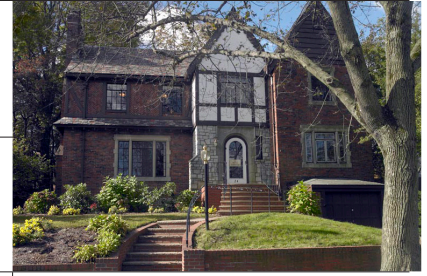


# BOISI CENTER REPORT



VOL. 16 NO.2 • MAY 2016

## FROM THE DIRECTOR



*Wolfe writes last letter as director of the Boisi Center. James Keenan challenged universities to have ethical frameworks. Bruce Herman explained the beauty in art that is broken. Distinguished scholars explored religion and American public life, as well as the role of the public intellectual.*

Greetings all, as I send out my last letter as director of the Boisi Center. More on that below.

Jim Keenan, S.J., began our semester's events with a discussion of his new book, *University Ethics*. The venue for the lunch was shifted to St. Mary's because Jim had a knee injury, but perhaps it was for the best. We ended up with more than 30 people in attendance and others had to be turned away. The popularity of his colloquium spoke to the importance of his work. Jim argued that the university needs to develop an internal culture of ethics in order to prevent the various scandals that keep cropping up in sports, student life, the classroom and elsewhere.

We had four other lunch colloquia with terrific speakers. Ray Madoff of the BC Law School educated us on the ins and outs of philanthropic organizations and tax law. She highlighted the absence of a legally mandated time frame for Donor Advised Funds to actually distribute money to charitable causes. Pierre de Charentenay, S.J., shared his expertise on the reception and integration of Muslims in France – a timely topic in light of the tragedies in Paris and Brussels during this school year. Laurie Johnston discussed incorporating concern for the environment into a robust just war theory and pointed out the global failure to consider the environmental impact of military establishments in the face of climate change. And Kristin Heyer, a former graduate research assistant here at the Boisi Center, and now professor of theology at Boston College, returned to talk about immigration

and Christian ethics. She underscored the humanity of the immigrants who are involved in difficult situations and the Christian call for the respect of persons. It would have been nice to have a few candidates for President of the United States in the room with us that day.

In a somewhat unusual foray for the Boisi Center into the visual arts, Bruce Herman shared his paintings at an evening lecture and talked about both his studio process and the theological underpinnings of his work. Key to Herman's work is offering hospitality to the viewer so that the artist and the audience together seek meaning in a piece.

Last, but by no means least, we have just finished a conference, "Religion and American Public Life: The Calling of a Public Intellectual." This one day conference featured a group of distinguished scholars who commented on public scholarship from a variety of perspectives. The first panel discussed the renewed attention to religion in political science and law scholarship, as well as in the academy as a whole; the second panel addressed the state of public scholarship today; and, in the keynote conversation, Howard Gardner and I revisited our careers as public intellectuals and talked about issues that scholars may face in the years to come. I cannot imagine a better way to end my time at the Boisi Center and at Boston College. My deepest gratitude to the Provost's Office and all who made it possible.

I am retiring as director of the Boisi Center at the end of this semester. I am delighted to announce that Erik Owens, who has done so much to make this place

what it is, will be the interim director for next year. In the fall of 2017, Mark Massa, S.J., who has been the dean of the School of Theology and Ministry here at BC, will assume his position as director of the Boisi Center. I wish him, as well as the team here, including Susan Richard and Suzanne Hevelone, the very best. Erik, Susan and Suzanne have been the best colleagues one can imagine. I thank them, as well as Geoff Boisi, David Quigley, Pat DeLeeuw and Father William Leahy, S.J., for all their support. I have loved this place and I consider my directorship of the Center as the capstone of my academic career. Best wishes to all my friends out there who have followed what we together have accomplished here.

