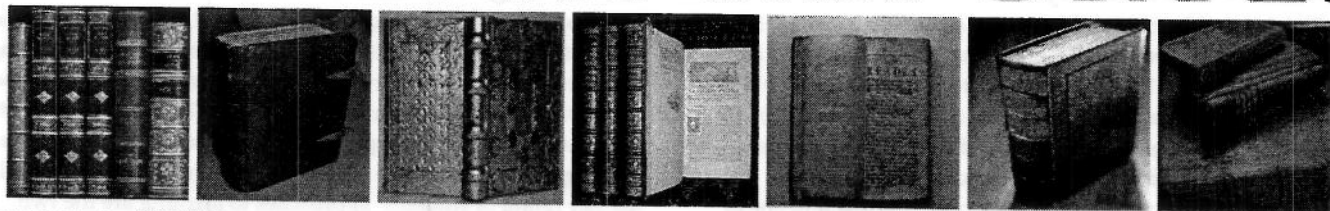


RESEARCH REPORTER



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APU Office of Faculty Research

Faith, Politics, and the American Regime



Dr. Dan Palm, Chair of the History and Political Science Department, and Dr. Thomas Krannawitter from Hillsdale College in Michigan, write on the history of ideas behind the American Civil Liberties Union, the federal Courts, and the conflicting ways America has come to understand itself in the Twentieth Century. *A Nation Under God?: The ACLU and Religion in American Politics* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2005) argues that, from its founding in the 1900's, the ACLU's primarily motivation has been derived from modern progressivism –

a philosophy that denies the possibility of human nature for the sake of remaking society in terms of participatory evolution, enforced by a powerful administrative state. Though often appearing in the guise of democracy and individual rights, progressivism rejected what the American Founders knew to be the basis of liberty, rooted in self-evident truths of human equality and eternal God-given rights, as stated in the Declaration of Independence. Far from establishing a "Christian nation" – as indeed many Right-wing factions claim – Palm and Krannawitter show how the Founders merely intended to provide a general basis for the cultivation of the virtues needed to maintain a constitutional democracy. The First Amendment's Establishment Clause only forbids a national denomination; it is of course coupled with the protection of Free Exercise. Yet the Supreme Court's reading of the First Amendment has brought these two clauses into collision, giving way to rulings that are no longer based on principle – thus giving the ACLU very arbitrary power in shaping national life. The authors call on us as citizens to realize the contingency of these judge-made laws, and rethink the character of our regime in light of the "laws of nature and nature's God." – Kevin Walker

Faith Integration

Clarity on Natural Law

Dr. Craig Boyd, APU's new Director of Faith Integration, writes on how the idea of natural law is often a victim of its own popularity. This is especially true among many modern philosophers who believe that the precepts of morality can stand apart from the divine nature from which it emanates, i.e., that we can know the Word without the God who speaks it. Such a view is certainly appealing to modern sensibilities; it allows us to establish certain ethical norms in terms of science rather than theology. It is also appealing among theologians who wish to avoid "divine command theory," i.e., that things are right and wrong *only* because God says so, which leaves morals quite arbitrary. Though these are wise precautions, we should see that a careful reading of the first major natural law thinker, St. Thomas Aquinas, reveals some serious errors in the current way of thinking. For Thomas, all divine laws, both Hebrew and pagan, could be generalized under the first precepts of morality rather than in the

detailed old laws of daily living. Grace, of course, is forgiveness of sin, and salvation is extended to all; yet it is also the revelation of a God who is the source of all being, who, as such, guides all things to their fullness through His creative love. The fullness of rational creatures, who in their completion live according to natural law, is in fact the "participation in the eternal law," or a harmonizing of ourselves with God's nature. For Thomas, Dr. Boyd points writes, this *necessarily* preceded any concept of natural law. Indeed, even when it is considered by itself, the first precept of natural law is to know and commune with the divine. It behooves us as Christians coming from a variety of theological traditions – and so prone to modernist mistakes – to see that the true basis of natural law is not purely scientific or rational, but theological. Dr. Boyd's article, "Participation Metaphysics in Aquinas's Theory of Natural Law" appeared in the 2005 issue of *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* (431-444). – Kevin Walker

