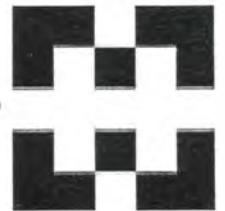




The Challenger



A Publication of the
William Rainey Harper College Honors Program

Challenge Is Welcome

by Mirja Lorenz

One day in October, 2005, I (a conflict-shy European woman) was innocently walking through the hallway of Harper's music and art building when all of a sudden, an uncomfortable atmosphere distracted me from my own busy thoughts. So, I looked up and found myself surrounded by a big crowd of Muslim students who were spreading an enormous tension – an intense, quiet, and angry tension. They were glaring at something. Maybe the pictures at the wall? I allowed myself a quick glance and saw a half-naked, female Muslim woman. Was this picture

the cause for their resentment? Can a picture be so important? But my careful intuition prevented me from asking; neither did it allow me to look at the pictures more closely. In fact, I neither felt nor wished to feel that I was a part of this uncomfortable scene, so I hurried along my way and left this eerie atmosphere as fast as possible.

Nearly every person involved with Harper College might have heard at least something about the incident involving the art exhibit of last fall. Some

seem to know everything whereas others have just heard vague rumors. This topic was hot. Unfortunately, strong opinions reverberated more loudly throughout the campus than any trustworthy facts about the story. So now, almost four months after the incident, many non-involved people might be interested to learn more about this incident in its settled aftermath.

In case you don't remember, or in case you haven't heard the story, let me summarize for you the most obvious facts. Last October, the artist

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Christianity and the Political Spectrum: Where Should It Fall?

by Tim Ophus

Today in America, being a Christian and voting Republican seem to go hand in hand. Some religious leaders have painted the picture that not voting Republican is a vote against God. Issues such as abortion and gay marriage, so-called "moral issues," are even said to have been the deciding factor in the 2004 election, which saw George Bush defeat John Kerry, whose faith seemed to play a minimal role in his politics. But few people are stopping to ask some important questions: Are these issues really the most important to God? Do the policies of the Republic

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"Whereas Almighty God Hath Created the Mind Free"

by Chris Poulos

There is an idea that dates way back to the birth of this country, an idea which Thomas Jefferson seemed fixed on upholding, and an idea which always struck me as intelligent and well crafted. Luckily, for all those Americans who are preoccupied with working, attending school, or trying to bum change from the passing automatons—even for those who simply dislike the act of reading—this idea is right there in the *First* Amendment. It takes only a few seconds to read, I promise—and I'm a slow reader. Enough stalling, the idea I am speaking of, which supposedly has intrinsic worth in the fabric of our fine country, is none other than the separation of church and state. The question I pose is: How important is the idea of separation of church and state?

There is a consistent debate I've heard on

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February
2006

Editor: Tim Ophus

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Not Designed For Intelligent Debate In The Classroom

by Brian Bellows

The concept of Intelligent Design is that some things are too complex to have occurred naturally; thus, it must have been created by an unspecified guiding force. Many different definitions of Intelligent Design have been asserted, but this is the definition that proponents attempting to bring Intelligent Design into the science curriculum have adopted. Teaching Intelligent Design in schools was defeated at the ballot box in Dover, Pennsylvania, but ratified in Kansas City.

Inherently Intelligent Design is a great theory in a theological class. The world is vastly complex; when one considers the intricate facets of our reality, even our own consciousness seems too great to chalk up to random chance. Intelligent Design is applicable to almost all religions of the world, from Christians to the earliest Aboriginal beliefs. The problem begins when this 'theory' is taught in the classroom. Intelligent Design has set off an arduous firestorm of controversy. Proponents of the theory have initiated measures to have it taught in schools, and opponents of it have launched lawsuits against it being taught.

In the words of a college biology teacher who wanted to remain anonymous, "Evolution is a theory that is testable. Given its evidence; it is almost at the point of irrefutability. You can trace evolution through genetics, see it in our day to day dealings, watch its progression through dinosaurs and observe fossil records of early man. This makes it a tangible theory. Intelligent design is not a theory you can test."

Evolution is a theory that has been tested and should be taught in schools because of its scientific merit. Copious amounts of fossil evidence and genetic information are able to trace life back before the time of the dinosaurs. The human genome project is beginning to trace our DNA back to one human and show how certain genes evolved. Also, bacteria's evolution can be seen in lab dishes. Bacteria encompasses an entire kingdom. It is the essence of life, and some of its functions as our cells do. The science of biology,

physics, and chemistry tie into evolution heavily. Based on this evidence alone, evolution is a testable, and can be viewed in a lab.

Since Intelligent Design is not a theory you can test, it is a mere hypothesis without any real evidence. If Intelligent Design passes as something to be taught in schools, I want to vehemently fight for my own theory. My theory is that little green men from planet Vulcan created earth with psychic powers. It's not scientific because you cannot test it, there is no tangible evidence to suggest this happened, but it is a theory by the definition of Intelligent Design. If Intelligent Design will be taught in schools, as many influential politicians and religious leaders assert, then by utilizing their standards, my green-men-from-Vulcan theory deserves to be taught.

The Catholic Reverend George Coyne, the Jesuit director of the Vatican Observatory has denounced teaching Intelligent Design in schools and stated that Darwin's theory of evolution has its place in science. His assertion is that Intelligent Design is a valid faith based theory, but there is no viable evidence to give it scientific credence. The Catholic church is a conservative institution on social issues: this indicates that even conservative religious institutions see that Intelligent Design corrupts science.

