

BERKELEY DIVINITY SCHOOL

**THE PROBLEM OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD AS IT IS PROBLEMATICALLY RELATED
AMONG PLATO, ARISTOTLE, AUGUSTINE, AND THOMAS AQUINAS:
An Informal Essay**

**Theology 109: History of Philosophy II
Dr. Richard B. Kalter**

**May, 1960
Richard T. Nolan**

2007 Nolan note: Scanned from the original (produced on a very basic Smith-Corona electric typewriter - no computers then!) **for inclusion here, the original was double-spaced, had wide margins, and was prepared for Dr. Kalter's reading only. The original text's style, ambiguity, sexist language, punctuation, etc. have not been corrected. Had I the slightest notion that this informal essay would someday be public, I am sure that I would have been more careful about a number of things! In my later role as a philosophy professor, I would not have assigned a grade as generous as Dr. Kalter's!**

PREFACE

Throughout the writing of this essay, this student has become even more convinced of the complexity of the problem. It is hoped that this essay has raised pertinent issues and has offered some reliable foundations for those conclusions which the writer has tentatively reached.

The problematic comparisons of the four pillars of Western thought, although most sketchy, have served to introduce the student to ideas for more technical consideration in the future. It is the writer's hope to someday expand this essay into a scholarly presentation, but In the meantime, he has profited much from this introductory consideration of the issues discussed herein.

Comments from the reader will be most welcomed.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Problem. Man’s quest for knowledge of ultimate reality or “God” has occupied much of his intellectual history. The nature of the really real or most real was, in a sense, the first philosophical problem with which man chose to concern himself. Readily assuming that the human mind is competent to solve the world-problem, Thales and his pre-Sophist successors investigated their idea of the “obvious” ultimate reality, the world. Thus, with the search for the nature of the really real was begun man’s intellectual quest for God.

Much was unquestioningly assumed by early thinkers with regard to various methods of inquiry, but amidst a multitude of opinions emerged the question about the nature of THE method by which man might know. The arising of the basic problem *HOW DO WE KNOW* provided occasion for the beginnings of epistemological inquiry, itself vast tad dominant in the history of philosophy.

This essay primarily concerns itself with the problem of the knowledge of God, *HOW IS GOD KNOWN*, as it is problematically related among four pillars of Western thought: Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, and Aquinas.

An Interrelated Issue. An issue that is inseparable from the problem under discussion is the cosmological and ontological status of God or the ultimate. Roughly speaking, the issue may be interrogatively rephrased: where and what is ultimate reality?

Many, if not most, philosophers and theologians have entertained the idea that God is not that which man may perceive with his senses. God is usually conceived as being “wholly other,” or at least “pretty much other” than man and this world. Within this transcendent perspective, the ultimate is “located” other than in the physical cosmos, and the essence of God is conceived as being incompatible

with matter in space and time. Inasmuch as such incompatibility may be equated with not existing, as man knows existence, thinkers such as Erich Frank conclude: “Existence is a category much too inferior to be applied to the greatness of God.”¹

Some others have maintained that the really real is what one does perceive, and that the perception of anything less than the totality of a given object results only in perceiving a different object. By way of illustration of this point: water may be perceived, but the perception of H² or O is not more or less real than water, but rather a different manifestation of the infinite possibilities of the combination or fundamental elements. Such thinkers would probably maintain that

¹Erich Frank, *Philosophical Understanding and Religious Truth* (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1945), p.44.

ultimate reality is the multitude of fundamental elements present in the universe.

Thus, extremes and various intervening theories about the where and what (cosmological and ontological status) of God have emerged throughout the historical consideration of these problems.

Knowledge of God and Metaphysics. Mentioned above is reference to the interrelationship of the “where and what of God” and the problem of the knowledge of God. The cosmological-ontological problem is what is often referred to as a metaphysical issue. “The metaphysician asks: ‘What is true always and everywhere, regardless of time or place?...’”¹ In our particular metaphysical inquiry we are asking what is true always and everywhere about God, regardless of time or place, and in particular, about the “where and what” of God. The epistemological problem involves the *method* by which an understanding of the “where and what” of God may be determined.

