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*The Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture is a research center at the University of Virginia that investigates the logic and meaning of contemporary cultural change and its implications for our understanding of the human person and the ordering of public life.*

*The Center on Religion and Democracy, an initiative of the Institute, explores the complex questions arising at the intersection of religion and democratic culture.*

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## Telling Suffering: Pain, Trouble, Trauma, and Their Stories

### Spring Colloquium 2006

In the face of suffering—our own, others’—what are we to say? Suffering is common to us all and yet it is radically personal. We can respond to the pain and distress of another but never enter directly into their experience, nor they into ours. The felt reality of suffering is in an important sense ineffable, “unsharable.” It defeats adequate representation and this is in part what causes the pain and distress. Sufferers often observe that their suffering is most acute when they are unable to connect to others because they are unable to communicate their suffering. Silence, especially in the face of extreme and life-threatening experience, often seems the logical response. Allowing sufferers not to speak of their suffering; not trivializing their suffering with words of understanding.

Yet speak we must. As a matter of justice and of human caring, an encompassing silence is not an option. And this means that we must always struggle to find ways of expressing the inexpressible, of comparing the incomparable. One important line of scholarly research has explored how experiences of suffering find commonalities in narrative. The way one experiences suffering and tells others about it is shaped by other stories of suffering inherited from one’s family, other sufferers, the discourses and practices of professionals, and the wider culture. These shared narratives influence what counts as “experience,” both past and present, and in how those

now suffering understand themselves and their situation.

On March 16 and 17, 2006, the Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture will host its Spring Colloquium on “Telling Suffering: Pain, Trouble, Trauma, and their Stories.” Prominent scholars will examine stories of suffering, exploring what they reveal about how suffering is understood, experienced, and remembered, considering what comparing different narrations of suffering might reveal about human subjectivity and embodiment, and asking if we can point to richer ways of using narrative to enable people to live with suffering and claim its place in social life.

**Jonathan Shay** is best known for his books, *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character*, and *Odysseus in America: Combat Trauma and the Trials of Homecoming*. He began his career as a neuroscientist and has been a staff psychiatrist at the Department of Veterans Affairs Outpatient Clinic in Boston for the past 18 years. He has held various academic appointments, including Visiting Scholar-at-Large at the U.S. Naval War College.

**Arthur Frank** is Professor of Sociology at the University of Calgary. He is the author of a number of highly-acclaimed books, including *At the Will of the Body: Reflections on Illness*, *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness and*

*Continued on page 2*



Jonathan Shay



Arthur Frank



Cheryl Mattingly

*Ethics*, and, most recently *The Renewal of Generosity: Illness, Hospitality, and Dialogue*.

Cheryl Mattingly is Professor of Anthropology and Occupational Science & Occupational Therapy at the University of Southern California. Her publications include *Healing Dramas and Clinical Plots: The Narrative Structure of Experience, Narrative and the Cultural Construction of Illness and Healing* (co-

edited with L. Garro), and *Narrative Self and Social Practice* (co-edited with U. Jensen).

Paul Komesaroff is a physician, medical researcher and philosopher at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia. His positions include Professor of Medicine, Director of the Monash Centre for the Study of Ethics in Medicine and Society, Ethics Convener of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians, and Convener of

the Global Reconciliation Network. He is the author or editor of nine books, including *Troubled Bodies: Critical Perspectives on Postmodernism, Medical Ethics, and the Body* and the forthcoming *From Bioethics to Microethics*.

For more details about this event, see the full schedule on the back of this issue or at our website at [www.virginia.edu/iasc](http://www.virginia.edu/iasc). ■

The Institute is pleased to announce that the Fall 2006 LaBrosse-Levinson Lectures will host Adam Michnik. Michnik, a Polish activist, intellectual, and former parliament member, was one of the founders of the Committee for the Defense of Workers (KOR) and a founding Solidarity member. He played a prominent role in the struggle against martial law during the 1980s in Poland, including representing Solidarity at round table talks with the government that eventuated in the end of Communist rule.



