We are pleased to present the inaugural

Victor Danner Memorial Lecture in Islamic Studies

by

Professor Huston Smith

On

The Master-Disciple Relationship

WHEN: Wednesday, February 26, 2003 at 7:00 pm
WHERE: Jordan Hall, Room 124

Professor Huston Smith is the Thomas J. Watson Professor of Religion and Distinguished Adjunct Professor of Philosophy, Emeritus, at Syracuse University. He has also been featured on the Bill Moyers PBS Special, The Wisdom of Faith with Huston Smith.

This lecture is funded by the College of Arts and Science with an additional contribution from Religious Studies.

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Welcoming Remarks

Professor Nazif Shahrani, NELC Chair and Director

Introduction, tribute to Victor Danner

Professor Zaineb Istrabadi, Assistant Director, MEISP

Introduction and welcome of Professor Huston Smith

Dr. Mary Ann Danner Fadae

‘The Master-Disciple Relationship’

Professor Huston Smith

Professor Smith will begin by contrasting the master-disciple relationship with that of a teacher and a student, seeking to identify the essential qualities of the former. In fidelity to the theme of this lecture, it will focus on the shaykh-murid relationship, but the analysis will be broadly comparative in relying on case studies drawn from several of the world’s religions.

Thank you for joining us. Please join us and Professor Smith at the reception at the IMU University Club which will immediately following this lecture.
Huston Smith is the Thomas J. Watson Professor of Religion and Distinguished Adjunct Professor of Philosophy, Emeritus at Syracuse University. Prior to that appointment he taught at Washington University in St. Louis, and for fifteen years was Professor of Philosophy at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. His most recent position was a visiting professor of religious studies at the University of California, Berkeley.

Born of missionary parents in Soochow, Dr. Smith lived in China until he was seventeen. His youth there provided an appropriate background for his subsequent interests in comparative philosophies and religions.

Interest in education beyond the classroom led Professor Smith to produce three television series for the Public Broadcasting System, “The Religions of Man,” “The Search for America,” and (with Arthur Compton) “Science and Human Responsibility.” His films on Hinduism, Tibetan Buddhism, and Sufism have all won awards at international film festivals. His phonograph record, “The Music of Tibet,” which embodies his discovery of the capacity of certain lamas to sing multiphonically, was acclaimed by the Journal of Ethnomusicology as “an important landmark in the study of extra-European music’s, and in fact of music itself.”

Holder of eleven honorary degrees, Professor Smith was one of six professors in 1964 to receive the national E. Harris Harbison Award for Distinguished Teaching and was featured guest that year on the opening and closing programs of ABS’s “Meet the Professor” series. In 1961 he was invited to be the first Charles Strong Lecturer on World Religions to the Universities of Australia. Twice he has been appointed Distinguished Visiting Lecturer to the United Chapters of Phi Beta Kappa, and in 1964 he was Annual Lecturer to the John Dewey Society. In 1996 Bill Moyers devoted a 5-part PBS Special, “The Wisdom of Faith with Huston Smith,” to his life and work.

Author of over seventy articles in professional and popular journals, his book The World’s Religions has been for a third of a century the most widely used textbook for courses in world religions. His eleven other books include Forgotten Truth, Beyond the Post-Modern Mind, The Illustrated World’s Religions, Essays of World Religion, One Nation Under God: The Triumph of the Native American Church, Cleansing the Doors of Perception: The Religious Significance of Entheogenic Plants and Chemicals, and, most recently, Why Religion Matters: The Fate of the Human Spirit in an Age of Disbelief, and Islam: A Concise Introduction.

Professor Smith is the father of three daughters. His wife, Dr. E. Kendra Smith, is a psychologist. They live in Berkeley, California.
Professor Victor Danner was born on October 22, 1926 in Irapuato, Guanajuato, Mexico to Arthur James and Maria Lopez Danner. As a young man, he served his country during WWII. After the war he attended Georgetown University where he received his BA magna cum laude in 1957. Later that year he traveled to Morocco to become an instructor and eventually Director of the American Language Center, sponsored by the US Information Service. While there he took advantage of the opportunity not only to get acquainted with the country but also to perfect his knowledge of classical Arabic texts.

In 1964, Professor Danner returned to the US for his doctoral studies and graduated from Harvard in 1970. He came to IU in 1967 and was a professor of Arabic and Religious Studies at Indiana University until his death in 1990. He served as Chairman of the Near Eastern Languages and Cultures Department for five years, and was an enthusiastic supporter of the Middle Eastern Studies Program.

He was an internationally renowned scholar in the fields of Islamic mysticism, comparative religion, and classical Arabic literature. In 1976, he was invited to speak at the International World Festival of Islam in London. Professor Danner was also active in a number of professional organizations, including the Washington D.C. based Foundation for Traditional Studies, for which he served as Secretary-Treasurer. His scholarly achievements included *Ibn ‘Ata’Allah’s Sufi Aphorisms (Kitab al-Hakim)*, 1973, *Ibn ‘Ata’Allah: The Book of Wisdom* (1978); and *The Islamic Tradition: An Introduction* (1988), as well as over twenty-five articles and reviews.

One of his students, Lauri King Irani, captured his essence when she wrote the following of him in memoriam, “As a teacher, Victor Danner had few equals. He taught Arabic, classical Arabic literature, Islam, Sufism, the Qur’an, comparative religion, comparative mysticism, and Eastern religions. His dignified bearing, elegant gestures, and verbal eloquence transformed his lectures into performances which had the power to captivate and inspire his students, whether he was discussing Arabic grammar or Islamic theology. His concern for and encouragement of his students, coupled with his understated sense of humor, earned him a well deserved reputation as a caring and committed educator who taught not only when behind the classroom lectern, but also by example.”

*He who is illumined at the beginning is illumined at the end.*

—from the *Sufi Aphorisms* by Ibn ‘Ata’Allah (d.1309)  
Translated by Victor Danner