The interrelationship of these issues are brought to the fore by Professor Cherbonnier’s words: “Is God ‘wholly other’ than man? If so, then only negatives may be applied to him.”² “A consequence of the theory (that

¹E. La B. Cherbonnier, “Is There A Biblical Metaphysic?”, *Theology Today* (Vol. XV, No. 4, Jan., 1959), p.454.

²E. La B. Cherbonnier, “The Theology of the Word of God,” *Journal of Religion* (Vol. XXXIII, No.1, Jan., 1953), p.25.

God is “wholly other”) is that every symbolic expression is necessarily ambiguous. It must simultaneously negate what it affirms. In so far as it derives from ultimate reality, the symbol is able to reflect some truth. But in so far as it is also disrupted from its ‘divine ground’, it inevitably distorts it: ‘The segment for finite reality which becomes the vehicle of a concrete assertion about God is affirmed and negated at the same time. It becomes a symbol, for symbolic expression is one whose proper meaning is negated by that to which it points. And yet it is affirmed by it’ (Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, p. 239).

“It follows that to translate symbolic expressions into literal propositions is inherently impossible. Since the words of everyday speech are the product of the ‘subject-object structure’ of the spatio-temporal world, they are inadequate to the ‘divine ground,’ and even do violence to it. Every proposition about ‘ultimate reality therefore negates itself. The only way to avoid these paradoxes is to be silent. The mystics therefore regularly insist that silence does far more justice to truth than does speech.”¹

Thus, the motif of a “wholly other” God determines the analogous and ambiguous nature of expressions

¹E. La B. Cherbonnier, “Mystical vs. Biblical Symbolism,” *Christian Scholar* (Vol. XXXIX, No.1, Mar., 1956), pp. 33 ff.

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about God, thereby determining that knowledge about God be analogous, ambiguous, and paradoxical. The nature of knowledge and expressions of knowledge take on different meanings and characteristics when viewed within a different perspective from the wholly transcendent ultimate.¹

It would be no less than fascinating to explore further these issues, but the present task has been to provide insights of the relationship between the problems of knowledge of God and certain metaphysical issues.

The Four Philosophers. Plato was born about 427 B.C, the son of noble parents. As tradition has it, he became a pupil of Socrates at the age of 20, remaining with the great philosopher until Socrates’ death about eight years later. It is said that he then traveled in Egypt, Asia Minor, Italy, among the Pythagoreans, and to have lived at the royal court in Syracuse from where he was sold into slavery. Whether or not these stories are true is riot certain, but many scholars think them improbable. He founded the famed *Academy*, where he carried on his teaching and pursuit of knowledge until his death at the age of 80. The writers of a contemporary work on the history of philosophy say of him:

¹For a discussion of knowledge of God within a different perspective see E. La B. Cherbonnier, “Theology of the Word of God,” *Journal of Religion* (Vol. XXXIII, No. 1, January 1953), pp.16-30.

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Plato was a poet and a mystic, as well as a philosopher and dialectician; he combined, in a rare degree, great powers of logical analysis and abstract thought with flights of poetic imagination and deep mystical feeling. His character was noble; he was an aristocrat by birth and by temperament, an uncompromising idealist~ hostile to everything base and vulgar.¹

The period in which Plato wrote is characterized by a concern with all problems of philosophy. The metaphysical problems concerning reality and the humanistic problems relating to man’s knowledge, conduct and place in the world provide the foundation for this systematic period.

Aristotle was born about 384 B.C., the son of a court physician. At the age of 17, he entered Plato’s Academy, where for twenty years he remained as student and teacher. After the death of Plato, Aristotle made a few journeys, opened a school of rhetoric, and directed the education of young Alexander (the Great). Thereafter the pupil of Plato established the Lyceum, where he continued to teach by means of lectures and the dialogue. He died at the age of 62, after being compelled to flee from Athens for political reasons. The scholars whose words were cited above about Plato say of Aristotle:

¹F. Thilly and L. Wood, *A History of Philosophy* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1951), p. 74.

