

---

# THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO RECORD



Volume 36, Number 4

May 23, 2002

---

## CONTENTS

- 2 The 2002 Nora and Edward Ryerson Lecture**  
“Engaging Subjective Knowledge: Narratives of and by the Self in the Amar Singh Diary”  
—*Susanne Hoerber Rudolph and Lloyd I. Rudolph*  
About the Lecturers  
The Nora and Edward Ryerson Lectures  
Previous Ryerson Lecturers
- 7 Report of the Student Ombudsperson for Autumn Quarter 2001 and Winter and Spring Quarters 2002**  
—*Noor-Aiman Khan*
- 9 The 466th Convocation**  
Address: “A University of Chicago Education and the Pursuit of Truth and Beauty in Mathematics”—*Robert A. Fefferman*  
Summary
- 11 The 467th Convocation**  
Address: “Altruism Examined”—*Jeanne C. Marsh*  
Honorary Degree  
Summary

---

**THE UNIVERSITY OF  
CHICAGO RECORD**  
5710 South Woodlawn Avenue  
Chicago, Illinois 60637

Nonprofit  
Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Chicago, Illinois  
Permit No. 8070

# The 2002 Nora and Edward Ryerson Lecture

## “Engaging Subjective Knowledge: Narratives of and by the Self in the Amar Singh Diary”

By Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and Lloyd I. Rudolph

As Lloyd and I imaginatively reconstructed the phone call from Don Randel the musicologist, we thought we heard him ask us to perform a duet. A duet, the *OED* tells us, is a musical composition for two voices or two performers. Hopefully, it will be a harmonious duet. Again resorting to the indispensable *OED*, we find that harmonious means “marked by agreement or concord . . . so as to produce an aesthetically pleasing effect.” We hope, of course, that these adjectives apply. We also found that duet implies a certain simultaneity. You will be relieved to know that the only thing simultaneous about this lecture is that we wrote it together.

I start by confessing to you that Lloyd and I have been living in a ménage à trois for the past thirty years. This arrangement has been suspected by our children and a few close friends. The third member of our household has been Amar Singh, the dashing cavalry officer you see on the cover of *Reversing the Gaze*. His presence often disrupted the household, compelling us to travel frequently to distant places, drawing down the family exchequer, and affecting our family culture by teaching our children to recite *dohas*, Marwari couplets whose performance captures the culture and identity of the Rajput order that ruled India’s ancient kingdoms—Udaipur, Jodhpur, Jaipur, and others. Amar Singh has been our constant companion for thirty years, ever since that breathtaking moment in 1971 when Mohan Singh Kanota ushered us into his father’s high-ceilinged room in Narain Niwas to show us the ninety folio-sized, 800-page volumes bound in red leather of his uncle’s diary. Written in English and kept continuously for forty-four years—from September 1898 until November 1, 1942, the day Amar Singh died—it may be the world’s longest continuous diary.

### Introducing Subjective Knowledge

The three decades spent selecting, editing, and interpreting Amar Singh’s diary have led us to reflect on the subjective knowledge Amar Singh’s narratives of and by himself make available. This evening we would like to share with you some of those reflections.

We start with a story familiar to anthropologists. A Cree hunter is asked by a Canadian court to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth about his people’s way of life. “I’m not sure I can tell the truth,” he says, “I can only tell what I know.”<sup>1</sup>

Amar Singh says something similar about his diary narratives. After completing the last entry for 1898—the year he converted his copybook into “the diary”—the nineteen-year-old student of Ram Nathji, tutor at the Jodhpur court of the young maharaja, Sardar Singh, turns the fledgling volume over to his much admired and respected teacher in the hope and expectation that Ram Nathji will comment on what he has written. Ram Nathji pencils mostly approving observations and comments throughout the diary’s pages but comes down hard on Amar Singh at the end of the last page for writing so much about the “butchery” of hunting boar, tigers, and birds but writing nothing about Jodhpur’s worst famine of the century. Amar Singh’s

response to Ram Nathji is reminiscent of the Cree hunter’s response to the Canadian court’s injunction to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

I ought to have written about the famine, but you must bear in mind that no opportunities were given me to study or watch it and consequently I could not write anything. . . . What I have written is of which I am an eye witness or have heard from very reliable sources.<sup>2</sup>

Amar Singh, like the Cree hunter, has taken a position on the epistemology of subjective knowledge; he tells what *he* knows about what he has experienced. Like the Cree hunter, his knowledge is situated and contextual; his voice is located in time, place, and circumstance. The epistemology of subjective knowledge stands in marked contrast with the epistemology of objective knowledge, i.e., knowledge based on a view from nowhere generated by unmarked and unencumbered observers.<sup>3</sup>

James Clifford glossed the Cree hunter’s concept of truth as “rigorous partiality.” Clifford reverses the conventional valuation of partial and impartial, treating partiality as the more desirable and impartiality as the less desirable state. Rigorous partiality recognizes and validates the situated, inflected nature of truth. Rather than denying or repressing the existential character of the sociology of knowledge, rigorous partiality self-consciously acknowledges that place, time, and circumstance shape why and how knowledge is acquired and what it is taken to mean. Clifford’s claim for rigorous partiality is consistent with Hans-Georg Gadamer’s hermeneutic stance in *Truth and Method*,<sup>4</sup> that the scientific ideal of objectivity is compromised by personal experience, cultural tradition, and prior understandings.

Clifford’s second signification for partiality refers to that which is not whole, complete, or capable of being carried to completion. “Rigorous partiality” makes the epistemological claim that knowing the whole truth is a capacity not given to mortals. The best they can do is to strive for partial truths.

Working with the Amar Singh diary invited us to consider the relationship between a personal document written daily in the first person and subjective knowledge. We began to ask ourselves, What kind of knowledge can be found in a diary? and How does such knowledge differ from other forms of knowledge? We recognized that monopoly claims could be and were being made for objective knowledge, particularly objective knowledge based on stereotypical views of “science” and “scientific method.” Influential and powerful voices claimed that only science could ask and answer questions. If it wasn’t scientific it couldn’t be true. Early on we recognized that subjective knowledge posed a challenge to the monopolistic claims of science to objective knowledge. But we are not arguing in reply to such monopoly claims for objective knowledge that subjective knowledge is the only form of knowledge or even that it should be taken to be the best or a better form of knowledge. We think there is room at the roundtable of knowl-

edge for the imaginative truths found in literature, myth, and memory; for the archival truths of history; for the spiritual truths found in religions and religious experience; and for the aesthetic truths of the visual and performing arts.

Resisting monopolistic claims about forms of knowledge and ways of knowing was not something that began with our work on the Amar Singh diary. Looking back, it began in the mid-1950s when we were working on our Ph.D.s at Harvard, mostly but by no means exclusively in its Department of Government. We encountered—perhaps sought out—would be a better way of putting it—diverse forms of knowledge and ways of asking and answering questions. We learned about macrohistorical theory and political institutions from Carl Friedrich and Sam Beer, and came to be positivists of sorts working with V. O. Key, the doyen of statistical analysis of electoral and party behavior based on voting and survey data; Erik Erikson guided us into the realm of ego psychology and identity formation; David Riesman showed us what it meant to interpret American character and culture, and Louis Hartz how to analyze and explain American political development; Rupert Emerson supported our ventures into the first wave of postcolonial studies, the formation of new nations and new states; and, for a time, Talcott Parsons led us to believe that all would be revealed once we understood the mysteries of structural functionalism. From the beginning our work has drawn on diverse epistemes and methods, and years of teaching in the University of Chicago College only fortified the habit. We have been re-enforced in our tendency toward pluralism in forms of knowledge and ways of knowing by Max Weber’s embrace of it on the last page of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*:

It is not our aim to substitute for a one-sided materialistic an equally one-sided spiritualistic causal interpretation of culture and history. Each is equally possible, but each, if it does not serve as the preparation, but as the conclusion of an investigation, accomplishes equally little in the interest of historical truth.<sup>5</sup>

### Images of Liminality

So how did we get here from there? How did we come to be giving the Ryerson Lecture in April 2002 about a diary and subjective knowledge? Lloyd will return to that question once I introduce the subject who provides narratives of and by the self in his diary. We have “read” Amar Singh not only through his words but also through his photographs, an experience we will try to repeat here. Most of these photographs can be found in the thirty-five photo albums that he composed and that reside in his ancestral *haveli*.

Two images display the kind of identity the young officer is constructing for himself: the first an image of the booted, turbaned reader we use on the cover of our book, *Reversing the Gaze* (figure 1). the second an image of Amar Singh shooting (figure 2). There are Indian elements such as the Jodhpur-style *sapha* or turban and



Figure 1. “A Rajput who reads will never ride a horse”? Amar Singh the cavalry officer reading a book. (Figures 1 through 7 are from Amar Singh’s Photo Albums.)



Figure 2. The diarist as Indo-Edwardian gentleman

the jodhpurs and English elements—the cavalry boots, the well-cut Norfolk jacket, the fine shirt and tie. He is what we think of as a liminal creature, a Rajput Edwardian gentleman who lives on the *limes*, the border between two forms of life, the English culture of British India and the Rajput culture of princely India.

