(tē•kün) To mend, repair and transform the world.

TIKKUN

Christopher Lasch and Critics on The Family:

A feminist critique of Lasch by Lillian Rubin;
A socialist critique by Richard Lichtman.
And Lasch lashes back.

A QUARTERLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY VOLUME 1 NUMBER 2 $5.00

Todd Gitlin
ABC TV's Right Wing Offensive

Abba Eban
On the West Bank

SPECIAL FEATURE: THE NICARAGUA DEBATE
Robert Leiken, William Leogrande, Aryeh Neier & Ronald Radosh

Amos Oz
An Interview

Judith Plaskow
Standing at Sinai

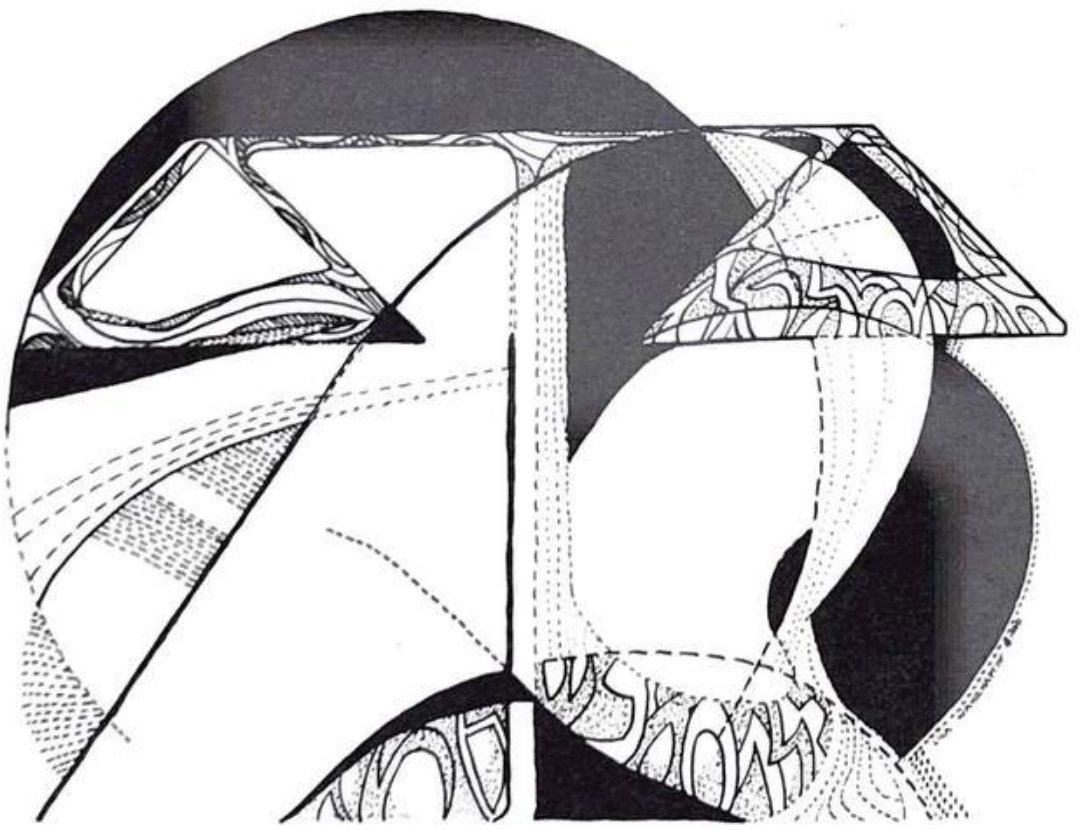


PLUS

Mark Tushnet and Peter Gabel on The Intent of the Framers; M.K. Morelle Baron on Israel's Coalition Government; Alan Wolfe on the Return of Values; Anne Roiphe on The Jewish Family; Haim Chertok on Rachel and Esau; Poetry by Dan Pagis & Marge Piercy; Fiction by Chaim Grade; Seven Parables by Stephen Mitchell; Reviews by Michael Berenbaum, Daniel Landes & Elisa New.

A student of philosophy who turns
from the discourses of the great metaphysicians
to the orations of the prophets may feel as if
he were going from the realm of the sublime
to an area of trivialities. Instead of dealing
with the timeless issues of being and becoming,
of matter and form, of definitions and
demonstrations, he is thrown into orations
about widows and orphans, about the
corruption of judges and affairs of the market
place. Instead of showing us a way through the
elegant mansions of the mind, the Prophets
take us to the slums.
Their breathless impatience with
injustice may strike us as hysteria. . . . But
if such deep sensitivity to evil is to be called
hysterical, what name should be given to
the abysmal indifference to evil which
the prophet bewails?

ABRAHAM JOSHUA HESCHEL



TIKKUN

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Cover: "ISA," Tobi Kahn

Acrylic on board 19 × 15—Collection of the Artist
Courtesy, Althea Viafora Gallery, New York.

ISA is part of a body of work painted in the summer of 1985 at Mishkenot Sha'ananim, Jerusalem, Israel.

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Letters

Why Tikkun?

To the Editor:

... Being aware of the swing to the Right in the U.S. in general, and within the Jewish community in particular in recent years, a liberal progressive voice is certainly welcome, and I wish you luck in your new venture....

Gad Yaacobi
Minister of Economy and
Planning of the
Government of the
State of Israel
Jerusalem, Israel

To the Editor:

I've read the first issue of *Tikkun* from cover to cover with a sense of satisfaction, gratitude and hope. As a non-Jewish intellectual who was introduced to *Commentary* 25 years ago, I have watched its relentless narrowing down over the years with a sense of sadness mixed with anger. How could they "take away" something I found so wonderfully valuable. Could it be that the vacancy might now be filled? ...

As I write this I ask myself why I sense such a surge of hope about *Tikkun* and what it might represent. I think it may be gratitude that those of us who are still willing to let ourselves be known as "progressive" but who hold firmly to traditional religious values (as I do); and who insist that religion and politics *do* belong together (but not the way Pat Robertson does it) need to find and support each other. There are a lot of "us" out there. And a lot more of "us" coming, which I know from teaching Harvard undergraduates.

Blessings *Tikkun*.

Harvey Cox
Harvard University
Divinity School
Cambridge, Massachusetts

To the Editor:

What I liked most about *Tikkun* is the following:

a. The intellectual level. The pieces are serious, the sort of thing you wouldn't find in the *N.Y. Times* or even in *The Nation* and *The New Republic* (both of which I like, but both of which have formats that don't allow the depth of analyses you publish in *Tikkun*). But though you are deep, you don't read like an academic journal—more interested in impressing people

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with the writer's intellectual credentials than with communicating exciting ideas.

b. The obvious passion of your concerns. Unlike the *N.Y. Review of Books*, you enter issues not just to detachedly explore them, but with a goal of acquiring knowledge for the sake of remaking the world. Although that was most obvious in the Founding Editorial Statement, which I loved, it came through as well in many of the articles. Keep up that passion!

c. Your approach to Judaism. I am one of the people whom you'd probably describe as an "alienated Jew." I read *Tikkun* because it addresses political issues that are important to me—and it seems to have some new things to say (quite unusual these days on the Left!) So I was completely shocked to find that the way you addressed Jewish issues actually engaged me quite seriously. The approach you articulated in the editorial, the statement by Zalman Schachter, the articles by Arthur Green and Drorah Setel and Laura Geller—all this is quite new to me, quite different from anything I ever heard when I was growing up, and I'm sure quite different from what most people hear today in the "official" Jewish world. I find myself seriously challenged by all this material—in a way that I would have always dismissed before as quite remote from who I am as a person. I haven't "bought it all" quite yet, but it's much harder to dismiss than what I grew up with, and frankly I really appreciate being forced to think about fundamental philosophical issues. I had always thought that my work as a lawyer for the oppressed was my statement of how to be a Jew—now I see that I need to look deeper. And I feel I can do that with *Tikkun* because getting into religious issues in your context doesn't require any suspension of my intellect or distancing from my commitment to social change.

Thanks.

Wendy Cohen
New York

To the Editor:

I didn't expect to be 'bowled over' when I began reading the first issue of *Tikkun*. I've been carrying it around ever since, quoting passages to friends, stopping at diners to reread articles, not being able to wait until I get home.

Patte Doran
Washington Depot,
Connecticut

To the Editor:

I have been meaning to write to you ever since I saw the first issue of *Tikkun*. . . . I am thoroughly unhappy with the direction of your thought. I have battled during the past decades to reverse the knee jerk liberalism of our Jewish community. We have made great strikes. Not only is *Commentary* arguably the best English language journal of its kind in the country, but there are growing numbers of young, intelligent Jews who are embracing the conservative side of politics. I hear from these people almost every day and see their names prominently featured in the outstanding journals of thought and letters. You, of course, have a right to attempt to reverse this trend, but from all indications, you will not and cannot succeed. The reason [is that your view] . . . is against reality.

The conservative view is fully aware of the real state of human political and economic enterprises. This confirms daily the biblical observation that the inclination of man is evil. The very best that we can do is to devise laws, create institutions and attitudes which will try and check the impulses which are so ubiquitous in human affairs. The utopianism which has been so characteristic of liberalism, especially in this century, is not only illusory, it is also dangerous. . . .

There is one other, very important matter. The post-war world has been unfortunately characterized by a struggle with the Soviet Union. It would be a grievous error to underestimate the power and ruthlessness of our adversary. I find the Left-leaning elements, with the exception of the formal socialist part, guilty of underestimating the intentions of the Soviets—whether it be in Central America, Europe or Africa. As far as Israel is concerned, I sympathize with the Israelis who want to hold onto the 1967 gains for security reasons. I also believe that the influence of religion is important to be felt in our common life and people have the right to express that approach whether they are in politics or not.

In other words, I am committed to the program of the Republican Party. We do have a two party system in our nation and people have the freedom to be committed to one or none of them. This, of course, does not in any way affect the way people feel they can strengthen Jewish life in our country and abroad. I would support efforts to do that; but I want to register my nonsympathy with the political direction you and your colleagues have chosen.

Seymour Siegel
Prof. of Ethics and Theology
Jewish Theological
Seminary of America
New York

To the Editor:

I received your first issue, and I like it. . . . I had to search for awhile to figure out where the title of your publication came from, but once I finally found it, I was pleased with the title.

I am pleased with the publication, and you have a new subscriber.

Paul Simon
U.S. Senator
Washington, D. C.

The Book of Job

To the Editor:

Stephen Mitchell's essay on the Book of Job, in the premier issue of *Tikkun*, like his earlier translation of the book, *Into the Whirlwind*, brilliantly re-visions the book as an epic *koan*, put to Job by the unnameable and unimaginable God. As long as Job insists on asking "the harrowing question of someone who has only heard of God . . . 'Why me?'"says Mitchell, "[t]here is no answer, because it is the wrong question" (p. 59). God's answer to Job, finally, is a *vision*, a direct experience of Divinity, the ultimate rebuttal to mere hearsay. Mitchell wishes to confront us with the paradoxical starkness of Job's realization that God is not man, not subject to human values. The vision is one of "our world, when we perceive it clearly, without eating of the Tree of Good and Evil. It is an experience of the Sabbath vision: looking at reality, the world of starving children and nuclear menace, and recognizing that it is very good" (p. 61). Ultimately, God's answer to Job transcends and undoes all dualistic thinking about Divinity or the world. Evil is God's creation as much as good, and Job, finally enlightened, is comforted about his (and our) true state of being as "dust and ashes."

But, in his vision of Job, I believe that Mitchell misunderstands a fundamental and unique characteristic of Judaism (which is, after all, not Zen). Judaism, as a spiritual path, is a Way for a collectivity of persons who *have*

eaten of the Tree of Good and Evil, who have an evil as well as a good impulse, who are instructed not simply to transcend this evil impulse but to serve God with it. Ordinary Biblical narratives, as Robert Alter points out elsewhere in the same issue of *Tikkun*, disparate and limited as they may seem at times, are parts of an intricately patterned weave that includes opposites and contradictions—and is far from the single-visioned ideas of a sky-god who heroically conquers evil, period. This intricate patterning is even more evident if we include rabbinic and kabbalistic revisionings of the Bible. Take, for example, the *Akedah*, the binding of Isaac by Abraham at the command of God—an episode which Mitchell would evidently relegate to the revelation "of a lesser god" (p. 63). The Zohar (I, 119b) understands the *Akedah* precisely as a mythic expression of Abraham's need—the very Abraham who knows himself to be "dust and ashes"—to overcome his one-sided loving kindness and generosity (*Hesed*) and to become truly whole by integrating this *Hesed* with its opposite, *Gevurah*, with judgment and severity, with the attribute of Isaac. The *Akedah* narrative may lack the sustained grandeur of Job's struggle, but it is no less paradoxical and transformational in its demand on Abraham to overcome his one-sidedness (to become wise and not merely good). It seems to me that this is just what the Jewish Way asks of its practitioners: while *continuing* to live life under the aegis of the Tree of Good and Evil, to actualize the paradoxical reality and presence of Divinity—or, as the Kabbalah puts it, precisely in the lower worlds of ordinary, everyday life, to make a dwelling place for Divinity. Job's vision is surely an aspect of this *tikkun olam*, but not the whole story.

Steven M. Joseph, M.D.
Berkeley, California

To the Editor:

Congratulations on your first issue of *Tikkun*. It is stimulating. I look forward to succeeding issues.

In the meantime, permit me to question several points made by Stephan Mitchell in his provocative article on the revolutionary and ever-challenging Book of Job.

My first problem is with Mitchell's first sentence. Can he substantiate his statement that the book's "hero is Gentile"? It seems to me that all of Job's ritual and religious activities as recounted in the prologue, and all of his moral values as spelled out in detail in his give-and-take with his friends, reflect adherence to old Hebrew cultic practices and to the morality of the Penteteuch and of the Prophets. Other cultures no doubt observed some of these practices and values, but none, I suggest, was as much like Job's as Hebrew culture. Even Job's universalism, as it manifests itself later in the poem, when he laments the suffering of the poor of the world, reflects a Hebrew attitude; it parallels the Prophets' line: "Are you not as the children of the Ethiopians unto Me, O children of Israel? saith the Lord" (Amos 9:7).

It is my feeling that the great author of the Book of Job, while nowhere being explicit, in fact always being almost obsessively *in*explicit, wanted us to understand by this treatment that his Job is both a Hebrew and a universal man, and that to be a true Hebrew involves being every good man. I think this is one of the many great messages of the book. In light of the foregoing, I again ask Mr. Mitchell in puzzlement whence his categorical statement that "its hero is a Gentile"?

My second question deals with the short-shift Mitchell gives those words of God in the epilogue which are addressed to the friends, that they "haven't spoken truth of Me as has My servant Job." These words are spoken twice for emphasis. Our author wants us to take careful note of the idea. Job, we remember, has charged God with mocking the innocent, with ignoring the groans of the wounded and with destroying the innocent with the wicked. In short, he has charged God with great cruelty and injustice. And it is for these assertions that Job is rewarded by being restored. Why? These words are too fundamental to the book to be blandly summarized by Mitchell's words "the righteous are not rewarded." It is so much more than that. God is approving the integrity reflected by Job's harsh description of the Deity. This strikes at the heart of the matter, and is the kind of tough and gut question that must be dealt with, or at least referred to, in any worthwhile discussion of Job.

My last question for Mr. Mitchell relates to his apparently considered decision to accept the entire modern Hebrew text of Job as having literary "integrity." To the contrary, a powerful case can be made for there being many addenda and glosses in the text, some of them of overwhelming importance. I am not referring to the Elihu portion—that is almost universally accepted as an addendum—but to the matter of Job's assertions of repentance. I feel that all logic demands that Job's words of repentance be regarded as insertions by later meddlers who felt that they had to purify the work. In so doing they changed the original thrust with resultant fundamental misinterpretations. Mitchell comes close, but not nearly close enough, to this understanding, apparently unconsciously, when in referring to Job's brief replies to the Theophany he uses the crude but apt words, "squeak," "cringing," "wretched climax" and "pratfall." The inserted repentant replies are all of these things. Unfortunately, Mitchell ignores the implications of his own words and the fact that Job has described all of God's powers at great length before they are stated by the Voice from the Whirlwind. They're nothing new to Job, so why should he suddenly change from a courageous giant of the spirit into a cringing weakling? The answer has to be that the text has been corrupted, as stated, by small-minded "sages" who couldn't stand the heat of Job's princely courage.

It is Job's courage, in standing up to his unknowable God, this omnipotent God who inexplicably permits good and evil to coexist, that God is applauding when He blesses Job for having spoken of him the thing that is right, and when he expresses wrath at the fraudulently pious friends.

In a word, the later addenda of Job's unbelievably cringing words of repentance have been a disastrous stumbling block to the understanding of the Book of Job and demeaned it. I feel that Mr. Mitchell's article is severely flawed by its failure to address or understand these crucial matters.

After all this, I must say that I admire Mitchell's work in speaking of our ancient author's revolutionary accent on Job's old-new daughters. Here Mitchell hits a very important and delightful nail on the head. The ancient author (as modern as we are) with a deadpan smile, has the Female come into her own, indeed, perhaps, to dominate. I have in the past touched on this in my classes, but never as well as

Mitchell does. Here I tip my hat to him.

Gerson H. Brodie
Denver, Colorado

Stephen Mitchell responds:

Dr. Joseph's first paragraph is a fair summary. But I'd prefer to begin with a parable:

1

During the first stage of suffering, Job's companion was a worm that had lodged itself in one of his open sores. Job would pass the time brooding; the worm, exploring. Job would narrow his eyes and try to see through the dark cloud-bank overhead. Or would stare at the supple, slowly digesting worm as if it were a messenger from another world.

Eventually, they came to know each other quite well.

2

Of course the friends were blond and clean-shaven and had no trouble making their hexameters scan.

They reasoned thus: that although degradation was no proof of viciousness, it did indicate bad judgment, or incompetence. Item: Job's nose was irredeemably hooked. Item: Job's face was crisscrossed by whole networks of unhappiness. His potential vindication, they declared, had already begun to create havoc in the realm of Nature. Birds fell, confused, from the blue sky; lions lost their appetite; a large date-palm had been seen pacing in the wilderness.

What did he expect, anyway? A medal?

3

Suddenly Job understands: there is perfect justice: not later. Not later; but always now.

In that first moment of waking, he sits up, stunned, not recognizing even himself, not needing to hear the morning-stars burst out singing, or the angels explode with joy.

4

"In any case," the friends said on their way home, "his offensiveness has not diminished. A miracle is no cure for bad breath."

This is not to say that religious insight is a prerequisite for understanding the poem. But somehow, at least imaginatively, we need to enter Job's vision.

Mr. Brodie asks me to substantiate the statement that Job is a Gentile. Quite simply, Job is described as one of the "sons of the east" (1:3) and as a native of the land of Uz.

The sons of the east are mentioned in the Book of Judges along with other non-Israelite tribes in or bordering on the land of Canaan: "And it happened, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites attacked, and the Amalekites, and the sons of the east attacked also" (Jg. 6:3; also 6:33, 7:12, 8:10; cf. Gen. 25:6, 19:1, Is. 11:14, Ez. 25:4,10). A later reference in First Kings seems to be a more general usage of the phrase: "And Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of the sons of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt" (1 Kings 5:10). In either sense, the sons of the east are certainly Gentiles.

As for the land of Uz, there are two conflicting traditions. The first is based on Gen. 10:23 and places it in northern Mesopotamia or the Hauran. The second identifies it with Edom, to the southeast of Canaan. The relevant Biblical verses are: "Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, who livest in the land of Uz ... " (Lam. 4:21); "And all the mingled people, and all the kings of the land of Uz, and all the kings of the land of the Philistines, and Ashkelon, and Azzah, and Ekron, and the remnant of Ashdod" (Jer. 25:20). For an exhaustive survey of the evidence, see Dhorme, *The Book of Job*, pp. xxi ff.

It is Mr. Brodie's opinion that the statement in the epilogue about Job's having spoken the truth about God is significant. I disagree. In my view, the epilogue is a return to the smaller humanity and god of the prologue. The great poem has already ended with Job's final words, and the epilogue, lovely as it is, seems not much more than a tying up of loose ends and a benediction. If we take "God's" words more seriously, we are likely to wind up in truly byzantine complexities, since "God" rewards Job for being right about God's injustice, thus proving him wrong, and punishes the friends for being wrong, thus proving them right. All Cretans are liars. Evidently this god has been spacing out during the whole wonderful conclusion of the poem, and has understood neither the Voice from the Whirlwind nor Job's final transformation.

Mr. Brodie is correct about the addenda and glosses. The Elihu interlude, by some later and much inferior poet, is the most notorious addition; there is also the Hymn to Wisdom of chapter 28. And in several verses the text seemed so scandalous that a scribe deliberately altered a word, out of a pious desire to suppress Job's blasphemy. In my translation, I have sought to correct all this fiddling.

Job's final verses, though, seem to me to be absolutely genuine. They are not at all words of repentance; they are words of awe and surrender. This is a very important point. If Mr. Brodie is interested enough to reread section 5, with a bit more attention this time, perhaps he will feel that the essay is less severely flawed. In any event, I hope he doesn't leave Job forever shaking his fist at a God forever unjust.

I appreciate Dr. Joseph's point about Judaism as a spiritual path. But I wasn't writing about Judaism; I was writing about *Job*.

Nevertheless, I owe Dr. Joseph a response. The question is, it seems to me, not how we can serve God (as Job did in the prologue), but how we can love God, with our *whole* heart, in the face of appalling evil. *V'-ahavta et adonai elohekha b'khol l'vavkha u-vkhol nafsh'kha u-v'khol m'odekha.* Our prophet Jesus of Nazareth called this the great commandment.

But how can we love God if we feel he is unjust? There are, perhaps, pure souls who don't have to struggle with this issue. Most of us do. And there are a few privileged ones who are granted an almost unbearable need for God's justice, who so hunger and thirst after it that they will never be satisfied until they eat and drink their fill. Job is one of these.

We would have to be retarded or willfully blind, like Job's friends, the orthodox moralists, not to recognize that the world is filled with evil and suffering. Naturally, we doubt God or blame him. But where anger and doubt exist, there is no room for love. Job, in expressing these emotions, is able to move beyond them. His blasphemy can be a wonderful catharsis for anyone

Continued on page 125

Publisher's Page

Nan Fink

After one quarter year of existence, we can report that *Tikkun* is thriving far beyond our most optimistic expectations. We have attracted more subscribers, received wider national distribution and had more press attention than we thought possible in such a short time. Our daily mail brings letters expressing excitement about and appreciation for *Tikkun*, and people tell us how the articles in the premier issue have stimulated their thinking in new ways.