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Aristotle was a man of noble character, realizing in his personality the Greek ideal of measure and harmony taught in his system of ethics. His love of truth was strong, his judgment sober, impartial and acute; he was a master of dialectic, a lover of detail, a great reader, a close observer, and a specialist.¹

The period during which Aristotle wrote is, like that of Plato, characterized by a concern with all problems of philosophy. Both great philosophers worked out comprehensive systems of thought, and interpreted the universe in terms of mind, or reason.

Saint Augustine was born in Tagaste, North Africa, in 353 A.D., some five centuries later than Aristotle. He was a teacher of rhetoric, and a student of philosophy and theology. The latter enterprise carried him through Manichaeism and skepticism, and, finally, to Christianity. After his conversion at the age of 34 he was a monk and was ordained to the priesthood. In 396 he became bishop of Hippo and held that position until his death in 430. Professors Thilly and Wood say of him:

St. Augustine was the greatest constructive thinker and the most influential teacher of the early Christian Church. In his system the most important theological and philosophical problems of his age are discussed, and a Christian world-view is developed which represents the culmination of patristic thought and becomes the guide of Christian philosophy for centuries to come.²

¹F. Thilly and F. Wood, *op.cit.*, p. 96.

²*Ibid.*, p. 177.

Under the influence of Greek philosophy, and particularly that of Plato, Augustine carried on his work. During his age one encounters minds who have in their thoughtful developments personified the Greek notion of the divine reason, and from that perspective systematized their philosophies.

Saint Thomas Aquinas was born about 1226 A.D. the son of a Count. At an early age he joined the order of the Dominicans and continued his studies shortly thereafter under Albert the Great. During his teaching career Aquinas devoted himself to the construction of a great system of Catholic thought. He died in 1274.

Professors Thilly and Wood say of him that his "...fundamental aim is to demonstrate the rationality of the universe as a revelation of God." (p. 227)

Typical of the Scholastic period, the thought of Aquinas concerns itself with the relation between faith and reason, the relation between the will and intellect, the distinction between nature and grace, and the status of universals.

Thus we have been introduced to the Four Philosophers with whom we shall be concerned in this essay. Separated by a period of almost 1700 years, these men were concerned with problems, many of which have by no means been solved today, almost 700 years since most recent of the Four. Our attention will now turn to a discussion of our problem, first with Plato.

Plato. Characteristic of Plato's philosophy is the notion that the essential qualities common to many particulars are held together by the Ideas; that the real essence of things consists in their universal forms. According to Plato, the Ideas or forms exist prior to and apart from things, and are uninfluenced by the changes that take place in things. These Ideas have a substantial existence of their own.

That which man perceives are imperfect copies or reflections of the eternal ideas, which constitute a rational cosmos. In their own realm, the Ideas are logically arranged with the idea of the Good being the source of all the rest. Thus, the unity of the ideas includes plurality. These Ideas are actually Plato's idea of Ultimate Reality.

Matter, according to this Greek philosopher, is perishable, imperfect, and unreal. Whatever reality the perceived world may appear to have, it owes to the Ideas from which the sensible world partakes a measure of reality.

Although the relationship between the realm of Ideas and the realm of the physical/sensory world is not clearly defined by Plato, it is evident that the Ideas are somehow responsible for all the reality that things possess. The separation of the Ideas from their reflections (this

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world) is often referred to as Platonic dualism.

The method of knowing about this ultimate reality is through dialectic method. Since dialectical knowledge rests on categorical first principles, not on and is able to dispense entirely with sensible figures, it is most adaptable to the contemplation of the Ideas.

Aristotle. Characteristic of Aristotle's philosophy is the notion that the essential qualities common to the many particulars are in and co-existent with the concrete individual. The essence of a particular thing is constituted by its form, which is the most important element in a thing. Matter is, however, co-existent with form. Thus, according to Aristotle, the forms co-exist with and in things, and although never changing (for it is matter that changes), they (the forms) are replaced by other forms as the matter becomes different.

Substances (*i.e.*, the concrete individuals), says Plato's pupil, arrange themselves in ascending scale, the limits of which are indeterminate matter at the bottom and pure form (God) at the top. The whole realm of substances are between these two extremes.

Knowledge about God in Aristotelian thought is centered about rational method. Like his teacher, Aristotle relies upon the highest part of man, the soul, the rational aspect of man closest to the Divine, to intuitively know about God.

