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Radix is a student-centred magazine providing literary and artistic space for expression on spiritual themes, produced by the McGill Office of Religious and Spiritual Life.
The theme of this issue, “Compassion in Action,” can be a simple act in a world that sometimes seems lacking in kindness or a lifelong commitment to reduce overall suffering. Virtually all religions and ethical views tackle the concept of compassion, and its importance is ubiquitous in our world.

“Compassion in Action” was also the theme of the Parliament of the World’s Religions conference this October, which bore the title: “Opening our Hearts to the World: Compassion in Action.” The Parliament of the World’s Religions seeks to bring together individuals of different faiths, in the spirit of peace and harmony, and work to tackle the issues in the world today. A conference is held, with participants coming from a vast array of religious faiths. McGill University selects a cohort of students to attend the conference and engage with the ideas presented. All cohort members must also complete and submit a deliverable, which can be an essay, poetry, images, photographs and other multimedia pieces.

The range of pieces in this issue are quite broad. One writer tackled the fascinating topic of the swastika in various cultures. Another contributor offers poetry and a written discussion of a gay wedding that took place during the Parliament of the World’s Religions.

We hope the readers of this issue leave with some more nuanced perspectives on Compassion in Action, and, perhaps, ponder how they could make compassion a greater part of their day-to-day life.

The cover art for this issue was produced by Taja De Silva. Taja is a student of Religious Studies, World Islamic and Middle East Studies, and Geography.

Written Word
Rebecca Hamilton, Melissa Hinckley, and Gabriel Yahya Haage

Visual Arts
Taja De Silva

Promotion
Ashley Thorup

Production
McGill Office of Religious and Spiritual Life
Our Hearts’ Belongings

There are places where our heart belongs,
And places where we have two hearts.
Where the beatings play separate songs,
Under the skies of ending nights.

Take your stick for your start,
Take the morning filling your will to live,
And set out on the path under the rising light,
Walking with nobody to deceive.

It is a contingent day, in a long land,
Full of mountains that disappear when you close your eyes.
The journey extends over valleys and your hand
Grasps that of all your loved ones.

The songs of the hearts takes a toll,
On those who cry deaths and lonely, silent mornings,
Where your eyes are set and close on your own light,
Where the songs feel like the pain that rings.

Overlooking your friend’s sleep,
You’re forgivable to their future,
As if that of a child’s, impossible to keep.
You’re sobbing because light sets and rises again.

Stepping in the pathways with their sheeps,
The monks are to say their prayers.
Two hearts beat in one when you stand alone in a cell,
Lodged in the fissures of inexisting cures.

So tonight she leaves the small room and goes,
To the chapel when it’s empty,
Where she speaks to the heart she knows,
And ready to take over the fight.

The next morning she’ll rise and fearless of the light
The morning will cast its blue shadows on the places
Where prayers resonate like two hearts,
Belonging in reciprocate devotion.

Chloé is an undergraduate Arts student. She explores and enjoys life through her studies and art.
Hugo is an undergraduate, queer American photographer seeking to understand the small miracles of healing from the past.
Ryan is a third year undergraduate student in Religious Studies. He is particularly interested in East and South Asian religious traditions.
"Grief is Love"

we are not always ready to part ways
still, “farewell” must come
and it comes too soon
so i hope you know
to be deeply missed is to have been
dearly loved
your love exists in actions
and mine will stay in pieces of you
i know you will grieve and
i know you will be loved
even when i’m gone
but please remember
fight for what is still here
honor memory by preserving what’s left
and i will be with you, always

Cathy is an undergraduate student in Psychology and Religious Studies, with a particular interest in Buddhism and East Asian religions.
On Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue

The developing field of Interreligious/Interfaith Studies asserts something radical: that the phenomenon of religion isn’t something that can be meaningfully understood in the singular; that the study of religion should actually be the study of religions-in-relation; that—to quote Max Müller—“those who know one, know none.” In addition to this important insight, Interreligious/Interfaith Studies asserts something even more radical: that this field of study should do more than just explain these relations, that it should train students how to help religious communities foster and nourish healthy relations with each other and with secular society at large. While the former assertion has, for the most part, been well-received, the latter is much more contentious, with many scholars arguing that this represents a type of “activism” has no place in the university classroom.

