion.” The conference description noted

**Philip A. Cunningham** is professor of theology and director of the Institute for Jewish-Catholic Relations of Saint Joseph’s University in Philadelphia. He also serves as president of the International Council of Christians and Jews.

that today “there is a return to religion with absolutist and intolerant accents.” Consequently, the conference would explore how the God of Israel developed “from a subordinate divinity [to gradually become] the exclusive deity of a people who, in an elitist manner, believe[d] themselves to be his unique possession,” and hence superior to other people. Evidently, the conference organizers were interested in how fundamentalism arises in all three Abrahamic traditions. Unfortunately, their phrasing echoed a long-lived polemic that contrasted an enlightened Christian universalism with a narrow Jewish particularism. The most prominent critic was Rabbi Giuseppe Laras, the former chief rabbi of Milan and president emeritus of the Italian Rabbinical Assembly. A letter of protest was sent, not to the officers of the ABI, but to various Vatican officials and personnel and to the Italian Bishops’ Conference. The letter lamented a persistent



“undercurrent of resentment, intolerance, and annoyance on the Christian side toward Judaism.” It accused the ABI of promoting the attitude that regards Jews as “execrable, expendable, and sacrificeable” and encourages a “resumption of the old polarization between the morality and theology of the Hebrew Bible and of Pharisaism, and Jesus of Nazareth and the Gospels.”

The letter also blamed Pope Francis for encouraging a revival of Marcionism (the ancient heresy in which the “jealous God” of the Old Testament is contrasted with the loving God of the New). After acknowledging that post-Vatican II church statements have repudiated such invidious comparisons, the letter continued: “What a shame that they should be contradicted on a daily basis by the homilies of the pontiff.... One need think only of the law of ‘an eye for an eye’ recently evoked by the pope carelessly and mistakenly... [recalling] anti-Judaism on the Christian side.”

Reactions quickly appeared from various quarters. The president of the ABI, Professor Don Luca Mazzinghi, denied Laras’s accusations. “The idea that the God of the Hebrew Bible is different in some way from the God of the New Testament is absurd and offensive,” he said. “It is even more the case for us who study and work on the two Testaments that the God whom Jesus called ‘Father’ is the same as the God of Israel, the people God has chosen and whom Jesus is part of.” He forcefully declared, “Any shadow of anti-Semitism, which we repudiate in the strongest terms, has always been absent from our Association.”

Announcing that the description of the ABI conference had been revised to stress that the relevant topics applied to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, Mazzinghi also noted that the conference title had been changed to “People of a ‘Jealous God’ (cf. Exodus 34:14): Consistencies and Ambivalences of the Religion of Ancient Israel.” He expressed confidence that ongoing dialogue would overcome allegations from critics that had lost “all sense of proportion.”

Indeed, that seems a likely outcome as conversations continue among the Jewish community, the Italian Bishops’ Conference, and the ABI.

Bringing some of the pope’s homilies into the dispute, however, provided an occasion for some within the Catholic community to discredit him. A Matthew Schmitz essay in *First Things* (“Rabbi Objects to Pope Francis’s Anti-Jewish Rhetoric”) accused Pope Francis of “anti-Jewish rhetoric,” saying that “too many authoritative Christian voices—both bishops and theologians” have excused it for too long. The *Catholic World Report* ran an article by Peter M. J. Stravinkas, asking if Francis was guilty of “Papal Anti-Judaism?” It opined that the pope has said “over and over again that he is no theologian and that he doesn’t care much for theology...that [is the] attitude which has caused so much damage in this pontificate.”

Since the pontiff is widely known for his close friendships with Jews in his native Argentina, and even co-wrote

a book with Rabbi Abraham Skorka on their dialogues over the years, what was the basis of Rabbi Laras’s critique of the pope?

Depending on the daily lectionary readings, Pope Francis does have a habit of uncritically repeating Gospel polemics against various Jewish leaders in Jesus’ day. This most often happens in the daily homilies he delivers in Domus Santa Marta in the Vatican. In a recent reflection, for example, he spoke of the Temple high priests as manifesting “arrogance and tyranny toward the people” by manipulating the law:

But a law that they have remade many times: so many times, to the point that they had arrived at 500 [sic] commandments. Everything was regulated, everything! A law scientifically constructed, because this people was wise, they understood well. They made all these nuances, no? But it was a law without memory: they had forgotten the First Commandment, which God had given to our father Abraham: “Walk in my presence and be blameless.” They did not walk: they always stopped in their own convictions. They were not blameless!

A listener or reader could readily be excused for wondering if the pope saw Judaism in the time of Jesus as heartlessly legalistic because of its focus on the Torah. Might that hold true for Jewish spirituality today as well?

Similarly, when preaching on the woman caught in adultery in John’s Gospel, Francis remarked about the Pharisees: “they thought they were pure because they observed the law...but they did not know mercy.... The description used by Jesus for them is hypocrites: they had double standards.”

Rabbi Laras was correct in asserting that postconciliar documents issued by the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews caution against such use of Gospel polemics. Its 1985 instruction on how to present Jews in preaching and education, for instance, noted that “The Gospels are the outcome of long and complicated editorial work.... [S]ome references hostile or less than favorable to the Jews have their historical context in conflicts between the nascent church and the Jewish community. Certain controversies reflect Christian-Jewish relations long after the time of Jesus.” In particular, the commission stressed that the Pharisees—widely understood to have been the precursors of rabbinic Judaism—shared with Jesus many defining convictions: “the resurrection of the body; forms of piety, like almsgiving, prayer, fasting (Matthew 6:1–18) and the liturgical practice of addressing God as Father; [and] the priority of the commandment to love God and our neighbor (Mark 12:28–34).”

Does this mean that Pope Francis harbors “anti-Jewish” attitudes? To answer that question we need to understand the pope’s homiletic purpose in using polemical Gospel texts in this way. In no case does he criticize either Judaism as a religious tradition or Jews today. Rather, he invites Christians to examine their own consciences. In particular, he deploys the harsh and sweeping rhetoric of the New



Testament against clericalism among Catholic priests and hierarchy. It is his fellow priests and bishops, not Jews, that he has in mind. In the homily cited above about the high priests, Francis went on to criticize “that spirit of clericalism,” found in the church today. “Clerics feel they are superior, they are far from the people; they have no time to hear the poor, the suffering, prisoners, the sick.... The evil of clericalism is a very ugly thing!... Today, too, Jesus says to all of us, and even to those who are seduced by clericalism: ‘The sinners and the prostitutes will go before you into the Kingdom of Heaven.’”

It is regrettable that Pope Francis does not occasionally mention the affinity between Jesus and his Pharisaic contemporaries or simply attribute to only some of the scribes or Pharisees the human temptation to sanctimoniousness or arrogance. Without such caveats, he risks unintentionally reinforcing Christian caricatures of Judaism. However, this blind spot hardly amounts to “anti-Judaism,” particularly when he has elsewhere spoken eloquently and consistently about his love for the Jewish people and traditions.

On the subject of Judaism’s Torah-centered spirituality, in February Francis greeted “Rabbi Abraham Skorka, brother and friend” on the occasion of being presented with a limited edition publication of a new illuminated volume of the Torah. “[We are] together today around the Torah as the Lord’s gift, his revelation, his word,” Francis said. “The Torah, which Saint John Paul II called ‘the living teaching of the living God,’ manifests the paternal and visceral love of God, a love shown in words and concrete gestures, a love that becomes covenant.”

Although expressed in everyday speech, Francis also offered some profound reflections on the Torah to the International Council of Christians and Jews in 2015:

The Christian confessions find their unity in Christ; Judaism finds its unity in the Torah. Christians believe that Jesus Christ is the Word of God made flesh in the world; for Jews the Word of God is present above all in the Torah. Both faith traditions find their foundation in the One God, the God of the Covenant, who reveals himself through his Word. In seeking a right attitude towards God, Christians turn to Christ as the fount of new life, and Jews to the teaching of the Torah. This pattern of theological reflection on the relationship between Judaism and Christianity arises precisely from *Nostra aetate* (cf. no. 4), and upon this solid basis can be and must be developed yet further.

The pontiff sees that since the Second Vatican Council, Jews and Catholics have undertaken a “journey of friendship,” which is why he wrote in *Evangelii gaudium*:

**It is unfair to accuse the pope of being ‘anti-Jewish’ on the basis of a handful of ill-chosen comments intended as criticism of his own church.**

Dialogue and friendship with the children of Israel are part of the life of Jesus’ disciples. ... God continues to work among the people of the Old Covenant and to bring forth treasures of wisdom which flow from their encounter with his word. For this reason, the church also is enriched when she receives the values of Judaism. While it is true that certain Christian beliefs are unacceptable to Judaism, and that the church cannot refrain from proclaiming Jesus as Lord and Messiah, there exists as well a rich complementarity which allows us to read the texts of the Hebrew Scriptures together and to help one another to mine the riches of God’s word.

