

# THE INSTITUTE LETTER

INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY

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## THE INSTITUTE WOODS: PROTECTION AGAINST THE NOISE AND BUSTLE

More than seventy-five years ago, Founding Director Abraham Flexner sought to create with the Institute for Advanced Study a haven where “scholars and scientists may regard the world and its phenomena as their laboratory, without being carried off by the maelstrom.” To this end, Flexner wrote in a 1931 memorandum to the Board of Trustees that the future site of the Institute “should be large enough to be forever protected against the noise and bustle of urban or commercial life.”

Today, the Institute Woods contain several markers that commemorate the dedication of those who have protected the mission of the Institute and its environment through the decades. In 1950, Institute Director (1947-66) J. Robert Oppenheimer dedicated a Founders’ Walk, which included four miles of trails and paths, the building of a suspension bridge, and a Founders’ Rock with a bronze plaque, inscribed: “Dedicated to Louis Bamberger and his sister Carrie B. F. Fuld whose vision and generosity made this Institute for Advanced Study possible.”

The preservation of the Institute Woods was celebrated by the Institute in 1997 with the dedication of four land markers that tell the history of the land, commemorate its conservation, and acknowledge the more than one thousand contributors involved in the preservation project. Located behind the Thomas Clarke House at Princeton Battlefield State Park, one marker pays special tribute to the late Trustee Frank E. Taplin, Jr. and his wife Peggy Taplin for their “foresight and generosity.” Another acknowledges the Institute’s Board of Trustees “for vision and support leading to the preservation of these important lands.”

In addition to conserving an historic parcel of land—General George Washington

marched his troops through the Institute Woods just prior to engaging in the Battle of Princeton in 1777—the permanent easement protects a fifty-six-mile-long greenway network critical for the feeding and nesting of birds on the Atlantic flyway. It also protects a unique laboratory, with more than forty-five species of trees, for studies of forest succession and what

Henry Horn, professor of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at Princeton University who has conducted extensive research in the Woods for more than thirty years, calls “one of the most renowned natural areas in central New Jersey.”

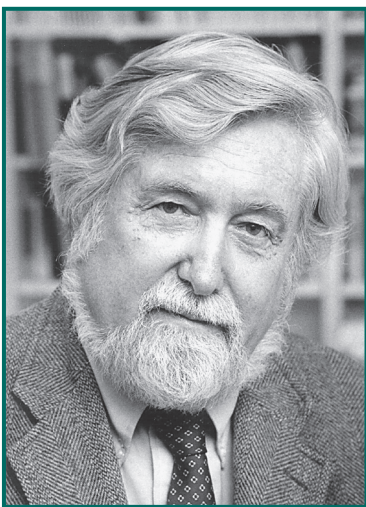


*The Institute Woods*

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## CLIFFORD GEERTZ

August 23, 1926 – October 30, 2006



*Clifford Geertz*

Clifford Geertz, an eminent scholar in the field of cultural anthropology known for his extensive research in Indonesia and Morocco, died on October 30, 2006, at the age of 80. Dr. Geertz was Professor Emeritus in the School of Social Science at the Institute for Advanced Study, where he had served on the Faculty since 1970. Professor Geertz’s appointment was significant not only for the distinguished leadership it would bring to the Institute, but also because it marked the initiation of the School of Social Science, which in 1973 formally became the fourth School at the Institute.

Professor Geertz’s landmark contributions to social and cultural theory have been influential not only among anthropologists, but also among geographers, ecologists, political scientists, humanists, and historians. He worked on religion, especially Islam; on bazaar trade; on economic development;

on traditional political structures; and on village and family life. A prolific author since the 1950s, Geertz’s many books include *The Religion of Java* (1960); *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia* (1968); *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (1973, 2000); *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth Century Bali* (1980); and *The Politics of Culture, Asian Identities in a Splintered World* (2002). At the time of his death, Professor Geertz was working on the question of ethnic diversity and its implications in the modern world.

“Clifford Geertz was one of the major intellectual figures of the twentieth century whose presence at the Institute played a crucial role in its development and in determining its present shape,” said Director Peter Goddard. “He remained a vital force, contributing to the life of the Institute right up to his death. We have all lost a much loved friend.”

Joan Wallach Scott, Harold F. Linder Professor in the School of Social Science at the Institute, commented, “Cliff was the founder of the School of Social Science and its continuing inspiration. His influence on generations of scholars was powerful and lasting. He changed the direction of thinking in many fields by pointing to the importance and complexity of culture and the need for its interpretation. We will miss his critical intelligence, his great sense of irony, and his friendship.”

Professor Geertz’s deeply reflective and eloquent writings often provided profound and cogent insights on the scope of culture, the nature of anthropology, and on the understanding of the social sciences in general. Noting that human beings are “symbolizing, conceptualizing, meaning-seeking animals,” Geertz acknowledged and explored the innate desire of humanity to “make sense out of experience, to give it form and order.” In *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author* (1988), Geertz stated, “The next necessary thing ... is neither the construction of a universal Esperanto-like culture ... nor the invention of some vast technology of human management. It is to enlarge the possibility of intelligible discourse between people quite different from one another in interest, outlook, wealth, and power, and yet contained in a world where tumbled as they are into endless connection, it is increasingly difficult to get out of each other’s way.”

The Institute will host “Remembering Clifford Geertz,” an event celebrating the life and work of Professor Geertz, on March 3. The program will include Javanese music performed by Gamelan Kusuma Laras under the direction of I. M. Harjito.

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## NEWS OF THE INSTITUTE COMMUNITY

ENRICO BOMBIERI, IBM Von Neumann Professor in the School of Mathematics, has won the 2006 Premio Internazionale Pitagora, an international prize for mathematics sponsored by the European Union and administered by the city of Crotone in Southern Italy.



Wonderful Blood: *Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Northern Germany and Beyond* by CAROLINE WALKER BYNUM, Professor in the School of Historical Studies, was published by the University of Pennsylvania Press in December.



Enlightenment Contested. *Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man, 1670-1752* by JONATHAN ISRAEL, Professor in the School of Historical Studies, was published by Oxford University Press in November.



JUAN MALDACENA, Professor in the School of Natural Sciences, has been awarded the 2007 Dannie Heineman Prize for Mathematical Physics by the American Institute of Physics and the American Physical Society. The award, which recognizes outstanding publications in the field of mathematical physics, acknowledges Professor Maldacena's "profound developments in Mathematical Physics that have illuminated interconnections and launched major research areas in Quantum Field Theory, String Theory and Gravity." He shares the award with Joseph G. Polchinski, a professor of physics at the University of California, Santa Barbara.



ERIC MASKIN, Albert O. Hirschman Professor in the School of Social Science, gave the Kenneth Arrow Lecture at the Eighth International Meeting of the Society for Social Choice and Welfare in Istanbul in July. In December he gave the Jacob Marschak Lecture at the South East Asian Meeting of the Econometric Society in Chennai, India.



The Middle East Studies Association of North America presented JOAN WALLACH SCOTT, Professor in the School of Social Science, with their Academic Freedom Award in November. The Association cited Scott for her role as head of the American Association of University Professors's Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure from 1993 to 2005, for being an extraordinarily articulate and vigilant defender of Academic Freedom in North America, and for putting the AAUP in the front lines of defending and promoting academic freedom in the United States.



The International Association of Mathematical Physics has awarded the 2006 Henri Poincaré Prize for mathematical physics to EDWARD WITTEN, Charles Simonyi Professor in the School of Natural Sciences. Witten was honored for his work on string theory, which has also influenced geometry and topology.



The Scientist as Rebel, a collection of 33 previously published book reviews, essays, and speeches, by FREEMAN J. DYSON, Professor Emeritus in the School of Natural Sciences, was published in November by New York Review Books.



The Social Science Research Council has established an annual prize in the name of ALBERT O. HIRSCHMAN, Professor Emeritus in the School of Social Science, for his lasting contribution to interna-

tional, interdisciplinary social science. The Albert O. Hirschman Prize, which carries an award of \$10,000, will be presented to a scholar who has made outstanding contributions to international, interdisciplinary social science, research, theory, and public communication. The recipient will deliver the annual Albert O. Hirschman Prize Lecture at a ceremony in New York.



An annual series of distinguished lectures has been established in honor of JOHN BAHCALL, the late Richard Black Professor of Astrophysics in the School of Natural Sciences. The lectures will be held at the Space Telescope Science Institute in Baltimore and NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Maryland.



Trustee JAMES H. SIMONS, president of Renaissance Technologies Corp, has been named Financial Engineer of the Year by the International Association of Financial Engineers/SunGard. The award, established in 1993, recognizes individual contributions to the advancement of financial engineering technology.



Former School of Social Science Member CHARLES BOSK (2003-04) was awarded the University of Pennsylvania's Provost's Award for Distinguished Ph.D. Teaching and Mentoring.



TOD S. CHAMBERS, former Member in the School of Social Science (2003-04), who was a participant in the School's thematic year focusing on bioethics, is president-elect of the American Society for Bioethics and Humanities.



The Averaged American: *Surveys, Citizens, and the Making of a Mass Public* by SARAH E. IGO, former Member in the School of Social Science (2004-05), has been published by Harvard University Press. The book, in which Igo analyzes how survey data has transformed the American public during the last century, was awarded the 2006 President's Book Award of the Social Science History Association.