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- *Alan Wolfe and other senior scholars on religion and American public life and public intellectuals*
- *Bruce Herman on art and theology*
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## THE CALLING OF A PUBLIC INTELLECTUAL

Boisi Center founding director Alan Wolfe and Harvard's Howard Gardner, two of the nation's leading public intellectuals, headlined the Center's day-long conference, *Religion and American Public Life: The Calling of a Public Intellectual*



Howard Gardner (L) and Alan Wolfe (R); Photo by Lee Pelligrini

On April 14, **William P. Leahy, S.J.**, Boston College university president, praised the work of **Alan Wolfe** and the Boisi Center since its founding in 1999. Leahy said that the Boisi Center has added to the intellectual discourse at Boston College by taking up major issues of the day and inviting people into dialogue about them.

Later in the day, the Boisi Center's patron and benefactor **Geoffrey T. Boisi** also praised Wolfe during the reception in honor of Wolfe's retirement. Boisi said the Boisi Center was founded for a rigorous examination of the most diffi-

cult issues of the day and he expressed his gratitude to Wolfe for his leadership of the Center. He said that Wolfe had caused Boston College to be richer intellectually, spiritually and ethically, as well as enhancing the academic reputation of the school. Boisi expressed his gratitude to Wolfe for the honor he had given the Boisi family name.

The keynote conversation of the conference on the **CALLING OF A PUBLIC INTELLECTUAL** was held between Wolfe and **Howard Gardner**, the John H. and Elisabeth A. Hobbs Professor of Cognition and Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Gardner asked Wolfe how he might explain his profession to a 10 year-old child. Wolfe answered that he would tell the child that he works with ideas, and that he finds this work important because ideas are in a precarious position today. He argued that much of Western Europe and the U.S. have become fearful, in particular of the stranger and especially of refugees coming from the Middle East. Wolfe said that we must know the difference between slogans and ideas – this is what education teaches.

Gardner and Wolfe also discussed their intellectual influences. Wolfe pointed to Isaiah Berlin, who he said taught a healthy suspicion of a singular and exclusive view of the good life. Robert Nisbet's work, particularly his belief that sociology is an art form, also influenced him.

Wolfe and Gardner also talked about the things they have always had great interest in, but never written about. Both said they have a great love for music, but hadn't explored it in writing. Wolfe did point out that his latest book, *At Home in Exile: Why Diaspora is Good for the Jews*, was the first book he has written on the topic of Judaism and the Jewish people. Wolfe joked that he now realized "the Jewish book" was a stage in the life cycle of secular Jewish intellectuals.

Gardner asked Wolfe about his ability to change his mind throughout his career, and noted that this was rare among intellectuals, especially in the public eye. Wolfe said he took pride in this ability to change his mind. He also discussed his move from the political left to the center over the course of his career. While he is no longer on the far left of American politics, he still believes strongly that economic inequality in the U.S. is the greatest moral problem of our era. Wolfe said that despite his firm convictions, he never wishes to become an ideologue incapable of changing his views.



From L to R: Geoffrey T. Boisi, Alan Wolfe and J. Donald Monan, S.J.



Boston College President William P. Leahy, S.J.



## WOLFE CONFERENCE CONTINUED



From L to R: Susan Meld Shell, Sanford Levinson, Richard J. Mouw, Ira Katznelson and Alan Wolfe

The conference's first panel grappled with **RETURN OF THE STUDY OF RELIGION IN LAW AND POLITICAL SCIENCE**. Susan Meld Shell, chair of political science at Boston College, moderated the session.

**Richard J. Mouw**, the Emeritus President and Professor of Faith and Public Life at Fuller Theological Seminary, pointed out that religion was largely absent from the scholarly conversation for many years, but while religions create many problems in the world, they also have rich resources to offer.

**Ira Katznelson**, the Ruggles Professor of Political Science and History at Columbia University, underscored the profound importance of toleration, both conceptually and in terms of institutional practices.

**Sanford Levinson**, the W. St. John Garwood and W. St. John Garwood, Jr. Centennial Chair in Law and professor of government at the University of Texas Law School at Austin, wondered whether the Religious Freedom Restoration Act had gone too far. While intended to protect marginal groups, religious claims are now taking priority over public law. Whose concerns should be protected?