We use the term liminality rather than a related term, hybridity, to characterize Amar Singh’s condition because, as we read liminality,<sup>6</sup> it fits better with the ways Amar Singh assembles his identity. Liminal identities are constructed and changeable while hybrid identities are continuous and self-perpetuating. As we use the term, liminality invokes a temporary location on one side or another of a border that separates two forms of life, or in the culturally ambiguous no man’s land that lies between them. Hybridity unlike liminality invokes the durable and persisting condition of a created but self-perpetuating crossbreed. Liminality is a term that suits the end-of-the-century imperial era, hybridity a term that suits the “postcolonial” thinking and practice characteristic of the end of the twentieth century.<sup>7</sup>

Amar captures his sense of living liminally, sometimes on one side, sometimes on the other, of the border between



**Figure 3.** *A man of many worlds: Zorawar Singh constructs a self from Rajput, Mughal, French, Victorian, and ancient Greek accouterments.*

two cultures, in a remark about what makes Indian and English food taste good. Indian food tastes better, he wrote, when it is eaten from a *tali* with the hand; English food tastes better when eaten from a plate with knives and forks. His dress in the two photos of him reading and shooting places him in the culturally ambiguous space between the English world of British India and the Rajput world of princely India.

At the turn of the century, when Amar Singh began to write his diary, liminality was suspect. A “black Englishman” was at best an anomaly, at worst an abomination. He had either assimilated imperfectly and was therefore a bad copy, or he had assimilated perfectly and was deracinated, an inauthentic self, a phony. It was a time when imperial narratives conflated culture and biology. Identity was essentialized; a Jat *was* a Jat; Jats *were* good cultivators. Kipling in “The Enlightenment of Padgett, M.P.” mocked the claims of English-educated Congress *babus*, deracinated, inauthentic men whose liminal condition contradicted their claim to speak for the people of India. When Dr. Aziz in Forster’s *A Passage to India* fails to insert the button needed to attach a starched collar to his shirt, he fails the test for passing as English.

But the world has changed. In today’s world of postcolonial discourse and practice hybridity is praised and celebrated. Salman Rushdie exemplifies a hybrid identity in what he writes as a novelist and how he lives as a person—in Bombay, Karachi, London, and New York.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the hazards of liminality, we find Amar Singh navigating its dangerous shoals with considerable ease and success. It is an old skill on the subcontinent. From at least Mughal times, reciprocal cultural adaptation and borrowing was commonly practiced. Rajput kings and courts adapted Mughal architecture, art, dress, and food. Mughal emperors learned from Rajput rulers. We see Amar Singh wearing jodhpurs, an anglicized version of Indian dress. The British adapt in the opposite direction: they wear khakis and live in bungalows.

In the next slide, Amar Singh’s grandfather enacts liminality (figure 3). Zorawar Singh is a ten-village thakur, minister in the government of Maharaja Ram Singh of



**Figure 4.** *Amar Singh reverses the gaze: the only turban at the Ormerod-Westcott wedding.*

Jaipur, and a leading member of his court. The genre of the image, a photographic portrait, tells us that the periphery, the down-country town of Jaipur, was emulating the latest practice at the center of the empire in London.<sup>9</sup> From 1876, visiting rulers had photographic portraits prepared in anticipation of an audience with the Queen Empress, Victoria. Zorawar Singh’s dress reflects a variety of cultural adaptations: the epaulettes made fashionable by European regimental dress; the pearls at the throat and the silk sword scarf that emulate Mughal court dress; the *angaarkhi*, a local jacket featuring the cut-out at the neck; the recently acquired gold anklets marking his rise to the rank of *tazimi sardar* in the Jaipur court. He rests his hand on a cunning table bearing the literary accouterments of a Victorian gentleman—book, pen, inkwell; and poses in front of a *de rigueur* portraiture stage prop, in this case of the Parthenon, symbolic of British recognition of Greece as the cradle of Western civilization. Zorawar Singh’s liminality naturalizes why and how his grandson, Amar Singh, adopted a similar mode of identity formation.

Four more photos of his early years as an officer display the environment that enabled and limited his identity choices. We see him at the Ormerod-Westcott wedding (figure 4). The photo is one of many in which he is the only Indian *sapha* in a sea of English garden hats and straw boaters. (If you zero in on the clergyman in black on the far right-hand side, you can spot his dark face and white *sapha* just behind the pastor.) On army duty as a staff officer, we see him sorted with the English officers rather than the Indian subalterns (figure 5). We watch him striding toward his very English bungalow in the Mhow army cantonment (figure 6), and we observe the Edwardian drawing room with which he surrounds himself, complete with objets d’art, paintings, and elegant furniture (figure 7).



**Figure 5.** *Lt. Amar Singh stands on the English side of the line.*



**Figure 6.** *Striding toward his English bungalow at Mhow cantonment*



Figure 7. Amar Singh's Victorian drawing room at Mhow

### Self-as-Other Ethnography

Now that Susanne has introduced you to Amar Singh the diarist, I want to make a case for how his narratives of and by the self can be said to constitute a form of subjective knowledge. My story of the diary as a form of subjective knowledge begins and, in a sense, ends with the thoughts of the late M. N. Srinivas, an Indian anthropologist of world repute. In texts written just before his unexpected death in Bangalore in November 1999, he provided warrants for the approach we take in this lecture. The passages make clear that by the late 1990s he had gone beyond explanations based on social structure and social function that characterized his major works to an appreciation of the importance of subjective knowledge and human agency in the making and shaping of culture:

Every life mirrors to some extent the culture and the changes it undergoes. The life of every individual can be regarded as a "case study," and who is better qualified than the individual himself to study [it]. . . . Anthropology started as the study of "the other," an exotic other. . . . [T]he culmination of the movement from the study of the other to studying of one's own culture is surely the study of one's own life? The latter can be looked at as a field, with the anthropologist being both the observer and the observed, ending for once the duality which inheres in all traditional fieldwork.<sup>10</sup>

As Susanne and I read and reread the Amar Singh diary, it gradually dawned on us that his narratives of and by the self provided an account not only of a self in formation, the making of identity, but also an ethnography, a cultural account of a way of life. We combined the two by thinking of the diary's narratives as a self-constructing culture, what we subsequently came to think of as "self-as-other ethnography."

The claim that Amar Singh was an ethnographer of whatever stripe runs counter to what anthropologists claimed they did from the time when, at the beginning of

World War I, Bronislaw Malinowski invented anthropology as a "science" based on "field work" and participant-observer methodology. In the beginning there was the self and the other. European anthropologists initially went to study the alien, exotic, and distant "other" in colonial places such as the Trobriand Islands or an Indian village, places where the natives could be observed enacting their culture, fulfilling cultural "obligations," behaving in culturally appropriate ways. Anthropologists from the metropole formulated a culture for the natives and told the Western world and the natives about it in their scholarly monographs.

Another of James Clifford's stories captures the process of defining the natives' culture for them. The story is about a graduate student ethnographer and an African chief. To put you in the proper frame of mind and illustrate the ambiguity of the relationship, I am showing you the cover of the *Times Literary Supplement* that featured Tanya Luhrmann's review of books about and by Clifford Geertz (figure 8). (As we look at this photo, we can wonder about who is mastering whose culture.) The story goes like this: A graduate student of African ethnohistory prepares for his fieldwork in Gabon among the Mpongwe by consulting an early twentieth-century work of a pioneering ethnographer, Raponda-Walker. When he reaches the field, the student's interview with a Mpongwe chief proceeds well until the chief has trouble with a particular word. "Just a moment," he says cheerfully, and disappears into his house to return with a copy of Raponda-Walker's compendium. For the rest of the interview the book lies open on his lap.<sup>11</sup>

The "us" in the early days of ethnography were "Europeans" from imperial metropolises, the "them," natives living under colonial domination in what were deemed cultural isolates, denizens of remote islands, villagers living behind mud walls, tribals hidden away in the bush. Natives were objects to be studied, subjects of alien rulers, peoples that administrators had to control and civilize—the white man's burden in Kipling's unintendedly ironic phrase.



Figure 8. *The chief and the anthropologist. Whose gaze? (Photo: Hutchison Picture Library, London)*

So how did we get from "self and other" to "self as other"? How did the natives lose culture and gain voice? The transformation did not occur recently or overnight. An important move in the direction of "self as other" took place when Srinivas's friend and younger colleague, Triloki Nath Madan, like Srinivas an Indian ethnographer of India, wrote "On Living Intimately with Strangers."<sup>12</sup> Madan is one of the earliest reflexive "others" among Indian anthropologists. He makes no special claim in the name of "authenticity." At the same time he sees himself as an anomaly when he remarks that "social anthropology took a very long time to realize the potential of studying one's own society." He cites two of Bronislaw Malinowski's students—Jomo Kenyatta, "an African tribal chief," and Fei Hsiao-Tung, "a Chinese Mandarin," whose studies were published in 1938 and 1939—as earlier examples of reflexive "natives" writing their own ethnography. He cites Malinowski's observation that writing anthropologies "of one's own people . . . [is] the most arduous, but also the most valuable achievement of a field worker," from Malinowski's foreword to Fei's *Peasant Life in China*. Madan argued that an anthropologist can go home again if he can "render the familiar unfamiliar." Madan went home again to study his own Kashmiri Pandit community. He recognized that "detachment" distinguished his way of studying his own community from the "empathy" called for by participant observation of an "other." What he did, he said, was closer to "objective subjectivity" than it was to the "subjective objectivity" of participant-observer ethnography.<sup>13</sup> Studying his culture in his own country and, more decisively his own community, led him in time to the view that anthropologists should "not divide humankind into 'ourselves' and 'others.'"