English

Laughing at our (Non)-Selves

Dr. Andrea Ivanov-Craig studies the basis of feminine wit in the works of mid-Twentieth Century writer Dorothy Parker. Parker plainly confessed to viewing her own humor as simply useful – and in itself, "trivial". For her, being funny was in fact a very serious matter, which, despite its charm, only covered the surface of the solemnity of being a woman. In this, Parker was distinctively modern, living between nature and self-creating will, i.e., she came after a time when laughter was divine, and preceded post-modernism where it was only a way of laughing through existential angst. Parker seemed intensely aware of the ominous certainty of the modern mind, and above all what it meant for gender to be imposed onto the sexes *by* the sexes. Hers was a "gender parody" – a term borrowed from postmodern theorist Judith Butler and applied by Ivanov-Craig in an effort to understand the thoroughness with which Parker questions the gender/sex distinction. Parker's work shows us not only the disjunction between self and role, but also the shakiness of the very idea of a stable self upon which a role has been thrust. This disconnection between self and habit is of course the keynote of the modernist enterprise, as the questioning of the essence of originals is that of the postmodernist. But even though it secured greater freedom, modernism has hardly made us happier. It remains to be seen if we have fared better with Postmodernism and the idea of a multitude of copies. Either way, Parker found gender roles devoid of meaning – the acting, the masks – to be so powerful in completing the modern woman's soul that it stayed with her even into death. Parker's self-ridicule, Dr. Ivanov-Craig writes, is in fact a broad cultural criticism, as well as an attempt at self-assessment; her sarcasm and cynicism comes from a perennial human longing for what is real – and a panic in the face of the possible non-existence of the real. In this, Parker's work is a testament to the distinctive form of spiritual suffering in modern times – and a subtle suggestion on how we might get out. Dr. Ivanov-Craig's article, "Being and Dying as a Woman in the Short Fiction of Dorothy Parker" appeared in R. S. Pettit's, *The Critical Waltz: Essays on the Work of Dorothy Parker*. (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2005.) pp. 230-245. – Kevin Walker

Theology

The Rhetoric of Theodicy

Dr. John Hartley, in his review of Alison Lo's *Job 28 as Rhetoric: An Analysis of Job 28 in the Context of Job 22-31*, clarifies the strengths and weaknesses of Dr. Alison Lo's argument that Job 28 is properly placed in Job's third speech in the third cycle of the dialogue (chs. 27-28). Dr. Lo's affirmation challenges "the position of the majority of scholars who have either dismissed this song of wisdom as [an] insertion reflective of conventional wisdom theology or reassigned it to one of the other speakers of the dialogue." Using rhetorical criticism, Dr. Lo notes that the "Joban poet frequently employed contradictory juxtaposition as a rhetorical device to probe deeply into the issue of the suffering of the righteous." Her hypothetical rhetorical audience "adheres to traditional theodicy as articulated by Job's friends, namely that all suffering is retribution for wrongdoing," yet is troubled by this doctrine. Dr. Lo effectively shows that the third cycle challenges "ingrained dogmas about human suffering" through positing numerous "contradictory juxtapositions" that rhetorically push the reader to a deeper understanding of theodicy. Dr. Hartley cites several of these in his review, acknowledging that "Lo employs sound hermeneutic procedures" and "does an excellent job of showing that this speech [Job 28] is an integral component of the book." However, for several reasons Dr. Hartley also rejects some of her assumptions.