As a result of his political involvement, he was imprisoned for a total of six years, during which time he wrote *Letters from Prison*, a collection of essays penned between 1973 and 1984. When the first free elections of the post-communist era were held in 1989, Michnik founded *Gazeta Wyborcza*, which continues to be the most significant paper in Poland. Michnik is currently its editor in chief.

He is the author of several books, most of which have been translated into English, including *Letters from Prison* (University of California Press, 1987), *Letters from Freedom* (University of California Press, 1998), and *The Church and the Left* (University of Chicago Press, 1993).

He will deliver three lectures, collectively entitled "Democracies, Dictatorships, and Intellectuals" this fall. Further details will be forthcoming on our website: [www.virginia.edu/iasc](http://www.virginia.edu/iasc). ■

## The Conference on Secularization

On Saturday, January 28th, the Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture and the Center on Religion and Democracy hosted a one-day conference on religion and secularization in Thomas Jefferson's Rotunda at the University of Virginia. The conference brought together scholars who have done ground-breaking work on this topic to discuss the role of religion and the processes of secularization in contemporary life with Institute fellows, as well as other University of Virginia faculty and graduate students. The conversation took up the following quandary: Despite the predictions of many social scientists, religion has not disappeared from public life, either through the waning of religious belief and practice or through its privatization or expulsion from the public sphere. Given this, is secularization theory still useful, perhaps with some revision, to understand elements of religion in the contemporary world? Or is a new theory, paradigm, or discourse needed to replace secularization theory? If so, what might that look like?

José Casanova, Professor of Sociology at the New School for Social Research and author of *Public Religions*



José Casanova

*in the Modern World*, spoke on ways of rethinking secularization using a global comparative perspective and suggested, among other things, that the “de-privatization of religion is likely to remain an important global trend.” Pippa Norris, who is the McGuire Lecturer in Comparative Politics at Harvard’s John F. Kennedy School of Government and the co-author (with Ronald Inglehart) of *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*, suggested that, rather than viewing religion through a supply-side model, conditions of insecurity need to be considered in shaping the “demand” for religion in society. Professor Talal Asad, Professor of Anthropology at the



Talal Asad

J. VARSOKE, 2006

City University of New York and author of the influential books *Formations of the Secular* and *Genealogies of Religion*, served as a respondent for both presentations, initiating a robust discussion among all the participants.

The conference was made possible through the generous funding of the Pew Charitable Trusts. The papers will be published in a special double issue of *The Hedgehog Review* (Spring and Summer 2006), along with contributions from Steve Bruce, Grace Davie, Nilüfer Göle, Paul Heelas, Danièle Hervieu-Léger, and Olivier Roy, among others. ■



### James Davison Hunter Honored

On October 21, 2005, James Davison Hunter, the Director of the Institute and LaBrosse-Levinson Distinguished Professor of Religion, Culture and Social Theory at the University of Virginia, was honored with the 2005 Richard M. Weaver Prize for Scholarly Letters.

The Weaver Prize is presented by the Bradley Institute for the Study of Christian Culture. The Bradley Institute,

located at Belmont Abbey College, in Belmont, North Carolina, awards the prize during its annual Ingersoll Symposium. Professor Hunter, the key-note speaker, lectured on “Authority and Democracy in Contemporary America.” ■

# Sacred Order/Social Order: My Life among the Deathworks

By Philip Rieff

*In January 2006, the University of Virginia Press published the first volume of Sacred Order/Social Order by Philip Rieff, titled My Life among the Deathworks: Illustrations of the Aesthetics of Authority. The Institute assisted with the publication of this book and the introduction was written by Institute director James Davison Hunter. A short excerpt from Hunter's introduction is reprinted below. It is followed by selections from Rieff.*

*Sacred Order/Social Order: My Life Among the Deathworks* is stunning in its originality, breathtaking in its erudition and intellectual range, and astonishing in the brilliance of its insights into our historical moment. It penetrates settled conceptual conventions to open up new ways of thinking about culture, religion, morality, character, identity, social movements, and a pantheon of intellectuals, novelists, poets, and artists. In the discipline of social theory, there is nothing quite like this.