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Both thinkers. The Aristotelian notion that forms exist independently of the matter in which they are exemplified seems to render inadequate Aristotle's own argument that Plato's Ideas do not explain the nature of things, and that the relationship between things and Ideas is inexplicable. Although Aristotle intended that a form be different from a Platonic universal, some common characteristics between Plato and Aristotle may be noticed on this point. For example, that form is more real than matter is an implied idea by Aristotle which is not unlike Plato's conception of the sole reality of the Ideas. Every Aristotelian

form is, like the Platonic Idea, eternal, but instead of being outside matter, it (Aristotle's *form*) is in and co-existent with matter.

Both Plato and Aristotle contain hierarchical tendencies, with the former claiming the Ideas to be the logically most prior and most real, and the latter asserting a scale with God (the Source, Ultimate Reality) at the top. For both philosophers, the competence of reason in the search for truth, and, in particular, for the Ultimate, is accepted; and, the recognition of matter as a factor secondary to mind in reality leads them both to their respective dualisms, Aristotle's being less extreme.

Although Aristotle has denied the transcendence of the Ideas beyond their immanence in things,

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he has asserted in subsequent thought the separateness of the forms from matter, thus formulating an ontological dualism. When viewed in relationship to the totality of Aristotle's notion of the really real (*i.e.*, the whole scale of existence), this ontological dualism does not seem to include the cosmological aspect of Plato's dualism (*i.e.*, two distinct realms: Ideas and Sensory), but does affirm an ontological dualism also implicit in Plato's metaphysics. This ontological dualism has ethical, anthropological, etc., implications not unlike those resulting from Plato's cosmological-ontological dualism.

Thus, the relationship between Aristotle's denial of the transcendence of the Ideas above their immanence in things to the Platonic world of Ideas above the world of appearances is not entirely incompatible; for, although their (cosmological) notions of the "location" of the Ideas and forms are different (*i.e.*, Plato: in a separate realm; Aristotle: in this sensory realm), the ontological dualism involved in both of their positions results in similar implications for a *Weltanschauung*. As Bertrand Russell once wrote: "Aristotle's metaphysics ... may be described as Plato diluted with common sense." (in *A History of Western Philosophy*, p. 159.)

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The cosmological-ontological dualism of Plato involves an epistemological approach centered about a contemplation of the Ideas. With the use of the rational capacity, Man may recall the Ideas through contemplation of them, for man's rational aspect of his nature is the highest order of the reflection of the Ideas, thus enabling man to "know" the Ideas (ultimate) which embrace all truth.

Aristotle also insists, as has been mentioned above, upon the rational capacity of man in attaining knowledge about God, but because of his ontological dualism lacking in a realm of Ideas *per se* to be contemplated, Aristotle offers the usage of logic in attaining knowledge of the really real.

Thus, both Plato and Aristotle assert the supremacy of the rational, but differ in their usage of the rational in ways that are consistent with their respective metaphysical positions.

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III. THE CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHERS

Augustine. An Augustinian motif is that only knowledge of God and self is knowledge worth having. Logic, metaphysics, ethics, etc. are valuable only in as much as they contribute to the worthwhile knowledge. It is man's task to view the rational bases of our faith in order to understand what we firmly believe. The means for ascertaining such understanding is insight or wisdom, which is the highest function of reason when it is directed toward the ultimate. The turning inward of reason finds both God

and the soul. To find one (God or the soul) is to find the other, for the soul is a reflection of the ultimate (the Trinity). Such knowledge is far more reliable than knowledge of external nature. In that a distinction may be made between truth and falsity, such points to the existence of a world of truth.

Augustine conceives of truth in a Platonic fashion. Truth has eternal, real, objective, and independent existence; knowledge of it is either rationally possible or made possible by God's implanting truth in us. The source of truth is God, who contains the Ideas, forms, etc., and ideas of particular things.