WEBB KEANE, former Member in the School of Social Science (1997-98), now Professor at the University of Michigan, received a Guggenheim Fellowship and was a Suntory and Toyota International Centres for Economics and Related Disciplines Distinguished Visiting Professor at the London School of Economics.



QUENTIN SKINNER, former Member in the School of Social Science (1976-79) and the School of Historical Studies (1974-75), was awarded a 2006 Balzan Prize in September. Skinner was cited "for his formulation of a distinctive methodology for the study of the history of ideas, his major contribution to the history of political thought and his acute reflections on the nature of liberty." Awarded by the International Balzan Foundation, each Balzan Prize is worth one million Swiss francs, half of which must be allocated to research projects involving young researchers.



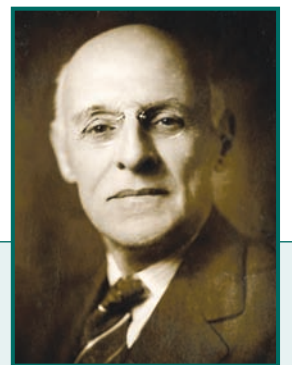
Five Germanys I Have Known by FRITZ STERN, Professor Emeritus of European History at Columbia University and former Member (1969-70) and Visitor (1985-86, 1988, 1990-91) in the School of Historical Studies, and Visitor (1996-97) in the School of Social Science, has been published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

DEJAN VINKOVIĆ, a current Visitor in the Program in Interdisciplinary Studies and a former Member in the School of Natural Sciences (2003-06), has coauthored with ALAN KIRMAN, a former Member in the School of Social Science (2005), the article "A Physical Analogue of the Schelling Model," which appeared in the December 19 issue of the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* (PNAS). In the study, the team presents a mathematical link between Schelling's model and models used for solving the physical problem of surface tension force in liquids and solids.



### OF HISTORICAL NOTE

The following excerpt by Abraham Flexner, Founding Director of the Institute for Advanced Study, was published in *The New York Times* on April 17, 1932:



#### Civilization's Advance

The world is not yet civilized. None the less it is a better world today than at any time in history. For the moment, however, the question arises as to whether society is able to carry out and to carry on the humane programs upon which it has embarked in education and in philanthropy. There are those whose hearts are weak and who cannot see the immediate present. I belong to a different school.

All my life I have been a student of history. In some of the ups and downs of society I myself have lived. My memory goes back to the panic of 1873, and I vividly remember subsequent convulsions in which the faint-hearted lost all hope.

I entertain not the slightest doubt that a decade hence we will be stronger, as I hope we may also be wiser, than during the period preceding 1929, when we were living in a fool's paradise.

Unquestionably adjustments must be made, but they are very often adjustments in feeling rather than in fact.

### CHARLES SIMONYI IN SPACE

Trustee Charles Simonyi is scheduled to launch on April 9 onboard Soyuz TMA-10 en route to the International Space Station (ISS). During his eight-day stay aboard the ISS, he will complete 160 orbits of the Earth, cover 4 million miles, and assist several international space agencies in conducting experiments. As part of his preparations for the mission, Dr. Simonyi has been training at the Yuri Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Center in Star City, Russia. Photos and information about Dr. Simonyi's training and upcoming flight can be found on his website [www.charlesinspace.com](http://www.charlesinspace.com).



Dr. Charles Simonyi will wear the IAS seal, pictured left, on his flight suit while aboard the ISS.



## THE WORLD'S LARGEST EXPERIMENT

In the theory of particle physics known as the standard model, matter particles can be arranged in a periodic table much like in chemistry, according to School of Natural Sciences Professor Nathan Seiberg, with an important exception. In his October 4 lecture “The World’s Largest Experiment,” Seiberg explained that while there “isn’t a single experiment that contradicts” the standard model, which he called “an unprecedented success,” our current understanding of it is limited.

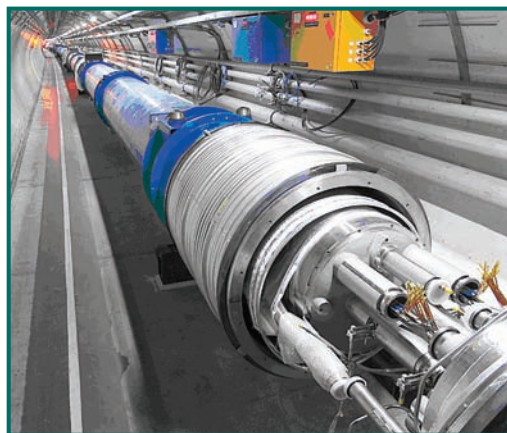
“We have this periodic table of matter particles but we don’t understand the fundamental structure underlying it, which explains why we have this periodic table,” said Seiberg. “In the case of chemistry the periodic table was eventually understood as a consequence of the structure of atoms. We don’t have the analogous story.”

The Large Hadron Collider (LHC), a particle accelerator expected to begin operating this year, offers an opportunity to probe beyond the standard model to find “a more complete theory, which has a larger range of validity, a theory that will explain the standard model,” Seiberg said.

Located at CERN, the European Center for Nuclear Research near Geneva, the LHC will allow for the exploration of physics at shorter distances and at higher energies than before. The accelerator, which cost about \$2.5 billion, is located 100 meters underground and measures 17 miles around. Seiberg explained that in this underground tunnel two tubes of rotating protons will cross each other at four points. Detectors located at each of the crossing points will examine the debris left behind as the protons collide.

Overall, there will be about one billion proton collisions per second. “Only about 10 to 100 of the collisions will be of some interest to us and will be recorded,” said Seiberg. “The very interesting collisions, those collisions that will teach us about new physics will be even more rare. They will happen only once every few hours or every few days. So this is really finding a needle in a haystack.”

Physicists are hoping that the LHC will help clarify some long-standing mysteries. Among them, said Seiberg, is proof of the existence of the standard model’s Higgs particle, named after the Scottish physicist Peter Higgs, which has not yet been discovered



The Large Hadron Collider at CERN

experimentally. “The Higgs particle is very important because it is responsible for masses of particles,” said Seiberg. “Understanding the Higgs particle better will shed more light and will clarify the origin of mass.”

It is also hoped that the LHC will confirm the existence of supersymmetry, which unites matter particles and force particles by pairing them in a single framework and suggests that the three forces in the standard model—the strong force, the weak force, and the electromagnetic force—become one force at very short distances.

The LHC may also find new particles that could explain the existence of dark matter in the universe. “Recent astronomical results tell us that only about one-sixth of the matter in the universe is in the form of particles we know of,” said Seiberg. “Most of the matter in the universe is not the kind of matter that we know of in the standard model. In the context of super-

symmetry we can offer an explanation. Supersymmetry naturally leads to a new stable particle which can be identified as the dark matter.”

In addition, the LHC might be able to detect the existence of additional space dimensions, beyond the currently known three dimensions. Ideally, the LHC may lead physicists to the “ultimate goal” proposed by String Theory of unifying gravity (which is excluded in the standard model) with electromagnetism, the strong force, and the weak force. While emphasizing that “we don’t know what the LHC will find,” Seiberg anticipates “that the discoveries will be very exciting. They will set the agenda and stimulate scientific research for decades to come.” ■

School of Natural Sciences Professor Nathan Seiberg will direct the Institute’s 2007 Prospects in Theoretical Physics program, “The Standard Model and Beyond,” which will focus on particle physics phenomenology with special emphasis on model building. The July 16-27 program, which Seiberg will direct with SNS Member Michael Dine, is designed to help young physicists prepare for the physics that will emerge from the Large Hadron Collider.

## COVER-UP: FRENCH GENDER EQUALITY AND THE ISLAMIC HEADSCARF



A French-Islamic protestor in France

Underlying the 2004 law banning the wearing of Islamic headscarves in French public schools is a fundamental clash between French and Muslim gender systems, according to Joan Wallach Scott, Harold F. Linder Professor in the School of Social Science. In her December 5 public lecture “Cover-up: French Gender Equality and the Islamic Headscarf,” Scott analyzed one of the justifications given by French lawmakers for the ban—that they were protecting the equality of women, a founding principle of the French republic.

Drawing from her recently completed book *The Politics of the Veil: Banning Islamic Headscarves in French Public Schools*, which is scheduled to be published by Princeton University Press in the fall, Scott concluded that, among other things, the Islamic headscarf revealed a “persistent contradiction in French political theory between political equality and sexual difference. Politicians and republican theorists have dealt with this contradiction by covering it over, by insisting that equality is possible while elevating the differences between the sexes to a distinctive cultural character trait.”

France’s “great emphasis on the visibility and openness of seductive play between women and men, and especially on the public display (and sexual desirability for men) of women’s bodies,” Scott said, thus “serves to veil a constitutive contradiction of French republicanism.” Scott further noted, “Until their confrontation with Islam, many French feminists saw the sexual exhibitionism of their society as demeaning to women because it reduced them to a sexed body. But in the heat of the headscarf controversy, those concerns were set aside and equality became synonymous with sexual emancipation, which in turn was equated with the visibility of the female body.”