In fact, during his 2015 visit to Philadelphia, Francis stopped briefly with his friend Rabbi Skorka to view an original sculpture by artist Joshua Koffman depicting exactly this concept. *Synagoga and Ecclesia in Our Time*, commissioned by Saint Joseph’s University to mark the golden jubilee of the conciliar declaration *Nostra aetate*, reverses medieval portrayals in which the feminine figure of the church triumphs over the defeated feminine figure of the synagogue. Francis blessed the new artwork in which two sisters of equal dignity enjoy studying their sacred texts together.

Francis’s awareness of the long history of Christian oppression of Jews was also clearly evident when he wrote:

I too have cultivated many friendships through the years with my Jewish brothers in Argentina and often while in prayer, as my mind turned to the terrible experience of the Shoah, I looked to God. What I can tell you, with Saint Paul, is that God has never neglected his faithfulness to the covenant...and that, through the awful trials of these last centuries, the Jews have preserved their faith in God. And for this, we, the church and the whole human family, can never be sufficiently grateful to them.

There is an added poignancy to a pope expressing gratitude to Jews for remaining faithful to their covenantal life with God when one realizes that it was Christians who were oppressing them over “the last centuries.”

It is clear that Pope Francis has great personal reverence for the Jewish people and tradition, for the Torah, and for the “journey of friendship” that Jews and Catholics have undertaken for more than fifty years. It is unfounded and unfair to accuse him of being “anti-Jewish” on the basis of a handful of ill-chosen comments intended as criticism of his own church. This kind of reproach seems grounded less in a concern for Catholic-Jewish relations than in broader critiques of Francis’s theology and style.

Seen more broadly, these recent incidents demonstrate the constant, conscious effort that is needed to overcome the legacy of the painful past between Jews and Christians. ■

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# What We Can & Cannot Fix

## *Rewatching 'The Mission'*

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Jeff Guhin

If you had any sort of experience with progressive Catholicism in the past three decades, you're probably familiar with *The Mission*, the 1986 Robert Joffe film that recently celebrated its thirtieth anniversary. With an original screenplay by the legendary Robert Bolt (*Man for All Seasons*, *Lawrence of Arabia*), the film presents Jeremy Irons and Robert DeNiro as Jesuit missionaries, the first a pacifist musician named Gabriel, the second a repentant slaver named Rodrigo. They live with the Guarani Indians, speaking their language while teaching them to sing religious hymns and play the violin. But then the mission is transferred to the Portuguese, making the Guarani once again prey to slavers: the moral dilemma begins. The church orders the Jesuits to abandon the mission, dividing them as to tactics. No one will leave, but Gabriel's faction refuses to do harm even as Rodrigo rediscovers his sword, leading many of the Guarani in a counterattack. All are killed, except a small group of children we see in the final scene, naked, rowing down the river towards a slight possibility of hope.

Today, most people remember *The Mission* for Ennio Morricone's iconic soundtrack, yet there's more to the movie than its music. *The Mission* was released the same year as the U.S. Bishops' pastoral letter "Economic Justice for All" and three years after their equally assertive "The Challenge of Peace." These two letters formed an unapologetic opposition to Reagan-era conservative politics and the growing sense that the Republican Party was the best fit for serious Christians. It was out of disillusionment with the bishops' perceived move to the left that the Catholic neoconservative movement was born, most famously at magazines like *Crisis* (1982) and *First Things* (1990). Latin America was important too. Liberation Theology had worked its way north, influencing lay Catholics (if not their bishops) to link Marxist critique with Christian theology. U.S. Catholics motivated by their Christian commitments, including priests, went to protests in solidarity with Latin American struggles for justice. Like any liberal Catholic kid in the '90s, I heard all about the famous El Salvador martyrs: the four U.S. churchwomen slain in 1980 and the six Jesuits at the University of Central America alongside assassinated

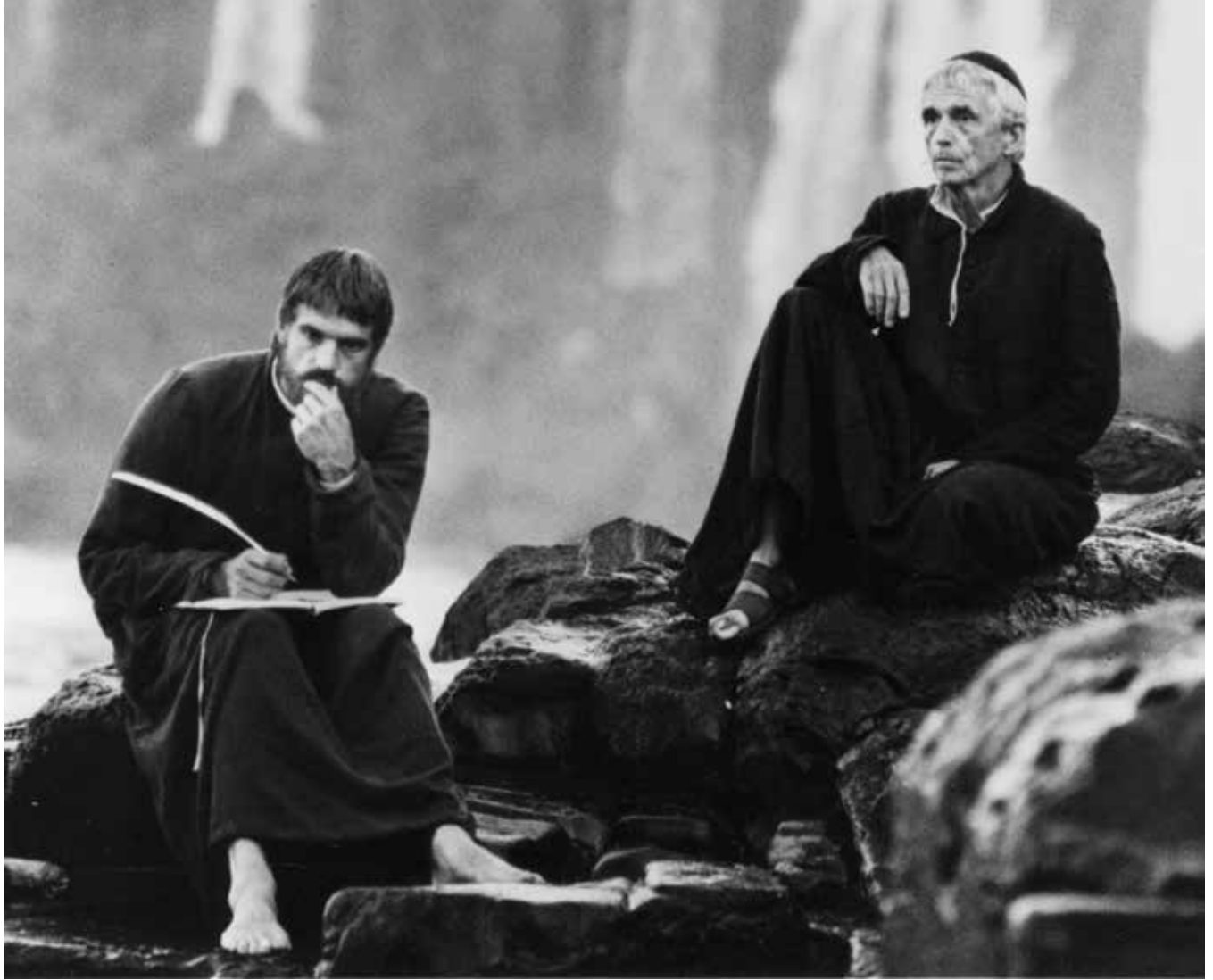
along with their housekeeper and her daughter in 1989. And, most importantly, I learned about Oscar Romero, the bishop of El Salvador shot down while saying Mass, also in 1980. This was the stuff in the air: Latin America, social justice, Jesuits so committed to the poor they're not afraid of a little trouble. *The Mission* felt like it figured everything out.

And then there was Dan Berrigan, the famous Jesuit pacifist, who has a bit part in the film. He plays a Jesuit with just one line ("No," he says, appropriately enough). I didn't recognize him when I first saw the movie, but if you watch it knowing who he is, it's amazing how many scenes he's in, usually next to a very young Liam Neeson. Berrigan also had a significant role in advising the film about the Jesuits and about pacifism. I met him a few times, and we talked, of course, about the movie. He told me that it was his suggestion that created one of the film's most famous scenes. Originally, Gabriel's faction was to be killed while celebrating Mass in a church. Yet it was Berrigan's idea that Gabriel lead his congregation into the bullets. It's night time, dark except for candle light and gunfire: a thin priest in a cassock holds forward his monstrance, walking slowly alongside the women and children of his congregation, all of them barely flinching as they die.

