David Bhagwati's 70th Birthday

On August 5, 2005, diplomats, scholars, business leaders, and members of the press gathered at Low Library for a gala dinner honoring renowned economics professor Jagdish Bhagwati on the occasion of his 70th birthday. Many of the guests, such as New York Times columnist Paul Krugman, had been Bhagwati's students, and one had even been his instructor at MIT: the Nobel laureate, Robert Solow.

The Indian-born scholar, who holds the prestigious University Chair in Economics and Law, was widely praised as the rare academic who has not only influenced his field but also made a bridge into policymaking. Participants said that his analytical grasp and rhetorical skill have helped to galvanize significantly the global trade regime and have contributed to accelerated growth in developing countries, such as his native India. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan (pictured, right) called Bhagwati an "inspiring" person and thanked him "for his contributions to the field of economics."

Beginning in 1962, Bhagwati and his colleagues at Columbia have been working on a project called the Columbia Astrophysics Laboratory (CAL), which is now the largest and most advanced telescope in the world. The telescope was built by a team of astronomers and engineers, including Arlin Crotts on the construction and the many other wonderful ingredients I use in my cooking. (This choice is not the center of the universe, but whose identities science has yet to discover.)

For The Record

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For The Record

David Bhagwati's natural element may be outer space, but The Record asked him to imagine himself stranded on a desert island. What books and music would he like to have with him? Whom would he like to have as a conversational companion? What would he miss most, least? Here's what we learned.

BOOKS: The Bible— "The notion of a flat world is as wrong metaphorically now as it was when Copernicus showed it to be literally wrong. To be more precise than his metaphor, Mr. Friedman has made the mistake of treating a large fraction of it—India and China. He believes that the gradient which the citizens of these countries had to climb to get to our shores and out-compete us has now disappeared, giving way to a level playing field that we ignore at our peril. (Wall Street Journal op-ed, 4 August 2005)

American Politics

Victor Navasky, Delaware Professor of Magazine Journalism, on why America needs dissent: "The great thing about this country is that our founding document has built into it a Bill of Rights, which guarantees the right to dissent. That's our safety valve—what keeps us going, what keeps giving us energy." (Charlie Rose Show; 15 August 2005)

Art

James Beck, professor of the history of art, on the newly discovered marble relief possibly attributable to Michelangelo: "The vast majority of works which claim to be by Michelangelo, but are not. Michelangelos, we have to rule out. They just aren't technically or aesthetically competent enough to be by a genius. This is a work of exceptionally high quality. There's no question that it's good enough to be by Michelangelo." (New York Sun, 28 July 2005)

New Media

Steven S. Ross, associate professor of professional practice, Graduate School of Journalism, on the use of blogs for journalism: "As blogs continue to gain in popularity, quality and influence, it is becoming imperative that journalists and journalism students continue to integrate blogs, especially blogs that cover technology, into their reporting practices. A number of credentialed journalists have blogs such as Scobleizer, Gizmodo and Boing Boing, provide an invaluable trove of research, story ideas and other information that current and future journalists would be remiss not to leverage in their reporting." (Media Relations Insider, July 2005)

Law

Jane C. Ginsberg, professor of law, on the issue of copyrights for 'orphan works': "The concern that orphan works start from the premise that there are works that should be in the public domain but which authors don't care about them, that they are clogging up the system and preventing subseqequent users from using them. That's not necessarily a correct premise." (Chronicle of Higher Education, 29 July 2005)