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# INTRODUCTION

As befits an Interdisciplinary Journal, this December issue provides methodological and content diversity. Variety continues to be one of the strengths of our writers, as you will see by the quality of the articles. For example, we have two fascinating studies addressing Aboriginal religion, one in New Zealand, and one in Canada. At the same time, we have a study addressing a very contemporary phenomenon—Wikipedia and its social implications. Then a historical study focusing on desert religiosity, and finally an essay on theological ethics on the important theme of "victim."

Such diversity is not just an expression of our writers, or of our Journal's interest—it is now a fact of life for scholars who work in either of the areas of religious studies or theology.

In the past, many scholarly studies valorized Aboriginal religion in some vague pre-European time. The result was a serious distortion of the plasticity and vigor of Aboriginal religion. Like all religious phenomena, traditions undergo change, development, decline and re-affirmation. The Maori of New Zealand are a case in point. Complex processes are at work; they are clarified in Adrian Leske's *The Role of the* Tohunga—*Past and Present*. He shows that Tohunga alteration and adaptability has allowed for a new role much more in keeping with the position demanded by the cultural situation today. The study is a snapshot of a new emphasis by scholars on the syncretic and hybrid movements among Aboriginal peoples around the contemporary world.

What happens when a philosopher begins plumbing the *Hamatsu* Dance of the Kwakiutl? He immediately is forced to translate from one system to another. Allan McLuckie borrows structures from Greek religion to elucidate what he sees occurring among this Canadian Aboriginal group. His *Reinterpreting the Kwakiutl* Hamatsu *Dance as an Expression of the Apollonian and Dionysian Synthesis* provides a way into Kwakiutl tradition for those of us that are intrigued by Indigenous religiosity, but do not know how to connect to it. McLuckie's argument is that something very like our Greek roots can be useful as a way into cross-cultural understanding.

Rubén Rosario Rodríguez sees a new model of discourse arising out of Wikipedia. He views the public-created encyclopedia as a cross-

cultural and interdisciplinary "conversation." Moreover, he argues that some theological discourses are very similar—liberation theology for example. Both escape from an Enlightenment "foundationalism," by foregrounding the contextual nature of truth-seeking. Hence he sees a major benefit in the "hermeneutics of suspicion" because it guards against the reification that one hears in theology discussion—certainly a challenging voice in the postmodernist debates.

There is still something compelling about the desert, even when, like today in Morocco, it creeps across fertile land compelling the people to flee. In *Desert Spirituality in 17th and 18th Century French Calvinism*, Kirk MacGregor takes us back to a point in time in the West when the desert was an attractive option for those searching for new disciplines of the soul. The Huguenots re-visioned their identity to that of a New Israel and proceeded to embrace the *désert* of the Cévennes as a way of affirming a deeply-felt spiritual reality. Out of this came less commitment to boundaries, more plasticity in numinous experience and ultimately a new identity that remained even after they returned to the French social world.

Finally, Paul Rigby continues to assess our intellectual acumen through the lens of the Holocaust. Pointing to the religious cultures of the time, and especially the theological perspectives, he queries how great minds can contend with meaninglessness that arises from such a systematic hatred. Using Levinas and Améry, he explores how ethical conceptions of God can survive this senselessness. Focusing upon the concept of victim, Levinas moves to a tragic sense of God, to tragedy, and an ethics of tragedy. As a counterpoint, he highlights Jean Améry's positioning of victimhood, turning that writer's atheistic argument back upon Levinas as a way to explicate a radical rethinking of "social and religious imperatives." His *The Victim in Ethnical Theology: Emmanuel Levinas and Jean Améry* demonstrates the power of "disinterested resentment"—which he interprets as a trace of the divine.

We invite you to continue this tradition by engaging our authors here; we also invite your own encounters with the diversity muse, and send your papers to us to add to this vital kind of interdisciplinary scholarship.

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