My time at the Parliament helped clarify my resolve to advocate for this pedagogical orientation, despite the formidable challenge it represents in terms of navigating the boundary between scholarship and activism. An overarching theme of the Parliament was the multitude of disasters facing the world—our growing environmental crisis, the growing inequities between the rich and the poor, racism, sexism, bigotries of all kinds, the COVID-19 pandemic, the list goes on. These are problems that humanity needs to work on urgently, earnestly, and most importantly, collectively. A second overarching theme was to highlight the important resources the world’s religions contain for addressing these disasters. While holding compassion for those who are other to us is one of these resources, this, the Parliament asserted, is not enough: we must turn compassion into action. While intercultural and interreligious dialogue initiatives can be powerful agents of change in addressing the intolerances that arise from the problems of bigotry, racism, sexism, etc., fostering healthy intercultural and interreligious dialogue is not an easy feat—stereotypes, prejudices, power imbalances, and negative emotional responses (among other factors) all represent pitfalls that must be overcome.
Interreligious/Interfaith Studies asserts that, as researchers and teachers, scholars have an important role to play in 1) devising strategies for overcoming these pitfalls through research, and 2) preparing students to meet these challenges in the real world. The Parliament helped me see that, although breaking down some of the barriers between scholarship and activism can seem scary, the alternative—maintaining the status quo in the name of safeguarding academic integrity—is even scarier. Why? Because this move isn’t a threaten academic integrity if we approach this project thoughtfully and with care.

That is why I was so happy to see Dr. Eboo Patel and Dr. Paul Knitter participating at this year’s Parliament. Both Dr. Patel and Dr. Knitter are scholars and interfaith activists, and both have led the way in articulating how we can negotiate this task thoughtfully while maintaining the academic integrity critics of this approach feel is at risk.

I would like to end by invoking some wisdom shared by Xhosa Elder and Professor Nokuzola Mndende in her remarks at the Opening Plenary: “I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am.” We can’t tackle the global problems facing us without remembering these words, without remembering that, without “we” there is no “I.” We must work together to tackle the challenges we face today, and we must accept that this will involve discomfort, the rethinking of norms, and radical shifts to the current status quo.

Elyse is a PhD student in McGill’s School of Religious Studies. Her primary area of research is in interreligious dialogue.
Swastika, Hakenkreuz: Tracing the History of a Charged Symbol

The symbol commonly referred to as the swastika has a history that spans thousands of years and many continents. Its adoption by the Nazi party during the fascist regime in Germany in the 1930s and 40s has tainted the symbol with a singular, horrifying association in the minds of many people, particularly in Europe and North America. However, in many cultures and religions, including Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism, the sign remains an important and sacred symbol of good fortune and wellbeing. Inspired by a panel discussion during the Parliament of the World Religions, which I attended virtually as part of MORSL’s cohort, I tried to trace the history of this simple sign and understand the relation between the symbol that many cultures have held a positive association with, and the emblem of the Nazi party which signifies a traumatic memory for so many.

The name swastika originates from the Sanskrit words su meaning “good” and asti meaning “to exist”. The origin of the word illustrates the positive meaning the symbol has held for many civilisations on the Indian subcontinent. Archaeological evidence suggests that the sign - featuring two lines crossing and bending either clockwise or anti-clockwise - was used across the entire continent of Eurasia as early as 7000 years ago. The symbol has been found on objects, including stone carvings, pottery and embroidery, spreading from the Bronze age in Eastern Europe, to Ancient Greece, up until its use among many religions and cultures today. The symbol has also been used by indigenous peoples in North America, as well as different groups on the African continent. Its use on textiles, household objects, currencies and architecture indicates that it was used freely and commonly over many centuries, and most often with a positive connotation.

After its use had decreased in the Christian cultural sphere, the symbol regained popularity in the West beginning in the 19th century with the colonisation of the Indian subcontinent and increased interest in “exotic” ancient cultures. By the early 20th century, under the adopted name swastika, the symbol had gained popularity as decoration on everyday items once again and even was used on commercial goods, for example by the company Coca Cola.
As excavations in Eastern Europe uncovered its use in pre-historic times, nationalist groups and race-theorists became interested in the symbol as evidence of an ancient Germanic lineage.