Why such a response? We think that the historical time is right for *Tikkun*, that many people are hungry for a liberal/progressive magazine that isn't just a party-liner but is open to discussing all sides of important issues. Regardless of the "wisdom" of the media field which says that people these days read only short, pre-digested pieces, our readers say that they are happy to have in-depth, intelligent articles about the things that concern them.

Not surprising to us, *Tikkun* has begun its life in the midst of controversy, much of which has centered around our positioning ourselves as a liberal alternative to *Commentary*. In our initial advertisement in *The New York Times* in May and in subsequent ads through the summer, we said that *Commentary* does not speak for the entire Jewish world and that *Tikkun* intends to fill the hole left by *Commentary's* move to the far Right.

People have asked us why we publicly positioned *Tikkun* in relationship to *Commentary*. Our answer is that we wanted to refute the common perception that *Commentary* is the agreed-upon voice of Jews in the United States. There are large numbers of Jews who do not subscribe to *Commentary's* right wing politics and who are offended that this magazine is assumed to speak for them. By presenting *Tikkun* as an alternative, we hoped to educate the larger world that the views expressed by neo-conservatives in the Jewish press are not representative of the majority of the Jewish population.

Additionally, we were concerned about the sense of hopelessness and alienation amongst liberal Jews and non-Jews that we think comes from believing that the Right is so far ahead in numbers and in power that the only realistic response is to give up. By saying that an alternative to an important neo-conservative magazine exists, we hoped to address this sense of defeat. We thought our ads would signal "you are not alone" to many people who are currently feeling politically isolated.

With these goals in mind, then, we launched our ad campaign for *Tikkun*. Immediately we were thrown into the national spotlight, with the press picking up *Tikkun's* emergence into the magazine world as a "big event." Since *Tikkun* brought together a large number of the voices in the Jewish liberal world in a strong show of unity against neo-conservatism, this was perceived as newsworthy. Also, the press, in its effort to provide excitement, sometimes interpreted our "liberal alternative to *Commentary*" position not so much as a challenge for all of us to rethink our views, but rather as an expression of an intra-family "conflict."

An interesting set of questions emerged as the result of this press coverage: Is it wrong for disagreement in the Jewish world to be made public (as opposed to keeping it quiet)? And, is it disloyal to take an oppositional stand? Some people thought that we were being disrespectful by publicly challenging *Commentary's* politics—we had two National Editorial Board resignations over this issue.

However, many people share our belief that it is important and useful to publicly challenge political and philosophical ideas with which we vehemently disagree. It is not disrespectful to the fundamental humanity of those who espouse conservative ideas to say that we think they are wrong. Our challenge to them is not a personal attack on their competency nor on their commitment to the Jewish community, but, rather, a disagreement with their ideas.

It is in the spirit of *Machloket leshem shamayim*—an intellectual struggle whose goal is to enhance God's glory—that we shall continue to vigorously but respectfully challenge conservative ideas. Public debate is necessary in order to create new ways of thinking.

Returning to our reasons for publicly positioning ourselves as a "liberal alternative . . . " we accomplished what we wanted to accomplish. Judging by our mail, many people who had been feeling isolated were greatly encouraged by the existence of a magazine which voiced their concerns. Also, many articles appeared in the press which discussed the fact that there are large numbers of Jews who do not subscribe to neo-conservatism and that a larger percentage of Jews remained faithful to their commitment to social justice in the last election than any other minority group, with the exception of Blacks. □

Editorials

Compassion as Hardball Politics

An ancient midrash relates that during the Creation, God's attribute of justice argued with God's attribute of compassion. Said justice: don't let human beings be created, because they will act unjustly. Said compassion, yes, but their errors can be forgiven. God sided with compassion, which is why we humans were created.

The emphasis on compassion in Jewish religion—central to the theme of Judaism's most sacred day, Yom Kippur, when sins may be atoned for and Divine forgiveness is available for those who truly repent—became central to Christianity as well. The sense of being washed clean through acceptance of Jesus certainly is fundamental to Christianity's appeal and central to its revival as a mass movement in contemporary life. There is no deeper hunger today than the hunger for compassion.

The power of that need, and the resulting willingness to suspend intellect to follow political leaders or sometimes even bizarre religious teachers who offer compassion, is in direct proportion to the degree that people feel badly about their own lives. Our society's primary psychological dynamic is based on the following two realities:

Tens of millions of people live lives in which their fundamental human capacities—for intellectual and aesthetic activity, for freedom and self-definition, for loving relationships and solidarity with others, for creativity and meaningful work—are systematically denied and stunted. The decreasing opportunities to use one's intelligence and creativity in the world of work, the breakdown of communities, the crisis in families, the secularization of daily life—all have led to a reality in which large numbers of Americans feel deep pain. The permeation of our society with the ideology of "meritocracy"—everything is fair here; you can make it if you really try; whatever you end up with is what you deserve, because you have created your own reality—leads people to interpret the pain that they experience in their daily life as a reflection of their own personal failings.

Most of American political life and mass culture can only be understood in relation to this pervasive pain and self-blaming. On the one hand we have a wide variety of activities that help us repress our pain and self-blaming—including alcohol and drug usage, burying oneself in front of TV, excessive consumerism, and obsessive engagement in many otherwise healthy activities (jogging, aerobics, religion, sports, politics, social life). On the other hand, we have an attraction to right wing politicians and preachers who offer temporary relief from self-blaming by peddling a form of ersatz-compassion.

Starting in the 1930's, compassion was the key to the popularity of the Democrats. The economic policies of the New Deal could not end the Depression—it took a war economy to put Americans back to work. The great political credit of New Dealers was not any "economic miracle" that they performed, but rather that they were able to offer a picture of the world that allowed most Americans to stop blaming themselves and have compassion for their collective situation. The pain in their lives was caused by the irrationality of the economic situation and required a collective and social remedy. This was a message of healing and compassion.

But in the post-war period, as larger sectors of the working class obtained relative economic security, liberals confined their compassion primarily to the smaller sector of poor and minority groups that had not benefitted from what was perceived as a general affluence. Eager to dissociate themselves from the Communists with whom they had made common cause during the war against fascism, liberals joined in the general celebration of the American status quo in the 1950's. Even in the 1960's, when liberals discovered poverty again and launched plans for a "Great Society" that would extend its benefits to everyone, its analysis suggested that there were merely some specific oppressed groups (alternately: Blacks, the poor, Indians, Chicanos, women) who had been left out of an otherwise wonderfully meritocratic reality. Indeed, not only did the liberals seem to accept the ideology of individualism that conservatives had originally developed to justify the struggle of all against all in the marketplace, but they took it one step further. Liberal intellectuals championed psychological perspectives that seemed to suggest that if people were facing pain in their lives, they needed "help" in the form of individual (or later: family) therapy. Even the radicalism of the 60's seemed to reinforce this perspective. Some "oppressed" groups had been left out, and the radicals promised to take their cause more seriously than the liberals, who were allegedly giving only lip-service to the cause of justice. But the underlying idea seemed to pervade all parts of

the American political spectrum: most Americans had a "fair deal" already and now it was time to deal with the special problems of the poor.

No wonder, then, that so many Americans felt left out of the concerns of the liberal and radical movements, and felt that their lives and their problems were being misunderstood and even scorned. Alleged by the liberals to be the bearers of privilege, these majorities still experienced their daily lives as full of pain and frustration. Ironically, it was the Right who turned to them with a message of hope and compassion. The individualistic ideology of the marketplace, the strong emphasis on meritocracy that the Right had traditionally insisted upon, was now complemented by an emphasis on a collective orientation to personal life. New religious and political communities were created in which people were encouraged to see themselves as part of some larger fantasized "we," as Peter Gabel shows in his article in this issue.

The appeal of Reagan is not that he has magical powers as a communicator, but that he offers a picture of the world that provides temporary distraction from the isolation and lack of connectedness of contemporary society. Through an appeal to patriotism, the mass psychology of Reagan suggests, "You are part of a larger community, our nation, of which you can be proud, and through which you can see yourself as fundamentally O.K. Because America is strong and healthy, you are strong and healthy. Just don't pay attention to all those nay-sayers: the liberals who only see problems, who make you want to feel ashamed of America and hence ashamed of yourself. You can feel good about yourself by becoming part of this larger community and affirming its value." Without negating the self-blaming ideologies of the marketplace and "personal life," the Right is able to offer a fantasized world of community in which, in return for uncritical acceptance of the way right wing politicians and preachers define the political ideology, people are able to experience themselves as valuable and accepted.

Similarly, the appeal of the Right's pro-family movement in the U.S. is not based on a claim that everyone's family is doing so well, but precisely on the painful recognition that there is much pain in family life. By insisting that the problems are social and collective (e.g. by pointing the finger at a culture of hedonism and "individual rights"), conservatives implicitly suggest that pain is not really the individual's fault and that self-blaming is inappropriate.

We should critique the Right's misguided efforts to blame feminism and gays for the collapse of the family, we should insist on the positive role that feminism can play in strengthening family life by basing it on real equality, but we must understand that the reason why the Right can get an audience for its kind of analysis is because most people feel deeply despairing about their personal lives. They feel tremendous relief when someone can give them an account of their problems that does not make them feel worse about themselves. No matter how successful instances of family or individual therapy may be in relieving some pain, psychological approaches to pain reinforce the notion of personal responsibility for why personal life isn't more satisfying. While a total denial of individual responsibility can be equally destructive, leading to passivity and irresponsible behavior, any approach that helps people see the social realities that have shaped their individual situation may potentially empower them to join with others in reshaping their world.

Compassion is the key to American politics. In the 1988 election the winning candidate will not be the one who has the most sophisticated programs or the one who knows just where to save money in the defense budget, or the one who has the most photogenic face and most TV experience. Rather, it will be the one who can make people feel more affirmed and less terrified of the "truth" they think they know and must hide from others—that their life is a mess and that they have no one to blame but themselves. A liberal program must be broader than this, articulating a new moral vision of America that includes a picture of how American industries can thrive by using, instead of stultifying, the creativity of their workers; how American foreign policy can move from the rhetoric of freedom to a real commitment to the forces struggling for freedom; and how America can pioneer a path to total worldwide nuclear disarmament. Yet no matter how powerful our moral vision, unless we speak to the pain of daily life few of our words will be heard or taken seriously.

The moment liberals and progressives begin to focus on this concern, they will be able to deepen the level of political debate in America. The pain that people experience in daily life is rooted precisely in the structures of a competitive marketplace, in the destructive consequences of patriarchal relationships, and in the replacement of moral values by an ethic of power and success. The absence of meaningful work based on cooperation and utilization of one's intelligence and creativity, the competitive marketplace and its impact on creating people who have a harder time sustaining friendships and families, the reduction of all values to the value of the dollar—speaking to these issues does not mean aping right wing ideas, but rather posing a deeper and more systematic critique of contemporary social arrangements.

Tikkun is committed to sponsoring analyses of the psychological, spiritual and ethical dimensions of politics. We shall outline the foundations for a politics of

compassion in the next several issues of *Tikkun*. One point we want to raise now that we shall pursue in more depth later: liberals must abandon their put-down approach to people who are attracted to religion. It is certainly correct to criticize the right wing politics that is being sold in many religious communities, and the political manipulation of religion by the Falwells and Robertsons. But right wing politics is not what draws most people to religious communities. If we understand the legitimate attractiveness of a community that articulates a vision of compassion for its members, if we can see the real value in the ideal of being forgiven that is ingredient both in Yom Kippur and in the experience of born-again Christianity then we can see the current religious revival not as a threat to rationality but as a response to real and legitimate needs that our society fails to satisfy. We may reasonably wish to convince the growing religious communities that their compassion should extend beyond the borders of their own participants, but that discussion will never be heard as long as liberal intellectuals project an air of fundamental disrespect to those who take religion seriously.

(This is the second in a series of editorials on the Jewish approach to American politics.)

Nuclear Madness Triumphs Again

Politics is usually so full of obfuscation that it's often hard to tell what is going on. In arms negotiations, this reaches even higher proportions, so it's a rare moment when something becomes so clear that even the untutored can figure out what is actually happening.

The Iceland Summit provided such a moment. The Soviet Union and the U.S. had agreed on arms cuts that would have dramatically reduced the threat of nuclear war. While we would have argued that even with this agreement in place, there would still be a need for further reductions and dismantling of many remaining weapons, the momentum that this agreement could have created would have been hard to stop, even for the most diehard cold warriors. Which is why they destroyed it. President Reagan's insistence on the development of a new and destabilizing defensive system, Star Wars, managed to derail what could have been the most important step made in the last two decades toward the survival of this planet

What still is not widely understood is why Star Wars could reasonably be perceived by the Russians as fundamentally destabilizing. Part of the problem here is that liberals have dismissed Star Wars as "unproven" and "unlikely to work," and have then cast the issue in terms of whether we should go for "a visionary" alternative to arms reductions. But this misstates the problem.

To understand the real issue, we need to think of the difference between a defensive system that works to prevent a Russian first strike against us, and a defensive system that works to prevent a Russian retaliation against us after we have made a first strike. In the first instance, the Russians would be launching thousands of missiles at the same time in a surprise attack. No serious scientist thinks a Star Wars system could be developed that would knock out enough of the incoming missiles to prevent the destruction of large sections of the U.S. population. On the other hand, if the U.S. were to engage in a first strike, successfully knock out much of the Soviets' command and control operation and destroy a large number of their missiles, the Russians' retaliatory capacity would be greatly weakened. In this case the Star Wars system could, it is believed by many nuclear experts, play an important role both in destroying the Russians' command and control communications satellites during our first strike and in knocking out most of the missiles being launched by the Soviets as they begin their retaliatory strike—at least enough to give the United States some serious chance of survival. In short, while Star Wars will never be an effective defensive system, it could be a very important part of an offensive first strike system.

None of us in the U.S. takes seriously the possibility that we would ever use our first strike capacity. However, the Russians have a different assessment of the intentions of some of our Pentagon war-makers than we do. Apart from this (paranoid, we hope) assessment, the Russians certainly do have a legitimate concern that we can recognize: If the U.S. had the military superiority that a first strike capacity would engender, thereby breaking the traditional "parity" that has prevented wars for the past four decades, the United States could much more likely be reckless in its military interventions around the world. This could possibly involve using tactical nuclear weapons with the threat that if the Soviets responded in kind, we would consider their action to be the kind of provocation that might justify using our larger first strike capacity.

This is why Gorbachev simply could not go along with the U.S. continuing to develop Star Wars. If the shoe were on the other foot, if the Soviet Union had a vast technological superiority in electronics and scientific technology, we would all oppose an agreement that allowed them to develop this kind of a Star Wars capacity. In fact, what Reagan was asking to do was to scrap the underlying philosophy of the ABM treaty that

has helped preserve relative stability between the superpowers for the past fifteen years. If one side were to unilaterally develop an effective defense, the other side would be forced to escalate its offensive capacity, knowing that only a greatly larger offensive system would have the capacity to overwhelm a defensive system. That is why Gorbachev said he would have to be a "madman" to agree to lowering his offensive capacity, if Reagan was insisting on scrapping the fundamental intention of the ABM treaty and its dependence on mutual vulnerability. After all, the fewer warheads they have, the more effective our Star Wars system would be. Their only effective way to neutralize Star Wars and the ensuing threat of a first strike against them is to have so many weapons that even after they face a first strike they would still have enough missiles left to render Star Wars ineffective. Hence, the development of Star Wars gives the Russians a strong reason to go in exactly the opposite direction that they were prepared to go at the Iceland Summit. In turn, their increased missile production will be used in the future by U.S. strategists to justify even greater escalations in the arms race from our side.

Is it possible that President Reagan doesn't understand all this? Yes. Judging from the wild misstatements Reagan ordinarily makes on a wide range of subjects, it is actually possible that he does not understand how Star Wars could reasonably be perceived as part of a first strike system. But it is impossible that his advisors fail to understand. They know full well that their plans could only be accepted by a Soviet Union that decided to place its fate in the hands of Pentagon cold warriors or a Soviet Union that was so crushed economically that it simply could no longer afford to play a role as a superpower.

The argument that Star Wars is an insurance policy against Russian cheating is illusory. We would be strongly inclined to oppose any sweeping disarmament deal that did not have built in it a much more effective insurance policy than Star Wars could provide. We would want both international and multi-lateral inspections (as detailed and intrusive as necessary) of all military plants on both sides to uncover any significant but hidden missile systems. If the Soviets didn't agree to that—that would be another matter, and the onus would be on them. But the fact of the matter, and something that has been greeted by our cold warriors not with cries of joy but with upset and a desire to keep this news from the public, is that the Russians are now willing to agree to all the necessary inspections and verification systems that would provide us with adequate surety that they are not cheating.

What about third party weapons and terrorists who might have access to nuclear weapons? Here there is some reason to worry, and some argument for a greatly scaled down defensive system.

We propose an obvious solution to this concern: Let us set up a joint Russian-American research and development program for Star Wars. Instead of promising that at some future date we will share what we have come up with, let the U.S. open its Star Wars-related laboratories and technologies to the Soviets while jointly signing a treaty to ban development or testing or research on any aspect of Star Wars that is not being jointly shared from the beginning with the Soviets. And let them be required to do the same for us—opening their research and development projects to us. The goal here is for the two sides to jointly develop a Star Wars defensive system that both sides would at all times have equal ability to use for their own protection, and meanwhile let both sides agree not to deploy such a system until all offensive weapons systems have been dismantled. That such a proposal would not be taken seriously given the actual relationship between the two countries serves to highlight why the Russians don't take seriously any idea about the U.S. sharing technology in the future: if the U.S. really was ready to share its information, let it start now.

Our point here is that the breakdown in negotiations makes no sense if the U.S. is worried only about what it says it's worried about. But there is another and more persuasive reason why the U.S. insists on Star Wars: the Reagan administration wants to throw an obstacle in front of any progress on arms negotiations, and since it can no longer depend on the demand for verification being an adequate stumbling block, it has found a more effective means of derailing negotiations.

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One need only listen to the conservatives, who "congratulate" the President for not having accepted an arms agreement, to understand the depth of this opposition to arms control. Reagan's hard-core conservative supporters (those who originally championed him and who also people the think-tanks, magazines, Pentagon and White House advisory positions) are deeply worried about arms control. Convinced that the Soviet system is an evil empire bent on world domination that will cynically manipulate the peace-loving sentiments of the American people into supporting agreements that would allow the Soviets to gain military superiority,

these conservative ideologues think the only good agreement is a scuttled agreement. If Iceland had produced a fundamental agreement, they would have opposed it. Their fear is that if sweeping agreements are reached, then a peace psychology will break out in the U.S. Believing that peace is possible, political pressures to decrease Pentagon spending would gather an unstoppable momentum—and this would then weaken the U.S. military capacity. On the other hand, from their perspective nothing would be better than to have negotiations fail and bad feeling flare, because such a failure would support continued massive Pentagon budgets and convince the U.S. populace that an aggressive posture is still necessary.

Although these people give all the superficial appearance of rationality, they are in fact quite insane. They know the incredible risks of nuclear war through technological error. While these errors have so far been caught, primarily because they occurred during periods of relative quiet between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, there is every reason to fear that in a situation of actual tension and political clash between the two sides, technological errors could lead to accidental nuclear war, because neither side would believe the reassurances of the other. And with the new generation of destabilizing weapons on both sides—Pershing II, Trident II, and SS 18s—the dangers are far greater, because these systems move so quickly that the other side would have to launch virtually on warning, without having adequate time to determine the "intentions" of the other side.

What is most discouraging is the role played by the media, the Democrats and the anti-nuclear movement. The media has done almost nothing to explain to the American public why the Russians see Star Wars as a threat. Too lazy or too craven to seek alternative explanations from the American anti-nuclear movement, the media has largely failed to make the current debate intelligible to the American public—thus reinforcing the existing tendency of most people to think, "This is too complicated, I've got to leave these kinds of negotiations to the experts." The Democrats, fearful of Reagan's popularity and of being portrayed as agreeing with the Russians, have managed to make only the wimpiest of criticisms of Reagan's fiasco. Anxious to prove that they are "strong on defense," many Democrats allow the terms of the debate to be set by the Administration, then find themselves on the defensive. And the anti-nuclear movement—crippled by countercultural, anti-leadership and decentralist hangovers from the 60's—has failed to develop a recognized national leadership that could respond to Reagan with an effective strategy designed to demonstrate the widespread support for dramatic de-escalation of the arms race. No wonder then that once again Reagan appears to be getting away with it.

We made clear in our founding editorial our profound opposition to the totalitarianism of the Soviet system. We are deeply opposed to the way the Soviets use their power, both in Eastern Europe and in the Middle East. We know that the Soviets in the past have thrown obstacles in the way of disarmament just as the United States has. We don't have any belief that the Soviets are born-again peaceniks. We would certainly have insisted on a full dismantling of Russia's own (relatively insignificant) defensive system as part of an agreement in Iceland. But we do know that the arms race presses hard on their economy, and that Gorbachev would prefer to develop the economic strength of his society rather than squander it in an endless arms race. That circumstance has created an unprecedented window of opportunity for a meaningful step towards security through nuclear disarmament, an accomplishment which will not bring the millennia but would make the world much safer.

We can only pray that that opportunity remains in place until the American people can elect a new president committed to the kind of broad nuclear disarmament that was almost ours this past October.* But that will only be possible if Congress succeeds in lowering Star Wars funding so that the project doesn't become so massively institutionalized that a new president is faced with a politically irreversible situation. We hope that Congress will also mandate a test ban for as long as the Russians are willing to reciprocate, will ban the production of all new chemical weapons, will mandate the maintenance of SALT, and will bar all tests against objects in space. While the recent revelations of Administration involvement with "private groups" supplying arms to the Contras in open defiance of the law shows that the Reagan crowd willfully finds ways to violate Congressional bans, Congress should do what it can to show that the democratic process has not been totally abandoned. In the meantime, unless the President takes some dramatic step to reverse his inflexible commitment to the arms race, now draped in the flag of a defensive system, he will ultimately go down in history as a man who decisively allowed for the triumph of nuclear madness.