Beginning with the text of the French law, Scott pointed out the lawmakers’ use of the word “conspicuous” to describe those religious signs (such as veils) that were prohibited versus their use of the word “discrete” to distinguish those religious signs (such as small crosses and Korans) that were permissible. “I was struck by the sexual connotation carried by the words the lawmakers chose,” Scott said. “When ostentatious or conspicuous refers to an excessive display on or by a body, especially if it’s a woman’s body, it conveys a sense of erotic provocation. Discrete is the opposite of ostentatious or conspicuous; it doesn’t call attention to itself, it downplays the attractiveness of the body in question; it is somehow neutral-asexual.”

The law’s wording was particularly striking, said Scott, considering the fact that the

Muslim headscarf is meant to signify modesty and sexual unavailability. “By what standard could girls wearing headscarves be considered disruptive, immodest or conspicuous?” Scott asked. “How then account for this seemingly strange reversal: Muslim modesty is taken to be sexually aberrant by French observers, who condemn it not only as different, but as somehow excessive (ostentatious, conspicuous), even perverse. The reason given by politicians and many feminists was the same: the veil represented the subordination of women, their humiliation, and their inequality.”

For Scott, the Muslim headscarf confronts a deep and discomforting reality of gender relations in France. “It makes explicit—available for all to see—the rules of public gendered interaction, which are in no way contradictory, and which declare sexual exchanges out of bounds in public space,” Scott said. “It is this explicit acknowledgment of the problem of sexuality that, for French observers, makes the veil ostentatious or conspicuous in the sexual sense of those words. Not only is too much being said about sex, but all of its difficulties are being revealed.” ■

Joan Wallach Scott has been a Professor in the School of Social Science since 1985. Her recent work has been concerned with the ways in which difference poses problems for democratic practice.

### Banning Headscarves in Bulgarian Schools

A similar movement in Bulgaria to prohibit headscarves in schools is one of the topics being examined by School of Social Science Member Kristen Ghodsee in a book tentatively titled *Miniskirts and Minarets: Gender, Eastern Aid and Islamic Revivalism on the Edge of Europe*.

The Bulgarian political climate differs substantially from that of France, according to Ghodsee. Unlike France where Muslims were once colonial subjects and today are largely immigrants, Bulgaria’s Muslims represent the heirs of the colonizers rather than the colonized and are primarily indigenous and moderate. But due to an influx of missionaries and outside financial aid after the collapse of Communist rule and official atheism (1946-1989), today a significant Slavic Muslim minority in Bulgaria is embracing more traditional forms of Islam fueled by Arab resources.

With educational secularism under threat, the Bulgarian Minister of Education recently suggested taking the French law a step further to ban all religious symbols in schools. “It is a great irony,” says Ghodsee, “that Bulgaria, a country which enshrined Orthodox Christianity as the national religion in its post-1989 constitution, now feels that it has to revert to policies associated with the Communist state.”



## AN ALTERNATIVE THEORY TO COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE

Globalization has come with many promises, said Eric Maskin, Albert O. Hirschman Professor in the School of Social Science in his October 27 lecture “Why Haven’t Global Markets Reduced Inequality?” including the assurance that it would bring prosperity and growth to poor countries. “On this count I think it’s fair to say that there’s been some success—in the cases of China and India, quite spectacular success,” said Maskin. “But another promise often made on behalf of globalization is that it will reduce the gap between the rich and poor, the haves and the have-nots in developing countries. Here I don’t think globalization has delivered what was promised.”

According to Maskin, the persistent inequality between rich and poor in developing countries in the face of globalization is surprising because it contradicts the theory of comparative advantage, which originated more than two hundred years ago with the British economist David Ricardo and which Maskin described as “the most secure theory we have in economics for explaining international trade patterns.”

The theory of comparative advantage (the twentieth-century formulation is known as the Heckscher-Ohlin model) has “explained many historical trade patterns very well,” Maskin said, but it also “predicts quite unambiguously that free trade should reduce inequality in poor countries.” While the theory proved accurate when trade between the United States and Europe took off toward the end of the nineteenth century (inequality fell in Europe, which had a relative abundance of low-skill labor compared to the United States’s higher proportion of high-skill workers), the theory “is clearly inadequate for explaining the patterns of globalization we face today,” Maskin said.

The theory of comparative advantage also predicts that the bigger the difference in the skill-ratio—the number of low-skill workers per high-skill workers—between two countries, the more trade will occur between those countries. Yet Maskin observes, “The very poorest countries of the world have been almost entirely left out of globalization.”

To explain these conflicts with the standard theory, Maskin outlined an alternative



Professor Eric Maskin is exploring the implications of cross-border production.

CLIFF MOORE

theory he has been working on with Michael Kremer, Gates Professor of Developing Countries at Harvard University and a Senior Fellow at The Brookings Institution. The motivation for Maskin and Kremer’s model is the observation that recent globalization has to a large extent meant the globalization of the *production process*. Their theory explores the implications of cross-border production, in which a single product can be manufactured out of components made and assembled in different countries, or designed in one country and manufactured in another.

A major reason behind the increase in inequality in poor countries, according to the theory, is the different effect globalization has on the job opportunities—the potential “matches”—of workers of different skills. The model implies that globalization will typically open up more options for moderately to highly skilled workers, while

actually reducing options for workers with the lowest skills.

The Maskin-Kremer theory also explains why the very poorest countries have been excluded from globalization: if the skill levels in a rich country are sufficiently different from those in a poor country, then international production efforts that employ workers from both countries will be rendered too inefficient to compete effectively in the global market.

“If the theory I have outlined is correct—and I should emphasize that it is one of several theories that are too new to have been thoroughly tested yet—then there is a clear implication for policy,” said Maskin. “The right response is not to try to stop globalization—it probably couldn’t be stopped even if we wanted it to be—but rather to invest in the training and education of the lowest-skill workers, the poorest people of the world, which will allow them to share in the benefits of globalization.” ■

Eric Maskin has been a Professor in the School of Social Science since 2000. His work covers many areas of economic theory, including game theory, mechanism design, and the economics of intellectual property.

## SPINOZA AND THE ORIGINS OF MODERN THOUGHT



Spinoza’s Opera Posthuma, 1677

In his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, the Dutch philosopher Benedictus de Spinoza (1632-1677) explained the fundamental principles of the state he had defined:

“But its ultimate purpose is not to dominate or control people by fear or subject them to the authority of another. On the contrary, its aim is to free everyone from fear, so that they may live in security, so far as possible. That is that they may retain to the highest possible degree their natural right to live and to act without harm to themselves or to others. It is not, I contend, the purpose of the state to turn people from rational beings into beasts or automata, but rather to allow their minds and bodies to develop in their own ways, in security, and enjoy the free use of reason, and not to participate

in conflicts based on hatred, anger, or deceit, or in malicious disputes with each other. Therefore, the true purpose of the state is in fact freedom.”

During his November 1 Friends Forum talk “Spinoza. Or the Failed Jewish Businessman Who Changed the World Through Philosophy,” Jonathan Israel, Professor in the School of Historical Studies, credited Spinoza “as the first great philosopher who was a democrat.” Equally important and of particular relevance to Americans, Israel said, Spinoza was “the first philosopher to insist that you can’t build a free, stable, and successful society, or a moral order that is stable, if theological criteria, and it doesn’t matter which theological criteria, are allowed to be the basis of its principles.”

Israel’s talk drew on his extensive research on the impact of radical thought (especially Spinoza, Bayle, Diderot, and the eighteenth-century French materialists) on the Enlightenment and on the emergence of modern ideas of democracy, equality, toleration, freedom of the press, and individual freedom. His recent book *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man 1670-1752* (Oxford University Press, 2006) continues the major revisionist study he began in *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750* (Oxford University Press, 2001), in which he credits Spinoza as the originator of the core principles of modern thought.

In his talk, Israel spoke about the “rival mythologies” or “the different grand narratives explaining Spinoza’s legacy, each of which is quite different from and incompatible with the other.” Prime among them is what Israel calls the “Voltaire Syndrome, because Voltaire was the earliest and perhaps the most important of its propagators. This is the myth according to which virtually nobody ever read Spinoza. Or of the few that did, practically no one understood him, and of those who understood him, practically none was ever influenced by him.” As Voltaire wrote in 1776, Spinoza “was a philosopher of whom everyone spoke but no one actually read, and who even if he undeniably had a huge reputation, had no discernible impact,” Israel said.

This incorrect and misleading impression of Spinoza’s influence, Israel stated, “has been asserted so many times in modern books that it can be regarded as a long-established cliché, even though this was certainly not the dominant image before 1800.” A more accurate account, said Israel, is that Spinoza’s influence was wide and profound and that Spinoza himself “actively sought to establish an underground philosophical sect, the purpose of which was to spread a particular kind of emancipatory, libertarian, democratic ideology in society.”

Because Spinoza’s philosophy denied the “possibility of miracles and revelation, and hence the divine character of scripture and the divinity of Christ, and denying these things was not allowed in Dutch society or any Western society at the time,” Israel noted, his books, including all reworking and restatements, were banned in the Netherlands in 1678 and printers convicted of publishing Spinozistic texts or reworkings of his ideas were liable to heavy fines and ten years in prison. Hence, Spinoza’s writings, such as his Theological-Political treatise (1670) and his main work *The Ethics*, which was printed only after his death (1677), were published without his name on the title-page and attributed to false publishers and locations.