Opponents of Intelligent Design argue that it is simply creationism being repackaged, and there is evidence to show that this is the case. Phillip Johnston, the proponent and creator of Intelligent Design, once said about Intelli-

gent Design, "The objective is to convince people that Darwinism is inherently atheistic, thus shifting the debate from creationism vs. evolution to the existence of God vs. the nonexistence of God." He believed that from there people would be introduced to the truth of the Bible and the question of sin, and they would be introduced to Jesus.

Why stop at applying the Intelligent Design 'idea' to the sciences?

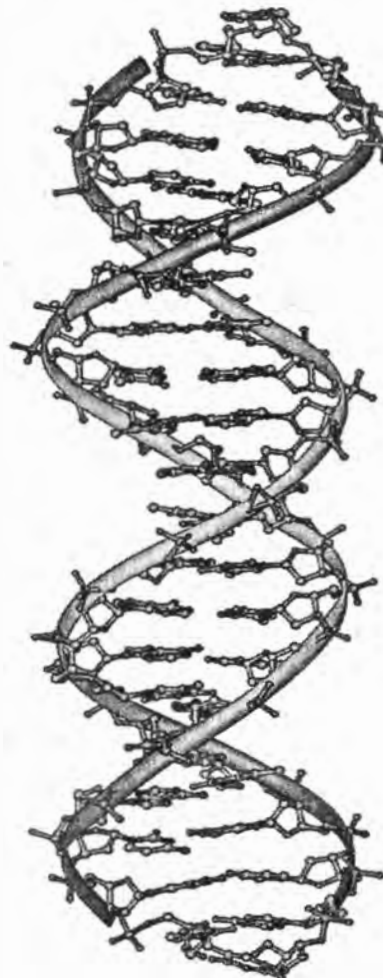
Let's move Intelligent Design away from science and theoretically apply it into my math teacher's classroom.

Diligently working through a statistics problem, I am befuddled by the numbers I am getting. "Teacher," I shout, emphatically waving my hand, "I came up with the answer to this problem. It seems this is too complex to comprehend. I believe I have found an answer founded on Intelligent Design for explanation." He responds, "Good work, class. My student has discovered the answer to this problem: Intelligent Design." Such an assertion would be ludicrous in mathematics.

Interjecting an entirely unwarranted, unscientific theory into a scientific curriculum will stifle the abilities of those scientists that dare to wonder and make our lives great. When Newton first saw the apple fall, he did not

say that some things are far too complex to happen. He realized gravity caused the apple to fall and created mathematical theorems. Had Newton merely said, the

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Intelligent Design Is Just Alright With Me by Tim Ophus

According to the Harris Poll research organization, 90 percent of American adults believe in God, while other polls such as ABC News and CNN/Gallup put that number at about 95 percent. Whatever the exact number, it is clear that the vast majority of Americans believe that a God exists. It would be a logical assumption to make, then, that at least a large number of Americans believe an Intelligent Designer created life. Polls reflect this, as 64% of Americans believe humans were directly created by God, and another 10% say that the creation of life at least required “a powerful force or intelligent being,” according to the Harris Poll in 2005.

These numbers are coming from credible sources. The Harris Poll predicted a tie in the 2000 election (unlike any other polling organization), and in doing so had the most accurate prediction of the election of all major polling organizations. So if we believe their numbers to be correct, nearly 75 percent of Americans essentially believe in Intelligent Design. It is because of this fact that Intelligent Design needs to be seriously addressed. We live in a democratic society, and if three-quarters of the country believes something to be true, it cannot simply be swept under the rug.

So what do we do with Intelligent Design? I happen to subscribe to Intelligent Design myself, but I would agree with those who say it should not be taught in science class. According to the National Academy of Sciences, “science can say nothing authoritative about anything supernatural.” It is impossible officially to prove that God exists. There may be factors that point to a God, but as of today, God cannot be proven. And science only deals with things that can be tested and proven. I do think that there are logical, scientific reasons to believe in Intelligent Design, which I’ll get into later. But it is directly tied to God, or at least a God-like force, and so cannot be proven. Science would be contradicting itself to teach it, and for

this reason I see why it should not be taught in science class.

Nevertheless, I am a proponent of Intelligent Design being taught somewhere in schools. If I were a parent who didn’t believe in something that 75 percent of the country believed, I still would want my child to get the facts on it and judge the issue for him or herself. I think even those that are anti-Intelligent Design would agree that it is important to know what it is. If you don’t have any exposure to the theory (I’ll use the word “theory” loosely, for argument’s sake), you can’t analyze it. Not only that, but it seems to me that if 75 percent of the country believes Intelligent Design, the democratic thing to do is to at least teach the people according to their inclination.

You, the reader, may not agree with me. You might be thinking, “Just because 75 percent of the country believes this bogus ‘theory,’ this doesn’t mean my kid should have it forced down his throat.” That’s an interesting point, and there’s nothing wrong with that. But for me, if I have a child, I want him to be well versed in all things. Whether or not I agree with Atheism, I want my child to know about it. Whether or not I agree with Buddhism, Hinduism, or any “ism” at all, my child should have the right to make an educated decision on what he believes.