In response, Katznelson affirmed that while the secular state should protect religious exercise, religious people must respect the laws produced by a

democratic polity society into which they enter. Continuing in this vein, Mouw spoke about the particular concerns and debates within America's evangelical community over some of the major changes in social policy over the last decade.

During the question and answer time, the speakers discussed the religious make up of the Supreme Court, noting that it does not match the demographics of the American public. Levinson argued that diversity brings perspective to institutions like the Supreme Court, but cautioned against religion influencing the justices in their legal rulings.

Boston College professor of economics, **Joseph Quinn**, moderated the second panel of the conference, **PUBLIC SCHOLARSHIP TODAY**.

The Michael R. Klein Professor of Law at Harvard Law School, **Randall Kennedy**, spoke about the three characteristics of public scholars that he most admires. They possess versatility, interdisciplinarity and independence. Kennedy appreciates intellectuals whose works are accessible to a broad array of people

and praised the intellectuals who are willing to interact with scholars in fields that are distinct from their own. Kennedy commended public intellectuals who are independent and are willing to break from their tribe.

Independent scholar **Susan Jacoby**, author of numerous books including *Strange Gods: A Secular History of Conversion*, reaffirmed the points raised by Kennedy. In addition to studying topics beyond his or her field, the public intellectual should study topics that run directly against it according to Jacoby.

**William A. Galston**, Ezra K. Zilkha Chair in Governance Studies and Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution, discussed the underlying difference between a public intellectual and a traditional scholar. The public intellectual does not conduct research for the sake of his or her discipline, but rather for society as a whole.

At the reception following the conference, **Erik Owens**, associate director of the Boisi Center, announced the annual Wolfe Lecture to honor Wolfe's work. Geoffrey T. Boisi also spoke about Wolfe's career and heralded the work of Chancellor and former University President **J. Donald Monan, S.J.**, in establishing Boston College as a leading institution of intellectual thought in the U.S.

Wolfe thanked those whom he worked alongside and those who had directed him along the way.

➔ [www.bc.edu/boisi-publicintellectual](http://www.bc.edu/boisi-publicintellectual)



From L to R: Susan Jacoby, Randall Kennedy, Alan Wolfe, Joseph Quinn and William A. Galston

## A THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR ART

*At a Boisi Center event in February, artist and professor Bruce Herman discussed how Eucharist influences his aesthetic principles and how destruction is an important part of his creative process.*

On February 17, Bruce Herman, the Lothlórien Distinguished Chair in Fine Arts at Gordon College, spoke and showed his art at a Boisi Center event titled, “Making and Breaking: Art, Hospitality and Eucharist.”

Many of Herman’s works include Christian themes, such as his series “Magnificat,” which is a meditation on the life of the Virgin Mary, and “Body Broken,” which commemorates Christian saints. One of his most recent works “QU4RTETS” — a collaborative exhibition and performance that also includes work by painter Makoto Fujimura, composer Christopher Theofanidis and theologian Jeremy Begbie — responds to T.S. Eliot’s poetic work, *Four Quartets*.

Herman’s physical studio process is emblematic of his theology. A convert to the Christian faith, Herman finds in the fundamental act of Christianity – Christ’s death on the cross – that good is born out of destruction. Salvation comes out of death. According to Herman, this can be analogous to making art. For Herman, the process of destruction in the studio is part of a creative exercise that leads to something new. Breaking art sometimes allows Herman to find



*Bruce Herman*

new meaning, so after he finishes a work, he often scraps it and uses pieces of the original to create something new.

Georges Rouault and Max Beckmann, expressionist painters who responded to the horrors of World War I by expressing violence and horror in their artwork, deeply influence his work.

In his talk, Herman also connected his process to hospitality, explaining that the Greek word for symbol, an image or sign that contains meaning, was literally a token that homeowners would offer strangers to welcome them into their homes.

For Herman, making art is a two-way relationship between artist and viewer. The artist must welcome the viewer to take part in creating meaning out of the work. The viewer must entrust himself or herself to the artist and be open to being changed by the work. Herman acknowledged the risk for each party, but he thinks that is where the meaning of art lies.