*Incidentally, some people think Gorbachev was never serious about the whole plan and just offered it to make the U.S. look bad. We wouldn't put it past the Russians—but the U.S. could win a tremendous propaganda battle if it accepted the deal and then the Russians backed out. If it is a bluff, then let's call it.

Let Our People Go

One of the first casualties of the Iceland Summit was the progress being made on free emigration of Soviet Jewry. In general, Soviet Jews have fared better under conditions of détente, and worse when confrontation between the superpowers became the major dynamic.

Either way, they haven't fared well. Even under the supposedly liberal Gorbachev regime, Jews face systematic discrimination in education and employment. Anti-Semitic propaganda periodically appears in public media and has repeatedly been used by competing sectors of the ruling elite to strengthen their support amongst a population whose anti-Semitic attitudes long predate the Soviet regime.

It is not surprising that most of the estimated three million Jews living in this nightmare have attempted to distance themselves from their Jewishness and to assimilate into the Soviet mainstream. What is extraordinary is that an estimated three to four hundred thousand Jews want out and are willing to say so.

As liberals in the West, we are supportive of all Soviet dissidents who struggle for basic human liberties and democratic freedoms in the Soviet Union. We agree with Anatoly Scharansky that the struggle of all dissidents is our struggle as well. But we cannot ignore that among these dissidents, Jews face a particularly repressive reality—and a particular precariousness since anti-Semitism has such strong roots in Russian culture and society.

For these reasons, we strongly support demonstrations in favor of Soviet Jewry and would have supported the demonstrations that were scheduled for the now-defunct Washington Summit. Many of us proudly marched as Jews for the elemental rights of Blacks—we have an equal obligation to march for the basic rights of our own people. Nor should we accept as reasonable any attempt to keep Soviet Jewry hostage to a more general peace agreement. While strategically we should recognize the connection, morally we have every right to be indignant at a Soviet system that oppresses our people and then tries to suggest that fundamental decency in the treatment of human beings is contingent upon their getting their way in international negotiations about the unrelated topic of nuclear arms.

At the same time, liberal Jews should also demand that the movement for Soviet Jewry separate itself from those who wish to use our people to advance their own sectarian right wing politics. All too often, rallies for Soviet Jewry have been filled with the crudest anti-Communist rhetoric. Right wing politicians have flocked to these events, wanting to use the pain and suffering of our people as a springboard to legitimate huge defense budgets that have, under the Reagan administration, replaced any serious commitment to human needs and social services. This tactic has seriously alienated a significant part of the liberal world, including many younger liberal Jews, who have mistakenly dismissed the Soviet Jews' struggle as an extension of right wing propaganda. For twenty years the Soviet Jewry movement has allowed itself to be a bedfellow to right-wingers without producing any improvement in the condition of Soviet Jews. It's time to shift course on this issue.

Such a shift requires, in part, a more sophisticated analysis of the actual reality. The Soviet Union is *not* Nazi Germany, though cold war rhetoric makes it difficult for some American Jews to tell the difference. The Soviets do not murder Jews in large numbers, nor do they advocate such murder. In fact, despite Stalin's later anti-Semitic campaign, the Soviet Union was directly responsible for saving hundreds of thousands of Jews from the Nazis when the U.S. and England kept their doors barred. And though anti-Zionist propaganda typically reinforces existing anti-Jewish prejudices, and often refers to stereotypical myths of Jewish power designed to anger a Russian population afloat in its own powerlessness, most Jews in the Soviet Union do not fear immediate physical violence from their neighbors in a way that was typical in many pre-World War II European societies.

Yet Jews are endangered physically the moment they decide to identify themselves as Jews, to take their Jewishness seriously. For example, in the past year Jews have been jailed for teaching Hebrew or for studying Torah with other Jews. Those who press for the right to emigrate face imprisonment, beatings, and physical torture. An intelligent Soviet Jewry movement need not rely on attempts to demonize the Soviet Union in order to show that its violations of the human rights of Jews is atrocious.

Liberal Jews have a special responsibility in communicating our position on Soviet Jewry. On the one hand, we should not allow right-wingers to represent our concerns to the Soviets. We should let them know directly that it is precisely the people who oppose Star Wars and who want an arms control agreement who are outraged at the Soviet's treatment of Jews. On the other hand, we must also make it known in the U.S., and particularly in the Jewish community, that we deeply resent the attempt to use our people's suffering as a pretext to support more militarist policies. The conservatives don't speak for us—and shouldn't be allowed to.

But we also have some bones to pick with some

sectors of the anti-nuclear movement who think that the way to achieve an American consensus for peace is to play down Soviet human rights violations. They fear that highlighting objectionable Soviet actions will contribute to a climate of fear and distrust and prevent the American public from supporting serious arms negotiations. The idea is that if we can get Americans to understand the fundamental humanity of the Russians, we will be less inclined to support war policies.

It *is* important to resist demonization. We *do* need to eliminate the projection onto the Russians of our own inner aggressiveness, with the concomitant tendency to paint them as evil incarnate. These kinds of extreme formulations then give support to unconscious fantasies that we will be able to eliminate all the parts of ourselves that we experience as terrifying and unacceptable by some dramatic, perhaps eschatological gesture ("nuke the Russians"). But we don't need to suppress our legitimate abhorrence of the policies of the Soviet government particularly in the way that they deny fundamental human liberties.

We reject the attempts by some element in the liberal camp to play down the importance of our demand for freedom for Soviet Jewry—just as we reject their attempts to hush-hush human rights issues for all Soviet dissidents. Precisely at the moment when government institutions in the Soviet Union are seeking to make contact with the American public, it is appropriate for us to raise the issue of human rights. Those of us who are proud of our participation in demonstrations and movements that opposed U.S.-supported dictatorships in Central and South America, in the Philippines and Korea, will be no less articulate in our opposition to the oppression of our own people by the government of the Soviet Union. Let our people go!

Sanctions Are Not Enough

The success of Congress in overriding President Reagan's veto of sanctions against South Africa is something that makes us proud of the American system. The overwhelming moral revulsion Americans feel at the systematic oppression of the Black majority could not be silenced or diverted, and the democratic pressures forced our elected officials to do what they might otherwise have preferred to avoid: stand up on a moral issue.

The cynical attempts by the Reagan White House to forestall any sanctions should not be forgotten in all the flurry of attention to summitry, elections, and new crises. In the deepest sense, Ronald Reagan has revealed himself to be morally bankrupt.

However, let's not get too self-righteous ourselves. It would be very easy to rest on the laurels of having voted sanctions. But valuable as they are, sanctions are merely symbolic—they will not by themselves change the political and economic situation sufficiently to empower Blacks in South Africa. In fact, the package passed by the Congress was a very watered down version that eliminated the more forceful ideas proposed by Congressional Blacks. Watch some conservatives turn around now and say, "See, the sanctions aren't working—we told you that this was a foolish strategy."

The goal is not to vote sanctions, the goal is to support democratic forces in South Africa. If the current level of sanctions does not work, it should be dramatically escalated. And if that doesn't work, other more direct means should be found to support those who are struggling for freedom against an increasingly ruthless minority government.

Jews in the United States should do all they can, before the issue is out of our hands, to convey to their friends and contacts in Israel how very seriously this issue is taken by the American public. Israel should be encouraged to speedily discontinue its military ties with South Africa, and its American friends should find ways to help Israel compensate for any ensuing loss of military strength. The American people has made it clear that even its popular President will be rebuffed on this issue. Before Israel allows itself to get set up in opposition to those sentiments, its American friends must move clearly and decisively to alert Israelis to the folly and political liability of its ways.

ABC's "Amerika": The Right Wing Paranoid's Dream

Todd Gitlin

Looking for stupidity on American television is like prospecting for depth in the ocean. But ABC's *Amerika*, to be aired in February 1987, bids fair to establish a new low. So low, in fact, that the serious critic is tempted to take this *twelve-hour-long* miniseries—intended to dominate the ABC schedule over six consecutive evenings of broadcasting—as nothing more than a protracted joke, beneath notice, certainly nothing to get worked up about. Russians taking over the United States? Americans driven to guerrilla war to take their country back? It sounds like one of the wilder sequences from Paddy Chayevsky's *Network*, a self-burlesque so grotesque and preposterous as to inoculate any half-educated audience against belief. How can this dopey exercise have been a wise $32 million investment for ABC's new owners, the famously cost-conscious Capital Cities Communications, whose penny-pinching is so serious as to have led them to fire at least 600 ABC employees when they took charge in 1985? But in the era of *Red Dawn, Invasion U.S.A., Rambo* and *Rocky IV*, the most retrograde fantasies have become political facts; and having taken on a popular aura, they rally the faithful, seduce some of the innocent, and help convince the opposition that it has been outfought. Ideological cartoons have their ideological uses.

Neither the meaning nor the "effects" of such a show can be known in advance, or even after the fact. It is hard to know how anyone will take *Amerika*. The script is saturated with clichés ("Do you think it's possible to kill an idea, General?"), although that by itself has never kept a TV audience down. The characters are "plausible" and "appealing" enough, by TV standards, to prove fit objects for audience identification. We can be sure that people will (as usual) tune in and out, stroll in and out of the living room, alternating ten-minute segments with MTV and CNN and the latest sitcoms. But what has to be faced is that *Amerika* is likely to be one of those television events that help shape the popular discourse of an entire period. Clunky as it is, *Amerika* speaks in the Right's robust tongue to a nation rising in nameless anxieties and thrashing about for fantasy solutions to intractable problems. Not since *Roots*, *Holocaust*, *Shogun*, and *The Winds of War* has a miniseries taken up an entire week of the prime time schedule. There are right wing zealots who will revel in *Amerika* as a plausible scenario for the Hot War to end all Cold Wars, or as an argument for massive armament (if not an immediate first nuclear strike) and against any conceivable arms control or (as it used to be called) détente. Some viewers will no doubt camp it up for a night or two and dizzy themselves with hilarity at the spectacle of a melodrama whose premise is so dumb.

If common sense prevails, incredulity will be strained for all but the truest of believers. What is more disturbing is the prospect of a melodrama that will be just "plausible" or "gripping" enough, in television's shriveled terms, to impress people who have not thought through the world view that it propounds. *Amerika* will be unavoidable. It will be News, An Event, The Cover Story. It will rivet public attention as *Roots* did in the far-gone Carter era. There will no doubt be *Amerika*-watching parties. Millions of young people are most likely going to entertain the thought that the Russian seizure of the United States is plausible. I do not mean to call to mind the spurious notion that the mass media injects ideas hypodermically into the cultural bloodstream of an unresisting population. But repetition does take a toll. The danger is that *Amerika* is going to help normalize a political fantasy for which there is not a shred of evidence. And more than a fantasy: *Amerika* is indeed the most coherent, explicit, and extended right wing vision of the world to be seen in American TV entertainment at least since a heroic FBI man masquerading as a homegrown Communist fended off Soviet subversion in 117 half-hour episodes of *I Led Three Lives* filmed between 1953 and 1956. And as we shall see, *Amerika* in some ways goes further than that Cold War classic and its derring-do ilk.

Amerika has a moronic script by a television writer named Donald Wrye who is also the director and producer under ABC's wholly-owned Circle Films division—quite a plum for a largely untested Hollywood journeyman. He has engendered characters who are,

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alas, just "believable" enough to hold a TV audience. The script, though, is a succession of holes in search of filler—yet the lapses themselves, if properly scrutinized, reveal a good deal about the right wing mentality today.[1] For one thing, it's hard to tell just how America turned into "Amerika." Not much is said about the military aspect of the war of conquest. Apparently America went down rapidly and without a fight, circa 1986—no matter that Ronald Reagan was in office, the military budget was soaring out of sight, and SDI was on the horizon. The Russians hoped to spare themselves both internal unrest and nuclear holocaust (i.e., disarmament can only be achieved at gunpoint). How did those tricky devils do it, then? They used nuclear explosions to generate an Electromagnetic Pulse which disrupted military communications, and then, in some unspecified way, pounced. Somehow (the details are vague in the extreme), they managed to avoid setting off alarms; they didn't land all at once on Cape Cod or the California coast. They may have blown up a city (there is a suggestion of Seattle) to show they meant business. They have also taken over Turkey, Northern Iran, Afghanistan, and Northern Pakistan, though not China.

In *Amerika*'s present tense, ten years have passed, and the Russian occupiers are busily consolidating their power. The KGB rules from Washington. They brainwash, imprison and drug up their tough cases in psychiatric hospitals. Alaska has not yet been pacified, and requires the attention of ten Soviet divisions. Latin America and Puerto Rico make up "Greater Cuba." Canada has apparently been seized as well. The new flag shows American and Soviet flags crossed against a blue background, and between them the white globe and olive branch of the United Nations. UN Special Service Unit troops occupy the country. (The UN commander we follow throughout the interminable hours is the single figure who lacks any iota of humanity: an East German named—what else?—Helmut. The major Russians in the script are softened with an endearing feature or two; they tend to be cynical realists, not true believers, and they are not personally sadistic—a nice humanistic touch. But Helmut simply slashes and burns, as befits his nationality and the UNSSU initials. Thus does *Amerika* attempt to appropriate the iconography of a World War II-vintage movie.) Still the Kremlin frets. The Soviet Union remains snarled in bureaucracy and inefficiency, despite the importation of American labor. Resisters persist despite counterinsurgency, and there is an underground railroad. Under Kremlin orders—in the eyes of the Russians in American residence, headquarters is paranoid about losing control—the occupying Russians are in the process of mobilizing their quislings and moving toward absolute control. As the show starts, the last independent candidate for president in 1988, a Vietnam vet *and* anti-war activist *and* congressman named Devin Milford (played by Kris Kristofferson), is being let out of prison camp ("American Gulag") after a period of re-education. The United States is being disunited into separate administrative zones. The nation, already shabby and impoverished, is being dismembered. There are shortages; people line up at shopping centers on the strength of rumors about shipments of tomatoes. Eventually the Kremlin will order the demolition of the U.S. Capitol and the massacre of Congress.

The danger is that Amerika *is going to help normalize a political fantasy for which there is not a shred of evidence. And more than a fantasy:* Amerika *is indeed the most coherent, explicit, and extended right wing vision of the world to be seen in American TV entertainment.*

The presence of the Russians keeps compelling the characters to ask who a Real American is. *Amerika* is more than superpatriotic; it is full of *volkisch* feeling about who the Real Americans are. One thing they are is filled with the right blood. Much is made of the importance of family continuity across the generations. The hero, Devin Milford, spends hours trying to find his children, taken from him by his treasonous ex-wife, who testified against him at his trial. His father, Ward, a deputy sheriff of Milford County, tries to rally family loyalty by saying things like "You're a Milford." The theme repeats a dozen times: Real Americans have Real American pedigrees. The other featured family (father Peter is an administrative chief on his way up) are the Bradfords—a name with an echo of Puritan forebears. There are occasional Black resisters, but they are little more than local color in the margins. The movers and shakers are sturdy WASPs, Milfords and Bradfords. Apparently real Americans have a Ford not only in their futures but in their surnames.

But the true *Volkischkeit* being propounded in *Amerika* is something far more sweepingly and stupefyingly reactionary. This miniseries is a compilation of right wing fixations about present-day America. Women, for example, are untrustworthy once they step out of good-wifely line. They are at best naive about

Russian intentions, at worst downright malevolent. The traitorous ex-wife of Devin Milford (and mistress of the general who heads the KGB's Washington headquarters) is a judge, and an ambitious one, who ends up as deputy to Peter Bradford when he becomes Governor General of "Heartland," the former Midwest. (That's what happens when women get power.) She proceeds to have her rebel son brainwashed. (There is no decency these go-getting women will not betray.) One of Devin Milford's sons is a "missing child"; Devin's anguish at being kept from his children (a condition of his parole) echoes the missing-children hysteria made familiar by milk cartons. (The message is: Your children are being stolen by strangers—although as Nicholas von Hoffman pointed out in *The New Republic*, the numbers are vastly inflated, and as Nina Eliasoph argues in a forthcoming article in *Socialist Review*, a far greater number of children are actually brutalized by their parents than by anyone else.) Meanwhile, it is the father who struggles manfully to be accepted by his sons, and pines to keep the family together (only the wicked ex-wife blames him for having disrupted family concord); three of the four prominent women sleep with Russian and East German big shots, although one of them (played by Mariel Hemingway) does redeem herself by running off to the resistance after Russian goons shut down her satirical revue.

By implication, good old laissez-faire capitalism is the sole alternative to the Russians' mélange of bleeding-heart liberalism and Party rule.

One major ideological thrust of the 579-page script is that liberal or leftist ideas have no native roots; they have been implanted by Russians. The Abraham Lincoln Brigade are now honored as heroic fighters; indeed, that is the name of the official Russian-organized youth group—festooned with the banner "LINCOLN, FATHER OF SOCIAL DEMOCRACY." (Social Democracy, Communism, it's all the same.) Affirmative action is also tainted, by implication. Peter Bradford's teenaged dancer daughter loses out in her dance competition because, despite her indisputable talent, she doesn't fit into the group. She sticks to "undisciplined gyrations," while the Russians have reintroduced "traditional classical dance." ("Sometimes cooperation is more important than talent," says one comrade teacher.) It sounds as if affirmative action and "plays well with others" are Commie plots, while robust individualism is on the side of healthy American rock music, the very anthem of nonconformity.

Then again, part of the new social studies catechism goes like this: "Our ancestors were very rough and got in fights a lot. There were many bullies, and when Americans conquered the country, they killed Indians who had been living on the land peacefully for thousands of years." That Commie propaganda! The next thing you know, they'll tell you Blacks were brought to this country as slaves. The teacher asks another student why our ancestors conducted themselves this way. The answer:

> They believed in the survival of the fittest. Everything was run by big companies and people who came into the country were forced to work on building railroads or in sweatshops or in steel mills or coal mines for almost nothing, while the companies and bosses and government were rich and lived in big houses and had servants.

This cruel, warmongering philosophy was known as Social Darwinism. But now we believe (so says the quisling Marion) in "Social Humanism." And how is this sinister force defined? "Everyone helps everyone else and we trust our new leaders to help us."

As long as the amalgam is stated thusly, there is little to recommend it. "Social Humanism" neatly blurs communitarian ideals of the welfare state (and the Puritans' own "city upon a hill") with authoritarianism. It is, in short, a neat and obscurantist ideological shorthand, redolent of the "Secular Humanism" so loathed by the Christian Right. Equipped with this formula, the Christian Right's own authoritarianism is camouflaged. By implication, good old laissez-faire capitalism is the sole alternative to the Russians' mélange of bleeding-heart liberalism and Party rule.

So liberal and leftist ideals have no American legitimacy; they are strictly foreign transplants. What is worse, again and again the heroic characters (and even intelligent Russians) make speeches to the effect that the conquest was made possible by America's moral rot. Military maneuvers mattered far less than America's decadence. No one quite had the nerve to fight back. Moreover, the peaceniks apparently welcomed the New Order, since they no longer had to wake up in the morning fearful of nuclear war. However, the cause of American's capitulation was not so much a stab-in-the-back as a rot-in-the-spine. Blessedly we do not hear directly about homegrown radicals who stole the country's secrets and sapped its nerve; but we do repeatedly hear the theme, vigorous in conservatisms both neo- and paleo- from Goldwater through

Reagan, that the country's quarrelsome "special interests" made it weak. In Samuel Huntington's words, America in the 60's and 70's was battered by "a crisis of governability." In Daniel Bell's terms, it suffered from a "democratic distemper." Devin Milford puts it this way: "We did not lose it on the field of battle—we lost it in our hearts. We lost it with our loss of purpose, our loss of vision.... We must blame it on our breaking into a nation of groups—special interests—corporate interests, minority interests, women against men, old against young." There is even a Solzhenitzyn-like speech: "It's amazing how good men [sic] just never seem to be single-minded enough or ruthless enough to survive."

The pathologies of actual American life today are acknowledged—and blamed on ten years of Russian rule. ... Fields lie fallow. Factories have shut down. Tenements molder. Highways decay. Bridges collapse. Cars rust at the sides of roads. Whole populations brood.

Once the Russians arrived, some corporations also had no trouble accommodating, and some of the media cheerfully swung into the New Order. (Devin, in a flashback to the 1988 campaign, sounds like Accuracy in Media's Reed Irvine: "You ladies and gentlemen of the press have not been honest in reporting to the American people just what's going on in this country. Whoever controls the media controls the American people.") Given the moral rot, is it any wonder that the Russians waltzed right in? Devin's villainous ex-wife Marion points out that the welfare-sucking, crime-breeding underclass were ready to sign on with the Russians—disloyal brutes all. Peter Bradford laments: "Where was all that patriotism when it counted? Where was all the willingness to sacrifice? Nobody wanted to be in the Army to defend the country unless they got paid well—nobody wanted to give any time to public service unless they could make a career out of it.... " A comedian (who gets off the only funny lines in the twelve hours) says: "... the only people who were willing to wear a uniform were the elevator operators." The simpatico Russian (his grandfather dies in Stalin's Gulag) blames the moral rot on the pre-"Transition" therapeutic culture, on guilt, passionlessness, and *America's refusal to use its power*—in short, on the feminization of American culture. (What makes the point especially laughable, like ex-Hollywood bachelor Ronald Reagan's moralism, is that the script is riddled with L.A. psychobabble like "What do you feel?")

Along with the theme of moral disintegration comes an obsession with national dismemberment. This vulgar nationalism is pure. The true America stands for the nation-state itself. We hear more about the physical integrity of the American nation than we do about American ideals. Recall that toward the beginning of *Amerika* the Russians have decided to do away with the territorial United States of America. This theme occasions more patriotic disgruntlement than any other in the miniseries. The Electromagnetic Pulse destroyed not only military but commercial communications. "What we didn't expect," says the urbane Russian Andrei, "was that without communications the United States would revert to a collection of separate peoples—separate regions." (The moral is that America needs national networks: not-so-subtle propaganda for ABC itself in a time of electronic proliferation.) Peter Bradford, the Russians' hand-picked puppet ruler for the new nation of Heartland, speechifies to the effect that Americans had long since lost the capacity to see themselves as members of a whole nation. "We don't live with Californians. Do you know anybody in South Carolina?" Decentralism is another Russian plot; no longer signifying states' rights in the vocabulary of the Right, it now means the loss of a moral center. But Bradford gets his come-uppance from the rebels, who know that the manifestly destined American territory is made up of fifty states or it is nothing.