But I know what you’re thinking. Seventy five percent of Americans believe in a lot of ridiculous things. Yes, a child should be exposed to things that people think, but these should be taught only if they truly have legs to stand on. “If 75 percent of the country believed pigs could fly, that wouldn’t mean we should whip up some theory to teach it,” you might say. Another solid point you bring up! While I would still stick to my guns that it would be a good thing for people to know about this “pigs in flight” theory, I would agree, it shouldn’t be taught if it doesn’t have at least some evidence for it.

So does Intelligent Design have any evidence pointing to it? There are intelligent, sane, logical people who believe so. With some exceptions, these people generally concede that evolution is true at least to some extent. Bacteria would not be able to develop immunity to antibiotics if it could not evolve. This is an example of microevolution. And if you take microevolution and do it over and over again, you can explain macroevolution. The Intelligent Design argument does not hinge on whether or not life evolved once it began.



The argument hinges on the origin of life. If it could be fully proven that life started naturally, on its own, then clearly the Intelligent Design argument would disappear. However, those who accept the Intelligent Design argument feel that evolution has not gotten anywhere in explaining the origin of life.

There are a number of theories that exist as to how life began on earth. For example, perhaps life began randomly. There is an infinitesimally small yet existent chance that the building blocks of life came together randomly, but most scientists reject this. Instead, some scientists searched for some sort of inherent attraction that causes amino acids to link up and create protein molecules and, eventually, living cells. However, those who proposed this idea later repudiated it. Having tested this hypothesis, it was found that chemical preferences did not affect the sequencing of amino acids.

Other theories — such as life on earth being seeded from space, coming from vents in the ocean, or emerging on clays — all contain fatal flaws. Answering the question of how the universe began, and how life emerged in it, is an

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Challenge Is Welcome

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Amir Normandi was hired to present the exhibit *No Veil Is Required* in the hallway of the music and art building at Harper College. In addition to other pictures with partial nudity, one picture exposed a breast of a presumed Muslim woman. The images were accompanied by a text that bashed female oppression everywhere, implying that Islam is the quintessence of female subjugation. Not surprisingly, the Muslim students at Harper College were shocked. They demanded an end to the exhibition, which the faculty at first declined to do. After more pressure from the Muslim students, the faculty finally took the exhibit down. However, then the artist was upset and pointed out his right of freedom of speech.

After several articles have been written, fervid arguments and discussions have cooled down, and the people involved have been able to sleep again; the topic has lost some of its explosive power. In other words, now is a safe and thus ideal time for me, the European conflict-shy woman, to put in my two cents about the whole affair, possibly stirring up the just settled headaches of some of the people involved, in order to give you, my dear reader, more insight into boobs – pardon, into the conflict that started out with a picture of a breast.

However, this article is not an attempt to judge what is right and wrong. I will merely approach this issue from two sides that are worthy of being heard. Four people kindly and thoroughly informed me about facts and gave me their points of view. Mr. Michael Nejman, the Student Activities Director, gave me

some general background information. Professor Richard F. Johnson, the coordinator of International Studies and Programs (ISP), and Professor Perry Pollock, Assistant Professor of Art, are the instructors who hired the artist, whereas student Asad Khan, president of the Muslim Student Association (MSA), represents the Muslim students at Harper. Their voices should reveal more background information and ideas that might first, challenge our opinions, second, open our minds for both sides, and third, show us the colorful side of the conflict.

For the next few paragraphs, I want you, yes you, the reader, to slip into the shoes of a Muslim student at Harper College (if you are not already there). So imagine, your parents are immigrants, but you are not. You speak English with a real Schaumburgian accent, and America is closer to you than your ancestors' country. You are closely bonded to your religion, Islam, and although America is dominated by Christians, you don't see a conflict with being Muslim and American. Isn't freedom of religion granted in the very First Amendment of the constitution, after all? On the website www.archives.gov, it says, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." And aren't Americans proud of their First Amend-

ment? Yet besides being a minority, being Muslim means standing in the shadow of American society, especially after 9/11. Although you always try to appear friendly, peaceful, and *normal*, non-Muslims all too often react skeptically, suspiciously, and appear distant. You feel insecure, but at the same time proud of yourself. You have no reason to change.

In February 2005, you see an exhibition at Harper College, the *Hejab Exposition*, that, according to the *Chicago Reader* article, "When Is a Boob Just a Boob," showed women in daily life in Iran.

The images were smuggled out of Iran in 2001. You ask yourself, why did they do this? You and your fellow Muslims complain bitterly, but the faculty of the International Studies Program does not give in to your complaints. Dr. Johnson points to the "political, social, and intellectual value" of the exhibition, and to the fact that journalism should, sometimes, challenge the mind. Instead of taking it down, Johnson offers discussion. Okay, finally, you just take it.

But when last October, in the middle of Ramadan, the holiest fest of Islam, another "anti-Muslim" exhibition opens, Harper College goes one step too far. Muslim women expose body parts in a cheap manner, including a breast, using the veil as an erotic element. According to Asad Khan, president of the MSA, the artist's message was to show how the government of Iran and the whole of



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Religion: The View from Japan

by Kuniko Baba

“What is your religion?” Whenever somebody asks me this question, I always answer, “I do not follow any particular religious belief.” However, I am confused by asking myself, “Wait a minute. In daily life, don’t we Japanese often observe religious customs of devotion?”

For example, my family has been always praying to God, or Kami (God, in Japanese), at either shrines or temples on every New Year. When my family had funeral ceremonies for my grandparents’ deaths, my parents asked Buddhist monks to read Sutra at home.