As a work of cultural analysis, it is also inherently provocative, controversial, and, in parts, incendiary. Rieff will surely sting as many as he astounds, incense as many as he inspires. There is some intention here. Against the analytic detachments of his earliest scholarship, Rieff now concludes that “there is no metaculture, no neutral ground, from which the war of the worlds can be analyzed.” As such, his examination leads to criticism of some of the most cherished pieties of our time....

The emergence of the third culture (and the origins of the present cultural struggle) is signaled not by any particular event but rather in the dispositions of artists and intellectuals through their

arts and sciences. An artificial but useful point of origin, for Rieff, is 1882, the year in which Nietzsche published *The Gay Science* and there declared that God was dead and all god-terms with him. This is the original and prototypical deathwork against traditional cultures from which all other deathworks follow.

In the triumph of these deathworks, the great inversion foretold by Nietzsche actually comes to pass. Inherited truths that frame the *données* of reality are replaced by theories and their interpretations. Assenting obligations and interdictions (as well as the range of remissive possibilities in-between) are replaced by highly contingent rules and systems of rules and the entire language of morality is replaced by a language of functionality. Identities, fixed and sacred, are replaced by ever changing and changeable “roles,” which are, in the end, nothing more than the functions of multiple social selves. In the material culture, art once addressed to sacred order is liberated from theological reference and now only addresses itself. Accordingly, in the structure of social authority, the artist replaces the prophet, the therapist replaces the priest, and so it goes.

What Foucault called the principle of reversal and Nietzsche called the transvaluation of values, then, has brought into being a world that is self-consuming and self-legitimizing—a world that has no precedent in human history. And, as Rieff ominously warns, “no culture in history has sustained itself merely as a culture, however attractive and authoritative.”

In the end, third culture is an “anti-culture,” whose inversions and negations eventually lead to the nega-

tion of the human. At first this negation is only symbolic. In due course, it can become a reality as it did in the death camps [that his grandfather survived but where his aunts died].

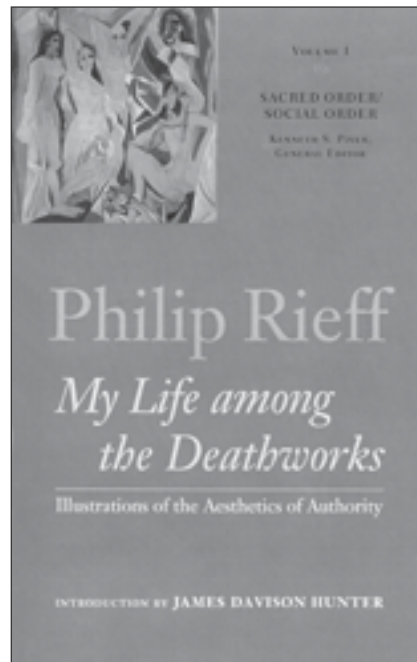
*Excerpted here are four sections (footnotes removed) from Rieff's first chapter, “The Present World Fight.” This fight, the contemporary kulturkampf, Rieff analyzes as a conflict involving three worlds, or cultures, each distinguished by its own god-terms, understandings of reality, and dispositions toward authority. By the provocative term “deathwork” he refers to any “assault upon something vital to the established culture.” Sacred Order/Social Order is itself intended, Rieff states, as a deathwork.*

1. *Let there be fight? And there was.* And there is. James Joyce's pun, on the words of Jewish second world creation, Genesis 1:3, is more than mildly amusing; it gives readers the most exact and concise account I know of the sociological form of culture. Culture is the form of fighting before the firing actually begins. Every culture declares peace on its own inevitably political terms. Unless a culture is defeated politically, as the Jewish was from the Roman conquest to the refounding of Israel, it will assert itself politically, later if not sooner. A living culture, even one that imitates life by politicizing its cultural impoverishment, works for itself. That cultural work is the matter and manner of disarming competing cultures, inside and outside its previously bounded self. In its disarming manner, a culture makes the ultimate political means of enforcement, armed force, unnecessary.

