Dear Professor Feinberg,

As a graduate student in ethics, I have had the opportunity to read a number of your articles. I have enjoyed and profited from the exposure to your work.

However, it is irreverent curiosity, not gratitude, which prompts this letter. In both Doing and Deserving and Rights, Justice, and the Bounds of Liberty you acknowledge the influence of and your indebtedness to Josiah Carberry. As a graduate of Brown University [A.B. 1973], I have been quite amused by the recognition you have accorded to the preeminent authority on "psycho-ceramics." While I have never had the privilege of meeting your former colleague [it is rather difficult to meet up with someone who bask’s in itinerancy and is "always pulling up stakes before they’re well done"], I remember John Rowe Workman’s panegyrics to Carberry within the context of Classics I.

...Inspired by Carberry’s motto ("Dulce et decorum est dispire in loco"), I feel compelled to inquire about this indebtedness you acknowledge in regard to Josiah Carberry. Did he pass on to you a priceless nugget chiseled from Sophia’s mother-lode? Or, was it simply the example of one who is sui generis?

Respectfully yours,
Steve Dalle-Mura

Dear Mr. Dalle-Mura,

Your letter inquiring about the "Carberrian influence on Feinberg" has precipitated a kind of moral crisis for me. After anguished deliberation, I have decided to make a clean breast of everything. Here it is straight. In one form or another, every last word of Doing and Deserving and Rights, Justice, and the Bounds of Liberty was written by Josiah S. Carberry.

You may remember what a diffident even humble person Carberry really was. All those years at Brown he was secretly producing philosophical essays in that inimitable psycho-ceramic style of his, but never sending them to a publisher or even allowing anyone else to read them. One day in 1961, upon learning that I was "his kind of philosopher" yet someone who had never published a thing of my own, he called me into his famous cluttered Victorian study in Sayles Hall to make the proposal that was to change my life. In the interest of what he quaintly termed "the truth," he wanted to have his articles published but he would be greatly embarrassed [he never explained why] to have them appear over his own name. You see, he was already on his way to becoming a figure of fun at Brown, a hard fate for so sensitive a man. I was young and naive at the time, and in danger of perishing for not publishing. I was moved by Carberry’s sincerity and greatly honored by his choice of me. How could I refuse!

Things went well at first. The articles were readily accepted by various journals, and then no one seemed to notice them after they appeared in print. But then they began to draw hostile reviews and presumptuous rebuttals. Carberry began to sulk, showing me a side of his character I had never before seen. Then he moved into a stage in which great bursts of creative energy alternated with fits of rage at adverse criticisms. As the articles became worse and worse, he produced more and more of them, until I [having somehow managed to secure tenure] began to fear for my own good name.

My attribution of errors to Carberry in the Preface of Doing and Deserving was my first warning shot across Carberry’s bow, but the wily old man [he is said to be one hundred and sixteen years old] was undeterred. He knew that he was in a commanding position. He fired back, in effect, by sending an article over my name to a journal without even showing it to me in advance, much less requesting my consent. The first I learned of it was when he sent me a reprint, and a facetious little note challenging me to make the whole story public. I couldn’t afford to do that, as he well knew. My carping reference to his "unreliability" in the Preface of Rights, Justice, and the Bounds of Liberty was but a feeble and petulant gesture. Since then, he sends all his/my articles to journals without my knowledge or consent, and then taunts me afterwards with jeering little notes in Latin.

Well, that is how things stand now. If you have any suggestions [short of homicide] of how I might extricate myself from this predicament, I would greatly appreciate them. In any case, I feel immensely better for having made this confession, and trust that you will be discreet about this matter. Now you know the full extent and profound depth of the "Carberrian influence on Feinberg." Never let this happen to you.

Non spingersi il coltello! joel Feinberg

Would anyone knowing the present whereabouts of Professor Carberry please get in touch with this office. ED.