Like me, many Japanese say they do not follow any religious belief; however, we are obligated to pray to Kami or Hotoke (Buddha, in Japanese), follow-

ing daily customs. It seems often that we are casual about religion, but there are, again, certain obligations. We face a contradiction between our thoughts and religious behaviors. So we should have come up with this question: “Is my family religion Buddhist or Shinto?”

Like me, many Japanese people do not know to whom we really pray. Kami or Hotoke? Who is Kami? We do not have one specific image of Kami because we are used to abundant images of Kami, with an agricultural background, in Japanese mythology. Mikisaburo Mori says that if there are many gods to worship, each power to worship God will be weakened. This may induce the situation that lacks of one strong religious belief (Mori 3).

Therefore, as a polytheistic nation, Japanese people traditionally used to borrow and mix together different

kinds of religious customs, such as Shinto, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, and Christianity in different occasions. “There are. . . more than 400 religions or sects” (Murakami 6). “They do not resist the situation that multi-religions exist and join together. Such a characteristic of Japanese religion is called syncretism” (Inoue 196). “Some time ago, H.I.H. Prince Takahito Mikasa characterized Japan as a ‘living laboratory and a living museum to those who are interested in the study of history of religions’” (Hori 5).

In order to understand the unusual situation more, I’ll explain the brief history of Japanese religions. The first religion in Japan, Shintoism, originated from agricultural rituals through festivals to call and pray to Kami, offering food in order to harvest rice crops in

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Christianity and the Political Spectrum

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can Party square with the teachings of Jesus? And if not, would the Democrats really be any better?

For the sake of this article, let’s look at a few issues that Jesus was concerned with, based on his teachings. And permit me to say that I do not assume that my reader is a believer in the New Testament. My aim, again, is merely to sound out whether the Republican platform — a nominally Christian platform — is a match for the spirit of Christ, whomever you, my reader, may conceive Christ to be.

While there are many other issues of importance to Jesus, we’ll examine a few more closely, and touch on others later. A persistent theme of Jesus was helping those who couldn’t help themselves. Jesus didn’t ask why people were needy; he simply stressed the need to help them. He even suggested to some to sell their possessions and give everything to the poor. Jesus also talked about retalia-

tion, telling his followers to “turn the other cheek” when struck by someone. On top of this, he asked his followers to love their enemies, and to pray for those who persecute them.

These are some pretty radical ideas, and they may seem counter-intuitive. But if Christians are trying to follow Jesus (which they are), these are issues that need to be taken seriously, just like all of his teachings. So how is the Republican Party doing on these issues? As for helping those who can’t help themselves, they aren’t doing well. On February 2nd Congress passed the Budget Reconciliation bill, which will result in cuts to health care, child support, and educational assistance for low-income families. At the same time, Congress is planning more tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans. All but one Democrat (who was absent) voted against the Budget Reconciliation bill, as opposed to only 13 Republi-

cans. This is one example of the cutting of social spending which continues to push low-income families deeper into poverty.

As for Jesus’ teachings on retaliation, these have absolutely been thrown out the window by both parties. Not only does the current administration not support “turning the other cheek,” they support striking someone’s cheek preemptively. The Bush administration does not seem to love its enemies; they



put them together in an “axis of evil.” To have a president who calls himself both a Christian and a “war president” would likely leave Jesus scratching his head. And what’s baffling to me is while Republicans are pro-life in terms of abortion, they pretend the human cost of war doesn’t exist. The people dying in Iraq and Afghanistan, on both sides, are real people made in the image of

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“Whereas Almighty God...”

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this issue. If the argument is that separation of church and state has gone too far, and freedom of religion is at jeopardy, then the counter-argument goes: the line between church and state is blurred more and more each day.

The former argument deals with the appearance versus the reality of the situation. Just because it may *seem* that the church is being blotted out does not actually mean the church is being blotted out. Take, for example, religion and the presidency. There is nothing that says the president *has* to be a non-Catholic Christian; however, with the exception of Kennedy, every president to this point *has* been a non-Catholic Christian. I can guarantee you that a Muslim will not be elected into office any time soon. I could also guarantee you that a Nietzschean philosopher will not be elected into office any time soon, especially if the madman parable were recited at any time during the campaign—the phrase “God is dead” would just not go over well with the American public. Take your pick: agnostic, Hindu, Buddhist, scientist. None of these will be the religion of the president any time soon. Going back to Kennedy, even if you are not the right *type* of Christian your chances are greatly diminished. If it were not for his understanding of how to play the media, his brother’s vicious campaign techniques, and his family’s affluent background, even Kennedy would not have been elected—Kennedy carried only 12 of 35 protestant states (see Rorabaugh’s *Kennedy and the Promise of the Sixties*). This information actually suggests that every belief besides Christianity is oppressed.

The First Amendment begins, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...” It states that religion should not be an issue in American polity; however, the example above contradicts that, and there must be a better reason than Christians enjoy running for president more than everybody else.

The United States is a country rooted in largely protestant, Christian ideology. As of 1996, the U.S. population was 41% protestant Christian and 86.4% Christian—Catholic, Protestant, Russian/Greek Orthodox, and Others (U.S. Bureau of Census). These roots have both consciously and unconsciously contributed to the moral basis of this country. It is no myth to politicians that Christian morality plays well with the American public. This is an idea which Thomas Frank accurately hits on in his book *What’s the Matter With Kansas?* His main inquiry was: in a state that has so much poverty, how did George W. Bush win “a majority of greater than 80 percent” of the votes? To hastily sum up the book, Frank’s answer was that voters tend to vote in terms of values rather than in terms of class. In other words, a poor Latino female living in the suburbs may be more influenced by her pastor than her current economic situation. Politicians know how to work in the bounds of these values in order to get votes. In this respect, religion has *never* been separate from the state.