The "other" of participant-observer anthropology is not, it seems, barred from self-understanding, the capacity, in Srinivas's words, of making himself or herself "a case study," if he or she can render the familiar unfamiliar. "Critical self-awareness," Madan says, is available to ethnographers who can access "distance,"

a "sense of surprise," and "anthropological doubt." This kind of self-consciousness and reflexivity can, according to Srinivas, remove the epistemological divide between self and other and open the way to ending "the duality which inheres in all traditional fieldwork."<sup>14</sup>

Amar Singh's self-as-other ethnography helps him to avoid some of the obfuscating mediations associated with self-and-other ethnography, the subjectivity and the projections that affect observation and knowing; the fortuitous or calculated resistance and/or compliance of the native subject; the objectivist fictions of scientific narration and authorial rhetoric. Clifford Geertz tells us how anthropologists try to persuade us to believe them despite such difficulties:

The ability of anthropologists to get us to take what they say seriously, has less to do with either a factual look or an air of conceptual elegance than it has to do with their capacity to convince us that what they say is a result of having actually penetrated (or, if you prefer, been penetrated by) another form of life, of having one way or another, truly 'been there'. . . . Persuading us that his offstage miracle has occurred . . . is where the writing comes in."<sup>15</sup>

The erosion of the self-and-other trope began after World War II, when decolonization abroad and the rise of minorities at home started to erase the line between them and us. Renato Rosaldo captured what was happening when he wrote, "The more power one has, the less culture one enjoys, and the more culture one has, the less power one wields."<sup>16</sup> "Culture" is what natives and minorities had and what anthropologists studied. Power is what the people of the metropole had; novelists, not anthropologists, wrote about their lives. But the situation changed. Abroad, the natives became citizens of sovereign nation-states, and at home voting and civil rights made citizens of minorities. When, at independence in 1947, Indians gained sovereignty, they lost "culture." Since independence, we have learned more about life in India from the pens of novelists—R. K. Narayan, Salman Rushdie, and Arundhati Roy—than from the field notes of anthropologists. "Wasps" gained culture as they lost power; Digby Baltzell's sociology of Philadelphia's fading elite replaced Edith Wharton's novels about New York high society.<sup>17</sup> Having written eight volumes of "subaltern studies" about the powerless, Indian intellectuals were brought up short in the 1980s with the realization that they were speaking for the powerless and asked, "Can the subaltern speak?"

In some ways, it was a strange question to ask. The answer was "Yes, the subaltern can speak." Natives and minorities began to do so in the name of authenticity. They went further. They claimed that they and only they could represent themselves. French ethnographers looking at Madagascar, MIT economists observing Paki-



stan, white men from NORC observing the black ghetto could not speak for them. As our daughter Amelia learned as a student in the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, authenticity makes an epistemological claim. When she set out to study a witch sect in California, the witches told her that you have to be a witch to study witches.<sup>18</sup> Authenticity became a claim to intellectual property. Trespassers were warned to keep out. Was the warning legitimate? Who and what is authentic? Does authenticity reside in the qualities of the text or object or in the identity of the producer? Does a Navajo blanket have to be made by a Navajo? Does a sociology of Jat-Sikhs of the Punjab have to be written by a Jat-Sikh of the Punjab? Alison Lurie in *Imaginary Friends*<sup>19</sup> satirized authenticity by narrating how two sociologists from a fictionalized Cornell studied a community of persons in upstate New York who believed in the existence and presence of extraterrestrial beings. One of them finds that he can't understand and represent his subject's beliefs without himself becoming a believer. Authenticity in this reading requires that self be or become the other.

Paradoxically, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., who presides over an enterprise that sometimes trades on authenticity claims, the Harvard Department of Afro-American Studies, has mounted a serious challenge to essentialist versions of authenticity. In his essay, "Authenticity, or the Lesson of Little Tree," he tells the story of the initially much celebrated book, *The Education of Little Tree*.<sup>20</sup> Its author, Forrest Carter, wrote the book in the first person, as if he were a Cherokee. Initially, Carter was praised for providing a brilliant, deeply moving account of Cherokee life. The autobiography was said by a critic uniquely to capture the meaning of the native American experience. Soon after his triumphant reception as an authentic Cherokee voice, Forrest Carter was unmasked. The author was not an authentic Cherokee. He was a "Ku Klux Klan terrorist and homegrown American fascist," an imposter with a criminal record. "Like it or not," Gates tells us, "all writers are 'cultural impersonators'."<sup>21</sup>

Gates challenges authenticity's epistemological and ontological claim that only a "native" can know a native, that it takes a "native" or African American to know and to tell about a native or African American. He praises slave novels pseudonymously written by whites in the voice of slaves and novels pseudonymously written by whites in the voice of blacks.

Before we follow Gates and throw out the baby of subjective knowledge with the bath water of authenticity, let us consider a story from Amar Singh's diary. The story raises questions about the claim that authenticity is independent of the speaker. Is an imperial ruler capable of speaking for a colonial subject and if he is, will he do so? Amar Singh's diary provides a partial truth answer to this question.

Amar Singh's entry for October 15, 1915, written on the Western front, includes an essay entitled "The Importance of Keeping Records." He is concerned that, in the absence of "eye witness" accounts, the story of Indian soldier's contribution to the allies' victory in World War I might be lost from view. That contribution was con-

siderable. The war began for England on August 4, 1914. By late September an Indian expeditionary force was at the front in Flanders, where British forces were falling back. The German army's Schlieffen plan to encircle Paris by invading through Belgium and penetrating to the Marne was moving toward success. Without the arrival of an Indian Corps of two-plus divisions and their valiant and determined resistance, the German offensive might very well have succeeded.

Amar Singh feared that the story of the Indian soldiers' contribution to fighting and winning World War I would fall victim to India's colonial relationship to Britain. He writes, "To my mind it is a thing of the greatest importance to keep a nation's records. In this we are backward. . . . [W]e ought to have brought our own *charans*, who are our hereditary [bards]. . . . What we want is a man of learning and imagination who could and would write from personal experience. . . . The English historians will simply treat . . . the war in a very general way. . . . [W]hat we can expect is a mere mention." And so it proved to be. Amar Singh's diary entry seems to resuscitate claims that being a witch provides a special vantage point for knowledge about witches and that power enhances the witch's ability to speak and to be heard.

Let me conclude by returning to the theory and practice of "self-as-other" ethnography. In recent decades, the dichotomies self and other, participant and observer, the ethnographer and the native, even subjectivity and objectivity have eroded. They have given way to first-person fieldwork accounts of the theater of the other. In "polyphonic," "dialogic" textual production, both the ethnographer and the subjects of his/her ethnography are on stage in a reconstituted theater of the other. They engage each other, sharing the conversation built into the script. But they do not share the production of the script's text. Despite the appearance on stage of reciprocity and mutual determination, the writing of the play, however literary and "partial" it may be, remains the task of the ethnographer, the self of the self-other duality. Politically he or she retains authority over the text about the other. But Amar Singh, a reflexive other writing in his diary about culture in the making as well as the doing, is located outside of a participant-observer relationship. By conflating self and other he constitutes himself, in M. N. Srinivas words, as a "case study." He is, as Srinivas said, "both the observer and the observed," a condition that ends "the duality which inheres in all traditional field work." Amar Singh creates subjective knowledge by being participant, observer, informant, narrator, and author rolled into one. Amar Singh sets the stage, writes the play, and speaks its lines. It is his script and his performance.

#### Notes

1. James Clifford, "Introduction: Partial Truths," in James Clifford and George Marcus, eds., *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p. 8.

2. Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, Lloyd I. Rudolph, with Mohan Singh Kanota, *Reversing the Gaze: Amar Singh's Diary, A Colonial Subject's Narra-*

*tive of Imperial India* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 2002), p. 55.

3. See for example Deirdre McCloskey, who discounts the objective truth claims of social scientists because they mistakenly assume a disinterested and omniscient observer or clothe themselves in the authority of the gnomic present's General Truth. See *If You're So Smart* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 61.

4. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. J. Weinsheimer and D. G. Marshall, second revised edition (New York: Seabury Press, 1989).

5. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Scribner, 1958, 1976), p. 183.

6. Liminality has more than one meaning. One variant can be found in narratives of rites of passage such as Victor Turner's usage in *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967). As the text makes clear, Turner's is not the variant of liminality we have in mind.