We observe that scene through Rodrigo's last moments; he is lying on his back, already shot and dying close by. He has died despite his best efforts to save the mission, but, more importantly, the mission has died as well. All is lost. And it's not clear how we're supposed to feel about that end. Should Rodrigo have been a pacifist as well? After all, he would have died anyway, and this way he would not have risked his soul. Should both Rodrigo and Gabriel have left the mission as they were ordered to do, or perhaps worked harder to convince the Guarani to go back to the forest? We're not sure. Yet, near the very end of the film, the bishop sent to clear the mission is talking to one of the brutal politicians responsible for its destruction. "We must work in the world; the world is thus," the politician tells the bishop. "No Señor Hontar," the bishop replies, with tears in his eyes. "Thus have we made the world. Thus have I made it." This acknowledgment of our own complicity in the world's evil hints at our capability to make the world good, a hope furthered by the closing scene of innocent children traveling down the river.

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Jeff Guhin is an assistant professor of sociology at UCLA.



Jeremy Irons and Fr. Daniel Berrigan, SJ, in a scene from *The Mission*

**Y**et there's a lot wrong with that idea, besides the wooden dialogue and the on-the-nose imagery of naked children: the dilemmas the bishop had earlier outlined to the Jesuits were not the making of any one man, or even one cabal. The courts of Europe were machinating, and the Jesuits had to lose this one, lest the church lose much more. Things are bad, and they are worse than they seem. Interactions with other cultures are nearly always rooted in historical inequalities that make us much less able to make a difference—and much more able to add to the problems—than we might like to believe.

Take, for example, the movie's final line. The film's narrative conceit is a letter to the pope from the bishop, sent to determine the future of the mission. As we watch the children row away, we are told that "the spirit of the dead will survive in the memory of the living." But of course this is not true. There are millions of dead who are simply gone, exterminated by colonizers who would sooner remember the names of their cattle. If an entire tribe falls to genocide, who is left to recall it? Even if we find bodies, somehow preserved in the jungle's heat, how could we possibly know what it meant to be them? We couldn't. They are lost, and they are lost because of us.

The problem of what can no longer be known is central to the intellectual movement known as postcolonialism.

It was made famous by Gayatri Spivak's essay, "Can The Subaltern Speak?" which claims, basically, that they can't. But you can find the same idea in Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, James Joyce, and others: colonization makes a certain way of thinking, and therefore a certain way of living, no longer possible. The mission took the Guarani out of the jungle, whether through a slaver's net or the warnings of hellfire. And so they were irretrievably changed, and, most importantly, their change was graded on a European curve. When making their case to the bishop that the Guarani were worth saving, it was their capacity at European music that dominated the evidence: we saw through the bishop how they could sing, play violin, even construct the instruments themselves. These people could be Europeans, he saw, which is to say they could be human.

It's not entirely fair to judge the Jesuits for being products of their time. Especially because they were in many ways ahead of it: they were the ones insisting the Guarani were fully human. In one scene, we gain a wide view of the bishop's court. On one side are the white folks; on the other side are the Guarani and their many Jesuit friends. Yet this distinction is part of the problem, for of course the Jesuits are white folks too. They are not Guarani. They could leave at any time. The real moral problem of *The Mission*, then, is not so much its Jesuit characters' treatment of the Guarani as the

film's portrayal of its central moral problem: the question is never what the Guarani should do with the Jesuits, but rather what the Jesuits should do with the Guarani.

There are exceptions to this rule. It is a Guarani boy who finds Rodrigo's sword and brings it back to him, encouraging him to lead them in a fight. A few Guarani quietly enter a church to pray alongside Gabriel, who had been sulking alone as Rodrigo and the other fighters train. And, after all, it remains the Guarani's world "above the falls": it is their language the Jesuits speak, and while the Jesuits do not change their own clothes, they do not force the Guarani to change theirs. In his final Mass before he is killed, we hear Gabriel utter a prayer in Guarani rather than in Latin. Most importantly, the Guarani have all the weapons. They could kill the Jesuits at any time, as they do in the movie's iconic opening scene, tying a priest to a cross and sending him over the waterfall.

Yet a difference in physical power is not the same thing as a difference in control. It is a European church the Guarani build, European farming they undertake, and European songs they learn to sing for a European (previously Middle Eastern) God. The Jesuits of that time were as unreflective about sharing Jesus as today's NGOs are about sharing democracy and capitalism, and perhaps there really is nothing wrong with any of it. Perhaps the modern Western way of life really is the best one. But even if we grant such an assumption, there still remain the problems of how these ideas are shared, the coercion and inequality undergirding the interactions, and the real loss of another way to be human.

Viewed this way, the film's final moral question—can we ever justify war?—seems strangely obtuse. Forget that the film seems to show both "just war" and pacifism as ultimately selfish, an opportunity to show either courage or piety at the cost of keeping children alive. More important is the problem that the question is asked about brown lives rather than with them. It is of course the case that we see the Guarani fighting alongside Rodrigo and praying alongside Gabriel. Yet we do not know their names or their stories. We do not know why they do what they do, what their own conflicts and drives might be. Compare this problem with the more sophisticated *También la Lluvia* (*Even the Rain*), a 2010 film about a Spanish film crew filming a movie about Christopher Columbus and Bartolome de las Casas in Bolivia. The crew is smugly certain about their moral credibility given their film's critique of the bad old colonizers, even as they inadvertently augment and then actively try to ignore the new, different colonization happening in their midst. *También la Lluvia* is much more interested in the experience of the indigenous people themselves, even as it shows how difficult it is to turn that well-meaning interest into actual changes that would protect the rights of indigenous people.

It's this tension that partially motivated longstanding discussions about a common Jesuit saying that anyone who's gone to Jesuit schools in the past forty years has heard: *men*

(and now women too) *for others*. It's a motto the Jesuits picked up from Pedro Arrupe, SJ, the superior general who did more than anyone else to make the Jesuits a force for social justice. But "for others" soon began to feel too uncomfortable. Some suggested a switch to "with and for others," which would better emphasize actual solidarity. Yet this became a problem too, because, after all, can the largely middle-class kids at U.S. Jesuit colleges and universities really be "with" the marginalized? Doesn't "with" imply a shared experience that these students (and Jesuits) could never claim, despite their noble commitments?

Yet those Jesuit students' good intentions must count for something, and surely Jesuit missionaries giving their lives to ministry counts for much more. It's important to distinguish between the moral problem of radical—even epistemic—inequality and the moral question of what we are to do about that. We're all implicated in that inequality: it's an original sin we're born into whether we like it or not. And there's no baptism to wash us clean of this either. We're stuck with benefits we didn't earn and that we couldn't give away if we wanted to (again, the Jesuits can always leave the mission). But that doesn't mean there aren't better and worse ways to deal with that sin. We live in a broken world that will have to wait an as-yet-unknown time to be fixed. In the meantime, we must do what we can.

It's that awareness of a broken world that helps us to see the film in a more forgiving light. *The Mission* is actually not so much a story about the mission as it is an account of Rodrigo's spiritual journey, using Gabriel's stoic peacefulness as a constant foil for Rodrigo's violence. That violence goes from gratuitous to at least possibly justified, and it's a clever allusion to St. Ignatius's own relationship to the army and to war. You could easily read this movie as a story about grace, with God using the Guarani to show how all things can be used for love of neighbor and the glory of God, even a soldier's sordid past. One could ungenerously criticize such a reading, saying that viewing the Guarani that way merely makes them pawns for Rodrigo's redemption. But aren't we all part of each other's redemption? Surely it is at least possible that some of the Guarani might have something good to say about what the mission had done for them?

If Rodrigo and Gabriel were alive today, they would no doubt have approached the Guarani differently, if at all. If Robert Bolt were to have written the screenplay today, he might have subtly changed his focus. Yet these are nonetheless people with good intentions, firm commitments, and an insistence that the Guarani are our neighbors, with lives as worthy as our own. But our world is so broken that even this is not enough. Epistemic violence leaks in. Subtle and unsubtle bigotry remains. Good intentions bring unintended consequences. All of that's true: we're never going to clean up this mess. But surely a willingness to have your life changed by the vulnerable is a place to start. The fact that it's they who make you holy is, of course, unfair to its core. Which is all the more reason to be grateful. And to work. ■



# HIKING ALL NIGHT, AN ODE

by Timothy Murphy

## *Alan's Ranges*

Batholiths upthrust from their ancient sea,  
the shattered sandstones clinging to their shoulders,  
the jumbled summit boulders  
for young rock hoppers such as you and me,

drew us in youth, yearning forever west  
to flee our graveled grandeur, the Great Plains,  
shucking my farmer's chains,  
to put our boots and backpacks to the test.

Cascades, so young they seemed but cinder cones.  
Back to the granites of the Great Divide  
and ponies we would ride  
to catch an earful from the pedal tones

of God's creation, the retreating shore  
where the uplifting peaks within us soar.

## *Dream Before Dawn*

Alan, we're still switchbacking up one peak,  
dusty our boots, treeless the camp we seek,  
rocks where the pikas scream their screeching squeak.