When Bush makes strong

stances on abortion, affirmative action, or homosexual marriage, he is speaking only in terms of values, and, again, playing off the Christian morality inherent in this country. This has little to do with what actually gets done. Mak-



ing general statements based on values has allowed Bush to get away with signing bills like CAFTA, that will probably ensure more job loss in the United States, or by inciting more tax cuts to the rich, without being called a hypocrite or liar. Making general value statements is paying lip-service to all the things a president *should* care

about but *cannot* care about, because it conflicts with an even greater ideology of this country—that of the rich white man. As Frank said, “Values may ‘matter most’ to voters, but they always take a backseat to the needs of money once the elections are won.”

I cannot go further without mentioning the crazy conspiracy theorists who feel that Bush is planning a fascist, theocratic take over. Such an idea is absurd for several reasons. *First*, there is no way he could accomplish something of that caliber; it would take cognitive abilities he could never dream of having. *Second*, to argue those who feel church and state are becoming blurred beyond recognition, religion itself is not the cause of the problem, but rather one vehicle for the problem. There are countless examples of progressive Christian organizations which use Christianity in positive manner. For example, Martin Luther King Jr. used religion effectively for his peaceful protests in Montgomery. Jesus

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Challenge Is Welcome

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Islam uses religion to oppress women. Normandi, the artist, just picks on Muslims without respect, knowledge, or explanation. This exhibition is an insult. Don't these Christian Americans have their own problems? Why don't they just let you live and study in peace?

I assume you can sympathize with the Muslim students when they wonder if Harper College hates them. Khan goes on to say that an artist should never forget the response to a piece of art. Khan concludes that Islam is a peaceful religion and does not oppress women. The free encyclopedia *Wikipedia* confirms Khan's first claim: Islam means "the peaceful submission to the will of God." The second claim might be debatable, as is the treatment of women in most societies and religions. An example from a recent discussion in my philosophy class comes to my mind. For some people, a gentleman's behavior of opening the door for a lady is an insult because subliminally, he implies that she is absolutely dependent on him and unable to care for herself. For others, however, opening the door for a lady shows respect. Similarly, some female Muslims view the veil as a sign of oppression, while others view it as a symbol of honest respect.

After opening the door to a better understanding of the Muslim student's side, I will also present to you the voice of the faculty who both hired and "fired" Normandi. In May 2005, Normandi proposed a "follow-up" show to his first journalistic exhibition, *Hejab Exposition*, which led to controversy but also rich discussions last February. Although Rich Johnson and Perry Pollock thought there should have been more text accompanying the images, they were generally satisfied with the

result. So, Johnson, Pollock, and Normandi agreed to a continuation on the condition that the next show would need more "appropriate commentary."

Before the beginning of the exhibition, Johnson and Pollock received three sample images per email, which made them skeptical. But Normandi assured them that only a few images would include nudity and that he would provide appropriate contextualization. Maybe this moment offered an opportunity to check out Normandi's work more thoroughly, but since they had an agreement and a contract, Johnson and Pollock trusted him and his work.

Then, at the opening of the exhibition, Johnson and Pollock finally saw the whole show. What they'd feared had come true. The show did not meet their expectations. According to Pollock, the quality was "poor and superficial It did not make a point"; in fact, "it undermined its own message." However, both Johnson and Pollock had a responsibility not only to the public, but also to themselves and the artist. Since they had agreed to the exhibition, they had to stick with their decision now. They knew it would create controversy, but controversy can be a creative power.

So, they were neither surprised nor concerned when first complaints pattered upon them. But the complaints grew to a rage, and some faculty members had to face physical threats! Johnson and Pollock were set into the undesirable position of defending the show, supporting it on grounds clear and intellectual enough to quell the MSA's fury.

Both of them are generally not

afraid of controversy; on the contrary, Pollock, as a Professor of Art, sees controversy as creative energy. Also Johnson states in the aforementioned article, "When Is a Boob Just a Boob," that his job is "to bring challenging international programming to campus..." However, they had to acknowledge that they could not find the necessary intellectual grounds in this exhibition.

So Johnson contacted Normandi, asking him to add clarifying text, but he never did. The pressure from outside grew. Not only Muslims but also the administration started to get involved. Inside, Johnson and Pollock were in a fight of thoughts. After first covering the images, then taking them down temporarily, they found out that Normandi commissioned the pictures from other photographers. According to Johnson, the photographers had no "extensive personal experience with Iran or oppression in Islamic societies." Also, "all the photos were produced in Chicago, using non-Muslim models." The supposedly journalistic exhibition turned out to be absolutely non-journalistic. Especially with this new background information, Johnson and Pollock slowly realized that they could not properly defend the show. So, they finally agreed to take the show down.

Normandi then contacted the media, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), of which Johnson himself is a member, and threatened to impose a lawsuit on Harper College. He pointed to his freedom of speech. Interestingly, the First Amendment protects both religious freedom and the freedom of speech at the same time, uniting the opposing

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Religion: The View from Japan

(Continued from page 5)

the Yayoi period (around B.C. 300 to A.D. 300) (Murakami 8). Ancient Japanese believed that God's spirit exists in all kinds of nature, such as certain mountains, rocks, trees, rivers, waterfalls, the sea, animals, the sun, volcanoes, thunder, etc. They followed the rules of nature, surrounded by mountains and the sea, and they enjoyed four clear seasons.