The other superordinate sociological form of culture is complicit in its fighting form: *world creation/rule*. Our church civilization is being, like all others, constantly re-created. In those recreations, worlds are ruled authoritatively. There are no uncreated worlds. All are supranatural. The morning prayer of observant Jews includes thanks to the Creator for renewing the world. The Our Father in the Roman liturgy concludes at its *world without end*. In the truth of what I call the second world culture out of Jerusalem, the world has been created once, but it is the task of those who live in that world to act as agents of world creation.

Unending, world creation comprises the historical task of culture: namely, to transliterate otherwise invisible sacred orders into their visible modalities—social orders. As transliterating institutions of sacred order into social, cultures are what they present: ‘symbolics’ or, in a word that represents what it is, ‘worlds’. Cultures are the habitus of human beings universal only in their particularities symbolically inhabited.

Tocqueville understood the work that is the making of the world each day. He called the principle of authority, which must then “always occur, under all circumstances, in some part or other of the moral and intellectual world. Its place is variable, but a place it necessarily has.” To know where that authority is, “where it resides and by what standard it is to be measured,” is to know the work that is the making of the world each new day. That arrangement or order of words, images, bodies, of all social relations in space that is called culture is the object of my examination.



*The kulturkampf between second world sacred orders and third world anti-sacred social orders is now worldwide. There is no escape from the struggle.*

4. *A synchronic of three cultures.* Every world, until our third, has been a form of address to some ultimate authority. Of first worlds, pagan as they were called by those in our second cultures out of the traditions of Jerusalem, I

ask my leading question: whether any remain other than as a recycling of their aesthetic in ultimate authority? Ultimate authorities in pagan first worlds, various as Platonic Athens and aboriginal Australia, had something essential in common: mythic ‘primacies of possibilities’ from which derived all agencies of authority, including its god-terms. Typologically, all first worlds, characterized by their primacies of possibilities, should be known, especially in our third world of those primacies recycled as fictions, by a familiar acronym: *pop*. Whether Platonic essences or aboriginal dreamtimes, an all-inclusive *pop* once characterized highest authority there, being above and in all its agent authorities in all first worlds.

The leitmotif of our second *culture/world* is nothing miasmatic or primordial, nothing metadivine and impersonal. In a word, faith, not fate, sounds the motif of our second world. Faith is in and of the creator-character that once and forever revealed himself in the familiar words of Exodus 3:14: *I am that I am*. Faith means trust and obedience to highest most absolute authority: the one and only God who acts in history uniquely by commandment and grace. Even given grace, in the second world of Rome as in Jerusalem, the largely prohibitive commandments, interdictory in character, must be kept. Even to the question of a rich young intellectual on what he must do to enter the kingdom, Jesus answered: *Keep the commandments*. Those commandments, divine Law, have not been abrogated by *one jot or tittle* anywhere in second culture. The commanding truths, revealed by highest absolute authority and elaborated by the practicing observant elites of that author-

ity, first to themselves, and not before and above everything else. Before commanding truths there exists their author. Before the existence of that authorial God—One or Three in One, as various traditions of that second culture would have it in their own quests for historical power intellectualized—there is nothing.

There is no meta-culture, no neutral ground, from which the war of the worlds can be analyzed. My embattled analysis runs toward what I hope will prove an authorized conclusion: that *pop* first worlds have been recycled in a variety of disarming assaults by third world warriors—upon the exclusive and intolerant aesthetic of authority by which our seconds have continuously reconstituted their embattled identities. Whether our third worlds, as inventions of radically remissive late second world elites, can be called ‘cultures’ takes the answer, I believe, that our thirds should be called ‘anti-cultures’. Anti-cultures translate no sacred order into social. Recycling fantasy firsts, third worlds exist only as negations of sacred orders in seconds.