Herman argued that the themes of Eucharist and hospitality are connected. To Christians, the Eucharist is a symbol of welcome, and that hospitality, made possible through Christ’s death, is a source of healing on Earth.



*Zachary Matus, assistant professor of history, in the audience*



[www.bc.edu/boisi-herman](http://www.bc.edu/boisi-herman)



## UNIVERSITY ETHICS

*James Keenan, S.J., Canisius Chair and director of the Jesuit Institute at Boston College, spoke about the crisis of ethics at America's universities.*

James F. Keenan, S.J., spoke about his new book, *University Ethics: How Colleges Can Build and Benefit from a Culture of Ethics* at Saint Mary's Hall on February 2. Keenan, Canisius Chair of Theology, director of the Jesuit Institute and director of the Gabelli Presidential Scholars Program at Boston College, began his talk by describing how



*James Keenan, S.J.*

the sex abuse scandal in the Catholic archdiocese of Boston motivated him to investigate breaches of ethics related to the university. He called the university the other institution, like the Church, that teaches ethics but often fails to act ethically.

Despite little academic literature on university ethics, Keenan researched a wide array of ethical failures occurring in university settings. These included recent athletic scandals, the treatment of adjunct faculty, sexual assaults, cheating in the classroom, the commodification of education and hazing episodes at American universities. Keenan pointed to numerous incidents related to gender and race that were also troubling. The problem is not a new one. That does not mean it should not be addressed, according to Keenan.

Keenan argued that the modern university is not designed to embody a culture of

ethics, despite the number of courses offered on the topic of ethics. The structure of the university perpetuates the problem of an environment without ethical behavior. Keenan explained that the university confines its members to areas of their own special interests and limits their interactions with the rest of the community. Furthermore, faculty and staff are separated from student life, making it difficult for them to understand student culture.

According to Keenan, a university cannot establish a culture of ethics if its students, faculty and staff are unable to engage in conversations about the ethical issues that take place at the university. A university that seeks to establish an ethical culture must promote added communication and transparency. Until universities develop a culture of ethics, ethical crises will continue to occur.

➔ [www.bc.edu/boisi-keenan](http://www.bc.edu/boisi-keenan)

## PHILANTHROPY AND THE PUBLIC GOOD

*Ray Madoff argued that the tax deductions for philanthropic activities outweigh their contributions to the public good.*

On February 9, Boston College Law School professor Ray Madoff led a discussion on the intersection of charity and taxes, exploring the benefits to the American public good. An expert in philanthropy policy, estate taxes and comparative inheritance law, Madoff began her talk by discussing the history of some of the largest philanthropic institutions in America. She said these organizations benefited from federal tax deduction policies, which in turn, may short the American net common good due to the loss of substantial amounts of tax dollars.

The rise of donor-advised funds (or DAFs) further contributes to the disconnect between philanthropy and the public good, according to Madoff. DAFs are relatively new investment vehicles, run by banks and investment firms for companies or individuals to donate money to charities. Instead of giving directly to charities,

donors are able to give to DAFs, which then invest the money and collect fees on investment performance until the money is ultimately distributed to charity. One of Madoff's major concerns about DAFs is that donors are able to claim full and immediate tax benefits upon giving to a DAF, but the money donated may not be distributed to charities for many years.

Madoff also noted that private foundations benefit from favorable philanthropic tax policies. For instance, private foundations are only required to spend 5 percent of the value of their annual total worth each year to be considered a philanthropic organization, and this spending may include staff salaries. DAFs are not required by law to spend anything at all.

Madoff referred to these issues as "perpetuity over charity" – the political tendencies to keep philanthropic foundations alive rather than to increase

funding to charities. Consequently, many corporations and private foundations benefit more from charitable tax deductions than what the public receives in philanthropy.

