**Barry Schwartz**

**1938–2021**

Barry Schwartz, age 83, died suddenly on January 6, 2021, of injuries suffered in a bicycle accident. A native of Philadelphia, Schwartz completed his undergraduate degree at Temple University and his master’s degree at the University of Maryland. He earned his PhD at the University of Pennsylvania in 1969, working with Marvin Wolfgang. His initial academic appointment was in 1970 at the University of Chicago. In 1977, Schwartz joined the faculty of the University of Georgia, where he continued until his retirement in 2000.

Schwartz’s dissertation was in the areas of crime and punishment, and he subsequently published a number of writings on prisons and correctional communities. His first professional writings as an assistant professor at the University of Chicago were Simmel-style studies of types and processes such as gift exchange, privacy, waiting, forgiveness, and dominance. This period of his writing culminated in his first book, *Queuing and Waiting: Studies in the Social Organization of Access and Delay* (University of Chicago Press, 1975). The transition from his prison studies and social psychology writings to culture and collective memory was already evident in Schwartz’s second book, *Vertical Classification: A Study in Structuralism and the Sociology of Knowledge* (University of Chicago Press, 1981).

Schwartz’s work concerned two central questions: (1) How does culture enter into and shape human perception and understanding? and (2) How do the historical conditions and situational circumstances of groups as diverse as nations, neighborhoods, and local work networks create the specific problems and needs that group culture must then address and resolve? Although there is clearly a persistent interest throughout his oeuvre in both issues, Schwartz’s earlier work focused primarily on the first of these questions, while his later work was devoted to understanding the second.

This change in emphasis in Schwartz’s work became evident by 1982 when his first paper on collective memory was published (“The Social Context of Commemoration: A Study in Collective Memory,” *Social Forces*, 61, December 1982: 374–402). This was the first of many of Schwartz’s studies examining the ways in which groups of all sizes and types are identified through the historical memories shared by group members, leading him to his original and profound research on the great American presidents, George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. By studying these great American presidents, Schwartz believed that the central cultural beliefs and ideals of a group would become manifest.

In addition to his papers in the *American Journal of Sociology*, the*American Sociological Review*, and other highly regarded journals, Schwartz’s work on U.S. presidents came to fruition in three major books: *George Washington: The Making of An American Symbol*(Free Press, 1987); *Abraham Lincoln and the Forge of National Memory* (University of Chicago Press, 2000); and *Abraham Lincoln in the Post-Heroic Era:* *History and Memory in the Late Twentieth Century*(University of Chicago Press, 2009). Schwartz also wrote on other historical personages and events, including the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the Korean War Veterans Memorial, the collective memory of WWII in Germany and the U.S., and, most recently, Jewish and Christian collective memory, as in *Memory and Identity in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity: A Conversation with Barry Schwartz*, ed. Tom Thatcher (SBL Press, 2014).

Conservative by temperament, Schwartz enjoyed gently and often humorously chiding his colleagues and university administrators for policies that he felt departed from traditional academic values. Those of us who had the pleasure of being his colleagues will fondly recall that when Schwartz wished to speak on an issue about which he felt strongly, he would usually begin his comments with a rhetorical “Why?” followed by an invariably interesting explanation of his support for or opposition to the matter under consideration. These were moments we savored.

Schwartz was a gentle, kind, and extraordinarily generous friend and colleague. Graduate students adored him, and he was consistently among the department leaders in the number of graduate students he advised and dissertation committees he chaired. One of his former students recalled how she cherished the moments when he “complimented something I had written, his highest praise would be to say it was ‘very fine.’ Classic Barry.”

As a model of what a scholar, colleague, teacher, and human being should be, Barry Schwartz has marked our own collective memory in an indelible way. Along with his wife of 58 years, Janet Faye Cline Schwartz; his two children, Hal and Sarah; and four grandchildren, Aaron, Ian, Heath, and Asa; all of us who were friends and colleagues of Schwartz will miss him greatly.

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