Third world anti-cultures consume their negational truths as swiftly as they produce them. Those consummations refer to worlds of *pop* inventions always ending in the name of a better world elsewhere. *Pop* inventions submit readings of themselves alone, toward some supreme fiction at which not even virtuoso readers can arrive in this historical life. In contemporary American third culture (as in Europe), primordial power is widely thought to be desire; specifically, sexual. The alternative, closely related to desire in third culture, is power. O’Brien, in Orwell’s *1984*, makes this point quite explicitly and straightforward:

The Party seeks power entirely for its own sake. We are not interested in the good of others; we are interested solely in power. Not wealth or luxury or long life or happiness: only

power, pure power... Power is not a means, it is an end.... The object of power is power.

However their numbers threaten to transform second world moral majorities into third world fundamentalist minorities, *pop* worlds are created more or less consciously to remain readings of a free future. Freedom now is as it never was and cannot be. In our second worlds, freedom can be defined as a change of masters, from the merely fictive god-terms of first worlds to the master of our universal seconds who always asks at least one question, the parent question of humanity, *Am I Thy Master or Art Thou Mine?* The unmastered world, however many and cruel the number of its deathworks, loses its tragic sense of life. Life becomes, as Nietzsche knew to his horror of it, a “comedy of existence... ‘become conscious’ of itself.” Third worlds propose an unprecedented present age without moralities and religions. Nietzsche’s doctrine of eternal recurrence was his consolation prize, which he awarded to himself, for an age that he foresaw would be as horrifying as it turned out to be....

9. *Culture*. Cultures give readings of sacred order and ourselves somewhere in it. A culture is constituted by institutions that supply the texts of transit, those texts in many media, from sacred to social order. It is in his culture that man becomes a reading animal, to that sacred manner as if born. Culture and sacred order are inseparable, the former the registration of the latter as a systemic expression of the practical relation between humans and the shadow aspect of reality as it is lived. No culture has ever preserved itself where it is not a registration of the latter as a systematic expression of the practical relation between humans and the shadow aspect of reality as it is lived. No culture has ever preserved itself where it is not a registration of sacred order.

There, cultures have not survived. The third culture notion of a culture that persists independent of all sacred orders is unprecedented in human history.

The *kulturkampf* between second world sacred orders and third world anti-sacred social orders is now worldwide. There is no escape from the struggle.

We are all caught in the war one way or another (or many ways at the same time, in repressed/divided states of mind). The struggle looks different at almost any space to which one turns; particular battle lines are differently drawn. The contemporary *kulturkampf* is unique because it is not between sacred orders but between great abolitionist movements directed against all sacred orders in any of their historical or theoretical manifestations....

10. *Kulturkampf*. The German compound for the disarming *force/form* of culture has an awkward English equivalent: *culture/struggle*. Where there is a culture, there is struggle. The abstract word for *culture/struggle* is, at its most German, *dialectic*. As I remarked in my very first paragraph, the punning polemical genius of Joyce brought him closer than any sociologist I know to both the formal fighting sense of culture and its superordinate creative sense. It is in that *both/and* that the historical task of culture is always and everywhere the same: the creation of a world in which its inhabitants may find themselves at home and yet accommodate the stranger without yielding their *habitus* to him. Here and now, pluralism has its price: a united form of second against third world assaults, which are often mounted in the name of pluralism. The *either/or* of our second worlds stands against the substance and subtleties of our third worlds in their advancing fictions of multiculturalism. A multiculture is an anti-culture. Such a multiculture no longer mediates between sacred order and social order. ■



Käthe Kollwitz, *Schlachtfeld (Battlefield)*, 1907. Etching on laid paper, 16 x 20 7/8 inches. Museum Purchase. 1996.24.2. Collection University of Virginia Art Museum © 2006 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

## Depictions of Suffering

One of the central themes of the Institute's Spring Colloquium, *Telling Suffering*, is the inarticulacy that haunts nearly all encounters with suffering. Our collective inability to communicate this experience highlights the radical singularity entailed in suffering. Yet we know that vulnerability and suffering are intrinsic to the human condition.

Often, however, the visual arts provide a compelling and vivid alternate "telling" that overcomes some of the limitations of language. In depictions of suffering, the viewer is able to see com-

monalities that aren't swallowed by the harrowing particularity of the account. In so doing, viewers are given cause to ponder suffering as an experience common to all humans despite our inability to always "tell" about it.

