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Remembering Peter L. Berger

Peter L. Berger passed away on June 27, 2017, after a month's illness. He was 88 years old, and had remained intellectually sharp right up through the final months of his life. He published a bi-weekly blog, and had written three important books on the sociology of religion and his own intellectual career in the final five years of his life. Although wheel-chair bound since a winter tumble several years ago, Peter had hoped to travel this summer to Italy for the official launching of the Italian translation of his last book, *The Many Altars of Modernity: Toward a Paradigm for Religion in a Pluralist Age*. In the day that has passed since his departure, I have hosted telephone calls from Peter's colleagues and friends around the world, all distraught by the news of his passing.

Peter will be remembered as one of the greatest sociologists of religion and modernity in the period stretching from the late 1950s to today. Co-authored with his life-long friend, Thomas Luckmann, his *The Social Construction of Reality* is recognized as one of the most original and influential books in the sociology of knowledge ever written. It was translated into more than twenty languages; its English-language edition sold more than one million copies in paperback. He went on to publish more than twenty other books in sociology, and three works of a broadly theological nature. He also wrote two books on humor. He had an astonishing memory and verbal faculty for joke telling, typically related in a dead-pan manner but with a trademark twinkle in his eye. He trained dozens of students, and inspired many more.

Peter came to Boston University in 1981, and established the institute now known as the Institute on Culture, Religion, and World Affairs (CURA) in 1985. CURA is now part of the Pardee School for Global Affairs. In January 1986, he invited me to join CURA as associate director, an event that changed my life. Over the next twenty-two years as CURA director, Peter worked with a network of Boston University colleagues and international scholars to coordinate more than 140 research projects in twenty countries, resulting in the publication of 130 books. In 1999, the Pew Charitable Trust recognized CURA as one of its first three "centers of excellence" for multi-disciplinary research on religion and world affairs. CURA remains the oldest such center in North America, with a publication legacy second to none. All who had the pleasure to work with Peter know that his combination of wit, intellectual brilliance, and graciousness was unique. His personal and intellectual legacy will continue. But all who knew him miss him deeply.

Bob Hefner, Director 2009-2017, Associate Director 1986-2009