Hand in hand with such epistemology is the Neo-Platonic conception of the absoluteness of God and His independence from this world. For Augustine, God is an

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eternal, transcendent being, having his essence neither in time nor space. This student, upon examining Book X of the *Confessions*, concluded in a recent paper that "Book X of the *Confessions* seems to imply or actually reflect ideas that indicate a perspective not unlike Plato's own: Man is a being with two distinct aspects, the body and the soul (mind); the body may be by its very nature a hindrance to the soul's yearnings for the Divine. The Divine, though wholly 'other', is sought within one's higher self (soul). The point of departure of Augustine from Plato seems to this writer to be primarily in their respective concepts of an aspect of the nature of Ultimate Reality. For Plato the really real is the Ideas, and more especially the Idea of the Good; for Augustine the Divine is a personal God Who revealed Himself uniquely in the Christ and who guides the Church through the Spirit. It is evident in Book X that Augustine's God is, indeed, not a philosophical abstraction, but rather a personal reality."¹

If Augustine is as heavily Platonic as this student presently thinks the early church Father is, it would follow that Augustine's relationship to the thought of Aristotle would be quite similar to the relationship between Plato and Aristotle that has been referred to above. Augustine would share with

¹R. T. Nolan, "A Discussion of St. Augustine's Ideas As Reflected in Book X of the *Confessions*" (March, 1960).

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Aristotle the notion of the supremacy of the rational and the dualistic ontological characteristic of their respective metaphysics. Their usages of the rational would, however, coincide with their own metaphysical positions. The Saint would differ with Aristotle beginning with the perspectives of the 'personal' quality of the Ultimate, as Augustine and Plato differed on this point (see p. 15).

Aquinas. Saint Thomas retains the notion that genuine knowledge is conceptual knowledge. Concepts, says he, have their bases in sense perception. Knowledge of God is obtained through the rationality of the universe as a revelation of God. God invites us to believe, as an inner instinct, or by natural phenomenon. God is pure form, which is not unlike Aristotle's conception of form, at least metaphysically speaking.

At the risk of asserting a position without adequately supporting the contention, this student has come to regard the idea that as Plato is to Aristotle, Augustine is to Aquinas. What has been said of Aristotle's relation to Plato could probably be said of Aquinas' relation to Augustine. It is this student's present thesis that Aquinas represents the culmination of philosophy from ancient times through the thirteenth century, incorporating elements of Platonism, Aristotleanism and Augustinianism.

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IV. PROBLEMATIC COMPARISONS

God. The similarities in this issue between Plato and Augustine have been for the most part discussed. As was either mentioned or implied earlier in this essay, the chief distinction between the two lies not in their respective metaphysical structures, but rather in the characteristics ascribed to the Ultimate. For Plato, Ultimate Reality is the impersonal, transcendent realm of the Ideas and, in particular, the idea of the Good. For Augustine, ultimate reality is the transcendent, living, and personal God of the Bible. The relationship between God and man in their respective thoughts are that the transcendent is also somehow immanent, with this paradox left unexplained by both men.

Likewise, the metaphysical structures of Aquinas and Aristotle are strikingly familiar with the characteristics ascribed to God. For Aristotle, the really real is (like Plato) impersonal and transcendent form, the highest order of Being. For Aquinas, God is (like Augustine) a living, transcendent pure form, the highest order of Being, the God of the Bible. The relationship between the ultimate and man is the same as the above made comparison between Plato and Augustine.

Knowledge of God. For Plato, knowledge of God is obtained by the turning inward by man, the contemplation of the transcendent Ideas that are somehow linked to man's soul and rational capacity.

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For Augustine, knowledge of God is likewise obtained by the turning inward of man, etc. Aristotle and Aquinas share the notion of the rational use of logic for determining knowledge about God.

Shared by all four philosophers seems to be the ideas that wherever the ultimate may be, He is ontologically wholly other than man and the changing, perceptible world. The primary distinction seems to be between the Greek and Christian, impersonal vs. personal notions of the ultimate.

Also, shared by all four seem to be the ideas that it is the rational aspect of man that obtains knowledge about God through contemplative methods wherein the soul or mind enjoys communion or union with the Divine. The primary distinction seems to be in the personal vs. impersonal type of relationship between man and the ultimate. Thus, God Is known according to all four philosophers through rational methods bordering both on mysticism and rational objectivity.