You have made your summit ahead of me  
as usual, *krumboltz*, the knee high tree  
on which we pitch our packs. What do you see?

I think you see what I glimpse far below  
on the high prairie where the blizzards blow  
and bury my brother farmers deep in snow.

Looking aloft you see a sky we'll make  
black as the course which I will overtake,  
obsidian my steel has yet to flake,

the black that terrifies you as a child  
and then exalts you when you're growing wild.

## *Hiking All Night*

Alan, last night we hiked a forest road  
under construction. There a stark massif  
soared in the wintry air. Trivial load  
our daypacks, surely three miles of relief,

so this was no trail we had hiked before,  
no trail on earth of which this hiker knows,  
tree line our goal, where pines break on a shore  
of rock upthrust into the realm of snows

we reached, cramponed, with ropes that I could splice.  
We broke for lunch beside a gurgling stream  
green with the flour of granite ground by ice,  
a jasmine tea discolored by no cream.

Our waking world not always what it seems,  
I love it when you come to me in dreams.

## *Upper and Lower Tree Lines*

Tree belts grow narrower when we set forth  
to climb ranges further and further north  
from xeric basins to the rock and snow  
where only crazed backpackers care to go,  
pikas, marmots, ravens and mountain goats,  
none of them fattened on our flatland oats.

Far in the North there are no trees at all,  
ranges unforested, each stony wall  
soaring above the tundra and the sea,  
and there sometimes I dream of you and me  
carrying canteens to a modest peak  
where an expansive view is all we seek,

where I am twenty-two, you twenty-four,  
eight long degrees north of a forest floor.

## *Epode*

Four months, four dreams, all set at altitude  
you longed to reach, born by the Hudson River.  
Westward fifty degrees of longitude,  
layered in woolens so we wouldn't shiver  
above ten thousand feet on mountain meadows  
blossoming wildly in their three week season,  
no lodgepole pines to cast their fragrant shadows,  
our urge to climb a most unearthly reason  
for such exertions, that and the dusty prairie  
we left behind, the drought, the debt, the anger,  
all for our scrambles where the pitch was scary,  
campfires occasion for exhausted languor.

Old friend, give my regards to our Redeemer.  
I'm studying to be an expert dreamer.

Richard Alleva

# Two Beauties and Some Beasts

'BEAUTY AND THE BEAST' & 'COLOSSAL

When I saw Disney's animated version of *Beauty and the Beast* in 1991, I had a revelation. Though the computerized imagery neither recaptured the hand-drawn magic of the studio's pioneering days nor measured up to the hieratic grandeur of Jean Cocteau's 1944 version of the famous tale by Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont, I still felt that something interesting had happened. Disney features had always included songs (some of them had won Academy Awards), but *Beauty's* tightly structured script was modeled after a Broadway book. The first song was the same sort of introductory ensemble number that explains the characters and initiates the action of so many musicals. And after the fight with the wolves, you could practically see the curtain come down for the intermission. Let Stephen Sondheim and his ilk innovate to their hearts' content; in the hands of Disney and songwriters Alan Menken and Howard Ashman, the old-timey,

show-stopping formula was safe on the silver screen.

And soon enough the show came home, so to speak, when the animated film was turned into an actual Broadway musical. Now, with a live-actor movie adaptation of both the cartoon and the play, the cycle is complete. At least I hope so. The new movie, directed by Bill Condon, comes across as skillful but somewhat overcooked—as the musicals *My Fair Lady* and *The Music Man* were when they finally reached the screen. The proficiency of the new *Beauty's* makers is obvious, but a certain jadedness has set in. The visuals are high-tech and even galvanizing, but there's a little too much swirling, twirling camerawork.

There's also, it should be said, a real gain in using live actors, as the Cocteau masterpiece demonstrated long ago. With animation, the contrast between the "normal" humans and the spellbound characters (the Beast, the talking furniture, et al.) wasn't great since everyone was a cartoon. Now that

Beauty is the flesh-and-blood Emma Watson, we share her amazement at the magic menagerie.

Watson is convincingly pensive as the bookish Belle. (Her cartoon counterpart was drawn to look like a high-school cheerleader, so it was hard to believe she ever cracked a book.) But the thespian honors go to Kevin Kline, who makes Belle's father a true philosophe instead of the bumbling idiot that the 1991 film gave us. And Luke Evans triumphs as the despicable suitor Gaston. He is so juicily villainous that kids will both accept and applaud his grim demise. As far as the singing goes, you can only pity the merely adequate vocalists who have to share the soundtrack with Audra Macdonald as the Singing Wardrobe. The best, as they say, tends to be the enemy of the good.

By the time you read this, *Colossal* will be gone from the multiplexes, where it didn't stand a chance against the latest *Fast and Fu-*



Jason Sudeikis & Anne Hathaway

rious installment, but it won't be long before it arrives on DVD. Rent it or stream it. This admirable oddity, written and directed by Nacho Vigalondo, could have been titled *The Beast within the Beauty*.

The first scene is in Seoul, South Korea, where a little girl and her mother are searching in a park for a lost doll. The child glances up at the sky and screams. A Godzilla-like monster looms over her. Cut to a Manhattan apartment to which Gloria (Anne Hathaway), an online journalist with a drinking problem, returns after yet another all-night bender only to be thrown out by her disgusted and rather priggish British boyfriend. This is a typical rom-com set-up. Gloria will surely acquire another, better lover and get her life together. But, hey, what about that monster?

Having lost her job as well, Gloria retreats to her parents' house in the Midwest (the folks have relocated and never appear in the story). She runs into a childhood pal, Oscar (Jason Sudeikis), apparently a salt-of-the-earth guy and such a relief from that snotty Brit. He supplies her with furniture and brings her into his circle of scrubby but lovable pals. He also gets her a job at his bar and though that may not be the best environment for an alcoholic, surely Oscar will guide her toward sobriety once he learns about her problem. Recovery and romance must be on the horizon. But...uh...what about that monster?

One day, customers at Oscar's glance over at the bar's TV and see that giant reptile tearing up Seoul, and Gloria gradually realizes that its human-like gestures closely resemble the ones she was making that very morning while staggering about a school playground while nursing a hangover. It turns out she is the monster: her id has somehow escaped her body and crossed the Pacific. Worse still, Oscar, envious of Gloria's big-city experience and jealous of her recent fling with one of his friends, discovers that he too can project his id (as a giant robot, no less). The fate of humankind depends on how well Gloria can control herself and on whether she can defuse Oscar.

I feel stupid recounting this absolutely ridiculous plot but I never felt stupid watching the movie. The rationale for the transformations turns out to be lame even by fantasy standards, but you just have to shrug and accept it in order to respond to the heart of the story: the psychological tug-of-war between a woman who needs more self-control and the control freak who knows his natural prey when he sees it. The monsters remain in the background, on TVs and computer screens. It's the emotional conflict that dominates.

Watching *Colossal* is like seeing *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* morph into *Fatal Attraction* before winding up as *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms*. Yet somehow it all holds together by being solidly anchored in believable human emotion. Instead of revving us up with special effects and a deafening soundtrack, Vigalondo keeps bringing us down to earth with glimpses of humanity at its goofiest: Gloria waking after her first tryst with a new lover and finding her arm trapped and numb under his blissfully sleeping head. A pleasantly ugly bruise of a guy, hearing the monster in Seoul praised by a newscaster as benevolent, smiles and mutters, "I knew all along he was a good monster."

Anne Hathaway, with her high-voltage smile, has long been the embodiment of liberated, upscale twenty-first-century womanhood, but here she gives us a woman who has too often used that smile to get people to forgive her countless screwups. Now approaching early middle age, she's discovering that forgiveness is harder to come by, and that smile is becoming something close to an apologetic wince. Jason Sudeikis, who usually plays self-satisfied lunkheads in gross-out comedies, makes it clear that Oscar is a man eaten up by simmering resentments that can never be appeased. One of the most interesting features of this wacky movie is that these two sterling performances seem so contrary to the actors' previous work. That Hathaway helped get the movie green-lighted is a tribute not only to her star power but to her courage. ■



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Gary Gutting

# More than Animals

## On Human Nature

Roger Scruton

Princeton University Press, \$22.95, 151pp.

“We human beings are animals, governed by the laws of biology.” So begins Roger Scruton’s new book, based on his Test Memorial Lectures at Princeton. This opening sentence could as well have begun a book on human nature by a materialist philosopher or scientist, say Daniel Dennett or Richard Dawkins, who—like Scruton—would go on to cite results of comparative anatomy, evolutionary biology, ethology, and recent neuroscience to show the similarities and continuities between humans and other animals. But where thinkers such as Dennett and Dawkins end with a view of a human being as simply another animal, even if in some ways the most advanced, Scruton maintains that animality is but one aspect of our human nature. Unlike other animals (so far as we know), we are unique in possessing a mental life that empirical science cannot adequately understand. Moreover, according to Scruton, this mental life is not that of an isolated Cartesian thinker in need of elusive arguments to prove that there is an external world and other minds. Our mental life is by its nature directed outward to a human world that we share with other human beings and that we must understand via concepts such as subjectivity, truth, moral values, persons, and beauty that are not open to scientific explanation.