Then Japanese mythology was born and shrines were built for those gods. "Shinto is usually described as a form of polytheistic animism, it has no elaborate theology, no holy books, no moral codes or precepts" (Sosnoski 64).

In 538 Buddhism was imported



in Japan from China and was accepted as a national religion by the Japanese. Since then, both Shinto and Buddhist deities were enshrined side by side, influencing each other and protecting each other from the Nara period. So Buddhist temples were often established in the land of shrines. Toji Kamata, Professor at Kyoto Zokei Art University, asserts the following about Shinto's tolerance: "The good things about Shinto are to be able to accept the gods from other religions and to coexist. [Shinto] has never been the abso-

lute center of the world. [Shinto] is fundamentally open and tolerant. [It] has respect for others and other religions" (Kamata 211).

During the Edo era, the Shogunate (Samurai government) decided which Buddhist temples belonged to which people, and those temples also functioned as family registers. In 1549, Francisco de Xavier came to Japan to preach Christianity, and Christians spread out across Japan. But the Shogunate, concerned that its control over the nation would be threatened by Christians, suppressed Christians.

In the Meiji Restoration (1868), the new government, which replaced Shogun, unified Shinto and the State. The government reorganized to control all over about 170,000 Shinto shrines in Japan, forcing its nation to worship at Shinto shrines and to revere the Emperor as Kami, thus forming a state religion. So the Meiji government completely separated Shinto from Buddhism because the government wanted to weaken Buddhist power supported by the old Shogunate. Unfortunately, in some areas, some temples and statues of Buddha were destroyed.

In 1873, the government lifted the ban on Christianity. After World War II, Shinto and the State were separated and all religions were freed from the Japanese government by the occupation of allied forces. Therefore, the Emperor denied himself that he was Kami, which gave a great shock to Japanese people who had pledged loyalty to the Emperor as Kami. So based on the new Constitution since the 1950's, new religions, such as Rissho Koseikai, Soka Gakkai, have emerged.

Nowadays, although Japanese people are not conscious about believing either Shinto (only 3 or 4 percent of the people believe it) or Buddhism, Japanese customs in daily life are closely related to rituals of the religions addressed above.

We celebrate the New Year's
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Christianity and the Political Spectrum

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God. Why isn't the Republican Party pro-all lives?

So are Democrats any better? While they may put more of an emphasis on social issues, I personally don't feel their policies are in line with God's. Democrats aren't afraid to support war or military involvement in other nations. And I don't feel that the poor are in any more capable hands when the Democrats have more control. Their policies are frequently inconsistent, in my view, just as the Republicans are.

You may be wondering, "If you think the Democrats aren't really any better than Republicans, then why did you come down so hard on them and not Democrats?" The reason is because of what is stated in the first paragraph of this article: Christians and the Republican Party are presumed to be synonymous with each other in America. Being a Christian today seems to equal being a Republican. And I think that's fine, but only if that is decided on a personal level, for reasons rooted in faith. In Jim Wallis' book *God's Politics* he quotes a petition that states, "We believe all candidates should be examined by measuring their policies against the complete range of Christian ethics and values." And if, in doing this, someone decides to vote Republican, that's fine. But it also must be alright for Christians to examine the candidates and come out on the Democratic side as well.

Every issue, not just abortion and gay marriage, are essentially moral issues. These were moral issues to Jesus, not just issues of practicality. I believe Christians need to be more concerned with these moral issues, and be sure that God, not country, is the focus of their decisions. Ultimately, the Bible says, "our citizenship is in heaven."





Religion: The View from Japan

(Continued from page 8)

festival, decorating with Kadomatsu, pine boughs and bamboo stalks, and Shimekazari, sacred straw ropes strung with little angular strips of white paper, in the entrance of each house. In the early hours of the New Year, we, wearing beautiful Kimonos, go to a shrine to pray to Kami that the family will be happy and healthy on the New Year.

On funerals and memorial services



for several anniversaries marking the death of family or relatives, Japanese families ask Buddhist monks to read Sutra at home or in Buddhist temples. They pray over a memorial wooden tablet that shows the new, posthumous names given to the dead by a Buddhist monk. During Bon festival in the middle of August, many Japanese people visit their hometowns to pray to their ancestors on gravestones; based on Buddhist belief, the spirits of the dead return home to visit.

Not only Shinto and Buddhism but also Christianity has played an important role in our customs in daily life, although we are not so conscious about it. For example, many Japanese people prefer to hold their wedding ceremonies at churches. I had a wedding ceremony at a Protestant church in the garden of a famous wedding reception place in Osaka. There was the option of a Shinto-style wedding ceremony in the place, but we chose the Christian style because it was easier and cool for me to wear a beautiful white wedding dress in a church rather than to wear a heavy, complicated Kimono (traditional Japanese dress) at a shrine. My mother is a Buddhist, but she did not oppose the wedding style at all. Actually, in Japan "The Christian-style wedding ceremony at churches

Intelligent Design Is Just Alright With Me

(Continued from page 3)

credibly difficult question to answer, even for the most brilliant scientists. While matter cannot be created or destroyed, it initially came about somehow, and then began sustaining life that also came about somehow.