From the clandestine philosophical literature inspired by Spinoza that became a major intellectual phenomenon in the early eighteenth century, to Shelley, Coleridge, and Wordsworth, who were all deeply affected by Spinoza’s philosophy, Israel said, “We see how Spinoza was linked, perceptibly linked, with secret underground revolutionary ideology, an ideology which took for granted that the world needed changing and the world should be changed, but that the agent of change should be philosophy, and in particular, his kind of democratic, egalitarian, and libertarian philosophy.” ■

Jonathan Israel has been a Professor in the School of Historical Studies since 2001. His work is concerned with European and European colonial history from the Renaissance to the eighteenth century.



In March, the Institute for Advanced Study will introduce Lectures on Public Policy, an annual lecture series that will elucidate and weigh in on issues relevant to contemporary politics and social conditions. The lecture series will also address scientific matters of broad import every few years.

Director’s Visitor Lakhdar Brahimi will give the inaugural Lecture on Public Policy on March 28. He will speak about the circumstances that have led to the current situation in Afghanistan and Iraq. Brahimi, former Special Advisor to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, assisted in the postwar transitions in Afghanistan and Iraq, and chaired the Panel which authored the Brahimi Report on UN Peace Operations in 2000. The lecture, which is free and open to the public, will begin at 4:30 p.m. in Wolfensohn Hall.



## OSWALD VEBLER AND THE INSTITUTE WOODS

*I have walked over the new property of the Institute several times since there has been a hard crust on top of the snow. This enables one to explore the woods down near the brook much better than one will be able to after the ground gets soft again.*

—Oswald Veblen to Frank Aydelotte, 13 February 1936

From the very beginning, the Institute for Advanced Study was conceived as a refuge for wildlife as well as a refuge for ideas.

Norwegian-American topologist Oswald Veblen (1880-1960) arrived in Princeton in 1905, became the Institute's first Professor in 1932, and "conceived the whole project" in the words of P.A.M. Dirac. "There is no educational institution in the United States which has not in the beginning made the mistake of acquiring too little rather than too much land," Veblen wrote to Founding Director Abraham Flexner on April 12, 1934. "I think that any institution which becomes a part of a community like this one, has a duty to contribute something to the amenities of the place," he continued, urging the Trustees to acquire "a sufficiently large plot of land, which would thus be kept free from objectionable intruders."

Veblen, the eldest of eight children (and nephew of Thorstein Veblen), was an indefatigable outdoorsman as well as an administrator whose leadership transformed Princeton into one of the mathematical centers of the world. He won prizes in both mathematics and sharpshooting during his student years, and traveled down the Iowa and Mississippi rivers in the style of Huckleberry Finn. "He is a most excellent person," Flexner wrote to Founding Trustee Herbert Maass in 1937, "but the word 'building' or 'farm' has an intoxicating effect upon him."

At a time when the Institute's Professors were still occupying borrowed office space in Fine Hall, with the administration operating out of rented space at 20 Nassau Street, Veblen was already thinking big. "If we are going to have inflation," he argued in March of 1933, "would it not be well to speed up the land question? At least two of the proposed sites seem good to me."

It was Veblen who tramped through the Woods and fields at the outskirts of the University, driving a series of tough bargains with depression-strapped landowners to assemble the parcels that constitute the Institute Woods. He defended the Woods against encroachment until his death, conceding a small portion to the State of New Jersey for the Battlefield monument, but that was it. In 1949, he pushed for the construction of the swinging bridge. In 1959, Oppenheimer wrote to Veblen asking permission to change the name of one of the Institute's roads from Portico to Veblen Lane. Oppenheimer's notes record the response: "Said no. Would rather wait until dead." Veblen divided his time between his home on Battle Road and his summer retreat in the Maine woods, later retiring to a home on Herrontown Road which also became a public trust: the Herrontown Woods.



A youthful excursion in the Institute Woods, 1956

had advised Abraham Flexner in 1939. Veblen went one step further: people need room to think, too. The Institute Woods were Veblen's way of making a public statement that Olden Farm would be forever devoted to the cultivation of ideas. —George Dyson

George Dyson, son of School of Natural Sciences Professor Emeritus Freeman Dyson, is a former Director's Visitor (2002-03) compiling a history of the IAS Electronic Computer Project (1945-58). An author, designer, and historian of science and technology, he launched his first kayak into the Delaware & Raritan Canal near the Institute Woods' swinging bridge.

### A Natural Administrator and Leader



Oswald Veblen

In an oral-history interview with Albert Tucker and Frederik Nebeker, the late Herman Goldstine, a former permanent Member, described Veblen as "a natural administrator and leader ... He was the kind of guy who would keep dripping water on the stone until finally it eroded. If it didn't happen otherwise, he just kept at it, and at it, and at it."

Of Veblen, who was married to an English woman named Elizabeth (she introduced teatime at the Institute), Goldstine surmised, "I think it would have been a great ambition of his, if it were possible, to become an Englishman." The young mathematicians at Fine Hall in the 1930s apparently concurred, having composed a Faculty Song with a Veblen verse: "Here's to Uncle Oswald V., lover of England and her tea. He is that mathematician of note, who uses four buttons to fasten his coat." Tall and slim, Veblen never appeared to be wearing new clothes, Goldstine observed. "We always had a theory with Veblen that after he bought a new jacket and pants he would hire somebody to wear them for a few years so that they wouldn't look new when he put them on."

### THE INSTITUTE WOODS (Continued from page 1)

Oswald Veblen, one of the Institute's first Faculty members who is credited with persuading Flexner to establish the Institute in Princeton and who was instrumental in the formation of the School of Mathematics, played an active role in the Institute's acquisition of land between 1936 and 1945 (see story above). In addition to serving on the Buildings and Grounds Committee, Veblen "organized what was called a wood-chopping group," according to Deane Montgomery, the late School of Mathematics Professor. "They used to go out and clear some of the paths that nobody had cleared at that time."

Over the years, the Woods have provided a place for contemplation and discussion for generations of Institute scholars from Albert Einstein onwards. Veblen's tradition of clearing the Woods was carried on by Paul Dirac, a former Member, according to R. H. Dalitz and Sir Rudolf Peierls. Noting Dirac's fondness for long walks, Dalitz and Peierls noted in *Biographical Memoirs of Fellows of the Royal Society*, "In Princeton these took him into the woods below the Institute, which were not well kept, with the paths getting overgrown. So Dirac started to work there, and proudly showed visitors the areas he had cleared. A. Pais reports that on one occasion he helped Dirac in his work. The physical work made Pais too hot, and he took off his shirt and singlet and hung them on a nearby branch. Dirac noticed this and, in a gesture of sympathy, took off his tie and hung it near them."

The late André Weil, former Professor in the School of Mathematics, spent time in the Woods as well. In 1999, Pierre Cartier, a former Member, wrote of Weil, "I had the immense good luck to share long walks with him in the Institute Woods, or sometimes along the frozen Lake Carnegie in winter; we discussed his published articles or ones in progress, or we discussed the plans for Bourbaki."

In the preface to *The Essential John Nash*, Harold Kuhn, Professor Emeritus of Mathematical Economics at Princeton University, recalls a conversation he had with Nash, a former Member, in October 1994. "As we sat on the bench, enjoying the mild fall weather and the splendor of the Institute Woods, I told John that he should be up at 6:30 a.m. the following morning to receive a phone call from Carl-Olof Jacobson, secretary general of the Nobel Foundation, who would tell him that he was sharing the Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel."

School of Mathematics Professor Enrico Bombieri has observed of his late colleague Armand Borel, "He loved nature, and quite often I walked with him in the Institute Woods, talking about the future of mathematics and of our School of Mathematics." According to Bombieri, Borel "liked the Institute Woods, and he was very relieved when eventually they did not fall to a developer and were preserved as a park. The last time I saw him I mentioned that the same afternoon I was planning to go in the Institute Woods to visit my secret

chanterelles patch, maybe I would find a few, would he like to have some too? He had a big smile and just said, 'Oh, yes!' I found quite a few chanterelles, and I suspect that they were much better for him than those one can buy in a store, not just because they were fresh, but especially because they came from the Institute Woods." ■

### FRIENDS NEWS

Friends of the Institute for Advanced Study receive many opportunities to participate in the intellectual life of the Institute.

At a Friends Forum on February 28, Avishai Margalit, George F. Kennan Professor, School of Historical Studies, will speak about "The West and the Rest." Professor Margalit is considered one of the foremost thinkers and commentators on the contemporary human condition, the moral issues of our time, and current problems facing Western societies.

Peter Goldreich, Professor of Astrophysics in the School of Natural Sciences, will also speak at a Friends Forum on April 18. Professor Goldreich, who has made profound and lasting contributions to planetary sciences and astrophysics, will discuss physics in everyday life. For information on becoming a Friend, please contact Pamela Hughes at (609) 734-8204 or by emailing phughes@ias.edu. ■



## THE GÖDELIAN CHALLENGE

*Kurt Gödel's achievement in modern logic is singular and monumental—indeed it is more than a monument, it is a landmark which will remain visible far in space and time.*

—John von Neumann

Upon presenting Kurt Gödel (1906-1978) with the Albert Einstein Award in 1951, John von Neumann remarked, “Gödel was the first man to demonstrate that certain mathematical theorems can neither be proved nor disproved with the accepted, rigorous method of mathematics ... Gödel actually proved this theorem, not with respect to mathematics only, but for all systems which permit a formalization, that is a rigorous and exhaustive description, in terms of modern logic: For no such system can its freedom from inner contradictions be demonstrated with the means of the system itself.”