Scruton begins with two common human behaviors: laughing with one another about our faults and blaming one another for our misdeeds. He acknowledges that evolutionary psychologists might offer plausible explanations of

these behaviors. “By laughing together at our faults, they might say, we might come to accept them and this makes cooperation with our imperfect neighbors easier,” and such cooperation gives a laughing community a competitive advantage for surviving over one that does not laugh. But, Scruton urges, this explanation assumes the concept of cooperation, which is part of the human world but not of the scientific world of genetics. Similarly, Nietzsche’s proto-scientific explanation of blame, in *On the Genealogy of Morality*, sees blame as arising from guilt—the sense of sin that the weak feel when their powerful masters punish them. But, Scruton asks, how can a normative concept such as guilt be part of a merely descriptive scientific account? Such an account, he says, could only explain blame as arising from fear as a purely physiological response, which would miss the force of blame as a moral concept.

To make sense of such distinctive concepts, we must, Scruton says, think of ourselves not only as human beings (a biological category) but also as persons (a philosophical category). Scruton does not separate, in the manner of traditional dualism, the person from the body. Rather, he suggests that “we understand the person as an emergent entity rooted in the human being but belonging to another order of explanation than that explored by biology.” Here the term “emergent” is crucial. It is meant to provide a middle way between materialism, which sees a person as simply a body, and dualism, which sees a person as an immaterial thing (like Plato’s soul) quite distinct from—even if closely connected to—a material body. The problem, of course, is to make sense of a “middle way” between there being one thing and there being two things.

To show that introducing emergence is not just a verbal sleight-of-hand, Scruton presents an analogy with the art of painting. “When painters apply paint to canvas they create physical objects by purely physical means.... When we look at the surface of the painting, we see...areas and lines of paint and also the surface that contains them. But that is not all we see. We also see—for example—a face that looks out at us with smiling eyes.” The face, Scruton notes, “is really there,” although “there is a sense in which the face is not an additional property of the canvas, over and above the lines and blobs.” This is what he means by saying the face “emerges” from the paint on the canvas. Similarly, a person emerges from a physical body: it is not a separate thing from the body but, at the same time, it is not reducible to the matter that is the body.

Just what is this person that emerges from a body—in other words, what is this “embodied person”? For Scruton it is, first of all, not only an object in the material world (because of its body) but also a subject. To be a subject is first of all to be aware, and awareness is always directed toward something (the object of my awareness). When, for example, my thirst leads me to look into the refrigerator, I see a pitcher of lemonade, believe that it will quench my thirst, and desire to drink it. Here seeing, believing, and desiring are conscious states; and the lemonade, the quenching of my thirst, and the drinking are their respective objects. Philosophers use the term “intentional” to mean “directed toward something,” and they call organisms that are aware of their world “intentional systems.” (Note that, contrary to ordinary usage, this technical sense of “intentional” need not involve acting deliberately.)

Scruton allows that at least some





animals are intentional systems in the sense of having experiences, beliefs, and desires; and he agrees that biology may entirely account for such systems. But he thinks that human beings are examples of a higher sort of intentional system. All of us not only have experiences, beliefs, and desires (intentional states) but also are aware of our own intentional states and attribute such states and an awareness of them to other humans. As a result, we inhabit not only the material world but also an interpersonal world in which we are “accountable for what we

think and do” and must “try to relate to one another as responsible subjects.” This is a world that is not accessible to the descriptions and explanations of empirical science, which can only account for the objective aspect of human reality and not the personal, subjective aspect.

Another way to make the point: science can provide only a third-person account of human existence, not a first-person or a second-person account. Scruton supports this claim through “the argument from language.” This argument starts from the fact that “first-

person declarations exhibit a special kind of privilege.” If, for example, I honestly assert that I am in pain, then I cannot be wrong about being in pain. This contrasts with the situation in science, where any assertion by an individual can be refuted by public evidence available in principle to any inquirer. No amount of public, scientific evidence could ever refute your honest claim that you are in pain. If it could, people could rightly say that it merely feels like you’re in pain. But if you feel like you’re in pain, you are in pain. This is so because it’s part of the linguistic meaning of the word “I.” As Scruton puts it, someone who thought she could be wrong about being in pain would show that “she had not grasped the grammar of the first-person case.”

Further, since this grammar is established by the usage of a linguistic community, the infallibility of certain first-person claims implies the existence (present or past) of other language-users, whom I would have to address as “you.” So the argument from language establishes the reality of a community of subjects, beyond the third-person objects accessible to science. (Scruton offers a similar argument, in a continental rather than an analytic mode, based on Hegel’s account of mutual recognition.)

**N**one of this, however, is to deny that science can, in principle, provide a complete account of the causes that operate on our bodies to make the interpersonal world emerge. But this interpersonal world itself is not a world of causes but of reasons (and therefore also of meanings and norms). Many philosophers, however, think that this world of reasons is merely the way that the material world appears from our limited subjective perspective. To return to our earlier example, the face in the picture, they maintain, has “no reality beyond the colored patches in which it is seen.” Similarly, a person is “nothing over and above the biological organization in which we perceive it.”

Scruton agrees that the face causally emerges by “incremental additions” of paint to a canvas. But he notes that, once the face emerges, the picture takes

on an entirely new aspect, and we can begin asking questions about why the artist chose that particular flesh tone, whether the face is expressing pain or anger, and whether and why the face adds or detracts from the painting's overall aesthetic effect. Gathering more information about the physical properties of paint on canvas will not give us answers to these questions about purpose, meaning, and aesthetic value. Going a bit further than Scruton's explicit formulations, we might even reverse the critic's point about a "limited perspective": a scientific account of the face is itself merely the way it appears when we have only the empirical concepts of science to explain it.

A materialist might, however, agree that science cannot answer our questions about pictures or, more importantly, persons, and argue that this is because we formulate those questions in terms of inadequate and outdated concepts. This is the philosophical view—called "eliminative materialism"—perhaps most prominently defended today by Paul Churchland. According to Churchland, talk of purpose, meaning, and values—and related concepts such as perceptions, beliefs, desires, and intentions—is part of a common-sense psychological theory almost every one grows up believing. This theory—called "folk psychology"—is admittedly useful in many everyday cases for explaining human behavior. But the explanatory power of folk psychology falls far short of even current scientific psychology and neuroscience. Folk psychology may explain such things as my running toward the river because I heard what I took to be a call for help and wanted to save someone's life. But folk psychology has—to use Scruton's examples—"no theory of memory retrieval, of image construction, of visual-motor coordination, of sleep," etc. There is, Churchland maintains, good reason to think that science will someday explain everything folk psychology does and much more, with no reference to the concepts of Scruton's "interpersonal world." Instead, it will use only concepts that describe the

brain and other parts of the body as, say, an electro-chemical system.

Once this happens, Churchland says, this successful scientific theory will be able to replace folk psychology, just as the heliocentric theory of the solar system replaced the geocentric theory. Of course, we may, for practical reasons of simplicity, still often use the language of the outdated theory. But we will recognize that this theory is only a useful fiction and reject it as a literally true account of human nature and behavior. We will then have recognized that the interpersonal world does not actually exist and eliminate it from our account of what there is.

But, Scruton replies, eliminating the interpersonal world means eliminating the self-awareness that, as the language argument showed, requires that honest self-reports such as "I am in pain" cannot be wrong. For example, if a scientific account eliminates pain, replacing it with the occurrence of certain electro-chemical events in my brain, then my honest report that I am in pain might be falsified by a brain scan showing that the relevant events are not occurring. It follows, therefore, that eliminative materialism eliminates even my immediate subjective awareness of pain. But, according to Scruton, this is simply to reject the most obvious of all evidence: my direct awareness of myself as a conscious person. As Scruton puts it: "The concept of the person, and its attendant idea of first-person awareness, is part of the phenomenon [the given data to be explained] and not to be eliminated by the science that explains it." Unless we are willing to deny the authority of our own self-awareness, we must conclude that empirical science cannot offer a complete account of what it is to be a human being.

Some materialists—Daniel Dennett, for example—are willing to deny the authority of their own self-awareness. According to Dennett our belief that there are aspects of consciousness that science can't explain is like the belief that the Sun moves around the Earth: it seems to be true even though it isn't. He predicts a future "when philoso-

phers and scientists and laypeople will chuckle over the fossil traces of our earlier bafflement about consciousness: 'It still seems [they will say] as if these [scientific] theories of consciousness leave something out, but of course that's an illusion. They do in fact explain everything about consciousness that needs explanation.'"