Amerika's final contribution to right wing demonology is an amazing exercise in projection. The pathologies of actual American life today are acknowledged—and blamed on ten years of Russian rule. One particular montage sequence serves as a grand tour of the hideous. We see Amerika as the fiendish Russians have left it. Fields lie fallow. Factories have shut down. Tenements molder. Highways decay. Bridges collapse. Cars rust at the sides of roads. Whole populations brood. To blame the collapse of American industry, the desperate condition of American farming, the deterioration of American public services, on the Russians is a truly breathtaking gambit. It is a scapegoating exercise worthy of Dr. Goebbels himself.

What is appalling is that this travesty is going to occupy the airwaves at all, for twelve minutes let alone twelve hours. The idea of a Russian occupation of the United States wholly misunderstands what the Soviet Union is about. It is unimaginable that any network would grant any left wing equivalent the comparable time. ABC's 1983 *The Day*

After, far less coherently ideological than *Amerika*, lasted three hours on a single night. (It was also partly denatured by a "Viewpoint" follow-up discussion featuring a barely coherent reassurance from Secretary of State Shultz and a panel of experts including Henry Kissinger, General Brent Scowcroft [a Kissinger protégé], and William F. Buckley, Jr., with Carl Sagan and Robert S. McNamara [!] speaking for the Left and Elie Wiesel testifying weakly for humanity.) The BBC's brilliant *Threads* has been aired for two hours on public television and on Ted Turner's WTBS superstation. (One can hardly call *Threads* "pro-Soviet" either. In fact, in its pre-war scenario, the Russians actually strike the first nuclear blow—for which reason, so they said, the Russians decided not to air it on their own television.) *The Day After*, to which *Amerika* is the right wing rebuttal, at least propounded a plausible scenario—international crisis leading to a nuclear strike (of ambiguous provenance). That plausibility rests on a simple fact: both superpowers have nuclear arsenals whose purpose is to threaten attack on the other. *Amerika* offers not a trace of a fragment of an iota of such plausibility. The script *must* stand virtually mute on the practical question of how the hypothetical Soviet assault actually took place—since there is no way to render it dramatically believable.

Readers may recall that a few ideological cycles ago, "Amerika" was the late New Left's name for an America so deeply evil as to have gone Teutonic. "Amerika," outfitted with Kafka's K,[2] seemed to bestride the Third World like a permanent colossus. Now it is the Right—specifically, the American Broadcasting Company division of the Capital Cities Communications—that quivers at the thought of the encroachment of foreign devils. Bolivian drugs, Japanese cars, Hispanic farm workers, Korean computers ... And those most foreign of all foreigners, the Russians, become the condensed symbol of the whole invading armada that threatens an America whose dreams are curdling into nightmares.

Within the slender spectrum of the three nightly news shows, ABC's has been reliably the most conservative for years. But *Amerika* goes further than anything in the history of American television. How to explain it? The mood is certainly right for such a piece of propaganda. With major deregulatory decisions coming from the Federal Communications Commission, ABC has reasons to curry favor with the Reagan administration. *Amerika* was publicly announced (under the name *Topeka, Kansas ... USSR*) at the ABC stockholders' meeting of May 1984, at which Accuracy in Media denounced *The Day After* and specifically urged a show about Russian conquest. No less a figure than ABC board chairman Leonard Goldenson set their minds to rest that day by assuring them that just such a series was in the works. But if *The Day After* exposed ABC to the wrath of the Right, *Amerika* is overcompensation with a vengeance. The takeover worth contemplating is that of ABC by the ideology of *Amerika*. □

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1. I am judging from the revised script dated Dec. 3, 1985. It is always possible that lines will get dropped during editing, or have been revamped slightly in the shooting (though TV rarely allows much leeway for improvisation). Nonetheless, given the production schedule, there is no time for a major revision of the version which I quote here.
2. Actually, the "Amerika" of Kafka's novel by that name was a considerably more complicated place, both sinister and playful, a nation of fullness where dreams might be realized.

The Central Question

Abba Eban

Israel has never been more secure against external menace and never more vulnerable to domestic folly. There is no existential danger from hostile Arab armies. Egypt has removed itself in its own interest from the cycle of recurrent wars. Jordan does not seek military aggression; no sane Israeli has ever sought prolonged military involvement in the anarchy of Lebanese politics, and the Syrian threat can be contained by deterrent power and vigilance. Terrorists are a threat to individual Israeli lives, but not the life of the Israeli state. The American-Soviet balance creates an international environment favorable to Israel's stability. The global relationship, moving toward a possible era of détente, does not imply a Soviet threat to Israel's existence. In these conditions, the darkest shadow hanging over Israel comes from within itself.

Most tragedies in history are self-inflicted. Israel's peril would arise from the stupendous folly of accepting a structural defect through the permanent incorporation of the West Bank and Gaza into the Israeli state. There does not exist on the face of the inhabited globe a single country that resembles what Israel would look like if it were to exercise a permanent jurisdiction over 1,300,000 members of a foreign nation owing no devotion to our flag, our faith, our tongue, our name or our national vision, and recognized by all the governments of the world, including that of Israel, as a separate nation endowed with a specific particularity within an Arab context. If we were to hear that Holland had decided to incorporate four million unwilling Germans into its society, or that the United States wished to have a permanent jurisdiction over 90 million rebellious Russians, we would assume that those countries had decided to resign from world history. Yet there are still some Israelis and friends of Israel who speak as if the annexation of the West Bank and Gaza were a serious option.

To Israel's great fortune the national consciousness is awakening to this danger. The most significant development in Israeli politics during the premiership of Shimon Peres has been the irreversible decline of the annexationist idea. The experience of 19 years has proved two things beyond a reasonable doubt: there is not, and, in all probability, there will never be, a Knesset majority for the application of Israeli sovereignty to all the territories of the West Bank and Gaza; and there is no prospect that Israelis will ever form more than four or five percent of the total population of those areas. Annexation has failed both the juridical and the demographic test.

The evidence for these conclusions is cumulative. In September 1984 all previous commitments to the ultimate application of Israeli sovereignty to Judea, Samaria and Gaza were expunged from the coalition agreement on which the Peres-Shamir government of national unit bases its mandate. Permanent Israeli rule in the West Bank and Gaza is no longer official Israeli doctrine and no accredited spokesman of our country has a right to propound it as a national consensus. (Not all the Israeli envoys in the western hemisphere show awareness of this change.) In June of 1984 the Labour party conference had unanimously adopted resolutions declaring that the incorporation of the administered territories into Israel and the refusal to entertain any territorial concessions "would violate the nation's Zionist principles, undermine its moral foundations, contradict its democratic character and thwart any possibility of peace in the future." The text went on to say that "the settlements located in the heart of the Arab-populated areas not only fail to serve Israel's security needs, but constitute a security problem and a heavy economic and political burden" and that, accordingly, a government headed by Labour will not establish settlements in densely populated Arab areas in the heart of Judea, Samaria and Gaza that are not expected to remain under Israeli sovereignty. . . ."

Over 1,030,000 Israelis voted for this and even more vigorous anti-annexationist platforms in the 1984 elections which enabled Shimon Peres to head the incoming government. Two years later, as prime minister, he successfully sought a unanimous Labour party conference resolution (April 10, 1986) defining "the termination of Israeli rule over the 1,300,000 Palestinian Arabs in the West Bank and Gaza" as the aim of any peace negotiation. The resolution went on to propose the establishment of a Jordanian-Palestinian state "which would also include the populated Arab areas of Judea, Samaria and Gaza that would not be included in the State of Israel under a peace agreement." It was at this meeting that Peres turned to the Palestinians and exclaimed: "We recognize you as a people!"

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Disenchantment with annexation in the labour movement has been paralleled by the action of some prominent Likud politicians, including the mayors of Tel Aviv, Rehovot, Dimona and the chairman of the World Zionist Organization who formed a new "liberal" party with a platform advocating the principle of "territory for peace." The party has a doubtful prospect of independent existence, but its very formation recalls the fact that not everyone in Likud supports political or territorial radicalism. There is a great deal of compromise potential in the liberal wing of Likud. Israeli sovereignty in an undivided Eretz Israel still survives in Likud's official platform and rhetoric, but there is encouraging evidence that it is a slogan rather than a serious program of action. The Likud parliamentary party has always avoided the kind of legislation that would translate the annexation rhetoric into reality. On March 7, 1986 the Knesset rejected a formal motion to apply Israeli sovereignty to Judea, Samaria and Gaza. Only eight of the one hundred twenty Knesset members supported this proposal, five of them being members of Techiya and one being Kahane! The massive opposing majority was composed of Labour members who believe that annexation is undesirable in principle and Likud members who believe it to be impossible in practice. Likud members were also unwilling to absorb the juridical and electoral consequences of enfranchising a vast Arab population which would take virtual command of the parliamentary balance of power and would, incidentally, generate a great leftward swing in the Knesset's center of gravity. Both on national and on party grounds the Likud party is totally inhibited from actually voting annexation into law.

Another circumstance that exposes the fragility of the annexationist rhetoric is that the Likud party is formally committed to support the Camp David accords concluded in 1978 between Menachem Begin and Anwar Sadat. This is the most renunciatory text ever signed by a Zionist or Israeli leader in relation to the Land of Israel. It totally excludes any idea of incorporating the West Bank and Gaza into the State of Israel, decides that the permanent status of those territories shall be determined by agreement between Egypt, Israel, Jordan and the elected representatives of the Palestine people, insists that any agreement must satisfy "the legitimate rights and just requirements of the Palestine people," insists further that any agreement on the future status of the West Bank and Gaza be subject to Palestinian ratification and requires the "withdrawal of the Israeli civil and military administration" during an interim period in which the Palestinians shall exercise "full autonomy" in the West Bank and Gaza.

It is beyond any resource of the English language to express a greater incompatibility than that which separates the Camp David text from any idea of permanent Israeli rule over the entire territory of the West Bank and Gaza. Whatever the inter-party rhetoric may be, it is a fact that the avoidance of annexation is the dominant theme of Israel's official jurisprudence.

The international news media and, especially, Diaspora Jews tend to exaggerate the strength of annexationist opinion and to underestimate the range and depth of public support for a peace settlement based on territorial compromise. The lack of progress in this direction is not the result of inherent Israeli obduracy; it is the consequence of the Arab refusal to enter a substantive negotiation. Israelis react in one way to theoretical fantasies and in another way to concrete diplomatic prospects. The dramatic change that ensued when Anwar Sadat made his voyage to Jerusalem illustrates the speed with which ultimative platforms and conditions melt away under the influence of operative encounter.

Israel has never been more secure against external menace and never more vulnerable to domestic folly.

To understand why other Arab states have not put this Israeli syndrome to the test we must evoke the sharp contrast between the Zionist and the Palestinian diplomatic traditions. Chaim Weizmann's advice to his associates used to be: "If a document or proposal is thirty percent in our favor, put the thirty percent in your pocket and argue about the rest." The Palestinian national movement has invariably taken the contrary attitude. If a proposal was 80 percent in its favor it could be trusted to reject it with total vehemence. Professor Yehoshafat Harkaby, who first analyzed the Palestine Covenant with ruthless realism has now reached the conclusion that this attitude no longer prevails. In his masterly work *Fateful Decisions* (Hebrew, Am Oved, Tel Aviv 1986) he diagnoses an elusive pluralism in which the old fundamentalism might cease to be decisive in the policies of the Palestinian national movement. This is the implicit assumption behind the urgent effort of Shimon Peres to bring the possibility of a converging interest to the test of a negotiation process. If Israel were able safely to disengage from the tasks of ruling the densely populated Arab areas of the West Bank and Gaza, it would not only be making a concession to Palestinian rights; it would also be serving Israel's values and interests. We may even be approaching a point at which the burden of this coercive

rule would weigh more painfully on Israel than on any part of the Arab world. Asked by an interviewer in an Israeli newspaper (*Ma'ariv*, October 3, 1986) whether, in the absence of a peace agreement in the next decade or two, an Israeli leader might have to give up territories unilaterally in order to disengage from the disenfranchised Arab population, Peres replied: "Whoever says that would be telling the truth . . . "

Clearly, this is no zero sum game in which a gain for one side would automatically mean a sacrifice for the other. The movement of opinion in Israel away from annexation has come not in response to Arab pressure, which is surmountable, or to international influence which is negligible, but rather as a result of deep Israeli reflection on the structural fallacy inherent in the present condition. The security of a nation-state depends not exclusively on its territorial configuration, but also and mainly, upon its inner cohesion, the rhythm of solidarity between its citizens, the capacity to share common memories and devotions. In the historic 1947 U.N. debate, when an Arab delegate urged that "Arabs and Zionists should be *forced* to accept the 'axiom' of a single state," the Canadian delegate quietly remarked; "Mutual consent is necessary for living together. Without consent there must be separation." Ironically, it was the Zionist camp which then applauded that remark.

Those among Israel's friends and supporters who are advocating political passivity, in which the present Israeli structure continues to congeal do not seem to understand the consequences of their complacency. There is no political structure in the world marked by such discontinuity as that which describes the relations between the area of Israeli law and the areas and populations under military administration. They live in different worlds of experience and aspiration. Their allegiances flow in opposite directions. The kind of Israeli government which would envisage permanent rule over the 1,300,000 Palestinians is not the kind of government that would offer them the right to vote and to exercise their real numerical weight in our political system. History has created such a duality of national identities between the river and the sea that any unitary framework is bound to be coercive and morally fragile. While Zionist radicals profess to believe that the bigger Israel becomes, the more Zionist and Jewish will it be, the truth is that we have reached a point whence the bigger that we become, the less Jewish and Zionist will Israel be.

It is astonishing to find so many Diaspora Jews indifferent to the question of whether or not Israel is to be a land of double jurisdictions, as it inevitably is under the present condition, or whether there is a Jewish duty to require the affirmation of the principle of consent. In the areas of Judea, Samaria and Gaza today there are 1,300,000 Arabs and less than 50,000 Israeli settlers. The Arabs cannot vote or be elected at any level, have no degree of juridical control over the government that determines the conditions of their existence, have no right of appeal against the judgments of military courts, are not free to leave their land with assurance of a right to return, are not immune from judgments of expulsion from their birthplace and homeland, have no flag to revere, do not possess the same economic and social conditions as their Jewish neighbors, nor the same status for their newspapers and universities. The 50,000 Jews and those who might come in their wake have a totally different set of rights and immunities. Instead of the basic Jewish social injunction "Hoq echad yihyeh lachem," there is a society in the West Bank and Gaza in which a man's rights are defined not by his conduct or by any egalitarian principle, but by his ethnic identity. This is precisely the condition from which the French and American revolutions saved or protected the Jews during their century of emancipation, enabling them to emerge from the ghetto and to join in the wonder and the innovation—and also the challenge—of the outside world. This may be inevitable in the absence of a peace settlement, but it is not a long-term Zionist vision.

If Israel were able safely to disengage from the tasks of ruling the densely populated Arab areas of the West Bank and Gaza, it would not only be making a concession to Palestinian rights; it would also be serving Israel's values and interests.

Despite all its importance, the issue of individual rights is not decisive. For the Palestinians today as for the Jews in 1948 the issue is one of national self-expression. It is anachronistic as well as wildly unrealistic for Meron Benvenisti to urge an Algerian solution, such as that which inspired the French colonialists to believe that to make the Algerian nationalists citizens of metropolitan France would win respite from the painful necessity of territorial separation.

Israel can only affirm its membership in the democratic family of nations today by asserting the provisionality of the present dual jurisdiction. This ceased to be a fully convincing argument after 1977 when the idea

of permanent rule entered the Israeli political lexicon from which Shimon Peres is now attempting to exclude it.

I do not deal here with the various diplomatic expressions that could be given to the doctrines of disengagement or "territory for peace." The Camp David autonomy, the Palestinian-Jordanian state advocated in the Labour platform, the unilateral autonomy proposal bequeathed by Moshe Dayan, proposals in the same sense made recently by Israeli ministers such as Yaacov Tsur and Gad Yaacobi and, above all, Shimon Peres' conscious revolt against quiescence and inertia all show that thoughtful minds are moving away from immobilism. The immediate task is ideological: to combat and defeat the vogue of status-quoism. What is at stake is not "the Palestinian problem," but the Israeli problem. What is Israel, what is its nature, what is its vision, what are its dimensions, where are its boundaries, what is its human composition, what is the degree of its commitment to its Jewish character and its democratic vocation? No other state in the world community has so many existential marks of interrogation hanging over its life and obscuring its forward march.

The issue cannot be determined by marginal interests or "avant-guard" pressures. There are now less than 50,000 Jews in the West Bank and Gaza. This means that they have multiplied at a rate of about 400 families a year over the past two decades during a period in which the Arab population has grown by 200,000! The spectacular marginality of this phenomenon in Israel's social and cultural enterprise refutes the preposterous idea that the 50,000 may dictate the destiny and policy of the four million who reside in the area under Israeli law. I have read ridiculous magazine articles announcing that "armed revolt" by this group would inhibit an Israeli government from adopting a "peace territory" approach even if such an approach became operational. Those who write and speak in this way are not always conscious of the insult that they inflict on Israel's statehood by ascribing impotence and frivolity to its institutions. Today—when the myth of Kahana has subsided into derision, with serious doubt that he can even ensure his own individual re-election—is no time to be intimidated by a demonology that would make a puny illicit squatters the determinant factor in deciding Israel's political and moral future. A movement whose members have been caught attacking mosques four decades after the Nazi assault on Jewish synagogues does not merit any degree of deference. It is part of the problem and the malady; it is not part of any solution.

What must be resisted is the corrupting effect of a spurious Zionist deviationism on the nation's spiritual condition. *The idea of exercising permanent rule over a foreign nation can only be defended by an ideology and rhetoric of self-worship and exclusiveness that are incompatible with the ethical legacy of prophetic Judaism and classical Zionism.* The spiritual father of that movement described the 1,300,000 Arabs in Judea, Samaria and Gaza as illicit squatters who infiltrated in the seventh century into what they should have known to be a totally Jewish country, so that they are merely squatters who took possession when the owner happened to be abroad. Accordingly "they have no rights or lands or homes and are entirely at our disposal to deal with as we see best." Therefore "any decision by an Israeli government or parliament to concede any part of the territory of Eretz Israel is to be regarded as null and void by any citizen or soldier. . . . "

The idea of exercising permanent rule over a foreign nation can only be defended by an ideology and rhetoric of self-worship and exclusiveness that are incompatible with the ethical legacy of prophetic Judaism and classical Zionism.

This seditious nonsense deserves therapeutic treatment, with all possible patience and concern. But no other nation in the world is being asked to put its decision-making process under the influence of ideas which can only add to the sombre lineage of Jewish self-destruction. We must be inspired and guided by our history, but inspiration and guidance are vain if they lead to suicidal zealotry. What we must not do with our history is to try to repeat it. The great Ben Gurion refused to name military units after Masada, Betar and Bar Kochba since he considered it bizarre to name regiments after failures. Nobody would name a French regiment after Waterloo.

Our road points to crucial survival, not to another heroic martyrdom. We cannot dictate the conduct of our foes or even of our friends, but we can at least keep the sanctuaries of reason intact and arm ourselves with a rationality the lack of which is written in the death of past kingdoms. □

An Interview with Amos Oz

David Twersky

David Twersky: You once spoke of Israel as a place that has more nightmares per square mile than any other country on earth. Your book, *In the Land of Israel*, which can be read as a record of those nightmares, was received like an unfamiliar and frightening visage in the mirror.

The elections in the summer of 1984 can be seen as a confirmation that you were right. The hung parliament and the resulting National Unity Government reflected the widening chasm among Israelis. Right after those elections you joined with three other writers in an appeal aimed at the dovish Left to join in the Unity Government. At the time, you spoke of your anxieties about Israeli democracy and of the continuation of the high-voltage public debate. Weimar and the French Fourth Republic were dusted off and brought out of the archives as examples of what could happen. Are you still worried about Israeli democracy?

Amos Oz: I am still anxious about Israel altogether. I think we do not have a clear rift between Left and Right, Orthodox and secular, Sephardi and Ashkenazi. We have very many rifts, so that it looks more like a puzzle than a barricade. This is often very embarrassing for foreign correspondents. They would like every Sephardi to be a settler on the West Bank and a religious fanatic, and every Ashkenazi to be secular, dovish and so on—everything to fall neatly into place. But luckily for Israel this is not the case. When we pleaded for this coalition of the Left with the Likud, the idea was that one ought to opt for the lesser of the many evils. At the time, I felt that either a narrow Labor-led coalition that depended on the Communist party, or a right wing coalition that leaned on Kahane would be an illegitimate government in the eyes of half the nation.

DT: The appeal you made to the Left was not particularly successful. Those to whom it was addressed—Mapam, Ratz, Yossi Sarid, Peace Now—went into opposition. A. B. Yehoshua, who co-signed the appeal with you and two other writers, has spoken recently of a widening gap between himself and many of his former allies on the Left. How do you evaluate the National Unity Government now?

AO: It has met 100% of my expectations because I had very low expectations. I expected this government to prevent the explosion of potential violence, an immediate danger at that time to Israeli democracy. I expected it to deal with urgent economic problems and it did. I never expected it to create unity of the national puzzle we have here, so I am not disappointed.

DT: What is your assessment of the people to whom that appeal was addressed?

AO: I am sorry they did not join in. Had they joined, they would have given the Labor Coalition (Ma-arach) the strength to demand that a Coalition government with the Right (Likud) not involve a rotation such as we are now facing in a government of the Center-Left. That would also have made the Orthodox religious parties much less powerful than they eventually became in a government formed without the Left. That is what I advocated, and I think it was a big mistake that the Left forces stayed out. I conclude my book, *In the Land of Israel,* with a plea for patience, and a certain historic perspective. I think Shimon Peres is operating along similar lines, and I am very happy about this.

DT: During the seven years of Likud-led government you both spoke in public and wrote as a partisan of a specific set of views. Looking back, would you say that your views have changed, specifically in terms of Likud and the hard Right?

AO: I do not remain consistent very often on very many things, but I think my criticism of the Likud government is still valid. I think it was probably the worst government Israel ever had. Those years were both lean and fat.

DT: What do you mean by that?