7. For more on hybridity see Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994).

8. Mira Nair's films *Mississippi Masala* and *Monsoon Wedding*, like Rushdie's novels, depict a version of Indian hybridity.

9. Russell Harris *The Lafayette Studio* (New Delhi: Roli Johnson, 2001).

10. M. N. Srinivas, "Indian Anthropologists and the Study of Indian Culture," *Economic and Political Weekly* (March 16, 1996): 657.

11. James Clifford, "On Ethnographic Allegory," in James Clifford and George Marcus, eds., *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1986), p. 116.

12. In André Beteille and T. N. Madan, eds., *Encounter and Experience: Personal Accounts of Fieldwork* (Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1975), pp. 131-156.

13. "Subjective objectivity" is reminiscent of Hans-Georg Gadamer's view in *Truth and Method* and of Michael Polanyi's in *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958, 1962).

14. T. N. Madan, "On Critical Self-Awareness," in *Pathways: Approaches to the Study of Society in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 159-160. These themes are developed in Madan's critical appraisals of the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss and Louis Dumont.

15. Clifford Geertz, *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1988), pp. 4-5. "It is clear," he says, "that in . . . [Foucauldian] terms anthropology is pretty much entirely on the side of 'literary' discourses rather than 'scientific' ones. . . . Ethnographies tend to look at least as much like romances as they do like lab reports." p. 8.

16. Renato Rosaldo, "Culture Visibility and Invisibility," in his *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), pp. 198-204.

17. Our readers are more likely to be familiar with the novels of Edith Wharton than with the sociological works of E. Digby Baltzell. The appearance of his *Philadelphia Gentlemen: The Making of a National Upper Class* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1958) made a case inter alia for "The Rise and Fall of Anglo-Saxon-Protestant Rule in America." Baltzell had been preceded in writing about the culture of fading WASPs by Lloyd Warner in his "Yankee City Series" about Newburyport, Massachusetts, and by Robert S. and Helen Merrell Lynd's "Middletown" books about Muncie, Indiana.

18. Tanya Luhmann reported a similar experience in her Social Science Dean's lecture (2002) about the writing of *Persuasions of the Witch's Craft*.

19. Alison Lurie, *Imaginary Friends*, New York: Coward-McCann, 1967.

20. Forrest Carter, *The Education of Little Tree* (New York: Delacorte Press/E. Friede), 1976.

21. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., " 'Authenticity,' or the Lessons of Little Tree," *New York Times Book Review* (November 24, 1991). Julian Barnes mounts an extreme challenge to authenticity in his novel *England, England*. If you look deep enough and far back enough, Barnes argues, you will find replication in some form or other.

#### About the Lecturers

Susanne Hoeber Rudolph is the William Benton Distinguished Service Professor in the Department of Political Science and the College.

She completed her undergraduate degree at Sarah Lawrence College and received a Ph.D. from Harvard University in 1955. Since joining the University of Chicago faculty in 1964, she has served as Director of the South Asia Language and Area Center, as Master of the Social Sciences Collegiate Division, and twice as Chair of the Department of Political Science. She is currently Director of the Center for International Studies.

Her teaching and research concentrate on comparative politics, particularly the political economy and sociology of South Asia, Max Weber's social science, and the politics of category and identity formation. She is the author of *Transnational Religion* and *In Pursuit of Lakshmi: The Political Economy of the Indian State*, among others.

Recipient of the University's Quantrell Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching in 1973, Susanne Hoeber Rudolph was recently nominated president-elect of the American Political Science Association.

Lloyd I. Rudolph is Professor in the Department of Political Science and the College.

He received his undergraduate and graduate degrees from Harvard University, completing his Ph.D. in 1956. Since joining the University faculty in 1964, his research and teaching have focused on institutional political economy, narratives and metaphors of state formation, South Asian comparative politics, and Gandhian thought and practice. His publications include *The Modernity of Tradition: Political Development in India* and *Education and Politics in India: Studies in Organization, Society, and Policy*.

He has served as Chairman of the Committee on International Relations and of the Master of Arts Program in the Social Sciences. He is now Chairman of the South Asian Studies and the International Studies concentrations in the College. In 1999, he received the University's Faculty Award for Excellence in Graduate Teaching.

The Rudolphs collaborated with Mohan Singh Kanota, the nephew and heir of Amar Singh, on *Reversing the Gaze: Amar Singh's Diary, A Colonial Subject's Narrative of Imperial India* (Westview Press, 2002).

#### The Nora and Edward Ryerson Lectures

The Nora and Edward Ryerson Lectures were established by the Trustees of the University in December 1972. They are intended to give a member of the faculty the opportunity each year to lecture to an audience from the entire University on a significant aspect of his or her research or study. The President of the University appoints the lecturer on the recommendation of a faculty committee, which solicits individual nominations from each member of the faculty during the Winter Quarter preceding the academic year for which the appointment is made.

---

**Previous Ryerson Lecturers**

1973–74 John Hope Franklin, “The Historian and Public Policy”	1980–81 James M. Gustafson “Say Something Theological!”	1988–89 Gary S. Becker “Human Capital Revisited”	1995–96 Cass R. Sunstein “Constitutional Myth-Making: Lessons from the <i>Dred Scott</i> Case”
1974–75 Subrahmanyan Chandrasekhar “Shakespeare, Newton, and Beethoven: Patterns of Creativity”	1981–82 Saunders Mac Lane “Proof, Truth, and Confusion”	1989–90 James W. Cronin “What Does a High-Energy Physicist Really Do?”	1996–97 Eugene N. Parker “Probing Space through Measurements and Meditations on Your Porch”
1975–76 Philip B. Kurland “The Private I: Some Reflections on Privacy and the Constitution”	1982–83 George J. Stigler “Laissez faire l’état”	1990–91 Stuart M. Tave “Words, Universities, and Other Odd Mixtures”	1997–98 Bernard Roizman “Herpes Simplex Viruses: Our Lifetime Unwanted Guests and a String of Pearls”
1976–77 Robert E. Streeter “WASPs and Other Endangered Species”	1983–84 Karl J. Weintraub “. . . with a long sense of time . . .”	1991–92 Marshall Sahlins “Goodbye to Tristes Tropes: Ethnography in the Context of Modern World History”	1998–99 David Bevington “Shakespeare Faces Retirement”
1977–78 Albert Dorfman, M.D. “Answers without Questions and Questions without Answers”	1984–85 James S. Coleman “Schools, Families, and Children”	1992–93 Philip Gossett “Knowing the Score: Italian Opera as Work and Play”	1999–2000 Leo P. Kadanoff “Making a Splash, Breaking a Neck: The Development of Complexity in Physical Systems”
1978–79 Stephen Toulmin “The Inwardness of Mental Life”	1985–86 John A. Simpson “To Explore and Discover”	1993–94 William Julius Wilson “Crisis and Challenge: Race and the New Urban Poverty”	2000–01 Martha K. McClintock “Scents and Sensibility: Pheromones, Social Dynamics, and the Control of Fertility and Disease”
1979–80 Erica Reiner “Thirty Pieces of Silver”	1986–87 Wayne C. Booth “The Idea of a <i>University</i> as Seen by a Rhetorician”	1994–95 Wendy Doniger “Myths and Methods in the Dark”	
	1987–88 Janet D. Rowley “Finding Order in Chaos”		

# Report of the Student Ombudsperson for Autumn Quarter 2001 and Winter and Spring Quarters 2002

By Noor-Aiman Khan

## Introduction

The Office of the Student Ombudsperson exists to resolve problems that students in the University have been unable, for any reason, to resolve through normal channels. The office, which was instituted in 1968 and was the first of its kind in the nation, is part of the University administration and is budgeted through the office of the President. The President appoints the Ombudsperson from among registered student applicants who are recommended to him by a committee comprised of students, faculty, and administrators.

The major concern of this office is to make sure that problems are solved in a respectful and fair way for all the parties involved. In general, we attempt to understand the opinions of all of the parties involved, and try to find solutions that are acceptable to all. On some occasions, however, we find ourselves in the position of an advocate for students when there is a serious concern about the fairness or appropriateness of University procedures or decisions. To these ends, we maintain regular contact with various officials in the University as well as holding open office hours for students to bring their concerns to us. A very important aspect of our work is to keep the confidentiality of any student who requests it. With very few exceptions, records of the office are privy to no one except the staff of the office. Among reasons to break confidentiality would be reasonable belief that the law had been broken or if, in the judgment of the Ombudsperson, there were a clear danger of imminent harm that could be avoided by a limited break of confidentiality. Fortunately, there has not been such a case in some years.

As noted in previous Reports of the Office of the Ombudsperson, the vast majority of problems brought to the office are the results of miscommunication. This report will serve to highlight some common causes of confusion among students and other members of the University community, in the hope that identifying them will lead to solutions or—better yet—prevention. Some of these causes will be illustrated with examples from cases that have been filed with the office since September of 2001, edited to protect the confidentiality of those who have requested it. Following the discussion of these problems will be a brief set of suggestions from this office that may be helpful in minimizing similar problems in the future. The following sections are headed Academic Issues, Housing, Finances, and Quality of Life. There is also a small section on areas in the University that have experienced considerable change in the recent past, and the kinds of issues that these changes have raised.