Kurt Gödel was among the Institute's first Members in 1933-34, returning for further periods in the 1930s and 1940s before joining the Faculty in 1953. He remained at the Institute until his death in 1978.

On November 17, the Institute for Advanced Study hosted “A Program to Mark the Centenary Year of the Birth of Kurt Gödel.” The program, which drew some three hundred people to Wolfensohn Hall, consisted of talks by Karl Sigmund, Professor of Mathematics at the University of Vienna; Solomon Feferman, Professor of Mathematics and Philosophy, Emeritus, and the Suppes Professor of Humanities and Sciences, Emeritus, at Stanford University; John Burgess, Professor of Philosophy at Princeton University; Avi Wigderson, Herbert H. Maass Professor in the School of Mathematics at the Institute; and John W. Dawson, Jr., Professor of Mathematics, Emeritus, at The Pennsylvania State University. Excerpts follow:



*An exhibit of photographs and historical documents accompanied the lectures honoring Kurt Gödel.*

“When the war broke out, the situation seemed in fact completely hopeless for the couple. But the Institute for Advanced Study proved up to the task. John von Neumann stepped in and briefed the Director [Frank Aydelotte] where to intervene. Almost miraculously the Gödels got permission to leave the Third Reich in January of 1940.”

—Karl Sigmund

“The Gödelian challenge is that our best concepts, like that of set, seem to have a content perhaps not exhaustible in formal conventions, and certainly not exhausted by the formal conventions recognized so far, and we must strive both to work out more of what that content is, a project on which Gödel led the way, and to try to understand what it is that we are doing when we do so.”

—John Burgess

“Gödel's office was directly above the one that I shared with another visitor, the Japanese logician Gaisi Takeuti. We used to think we heard him pacing the floor above us. When I wanted to meet Gödel and figured he was in his office, I'd phone him for an appointment and would hear the phone ring and hear him answer. When it worked out, I would walk upstairs to his office. There he would be seated at his desk and I would sit down across from him. We never worked at the blackboard, unlike most mathematicians ... He'd raise some questions and make some suggestions and what he had to say would be very much to the point and fruit for further thought. After precisely half an hour the alarm on his watch would go off and he would say, 'I have to take my pills.' And I took that as my cue to leave.”

—Solomon Feferman (Member, School of Mathematics, 1959-60)

“What can we know about the world? Gödel showed that some true theorems can never be proved. Turing showed that there are functions which cannot be computed. These fundamental results, and further refinements of them regarding *efficient* computation, set basic limits on what is accessible by science and mathematics.”

—Avi Wigderson

“For Gödel, mathematical intuition was itself a kind of extrasensory perception. He believed that there is a world of concepts that we can access through our mathematical intuition, as he asserted in his paper ‘What is Cantor's Continuum Problem?’ Gödel actually attributed some of his success precisely to his pleonastic, philosophical outlook and the fact that it allowed him to pose certain questions that others would not consider meaningful.”

—John W. Dawson, Jr.

## DIRECTOR'S VISITOR: TOM PHILLIPS

A Royal Academician and a Trustee of the British Museum, Tom Phillips is known for his pioneering work with word and image and for his portraits of notable figures in science and the arts. Institute Director Peter Goddard first met Phillips about ten years ago when, as Master of St. John's College in the University of Cambridge, he was faced with the prospect of having his portrait painted. Regarding the idea as “somewhere between a visit to the barber and a session at the hygienist, I was determined to pick not only someone whose art appealed to me but who also seemed likely to be interesting to talk to,” says Dr. Goddard. “I certainly succeeded.”

Last term marked the second time Phillips, Slade Professor of Fine Art at the University of Oxford in 2005, has made a stay at the Institute as a Director's Visitor. When he first invited Phillips two years ago, Dr. Goddard recalls, “I was told that he was as far as anybody could remember the first practicing visual artist at the Institute. But I knew Tom well enough to know that if he accepted our invitation anything could happen.”

An accomplished translator and a composer in his own right, his artworks are represented in museum collections all over the world. He put to full use his many talents at the Institute last fall—creating sudoku prints from leaves found on the Institute grounds (see image below); appearing in a public presentation of the *Heart of Darkness* opera at the Institute; and continuing work on his 40-year-old project *A Humument*. In addition,

he had “the solicited pleasure” of drawing Freeman Dyson, Professor Emeritus in the School of Natural Sciences, whom Phillips describes as a “pioneer physicist and lucidest of writers on science and its moralities, one of my heroes.”

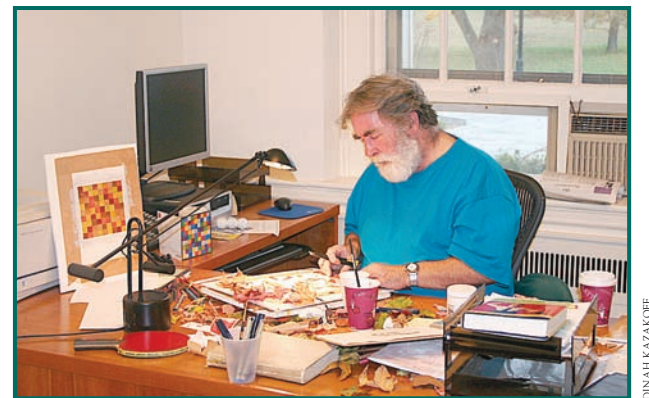
In November, Phillips appeared on the Wolfensohn Hall stage for a concert workshop, libretto reading, and panel discussion of Tarik O'Regan's

*Heart of Darkness*, an opera in one act for eight singers and thirteen instruments currently under development with American Opera Projects. During the panel discussion, Phillips explained his involvement with the project, which is based on Joseph Conrad's 1902 novella by the same title and for which he is both librettist and set designer. “I found opera in my experience the most naturalistic of all artistic mediums. I think in normal life it's impossible to express the true passion of our feelings. Otherwise, we'd all be hysterical all the time. In opera, you're allowed to be just that.”

During his stay, Phillips planned to make “some first steps towards the next version of *A Humument*,” a perpetual enterprise he started in late 1966 when he first began to artistically manipulate the extant text of W.H. Mallock's 1892 novel *A Human Document*, using paint and pen and ink to create “a unity of word and image, intertwined as in a mediaeval miniature.”

A resulting text (a newer version of page 176 of the fourth edition, recently published by Thames and Hudson) thus reads: “my stories of a soul's surprise a soul which crossed a chasm in whose depths I find I found myself and nothing more than that. Such trouble transfigured is mastered life.” According to Phillips, he completed only a few new pages of *A Humument* at the Institute “before my study was submerged in dying foliage. As is usual on Princeton visits, old plans were abandoned in favor of new projects.”

The progress of *A Humument* can be followed in the various editions of his books in the Institute's Historical Studies-Social Science Library. Additional information regarding Phillips's work can be found at [www.tomphillips.co.uk](http://www.tomphillips.co.uk). ■



*Director's Visitor Tom Phillips whose “study was submerged in dying foliage.”*

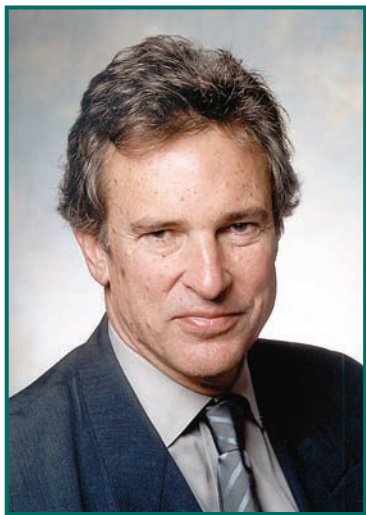


A not uncommon sight at the Institute for Advanced Study last autumn was that of Tom Phillips selecting leaves from the grounds and holding them aloft to study them under the sunlight. His selections were later used to create the leaf sudoku Halting the Fall on Einstein Drive, a print Phillips made for the Institute during his stay last term.

“Wet and windy today at the Institute for Advanced Study,” Phillips wrote in October. “My studies advance to the extent of trying to make an organic sudoku [doubly fashionable] from the leaves which red and yellow are chasing each other across the wide lawns.”



## MODERN ART AND KIRK VARNEDOE'S BOOKS



The late Kirk Varnedoe, Professor in the School of Historical Studies, whose library was donated to the Institute.