AO: They were intellectually lean. We had a very unimaginative national policy. Those Likud years were miserable, they were the years of the invasion of Lebanon and the years in which Likud encouraged confrontation between Sephardim and Ashkenazim. They were fat years in terms of the artificial inflation of the economy with everybody living above the level the society could afford, at the cost of destroying the economic infrastructure and undermining the future of Israel.

DT: I remember when your essay on Sephardim in Bet Shemesh in your book *In the Land of Israel* first appeared—it caused quite an uproar. At the time you wrote, "What will become of us all, I do not know. The situation is not good." How does it look today almost four years later?

AO: Slightly better than it looked to me on that particular afternoon in Bet Shemesh. I think this particular wound is beginning to heal. Now, when I say beginning to heal, I am not suggesting that it has healed already. But paradoxically those terrible years of the Begin government gave very many Sephardic Jews the legitimate feeling that they are no longer guests in Israel. They own the country and run it, and rightly so. Politically speaking, I think this segment of the population, the new Sephardic middle class, is the key to political power in Israel. They will decide the balance of power, they will decide who will be the next Prime Minister and what the next government is going to be like. Now they probably are beginning to realize that they have power, which means potentially less bitterness, less anger, possibly more responsibility.

DT: Do you have any suggestions about how the Labor Party and the progressive forces in Israel should relate to the Sephardic community?

AO: I think we must understand that Israeli society is in the midst of a fundamental change. It is on its way to becoming a Mediterranean country. The old Israel was formed on the basis of a marriage between the Yiddishkeit mentality of the ghetto and Russian inspired ideas. It was this that formed the culture of the Israeli Labor movement that originally built Israeli society. If the Labor movement and the progressive forces are to survive today, they must recognize that Israel is heading for a new culture based on a marriage between the temperament and sensibilities of the Sephardic community and the tolerance, openness and moderation associated with the Labor tradition.

DT: Does abandoning Yiddishkeit mean giving up on Judaism having any legitimate role in Israeli society?

AO: Judaism is not Yiddishkeit, Yiddishkeit is only one significant branch of Judaism. The Jewish traditions, values and customs of the Sephardic community are not less genuinely Jewish than the forms of Judaism developed in Russia. It's high time for the Labor movement to begin to respect the strengths of Sephardic culture.

DT: Sometimes this very culture that you are talking about is used as the explanation for why Sephardic Jews voted heavily for the Likud. The claim is sometimes made that Sephardim came from countries where there was no democratic tradition, and that they learned there to respect force and authoritarian leaders. What do you think of this kind of pop-political psychology analysis?

AO: This kind of reasoning is based on a very distorted logic. After all, the so-called "enlightened" Ashkenazim came from countries that do not have a long tradition of democratic values. Czarist Russia and Poland were no more democratic than Khomeini's Iran or the various regimes of the Arab World. The pop-culture analysis of Sephardim is based on a willingness to close our eyes to the obvious fact that most Israeli fanaticism, Left and Right, is almost entirely Ashkenazi. The nationalist zealots of Gush Emunim (the religious force committed to settling all of the West Bank and retaining it forever under Jewish control) are 90% Ashkenazi. So too are the religious fundamentalists of Meah She-arim. While it is true that the Sephardim are often hawkish, they are not fanatic. Religious and nationalistic fanaticism are imported not from Morocco or Yemen, but primarily from the U.S.

The possibility of forging a new bond between the tolerance and openness of the Social Democrats (the Ma-arach Labor Movement) and the warm, passionate Mediterranean Sephardic community does exist. In fact, this could make Israel into a society not dissimilar to Greece, Spain or Southern Italy in some important cultural respects. I think the process of becoming a Mediterranean nation is actually underway—just walk the Tel Aviv streets and you see it. Personally, I like it and have much faith in its potential blessings. The initial dream of transplanting Tolstoyan Russia or Franz-Josef's Austria-Hungary into the heart of the Middle East was bound to remain a dream. The Israeli Labor Movement must abandon the Yiddishkeit/Marxist/Tolstoyan conception and replace it with this new reality. It must forge a bond with the openness and warm-hearted kind of Judaism represented by the traditions of the Sephardic community.

DT: Do you have a similar increase in optimism about the Orthodox-secular tensions in Israel?

AO: No, I am not more optimistic about the Orthodox-secular grievance than I was at that time. Unlike Bet Shemesh, I think the rift between secular and ultra-Orthodox is metaphysical. I do not see any practical way of healing it. I think we have a sincere disagreement with the ultra-Orthodox about the origin of authority, whether it should come from the people as it does in a democratic country, or from the Halacha (Jewish law). I do not see any prospects for a long term compromise on this.

DT: You begin *In the Land of Israel* with a quote from an article of yours in the Labor paper *Davar*, to the effect that we might have to wait a long time as occupiers of the West Bank and Gaza. It has now been 19 years of "Greater" Israel (1967–1986) matching the 19 years of "Lesser" Israel (1949–1967.) How is Israel taking the strain of the long wait?

AO: I think if Israel is being tested, it is failing the test. In the first place, the question of occupied territories versus liberated territories is not an etymological one. As I have written on many occasions, the word "liberation" can only be applied to human beings. Lands cannot be liberated. Clearly we have not liberated the Arabs; we have occupied them. This is an occupation, a nasty occupation, and it is steadily corrupting Israeli society in many ways. It is turning the Jews of Israel from a people back into a social class. It corrupts the basic values of what I would call a more decent element within the Zionist coalition. No, I cannot possibly offer any immediate hope for a solution.

In some circles I am thought to be a raving radical, but I have never been a radical. I have been an evolutionist all my life. I believe in painful compromise vis-à-vis the Palestinians, vis-à-vis the Orthodox, vis-à-vis other segments of Israel. Over the issue of Israel and Palestine there are two emotional attitudes. There are those among the Israeli doves who are dying to form some sort of unity, federation or marriage with the Palestinians. I belong to those who believe in the vital necessity of a fair and decent divorce between Israelis and Palestinians—divorce meaning a partition and separation of land and assets, a fair one but a painful one. I do not share the enthusiasm of some Israeli Leftists about the Palestinians, the PLO or the Palestinian national movement. I happen to think that this national movement is one of the ugliest in modern history, and one of the stupidest ones too.

DT: Why do you say that?

AO: The PLO has never made the slightest attempt to put themselves into the shoes of their rivals. Also, their extreme visions and terrorist methods have brought a row of catastrophes upon their own people. The PLO as a national movement has committed every sin in the book and almost every mistake by refusing to settle for part of the country and by refusing to respect reality.

This is not to say that I want to go on oppressing the Palestinians. This is not to say that I see any alternative to the compromise. This is not to say that I withdraw my 16 or 17 years support of the idea of a Palestine co-existing side by side with Israel. But I do believe that what we need is a fair divorce rather than a marriage, because I do not share, and am not enthusiastic about, the basic values of the Palestinian national movements. This, I believe, is the real rift between those whom I would define as the romantic segment of the Israeli dovish Left and the realistic segment of the Israeli dovish Left. I think I belong in the realistic segment.

DT: What kind of communication exists between you and Palestinians?

AO: Conversations I've had with Palestinians have been quite pleasant as long as they were conducted in private and in English over a cozy cup of coffee. Unfortunately, most of my Palestinian partners in those conversations, when addressing their own constituencies in Arabic, have repeated the most savage PLO lines about the need to exterminate Israel altogether, sometimes just days after they talk to me. Over the years I've learned that what those people say in Arabic to their own constituencies weighs a million times more than what they might have whispered in private into my peace-loving ear. There were, however, two exceptions among those Palestinians who did try to express in Arabic and in public the opinions that I heard from them in private. Both of them were eventually shot dead by their own people.

DT: There are some people who have argued that Israel should not be a Jewish society, but simply an Israeli society. What connection do you think Israel should have to the Jewish people, to Jewish history, and to Judaism? And how should Israeli Arabs feel about being part of a society that is explicitly Jewish?

AO: Israeli society is by definition a Jewish society, because I regard Judaism as a civilization, not just a religion. Israeli society operates within the domain of a Jewish language, Hebrew, and also within the domain of a rich sense of Jewish sensibilities, memories and, indeed, lunacies. Israeli Arabs face a fascinating challenge of an Arab-Hebrew culture in the same way in which Jews in Arabic countries have created in the past a Jewish-Arabic culture. They may be developing already a unique brand of Arabism, namely Israeli-Jewish Arabism.

DT: In Israel there is a long and unique relationship between the literary and academic communities on the one side, and the political elites on the other. Mostly this is a tradition of the Left, with the exception of Uri Zvi Greenberg who is on the Right. Is this tradition in decline or do we tend to glorify it retroactively?

AO: Both. There has been a certain tradition of Jewish respect for the intellectuals, writers, painters—those who are supposed to be the heirs of the prophets. Respect but not necessarily obedience, respect but not necessarily collaboration. Everyone respected Brenner, everybody respected Bialik, everybody including the political leaders, respected Alterman. Practically and politically speaking, however, very few people actually followed their ideals.

Presently I have no doubt in my mind that Shimon Peres has a deep respect, perhaps an exaggerated respect for the literary community, the academic community, and so on. Respect does not in his case necessarily

mean agreement, however. So we talk to each other—Peres and myself, Peres and other writers, Peres and other academics.

DT: It is clear you have carefully read Yosef Haim Brenner. What other writers would you point to as major influences on your writing?

AO: In Hebrew literature, Berdachefsky and Bialik-Agnon. In world literature, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Checkov, Melville, Sherwood Anderson and William Faulkner, in this order.

DT: There has been a lot of critical attention focussed on David Grossman's novel on Yaakov Shabtai in the U.S., as well as on Aharon Applefeld and several other Israeli writers. Who among the new Israeli writers are you reading with care?

AO: I am reading everyone with care, including those for whom I do not care very much. I am absolutely fascinated by contemporary Israeli literature, and rather than deal specifically with a particular author, I want to tell you generally that I think the present scene in Israeli literature is one of the most fascinating literary scenes in the world. Not necessarily one of the best, but one of the most fascinating precisely because it is so deeply divided between trends, directions, traditions, influences and so on. The plurality and polyphony alone excite me. I am also positively thrilled by the Latin American and South African scene in contemporary literature.

DT: Anton Shamas' new novel, *Arabesque*, has been published to great critical acclaim. Do you consider the presence of this novel, written by an Israeli Arab in Hebrew, to be a turning point in Israeli society?

AO: I think of this as a triumph, not necessarily for Israeli society, but for the Hebrew language. If the Hebrew language is becoming attractive enough for a non-Jewish Israeli to write in it, then we have arrived.

DT: You made a very deep impression at last winter's PEN Congress in New York. You referred there to the cowardice of the relatively decent societies in failing to distinguish themselves from the bloody ones.

AO: I was amazed by the fact that I had to say very basic, elementary things, and that those elementary things were received with enthusiasm rather than with the kind of shrug that the obvious should have evoked. All I said was that writers are in the department of making distinctions, and consequently, when we deal with politics and politicians, countries and governments, we ought to be distinguishing bad from worse from worst. This is hardly a sensational or revolutionary statement. I was amazed and I am still amazed by the fact that this evoked such a tremendous polemical storm.

DT: In a Congress where Gunther Grass says something to the effect that capitalism is not better than Gulag Communism, apparently somebody is not making the distinction between bad and worse and worst.

AO: Well, I say, and I am quoting myself, that those who fail to distinguish between the various degrees of evil are bound in the end to become servants of evil themselves.

DT: On the one hand, some writers consider the West to be guilty of committing original sins against the rest of the world over the past several hundred years. On the other, some Israeli writers apparently consider Israel to be guilty of original sins against Palestinians. Do you see any kind of connection, say an intellectual mood, common to the local scene and the larger scene?

AO: There are certain intellectual trends here, there and everywhere that attempt to simplify and create some sort of a modern catechism with the good guys and the bad guys. In the worst cases this leads some writers and intellectuals to what I regard as reversed racism—anything that is Third World is bound to be good by definition, and anything that is European is bound to be bad by definition. I do not buy that, I cannot buy that. I think it is an agonizing spectacle to watch those freedom fighters, or self-determination fighters, stop short of a struggle over civil rights in so many newly liberated countries. Many of those writers, poets, thinkers and intellectuals seem most unreal. I'm speaking of those who claim that this or that country ought to be "liberated," and then lose interest in that country the moment it is "liberated" from Western presence, even though it may be oppressed by a new ruling class or it may become a dreadful place. I am not going to lose interest in the Palestinians once the Palestinians arrive at self-determination.

DT: Would you say that the "bad, worse, worst" formula is still a bit too defensive? Does it not pay lip service to the same world weary cynicism against which you are speaking? Is there no good at all—only bad, worse and worst?

AO: I am very skeptical about the limits of politics to achieve goals. It may or may not depend on degrees, but I have not seen much good done by politics or the politicians I know.

DT: You also spoke of the poisonous effects of history. Yet your writing is so clearly located within history. What did you mean by that phrase?

AO: I think it is wrong for people to assume that life

forever moves in a series. It is wrong for people to assume that the Palestinians are an incarnation of Rome, or that Russia is a modern incarnation of the devil. These are the kinds of blunders which prevent people from seeing the essential uniqueness of each situation. I think people tend to be poisoned by history, to the extent that they relate every immediate problem to some familiar historical event. I think this is wrong and dangerous.

DT: Speaking of the worse and the worst, in October, 1985 you participated in an unofficial forum in Hungary organized by the Helsinki Federation for Human Rights. What was your impression of the Eastern European writers and intellectuals with whom you met?

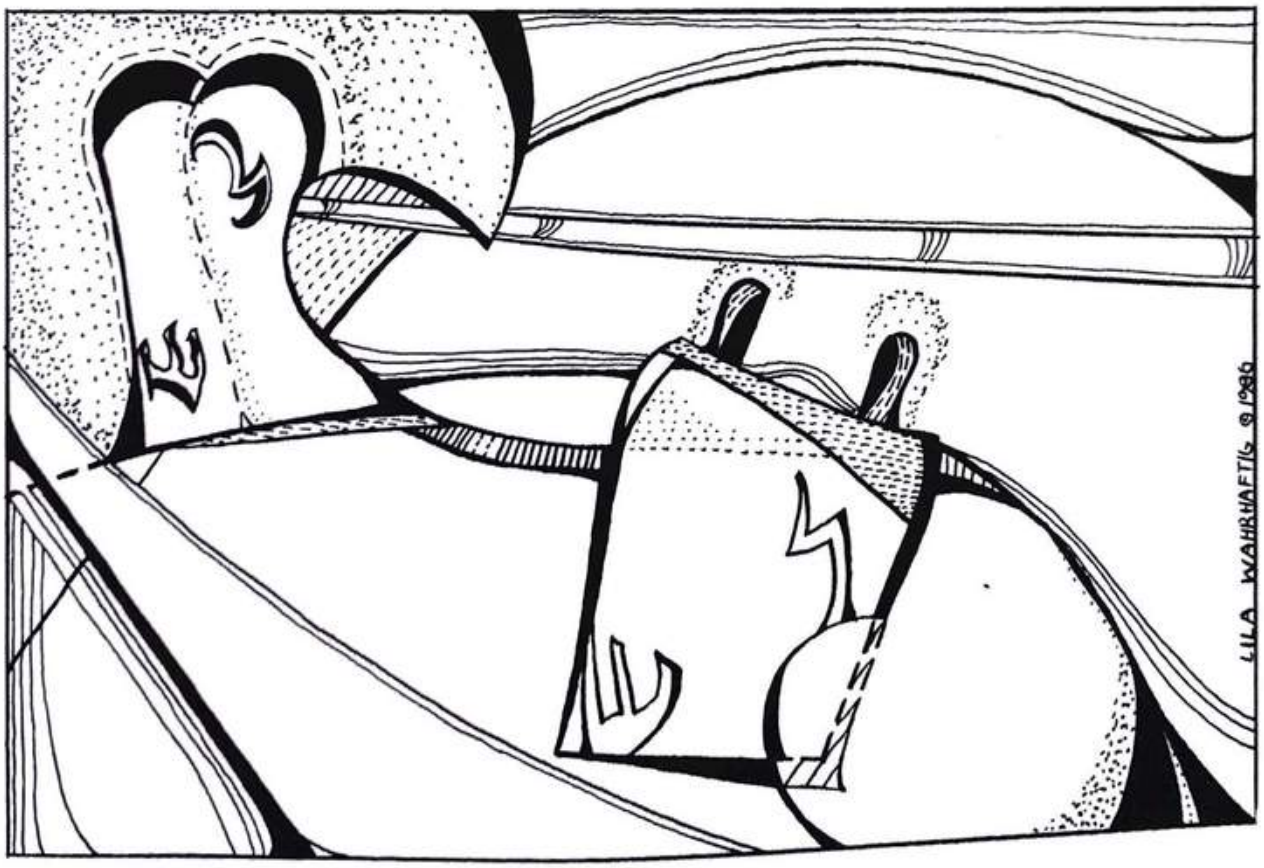
AO: They are oppressed. They are oppressed in a way which I have not seen before anywhere in the West. I have seen similar phenomena in Latin America in 1978, but not in the democratic West. This is not to say that I regard the democratic West as a garden of roses for writers, or for anyone. But again, there are grades or degrees of evil. Mind you, on the degrees of evil, Hungary is not the worst. On the contrary, Hungary is probably the best in the Eastern Block.

DT: At the forum in Hungary, you spoke of the writer as a smoke detector. What did you mean by that image?

AO: I think every corruption in the world begins with some corruption of the language. For example, the term "liberated territories" is used by some to refer to the West Bank. I think writers, precisely because they deal with words, are the best equipped, if not qualified, to sense this linguistic corruption before it actually degenerates into a total corruption of the society. I think the corruption of Nazi Germany, the corruption of Germany in general, began long before Hitler with the corruption of the German language vis-à-vis the Jews. The moment you refer to human beings as insects, the consequences are only a matter of time. □

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Standing Again at Sinai: Jewish Memory from a Feminist Perspective

Judith Plaskow

There is perhaps no verse in the Torah more disturbing to the feminist than Moses' warning to his people in Exodus 19:15, "Be ready for the third day; do not go near a woman." For here, at the very moment that the Jewish people stand at Mount Sinai ready to enter into the covenant—not now the covenant with the individual patriarchs but presumably with the people as a whole—Moses addresses the community only as men. The specific issue is ritual impurity: an emission of semen renders both a man and his female partner temporarily unfit to approach the sacred (Leviticus 15:16-18). But Moses does not say, "Men and women do not go near each other." At the central moment of Jewish history, women are invisible. It was not their experience that interested the chronicler or that informed and shaped the text.

This verse sets forth a pattern recapitulated again and again in Jewish sources. Women's invisibility at the moment of entry into the covenant is reflected in the content of the covenant which, in both grammar and substance, addresses the community as male heads of household. It is perpetuated by the later tradition which in its comments and codifications takes women as objects of concern or legislation but rarely sees them as shapers of tradition and actors in their own lives.

It is not just an historical injustice that is at stake in this verse, however. There is another dimension to the problem of the Sinai passage essential for understanding the task of Jewish feminism today. Were this passage simply the record of an historical event long in the past, the exclusion of women at this critical juncture would be troubling, but also comprehensible for its time. The Torah is not just history, however, but also living memory. The Torah reading, as a central part of the Sabbath and holiday liturgy, calls to mind and recreates the past for succeeding generations. When the story of Sinai is recited as part of the annual cycle of Torah readings or as a special reading for Shavuot, women each time hear ourselves thrust aside anew, eavesdropping on a conversation among men and between man and God.[1]

Significant and disturbing as this passage is, however, equally significant is the tension between it and the reality of the Jewish woman who hears or reads it. The passage affronts because of a contradiction between the holes in the text and many women's felt experience. If Moses' words shock and anger, it is because women have always known or assumed our presence at Sinai; the passage is painful because it seems to deny what we have always taken for granted. On the one hand, of course we were there; on the other, how is it then that the text could imply we were not there?

This contradiction seems to me crucial, for construed a certain way, it is a potential bridge to a new relationship with the tradition. On the one hand, women can choose to accept our absence from Sinai, in which case we allow the male text to define us and our relationship to the tradition. On the other hand, we can stand on the ground of our experience, on the certainty of our membership in our own people. To do this, however, is to be forced to re-member and recreate its history. It is to move from anger at the tradition, through anger to empowerment. It is to begin the journey toward the creation of a feminist Judaism.

Give Us Our History

The notion that a feminist Judaism must reclaim Jewish history requires some explication, for it is by no means generally accepted. There are many Jewish feminists who feel that women can take on positions of authority, create new liturgy, and do what we need to do to create a community responsive to our needs in the present without dredging around in a history that can only cause us pain. What we need to do, according to this view, is to acknowledge and accept the patriarchal nature of the Jewish past and then get on with issues of contemporary change.

But while the notion of accepting women's past subordination and attending to the present has some attractiveness, it strikes me as in the end untenable. If it is possible within any historical, textual tradition to create a present in dramatic discontinuity with the past—and I doubt that it is—it certainly seems impossible within Judaism. For as I have already suggested, the central events of the Jewish past are not simply history but living, active memory that continues to shape Jewish identity and self-understanding. In Judaism, memory is

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not simply a given but a religious obligation.[2] "We Jews are a community based on memory," says Martin Buber. "The spiritual life of the Jews is part and parcel of their memory."[3] It is in retelling the story of our past as Jews that we learn who we truly are in the present.

Women's invisibility at the moment of entry into the covenant is reflected in the content of the covenant which, in both grammar and substance, addresses the community as male heads of household.

While the Passover Seder is perhaps the most vivid example of the importance of memory in Judaism, the rabbinic reconstruction of Jewish history after the destruction of the second Temple provides an example of remembrance that is also recreation. So deeply is the Jewish present rooted in Jewish history that, after 70 C.E, when the rabbis profoundly transformed Jewish life, the changes they wrought in Jewish reality were also read back into the past so that they could be read out of the past as a foundation for the present. Again and again in rabbinic interpretations, we find contemporary practice projected back into earlier periods so that the chain of tradition can remain unbroken. In Genesis, for example, Abraham greets his three angelic visitors by killing a calf and serving it to them with milk (18:7-8), clearly a violation of the laws of kashrut which forbid eating milk and meat together. As later rabbinic sources read the passage, however, Abraham first served his visitors milk and only then meat, a practice permitted by rabbinic law.[4] The links between past and present were felt so passionately that any important change in the present had to entail a new understanding of history.