Walter L. Bradley, author of the book *The Mystery of Life's Origin*, brings up an interesting analogy in his argument for why he believes in intelligent design:

In the movie *Contact*, scientists are scanning the skies for signs of intelligent life in space. Their radio telescopes just receive static- random sounds from space. It's reasonable to assume there's no intelligence behind that. Then one day they begin receiving a transmission of prime numbers....

The scientists reason that it's too improbable that there would be a natural cause behind a string of numbers like that. This wasn't merely unorganized static; it was information, a message with content. From that, they concluded there was an intelligent cause behind it. As Sagan [author of the book that *Contact* was based on] himself once said, 'The receipt of a single message from space' would be enough to know there's an intelligence out there. That's reasoning by analogy — we know that where there's intelligent communication, there's an intelligent cause....

And if a single message from space is enough for us to conclude there's an intelligence behind it, then what about the vast amounts of information contained in the DNA of every living plant and animal?

Each cell in the human body contains more information than in all thirty volumes of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. It's certainly reasonable to make the inference that this isn't the random product of unguided nature, but it's the unmistakable sign of an Intelligent Designer.

This is one example of why even very intelligent people have deduced that Intelligent Design is a plausible theory for how life began. It is because of reasoning such as this, and science's inability to propose a theory that effectively explains how life began, that I find intelligent design appealing. Admittedly, I'm not an Intelligent Design expert. These are other people's arguments that I am putting together to make a short, coherent argument of my own. I'm always attracted to compelling arguments, and I feel that the arguments for Intelligent Design are very compelling. So too are the arguments for evolution. Yet however compelling the evolution argument is, it does nothing at all in explaining how life came about in the first place.

Both sides of this argument ultimately have to put their faith in something. Either matter was created somehow, with life emerging from it in natural way, or it was intelligently designed by something. Neither option can be explained. But one of them is right.



has been the most popular wedding style among young couples since 1990's" (Inoue 226).

On every Christmas, Japanese stores have a big sale for Christmas cakes and most of the families eat cakes to celebrate Christmas, exchanging Christmas presents with each other. There are

many great private Christian schools receiving higher reputations in Japan. My sister and I went to a Christian preschool, and I still remember how we enjoyed playing scenes from Bible at the preschool.

In this way, Japanese people tend to easily accept different cultures

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Religion: The View from Japan

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and religions. This unique Japanese syncretism came from Shinto. Shinto is very tolerant of other religions because it is originated from animism that has a belief that God's spirits reside in all kind of nature. The people are easily influenced by another culture due to a lack of theology and fundamental dogma of Shinto.



Through dramatic change of social systems, from militarism and the emperor system to democracy at the end of World War II, Japanese people lost their strong belief that the Emperor is Kami. Yet, thousands of people died for the Emperor in the war. I cannot imagine how they could recover from the emptiness in their mind when they heard that the Emperor said that he was a human, not an immortal.

After Japan lost the war, Japanese worked so hard to be successful economically in the world, as if they could recover the spiritual losses through monetary and material gain. Then when the Japanese economy was at the highest level and started to threaten other developing countries before the bubble economy burst in the late 1980's, Japan was called "an economic animal" by other countries.

I think this expression symbolizes that Japan has no thought, philosophy, and religion. Many professors in Japan point out that Japanese are not so interested

in thought or philosophy. According to Iwao Ootsuka, their (the Japanese people's) real purpose is that they want to enjoy sharing the same thought with other people in one group as a company. He adds that philosophical religion is "just a means to accomplish the purpose" (<http://iwao-otsuka.com/jpn/jpntop1.htm>). Takeshi Yoro, Professor at Tokyo University, mentions the advantage of the Japanese attitude:

The philosophy that "we do not have philosophy," was able to save [the] economy in Japan because they do not have to correct it and do not have to listen to criticism from others. Such a philosophy had power to make the country modernize rapidly. (Yoro 95)

Once Japanese find a good thought, due to a lack of their own fundamental philosophy, they easily show outright allegiance to the new thought. And if one person says this thought is good, other people follow suit quickly. They may feel relieved by the behavior. Everybody wants to keep up with fashions or trends, but the trend will not continue for long.

For example, Japanese Anime is now very popular in the world because the Anime industry in Japan has been leading the trend; consider Pokemon and Yugi-oh. But when Yugi-oh became a boom in the U.S., Japanese kids forgot about Yugi-oh and grew interested in Duel Masters. What a short cycle of popularity in Japanese culture! Not only the Anime industry but also all other home electronic products and automobiles show the same pattern.

When I visited Japan in December, I was shocked to see the big change of Akihabara, Tokyo over a span of two years. Akihabara has been shifting into a big Otaku and Anime city from a once-famous electronics city. On the trains many people are always pushing the small keyboards of their cell phones to communicate by E-mail.

All of these phenomena in Japan seem to be related to a lack of thought for Japanese. Japanese people tend to be lonely from a lack of face-to-face communication and as a result, they tend to depend upon electronic tools. Their lives are very materialistic. This is the disadvantage of the Japanese attitude. However, Japan maintains peace, without any major conflicts with other countries. I think this is partly from Japan's unique syncretism, its tendency to respect (perhaps *over-respect*) all other religions and cultures. Tetsuo Yamaori, the head of International Japanese Cultural Study Center, suggests that the "Traditional Japanese religious sense which found gods in all kinds of nature may contribute to mankind in the future. It is necessary for Japanese to send such a religious belief to the world" (www.eco.goo.ne.jp/business/csr/lesson/jul01.html).