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2007: Dr. Cherbonnier's writings are available on this website. Also of possible interest is the subsite "The Perennial Philosophy."

ADDED IN 2007 - ABOUT THE INSTRUCTOR

from a Yale alumni magazine:

THE REVEREND DR. RICHARD KALTER, professor of theology at Berkeley Divinity School from 1958 to 1971, died November 8, 2004. He was 79 years old. Born in Dayton, Ohio, he received his M.Div. from Union Theological Seminary in New York and a Th.D. from Harvard Divinity School. Following his many years at Berkeley, he was a beloved philosopher-in-residence at the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore, where he was honored in 2003 with the College's Medal of Honor.

Two Articles From The *Baltimore Sun* Newspaper:

MICA's Philosopher-in-Residence Dies At Age 79

Dr. Richard Kalter, beloved philosopher-in-residence at Maryland Institute College of Art for more than 25 years, died early afternoon on Wednesday, November 10. He was 79 years old.

In his role as philosopher-in-residence at Maryland Institute College of Art, Dr. Kalter provided an important link between the liberal arts and studio experiences for generations of MICA students. He participated in critiques in studio classes and organized informal conversations that brought students together with scientists, scholars, and thinkers in a wide array of fields, including a regular series of Sunday evening conversations at his home. He also organized and presented seminars on humanistic issues as they related to artists. In addition, he was a beloved friend for students, faculty, and staff. Richard's apartment on MICA's campus is a reflection of his influence on generations of artists, and of the importance of art in his life. Every wall, every horizontal surface holds work by students, colleagues, friends.

Richard Byron Kalter was born in Dayton, Ohio. His aunt, a painter, inspired an early love of art, and his mother encouraged his creative spirit with lessons in piano and clarinet, and visits to Dayton's cultural institutions. While at Elmhurst College, he was drawn to philosophy and theology, attending religious discussion meetings at the University of Chicago, and playing music for an Episcopal Church. His next move, to Union Theological Seminary, provided the academic rigor and theological focus he sought. While studying in New York, he worked at St. John the Divine Episcopal Church and began to visit the Museum of Modern Art. Caught up in the tide of artistic innovation of the time, he remembered the time he spent in his Aunt Louise's studio, learning about painting and began to view art through the lens of philosophy. After seminary, he completed a master's degree at Yale and then was ordained as an Episcopal priest.

Following a short stint in a parish in New Haven, Kalter pursued a doctorate at Harvard. His doctoral work contrasting Protestant and Catholic notions of conscience earned him selection as the youngest member of the American Ecumenical Council of Vatican II. "It was a different time," he said when asked about this in 2003, "People were trying to find more open ground for cooperation and weren't dominated by ideologies."

Upon his graduation from Harvard, colleagues at Yale invited him back to teach. He remained in New Haven for more than 20 years, leaving in the 1970s at the behest of a former student, who invited him to teach at an alternative education center, Koinonia, in Maryland's Greenspring Valley. He was introduced to MICA president Fred Lazarus by the assistant minister at Brown Memorial Presbyterian Church, who described him as "an Episcopal priest, a student of the existentialist movement."

A poet and painter, Dr. Kalter regularly collaborated with other artists, served as a dramaturge for playwrights, filmmakers, producers, and directors in Baltimore's theatrical community for many years. Longtime friend Mary Fredlund noted that Richard's approach to viewing the world could best be described as "gazing. He believed that the artist was a greater thing than the art." In critiques, Dr. Kalter was not concerned with paint application, composition, light, and shadow except as they affect what he called "the life of the painting." MICA alumnus and Black Cherry Puppet Theater director Michael Lamason observed that "Richard had a special gift to show artists what we don't always see in our own work." Michelle La Perriere, also a MICA alumna and co-chair of the College's foundation department, said, "In his delight in and respect for creativity, his eyes wide open, he is an essential being in life."

In 2003, Dr. Kalter was honored for his 25 years of service to the MICA community, receiving the College's Medal of Honor at Commencement and serving as the 2003 Commencement speaker. He was also recognized with a special exhibition, *Richard Kalter: A Tribute*, during the 2003 Alumni Weekend, which showcased works by MICA alumni from the classes of 1979 – 2002 whose art and life had been inspired, influenced, and informed by their interaction with Dr. Kalter. Additionally, a separate exhibition in conjunction with *Richard Kalter: A Tribute* featured work by MICA faculty members who had been inspired by Richard Kalter.