➔ [www.bc.edu/boisi-madoff](http://www.bc.edu/boisi-madoff)



*Ray Madoff*

## WHAT THE ISLAMIC VEIL REVEALS

*Gasson Chair at Boston College Pierre de Charentenay, S.J., argued that the use of the Islamic veil reveals that Muslims will stay in Europe.*

Pierre de Charentenay, S.J., 2015-16 Gasson Chair in the department of political science at Boston College, spoke at the Boisi Center on February 25 about the role of the Muslim veil in contemporary French society. Drawing on research from his book, *Nouvelles Frontières de la Laïcité*, de Charentenay spoke about how French culture has



Pierre de Charentenay, S.J.

become hostile to public forms of religious expression, especially those from its Muslim community members.

According to de Charentenay, the debate over the veil occurs within France because it has an individualistic understanding of religion, has been a specific target for terrorist attacks and because of the migratory crisis that has resulted from the Syrian Civil War. Second and third generation Muslim immigrants are more likely to wear the veil than first generation immigrants to France were.

Controversy over the veil in France began in the 1990s when several Muslim girls wore their hijabs to public school. This sparked the creation of the Stasi Commission, which in 2004 passed a law banning all ostentatious religious signs in government places. At odds with Muslims' demands for greater religious expression in France is the increasingly pervasive culture of *laïcité*, which promotes the absence of religious

influence on the state and holds that there should be no expression of religion in public space.

The debate over the veil in France is only one of the many issues dividing the Muslim minority from mainstream society. Another major problem is the extraordinarily high rate of unemployment in the suburbs of France's major cities, where a majority of the Muslim population lives.

For de Charentenay, the increased use of the Islamic veil reveals that Muslim immigrants feel at home in France and in Europe more broadly, but seek to maintain their religious identity. According to de Charentenay, only time will tell if France develops into a more multicultural society, tolerant of diverse religions, or completely closes the public sphere to any such forms of religious expression.

➔ [www.bc.edu/boisi-decharentenay](http://www.bc.edu/boisi-decharentenay)

## ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES OF WAR

*Theology professor Laurie Johnston spoke about incorporating the effects of war on the environment into just war theory.*

Laurie Johnston, assistant professor of theology and religious studies at Emmanuel College, began her March 17 talk at the Boisi Center by highlighting the connection between warfare and the environment. While modern war can have devastating effects on the natural environment, the environment itself can also influence relations between groups and states, causing violence and war. According to Johnston, just war theory can be used to explore the ethical implications of war on the environment.

Just war theory delineates a set of criteria that must exist for a war to be just from a Catholic perspective. Johnston argued that proportionality is the most important criterion in relation to war and the environment. This principle requires policymakers to weigh the environmental cost of war against the other benefits of waging a war. Johnston said that this question is fundamentally about what we

value. At times waging a war could prevent future environmental destruction. At other times, war can greatly damage the environment, such as when the United States used Agent Orange during the Vietnam War.

Johnston highlighted the influence of Pope Francis' recent encyclical *Laudato Si'* and the 2015 Paris Climate Conference on public discourse generally, and specifically on policy about war and its impact on the environment. The Paris agreement forced militaries to track carbon emissions, ending an exemption they previously had. Some estimates report that military emissions make up about one-fifth of global carbon emissions, Johnston said.

While warfare affects the environment, Johnston argued that the environment also affects human relationships. Johnston said droughts and other extreme weather

events tend to aggravate social or economic tensions, which may lead to war. Johnston ended her remarks by noting the United States military has recognized that climate change will pose security risks around the world in the coming decades.

➔ [www.bc.edu/boisi-johnston](http://www.bc.edu/boisi-johnston)



Laurie Johnston

## IMMIGRATION AND CHRISTIAN ETHICS

*Boston College theology professor Kristin Heyer talked about the dehumanization of immigrants in contemporary discourse and how Christian ethics offers an alternative framework for treating questions of migration.*