One of the final privileges to which members of the Faculty at the Institute accede as they approach retirement, is that of suggesting to their colleagues the names of possible successors. I was the third in the series of art historians, following Erwin Panofsky and Millard Meiss, whose interests focused largely on European art from the Middle Ages through the Renaissance and Baroque. I was acutely aware that there had never been in the School of Historical Studies an appointment devoted primarily to contemporary history. Although it was a dangerous move, given the current tendency of "modernism" to dominate, not to say overwhelm, university art history departments, I felt it was time for a change. And with Kirk Varnedoe, it seemed worth the risk. There was some initial, but soon dispelled, hesitation among the Faculty of the School because he was a "museum man," rather than a proper academic historian. But Varnedoe had had a very orthodox training—

undergraduate at Williams, graduate at Stanford—and his publication record was replete with important, innovative, professionally crafted, and beautifully written scholarly work, wide-ranging within his field. Moreover, throughout his career, he had continued to teach, attracting and rearing many young people to the rigors and unmatched intellectual rewards of our discipline. And after all, the glamour he brought from his long association with the world's most important institution devoted to modern art (MoMA), as well as his equally legendary personal charisma, could do no real harm to the Institute for Advanced Study!

There has always been one significant reservation about the viability of art history at the Institute. By virtue of a cordial and mutually beneficial agreement with Princeton University we depend very heavily on our privileged access to the University libraries, including Marquand, one of the greatest art libraries in the world. Apart from its comprehensive holdings, a major virtue of Marquand is that it is non-lending. The policy seems, and may be, paradoxical, but it is essential: the books are there when you need them. Art historians by the very nature of their work need to have books physically present at hand, not necessarily (or even primarily) to read them, but in order to compare the images they contain. (Panofsky famously said, he who has the most photographs wins!) When I first came to the Institute I noticed immediately that the visiting Members in art history, unlike their colleagues in other fields, were scarcely to be seen at lunch or teatime, participating in the communal exchange of ideas that is, to my mind, the life-blood of the Institute. They were always working at Marquand Library. The Institute, I discovered, had once actually handed over to Marquand an important (now more valuable than ever) collection of art books—presumably because our Members could make better use of them there, for purposes of comparison. One of my first reactions to the situation was to try to build a basic, general collection of reference material and major periodicals, so as to make it possible for the average Member in our field at least to establish a bibliographic point of departure here, and work at Marquand when, as is still frequently the case, he or she needs more specialized material. The then-Director, Carl Kaysen, was very sympathetic to my appeal and responded with a substantial initial grant of funds toward that goal. Judging now by the lively and

regular participation of art historians at lunches, teas, and other events at the Institute, the effort has been largely successful.

Successful, that is, with the notable exception (as regards Western, let us not speak of more exotic fields) of modern art. All academic libraries tend to reflect the interests of the faculty, the smaller the more so, including the Institute's. And one of the risks of making an appointment in the modern field was that the recipient would be faced with the same kind of situation that had confronted me thirty years before—no books, and members exiled to Marquand Library. The appointment of Kirk Varnedoe proved this risk minimal, since his personal library, which has been given to the Institute, is a veritable treasure trove, unique, of its kind. Some three thousand volumes in all, I suppose that virtually every important publication in his field for the last quarter century is there. The art historical quantity and quality of his library is of course no surprise, considering who Varnedoe was, and the nature of his all-too-brief life's work. I knew Kirk fairly well for many years, but perusing the list of his holdings for this note in *The Institute Letter*, I have been astonished by the breadth and depth of his interests beyond his field: only half deal with art, the rest with all manner of themes, from airplanes, children's and comic books to rugby and motorcycles, but especially philosophy, linguistics, psychology, and the sciences, including anthropology. With this legacy to our library Varnedoe has helped to ensure that modern art will find a firm future and an encompassing vision at the Institute. —Irving Lavin, Professor of Art History, Emeritus

Irving Lavin became a Professor in the School of Historical Studies in 1973 and Professor Emeritus in 2001. He delivered the A.W. Mellon Lectures at the National Gallery of Art in 2004.



### Kirk Varnedoe's *Pictures of Nothing*

While a Professor in the School of Historical Studies at the Institute for Advanced Study from 2002-03, Kirk Varnedoe worked on the A. W. Mellon Lectures he delivered at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., in the spring of 2003, just months before his death. The lectures, which he gave to overflowing crowds, are reproduced and illustrated in the recently published *Pictures of Nothing: Abstract Art Since Pollock* (Princeton University Press, 2006).

*Abstract Art Since Pollock* (Princeton University Press, 2006).

In the book's introduction *New Yorker* critic Adam Gopnik observes that Varnedoe did not have the chance to polish the lectures for publication, but suggests that "their necessarily unfinished nature—their existence as lectures, still-breathing sketches toward a final work, drafts and researches not yet fully closed—may allow readers more room for exactly the kind of open-ended responses, the inventive reinterpretations, the structured but uncoerced freedom to use another's thought to think again for ourselves, that Kirk Varnedoe thought was at the heart of all creative endeavors."

## Book Donations at the Institute: A History of Generosity

Donations to the libraries of the Institute have been central to the development of the collections over the years. In the Institute's earliest days, School of Mathematics Faculty member Hermann Weyl took an avid interest in the library. He was the first to hold the title of Institute librarian, and he donated a considerable collection of mathematics books to IAS.

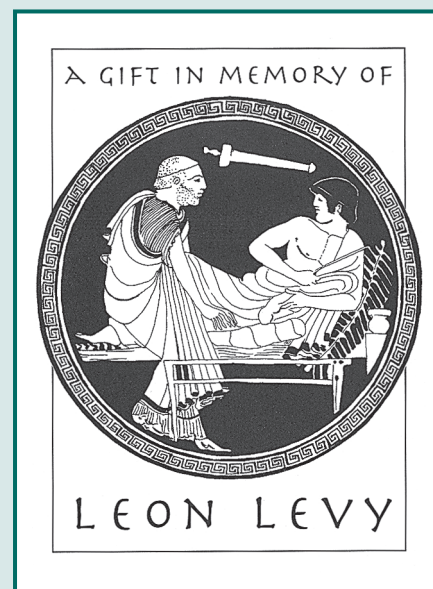
His was only the first in a series of significant gifts to the Institute's libraries. Major collections have been donated covering subject areas ranging from the history of science to political history, from astrophysics to number theory, and from art history to epigraphy. Book funds have been established in memory of Trustees, as demonstrated by the Leon Levy Fund, and by interested members of the community, as with the Usdan Fund, established by Leo Usdan in memory of his parents.

Among those who donated their entire collections to the IAS libraries were Faculty members Ernst Kantorowicz and Kenneth Setton, both Medieval historians; Andrew Alföldi, a Roman historian; mathematicians Armand Borel and André Weil; astrophysicist John Bahcall; art historian Kirk Varnedoe (see story above); and logician Kurt Gödel. Institute Director Harry Woolf's entire library was presented to IAS by his children, and Benjamin Nadel and Carl Schorske, former Members in the School of Historical Studies, both donated their complete libraries.

Former Trustee Lessing J. Rosenwald established the rare book collection at IAS

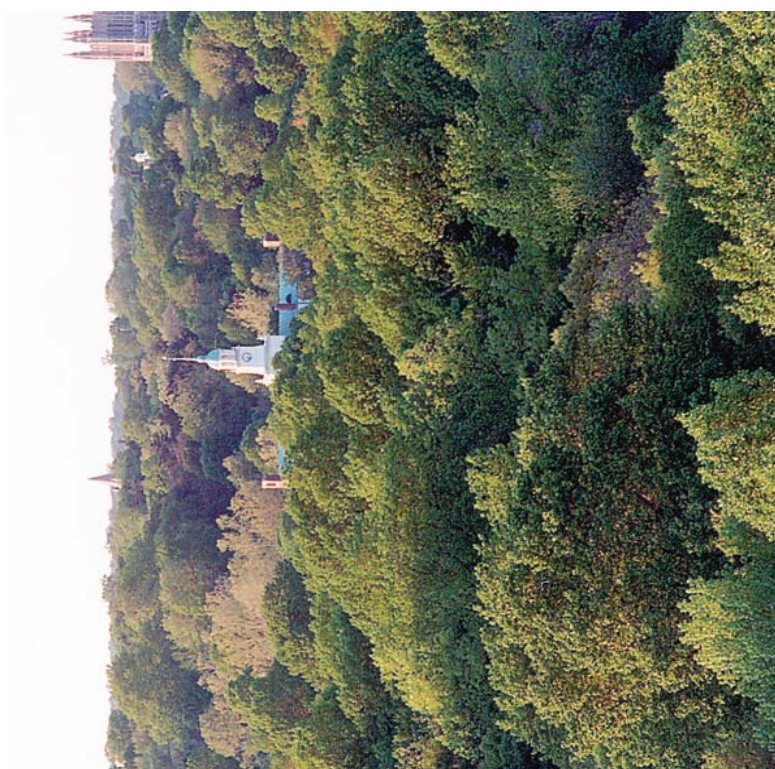
with his generous and ongoing donations. The Institute's first female Faculty member Hetty Goldman gave a significant collection of works in archaeology, and countless important gifts covering a wide variety of subjects were made by former Faculty members, including George Kennan, Homer Thompson, and Millard Meiss. The libraries regularly receive donations of books from current Faculty and from current and former Members as well, such as the rare books donated by Princeton University Professor J. Lionel Gossman, a former Visitor in the School of Historical Studies.

The Leon Levy bookplate, inspired by an Attic Red-figure skyphos by the Brygos Painter, 485-480 B.C.