The fictional tale spun around the ancestral race of the Aryans made multiple anti-Semitic groups adopt the symbol, until Hitler and the Nazi party declared it as their emblem. After their rise to power, the Nazi flag, featuring a tilted version of the symbol in a white circle on red background, became the official flag of Nazi Germany and the symbol was both referred to as swastika and Hakenkreuz (“hooked cross”). Its adoption by the Nazi state ended the popular use of the symbol in the West. Yet, unrelated to the horrific events taking place in central Europe during the 20th century, its use in East Asian religions and cultures continued.

Today, the reproduction of Nazi symbology, including the Hakenkreuz, has been banned in Germany and other European nations. While preparing to write this piece, the conversations I had with friends from around the world reflected the breadth of opinions presented at the Parliament of World’s Religions panel. One friend began to recount the lives of his Jewish grandparents who fled Europe during the Holocaust. I myself start to think of one great-grandfather whose plane was shot down by another wearing this symbol. Then, I think of another grandfather, who being only a child was made to salute the same symbol during his schooltime in Vienna. Other friends told me a different story, of foreigners pointing fingers at the statues they use for worship and of families hiding their sacred objects in their own households in Canada. Tracing the history of this symbol does not provide the answer to the conflicts that these stories and memories spark in our society. The word that was stressed again and again during the panel on this subject at the Parliament was “context”, and the importance of understanding the significance and use of the specific sign you see in front of you. Thinking of the title of this Radix issue, I want to add another word: compassion. Compassion for those traumatised by their own and their family’s history, and compassion for different backgrounds and the vast arrays of cultures we are surrounded by for whom this symbol is sacred.

Antonia is a fourth year undergraduate student in Anthropology, Religious and Culture Studies originally from Vienna.
Erica is an artist from Toronto whose work explores themes of language, culture, and identity.
One Tree, One World

Darcy is an undergraduate student double majoring in Philosophy and East Asian Studies.
With the “Wood” centralized on the right, this painting represents that the whole world is connected as one tree. The wood is written in Red because it reminds us of the unfortunate bloodshed in the human community. We may not realize this, but all of us were just in different positions on the tree, and sometimes we don’t even know that’s the case. But no matter what we go through, suffering and an eagerness for freedom and even to transcend are what we all share. Believing in something is one way we seek freedom and empowerment. It could be religions, and it could be money; it could even be science. But these different beliefs all act similarly -- they are designed to help humanity become better and stronger.

The reason I used the tree symbol is that I once had an image of how we are all limited to our perspectives of the world, in a sense, we only see one side of a tree, and we take that to be the complete knowledge of the tree and assume truths for the others. However, how can our truth be applied universally? Truth is limited in time and space, and so is our belief in religions and other matters. To face this defect, what we can do is to open our minds and ears as much as possible to listen to the world, to see from others’ perspectives, to feel what they have suffered and to be proud of what they have accomplished. This mentality was also brought up in one of the Charter for Compassion training sessions. Sometimes the best way to act out compassion is not to act but to do nothing and listen. Sometimes we may act out in the sense of courtesy, but maybe we added extra pressure onto others that they do not appreciate. Instead, we should observe. Observe the differences, observe the similarities, listen to what is in their heart, let them speak about their truths and applaud them. It is essential to know how not doing something could be helpful as it is not judging, not acting for others, and embracing and giving freedom and peace of expression to others.

As the world becomes more and more closely connected, understanding religion combined with the geographical and cultural elements became necessary. As we are all just like a tiny leaf in a worldly “Tree”, developing the network and communication across religions became the most crucial thing to do.
This piece highlights the beauty of compassionate conversations, where joy is a by-product of understanding. A compassionate conversation is one where profound listening is engaged. Interestingly, this is one the most beautiful ways to show love, as it involves truly seeing the other for what they are as a whole and understanding their deepest needs. Opening our hearts to the encounter of the other is a powerful way to better understand ourselves by realizing how similar we are at our core as we navigate this shared human experience that is without a miss filled with love, fear, loneliness, hope and above all; a deep desire to live a fulfilling and purposely oriented life which can only be attained together, as relating to others is relating to our own internal reality. In a world that yearns for peace, it is clear that contemplative listening is the first step towards active compassion.