This has an important moral for Jewish feminists. We too cannot redefine Judaism in the present without redefining our past because our present grows out of our history. The Jewish need to reconstruct the past in light of the present converges with the feminist need to recover women's history within Judaism. Knowing that women are active members of the Jewish community in the present, we know that we were always part of the community, not simply as objects of male purposes but as subjects and shapers of tradition. To accept androcentric texts and contemporary androcentric histories as the whole of Jewish history is to enter into a secret collusion with those who would exclude us from full membership in the Jewish community. It is to accept the idea that men were the only significant agents in Jewish history when we would never accept this (still current) account of contemporary Jewish life. The Jewish community today is a community of women and men, and it has never been otherwise. It is time, therefore, to recover our history as the history of women and men, a task that will both restore our own history to women and provide a fuller Jewish history for the Jewish community as a whole.[5]

History, Historiography, and Torah

It is one thing to see the importance of recovering women's history, however, and another to accomplish this task in a meaningful way. First of all, as historian, the Jewish feminist faces all the same problems as any feminist historian trying to recover women's experience: both her sources and the historians who have gone before her record male activities and male deeds in accounts ordered by male values. What we know of women's past are those things men considered significant to remember, seen and interpreted through a value system that places men at the center.[6] But, as if this were not enough, the Jewish feminist faces additional problems raised by working with religious sources. The primary Jewish sources available to her for historical reconstruction are not simply collections of historical materials but also Torah. As Torah, as Jewish teaching, they are understood by the tradition to represent divine revelation, patterns of living adequate for all time. In seeking to restore the history of Jewish women, the Jewish feminist historian is not "simply" trying to revolutionize the writing of history but is also implicitly or explicitly acting as theologian, claiming to amplify Torah, and thus questioning the finality of the Torah we have. It is important, therefore, in placing the recovery of women's history in the context of a feminist Judaism to confront the view of Torah that this implies.

I understand Torah, both in the narrow sense of the five books of Moses and in the broader sense of Jewish teaching, to be the partial record of the "Godwrestling" of part of the Jewish people.[7] Again and again in the course of its existence, the Jewish people has felt itself called by and held accountable to a power not of its own making, a power that seemed to direct its destiny and give meaning to its life. In both ordinary and extraordinary moments, it has found itself guided by a reality that both propelled and sustained it and to which gratitude and obedience seemed the only fitting response.

The term "Godwrestling" seems appropriate to me to describe the written residue of these experiences, for I do not imagine them à la Cecil B. DeMille with the

booming of a clear (male) voice or the flashing of tongues of flame, publicly visible, publicly verifiable, needing only to be transcribed. Rather, they were moments of profound experience, sometimes of illumination but also of mystery, moments when some who had eyes to see understood the meaning of events that all had undergone. Such illumination might be hard-won, or sudden experiences of clarity or presence that come unexpected as precious gifts. But they would need to be interpreted and applied, struggled with and puzzled over, passed down and lived out before they came to us as the Torah of God.

I call this record partial, for moments of intense religious experience cannot be pinned down and reproduced; they can only be suggested and pointed to so that readers or listeners may, from time to time, catch for themselves the deeper reality vibrating behind the text. Moreover, while moments of revelation may lead to abandonment of important presuppositions and openness to ideas and experiences that are genuinely new, they also occur within cultural frameworks that can never be escaped entirely, so that the more radical implications of a new understanding may not even be seen. I call Torah the record of part of the Jewish people because the experience and wrestling found there are for the most part those of men. The experience of being summoned and saved by a single power, the experience of human likeness to the creator God, the experiences of liberation and God's passion for justice were sustained within a patriarchal framework that the interpretation of divine revelation served to consolidate rather than shatter.[8]

In Judaism, memory is not simply a given but a religious obligation.

There is a strand in the tradition that acknowledges this partiality of Torah and thus indirectly allows us to see what is at stake in the recovery of women's past. According to many ancient Jewish sources, the Torah pre-existed the creation of the world. It was the first of God's works, identified with the divine wisdom in Proverbs 8. It was written with black fire on white fire and rested on the knee of God. It was the architectural plan God consulted in creating the universe.[9] For the Kabbalists, this pre-existent or primordial Torah is God's wisdom and essence; it expresses the immensity of his being and power. The written Torah of ink and parchment is only the "outer garments," a limited interpretation of what lies hidden, a document that the initiate must penetrate more and more deeply to gain momentary glimpses of what lies behind. A later development of the idea of a secret Torah asserted that each of the 600,000 souls that stood at Sinai had its own special portion of Torah that only that soul could understand.[10] Obviously, no account of revelatory experience by men or women can describe or exhaust the depths of divine reality. But this image of the relation between hidden and manifest Torah reminds us that half the souls of Israel have not left for us the Torah they have seen. Insofar as we can begin to recover the God-wrestling of women, insofar as we can restore a part of their vision and experience, we have more of the primordial Torah, the divine fullness, of which the present Torah of Israel is only a fragment and a sign.

The recovery of primordial Torah is a large task, however, to ask "history" to perform. And in fact, in the foregoing discussion, I have been slipping back and forth between different meanings and levels of the term "history." The rabbinic reconstruction of history, which I used as an example of rewriting Jewish history, by no means involved "doing history" in our modern sense. On the contrary, it was anachronistic and ahistorical. Taking for granted the historical factuality of the momentous events at Sinai, the rabbis turned their attention to mining their eternal significance. Reshaping Jewish memory did not involve discovering what "really happened," but projecting later developments back onto the eternal present of Sinai.[11]

Recovering women's history through modern historiography, a second meaning of history that I have used implicitly, is not just different from rabbinic modes of thinking, it is in conflict with them. It assumes precisely that the original revelation, at least as we have it, is not sufficient, that there are enormous gaps both in tradition and in the scriptural record, that to recapture women's experiences we need to go behind our records and *add* to Torah, acknowledging that that is what we are doing.[12]

But while the tensions between feminist and traditional approaches to Jewish history are significant and real, there is one important thing they have in common. The feminist too is not simply interested in acquiring more knowledge about the past but in incorporating women's history as part of the living memory of the Jewish people. Information about women's past may be instructive and even stirring, but it is not transformative until it becomes part of the community's collective memory, part of what Jews call to mind in remembering Jewish history. While historiographical research may be crucial to recovering women's history, it is not sufficient to make that history live. The Jewish feminist reshaping of Jewish history must therefore proceed on several

levels at once. Feminist historiography can open up new questions to be brought to the past and new perspectives to be gleaned from it. It must be combined, however, with feminist midrash and feminist liturgy before it becomes part of a living feminist Judaism.

Reshaping Jewish Memory

Feminist historiography as a starting point for the feminist reconstruction of Jewish memory challenges the traditional androcentric view of Jewish history and opens up our understanding of the Jewish past. In the last two decades, feminist historians have demanded and effected a far-reaching reorientation of the presuppositions and methods of historical writing. Questioning the assumption that men have made history while women have stayed home and had babies, they have insisted that women and men have lived and shaped history together. Any account of a period or civilization that does not look at the roles of both women and men, their relation and interaction, is "men's history" rather than the universal history it generally claims to be.[13]

Any number of examples might show how the insights and methods of feminist historians have been applied to Jewish women's history. Archeologist Carol Meyers, for instance, has begun to reconstruct the roles of women in ancient Israel through a combination of biblical and archeological evidence. She asks important new questions about the changing roles of women in biblical society, questions that point to the social construction of gender in biblical culture. In the period of early settlement, she argues, when women's biological and agricultural contributions would have been crucial, their status was likely higher than in the different cultural context of the monarchy. Restrictions on women's roles that were initially practical only later became the basis for "ideologies of female inferiority and subordination."[14] New Testament scholar Bernadette Brooten, working on the inscriptional evidence for women's leadership in the ancient synagogue, shows that during the Roman and Byzantine periods, women took on important synagogue functions in a number of corners of the Jewish world.[15] Her research on the inscriptions, and also on Jewish women's exercise of the right to divorce,[16] sheds light on the wider social world in which the Mishnah emerged, clarifying and questioning the extent of its authority. Chava Weissler's work on the *tekhines*, the petitionary prayers of European Jewish women, provides us with sources that come in part from women's hands, giving us an intimate view of women's perceptions. While these sources have often been dismissed as "women's literature" or relegated to casual reading, they give us important glimpses of women's religious experiences. They also make us aware of the subtle interplay between the ways women have found to express themselves and the influence of patriarchal religion.[17]

While none of this women's history alters the fundamentally androcentric perspective of "normative" texts or proves that Judaism is really egalitarian, it does reveal another world around and underneath the textual tradition, a world in which women are historical agents struggling within and against a patriarchal culture. In the light of women's history, we cannot see the Tanach or the Mishnah or any Jewish text simply as given, as having emerged organically from an eternal, unambiguous, uncontested religious vision. Indeed, feminist historians have come to recognize that religious, literary, and philosophical works setting forth women's nature or tasks are often prescriptive rather than descriptive of reality. So far from giving us the world "as it is," "normative" texts may reflect the tensions within patriarchal culture, seeking to maintain a particular view of the world over against social, political, or religious change.[18] "Normative" texts reflect the views of the historical winners, winners whose victories were often achieved at the expense of women and of religious forms that allowed women some power and scope.[19] Insofar as women's religious and social self-expression and empowerment are values we bring to these texts, the texts are relativized, their normative status shaken. We see them against the background of alternative religious possibilities, alternatives that must now be taken seriously because without them, we have only the Judaism of a male elite and not the Judaism of all Jews.

The original revelation, at least as we have it, is not sufficient . . . to recapture women's experiences we need to go behind our records and add *to Torah.*

Recovering Jewish women's history, then, extends the realm of the potentially usable Jewish past. Women's experiences expand the domain of Jewish resources on which we can draw in recreating Judaism in the present. In writing women into Jewish history, we ground a contemporary Jewish community that can be a community of women and men. But historiography by itself cannot reshape Jewish memory. The gaps in the historical record alone would prompt us to seek other ways

of remembering. However sensitively we read between the lines of mainstream texts seeking to recapture the reality of women's lives, however carefully we mine non-literary and non-Jewish materials using them to challenge "normative" sources, many of our constructions will remain speculations and many of our questions will go unanswered.

Moreover, even if it were not the case that the sources are sparse and unconcerned with our most urgent questions, feminist historiography would still provide only a fragile grounding for Jewish feminist memory. For historiography recalls events that memory does not recognize.[20] It challenges memory, tries to dethrone it; it calls it partial and distorted. History provides a more and more complex and nuanced picture of the past; memory is selective. How do we recover the parts of Jewish women's history that are forgotten, and how do we then ensure that they will be *remembered*—incorporated into our communal sense of self?

The discovery of women in our history can feed the impulse to create midrash; midrash can seize on history and make it religiously meaningful. Remembering and inventing together help recover the hidden half of Torah, reshaping Jewish memory to let women speak.

The answer to these questions is partly connected to the wider reconstruction of Jewish life. We turn to the past with new questions because of present commitments, but we also remember more deeply what a changed present requires us to know. Yet Jewish feminists are already entering into a new relationship with history based not simply on historiography but also on more traditional strategies for Jewish remembrance. The rabbinic reconstruction of Jewish history, after all, was not historiographical but midrashic. Assuming the infinite meaningfulness of biblical texts, the rabbis took passages that were sketchy or troubling and wrote them forward. They brought to the Bible their own questions and found answers that showed the eternal relevance of biblical truth. Why was Abraham chosen to be the father of a people? What was the status of the law before the Torah was given? Who was Adam's first wife? Why was Dinah raped? These were not questions for historical investigation but imaginative exegesis and literary amplification.

The open-ended process of writing midrash, simultaneously serious and playful, imaginative, metaphoric, has easily lent itself to feminist use. While feminist midrash—like all midrash—is a reflection of contemporary beliefs and experiences, its root conviction is utterly traditional. It stands on the rabbinic insistence that the Bible can be made to speak to the present day. If the Torah is our text, it can and must answer our questions and share our values; if we wrestle with it, it will yield meaning.

Together and individually then, orally and in writing, women are exploring and telling stories that connect our history with present experience. Ellen Umansky, for example, retelling the story of the sacrifice of Isaac from Sarah's perspective, explores the dilemma of a woman in patriarchal culture trying to hold onto her sense of self. Isaac was God's gift to Sarah in her old age. She has no power to prevent Abraham's journey to Moriah; she can only wait wailing and trembling for him to return. But she is angry; she knows that God does not require such sacrifices. Abraham cannot deprive her of her own religious understanding whatever demands he may make upon her as his wife.[21]

While midrash can float entirely free from historiography, as it does in this example, the latter can also feed the former so that midrash plays with historical clues but extends them beyond the boundaries of the fragmentary evidence. In her midrash on the verse, "And Dinah ... went out to see the daughters of the land" (Genesis 34:1), Lynn Gottlieb explores the possible relations between Dinah and Canaanite women based on the presumption of Israelite women's historical attachment to many gods and goddesses.[22] A group of my students once used the same historical theme to write their own midrash on the sacrifice of Isaac as experienced by Sarah. In their version, Sarah, finding Abraham and Isaac absent, calls to Yahweh all day without avail. Finally, almost in despair, she takes out her Asherah and prays to it, only to see her husband and son over the horizon wending their way home.

Moving from history into midrash, Jewish feminists cross a boundary to be both honored and ignored. Certainly, there is a difference between an ancient Aramaic divorce document written by a woman and a modern midrash on Miriam or Sarah. The former confronts and challenges; it invites us to find a framework for understanding the past broad enough to include data at odds with selective memory. The latter is more fully an expression of our own convictions, a creative imagining based on our own experience. Yet in the

realm of Jewish religious expression, imagination is permitted and even encouraged. Midrash is not a violation of historical canons but an enactment of commitment to the fruitfulness and relevance of biblical texts. It is partly through midrash that the figurine or document, potentially integrable into memory but still on the periphery, is transformed into narrative the religious ear can hear. The discovery of women in our history can feed the impulse to create midrash; midrash can seize on history and make it religiously meaningful. Remembering and inventing together help recover the hidden half of Torah, reshaping Jewish memory to let women speak.

Feminist historians have come to recognize that religious, literary, and philosophical works setting forth women's nature or tasks are often prescriptive rather than descriptive of reality.

There is also a third mode of recovery: speaking/acting. Historically, the primary vehicle for transmission of Jewish memory has been prayer and ritual, the liturgical reenactment and celebration of formative events. Midrash can instruct, amuse, edify, but the cycles of the week and year have been the most potent reminders of central Jewish experience and values. The entry of the High Priest into the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement, the Exodus of Israel from Egypt every Passover: these are remembered not just verbally but through the body and thus doubly imprinted on Jewish consciousness.

Liturgy and ritual, therefore, have been particularly important areas for Jewish feminist inventiveness. Feminists have been writing liturgy and ritual that flow from and incorporate women's experience, in the process drawing on history and midrash but also allowing them to emerge from concrete forms. One of the earliest and most tenacious feminist rituals, for example, is the celebration of Rosh Hodesh, the new moon, as a woman's holiday. The numerous Rosh Hodesh groups that have sprung up around the country in the last decade have experimented with new spiritual forms within the framework of a traditional women's observance that had been largely forgotten. The association of women with the moon at the heart of the original ceremony provides a starting point for exploration of women's symbols within Judaism and cross-culturally. At the same time, the simplicity of the traditional ritual leaves ample space for invention.[23] Feminist haggadot, on the other hand, seek to inject women's presence into an already established ritual, building on the theme of liberation to make women's experience and struggle an issue for the Seder. Drawing on history, poetry and midrash, they seek to integrate women's experiences into the central Jewish story and central ritual enactment of the Jewish year.[24]

These two areas have provided basic structures around which a great deal of varied experimentation has taken place. But from reinterpretations of mikveh, to a major reworking of Sabbath blessings, to simple inclusion of the *imahot* in daily and Sabbath liturgies—which, however minimally, says, "We too had a covenant; we too were there"—women are seeking to transform Jewish ritual so that it acknowledges our existence and experience.[25] In the ritual moment, women's history is made present.

We have then an interweaving of forms that borrow from and give life to each other. Women's history challenges us to confront the incompleteness of what has been called "Jewish history," to attend to the hidden and hitherto marginal, to attempt a true Jewish history which is a history of women and men. It restores to us some of the women's voices in and out of the "normative" tradition, sometimes in accommodation and sometimes in struggle, but the voices of Jews defining their own Jewishness as they participate in the communal life. Midrash expands and burrows, invents the forgotten and prods the memory, takes from history and asks for more. It gives us the inner life history cannot follow, building links between the stories of our foremothers and our own joy and pain. Ritual asserts women's presence in the present. Borrowing from history and midrash, it transforms them into living memory. Creating new forms, it offers them to be remembered.

Thus, through diverse paths, we re-member ourselves. Moses' injunction at Sinai—"Do not go near a woman"—though no less painful, is only part of a story expanded and reinvigorated as women enter into the shaping of Torah. If in Jewish terms history provides a basis for identity, then out of our new sense of identity we are also claiming our past. Beginning with the conviction of our presence both at Sinai and now, we rediscover and invent ourselves in the Jewish communal past and present, continuing the age-old process of reshaping Jewish memory as we reshape the community today.

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2. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982), p. 9.
3. Martin Buber, *Israel and the World: Essays in a Time of Crisis* (New York: Schocken Books, 1963), p. 146.
4. Louis Ginsberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, 7 vols. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1909), 5:235, note 140.
5. Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983), pp. 14-20. I am indebted to Schussler Fiorenza for this whole paragraph and, indeed, much of my approach to the recovery of Jewish women's history.
6. Gerda Lerner, *The Majority Finds Its Past: Placing Women in History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 160, 168f.
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8. See Norman K. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1979), p. 685.
9. Ginsberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, 1:3-4.
10. Gershom G. Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), pp. 37-65.
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14. Carol Meyers, "The Roots of Restriction: Women in Early Israel," *Biblical Archeologist*, 41, Sept. 1978, p. 101. See the whole article (pp. 91-103) and also her "Procreation, Production, and Protection: Male-Female Balance in Early Israel," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 51, Dec. 1983, pp. 569-593.
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21. Ellen M. Umansky, "Creating a Jewish Feminist Theology: Possibilities and Problems," *Anima*, 10, Spring Equinox 1984, pp. 133-34.
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25. Rachel Adler, "Tumah and Taharah; Ends and Beginnings," *The Jewish Woman*, ed. Koltun, pp. 63-71; Marcia Falk, "What About God?" *Moment*, 10, March 1985, pp. 32-36. Many of Falk's blessings are circulating privately. □

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The U.S. Constitution and the Intent of the Framers

Mark Tushnet

Attorney General Edwin Meese's call for a return to "original intention" in constitutional law has produced strong reactions from liberals such as Justice William Brennan. They see Meese's speeches as part of a concerted conservative effort to limit the role of the federal courts. Yet there is more to the controversy than simple political strategy. After all, by the end of his term Ronald Reagan will have appointed more than 50% of the sitting federal judges. And even if he makes no further appointments to the Supreme Court, the lower federal courts will be dominated by deeply conservative judges for many years. So conservatives have little reason to try to rein in federal judges by insisting on an "originalist" or any other approach to constitutional law. They have won in the political arena already, and the victory in staffing the federal bench is soon to follow.

Even more striking, Meese's jurisprudence of original intention has no significant support among people who have thought seriously about constitutional law. Some conservative lawyers and political scientists talk to each other about how important original intention is, but they have paid no attention to the withering critiques of their theory that others have developed. Justice Brennan has criticized the jurisprudence of original intent because it might stand in the way of achieving liberal goals. He would interpret the Constitution so that it advanced the cause of justice as he and other liberals understand it. Justice Brennan concludes that the framers were confused on some issues, that they often intended to leave issues open for later decision, or that their views are frequently irrelevant to today's problems. But the jurisprudence of original intent is wrong, not primarily because it produces results that are incompatible with the political preferences of today's liberals, but because "original intention" just doesn't make any sense at all, and everyone who has thought about the question knows that.

Yet Meese's speeches strike a chord in our understanding of the Constitution, because they direct attention to our fear that judges, like other government officials, can do us serious harm. The dilemma is that Justice Brennan's confident liberalism, though it recognizes that governments and judges can do good, fails to express our concern that they do evil as well. Within the confines of contemporary views about government and law, we are bound to oscillate between believing that Meese is onto something and hoping that Brennan is correct too.

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I

The Constitution's words do not define themselves. How do we know that holding a prayer breakfast at the White House, or opposing, on religious grounds, a woman's right to choose an abortion is not an "establishment of religion" prohibited by the First Amendment? Or that statutes requiring schools to have a moment of silence before classes might be establishments of religion?

The Constitution must be interpreted, and "original intention" is one method of interpretation. Others might be interpretation to do justice, or to enforce contemporary understandings of the Constitution's language. Meese believes that interpretation according to original intention is the best way of reconciling our commitment to limitations on government with our commitment to democracy. It is like enforcing a contract. When the framers created our government by writing the Constitution, they limited its powers in the same document. Courts can enforce the framers' agreement by figuring out what limits these men intended to place on the government they created. But, according to Meese, if courts go beyond the intent of the framers, the courts are assuming a power to restrict the elected branches of government that they were never given.

Some critics of "original intent" have challenged the contract analogy. Maybe the people who signed the Constitution agreed to be bound in specific ways, but they died a long time ago. Meese needs to explain why people today, who did not sign the "contract," should care one way or the other about the intentions of the people who did.

Meese's theory of constitutional interpretation can't stand up to even milder criticisms. We can begin with what has been called the problem of "interpretive intent." Meese wants to know how the framers intended that the courts interpret the Constitution. Did *they* think that it should be interpreted according to their

intentions? If they did not, Meese is caught in a contradiction: He wants courts to do what the framers intended, but the framers intended that the courts ignore their intentions. For example, the framers might have intended that later interpreters decide for themselves what the Constitution means. Their "interpretive intent" would direct today's judges to refrain from examining what the framers themselves would have thought about the proper interpretation of specific constitutional provisions.

The jurisprudence of original intent is wrong, not primarily because it produces results that are incompatible with the political preferences of today's liberals, but because "original intent" just doesn't make any sense at all.

