IN MEMORIAM

DOUGLAS NEIL MORGAN

Douglas Neil Morgan, Professor of Philosophy, died suddenly of a heart attack on the thirty-first of May, 1969. He was, at the time of his death, very much in the middle of the activities that had occupied his professional life. He had completed the manuscript for a new book, he had sent in Spring Semester grades and, just a few minutes before, he had finished the oral examination of a young man whose dissertation he had supervised. He is survived by his father, Neil Morgan, of Clearwater, Florida; by his wife, Greta; and by two daughters, Caroline Chaput, who lives in Panama with her soldier husband, and Meredith, a student at the University of Texas.

Douglas Morgan was born November 22nd, 1918 in Detroit, Michigan; and he received his primary and secondary education in the public schools of that city. He studied briefly at Cornell University and the University of California at Berkeley; his B. A. and his Ph.D., however, were from the University of Michigan. After apprentice years, one each, at the Universities of Michigan and Illinois, he taught for eleven years, or until 1960, at Northwestern University, and for the rest of his life at the University of Texas.

Douglas Morgan was a man of attainments, good at languages, erudite in music and the arts, actor, master of the bon mot, and an hilarious parodist (Cf. e. g. "Ritual Value-Washing Among the Wienerkiesel," American Anthropologist, October, 1957, pp. 871-74). But, not content with attainments, he was a man of accomplishments, too. He wrote widely, publishing not only in such philosophical journals as Philosophical Studies, Review of Metaphysics, and the Journal of Philosophy; but also in publications as diverse as The Progressive, Judaism, American Political Science Review, and The AAUP Bulletin. His first book, Love: Plato, The Bible, and Freud (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., Prentice-Hall) appeared in 1964; and a second book, Religion Beyond Truth, is in final draft form, to be published by Trinity University Press.

His credentials as author were strong, but it was perhaps as teacher that Morgan was at his best. His lectures were wise and perceptive, but they were also good fun--fun for him and fun for his students. His puns were sly, allusive, and often outrageous; his metaphors marvelous; his aside devastating but never bitter. As a teacher, his standards were high; but if he did not suffer fools gladly, neither was he capable of injuring their dignity. Morgan was boundlessly energetic and innovative, always concerned to challenge himself and his students. A few months before his death he completed a successful series of television lessons, entitled "Understanding the Fine Arts," commuting weekly from Austin to Lincoln, Nebraska, for the purpose. He was continually proposing new courses, and taught in a number of fields, especially the history of philosophy and political philosophy. His first and constant love, however, was aesthetics. Here his courses were catholic in their coverage, ranging across vast regions of psychology, music, art history, and criticism, as well as more narrowly philosophical realms. As a teacher, Morgan was probably best known to the University of Texas community for his voluntary service as the coach of an eminently successful "College Bowl" team, and as the recipient of the Bromberg Teaching Excellence Award in 1967.
As a lecturer, Morgan was much in demand. He gave invited lectures at a great many universities, including Michigan, Chicago, Utah, California, and Illinois. He lectured in the "Distinguished Professor" series at Loyola University of Chicago; at Chatham College he was Gillespie Lecturer.

In his time, Morgan did his full share as a member of boards, delegate to conventions, journeyman on committees, drafter of resolutions, consultant to foundations, and organizer of conferences. Among many other things, he was Chairman of the Department of Philosophy at Northwestern University from 1951 through 1959, a Member of the Board of Directors of the American Philosophical Association (Western Division), and a Member of the Board of Trustees of the American Society of Aesthetics. At the time of his death, he was President of the latter Society, which he had helped to found.

Douglas Morgan's life and work were informed by a single idea which developed through the years. It is that the world is not forced upon us. We are not subject to the tyranny of facts. We understand and give form to the world through devices which are works of art. These enable us to distance ourselves from fact, and yet to penetrate to the core of things. In the space of that distance, we make our human lives together; and we should understand well that there is room enough for intelligent difference over the way in which we should live. We must recognize that those who see the world differently may nevertheless see it discerningly. We should therefore have the wisdom to recognize our own artistry and to move beyond mere truth and falsity. We must value intelligent and human imagination: imagination quickened and disciplined by the arts. Such an imagination will be the artificer of a "religion beyond truth." Douglas Morgan's aestheticism was no flirtation with the finical and the precious; on the contrary, it was the reservoir from which he drew the resources for a richly moral, richly spiritual, and richly human life.

Edmund L. Pincoffs, Chairman
Irwin C. Lieb
Alexander Mourelatos

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