In a recent book, *From Bacteria to Bach and Back*, Dennett makes his point by evoking the philosophical concept of a zombie. This is not the flesh-eating undead of the movies but rather an organism physically the same as a human being but without any flicker of self-awareness—a living human body but with the "internal light" of consciousness turned off. Contrary to Scruton's view, Dennett insists that we have no experience showing that we are not zombies. If someone suggests that "you might be a zombie, unwittingly taking yourself to have real consciousness," you will, he says, respond "I know I am not a zombie!" But to this Dennett's reply is: "No, you don't. The only support for that conviction is the vehemence of the conviction itself." I suspect, though, that for most of us Dennett's conviction that there is no self-awareness is itself supported only by the "vehemence of the conviction itself." The strength of Scruton's argument is signaled by the fact that a position as radical and implausible as Dennett's seems the only alternative to it.

**T**he argument I've been discussing strikes me as the central achievement of Scruton's book, offering a penetrating but accessible response to the materialism that many regard as unavoidable in light of recent science. Building on the foundation of this argument, Scruton sketches (sometimes too schematically) his views on major aspects of the interpersonal world that require an understanding that eludes scientific account. Here he discusses, for example, the metaphysics of the person, including what it means to be a person, the basis of personal identity over time, and the dialectical structure of I-you encounters. He also touches on the philosophical psychology

of pleasure (particularly sexual pleasure) and of the passions.

Particularly important is a wide-ranging chapter titled “The Moral Life,” including discussions of the individual and society; praise, blame, and forgiveness; pollution and taboo. The chapter culminates in a stimulating—if too condensed—critique of contemporary utilitarian ethicists (e.g., Peter Singer and Derek Parfit), from a standpoint that combines Kant’s ethics of duty and Aristotle’s virtue ethics.

Scruton concludes with a fascinating chapter titled “Sacred Obligations,” which begins with a critique of social-contract liberalism as developed from the thought of John Rawls and moves through reflections on the ancient virtue of piety, the sacred/profane distinction, and evil as a metaphysical category, to the seeds of a philosophy of religion.

The laundry list of my last few paragraphs may give the impression that, after developing a tight argument against materialism, Scruton fills out the later chapters of his book with a hodgepodge of idiosyncratic aperçus. In fact, however, these chapters are best read as a high-flying survey of a well-thought-out philosophical vision, based on his critique of materialism, that has been percolating for some time in Scruton’s mind. Those familiar with Scruton’s controversial political views and activities will note a certain consonance between his defense of more traditional philosophical positions and his conservative ideology. But Scruton’s philosophy of human nature can and should be appreciated and assessed independently of his politics. Elements of this philosophy are also present in earlier works, particularly *The Soul of the World*, *The Face of God*, and his writings on aesthetics; but this volume is a welcome introduction and overview. ■

**Gary Gutting** is the emeritus John A. O’Brien Professor of Philosophy at the University of Notre Dame. His most recent book is *What Philosophy Can Do* (Norton), and he writes regular columns for “The Stone,” the New York Times philosophy blog.

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Eric Miller

# The Unnamed Behemoth

## Public Intellectuals in the Global Arena

Professors or Pundits?

Edited by Michael C. Desch

University of Notre Dame Press, \$55, 424 pp.

In his 2011 book *Reading Obama*, the historian James Kloppenberg called the president “a man of ideas,” an “intellectual” who had long “showed the capacity and inclination to mobilize America’s intellectual traditions to bolster democratic political action.” Indeed, in a recent *New York Times* interview Obama revealed that even during his years in the White House he dedicated himself to reading—in an effort, as he put it, to “slow down and get perspective,” to “get in somebody else’s shoes,” to “maintain my balance.” Unlike many high-profile politicians, he wrote many of his own speeches, trying, as he says future political leaders must, “to tell a better story about what binds us together as a people.”

If Barack Obama embodies the promise of public intellectualism, his own record also reveals its shaky prospects. Deep learning eloquently brought to bear on the contemporary moment has, quite evidently, not been enough to shore up the aging foundations of

our republic—much less bind us together as a people. And a live-from-the-West-Wing Twitter feed is not likely to advance our fortunes, either. “The evolving edifice of public intellectualism,” to use the term of *Public Intellectuals in the Global Arena*’s editor Michael C. Desch, rests on a foundation whose cement seems to be returning to sand. We have it on good information what comes next.

“Once human societies stop being essentially grounded in tradition, something like public intellectualism becomes constitutive,” observes the political scientist Michael Zuckert in his chapter of this volume. And herein lies the challenge these authors—fifteen in all, from a range of disciplines and nationalities—glimpse and name in diverging ways. If our grounding in tradition is gone, and if the enlightened replacement yet continues its deconstructing course, what have the intellectual avatars of the contemporary order to offer?

Economics, apparently. Desch names the discipline “the preeminent home of public intellectuals” in today’s academy; Mark Lilla drily notes that “Economics 101” is now “the world’s de facto core curriculum.” The economist J. Bradford DeLong agrees, announcing that

“Economists are here to tell you what’s what and how to do it”—teachers in the authoritarian mold, it seems. He follows this pronouncement with the observation that, given the triumph of global capital and subsequent failure of any other organizing principle, mere citizens have no choice but to “listen” to economists. “But you have nearly no ability to evaluate what you hear,” he warns. “When we don’t reach a near consensus, then heaven help you.” As DeLong goes to lengths to show, the country—the world—is in the hands of a field that is nowhere close to such consensus. Such news does not reassure the democratic soul.

DeLong baldly states that “a market economy’s underlying calculus is a calculus of doing what wealth wants rather than what people need.” Several contributors are intent on finding a way to thwart that desire and explore alternatives. Willy Lam, writing on the fate of public intellectuals in China—where, he says, their “toughest challenge” is mere “survival”—places his hope in the triumph of what he calls, variously, “universal norms,” “universal-style democratic institutions,” and “the values enshrined in the charters of the United Nations.” Writing from the United States, Zuckert too finds the “liberal-democratic tradition” to be “the indispensable ground for our common moral and political life.”

But is the liberal democratic tradition up to the challenge—the challenge of disciplining an economic order that exists not to prosper democracy but itself?

On such crucial questions this volume sounds an uncertain note—and a rather quiet uncertain note at that. This may have something to do with the fact that on the whole its contributors lean right; indeed, Desch dedicates the book to Allan Bloom and Samuel Huntington. Remarkably, given their incontestably central place in the history of public intellectuals, no thoroughgoing leftists (seemingly) number among the contributors—none, that is, disposed to warn of enlarging catastrophic conflict between democracy and capital. Tellingly, many of the book’s authors find



Image of Samuel Huntington



themselves preoccupied with structural-functional questions regarding the evolving place of public intellectuals in contemporary society, taking for granted that society's integrity and stability (or, just as concerning, the impossibility of an alternative to the current order). The actual "global arena" of the book's title is often (again, tellingly) lost from view, replaced by musings on the "role" of intellectuals in it. These portions of the book read like a tired update of mid-twentieth-century sociological theory.

But at key moments urgency breaks through. Lilla in fact goes so far as to conjure the ghost of Marx. "Returning to the baroque edifice Marx's *Capital* would be a step backward," he writes. "But acquiring some of Marx's ambition simply to describe the reality of contemporary capitalism and its political repercussions would be a genuine advance." He contends that "the era of liberal idealism that began in the 1980s and spread in the 1990s is over," and that we now find ourselves illiberally bound to a global behemoth that is yet unnamed—or not named properly: "We have no idea how this system really works, or even what to call it."

Andrew Bacevich—not one to take stability of any kind for granted—writes in a similar register. In his examination of Cold War American intellectuals Bacevich discovers an earlier version of the same analytic deficit Lilla points up, warning that these influential intellectuals, when "faced with a dire threat defined in oversimplified ideological terms," broadcast "a faux ideological response." Their tendency to miss the actual historical circumstances for the Big Idea proved costly: they helped leverage "a state-centered militarized version of liberalism." The result? "Gaping inequality and a culture that has made gods of choice, consumption, and an absence of self-restraint"—a "shallow and insipid definition of freedom," he none too delicately calls it.

Definitions of freedom may be hampered out in the intellectual sphere, but they begin as social practices in the realm of civil society—that pricey terrain that Lam, for instance, has his

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eyes on when he thinks hopefully about the prospect of serious, independent intellectuals in China. Even the Communist Party, in its own malign way, grasps this: it has "been reviving Confucianism with gusto," writes Lam, "so as to fill the spiritual vacuum within citizens who have lost faith in socialism." Ahmad S. Moussalli (from the American University of Beirut) senses the same spiritual need in the Middle East. He criticizes "Arab renaissance intellectuals" whose embrace of a liberal, secular vision choked out "an intellectual Muslim modernist and reformist trend," paving the way for "the authoritarian nationalist state." Moussalli understands that public order—whether in liberal or authoritarian societies—is bound up in religious vision, ideals, and practices. Political wisdom requires an embrace of this inalienable human reality, however socially complicated such an embrace may be.