# THE INSTITUTE LETTÉR



COURTESY OF THE INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY

*"I have lived in the proximity of these Woods for over half a century. They are a friend, a source of inspiration and restoration, and were they to disappear it would be like the disappearance of an old, beloved, and respected friend."*

—George Kennan, Professor in the School of Historical Studies, 1956-1974; Emeritus, 1974-2005

For more than sixty years, the Institute for Advanced Study has been the steward of 589 acres of woods, wetlands, and farmland that are historically important and environmentally vital to central New Jersey and beyond. The Institute gradually acquired the majority of the land between 1936 and 1945, strengthening the Institute's endowment and providing a tranquil environment for scholars engaged in theoretical research and intellectual inquiry.

In November, the Regional Planning Partnership presented the Institute with its 2006 Van Zandt Williams Community Involvement Award for the Institute's role in the permanent conservation of these lands. The conservation was achieved in 1997 through the foresight and dedication of a private-public partnership that involved local and state government, foundations, nonprofit organizations, and more than one thousand individuals. The Institute contributed financially to the conservation and continues today to fund the maintenance of the Woods and farmlands, which are open to the public and utilized year-round by bird watchers, walkers, runners, and cross-country skiers.

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# THE INSTITUTE LETTER

INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY

PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY • WINTER 2007

## CLIFFORD GEERTZ August 23, 1926 – October 30, 2006



Clifford Geertz wearing the Bintang Jasa Utama (First Class Merit Star) of the Republic of Indonesia, 2002.

Clifford Geertz was born in San Francisco, California, on August 23, 1926. After serving in the Navy from 1943 through 1945, he studied under the G.I. Bill at Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio. His internship as a copyboy for *The New York Post* dissuaded him from becoming a newspaper man. "It was fun but it wasn't practical," he said in an interview with Gary A. Olson ("Clifford Geertz on Ethnography and Social Construction," 1991), so he switched to philosophy, partly because of the influence of philosophy professor George Geiger whom Geertz called "the greatest teacher I have known."

After receiving his A.B. in philosophy in 1950, Geertz went on to study anthropology at Harvard University and received a Ph.D. from the Department of Social Relations in 1956. It was a heady time, according to Geertz. "Multi- (or 'inter-' or 'cross-') disciplinary work, team projects, and concern with the immediate problems of the contemporary world, were combined with boldness, inventiveness, and a sense that things were, finally and certainly, on the move."

Geertz recounted that he was exposed to a form of anthropology "then called, rather awkwardly, 'pattern theory' or 'configuralism.'" In this dispensation, stemming from work before and during the war by the comparative linguist Edward Sapir at Yale and the cultural holist Ruth Benedict at Columbia, it was the interrelation of elements, the gestalt they formed, not their particular atomistic character that was taken to be the heart of the matter."

At this point, Geertz became involved in a project spearheaded by cultural anthropologist Clyde Kluckhohn, who headed Harvard's Russian Research Center. Geertz was one of five anthropologists assigned to the Modjokuto Project in Indonesia, sponsored by the Center for International Studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and it was one of the earliest efforts to send a team of anthropologists to study large-scale societies with written histories, established governments, and composite cultures.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, anthropology was torn apart by questions about its colonial past and the possibility of objective knowledge in the human sciences. "For the next fifteen years or so," Geertz wrote, "proposals for new directions in anthropological theory and method appeared almost by the month, the one more clamorous than the next. I contributed to the merriment with 'interpretive anthropology,' an extension of my concern with the systems of meaning, beliefs, values, world views, forms of feeling, styles of thought, in terms of which particular peoples construct their existence."

Professor Geertz began his academic career as a Research Assistant (1952-56) and a Research Associate (1957-58) in the Center for International Studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and also served as an Instructor in Social Relations and as a Research Associate in Harvard University's Laboratory of Social Relations (1956-57). In 1958-59, he was a Fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences in Stanford, California.

From 1958 to 1960, he was Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the University of California at Berkeley, after which time he was Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the University of Chicago (1960-61), and was subsequently promoted to Associate Professor (1962), and then Professor (1964). He was later named Divisional Professor in the Social Sciences (1968-70). At Chicago, Geertz was a member of the Committee for the Comparative Study of New Nations (1962-70), its Executive Secretary (1964-66), and its Chairman (1968-70). Geertz was also a Senior Research Career Fellow at the National Institute of Mental Health from 1964 to 1970.

Consultant to the Ford Foundation on Social Sciences in Indonesia in 1971, he was Eastman Professor at Oxford University from 1978 to 1979, and held an appointment



Clifford Geertz, kneeling at left, at a seminar on "Meaning in Anthropology" at the School of American Research, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 1974.

as Visiting Lecturer with Rank of Professor in the Department of History at Princeton University from 1975 to 2000.

In 1970, Geertz joined the permanent Faculty of the School of Social Science at the Institute. He was named Harold E. Linder Professor of Social Science in 1982 and became Professor Emeritus in 2000. In an oral-history interview with Elliott Shore in 1995, Geertz spoke about selecting early Members such as William Sewell, Jr. and Quentin Skinner who were crucial to the School's development; starting the Thursday lunch seminars; and designating yearly themes "to help form this community." Among his aims for the School, Geertz said, "We would try to be a thorn in the side of the main direction of things, a critical place where people could think their own thoughts and resist the heavily institutionalized part of social science."



Clifford Geertz and his wife, Dr. Karen Blu, in a Tokyo park with cherry blossoms, 1984.

In his introduction to the book *Schools of Thought: Twenty-Five Years of Interpretive Social Science*, which developed out of a conference held at the Institute in May 1997 to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the School, Geertz observed: "What began as a fragile and imperiled enterprise—suspect, maligned, and ill-defined—became, over the course of a quarter century of the eternal vigilance that is the price of liberty, a firmly established, if still controversial, presence, both at the Institute and on the social science scene overall."

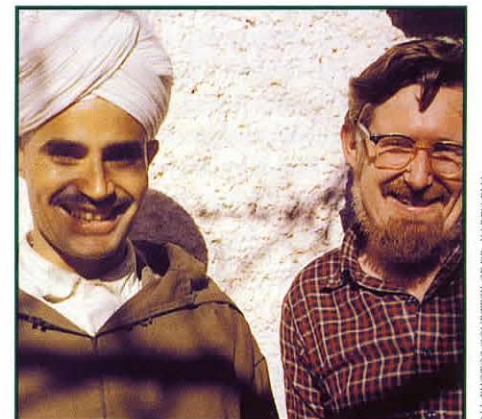
Professor Geertz was the author and co-author of important volumes that have been translated into over twenty languages and the recipient of numerous honorary degrees and scholarly awards. He received the National Book Critics Circle Prize in Criticism in 1988 for *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author*, and was also the recipient of the Fukuoka Asian Cultural Prize (1992) and the Bintang Jasa Utama (First Class Merit Star) of the Republic of Indonesia (2002). Over the years, he received honorary degrees from Harvard, Yale, and Princeton universities, from Antioch, Swarthmore, and Williams colleges, and from the University of Cambridge, among other institutions.

He was a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Council on Foreign Relations, the American Philosophical Society, the National Academy of Sciences, and the American Association for the Advancement of Science; a Corresponding Fellow of the British Academy; and an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland. He was a frequent contributor to *The New York Review of Books*.

Professor Geertz's fieldwork was concentrated in Java, Bali, Celebes, and Sumatra in Indonesia, as well as in Morocco. In May 2000, he was honored at "Cultures, Sociétés, et Territoires: Hommage à Clifford Geertz," a conference held in Sefrou, Morocco, where he had conducted work for a decade. It was particularly gratifying, commented Geertz, because "anthropologists are not always welcomed back to the site of their field studies."

Kartini Sjahrir, chair of the Indonesian Anthropological Association, observed in *The Jakarta Post*, "We mourn the loss of Geertz not merely because he carried out his fieldwork in Indonesia; he reminded us about our precious, pluralistic society that might be damaged if we did not take care of it properly. He gave us a tool in the form of 'thick description' methodology and holistic ideas about religion and aspects of economy. It now depends upon us—how we use his ideas and methodology in formulating policies."

Professor Geertz is survived by his wife, Dr. Karen Blu, an anthropologist retired from the Department of Anthropology at New York University; his children, Erika Reading of Princeton, NJ, and Benjamin Geertz of Kirkland, WA; and his grandchildren, Andrea and Elena Martinez of Princeton, NJ. He is also survived by his former wife, Dr. Hildred Geertz, Professor Emerita in the Department of Anthropology at Princeton University. ■



Clifford Geertz with a Moroccan, possibly 1975.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF DR. KAREN BLU



## REMEMBERING CLIFFORD GEERTZ

Clifford Geertz, in accepting my invitation to join the Institute for Advanced Study's nascent School of Social Science in 1970 as its first Professor, showed his characteristic venturesomeness, both intellectual and personal. He gave up a secure position in an innovative and prestigious program—the Committee on the Comparative Study of New Nations and the anthropology department at the University of Chicago—to join in realizing a loosely defined enterprise of creating a new school that would span the social sciences, and emphasize their common intellectual goal over their individual disciplinary concerns.