Dr. Lo assumes, rather than defends, that the third cycle of the dialogue consists of chapters 22-31 and that Job's affirmation of his innocence in 29-31 is a part of this cycle. Dr. Hartley questions this: Job's "extensive avowal of innocence. . . 1) has a distinctive heading (29,1), signaling that it stands outside of the dialogue. 2) This speech has a unique, more complex structure than any of Job's speeches in the dialogue, thereby signaling that it has a different purpose than those speeches. 3) Here Job summarizes his key arguments, stating definitively the position he has arrived at as he seeks to force God to answer him. Job's avowal of innocence, then, stands outside the dialogue as it opens the next major division of the book (chs. 29,1-42,6)." Dr. Hartley also cannot accept that Job 28 was spoken by Job: "the vast shift in style from Job's expressed solemn resolve in daring oaths (ch. 27) to the abstract, contemplative style of the song [in Job 28] and back to a determined avowal of innocence (chs. 29-31) is a major obstacle to accepting Lo's conclusion that this song was spoken by Job." He assigns Job 28 to the "Joban poet" whose omniscient perspective appears in the prologue of this book. Thus if Job 28 is acknowledged to be spoken by the "Joban poet" then "it is tenable to think that the poet composed this song about wisdom and appropriately placed it at the end of the dialogue to provide the audience a reflective respite, allowing them to ponder the preceding discussion in the dialogue, and also to prepare them for the course the dramatic action will take." If Job 28 is "assigned to the Joban poet rather than to Job," then "most of Lo's insights into the vital rhetorical role of Job 28 in the dramatic movement of the Book of Job remain valid." Dr. Hartley finds that her work "displays the value of rhetorical criticism as a vibrant methodology" and that "she makes a significant contribution to the interpretation of the Book of Job." Dr. Hartley's balanced analysis of Dr. Lo's text advances the discussion about this ancient but perennially provocative biblical book. Dr. Hartley's review appeared in *Biblica*, 86, pp. 427-31. – Carole Lambert

Education

Predicting Student Success

Dr. Ying Hong Jiang, Linda H. Chiang, and Dr. Doris Mok use logistic regression to explore predictors of probability of children falling into the category of 80th percentile or above consistently for three semesters in reading, math, and general knowledge. They acknowledge the great importance of identifying potentially gifted children even as early as kindergarten. Their study indicates that parent education level and teacher rating of students' approaches to learning are the two statistically significant predictors of success across academic domains of reading, math and general knowledge for all children. However, there are much fewer predictors for ethnic minority children than for white children unique to reading, math, and general knowledge. Closely analyzing ratings of children by both parents and teachers as well as parents' reports of children's home activities, the researchers found that parents' ratings of children's social behaviors, approaches to learning, self-control, and "sad/lonely" categories significantly correlated with reading success for the general population and white children. However, for "ethnic minority children, the only significant predictor. . . is self-control." When the teachers rated social behaviors of the children, approaches to learning is significantly correlated with reading success for all of the children. Interestingly, "externalizing problem behaviors is positively correlated with reading success for minority children alone." A child's home activities can also predict their reading success. For all of the children, "frequent reading outside of school" and "child takes music lesson" are two very significant predictors. The researchers also note that for the general population and white children, "participates in athletic events," "takes art lessons," and "participates in cultural events" positively correlate with reading success. In contrast, "for ethnic minority children, 'day care before/after school' seems to be correlated with reading success." Professors Jiang, Chiang, and Mok in a similar manner also analyze predictors of math success and general knowledge success in children. Their conclusion that the level of education of the children's parents is highly significant fits with past findings of other researchers. Their statistical tables in the Appendix provide detailed data of their findings. Their study demonstrates the need of much more research to clarify the predictors unique to various ethnic minority children so that they may be guaranteed equal educational opportunities. "Comparing Predictors of Early Academic Success between General Population and Ethnic Minorities" appeared in the *Journal of Early Childhood Education and Family Review*, 13 (1): 31-46). – Carole Lambert

APU FACULTY RESEARCH

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