## Academic Issues

Three of the most common causes of conflicts in academic life in our office this year were the following: (1) grades, (2) misunderstandings between faculty and students concerning course expectations, and (3) issues of academic honesty. The latter two are particularly important in that they are not only problems for individual students but concern the confidence the student population has about fairness and their empowerment in pursuing their own intel-

lectual goals, and thus will be discussed more completely below.

### 1. Grades

Grades are one of the most common reasons that students come to our office. Some are unhappy with their grades, some just don't understand why they got the grade they did, some are concerned when there is a delay in issuing grades. Sometimes students just don't know where to go with these problems, while others have tried to resolve the problems but have been unsatisfied with the results. The office is making available a short newsletter/pamphlet in order to address many of the queries we receive concerning grades, which we hope will help students understand the system and communicate with their instructors about it directly and more effectively. Based on the experience of the office, we will make two suggestions that could eliminate most of the individual grade conflicts the office handles.

*Suggestion 1: Students must take responsibility for reading all communication concerning a course from its instructor, including emails.* Far too many students have come to our office with the complaint that they "did not know" something that the instructor had said until too late. While it would help alleviate this problem to have all major communication with the students be given in writing, in practicality it is often not feasible and further, it is not unreasonable for the instructor to expect students to pay attention to announcements in class or on email.

*Suggestion 2: Professors should recognize the fact that students have a right to expect that information that will affect their grades will be imparted in a timely and reliable manner and that instructors will answer questions concerning those grades.* One of the most difficult and surprisingly common problems that this office has faced in grade disputes is when the instructor refuses to explain a grade to the student. Some instructors claim to have explained the reasons for the grade on the returned final or otherwise, but often these comments were not clear or convincing to the student, who felt s/he has a right to understand better the comments or critique. This is an important part of the learning process, and often it is all the student wants. Instructors do themselves and their students no favors by dismissing all post-course questions as "whining" or irrelevant; besides creating unnecessary ill will, they often miss an opportunity to teach, or learn.

### 2. Course Expectations

The Report of the Student Ombudsperson from AY 2000-2001 clearly referred to the importance of the syllabus as a mode of communication between students and professors. Unfortunately, many of the same concerns addressed in last year's report have brought students to our office this year, indicating that the problem is still one that needs proper attention. Specifically, there were still a significant number of students complaining that the requirements and expectations for a course were not *clearly stated in writing in the syllabus*. The result was that students felt that they were

not evaluated on what they thought they had been responsible for learning, or felt they had been misled as to the purpose of the class or the time commitment it required. A second common complaint from students was that the *means of evaluation were changed after the drop/add period for registration*, or late enough in that period that the students had already put considerable investment into that course as well as having foregone opportunities to take other courses. Again, these complaints were not specifically about the grades individuals got per se, but rather about student perceptions of fairness and their ability to set and meet their academic goals in conjunction with their instructors, rather than in opposition to them.

A student who came to our office demonstrated an excellent example of both these problems. S/he had taken an elective course that required a significant amount of work. S/he did well on the many homework assignments and the midterm, which covered two topics in depth. S/he had been shocked to find the final consist of a third, completely different, topic that had only been covered for the last two weeks of the class. The fact that this final counted for 45% of the course grade gave the student a sense of confusion and even victimization; s/he felt "tricked" or "trapped" after having done very well for the first eight weeks of the quarter.

The problem, from the perspective of this office, was not one of the instructor's method or course content, but simply one of communication. Had the student known that the information covered in the homeworks and midterm would not be on the final, s/he would have had a number of choices in order to feel that her/his grade reflected her/his mastery of the course material. S/he could have dropped the class or concentrated her/his energies in a different way. S/he could even have discussed concerns about the weighting of the grades with the instructor before taking the final, because afterwards s/he was perceived as complaining specifically about the grade s/he was given, and not the problems with evaluating it. This was a specific case, but the problems involved in it are endemic.

The Office of the Ombudsperson strongly encourages the Deans and Departmental Chairpersons to communicate to the faculty the value of giving students clear and unambiguous syllabi that outline how grades will be determined as early as possible in the quarter. It would be helpful to further stress that changes in the syllabus should not be taken lightly, and be subject to student input, particularly if made after the Registrar's drop/add period. Finally, the office would like to recommend providing a written syllabus and written confirmation of any changes to all registered students, in addition to e-mail or web-based communication.

### 3. Academic Honesty

Three cases concerning academic honesty have come to the office in the 2001-02 academic year. It is not the purview of this office to make determinations about academic content. The only concern of this office in these cases was procedural, in that some students were penalized for academic dishonesty without ever having gotten a

chance to speak with the instructor about the charges. In two separate incidents, the students felt they should have had a chance to speak with the instructor directly, before seeing the Dean of Students or a disciplinary committee. This office concurs, believing that while the policy and sanctions concerning academic dishonesty are and should be very strict, the first step in any academic conflict should be a frank discussion between student and instructor, or at least the attempt to hold one. This does not in any way mean that further action should be dependent on such a meeting. This office merely suggests that the person responsible for the grade (presumably the accuser of the student) should be the one who informs the student of the charges against him/her and the action being taken regarding it.

## Housing

Almost one-third of the complaints brought to the office involved student living arrangements. Several of the queries stemmed from difficulties with non-University housing, which were beyond the jurisdiction of the office and therefore impossible to adjudicate. However, the office has regularly referred students to the South East Chicago Commission and the Metropolitan Tenants Association, as well as advocating the use of the Chicago Tenants Handbook. Furthermore, we are planning on creating a list of comments about landlords and management companies to be used as a resource for new students, which we hope will encourage local landlords to provide safe and dependable options to students in the Hyde Park area. The involvement of Student Government or some other University body might help in this effort, simply because the majority of tenants in the area are affiliated with the University in some way.

Among those housing complaints that were within the jurisdiction of this office were those between roommates or sublettors who were both associated with the University. In these cases, there were a number of options for resolution. Those residing in University-owned housing were referred to the Office of Undergraduate Housing, the Neighborhood Student Apartments Office, or to the Dean of Students in the Division or the College, as appropriate. However, the most difficult problems were those between students who were subletting from one another in non-University owned properties, and these were occasionally complicated due to threats of legal action by one or both parties. We found that most of these conflicts were rooted in differing interpretations of oral agreements or written contracts that were vague or unenforceable. In the interest of avoiding such problems in the future, this office has also created a pamphlet that addresses common housing problems and also includes a template of a written contract for subletting an apartment or room. It is our hope that this will become a standard contract to be used between students at the University, so that expectations across the community will be somewhat similar even when this actual contract is not used. Furthermore, the sample contract asks signatories to request mediation through this office or elsewhere as a solution to conflicts.

## Financial Aid

The financial woes of students are hardly news to any university community, and particularly one located in an area where the cost of living is high. However, the recent economic downturn coupled with the increase in student population (and a corresponding increase in pressure on scarce resources) has pushed more students closer to the line between “getting by” and “dropping out.” At least five College students receiving aid have complained to our office about not understanding their aid packages and feeling ignored or discounted by the Financial Aid Office. In particular, they have expressed frustration at the fact that they speak to a different person every time they go to the office and therefore have to explain their entire situation every time. This problem could be solved by setting up a system of case management so that students who had concerns had one point of contact in the office who knew them and their file, at least within the context of a particular problem or complaint if not for the full year. Unfortunately, the level of staffing currently available in the office precludes this option.

Furthermore, there is a great deal of confusion about the role of divorced or estranged parents of College students in providing financial information and support. While students are asked to give information from both parents, in fact not all do so; and the impression among students is of a lack of consistency in determining parental contributions to students’ education. Whether or not these impressions are accurate, they are common. Another two students brought the complaint that their aid packages were cut significantly although their financial situations had not changed; both were encouraged to ask for more information and to petition for an increase in aid. This was difficult because many students facing problems with the Office of Financial Aid view it as an adversary rather than a resource, a situation that is unfortunate given the large percentage of College students who do get financial aid from the College. These concerns have been brought to the attention of the Director of the Financial Aid Office and the appropriate College Deans.

## Quality of Life

### 1. Insurance and Hospital Billing

There was actually a decrease from last year in the number of problems reported to us concerning the Student Accident and Insurance Plan, from 5 to 1, and in complaints about University Hospitals Billing, from 2 to 1. This is a heartening trend, although it remains to be seen whether the changes in the insurance plan that will go into effect in the fall of 2002 will impact this. The office did hear very positive feedback from students, particularly graduates, about the option of dental coverage in the current plan. There was also a positive consensus on the quality of the coverage offered dependants as well as its cost.