In choosing him, I was guided by both the opinions of a wide spectrum of social scientists and my own reaction to his published works: *The Religion of Java* (1960), *Peddlers and Princes* (1961), *The Social History of an Indonesian Town* (1965), and *Islam Observed* (1968). They combined the anthropologist's concern for social structure and the historian's search for understanding change over time in human institutions and societies. Among many distinguished social scientists from whom I sought counsel, the judgments of Robert Merton and Edward Shils had particular weight. Merton, Professor of Sociology at Columbia, was both a wide-ranging social theorist and an intellectual historian. Shils, Geertz's colleague at Chicago, was a political sociologist of unusually wide learning. Both thought Geertz the outstanding figure of his generation. He was then forty-four.

The attitudes of the Institute's Faculty to the new venture ranged from friendly curiosity to open hostility. Many made Geertz welcome; some would barely exchange Good Mornings. Geertz's and my first attempt to recruit a second Faculty member for social science—a European economic and demographic historian—was unsuccessful. He preferred to remain on his side of the Atlantic.

On the next try, we succeeded, but the nomination of the new appointee, a sociologist of religion, created a storm of disapproval among the Faculty. Although the appointment was eventually approved by the Board of Trustees, the professor did not accept it. How much this turmoil and how much a family misfortune led to his departure after a brief stay is unclear.

In 1974 Albert Hirschman, a theorist of political economy and economic development, came as the second Professor of Social Science. With the undersigned as the third Faculty member, the School was formally established and began to function in the same way as the other three Schools.

Through these difficulties, Geertz kept his faith in and commitment to the enterprise in which he was present at the creation. He attracted a succession of excellent visiting scholars; their productive later careers reflected the intellectual stimulus he provided.

In the thirty-six years of his Institute career, his own scholarly work continued in a steady and steadily broadening stream. He wrote for a broader audience than the academy as well. Over this period, honors—distinguished lectureships, visiting professorships, memberships in scientific academies, prizes, honorary degrees—accumulated. He was a model of what an Institute Professor should and could be.

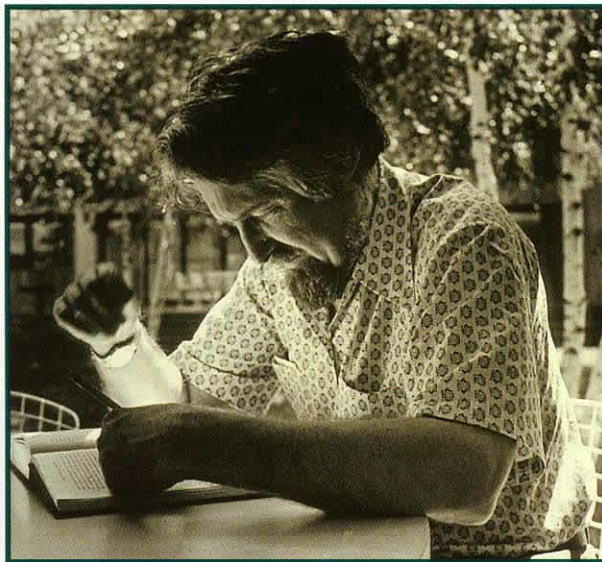
—CARL KAYSEN, *Professor Emeritus, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Director, Institute for Advanced Study, 1966-76)*

Like many visitors to the School of Social Science, I had read Cliff's books and articles long before I ever met him in person, and I had always been dazzled by his writing. Not just because of its baroque, looping elegance, for which it was famous, but for the sensibility behind the style. Somehow, by way of hesitation, indirection, and the occasional glimpse of self-deprecating humor, Cliff managed to convey a sense of intellectual seriousness without intellectual pretentiousness. When I eventually met Cliff, it was a pleasure to discover that the voice of the writer was the same as the voice of the man. There was the same delight in ideas; the same impatience with academic puffery; a shy, glib manner, leavened by a twinkle in the eye.

The topic of our Wednesday seminar in 2003-04 was

bioethics, an academic discipline whose practitioners are not generally known for their reluctance to offer moral advice. This enthusiasm for advice-giving occasionally ran against the grain of Cliff's careful, more diagnostic style of scholarship. In one of our seminars, Cliff recounted an old Peanuts cartoon that, in a slightly self-mocking way, summed up the contrast between the bioethical approach and his own. Lucy is talking to Charlie Brown at her psychiatry stand. Lucy says: "Charlie Brown, your basic problem is that you're you." Charlie Brown replies, "What am I supposed to do about that?" To which Lucy responds, "I don't give advice. I just point out the root of the problem."

—CARL ELLIOTT, *Professor, Center for Bioethics, University of Minnesota (Visiting Associate Professor, School of Social Science, 2003-04)*



Remembering Cliff, as he remembered  
(in *After the Fact and Available Light*)

Suppose your entire professional life could be tinged in "talking the talk" of cross-cultural *Verstehen* with one extraordinary person—"Tuan Clip" (Mister Cliff, in Indonesian). Suppose too that said talk translated across ultra-diverse locales: Burg Wartenstein (Austria), Chicago, Jakarta, Tabanan (Bali), Ithaca, Fez, Canberra, San Francisco, Syros (Greece), New Orleans, even Texas. A part of my career, such as it is, for which I am eternally (or whatever span remains) grateful is an "accident of passage" that made me Professor Geertz's occasional sidekick (first in Java) and long-term interlocutor attuned to his interpretive gifts. Cliff's jaws would audibly "chomp" (just barely) as he revved into thick-descriptive overdrive—music to my anthropological ears for thirty-seven years, most enduringly in Princeton.

—JAMES BOON, *Professor and Chair, Department of Anthropology, Princeton University (Member in the School of Social Science, 1973-75)*

When I was asked if I had any anecdotes about Cliff that I would like to share, I was of course greatly touched. But at the same time the invitation gave me pause. Although Cliff had an unfailing and infectious sense of humor, and loved hearing as well as telling funny stories, he never struck me as the kind of person around whom funny stories accumulate. This was not in the least because he liked to stand on his dignity. As far as I can see, he never gave the question of his dignity a moment's thought. Rather it was, I think, because of the intensity of his intellectual commitments, which left him preoccupied and a little withdrawn. Like many basically melancholy people, he saw the world as filled with absurdities, but he nevertheless felt that they needed to be seriously addressed. So when I think about Cliff, as I very often do, what I generally remember is something correspondingly serious that I learned from him. I knew him for over thirty years, and his views never ceased to be a touchstone for me. Whenever our whirling civilization took some

particularly unexpected turn, one of the things I always tended to ask myself was, "I wonder what Cliff would say about that?" Despite living a long way from Princeton, I usually found it possible to discover the answer, not least because one of Cliff's most endearing talents was that he was a marvelous letter-writer. Now that the answers have stopped, I feel a sense of truly irreplaceable loss.

—QUENTIN SKINNER, *Regius Professor of Modern History, Cambridge University (Member in the School of Social Science, 1976-79, and School of Historical Studies, 1974-75)*

As a North African scholar with a Muslim cultural background, I have been deeply influenced by Geertz's analysis of religion. I learned from him that faith, as a social force, is at the heart of anthropological studies. This can help us to more fully understand the motivations of Islamist violence which has erupted lately in so many countries. Geertz kept reminding us that, as scholars, we did not pay enough attention to the profundity of the rupture between the traditional Islamic world vision, which considered itself to be the universal truth, and the supremacy of the Western culture, which contradicted this world vision. This I learned from Geertz, and I am grateful to him.

—LAHOUARI ADDI, *Professor of Sociology, University of Lyon, France (Member in the School of Social Science, 2002-03)*

In the days following Cliff's death I received a number of communications from scholars, many of them younger ones from abroad, who felt the need to say something to someone. The gist of their condolences all carried the same message: "He took what I had to say seriously." This was not said in a self-congratulatory way. It was said with the continuing astonishment that this vastly senior figure, in the simplest of ways, engaged their ideas with an egalitarian and open mind that allowed each of them to begin a conversation whose benefits lay not in the connection to an important figure but a connection to a sincere colleague. It is this attitude—one that deserves to be called intellectual humility—by one who had every justification for approaching young scholars in a less than humble way that so encouraged, entranced, and enriched the lives of even those who knew him briefly as to provide a tone that will last well beyond the Institute and well beyond the moment of our grief.

—LAWRENCE ROSEN, *William Nelson Cromwell Professor of Anthropology, Princeton University, and Adjunct Professor of Law, Columbia University (Research Assistant, School of Social Science, 1970-71)*

The Department of Social Anthropology at the University of Cambridge would like to express its deep sadness at the loss of Clifford Geertz. There is probably not an anthropologist in the world who has not in some way been stimulated and provoked by the presence and writings of one of the most formidable intellects of the twentieth century. He not only played a significant role in changing the entire orientation of the discipline but his influence was felt very strongly in many cognate disciplines, and our loss is also their loss.

Cambridge University had the privilege of conferring an honorary doctorate on Cliff a couple of years ago and my colleagues still remember how graciously Cliff accepted our invitations both to give a lecture to the University in our largest auditorium that was nonetheless filled to overflowing, and to answer questions about his life and work to a small group of anthropology faculty.

Scholars such as Cliff appear rarely and they should be cherished for the gifts they provide not just to their students and to their colleagues but also to the wider societies in which they live and which they change.

—LEO HOWE, *Head of the Department of Social Anthropology, Cambridge University* ■