But the West has tried, of course, to lead the way in the other direction, a trajectory assessed with acuity by the political theorist Patrick Deneen, who turns our attention to the secularizing currents in the history of higher education. Earlier in our past, he writes, the task of the college teacher was to achieve "the integration of various forms

of knowledge," guided by a "theory of human flourishing" that imagined education's end to be the cultivation of the "free citizen." "The structure of the college," he notes, "reflected the deeper commitment to a *universum*." Today, thanks to the internet, we may have enlarging "public intellectual" presence, but only—and not coincidentally—in the face of an absent public, a public that, having been educated in a fragmented disciplinary and social order, has given itself over to "jobs and private affairs": Economics 101.

We citizens need a new core curriculum: that much this volume makes clear (even when it's not trying to). And we need the active presence of that ancient Augustinian city, portending a new one. We need a civil society founded upon the bedrock of institutions that store up treasure capital cannot see. And we need teachers—intellectuals, if you will—who can help us to see and seize that treasure. Now. ■

**Eric Miller** teaches history and the humanities at Geneva College (Beaver Falls, PA), where he also directs the honors program. He is the author of *Hope in a Scattering Time: A Life of Christopher Lasch*, and *Glimpses of Another Land: Political Hopes, Spiritual Longing*.

Celia Wren

# One Thousand and One Appropriations

## Marvellous Thieves

### Secret Authors of the Arabian Nights

Paulo Lemos Horta

Harvard University Press, \$29.95, 363 pp.

Controversies about “cultural appropriation” have reverberated loudly of late. Scandal erupted after the British band Coldplay released a video brimming with Indian imagery. Authorities in the field of higher education have issued warnings about potentially offensive Halloween costumes (no sombreros). Productions of *The Mikado* have been criticized, postponed, or scuttled because of concerns that casting and costuming would amount to yellowface. Underlying such controversies is widespread anxiety that borrowing from another culture can betray a blameworthy colonialist mindset.

Standards were far different in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when European translators set about rendering the Arabian Nights into French and English. As Paulo Lemos Horta makes clear in *Marvellous Thieves: Secret Authors of the Arabian Nights*, the scholars, travelers, and empire-builders who transposed the tales into the languages of Voltaire and Shakespeare felt free to appropriate like crazy. While translating the narratives, they made telling omissions and subjective choices, added exotic or archaic diction to pump up the romance quotient, and took the opportunity to show off by yoking their own know-it-all commentaries to the stories.

Nor were such literary shenanigans the only dubious aspects of European efforts to translate the Arabian Nights, a loose array of tales, of undetermined authorship and varied provenance, which found their way into Arabic-language forms as early as the eighth century. Horta writes that English and French translations “were created within a literary context in which practices of imita-

tion, forgery, and plagiarism flourished”—a fact that offers a new perspective on some of civilization’s best-known stories. *Marvellous Thieves* is not a light read; its attention to historical and textual detail can be strenuous, and its language is frequently academic. But, drawing on resources that include the Vatican Library, it offers some fascinating revelations about the translation efforts that turned the Arabian Nights—also known as One Thousand and One Nights—into the world’s inheritance.

The Arabian Nights translator with highest name-recognition today is surely Sir Richard Francis Burton, the nineteenth-century writer and explorer who is also known for traveling in disguise to the Islamic holy cities of Mecca and Medina, and for introducing Westerners to the Kama Sutra. That Burton’s “translation” of the Arabian Nights was grounded in plagiarism is not a new charge, but Horta draws on recent archival discoveries to delve into Burton’s brazen looting of an Arabian Nights by the Pre-Raphaelite poet John Payne, who may in turn have been ripping off other translators. (As for that 1883 English-language Kama Sutra, said to have been translated by Burton, Horta reports that it’s really the work of Sanskrit scholar Bhugwuntlal Indrajai.)

But many of the most intriguing episodes of appropriation detailed in *Marvellous Thieves* involve Easterners who contributed to the West’s Arabian Nights in ways that have gone unacknowledged. Two of the best known Arabian Nights adventures—“Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves” and “The Story of Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp”—were supplied by Hanna Diyab, a Syrian Maronite Christian who traveled to early eighteenth-century France, where he related a batch of tales to Antoine Galland, the first French translator of the Arabian Nights. These yarns, now known as the “orphan tales,” have (with

one exception) no known Arabic-manuscript source, yet they have joined the canon of the Arabian Nights.

According to *Marvellous Thieves*, a memoir by Diyab that recently surfaced in the Vatican Library sheds light on the Syrian’s talents as a storyteller and creative force. Comparing details from the orphan tales with episodes in Diyab’s memoir, Horta concludes that a visit to the bling-riddled environment of Versailles may have inspired Diyab to include descriptions of similar riches in a tale like “Aladdin.”

Horta also argues that the hagiographic narratives circulating within Syria’s Catholic community left an imprint on Diyab’s storytelling aesthetic. Perhaps more significantly, Diyab was hugely influenced by the time he spent traveling from Aleppo to France with Paul Lucas, a roguish French collector, opportunist, and liar-raconteur. Lucas’s deceitfulness, and anxiety about bandits and pirates, might have furnished material for such tales as “Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves.”

In general, Horta maintains, a series of “cross-cultural encounters”—such as Diyab’s French sojourn and relationship with Lucas—were pivotal in shaping what Westerners came to know as the Arabian Nights. Another important cross-cultural encounter explored in *Marvellous Thieves* involves Sheikh Ahmad, a Cairo bookseller whose enthusiastic riffing on the subject of women’s loose morals may have influenced the writings of the nineteenth-century British ethnographer and translator Edward William Lane. In rendering the Arabian Nights into English, Lane repeatedly played down, or omitted, episodes that show female characters to be smart, brave, and resourceful—a perverse achievement, given the centrality of the brilliant Scheherazade to the story cycle as a whole. (Were she real, and living today, Scheherazade would



Illustration by Albert Robida for a French edition of *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*

surely have donned a pink hat and led the Women's March on Washington.)

*Marvelous Thieves* would have benefited from a longer, clearer definition of the story cycle known as the Arabian Nights and more explanation—even if speculative—of the work's geographical roots and early history. An assistant professor of literature at New York University Abu Dhabi, Horta apparently assumed he was writing for a scholarly audience that would not need to be spoon-fed such stuff.

But many general readers are surely interested in the Arabian Nights, which

has inspired or influenced a vast swath of art and entertainment. Without the contributions of the “thieves” covered in this book, the world might not have Rimsky-Korsakov's symphonic suite “Scheherazade,” certain fiction by Salman Rushdie, Disney's *Aladdin*, the Arabian Nights of contemporary playwright/director Mary Zimmerman, and innumerable other works.

Moreover, Horta's book has come out at a time when geopolitical developments give it added poignancy. The election of Donald Trump, the vote for Brexit, and the rise of far-right parties

in Europe have signaled a surging antipathy towards the idea of an interconnected world. Trump's travel bans have been targeted at latter-day Diyabs. In this context, reading *Marvelous Thieves* is a reminder of the blessings that can come from global commerce and communion. Who would want to live in a society stripped of the Arabian Nights stories? Faced with the prospect of a closed, isolationist culture, who wouldn't want to cry, “Open sesame”? ■

**Celia Wren** is *Commonweal's* stage and television critic.



Andrew J. Bacevich

# Behold, the Jihad of Freedom

## America's Dream Palace

Middle East Expertise and the Rise of the National Security State

Osamah F. Khalil

Harvard University Press, \$35, 426 pp.

**T**he wonderfully evocative title of this book does not accurately convey its actual contents. A more apt, if also far less graceful title might be something like this: "Manufacturing Knowledge: How U.S. Attempts to Understand the Middle East Yielded Bogus Conclusions and Ill-Advised Policies."

*America's Dream Palace* describes a century-long collaboration between U.S. policymakers largely ignorant of the Middle East and the entities to which they turned for enlightenment. Osamah F. Khalil, an assistant professor of history at Syracuse University, begins his story in World War I when the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire drew President Woodrow Wilson's attention to the region. He concludes with the post-9/11 period, when agenda-driven pseudo-scholars endorsed the George W. Bush administration's bizarre insistence that it was incumbent upon the United States to transform the Islamic world, if need be at sword point.

In a sense, Khalil has written two books that he melds into a single manuscript. The first book describes and evaluates the various impulses, prejudices, and intellectual fads that over time have influenced U.S. policy in the Middle East. The second recounts the backstage maneuverings by organizations and individuals intent on generating policy-relevant insights and bringing those insights to the attention of high-ranking officials. The first book, dealing with ideas, is interesting and instructive. Some readers may consider the second book, which is about process, a bit of a snooze. To-

gether the two warn of the perils of professionalization.

Prior to World War I, except as a field for missionary activity, the Middle East attracted minimal American attention. The small U.S. foreign policy establishment possessed little pertinent expertise. The advisers recruited to prepare President Wilson for the Paris Peace Conference that would determine the region's fate specialized in saving souls and studying antiquities, not in great-power politics. Wilson's own instincts emphasized paternalism, assumptions about Muslim inferiority blending seamlessly with his serene confidence in American altruism.