### 2. Child Care

Older graduate students who contacted the office for advice on child care or schools were disappointed with the resources available to them. Among the complaints were:

the lack of affordable or subsidized daycare for children of students; the fact that University-owned housing within the Ray School district was limited; that the University Laboratory Schools did not offer a discount to students; and that there was no “family friendly” place on campus to bring children. Noting that the majority of University of Chicago students are graduates, and many do have families, the comparison with other universities was made unfavorably. Although these students acknowledged being pleased with the family coverage of the Student Insurance Plan and with the parks and schools in the area, the general consensus was that the only University-sponsored resource beyond insurance and housing that acknowledged student families was a referral service for baby-sitters. This is an on-going and long-term concern for the community, which has been previously examined by the Office of the Provost. In the future, this office or the Office of Dean of Students might address these concerns further in conjunction with graduate student families.

### Ambiguous States “between the Cracks”

This section is intended to identify three areas in which our office has identified a potential future problem if some thought is not given to clarifying the status of the individuals and organizations involved. Each is quite different, but cases concerning all three became complicated for the office because these areas are new or changing and their role is not yet fully defined. This section is not intended to promote immediate change, but rather to bring difficulties that we have noticed to the University’s attention.

#### 1. Post-Doctoral, Continuing, and Other Non-Traditional Scholars

There is a “gray area” in which non-traditional scholars, particularly post-doctoral researchers, at the University find themselves. Three different individuals in this category came to our office seeking guidance on student activities, insurance, and employment issues that would have been relatively straight-forward had these individuals been regular registered students. As they were not, even our office’s jurisdiction over their problems was unclear, as were their avenues for communication and redress. For post-doctoral scholars, in particular, the lines between their roles as directors of labs, instructors, assistants, and researchers on one hand, and neither faculty nor student on the other, led to serious concerns over their rights and duties *vis-à-vis* the University or their particular Departments. While the ambiguity of their status has not led to any major problems for this office so far, the potential for this exists and grows yearly. The Office of the Provost would do well to clarify the status of those now in this category of non-traditional scholars and to specify the attendant rights and obligations contracted between them and the institution, in order to avoid problems in the future.

#### 2. Club Sports

One particularly difficult case the office faced this year involved a particular club sport. Club sports in general have expanded

to play a prominent role in the lives of many University community members, and the program must be applauded for the strides that it has taken in expanding their membership and their offerings. However, since students generally run club sports under volunteered faculty supervision, the leadership within any club sport organization is much less defined than that of the student-run RSOs or the staff-run sports teams. The administration of the club sports program has been working to define this role, using the RSO system as a model but also taking guidance from the Athletic Department faculty and staff. The Office of the Dean of Students as well as the Director of the Reynolds Club and Student Activities should also be aware of this program as an area for potential confusion as to both the leadership and supervision of the clubs and the duties associated with it.

#### 3. New Professional Programs

Of all the cases that came to the office this year, one of the most resource-consuming of them concerned the professional graduate degree program of a department. During our work on this case, it became apparent from both the students and faculty involved that the students of this program came to the University expecting and needing different instruction and skills than usually found in traditional graduate programs that primarily train people who intend to remain in academia. The students in our case felt that the department was teaching academic material that did not provide the skills needed for the professional world. This office would like to call attention to the potential problem of a clash between the demands of the more theoretical and academic-focused curricula of the University and the needs and expectations of students who are seeking a more skills-oriented professional degree.

## Conclusion

The Office of the Ombudsperson would like to stress that because this office exists to resolve conflicts and problems, the Report must necessarily reflect these and offer suggestions for solutions. On the other hand, it has been our experience that the University as a large and complex system runs much better than one might expect, and that most problems can and do get addressed in a timely and fair way. In particular, we would like to express our admiration and appreciation to the many staff and administrators who work tirelessly “behind the scenes” to ensure the smooth running of the University in many areas that are often taken for granted. The office would also like to note that the majority of both students and faculty have demonstrated, despite their many differences, a sense of fairness and dedication to the larger community that indicated more about the strength of the institution than their conflicts have indicated about its weaknesses.

Another important note on the usefulness of this office is in the few exceptional cases that reached us this year, which could not easily be classified under any of the above headings. In one case, a student had a conflict with a faculty member in a non-academic context, and had no idea where to seek resolution. Through the efforts of

this office, representatives of a few different University units met together to satisfactorily resolve the issue, something that neither the student nor any one of the interested parties could have easily coordinated. In a second case, a conflict between students and a faculty member actually escalated due to the fact that the normal channels of redress all eventually led back to the party with whom the students were in conflict. Only the confidential intervention of this office gave the students the opportunity to express their concerns outside of the “loop of authority,” with which they were uncomfortable, and not fear reprisal or discovery. While these situations were exceptional in their content, they were not exceptional in that unusual and difficult problems do and must arise in any complex human system. The fact that there was a place to go to report them, however, indicates recognition *within the system* of the fact that such cases occur, and a commitment to address them. This in itself serves a useful and constructive purpose to the University, and is perhaps the most important—if least utilized—advantage of establishing our office.

An addendum to this report, which will include cases from late spring and summer 2002 and also statistics from the case load, will appear in the *University Record* in Autumn Quarter 2002.

*Noor-Aiman Khan is the Student Ombudsperson for the 2001-02 academic year.*



# The 466th Convocation

## Address: "A University of Chicago Education and the Pursuit of Truth and Beauty in Mathematics"

By Robert A. Fefferman

August 4, 2001

First and foremost, let me express my heartfelt congratulations to the students graduating here today. You have successfully completed the demanding course of study at one of the world's truly great universities. Our University is tremendously proud to educate a new generation of scholars to take up positions of leadership in a great variety of fundamentally important areas of society. You are those scholars, and we thank you for your hard work and dedication to the life of the mind that we so cherish at the University of Chicago.

As a mathematics professor at the University, it is a pleasure to have this opportunity to share with you some thoughts on the nature of my subject. Unfortunately, it is the case that the average person views this subject as dreary, dull, and technical, enjoyed by a few strange people, and having no real connection to society as a whole. This point of view is even shared by a considerable number of extremely accomplished and otherwise well-educated people. This is due to a number of factors: First, mathematics is indeed somewhat technical, and in order to understand much of it, one must in effect learn an entirely new language. This makes it more difficult to communicate to the non-expert than many other fields. Second, and probably even more important, the quality of pre-collegiate mathematics education in this country is, on average, very, very poor. Early on, children are often taught the subject by teachers who have no specialized training even in the most basic arithmetic, and who have a definite aversion to the material they are supposed to teach. These teachers then efficiently pass on their dislike of the subject to the students.

Furthermore, the study of mathematics is cumulative, so that when one teacher is ineffective and the student has no understanding of foundational material, this may well ruin his or her mathematical education for many years to come, even if there are excellent teachers in those years. Lastly, I think mathematicians are to some extent to blame for the bad reputation of their subject. Some time ago, a famous mathematician who had just been awarded a very prestigious prize was interviewed on television and asked whether it would be possible for him to explain, roughly and in a few sentences, what his work was all about. He immediately blurted out: "No, it was not possible," and the interview was over. It is important for the future of mathematical research that the average person, especially the average educated person who is in a position of leadership and influence, understand more fully the true nature of mathematics, its beauty and absolutely fundamental importance.

Of course with this audience, at a University where intellectual breadth and multidisciplinary research are particularly valued, pointing out the need to appreciate the nature of mathematics is quite obviously preaching to the choir. However, please allow me to relate a few observations and anecdotes that illustrate the true nature of mathematics, because I hope that they will very much capture, at the same time, the spirit and set of guiding principles of this University.

First of all, the pursuit of truth in math-

ematics is exact and uncompromising.  $1 + 1 = 2$  and it cannot  $= 3$ . There is a certain precision in the subject that means that everyone knows when you are right and when you are wrong, and there is usually no middle ground. More often than not, the important problems are very simple to state and have been worked on by a number of outstanding mathematicians over the years without success, and it takes a certain courage to attack these problems knowing this. Similarly, I would think everyone would agree that our University pursues excellence in an uncompromising manner. While others water down courses to cater to their student bodies, our University offers extremely rigorous courses to students who are not satisfied with anything less. While many other universities have admitted students according to a varying recipe involving many criteria of questionable relevance, ours has never taken anything into account except what really ought to count—the applicant's scholarship and intellectual potential. And, in a sense, it takes a certain amount of courage to go to a school like this one, where the standards are so high and where the culture is so absolutely committed to the life of the mind.

Another striking feature of excellent mathematics is the presence of beauty and especially beauty that is somehow connected with a large element of surprise. In order to explain the meaning of this, let me mention a remarkable University of Chicago story that illustrates beauty and surprise in mathematics as well as any that I know. As everyone is aware, during World War II a number of extremely distinguished scientists emigrated from Europe to the United States, and many of these came to the University of Chicago. Among them was Antoni Zygmund, one of the greatest mathematicians of his time.

Zygmund was a specialist in a branch of mathematics known as Fourier Analysis, in which complicated mathematical objects are broken down as a superposition of simple ones. Its methods involve generalizations of calculus—full of integrals, derivatives, and their more sophisticated extensions. Zygmund, who arrived in the United States in 1940, came to the University of Chicago in 1947. He proceeded to establish the most famous school of mathematical analysis in the United States here in the years that followed. The Chicago School of Analysis, as it was called, featured a remarkable number of brilliant graduate students who were students of Zygmund, or in some cases, students of his students. One of these was a man by the name of Paul Cohen.