At events during the 2003 Alumni Weekend, MICA's president, Fred Lazarus, noted that, "from the time he arrived in the late seventies, Richard elevated the level of discourse among faculty and students simply through his presence. He personally created a culture at this College that links artists with creative contemporary thinkers and at the same time the greatest historical thinkers. In addition to his direct contribution to the education of thousands of students, he has been a source of spiritual inspiration, officiating at the marriages of dozens of faculty, staff, and alumni, and helping all of us through times of loss and crisis. For generations of students and for colleagues here at MICA, Richard Kalter has been a teacher, mentor, touchstone, and friend."

An informal gathering of MICA students, faculty, and staff is planned for Thursday, November 11, at 6 p.m. in the College's Main Building Court. A more formal memorial service and tribute is in the planning stages. In lieu of flowers memorial gifts should be made to the Richard B. Kalter Memorial Fund at Maryland Institute College of Art, 1300 Mt. Royal Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21217.

Richard is survived by his sister Martha Ingelfinger, of Peoria, Arizona.

Sun, The (Baltimore, MD) - November 12, 2004

Deceased Name: Richard Kalter, 79, Episcopal priest and MICA philosopher-in-residence

Richard Kalter, an Episcopal priest and philosopher-in-residence at Maryland Institute College of Art, died of an infection Wednesday at Maryland General Hospital. The Bolton Hill resident was 79.

He was born in Dayton, Ohio, and was encouraged to pursue painting and music by his mother and his aunt. While at Elmhurst College in Illinois, he paid his tuition by playing church organs and was drawn to philosophy and theology.

He received a degree from Union Theological Seminary in New York.

After seminary, he earned a master's degree at Yale University and was ordained about 45 years ago. He briefly served at a parish in New Haven, Conn., and then received his doctorate at Harvard University. His doctoral work contrasted Protestant and Catholic notions of conscience.

He taught philosophy and theology at Yale for more than 20 years before moving to Maryland and living at the alternative education center, Koinonia, in Baltimore County. He joined the MICA faculty about 25 years ago.

"As philosopher-in-residence, he provided an important link between the liberal arts and studio experiences for generations of our students," said Cheryl Knauer, the college's spokeswoman.

He offered critiques in studio classes and organized informal conversations that joined students with scientists, scholars, and thinkers in various fields. He also held a series of Sunday conversations at his home.

"He was phenomenally wise. He could open up the world for you," said Mike Molla, MICA's vice president of operations.

He also was an informal campus chaplain, counseling students and officiating at wedding ceremonies for faculty, staff and students.

"He lived between the physical and metaphysical world," said Mary Fredlund, a fellow faculty member and longtime friend. "He was sought out by all kinds of individuals, his former students, faculty members and friends. He has boxes of cards and letters and addresses. He made and continued to make connections with people."

Dr. Kalter wrote poetry and painted. He also collaborated with artists and served as a dramaturge for playwrights, filmmakers, producers and directors in Baltimore's theater community.

In 2003, Dr. Kalter was honored for his 25 years of service to MICA with a Medal of Honor, the school's highest award.

He also was the 2003 commencement speaker, and during last year's alumni weekend was recognized with a special exhibition, Richard Kalter: A Tribute. The show presented works by the art school's alumni from the classes of 1979 to 2002 "whose art and life had been inspired, influenced, and informed by their interaction with Dr. Kalter."

"From the time he arrived in the late '70s, Richard elevated the level of discourse among faculty and students simply through his presence," said the college's president, Fred Lazarus.

"He personally created a culture that links artists with creative contemporary thinkers and, at the same time, the greatest historical thinkers," he said.

No funeral is planned. A gathering of his students, faculty, and staff was held yesterday at the school. Plans for a memorial service are incomplete.

Survivors include a sister, Martha Ingelfinger of Peoria, Ariz.; and nieces and nephews.

Sun, The (Baltimore, MD)

Date: November 12, 2004

Edition: FINAL

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