The work of Käthe Kollwitz (1867–1945) exemplifies this ability to convey suffering visually. *Schlachtfeld (Battlefield)*, reproduced here, depicts a woman searching for her son, after a battle during the German Peasants' War. Here, as elsewhere, she communicates suffering in all its authenticity

and complexity; often with unnerving elusiveness. Kollwitz, who later lost a son in World War I, understood that suffering has many faces. As Stephen Margulies of the University of Virginia Art Museum notes, "Kollwitz gives us both the fatal and too solid fact of modern suffering as well as the strength and endurance of those who resist death and who endure devastation. Her worn mothers and peasants have a strength greater than the grimmest of shadows because they themselves are a living and loving shadow." ■

## Death, Culture, and Virtue: The German Case

### An Interview with Monica Black

Your dissertation is titled “The Meaning of Death and the Making of Three Berlins” and explores connections between the cultural values surrounding death and the construction of moral life. Tell us a little more about the project and what you are finding.

I am interested in what views of death and the handling of the dead can reveal about the foundations of moral life in a given society. Focusing on Berlin, my study examines three German contexts between 1933 and 1961—the Third Reich and the German Democratic and Federal Republics. The question, “how should we show our concern for the dead?” emerged in each context. The answer almost always had to do with concerns of a moral nature, and varied depending on ideological perspective, religious suppression or renewal, and other factors. My study addresses what it meant in the Third Reich and in East and West Germany to behave “decently,” or “properly,” or “respectfully” toward the dead as a way of understanding changes in the ongoing construction of moral life.

It may strike some readers as strange, incidentally, to write about the foundations of moral life in authoritarian and even, in the case of Nazi Germany, patently murderous contexts. And yet, it seems to me a very important thing to understand how people can behave in a way that is, to us, profoundly disturbing and nevertheless see themselves as upholding and sustaining virtue. Such paradoxes lie quite near the heart of the human condition.

Many Berliners celebrated the inauguration of the Third Reich as a moment for German spiritual rebirth. New ways of understanding death, myriad projects to reshape burial practices, reforms

in the appearance of cemeteries, and so on demonstrated their enthusiasm for this renewal. During World War II, war deaths in particular took on profound moral purpose as the instruments through which Germany’s “redemption” would unfold.

The idealism attached to war death was dramatically undermined by defeat. Berliners in 1945 were faced not only with political, social, and economic collapse, but with a sense of existential disintegration as well. The ideal for which millions had died had evaporated. Rebuilding society from this state of collapse, in East and West, came to be bound up with demonstrating special concern for the dead. The meanings and rituals attached to death and the “pious” treatment of the corpse reflected emerging cultural and moral values in each of the two postwar Germanys as they struggled to define themselves. In the early Cold War years, each rival German nation posited for itself what constituted the true German cultural inheritance, and then demonstrated how it was the rightful heir of that legacy. Death was very much implicated in this process and central to redefining what it meant to be German in post-Nazi society.

**Is this study, then, also a study of social memory and its formation?**

Absolutely. I am very much interested in the ways that the Second World War was remembered by Germans, and the ways in which the memory of a collective experience—that of the war—became two, very distinctive memories in East and West Berlin, respectively. East and West Germans had very different interpretations of the war, its origins, why it had been fought, what it meant, and what its consequences had been. In both



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cases, however, the ways that deaths associated with the war were mourned and remembered took place in political contexts that militated against dwelling on what was euphemistically referred to as “the past.”

This “past” was the (now very disreputable) Nazi past. In the late 1940s–50s, all Germans, East and West, worked hard to put that past firmly behind them and to find new ways of understanding war deaths outside the framework of Nazism.