Mr. Cohen was a first-rate analyst who, through a friend, became interested in a very famous problem from an entirely different area of mathematics, namely mathematical logic. This was the so-called Continuum Hypothesis. The Continuum Hypothesis related to the simple idea of comparing the size of two sets of objects. If both sets are finite one simply counts how many objects are in each set, and the one with the higher number is the larger set. But in the case where both sets are infinite, it was only in the late nineteenth century that mathematicians discovered a precise way of comparing the size of the two sets. According to this beautiful theory, two

infinite sets can actually have different sizes—in other words, there are different orders of infinity. For example, it is a very simple and fundamental result that there are not as many counting numbers, 1, 2, 3, 4, etc., as there are points on a line. The Continuum Hypothesis is the hypothesis that there are no sets with a size between these two sets. What Paul Cohen proved to settle this problem truly shocked the entire world of mathematics: He proved that no such set intermediate in size could be found, and at the same time he showed that it was impossible to prove that no such set exists. In other words, Cohen proved rigorously that the Continuum Hypothesis simply could not be settled one way or the other. It is a tremendous understatement to call this a surprise. In a field which was always regarded as clear-cut, where every question had a definite answer, this was an intellectual lightning bolt, one that has taken its place in the history of human thought.

That ideas or truths can spring out at you in the most remarkable way as they did in Paul Cohen's work is one of the most appealing characteristics of mathematics, and at the same time of a great education. But there is another somewhat different type of surprise that is just as important. This occurs when a piece of mathematics that is studied for its own sake all of a sudden finds application in a completely unexpected way. Let me tell one more anecdote, also involving Antoni Zygmund, which illustrates this. Although Zygmund was quite productive into his mid-seventies, and this was often a source of inspiration to his younger colleagues, there came a time in the final part of his life when he slowed down in a way that suggested that something was wrong. I remember well the concern that many of us felt over this.

No one helped him more during this difficult period than Izaak and Pera Wirszup, two distinguished members of the University community. On one occasion, Pera took him to a doctor who was to perform brain scans in order to see what was responsible for his deteriorating condition. At this test, which revealed his Alzheimer's disease, the attending physician at the University of Chicago Hospitals who knew that Zygmund was a University mathematics professor, asked Pera for further details as to what kind of mathematical contributions he had made. Pera, whose specialty is far from mathematics, could only answer that she was unsure of the details, but she knew that he was considered the father of modern Fourier Analysis.

Immediately, the doctor recognized the field and its significance, and called a number of his colleagues over. As they gathered around Zygmund, the doctor said, "Without this man's field of mathematics, none of these instruments would be here today." Certainly the early pioneers of Fourier Analysis never dreamed of the idea of the CAT scan, but the methods of Fourier simply were found to be the relevant ones for this application.

There are many other examples of this in Zygmund's own work. For example, there is an idea which is a product of the so-called Calderon-Zygmund theory, the idea of wavelets, that is currently used to greatly improve upon previous methods of image processing. Thanks to wavelets, CAT scans

and MRIs may take considerably less time and the images will be a great deal clearer, allowing for much more accurate diagnosis of various serious disorders. And wavelets have many other uses, from medicine to the way the FBI currently processes fingerprints. And this broad applicability is a feature that cannot be overstated when it comes to analyzing the importance of mathematics to society.

Similarly, there is also this type of unforeseen application present in the education that our students receive here. We are certainly not a technical school, and yet by a deep investigation of basic human knowledge, whether it takes place in the College, or in the divisions, our students are able to find the most remarkable applications of their education in a wide assortment of fields. Some of them will be engaged in basic research which will directly make use of their Ph.D. work. Others will pursue entirely different areas seemingly unrelated to the exact subject content of their courses. But there will be many exciting applications here as well because most importantly, our students have learned to think effectively, and that is something that will serve them well as long as they live in whatever they choose to do.

I would like to conclude the way that I began—by congratulating our graduates, and sharing with them the enthusiasm they have felt over the beauty and wonder that was so much a part of their University of Chicago experience. It is most enjoyable to try to imagine what marvelous use the graduates here will make tomorrow of their education we celebrate today. May all of you enjoy the wonderful surprises and accomplishments that await you as you pursue your chosen field, and may you use these to enrich the lives of us all!

*Robert A. Fefferman is Louis Block Professor in the Department of Mathematics and the College.*

### Summary

The 466th convocation was held on Friday, August 4, 2001, in Rockefeller Memorial Chapel. Don Michael Randel, President of the University, presided.

A total of 420 degrees were awarded: 33 Bachelor of Arts in the College, 29 Master of Arts in the Division of the Humanities, 1 Master of Fine Arts in the Division of the Humanities, 37 Master of Science in the Division of the Physical Sciences, 96 Master of Arts in the Division of the Social Sciences, 4 Master of Arts in Teaching in the Division of the Social Sciences, 1 Master of Science in Teaching in the Division of the Social Sciences, 95 Master of Business Administration in the Graduate School of Business, 1 International Master of Business Administration in the Graduate School of Business, 3 Master of Arts in the Divinity School, 1 Master of Divinity in the Divinity School, 14 Master of Liberal Arts in the William B. and Catherine V. Graham School of General Studies, 1 Master of Arts the School of Social Service Administration, 2 Master of Public Policy in the Irving B. Harris Graduate School of Public Policy Studies, 13 Doctor of Philosophy in the Division of the Biological Sciences and the Pritzker School of Medicine, 20 Doctor of

---

Philosophy in the Division of the Humanities, 14 Doctor of Philosophy in the Division of the Physical Sciences, 37 Doctor of Philosophy in the Division of the Social Sciences, 3 Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of Business, 6 Doctor of Philosophy in the Divinity School, 2 Doctor of Law in the Law School, 1 Doctor of Jurisprudence in the Law School, 2 Doctor of Philosophy in the Irving B. Harris Graduate School of Public Policy Studies, and 4 Doctor of Philosophy in the School of Social Service Administration.

Robert A. Fefferman, Louis Block Professor in the Department of Mathematics and the College, delivered the convocation address, "A University of Chicago Education and the Pursuit of Truth and Beauty in Mathematics."

# The 467th Convocation

## Address: "Altruism Examined"

By Jeanne C. Marsh

December 7, 2001

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the 467th convocation of the University of Chicago. It is a privilege to offer the graduates a few final words—one last lecture—before you depart the University. In doing so, I take to heart the view of former Governor Mario Cuomo. He said that convocation speakers should remember they are like the body at an old-fashioned wake. They need you to have the party, but nobody really expects you to say very much.

First, a few words about you, the graduates of the 467th convocation. You are like all previous graduates of this institution in that each of you has elected to experience the rigorous and demanding form of education for which the institution is well-known. You take seriously the life of the mind. You have made a commitment to rigorous thought and independent judgment. At the same time you are different—as a cohort—from previous graduates of this institution: you are the first to convene here since the September 11 attacks on the United States. By virtue of this experience, you have some shared insights that your predecessors did not.

Much has been said about the transient and lasting effects of September 11 on individuals and nations. We have read countless articles, obituaries, and op-ed pieces. We have seen numerous video clips. The images are indelible; they have soaked permanently into our collective experience. Let me ask you to recall for a moment the images you hold in your mind's eye since September 11. I am sure in your collection, as in mine, you find the following:

You see firefighters and police officers, each carrying eighty to one-hundred pounds of lifesaving equipment, surging up darkened stairwells as uncertain workers make their way down. Many of these firefighters and police officers will never be seen again.

You see coworkers struggling to carry a wheelchair-bound colleague down smoky flights of stairs, as the people around them make way and offer words of encouragement.

You see blood donors across the country lining up around city blocks, insisting on being given the chance to "do something," to give something of themselves to the victims.

You see schoolchildren organizing penny drives and bake sales; musicians and entertainers giving impromptu concerts; journalists organizing relief funds—all collecting hundreds of millions of dollars to aid victims and their families.

You see harried bureaucrats in New York's vast social service system working with unexpected calm and compassion to distribute information and relief to victims and their families.

As we flip through these images, we have to be startled by the intensity and the enormity of the desire to help. We have to be stunned by the immediacy, the clarity, and the certainty of the altruistic response. We have to ask: What is this? Where does this come from? What do we know and what can we learn about the altruistic impulse? It is the purpose of my remarks to reflect on these questions.

As educated women and men thinking about altruism, we are apt to come rather quickly to the conclusion that genuine

altruism is impossible. Indeed, when I told my well-educated daughter the topic of today's remarks, she said, "You know, there really is no such thing as altruism." Tom Wilson captures our skepticism when he asks, "If people are put on earth to help others, what are the others here for?" We learn very early that much of what happens around us can be explained by self-interest. The market mentality has seeped deeply into our thinking. Further, these ideas receive strong support from social science theory. As social work scholar Jerome Wakefield has shown, the vast majority of social science theories explain altruistic behavior primarily in nonaltruistic terms. These theoretical explanations describe how apparently altruistic behaviors are not really altruistic at their core. In his review of these theories, Wakefield identifies many types of would-be altruists in social science theory: the "hedonistic" altruist, the "operationally conditioned" altruist, the "discharging instinctual impulse" altruist, the "rational economic calculator" altruist, and the "optimizing reproductive fitness" altruist.