A careful study by Jefferson Powell in the Harvard Law Review has shown that the framers did not hold Meese's jurisprudence of original intent. They thought instead that the meaning of the Constitution was clear to any person of common sense. The jurisprudence of original intention wasn't developed until around 1800, a decade after the constitution was adopted, as a result of political disputes between Jeffersonians and Federalists. Unfortunately for Justice Brennan, however, the framers did not, in general, take the position that they wanted to leave things open for future development.

But suppose original intent is as close as we can come to the framers' interpretive intent. We would still have to figure out what their intent was. But we can't.

The first problem is deciding whose intentions count, and in what ways. The Constitution was written by a group of men who were intensely aware of the political dimensions of their actions. For example, they acknowledged sectional divisions over slavery and protected Southern interests to some extent, but they also refrained from using the word "slavery" in the Constitution to make it more acceptable in the North. Some of the framers, like Benjamin Franklin, opposed specific provisions but thought that the Constitution overall should be adopted. Others opposed the entire Constitution. During the debates, some framers gave their views on many of its provisions; others spoke only a few times. The Constitution was then submitted to the states, and much political discussion and pamphleteering ensued. Many people voted to oppose ratification. Whose views should we examine when we try to determine "original intention"?

Maybe the answer is that, like all historians, we do the best we can with whatever evidence we can come up with. We could apply some rules of thumb, giving more weight to what the influential James Madison said than to what more obscure participants said, and the like.

But that approach simply exposes another difficulty. Once we know *who* to count, we somehow have to add up the views of men who disagreed about many important matters. We might conclude, on balance, that more of the people we count thought that it didn't violate the Establishment Clause for Congress to enter into a treaty with a Native American nation in which the United States agreed to pay the salary of a priest. (Congress did make such a treaty in 1803.) But we are sure to find some misgivings even about that. How can we figure out what "the framers" intended about the meaning of the Establishment Clause in situations that, unlike the 1803 treaty, don't involve war and peace or the territorial integrity of the nation?

The treaty example indicates a third problem with Meese's position. It's not easy to figure out what *any* framer's intention was about the issues that we face today. This problem has several facets. During the debates over the Fourteenth Amendment, some people said that, as they understood the amendment, it would prohibit school segregation; some of those people opposed the amendment for that reason, and others supported it for that reason. Still others disagreed with the suggested meaning, saying that the amendment would permit segregation. Others said that they hoped that the amendment would be interpreted to prohibit (or permit) segregation, but were afraid that it wouldn't be interpreted that way. Again, what is the framers' intention here?

The debate over the Fourteenth Amendment also demonstrates that much of what we know about the framers' views involves what they thought about particular issues: salaries for Christian minsters, a particular treaty, school segregation. But the questions presented to the courts today involve different issues. They may not involve subsidies to particular churches, but to all churches, or they may involve the national interest in remedial education, not territorial integrity. The most that we know is what the framers thought about specific problems. And somehow we have to infer from that what their views were, or would have been, about a different set of problems. Meese has not, and probably could not, explain why the inferences he wants to draw are more persuasive than the inferences that Justice Brennan would draw.

The problem of inferring intentions about novel cases is at the heart of Meese's criticism of some of the Court's recent church-state decisions, such as its holding that federal aid to parochial schools in poverty areas is unconstitutional. The prevailing view is that the framers were suspicious of government support of religion and accepted only modest invocations of religion and treaties like the 1803 one, which served overriding national interests. Justice Rehnquist has challenged this view, arguing that the framers accepted nondiscriminatory aid to religion. The problem is that the evidence we have is entirely consistent with *both* descriptions of the framers' intent. Early Congresses provided aid to churches in Native American territory—nondiscriminatory, but also involving urgent issues of national security. They appointed congressional chaplains—again-nondiscriminatory, but not terribly important to the overall operation of the government. So it doesn't help to say that, with respect to the issues presented to the courts today, we should pay attention to the framers' intent: Either we don't know what their intent was, or we have to choose between equally permissible inferences from what we do know about their intent.

There are a couple of ways to avoid this problem. One is that we may suppose that the framers actually intended to leave some questions open for future resolution by later legislatures or courts. However, those who have studied the question have rarely discovered an intention to leave hard questions to the courts.

The other way to avoid the problem is more important. We could distinguish between the framers' intent about specific practices like congressional chaplains, and their intent about the broader issue of the general relation between church and state. The framers' intentions were sometimes concrete, referring to particular issues that they had in mind, and sometimes abstract, referring to general principles that justified their views on particular issues. Of course there are insoluble difficulties in adding up intentions when some were concrete and others were abstract. For example, James Madison and Thomas Jefferson had fairly elaborate theories about church-state relations, tending to support rather strong separation of church and state, while many of their colleagues reacted to particular issues like raising taxes to pay the salaries of ministers, or hiring a chaplain to open congressional sessions. It seems impossible to put together these different types of intentions.

Distinguishing between concrete and abstract intentions just reproduces the problem it was designed to avoid. The framers' concrete intentions were directed at the problems *they* faced; obviously they had no concrete intentions about *our* quite different problems. And their abstract intentions point in several directions when applied to today's issues. They had some sort of abstract intention about church-state relations, and about equality. But those intentions fit into a comprehensive world view. We would not be faithful to the framers' abstract intentions if we were to enforce their idea of equality without enforcing at the same time everything else that made up their world view. But the passage of time has made it impossible for us to share or enforce the framers' comprehensive world view.

Consider church-state relations. In 1789 the framers held two general views of the world. One can be called liberal or individualist. In this view, each person chose his or her values and then figured out what to do to achieve them. Government was supposed to take people's values as given and provide the framework within which people would promote their individual goals without interfering with each other. The second view was republican. It placed positive value on citizen participation in public life, and believed that government should act to make its citizens more responsible. People like Jefferson and Madison were influenced by both traditions. Sometimes they invoked one to explain why particular programs of government support of religion violated their fundamental understandings, and sometimes they invoked the other to explain why a different proposal was consistent with those understandings.

We have two difficulties in using the framers' world views as a guide to interpreting the Constitution. First, the framers were at least as much practical men of affairs as they were systematic political philosophers. It did not bother them that much of the logical implications of the liberal view—for example, that government should have nothing to do with the private sphere of religious belief—was inconsistent with the implications of the republican one—for example, that religious institutions should receive official support because they made citizens more responsible—so long as they could reach some decision on the particular problem they were facing. But the only way to move from the compromises they reached on their problems, to resolution of our problems, is to strike for ourselves the compromises that help us get on with the task of governing ourselves.

Second, and more important, the republican tradition is much less vital for us than it was for the framers. Republicanism was a political theory suitable for relatively stable societies pervaded by networks of people who met each other face-to-face over long periods to engage in all sorts of projects—economic, religious, political. Our society simply does not fit the conditions of republicanism very well. In part it has come not to fit because of the dynamics of economic development.

The republican tradition understood that good societies rested on a base of independent property-holders, and the tradition understandably saw property-holding in its capitalist form. The republican tradition found itself yoked to a type of property whose dynamic transformed the society in ways that have now undermined the tradition itself. But that means that we can't enforce the framers' intent at all, unless we restore our society to the conditions of their society.

The social changes over the past two hundred years pose a final difficulty for the Meese theory of constitutional interpretation. Today our governments deal with many problems that were unknown to the framers, or whose dimensions have changed so much that it is misleading to think of the problems as the same in any useful sense. The framers of the Fourteenth Amendment did not know what nationwide, universal, compulsory public education was like. They may have had some "intentions" about the impact of that Amendment on the segregation of the very modest systems of selective and optional public education being operated in some states in 1868. But those intentions were directed toward institutions that share only the name "public school" with the institutions the Court dealt with in *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954. As Chief Justice Warren said in this decision which held segregated schools unconstitutional, "In approaching this problem, we cannot turn the clock back to 1868 ... We must consider public education in the light of its full development and its present place in American life throughout the Nation."

One solution to the problem that social change poses for a theory of original intention is to imagine resurrecting the framers, telling them all that has happened between 1789 or 1868 and today, describing the issue at hand, and asking them what they thought. Put aside the impossibility of performing the thought experiment, and consider this: If we resurrected Thomas Jefferson and brought him up to date on our problems, he'd be one of us. His intentions would be the intentions that we—or some of us—have. The jurisprudence of original intention projects the decisions we have to make back onto some revered figures in the past. But it remains a projection.

II

A classic Talmudic text tells this story: Rab Eliezer argued that the Torah could be interpreted directly, without paying attention to the intervening traditions of the oral law. One day he offered his interpretation of one passage, but the majority of the rabbis disagreed. R. Eliezer said, "If the Halachah agrees with me, let this carob tree prove it." Miraculously, the tree was torn from its roots and fell yards away. But the other rabbis said, "No proof can be brought from a carob tree." So R. Eliezer performed other miracles to confirm his interpretation. But the rabbis rejected them too. Finally R. Eliezer said, "If the Halachah agrees with me, let it be proved from Heaven!" And a Heavenly Voice cried out, "Why do you disagree with R. Eliezer, seeing that in all matters the Halachah agrees with him?" But Rab Joshua said, "It is not in Heaven," that is, the Torah had been given at Mount Sinai, and we pay no attention to a Heavenly Voice. The text concludes, "What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do in that hour? He laughed with joy, He replied, saying, 'My sons have defeated Me, My sons have defeated Me.'"

What is at stake is picking the conservative or the liberal application of the theory, and that choice can't be made by referring to original intent; we have to justify our choice on the basis of a political evaluation of the likely results.

The Talmudic story makes a specific theological point—that "the framer" intended to give humans a certain kind of interpretive freedom. The theological conclusion is not directly applicable to problems of constitutional interpretation, for the framers' interpretive intention might have been to deny that freedom. But surely the story is suggestive about how people ought to treat authoritative texts.

III

Meese suggests that only a jurisprudence of original intention restrains the judges in just the way that we want them to be restrained. But that's wrong for two reasons. First, restraining the judges is not valuable in itself. The Constitution is not a populist document that confers all power on the people. Instead, it requires that the people and their representatives sometimes refrain from acting. The republican tradition was confident that the people would elect delegates who chose to honor the limits the Constitution places on government. But with the decline of that tradition came the rise of judicial review as a back-up, to make sure that the elected branches adhered to the Constitution. We want to restrain the judges only insofar as they impose

too many restraints on legislatures. But we can do that only by evaluating what the judges have done and then developing some ways to keep them, and the elected branches, within bounds.

The second reason that Meese is wrong is that he mistakenly thinks that the method of paying attention to original intent actually will restrain the judges. But the *method* has nothing to do with the *results* the Court reaches. Meese thinks that a jurisprudence of original intent shows that many of the Court's decisions in the past fifty years were wrong. But there is a conservative application of original intent—for example, that the framers of the Fourteenth Amendment did not intend to make school segregation unconstitutional—and a liberal application—for example, that those same framers had an abstract idea of equality with which school segregation is inconsistent. Because these alternative interpretations of the framers' intent are well-supported by the historical evidence, we can't say that results follow from the theory of original intent at all. What is at stake is picking the conservative or the liberal application of the theory, and that choice can't be made by referring to original intent; we have to justify our choice on the basis of a political evaluation of the likely results.

Meese's political evaluation is obvious, but standing alone it is no more than that. With that in mind, we can understand the Meese-Brennan debate as a sort of shadow-boxing. It's really about results, but it purports to be about method. And what's curious is that it seems particularly pointless. Meese and his supporters think that it's important to persuade people to follow original intent, because that will produce the results they like. But the people they are trying to persuade include federal judges, and Meese is appointing them at a furious pace. It doesn't matter what theory of interpretation Reagan's judges have; we know what results they'll reach no matter what their theory is.

So why have the media paid so much attention to the Meese-Brennan debate? Partly, of course, it's politics. Brennan's a liberal and Meese is a conservative, and it hardly matters that their respective theories of constitutional interpretation have no necessary connection to their politics.

But I think there's more at stake. Think about what we can do with documents: We can write them, or we can read them. The jurisprudence of original intent says judges should not write the Constitution, but must only read it. An implicit image here is that writing is active and powerful, while reading is passive and responsive. Because writing is an active exercise of power, we are concerned when other people do it. Perhaps we would like to *be* writers, and therefore be powerful. But if we cannot be writers, we don't want anyone else to be either. Even more, we may find the imagery of passivity attractive, for activity (writing) may be frightening no matter who does it. Whatever the psychological sources of our fear of activity—whether we fear only other people, or are afraid of our own power—the political implications of the dichotomy between writing and reading are clear and direct: Anything other than reading and original intent is the assertion of judicial power.

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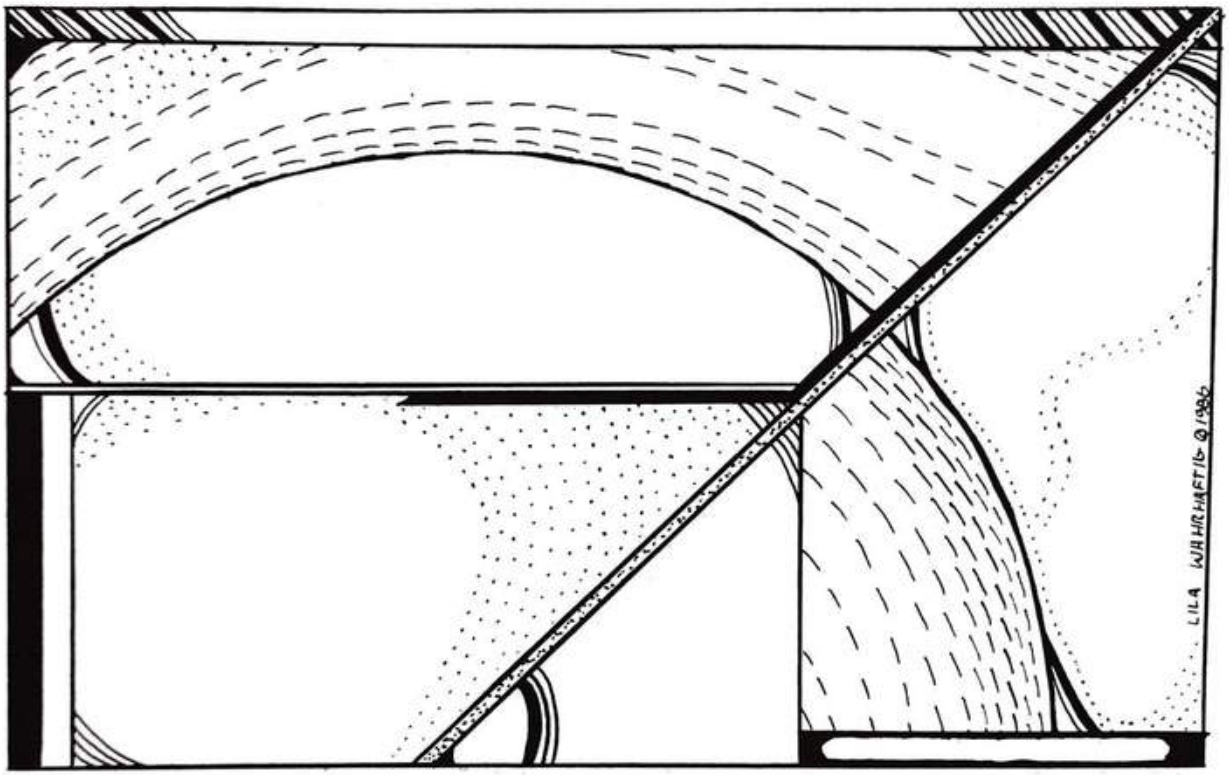
Our earlier analysis of original intent shows that the implicit image of reading as passive is false; reading is a creative and powerful act too, as the reader chooses abstract and concrete intentions, alternative social visions imputed to the framers, and the like. But the effectiveness of the implicit association between reading and passivity, and between writing and power, is more important than its falseness.

We have a Constitution in the first place because we want to have a government that is powerful enough to do things that benefit us, but not so powerful that it routinely hurts us. It's no secret that getting things to work out that way is not easy. Judicial review is one of the methods we've developed to mediate between the powers of government and the limitations we have placed on those powers. But the difficulties just recur. After all, judges are themselves part of government, and we want them to be powerful enough to limit the other branches, but not so powerful that they will keep us from making the political choices that we really want to make through a democratic politics. Theories of judicial review, such as the jurisprudence of original intent, are attempts to mediate the conflict at this level. But we've seen that original intent doesn't do that, and neither could any other abstract theory of interpretation.

The jurisprudence of original intent is kept alive because we don't seem to have any good alternatives. Justice Brennan's position is that the judges should do justice. A society confident that people could discover indisputable standards of justice might find that position to be an acceptable mediation between judicial

power and passivity. But that's not our society. Everybody knows that Justice Brennan's enduring principles of justice are his and his political allies', not some principles immanent in the natural order. When Meese says that his adversaries are defending unbridled judicial power, he's right. But the jurisprudence of original intent also defends unbridled judicial power.

Politics being what it is, progressives almost inevitably want to take sides in the Meese-Brennan debate. We don't need much sophisticated analysis to figure out whom we trust. But, as we have seen, there is an important sense in which Meese and Brennan are on the same side: the side that believes that the right *method* can reconcile power and limitations on the exercise of power. No method can do that. We simply have to live with the fact that the power that we hope will benefit us—whether it is the power of legislatures or the power of judges—might also hurt us, and do what we can to make it more likely that the people with power will help rather than hurt. □



Founding Father Knows Best: A Response to Tushnet

Peter Gabel

Mark Tushnet's critique of Ed Meese's "jurisprudence of original intention" is an example of the kind of work being done by a number of scholars in the critical legal studies movement, an influential left wing force in contemporary American legal scholarship. Most liberals (including not only Justice Brennan but also well-known legal theorists like Ronald Dworkin and Owen Fiss) think that Meese's call for a return to the intent of the framers in interpreting the Constitution is "wrong." They believe that the correct method of constitutional interpretation requires that the meaning of the constitution's language be drawn from a contemporary understanding of the nation's political morality as that understanding has developed over two hundred years, and that such a method tends (correctly in their view) to favor the enlightened expansion of altruistic and egalitarian ideals expressed in liberal case-results. Meese, they argue, is just trying to disguise his desire for more conservative outcomes on such issues as abortion, affirmative action, and school prayer, by advocating an interpretive theory that is at best outmoded and at worst hokey and disingenuous.

Tushnet's point is that the liberals' position is just as wrong as Meese's because there is no such thing as a correct method of interpretation that can properly determine the outcomes of cases. He shows that the intent of the framers' view can be used to legitimize not only conservative results, but liberal results as well, and that the liberal notion of principled adjudication informed by an enlightened, modern ideal of justice—although it has been used to justify liberal outcomes—could, with a little conceptual finesse, be invoked in the service of conservative ends. The thrust of Tushnet's argument, in other words, is that it is futile to seek salvation from having to make difficult ethical or political judgments by calling upon some higher interpretive scheme that could "correctly" tell us what to do because such schemes are inherently indeterminate and are themselves open to multiple interpretations. The critique of Meese is, therefore, not that his position is wrong but that it is incoherent, internally contradictory, and essentially meaningless, just as is its liberal counterpart.

Other critical legal scholars have developed critiques similar to Tushnet's in virtually every important area of American law, arguing, for example, that there is no such thing as a distinctively "legal" way of deciding when workers have the right to strike under the National Labor Relations Act, or whether industries that dump toxic wastes into rivers and lakes are creating a "nuisance" giving rise to actions for money damages under tort law. Since the law itself is always indeterminate in its application with a stock range of arguments on all sides, Critical Legal Studies writers assert that the resolution of these issues always requires frank political choices, that a legal argument is simply an opinion about right and wrong dressed up in an elite, technical discourse. The radical aim of this work is not simply to show that all legal decisions are actually political decisions, but to undermine the legitimacy of "legal reasoning" itself as a powerful symbol of cultural authority, a symbol that tends—along with other such fetishized symbols as flags, black robes, and the elevated judicial "bench"—to reinforce people's passivity before imposing cultural institutions like the Supreme Court, which is imagined to be the repository of a wisdom inaccessible to the average person and the oracle of American political truth. In alliance with the deconstructionist work of Jacques Derrida and the related work of Michel Foucault on the multiple ways that "official" forms of knowledge tend to crush people's self-confidence and sense of self-activity, this strand of critical legal scholarship means to expose "the law" as basically a lot of posturing baloney, and to empower people to think and feel for themselves. If we are to decide important social questions by reference to a constitution, then only a democracy of interpretations emerging from genuine political debate can give the document and its words an authentically democratic content.

If we return to the question of the meaning of Meese's current efforts, however, we can see that there is a limitation to the form of criticism that Tushnet puts forward, and, in fact, to the entire "deconstructionist"

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enterprise. This limitation is that a critique demonstrating the indeterminacy and essential irrelevance of interpretive method in relation to judicial results cannot account for the *meaning* of the debate over method itself. Tushnet says that Meese's haranguing about the intent of the framers seems "particularly pointless" since Meese knows the results his judicial allies will reach no matter what theory they use; but to Meese there seems to be something very important at stake, something that goes beyond naked results and focuses on the world view to which he wants those conservative results to be linked. It would not be enough, in Meese's eyes, for the Court to simply overrule its prior liberal rulings on, say, abortion (which it could easily do without a jurisprudential revolution); he wants an anti-abortion ruling to be based on a belief in a particular vision of how we are "constituted" or united or brought together through the Constitution and through our relationship to the Founding Fathers who framed it. Why?

The answer to this question seems to me to require a critical method that goes beyond the detached, analytical skepticism of deconstruction, to one that seeks to grasp and unveil the social meaning of Meese's world view itself as an aspect of the New Right's effort to fashion a lasting ideological hegemony. Seen in this light, the question of whether the "jurisprudence of original intention" is somehow rationally required for judges to reach conservative results is really quite irrelevant. The desire for a shift in judicial philosophy must, rather, be understood as an attempt to reshape prevailing cultural images about how "we" are constituted as a political-legal group, a reshaping that conservatives like Meese feel is needed if they are to retain their momentum during the current phase of their ascendancy, and consolidate their hold on popular consciousness. For however strong the New Right's cultural dominance may seem today, we should not forget that the vitality of its evocative appeal has yet to channel itself (at least at the level of "mass," or national culture) into legitimated institutional forms that might enable this dominance to reproduce itself without reliance on Reagan himself or on an endless series of contrived emotional highs. To achieve this degree of anchorage in mass consciousness, the Right must generate and sell a new mythic, historical narrative about the origins and nature of "our society" that can then serve as what might be called the psycho-political foundation for a passively accepted, conservative legal order. This kind of transformation in the "national belief-system" is a part of what is needed to convert the passion of the Reagan revolution into a set of habitually-obeyed conventional norms.