I argue that they did so in part with reference to the “official” explanations of the war emerging in both countries, but also through imaginative stories and with reference to their faith. When the war ended, millions of Germans seemed simply to have vanished; one in four was looking for a “lost” family member in 1945. I have found that in many

instances Berliners invented stories—purely for themselves—about what may have befallen a missing relation, or that imagined them carrying on their lives elsewhere. These crucial fantasies about the dead were connected to Berliners' own sense of personal vulnerability in the context of military occupation and the Cold War. The stories also permitted them to individualize both their own experiences and the deaths of their loved ones in ways that stood in contrast to “official” narratives of the war, which tended to explain it in undifferentiated, even anonymous terms. Similarly, understanding war deaths for many Berliners meant engaging with Christian notions of redemption and salvation, which offered a way of understanding deaths that otherwise seemed inscrutable, unintelligible.

**What motivated you to choose this topic?**

Social histories of the Nazi period tended to marginalize the experience of the war, because social historians were more concerned to explain how the Nazis came to power than how Nazism was “lived.” Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, historians of Germany have been

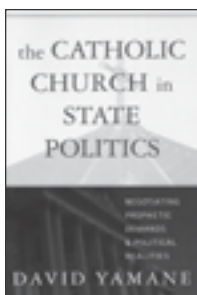
increasingly keen to explain Nazism's many lingering effects on the societies of East and West Germany. And the key experience, perhaps, of Nazism, was the war. Some excellent studies have begun to appear that consider various aspects of this experience. Mine attempts to go to what I think of as the crucial memory of the postwar years—that of death—which has remained largely unexamined.

Besides wanting to understand death's role in the construction of moral life in each of the Berlins I examine, I also wanted to understand why very deadly catastrophes—like wars or natural disasters—seem to unleash such profound anxieties concerning a society's moral life. Anyone who followed the events surrounding Hurricane Katrina saw this underscored: from the first days, some of the more dreadful rumors that emerged in the press (not all true, as we later learned) had to do with fears concerning the handling (or mishandling) of the dead. There does seem to be a fear that if things go very badly awry, the moral prescriptions in place in a society concerning the dead will be abandoned, and that this will be the signal that society itself is coming apart. ■

## Jennifer Geddes Awarded Fellowships

Jennifer Geddes, Co-Program Director of the Institute and editor of *The Hedgehog Review*, has been awarded two fellowships for the coming year to work on a book about the rhetorics of evil, that is, the multiple and complex ways that evil is narrated by perpetrators, victims, and bystanders. During the spring she will be a fellow at the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, during which time her research will focus on rhetoric and literary representations of evil. During the fall, she will be at The Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC, focusing on first-person accounts of the Holocaust, both by perpetrators and by survivors. ■

## New Publication



**The Catholic Church  
in State Politics:  
Negotiating Prophetic  
Demands & Political  
Realities**

David Yamane—  
Lanham, MD:  
Rowan & Littlefield,  
2005. 189 pp.

The political advocacy of the American Catholic bishops at the state level is one of the church's best-kept secrets. In this groundbreaking work, David Yamane reveals the rich history, accomplishments, and challenges of bishops and their lay colleagues in local politics. Through sociological analysis, up-to-date examples, and personal interviews, Yamane shows how the local Catholic advocacy organizations in thirty-three states and Washington, D.C., negotiate the ten-

sion between the prophetic demands of faith and the political realities of secular political institutions. Engaging and timely, *The Catholic Church in State Politics* invites readers both to understand the role of religion in the public square and to get involved themselves.

David Yamane worked on this book while a Postdoctoral Fellow of the Center in 2002–2003. He is Assistant Professor of Sociology at Wake Forest University. ■

## Democratic Faith

Patrick J. Deneen—Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005. 440 pp.