In the face of British and French imperial scheming, however, Wilsonian high-mindedness never stood a chance. The resulting settlement settled nothing, while laying the basis for a host of problems destined eventually to land

on Washington's doorstep. The lesson seemed clear: When playing with the big boys, amateurs get their pockets picked.

By World War II, U.S. interests in the Middle East had grown and increasingly centered on oil-rich Saudi Arabia. Efforts to professionalize regional expertise now fell principally to the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), wartime forerunner of the CIA. In a crash effort to build a cadre of Middle East hands, the OSS recruited Ivy League faculty and various bluebloods, leading critics, Khalil writes, to charge that OSS actually stood for "Oh-So-Special." Within the organization's high-toned ranks, Orientalism and American Exceptionalism came naturally.

So too did yet more fumbling amateurism. By way of an example, Khalil cites a speech by President Franklin Roosevelt, delivered after U.S. forces had landed in North Africa and then rendered into Arabic by an OSS operative intent on maximizing its appeal to Muslims. "Behold," read the translated text. "We the American Holy Warriors have arrived. Our numbers are as the leaves on the forest trees and as the



President and Mrs. Truman with the Shah of Iran, November, 1949



grains of sand in the sea. We have come to fight the great Jihad of Freedom. We have come to set you free.” As to how the intended recipients of FDR’s exhortation received it, Khalil is silent.

Although World War II did not mark a quantum leap in American understanding of the Middle East, U.S. regional ambitions became larger. According to Khalil, these centered on “oil, air bases, and future markets,” with opposition to Soviet influence soon joining that list. As interests expanded, so too did the level of U.S. engagement. Beginning in the late 1940s, the Middle East became an arena of intense CIA activity.

To improve its ability to understand the region, the U.S. government, with the CIA as lead agency, pursued a more comprehensive approach to creating expertise. In place of wartime expedients, the CIA sought to institutionalize mechanisms for producing both knowledge and individuals able to put that knowledge to work in advancing U.S. national-security objectives.

In this effort, the CIA found willing partners in major American universities and foundations. Pursuant to waging the Cold War, the CIA and foundations such as Ford, Rockefeller, and the Carnegie Corporation had money to spend. To expand academic offerings and fund individual research, universities were keen to help with the spending.

Few had qualms about where the money came from or the purposes to which the research might be put to use. During the 1950s, this arrangement fostered the rise of an academic enterprise known as Middle East Studies (MES), a multidisciplinary approach aimed at creating a corps of specialists who upon graduation would find employment in the CIA, State Department, or military services. Professionals would thereby supplant amateurs.

Khalil views the enterprise as highly suspect. With the imperative of pleasing the client an overriding consideration lest funding dry up, MES programs created even (or especially) at top-ranked universities such as Harvard and Princeton tended to be superficial.

Rather than challenging preconceived notions, the MES project reinforced them. Not least among those notions was an abiding conviction that Arabs and other Muslims were temperamentally incapable of managing their own affairs. If the peoples of the Middle East were to escape from backwardness and embrace Western-style modernity—the assumed destiny of all of humankind—they would require American coaching and assistance. MES trained coaches.

The resulting coaching staff, Khalil notes, included American diplomats and military officers keen to facilitate arms sales. Indeed, the principal expression of modernity that the United States succeeded in transferring to countries like Saudi Arabia and Iran came in the form of advanced weaponry, a boon to the military-industrial complex, if not to the region.

This arrangement lasted into the 1970s, when a changing mood on campus, fostered by the Vietnam War and revelations of CIA improprieties, made it impossible to sustain. MES programs survived, but now became critical of U.S. Cold War policies, and perhaps more importantly, of Israel, precisely when supporting the Jewish State was emerging as a first principle of American politics. In the formulation of policy, universities had been players; now they became bystanders.

The resulting void, Khalil writes, provided a made-to-order opportunity for think tanks to move in. Think tanks, especially those based in Washington, exist to shape elite opinion. While purporting to sponsor disinterested research, they actually promote a particular point of view, reaching conclusions that align with the preferences of the foundations, corporations, or wealthy individuals who pay the bills. It’s lobbying, dressed up with scholarly footnotes.

Khalil’s survey of the think-tank world is a bit cursory. Of those with a Middle East agenda, he focuses on just two: the Washington Institute for Near East Policy dedicated to preserving and deepening the U.S.-Israeli special relationship; and the American Enterprise Institute, which flogs Islamist terror as

an existential threat and is gung ho to unleash the U.S. military to put things right. The former offers regular updates on the never-ending “peace process.” The latter provides neoconservatives with a platform to campaign for more war.

In reality, on matters related to the Middle East, the landscape of Washington think tanks is more diverse than Khalil implies and the views on offer more varied. That said, he is surely correct in arguing that the “ideas” that emerged from the think-tank world to shape the U.S. response to 9/11 and that even today continue to influence U.S. actions in places like Iraq and Syria bear a remarkable similarity to the counsel that earnest missionaries and ivory-tower academics offered to Woodrow Wilson back in 1918: that the people of the Middle East are incapable of managing their own affairs and that providence summons America to tutor them.

Over the course of a hundred years, we’ve learned a lot. And we’ve learned nothing. ■

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**Andrew J. Bacevich** is the author of *America’s War for the Greater Middle East: A Military History*, which has just been published in paperback.

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# The Door of No Return

*Richard Brown*

I trudged along the rocky beach, with a dull, empty sickness. Turning back I squinted at the massive, bleached-white structure surrounded by swaying palm trees on a nearby bluff: Elmina Castle. The castle, built on the former African Gold Coast in modern-day Ghana, was the holding cell and point of embarkation for black Africans who were sold into slavery during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Established by the Portuguese in 1482, and also known as St. George of the Mine Castle, it was one of the earliest European forts on the African continent and one of more than twenty castles built by European colonial powers along this part of the Atlantic shoreline. These castles were originally made for the gold trade, but after the year 1700 a more lucrative commodity emerged: black bodies. Estimates range, but scholars believe that approximately 1.8 million black Africans were housed in Elmina Castle and then shipped off to various ports in Europe, the Caribbean, and South and North America to be sold as slaves. During this time the castle also served as a missionary sanctuary and housed a church.

I recently visited Elmina Castle with a group of fellow board members from the Theological Book Network, a nonprofit that facilitates the donation of scholarly books to libraries in the developing world, including Ghana. After we toured the castle church, our guide led us to the infamous “Door of No Return,” where black women and men and children had marched, chained and single file, onto awaiting slave ships. We lingered for a few excruciating minutes, then finished the tour before wandering in stunned silence toward the beach. The irony was not lost on us: all of these morally horrific activities were carried out within a fortress named for a martyr of the church who has been revered over the centuries by Christians and Muslims alike.

There is no post-racial America, Ta-Nehisi Coates has argued in the *Atlantic*. Despite decades of legal and social progress on race, there remains a massive gulf between our actions and our moral aspirations. This is not unique to the United States. Every nation, region, city, and village struggles with racial difference. It is a tragic fact of our nature, and of our shared history. The moral arc of the universe may bend toward justice, as abolitionist Theodore Parker first wrote and Martin Luther King Jr. famously repeated. But as Parker and King also noted, the moral arc of the universe is long. Our collective journey toward racial reconciliation, filled with jubilant victories and devastating setbacks, is seemingly endless.

From what we know of the era, faithful Christians were responsible for Elmina, for St. George’s Castle. They worshipped God in

the midst of utter depravity. Yet we can presume that they saw nothing morally hypocritical about this—no cause to condemn it or even to challenge it. They were blind to this collective moral failure, and today we condemn them, rightly, for this blindness. But as we do this, we should acknowledge that we, too, remain enslaved by our own collective moral failures. Racism endures. Can there be any doubt that in another three or four hundred years our progeny will look back at us, appalled, and say much the same thing as we do today about our ancestors? Yes, slavery is legally prohibited. But what is our Elmina Castle?

There are signs of promise. Georgetown University, where I work, recently acknowledged its historical ties to slavery with an astonishing report from an internal working group on slavery,



*Elmina Castle*

memory, and reconciliation. Representatives of the university are seeking out and meeting with the descendants of the slaves, known as the GU 272, whose sale assured the financial future of the institution. Redress is a work in progress; there are many questions, and not everyone will be satisfied. But this is a good-faith effort to confront a legacy of moral blindness and complicity—not to tear down Elmina Castle and scrub it from history but to recognize its heinousness and combat it in a very public way. This is yet another step in the long journey toward racial reconciliation.

And this is the essence of moral hope—to acknowledge our collective blindness while at the same time envisioning a world of justice and right relationships; to trudge collectively along the beach, occasionally looking back at the Elmina Castles of our own making, humbled and chastened by them, then peering seaward to the horizon of our moral aspirations. ■

**Richard Brown** is the director of Georgetown University Press.



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