These prevailing perspectives of altruism are disconcerting to all of us in the face of our response to the events of September 11. How can we explain the immediate and selfless responses to the tragedy? This dilemma is familiar to social workers and social work scholars. On the one hand, the altruistic impulse—the desire to "do good"—is fundamental to social work. It is a defining feature of the social work profession. On the other hand, social workers adhere to and, on a daily basis, use the very theoretical frameworks that dismiss the possibility of altruism. So unless they can find alternatives to the prevailing explanation of altruism, social workers are left to justify their work and social services more generally in terms of enlightened self-interest. Without alternative explanations, social workers—and, indeed, those inclined to be helpful—are vulnerable to being dismissed cynically either as "do-gooders" serving narcissistic self-interest or as "agents of social control" serving the interests of others.

In his book entitled *The Professional Altruist*, Roy Lubove describes how social workers come to understand the meaning of altruism. He describes the social work profession as one that exists to perform certain altruistic societal functions that can be accomplished more effectively by professionals than by individual citizens. In his title, Lubove captures the fundamental tension that confronts social workers. If a professional is one who receives remuneration for applying expert knowledge, and if an altruist is one who responds out of unrestrained generosity, how is it possible to have a *professional altruist*? As Lubove's book explains, human motivation is complex: it is possible to do "good works" and to be rewarded. Social psychologists have shown us that it may be a little more difficult to experience the internal rewards of altruistic acts when external rewards such as money are attached, but it is not impossible. Indeed, practicing social workers report that, given the modest size of their external rewards, it is the internal rewards that keep them going.

Increasingly, studies in social work, as

well as in evolutionary biology, developmental psychology, social psychology and sociology are documenting the source and functioning of the altruistic response. A key insight in this research is that it is possible for humans to have more than one motive at the same time and to use our powers of language and thinking to make choices to act on some motives and not on others. Thus, we recognize that one of the reasons we act with kindness and generosity is that we want to help—we care about others. We also know that we feel better when we can reduce another person's distress. This motive is the self-interested one: to feel better by reducing another person's distress. What we fail to consider is that we can have more than one set of desires at the same time. And, we can use language and thinking to regulate these desires. We want to help others and we want to feel good about doing it, all at the same time. For example, the schoolchildren feel better knowing their pennies will reduce the hardship for victims of September 11, but this knowledge is distinct from their basic desire to help, "to do something." As Wakefield notes, it is possible to understand altruism by drawing a distinction between a first-order desire for another's welfare and a second-order desire that may be self-interested. Thus, our basic puzzle about altruism results from confusing two different desires as one.

Teddy Roosevelt's view of altruism was that "the only quality worse than hardness of heart is softness of head." In these views Roosevelt was in complete agreement with Edith Abbott, founding mother of the School of Social Service Administration at the University of Chicago. Abbott brought the school into the University in 1920 in order to make "service scientific." She complained that "our public charitable institutions have been left to policies of drift, chance, and fate instead of being placed under competent management. . . . Too often benevolence is still considered a matter for the heart rather than the head." In founding the school, she brought to the study of social service, of altruistic behavior, and of altruistic institutions the same respect for ideas, for rigorous analysis, and for critical judgment that characterizes the University of Chicago as a whole. She advocated benevolence as a matter for the head as well as the heart.

Today I leave you with a similar message as you march through the chapel doors. By virtue of our shared experience on September 11, we have learned the depth of our desire to help, to respond with generosity to those around us. By virtue of your time at the University, you have learned the depth of your commitment to ideas and to free and independent thought. I hope that you leave the chapel never doubting the certainty of your altruistic impulse, confident that you are well prepared to continue your work with the combined virtues of a critical and inquiring mind and a generous and open heart.

*Jeanne C. Marsh is Professor in the School of Social Service Administration.*

### Honorary Degree

**Howard G. Krane**  
Chairman, Board of Trustees, 1992–99.

Howard G. Krane has served the University with energy, enthusiasm, and dedication. Mr. Krane began his relationship with the University as a student in the Law School, where he served as an editor of the *Law Review*. Upon graduation in 1957, he accepted a position with the Chicago law firm of Kirkland & Ellis. He has remained with Kirkland & Ellis ever since and is now one of the nation's leading experts in the law of federal income taxation. He has served as a consultant to the American Law Institute's national Income Tax Project and, reflecting his breadth of interests, he is both a Member of the American College of Tax Counsel and a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Mr. Krane's involvement with the University of Chicago is characterized by years of distinguished service. In 1971, he began teaching the Business Planning course at the Law School, a course he taught for almost two decades. In the 1980s he served as Chair of the Law School Visiting Committee and Chair of the Campaign for the Law School. In the course of that campaign, Mr. Krane played a key role in establishing the Kirkland & Ellis Professorship at the Law School.

In 1988, Mr. Krane, who was already serving as Chairman of the Board of the University of Chicago Hospitals, joined the Board of Trustees of the University of Chicago. In 1992, Mr. Krane was appointed Chairman of the Board of the University, a position he held until 1999.

During his tenure as chairman, the University's annual fund raising increased by more than 60 percent; the University's budget improved from a \$10-million annual deficit to a \$10-million annual surplus; and the University's endowment grew by more than 125 percent, from \$1.2 billion to almost \$2.8 billion. The University also initiated an unprecedented half-billion dollar campus master plan, including a new athletics center, new residence halls for College students, a new interdivisional research laboratory for the physical and biological sciences, a new integrated campus for the Graduate School of Business, and major improvements to the Midway Plaisance. The University made enormous strides in enhancing College admissions, expanding the opportunities for foreign study, investing in the library and academic computing, and strengthening faculty salaries and graduate student aid.

Even after stepping down as Chairman of the Board, Mr. Krane has continued to make profound contributions to the betterment of our University. Only last year, he played a key role in making possible the University of Chicago's new Comer Children's Hospital, which will improve the lives of thousands of desperately ill children in Chicago and from throughout the world.

Throughout his long relationship with the University of Chicago, Mr. Krane has eloquently voiced our most fundamental values, nurtured a spirit of open discourse and mutual respect and understanding between faculty and trustees and between

---

trustees and students, and promoted a long-range planning perspective that has strengthened the University for the future. His clear vision of the University's central mission never waned. He has consistently embodied the spirit of William Rainey Harper's aspiration that the University of Chicago be "one in spirit, if not one in opinion."

*The candidate was presented by Geoffrey R. Stone, the Harry Kalven, Jr., Distinguished Service Professor in the Law School and the College, and Provost of the University.*

#### **Citation**

Distinguished alumnus, lawyer, and teacher, as Chairman of the Board of Trustees you nurtured the most fundamental values of the University, fostered a spirit of open discourse and mutual respect and appreciation between faculty and trustees, and encouraged a long-range perspective that has strengthened the University for the future.

#### **Summary**

The 467th convocation was held on Friday, December 7, 2001, in the Rockefeller Memorial Chapel. Don Michael Randel, President of the University, presided.

A total of 361 degrees were awarded: 35 Bachelor of Arts in the College, 3 Bachelor of Science in the College, 29 Master of Arts in the Division of the Humanities, 22 Master of Science in the Division of the Physical Sciences, 8 Master of Science in the Division of the Biological Sciences, 54 Master of Arts in the Division of the Social Sciences, 107 Master of Business Administration in the Graduate School of Business, 3 International Master of Business Administration in the Graduate School of Business, 2 Master of Arts in the Divinity School, 1 Master of Divinity in the Divinity School, 5 Master of Liberal Arts in the William B. and Catherine V. Graham School of General Studies, 2 Master of Arts the School of Social Service Administration, 2 Master of Public Policy in the Irving B. Harris Graduate School of Public Policy Studies, 9 Doctor of Philosophy in the Division of

the Biological Sciences and the Pritzker School of Medicine, 15 Doctor of Philosophy in the Division of the Humanities, 14 Doctor of Philosophy in the Division of the Physical Sciences, 34 Doctor of Philosophy in the Division of the Social Sciences, 3 Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of Business, 8 Doctor of Philosophy in the Divinity School, 1 Doctor of Ministry in the Divinity School, and 4 Doctor of Philosophy in the School of Social Service Administration.

Howard G. Krane, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, 1992-99, received the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws.

Jeanne C. Marsh, Professor in the School of Social Service Administration, delivered the convocation address, "Altruism Examined."

---

© 2002 The University of Chicago  
ISSN 0362-4706

The University of Chicago Record  
5710 South Woodlawn Avenue  
Chicago, Illinois 60637  
773/702-8352

[www.uchicago.edu/docs/education/record](http://www.uchicago.edu/docs/education/record)