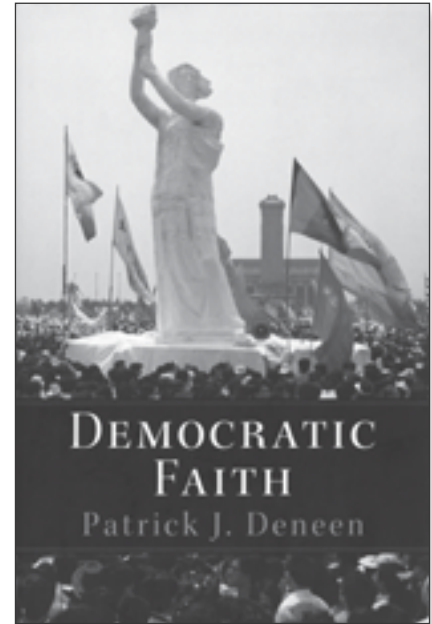
In his powerful analysis of liberalism and the idea of progress, *The True and Only Heaven*, Christopher Lasch contrasts a “vigorous form of hope” with the “conventional attitude known today as optimism.” Hope, Lasch argues, “asserts the goodness of life in the face of its limits.” It “does not demand a belief in progress,” or “prevent us from expecting the worse,” but rather “trusts life without denying its tragic character.” Progressive optimism, by contrast, rests on “a denial of the natural limits on human power and freedom,” and “a blind faith that things will somehow work out for the best.” It is not “an effective antidote to despair” and it cannot “justify the sacrifices imposed on those who seek to challenge the status quo.” These, Lasch shows in his analysis of popular movements, require hope, a tragic understanding of life, the “disposition to see things through.” Hope is what we need for steering the troubled waters ahead.

Much the same sensibility and urgency informs *Democratic Faith*, Patrick Deneen’s timely analysis of the “quiet crisis” of democratic theory, a crisis “reflecting (if inadequately) the more serious crisis of democracy itself.” His argument is developed in three stages. He begins with a general introduction to the concept of democratic faith, a phrase first used—approvingly—by Walt Whitman in 1846 as “a redirection of faith away from old religious forms and toward mankind.” For Deneen, “if faith is a belief in that which is unseen, then it may be that democracy is as justifiably an object of faith as a distant and silent God.” And so it has become, though the politicians, political theorists, and citizens who are adherents are seldom able or willing to acknowledge the nature of their belief. In part two, Deneen carefully traces how the idea

of democracy came to be an object of unquestioned devotion. This is a history that originates with the Greek Sophists, continues with Rousseau, and finally comes to an American tradition that includes Ralph Waldo Emerson, John Dewey, and Richard Rorty. Part three of *Democratic Faith* outlines a different intellectual tradition. This is the tradition of the “friendly critics” of faith in democracy. Its exemplars include Plato, Alexis de Tocqueville, Reinhold Niehbur, Christopher Lasch, and, especially, Abraham Lincoln.

For Deneen, what is central to the holders of democratic faith—and here he includes our current president—is their lack of a “tragic sense.” Democratic faith holds “an optimistic view of human transformation, scientific-driven progress, and the reconciliation of the individual and the global by an overcoming of human alienation.” Such wishful and uncritical thinking, because it papers over the very real human impulse toward despotism, is a danger to democracy itself. Conventional democratic theory, beholden to the same optimism and limited by its disciplinary blinders, fails to even acknowledge the threat.

Over against democratic faith, Deneen singles out the approach of President Lincoln. He argues that what was always central to Lincoln’s thought was his view of human “shared insufficiency” and his recognition of our common human need to have faith in something. Both of these ideas are rejected by the optimists but they are crucial elements of political self-criticism and underpin the tradition Deneen calls “Democratic realism.” For Deneen as for Lincoln, the ability to be self-critical is dependent upon a theological anthropology that sees human beings as lower than God, and thereby limited and imperfect. It is with this understanding



of humanity, he argues, that “we hold at bay the dangerous extremes of any faith toward unwarranted optimism, utopianism, and fanaticism, even as we do not lose our democratic hopes.” Since not all will share an awareness of human insufficiency and life’s tragic dimension for theological reasons, Deneen advocates it on more pragmatic grounds as well. Our own democracy, he maintains, is best served by a sober view of the human condition and the political virtues of gratitude and charity.

*Democratic Faith* provides a historically rich and analytically subtle map for thinking about democracy. As an alternative to a naïve democratic faith, Deneen offers us the tradition of Democratic realism. Tocqueville, Lincoln, and others understood the finitude of humanity and the crucial need for democratic self-criticism and correction. Troubled waters do lie ahead and for these we need realism and hope. ■

*Emily Raudenbush is a research associate at the Institute.*

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