Diana is an undergraduate student in Mechanical Engineering, who is passionate about sharing and living out her Catholic faith.
Sentient beings are numberless
I vow to liberate them
Delusions are inexhaustible
I vow to transcend them

As long as space remains
As long as sentient beings remain
Until then may I too remain
And dispel the suffering of the world
Through loving kindness and compassion

How can I make these vows
To liberate all under rays of sun?
If I proceed to let them down
And have failed to be kind to even one

And nothing I have learned
Has been put to use beyond the shelf.
And how can I think to serve,
When, still, I think about my ‘self’?

But I won’t let my past destroy me
And I won’t let my thoughts consume
These vows I’ve made, yet haven’t kept
These chains, unbound, I’ve up and left

I have no other words of use
I write this simply without a try
For no time, before Yama’s noose
Wraps around my neck, and in a grave I lie
Words are said
But deeds undone
Promises laid
But action lacking
Intentions made
But stay intentions
Words remain words
But actions remain nill
Thoughts remain thoughts
But my mind won’t stay still

So at this very moment. Now!
My failure serves as joyful fuel
And this bonfire that I call my life
Will burn brighter than the morning sun

Because my back will be mountain
And my mind will be the sky
My words will be the sunlight
And my thoughts are clouds; just passing by

Remain in pure awareness
Where no task is burdened
Where no task undone
Where no ‘thing’ can harm me
Where I can be of benefit
To every one
Just the “one”

nyompa is an undergraduate student who has a strong affinity for the shared wisdom of various religions of the world.
Photography to me is religion - an opportunity to capture the goodness, beauty, or magic of a moment and gifting it back to the world. I am autistic as well as synesthetic, which allows me to recognize patterns and interpret familiarities between things in a way few others can—and my photography is the most effective way of communicating those personal miracles. It is a way of showing gratitude for the gift of being alive, a thank you to a universe benevolent enough to create me. My camera shutter exposes my soul to the world, and as I create that instant of perfection, I am holding hands with God.
There is a holistic and world-famous proverb: “We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children.” However, it is saddening and heart wrenching to see how actions of human race have entirely thrown out this saying out of the window. We, as human beings, have failed to take the responsibility for this ecological destruction we are causing. We have proved ourselves to be those selfish and greedy beings who are only concerned about their own needs and never-ending urge to buy more, consume more, and destroy more. My greedy resource consumption is leading to starvation of a lot of people, my urge to buy more and more is stealing the dream of sustainable future from the incoming generations. Am I ready to accept that? Are you ready to accept that? Are we all ready to accept that? Probably yes, but definitely not. Greed culture, unfortunately, has overpowered the green culture! We have turned deaf ears to the cries of Mother Earth, who is alive, breathing and crying for its humankind to awake from deep slumber and help it.

How are climate action and the cries of mother earth connected to our faith, our religion, and our religious beliefs? Why does religion care for the global warming, sustainability and ecological well being of the world? Aren’t the global problems a matter for the science and policy, or economics, business, law, and technology? Before you question your knowledge about sustainability and climate change, let me say that this interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary knowledge and understanding is necessary undoubtedly. What I argue is, it’s not sufficient, it’s not sufficient to deal with the massive global crisis we are facing in regards to the earth. I know, I am putting your mind in more trouble and confusion, but we are about to find out what this missing piece of the puzzle is. I say, I argue, I believe that this missing piece is the faith, a faith that religion is not merely manifesting compassion towards other human beings. I argue that this is our religious imperative to care for the environment.
Do you know why, why I believe in that? Here is the missing link: caring for the environment is showing respect to the creation of Divine presence, God’s creation which should be preserved and not destroyed by His other creation, humankind. Just like you, I too was initially awestruck, dubious, surprised, and wondering what climate action has to do with my faith and my religion.

When I joined the cohort of PoWR, 2021, I was speechless when I first saw and later explored the track of climate action. In one of the sessions on climate action and faith, the speakers shared this beautiful book that pictures the world in faith for Earth: *Faith for Earth- A Call for Action*. Produced through a partnership between the United Nations Environment Programme and the Parliament of the World’s Religions (PoWR) Climate Action, this book transformed my thoughts on sustainability and climate action. How are world traditions and religions connected to the environment? How are science, religion and the earth knotted together on a rope that leads to sustainable future, a rope that leads humankind to our crying mother earth so we can wipe her tears? This book had an answer to my every question!