Not Designed For Intelligent Debate In The Classroom

(Continued from page 2)

apple simply falls from the tree and it is the will of an intelligent creator, we might not have televisions and airplanes today. The world's progress would have been hampered in innumerable ways. Intelligent Design is a valid theory for the faithful outside of the classroom, but a dangerous and unaccredited scourge inside the science classroom.

The empirical truth is there is no truth that science cannot grasp. In antiquity it was believed that the planets and sun revolved around the earth, the earth was flat, and evolution was both unfeasible and heretical. We now, however, reside in the 21st century, where scientific truth should be the endeavor to which we aspire.





Challenge Is Welcome

(Continued from page 7)

sides of this case. However, Normandi's contract said that the "exhibit will be supported appropriately with text and installed in a professional manner in accordance with Art Department standards." According to the faculty, however, Normandi's work was neither "supported appropriately with text" nor "installed in a professional manner." Normandi dropped the law suit.

The show was closed, but many wounds were (and are) still open. Johnson organized a forum called "Art, Politics, and Cultural Sensitivity: A Discussion," as an attempt to provide a "teaching, and even healing, opportunity for the campus community." All three -- Nejman, Johnson, and Pollock -- emphasized without being asked that the discussions at the forum were remarkably rich, deep, and interesting.

So, with the forum, Johnson's wish seems fulfilled. Con-

cerning the campus community, the controversy has finally led to healing and enrichment. One could conclude that the pictures were removed because they had offended the Muslim students, whereas in fact, they were taken down because of the discrepancy between the pictures' provocative power and their missing intellectual fundament. For the future, Johnson and Pollock hope that Harper College will still encourage interesting, inspiring, *challenging* exhibitions.

But should Harper really risk more provocative shows? And if it does, which "half" of the First Amendment should warrant more acknowledgement? Freedom of speech? Of religion?

The American Revolutionaries did not see a conflict in uniting freedom of religion with freedom of speech. In that spirit, let us also welcome challenge, freedom, and individualism; let us agree to disagree in peace.



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"Whereas Almighty God..."

(Continued from page 6)

and Christianity contributed to Martin Luther King Jr.'s determinacy in the face of despair during the bus boycotts. Many civil rights activists looked and still look up to Martin Luther King Jr.'s methods of protest. Another, more modern, example is the Emmaus Ministries, one of them located in Chicago, which gives homeless people a chance to rest, shower, and, most importantly, interact and talk with people they know, on a regular basis. It also deals with homosexuality and male prostitution in a positive way. Church groups from all over, who have little to no urban experience, come to Emmaus, in order to understand homosexuality in a new light—i.e. after they take a walk through Chicago's "boys' town" neighborhood they find homosexuality is not the cause of the destruction of America. Examples like this show that religion can be used in a more progressive and humanitarian way. *Third*, the problem does not lie with Bush alone. The problem is with the ideology of the whole system. Whether it be a Republican or Democrat, the president will probably come from an affluent background and probably serve the needs of the upper class.

Separation of church and state clearly had intentions of keeping the minds of Americans free of ignorance. Undoubtedly, I agree that the church and the state should be separate entities; however, this is of little importance to politics today and arguing that the line is blurred is a waste of time. Without critically-analyzing the situation, there is a whole power structure that remains unnoticed. It is an ideology that has learned how to become invisible by playing off peoples' values and fears, and it can transform a superficial argument into one of urgency and importance; it is an ideology that upholds monetary policies to benefit the upper class, and an ideology which strikes me as malevolently intelligent and well crafted.





The Lighter Side with Chris Poulos



Adam: It's all so beautiful, Eve. Just think, he made this all with his bare hands.

Eve: Yeah, and hundreds of thousands of years of evolution and cultivation

Adam: !

Adam: You ate the apple, didn't you.

Editor's Note

The opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the Harper College administration, faculty, or staff.

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Did you know....

The *Challenger* is named after the Space Shuttle that befell a tragic accident almost exactly 20 years ago. The Harper College Honors Program continues to pay homage to intellectual exploration, whether in space, on earth, or within the expanse of a single mind.

WE'RE ON THE WEB!
<http://www.harpercollege.edu/cluborgs/honors>

Honors Program Announcements

Honors Society Discussions:

Discussions take place in room L329, 3:30 to 5:00 p.m., each Wed. afternoon. All are welcome to attend.

Wednesday, Feb. 15

Issues in Geography: Faculty guest: Professor Veronica Mormino

Wednesday, Feb. 22

Religions of the World and the Problem of Evil: Faculty guest: Professor Charles Brown

Wednesday, Mar. 1

Unions, and the Labor Movement in America: (past, present, and future). Faculty guests: Professors Tom DePalma and Sean Noonan

Wednesday, Mar. 8

Tough Guise: (a film documentary)

Wednesday, Mar. 15

Skepticism and Pseudoscience: the difference between science and scientific-sounding claims, the fallacies within any number of hoax-like claims (e.g. magnet therapy, biorhythms chiropractic, intelligent design) and the way knowledge is discovered through scientific and logical inquiry. Also under the microscope here are the rhetorical devices and linguistic tricks such claims use to make themselves seem legitimate/valid. Faculty guest: Professor Josh Sunderbruch

Wednesday, Mar. 22

Controversies in Psychology: drug treatments, Freud v. Maslow, and more. Faculty guest: Professor Charlie Johnston