*Kristin Heyer*

On April 5 Kristin Heyer, professor of theology at Boston College, spoke at a Boisi Center luncheon about the state of immigration in the United States. Many responses to immigration in the U.S. fail to account for the structural causes of migration and serve to dehumanize migrants. Despite the United States' long history of immigration, the current operative lenses dominating discourse on migration present immigrants as a threat to national security, as a drain on the economy, and as disruptive to social cohesion and national identity. Heyer also argued that perceiving immigrants as threats to social cohesion or national identity often takes the dangerous form of xenophobia or Islamophobia. According to Heyer, a Christian ethics of migration could offer an alternative

to these dehumanizing lenses. By recognizing immigrants as persons with individual dignity, it exhorts justice for immigrants, not merely pity. Additionally, it addresses the root causes of immigration and our complicity in these causes. Profiting off of immigrants' desperation runs counter to the Scriptural command to care for the stranger. Only by identifying the root causes of immigration, Heyer maintained, can we correct our views of immigration and work toward restorative justice.

Viewing immigrants as national security threats arose out of the pervasive post-9/11 concern with terrorism. Also, since ISIS has been able to infiltrate and conduct terrorist attacks in Europe through existing migrant channels for Syrian refugees, the American public has grown wary of accepting immigrants from the Middle East.

Immigrants are often put into categories of 'takers' or 'makers' with respect to the economy. The work of many economists who say that immigrants can be a boon to the economy, because they pay taxes but receive few benefits, refutes this language. In fact, the for-profit detention industry in the U.S. reaps billions of dollars each year, thus creating a perverse economic incentive to detain and deport more and more people.

➔ [www.bc.edu/boisi-heyer](http://www.bc.edu/boisi-heyer)

## WOMEN IN RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP

The sixth annual Boisi Center Symposium on Religion and Politics considered the topic of women in religious leadership, with particular attention to issues of ordination. A group of graduate students met six times to discuss the women's leadership in five major world religions: Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism.

In addition to discussing relevant readings, the group was honored to have

three experts give presentations: Ruth Langer and Catherine Cornille of the BC theology department and Master of Divinity student at Harvard Divinity School Seonjoon Young. Langer offered her knowledge on the issue of women leaders in Judaism. Cornille shared her scholarship and stories of Hindu female gurus. Young was able to offer her experience of her time as a Buddhist monk.

➔ [www.bc.edu/boisi-womenleaders](http://www.bc.edu/boisi-womenleaders)

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Boisi Center event photos by Christopher Soldt.



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## THE BOISI CENTER REPORT IS GOING GREEN!

The Boisi Center Report will be going digital in the fall and will be distributed primarily by email. If you would like to continue to receive physical copies of the newsletter, you will need to request it. Please visit our homepage at [bc.edu/boisi](http://bc.edu/boisi) or call us at 617-552-1860 to opt-in to receive the newsletter by mail. As always, the Boisi Center Report is available on our website.

### FALL 2016 EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

#### Politics, Millennials and the Future of Civil Discourse

Alexander Heffner (Host of PBS's "The Open Mind")  
Graham Griffith (public media consultant)  
Student Participants TBA  
Wednesday, September 28

#### Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism

Edward E. Baptist (Cornell University)  
Response by Martin Summers (BC)  
Tuesday, October 4

#### Just War Revisited

Gen. James Dubik (U.S. Army, ret.)  
Rev. J. Bryan Hehir (Harvard University)  
Government Official TBA  
Thursday, October 20

#### And lunch colloquia with BC faculty:

Meghan Sweeney (Sept. 13)  
Marilynn Johnson (Sept. 21)  
David DiPasquale (TBA)

### ALL THE BEST TO OUR RESEARCH ASSISTANTS...

Sophomore **OMEED ALIDADI** continues his research on Middle Eastern educational systems this summer in Kuwait and will return to the Boisi Center next year.

Graduating senior **MAX BLAISDELL** will work as a paralegal in San Francisco. He hopes to eventually pursue either a degree in law or a master's degree in political science.

Graduating senior **CONNOR FARLEY** is moving to New York City, working in finance and attending as many Phish shows as possible this summer.

Graduate research assistant **KYLE LOGAN** will study for his Master's comprehensive exam in philosophy. He looks forward to getting to know Immanuel Kant very well.

Graduating senior **NATHAN MCGUIRE** will work as a paralegal and research assistant for a Boston defense attorney. He hopes to eventually pursue a law degree.