Midhat is a first year doctoral student in Educational Studies who loves to explore sustainability in education.
**CLASSIFIEDS**

**MCGILL CHAVURAH (GHETTO SHUL)**
The McGill Chavurah continues on the legacy of Ghetto Shul as a community intent on creating inclusive spaces for Jewish students. We are currently running online events, which aim to integrate the peace and comfort of shared Jewish experience into the hectic feeling of student life. We are progressive, sustainable, inclusive, traditional, non-hierarchical, and egalitarian in both structure and practice. Because we are student-run, we evolve to fit the needs of our changing community every year.

facebook.com/themcgillchavurah/

**MCGILL YOGA CLUB**
The McGill Yoga club aims to improve the physical, mental, and spiritual health of the community, through yoga! Although our in-person classes are currently suspended, check out our Facebook page for recordings of previous Spiritual Side of Yoga livestreams.

facebook.com/mcgillyc/

**MCGILL SIKH STUDENTS**
The Sikh Students’ Association aims to provide an inclusive space and platform to connect with Sikh students and come together for Sikh-oriented events.

facebook.com/sikhsatmcgill/

**HILLEL**
Hillel McGill is an organization providing Jewish life and education for both Jews and non-Jews at McGill. They offer a wide variety of (currently online) programs, events, and connection opportunities for everyone to take part in. Hillel’s vision is that every student be inspired to take part in Jewish life at McGill. Find them by their handle HillelMTL on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, or by email: hillelmcgill@ssmu.ca

**MUSLIM STUDENTS’ ASSOCIATION (MSA)**
The Muslim Students’ Association brings together Muslim students to provide resources, essential services, and educational tools needed to enhance their university experience. Through the services and events provided, the MSA aims to facilitate the spiritual and social growth of its members and the larger McGill community, supporting student needs. Like MSA on Facebook to get updates on this event, as well as all our other initiatives! Email communications@msamcgill.com to join the listserv.

facebook.com/msamcgill/

www.msamcgill.com
McGILL CHURCH OF JESUS-CHRIST OF LATTER DAY SAINTS STUDENT GROUP
We offer a sense of community and educational opportunities for students interested in the LDS movement. Everyone is welcome! For meeting times, and more info on specific scripture study classes and activities, check out the Montreal LDS Institute Facebook page: JAS de Montréal | Montreal YSA, or send an email to:
olivia.bala@mail.mcgill.ca

FALUN DFA
Falun Dafa (aka Falun Gong) is a Chinese self-cultivation practice guided by the principles of Truthfulness, Compassion, and Tolerance. It includes five meditative exercises and, different from other qigong, emphasizes the role of virtue in improving health. Check out our Facebook page for downloadable audiovisual meditation materials!
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NEWMAN CATHOLIC STUDENTS’ SOCIETY
Through our vibrant spiritual and social life, we seek to grow in the love of Jesus and spread the joy of his Gospel to the McGill University campus and beyond in a spirit of friendship and service. Inspired by the legacy of Cardinal John Henry Newman, we strive to provide a point of intersection between our lives as students and our lives as Christian disciples.
mcgillcatholics.ca
facebook.com/mcgillcatholics/

MIDWEEK QUAKER MEDITATION
The Montreal Midweek Quaker Meeting is continuing every Wednesday evening, via Zoom! Keep an eye on our Facebook group for updates.
facebook.com/groups/mtlmidweek

AM MCGILL
Am McGill is an egalitarian, event-based Jewish group committed to providing Jewish students with a safe space at McGill. Check out our Facebook page for more info on our group.
facebook.com/ammcgillu/

Looking for more community connections?
Visit MORSL’s website (mcgill.ca/morsl) for additional listings. Open M-F, 10am-4pm. 3610 Rue McTavish, Room 36-2.
About our back-cover artist:

Hugo Solomon, a first year undergraduate student, is a queer American photographer seeking to understand the small miracles of healing from the past.

Interested in this magazine?
Read back issues and submit your work online:

www.mcgill.ca/morsl/radix-magazine