The "jurisprudence of original intention" is intended to accomplish this transformation by seizing upon certain emotionally charged fragments of New Right ideology and integrating them into the conventional imaginary account of the source of our connection to one another as political beings. The imaginary account is roughly what everyone is taught in eighth grade civics class—that there was a group of "Founding Fathers," that they came together in certain sanctified buildings, that they created this great document, and that "We, the People" were born as a result. I describe this account as imaginary not because the historical events on which the account is based did not occur—obviously, they did. The account is imaginary because it is communicated in a way that transforms these actual historical events into a symbolic fantasy that has a mass-psychological significance independent of the events themselves. The people who wrote the Constitution are presented as exceptionally wise and virtuous; the document they produced is treated with great awe and reverence; and the feeling conveyed is one of belonging and oneness, as if by virtue of their words we were rescued from alienation and homelessness and brought into connection and harmony. The content of this fantasy, in other words, is that "We Americans" are magically bound together in a great democratic group, and that we owe this bond to the will of idealized father-figures who transfigured us by the frame they provided for our existence. And the mass psychological significance of this fantasy is that it generates in our consciousness an image of social connection that compensates for the feeling of disconnection and loss that suffuses our actual experience of each other in everyday life—at work, on the street, and even in our most intimate relationships—while allowing us also to deny that this lack of connection exists.

Critical Legal Studies writers assert that the resolution of these issues always requires frank political choices, that a legal argument is simply an opinion about right and wrong dressed up in an elite, technical discourse.

It is at this symbolic level that Meese's call for a return to the intent of the Founding Fathers must be understood, but understanding it requires some sense of how the fantasy functions psychodynamically in rela-

tion to the sense of alienation and loss that underlies and gives rise to it. Here we need to draw a contrast between a real sense of "we" and the false sense of "we" that acts as a substitute for it. A real sense of "we" emerges from the realization of a desire, immanent within each of us as social beings, for mutual recognition and confirmation; it is a feeling-bond that is grounded in the actual connection of those who generate it, and as a result, it has no need of a ground or source outside of itself in order to exist. The false sense of "we" is quite the opposite: it emerges in social contexts where the feeling-bond between people is for various reasons blocked, and it can only come into existence as a relation of withdrawn selves to a fantasized common image of connection whose fantasy-based nature is collectively denied. Since the actual relation underlying the false sense of "we" is one of mutual isolation and withdrawal, and since those who create it are therefore incapable of affirming its pseudo-reality on the basis of an underlying experience of mutual reciprocity, the false sense of "we" must always be supported by the projection of an "outside authority" invested with the power to constitute it. It is here that we find the function of the Founding Fathers in the fantasy of our own "constitution": since we know by virtue of our own alienation that we are unconstituted and feel incapable of generating a real "we" based on true reciprocity, we give ourselves over to the fantasy of being "united as a people" and invent the Founding Fathers to provide the authorship for this unity that we cannot provide ourselves. We then invest these imaginary figures with a "belief" that makes them seem as if they really exist, so that we can deny that our sense of national connection is a fantasy and sustain our own belief that we are a genuinely constituted, real group. Since the continuation of our false sense of "we-ness" depends upon the continuation of our belief in their authority, this belief becomes "reified," or collectively insisted upon as being true on pain of excommunication from the false group. Any sign of disbelief in the authority of the projected source upon whom the group's false sense of "we-ness" depends threatens to revive the underlying experience of loss, isolation and pain that the group's common image of connection is created to deny.

The Right must generate and sell a new mythical, historical narrative about the origins and nature of "our society" that can then serve as what might be called the psycho-political foundation for a passively accepted, conservative legal order.

Meese is putting his ideas forward during the rise of a movement whose aim is to restore people's loyalty to the false sense of "we-ness" embedded in the patriotic imagery of Americanism, a loyalty eroded by the social dynamics of the last twenty years. This erosion has in part been due to the success of the movements of the 60's, which were able to generate a powerful "movement" of actual, embodied community, multiple hints of real social connection spinning more or less out of control on a world-wide level. And it was eroded even further by the failure of these movements, leaving people feeling that the Vietnam War, for example, had been a "defeat for America" rather than a victory for a movement of humanity that no longer existed. The rise of the New Right was in part made possible, in other words, by the fact that the countercultural energy of these movements, which went far toward stimulating people's hopes for, and actual experience of, social transformation in the direction of creating deep and genuine connection between people, was defeated—and defeated in a way that led people to feel, however unconsciously, that they had been seduced and betrayed. Whatever the confluence of pre-existing cultural conditions that make them possible, social movements are founded fundamentally on an outbreak of desire that resonates throughout the social body and that cannot but revive, precisely because of its vitality, the memories of loss and disappointment associated with this desire that stems from our earliest childhood experiences. This is why people like Meese so fiercely resist the development of these movements, and it is also why such movements tend to defeat themselves by losing confidence in themselves from within. While the collapse of the movements of the 60's did not lead directly to the consciousness of the 80's in some simple, causal sense, the heightened vulnerability produced by these movements has played an important role in people drawing themselves back from the risks associated with the revelation of desire—a drawing back that in some cases is manifested in a commitment to a kind of hopelessness or spiritual deadness, and in other cases, especially in those who struggled to resist the utopian aspirations of the 60's, is manifested in a desire for revenge against these aspirations and ultimately against the desire for deep connection itself.

Taken as a whole, this historical experience has generated a social reaction in the direction of reclaiming the paranoiac and defensive social

armor that is meant to keep us from feeling even the possibility of another revival of our wounds. At a surface level, this reaction has taken the form of a middle-class populist revolt against liberal entitlement programs, but at the deep psychological level, the revolt is against the "permissiveness" that allowed too much vital and spontaneous social connection to be released in social relations, generating a renewed need to reconstitute the old authorities that could provide the vehicle for reconstituting a "false-we" requiring obedience to proper boundaries.

Understood against this background, Meese's call for a return to the intent of the framers should be seen as an attempt to reconstitute these old authorities by revitalizing their mythological appeal. He does this first by blaming our current sense of collective isolation, of not feeling part of something anymore, on the actions of judges like Brennan who have substituted their own interpretation of the Constitution for that of the Founding Fathers. This symbolically transposes the real historical experience I described in the last paragraph into an imaginary narrative in which "we" are imagined to exist by virtue of how authority figures interpret the Constitution and in which "our" present non-existence or sense of disconnection is imagined to have been caused by the failures of these authority figures. Such a transposition or imaginary re-narration has the effect of acknowledging people's real experience of desire and loss while denying the real source of this experience, placing the blame instead on the keepers of the false-we. At the same time, it acknowledges that we have tried to generate a real movement toward each other on the basis of our own ontological power and capacity for love, but it "transfers" this generative movement to the actions of those bad judges who have given in to their impulse to "substitute their own interpretation" for that of the Founding Fathers, thus transforming our own desire and actual effort to create a real-we into a transgression by the priests we select from among ourselves to maintain the boundaries of the false-we, against the higher authority of the "outside source" whose will creates the false-we. The imaginary schema that Meese is offering has mass-psychological appeal, in other words, because it allows people to recognize their own historical experience of, and continuing need for, true social connection, but in a symbolic form which disguises this need, characterizes it as giving rise to the very impulses which must be suppressed if we are to maintain our "national unity," and channels the energy generated by this need toward the re-creation of an imaginary pseudo-community based on a revitalized shared belief in authority. The political message is that passivity and dependency on the authority of the framers is required for continued membership in the false group, and that the false group is the only group there is.

At the same time that it transposes our real history into a symbolic history that acts as a defense against our awareness of real historical meaning, Meese's jurisprudence revitalizes the erotic appeal of the image of the Founding Fathers by infusing our imaginary relationship to them with a new sado-masochistic fervor. I use the phrase "sado-masochistic" here in the same sense that I have used the word "desire" throughout this essay, to refer to an organization and movement of social energy that is not strictly sexual in the Freudian sense but is nonetheless erotic in that it designates the "pull" that impels us toward each other as social beings. Meese's imagery is sado-masochistic because it seeks to redirect our desire away from the immediacy of real relations (in which we might form a real-we by developing our own "interpretation" of our constitution) and toward the safe arena of controlled, internalized images of connection based upon our carrying out the framers' will in its most essential and undiluted form. The symbolic message is that we must sweep away the impurities that we have allowed to accumulate in our law, impurities that have resulted from a succession of judges who have allowed our constitutional connection

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to dissipate in a thousand directions, and we must return to the original state of obedience to the Founding Fathers that gave us our original unity. But the real message is that we must: a) stop seeking vital recognition and confirmation in real life by withdrawing from each other; b) fuse our withdrawn desire with the rage that results from the disallowal of its expression; c) channel this eroticized aggression into an image of a punitive authority sadistically controlling a masochistically obedient and dependent group of subjects; d) act this sado-masochistic identification out through a rigid compliance with the dictates of social hierarchies. Within Meese's symbolism, we are to displace our potency onto the Founding Fathers and direct our eroticized aggression against the liberal judges who are symbolic carriers of our own authentic impulses for connection, impulses which, if followed, lead to betrayal and loss. In the real world we are to command

ourselves and each other to conform to an artificial social facade characterized on the one hand by passivity and role-compliance, and on the the other by repeated elicitations of "evil" impulses which are repeatedly subjected to control and punishment.

It is in this last respect that the call for a return to the intent of the framers is related most closely to the rest of the New Right's program—to the call for a return to a docile vision of the family of which "Father Knows Best" is perhaps the model, a vision of religion founded upon obedience to the will of God, a righteous and nationalistic militarism that stamps out evil empires wherever they appear, and a domestic policy that seeks to disassociate the State from "programs for the weak" while associating the State with the effort to cleanse the social body of such exciting impurities as drugs and oral intercourse. Whatever valid elements there may be in some of these positions (and these elements certainly receive sufficient attention in the pages of *Tikkun*), they are all directed in their symbolic dimension to the intensification of sado-masochistic control over our fundamental desire for spontaneous and genuine social connection. The distinctive meaning of Meese's jurisprudence is to be found in its attempt to place this perverse passion for control at the heart of our social and political bond, to make it part of "the law" in a way that would extend its cultural power beyond the appeal of any particular issue and, as I suggested earlier, beyond the appeal of Reagan himself. For if a generation of college students, for example, can be induced to revere the intent of the Founding Fathers at the expense of their own human needs, they will be less likely to challenge the many more secular forms of authority whose legitimacy is linked to this intent by law and onto whom their reverence is therefore likely to be transferred.

The symbolic reading of the "jurisprudence of original intention" that I am proposing here is representative of a competing critical method within Critical Legal Studies to the deconstructive method exemplified by Mark Tushnet. It seeks to understand—by recourse to a kind of socio-psychoanalytic theory of alienation—how cultural phenomena acquire and "hold" social meaning at non-rational levels, and I believe it therefore complements the deconstructionism which goes in quite the opposite direction in seeking to undercut the pseudo-rational surface meaning attributed to oppressive ideologies by those who advocate them. Tushnet shows that the call for a return to the intent of the framers is irrational, since what evidence there is of such an intent is so vague as to be inherently inconclusive in resolving any important legal question, and since to the extent that the evidence is clear it reveals contradictory intentions that would be likely to support opposing results. My claim is that this "call," however irrational in appearance, is nonetheless expressive of an intelligible non-rational meaning that must be comprehended if it is to be effectively opposed. Both strains of CLS work seem to me important in providing the forces of humanity with the kind of articulable insight that must be partly constitutive of any confident movement that seeks to challenge the level of estrangement that we face today. □

Meese's jurisprudence revitalizes the erotic appeal of the image of the Founding Fathers by infusing our imaginary relationship to them with a new sado-masochistic fervor.

Seven Parables

Stephen Mitchell

In the Garden

Eve bites into the fruit. Suddenly she realizes that she is naked. She begins to cry.

The kindly serpent picks up a handkerchief, gives it to her. "It's all right," he says. "The first moment is always the hardest."

"But I thought knowledge would be so wonderful," Eve says, sniffling.

"Knowledge?!" laughs the serpent. "This fruit is from the Tree of *Life*."

Hitler in Sheol

I needed to write a parable about Hitler. My friend said, "Don't."

I sat down at my desk and waited. What I glimpsed was an afterworld. There were no physical torments. Only this: that he had to relive his life, as actor and observer both, a thousand times, out to the farthest consequence of his acts, with a constantly growing awareness of the horror, and a constantly growing, unbearable, shame. (In that world there are no ideas to escape into.)

I showed the parable to my friend. He winced. He said, "You have no right to imagine it that way."

I said, "But according to our sages, on the last day even Lucifer will be forgiven."

He said, "You must crawl to the very center of evil before you can see the stars."

Stephen Mitchell's books include Dropping Ashes on the Buddha *(Grove),* The Selected Poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke *(Random House),* Rilke's "The Sonnets to Orpheus" *(Simon and Schuster), and* The Book of Job *(North Point, forthcoming.)*

Achilles and the Tortoise

Ready, set at their respective starting places, staring into the distance between the parallel white lines, they seem like an old married couple about to run through the same argument for the millionth time. Achilles is tense inside his huge golden muscles. The tortoise blinks.

Afterward, they shower; then walk, side by side, to a neighborhood cafe.

"It's the damnedest thing," says Achilles. "The more I catch up, the more reality slows down. Until it's no longer even a film. Every time: we finish, immobilized, in a single frame."

"With me a micro-meter ahead," the tortoise adds, sighing. He takes another bite of his lettuce sandwich; chews for a while, meditatively; blinks.

"Maybe if I tried something different," Achilles says. "Maybe a new pair of shoes."

Cinderella

Cinderella, the soul, sits among the ashes. She is depressed, as usual. Look at her: dressed in rags, face smeared with grime, oily hair, barefoot. How will anyone ever see her for who she is? A sad state of affairs.

Winter afternoons, in a corner of the kitchen, she has long conversations with her fairy godmother, over a cup of tea. The fairy godmother has, accidentally on purpose, misplaced her magic wand. In any case, the transformations were only temporary. The beautiful spangled gown, the crystal slippers, the coach and footmen—all would have disappeared at the stroke of midnight. And then what?

It is like the man in the mirror, says the fairy godmother. No one can pull him out but himself.

Cherry Plums

They grow all over Berkeley, along the sidewalks, and start to ripen in May. They are tart but delicious. We stop on our after-dinner walk, reach up and pluck a few. Or fill our pockets from the trees in the empty lot across Vine Street. She bites into the first one as I watch. "Mmmm," she says, "plum cherries."

"No no, sweetheart. Cherry plums."

"Oh you. I've *always* called them plum cherries. They *look* like cherries."

"But they're plums. They taste like plums. They're called cherry plums because they're so small."

"Well I don't care. *I* call them plum cherries."

The title of this parable is "Plum Cherries."

Faust

Faust begins by cutting into a circle. This, given the purity of his intent, eventually leads to mass pollution and fifty thousand nuclear warheads pointed at everything he loves.

He does not enter the world as the first Adam entered Eve.

There are other ways of knowing.

Madonna and Child

She is still a girl, fifteen or sixteen, with olive skin and strong Semitic features. She is not beautiful, though her eyes are beautiful.

And I imagine for her a life that will ripen almost beyond endurance, so that all women (I see Russian peasants kneeling on heavy legs in the snow) may recognize their sorrow in her. A love-affair with a Roman soldier. A husband in his sixties who has married her out of kindness. A child whom the other children call "son of a whore," whose demon must force him into the wilderness before he can forgive her. Still, it is *Abba, Father* he speaks about, and she finds it difficult to approach him, though she can sense who he has become. She is there at the end, without consolation: because her heart can bear it.

But she is holding the baby in her arms now. He has been suckling; is asleep. Inside this moment, she thinks, there is enough joy for a lifetime. □

The Nicaragua Debate

The decision by the government of the United States to send $100 million in aid to the Contras will inevitably increase the level of hostilities and the level of death and destruction in Nicaragua. It will also increase the level of protest against U.S. policy both in the United States and in other countries.

We have been concerned in recent months about the absence of a systematic presentation of both sides of the Nicaraguan issue. Generally, the liberal argument is aired in the liberal press, and the conservative argument is presented in the conservative magazines. What is missing is the kind of debate about Nicaragua that was fostered so systematically by the teach-ins of the early anti-Vietnam War movement.

It is our contention that when an understanding of the arguments made on the other side is absent, public discussion is reduced to sloganeering. More importantly, it is hard to change public opinion without addressing the considerations that have led people with opposing opinions to form their conclusions.

In the fall of 1986 Tikkun *brought together four of the most influential figures in the public debate about Nicaragua. Our purpose was to provide an opportunity for our readership to hear all sides of the debate in order to develop a more comprehensive and intelligent understanding of the issues.* **Robert Leiken**, *a Fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, has had his pro-Contra arguments cited by President Reagan. His book* The Central American Reader *will be published by Summit Books in 1987.* **William Leogrande**, *professor of political science at American University, served as a key consultant to Congressional Democrats who led the struggle against aid to the Contras.* **Aryeh Neier**, *a leading figure in the American civil liberties community, is a lawyer and is currently the Director of The Americas Watch, an organization that monitors human rights abuses throughout the hemisphere.* **Ronald Radosh**, *a severe critic of the Sandinistas, is a professor of history at the City University of New York and he is the author of* The Rosenberg File. *Major portions of the debate between these four men are presented below.*

The general topic set forward by Tikkun *was: What should the United States policy be in relationship to the government of Nicaragua and to the Contras, and how does that policy reflect on the general set of principles governing the role of the United States in international affairs?*

Aryeh Neier: The United States is a multi-dimensional power, and it has many things that it can do in the world in order to try to promote its interests. It can use military force, or engage proxies in the use of military force, as it has engaged in Nicaragua. It has tremendous diplomatic, economic, cultural and linguistic influence in the world, and it can bring all of those to bear in order to try to promote the policies that it considers to be desirable, or to try to promote the interests that it considers to be important. My own view is that the United States should resort to the use of military force or military force by proxy only as a last resort in extreme circumstances in which the United States is attacked, or its security is imminently and clearly in danger, or in circumstances when it is absolutely necessary to engage in reprisal for some grave abuse against the United States or against the citizens of the United States.

I can also imagine certain extreme circumstances in which it is appropriate for the United States to intervene militarily when governments are engaged in abuses of their own citizens. I recall George McGovern's suggestion that we should consider intervention in Cambodia at the time of Pol Pot. It seemed to me at that time that it was a proposal that was at least worth very serious consideration. Even under those circumstances, however, one had to be concerned as to whether or not one was going to make a bad situation worse. It was important to think about the desirability of not having big powers intervene in the affairs of small states. But in an extreme circumstance, such as what was going on in Cambodia in the late 70's, one could not dismiss the idea of military intervention.

Another circumstance in which it seems to me to be legitimate to intervene militarily is one in which a power is invading another country and engaging in gross abuses in another country. An example of that would be what is going on in Afghanistan today. It seems to me to be legitimate to aid the Afghan resistance militarily against the Soviet Union. I have difficulty in seeing any of the necessary elements in the Nicaraguan situation, however, which would warrant military intervention by the United States, either directly or by proxy.

I think that U.S. military intervention is primarily an effort to prove that if the Soviet Union can control its

part of the world by force, then the United States can control its part of the world by force, too. Because the Soviet Union intervened militarily in Afghanistan in 1979 and impelled the military crushing of Solidarity in 1981, the United States is determined to show that those countries within its sphere are going to be controlled in a somewhat analogous fashion. It seems to me that it is inappropriate for the United States to legitimize, or appear to legitimize, that kind of power over countries that they regard as within their sphere. I would rather that the United States engage in a more effective worldwide crusade against Soviet Union aggression in Afghanistan and Poland rather than ape the Soviet Union by intervening and sponsoring military intervention in Nicaragua.

Robert Leiken: I think it is absurd to regard the United States' actions in Nicaragua as aping the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. Had that been the case, the United States would have sent 50,000 or 100,000 troops to Nicaragua at the time that the struggle against Somoza occurred. In fact, what happened is that the United States supported the opposition against Somoza.

I also do not accept the characterization of U.S. aid to the resistance in Nicaragua as proxy. True, there are elements of it that seem to indicate a dependent mentality, much as there is on the Sandinista side vis-à-vis the Cubans and the Soviets. In essence, however, the vast majority of combatants are fighting for national popular self-determination. I think it's up to those of us who want to see an independent Nicaragua to struggle against those people in the administration and in the Contras who want dependency, who do want to turn this into a proxy force. The resistance itself is the revolt of Nicaraguans against an oppressive regime.

Let me say that I agree, of course, with the view that we should not be throwing around our military power at the drop of a hat. I would not have proposed an intervention in Cambodia in 1977. We are facing a situation today in which, at the fringes of the Soviet empire, there are revolts. I think those revolts, in most, but not all cases, are just. I think they have popular support, and that we ought to aid those movements for self-determination, both for our own security interests and for human rights reasons. We should help support the creation and consolidation of independent regimes and support popular self-determination in general. The fact that a country exists in our backyard or the Soviets' backyard should not limit its right to self-determination.

In Nicaragua, if there is any hope for national reconciliation, it rests on military opposition to the Sandinista regime being a component of our policy. But I also think our policy should aim at bringing about a situation in which there will be negotiations. I don't see that happening without military aid to the Contras.

Ronald Radosh: I think we have to look first at the Sandinista revolution, its trajectory, and where it has arrived. Just as the abuses, horrors and tyranny of the Somoza years led to the revolution of 1979, the abuses and horrors of the commandantes led to what has to be seen as a civil war—not, as the Sandinistas claim, the U.S. aggression against Nicaragua. Now, I'm fully aware that in the beginning the Contra force was put together by the CIA, trained by the Argentinian junta, and so forth. But when you get a force of plus 15,000 that is continually growing, most of these people are not the Somoza guard, which may be involved in the leadership and origins of the Contras, but are essentially Nicaraguan peasants. This is a force that amounts to far more than the Sandinistas had fighting with them against Somoza, and these people are men willing to die for what they believe is a necessary cause.

The Sandinistas were not willing to have any serious political dialogue. They would not allow, even among themselves (in terms of the differences among the commandantes), meaningful elections where the people could choose different or alternative courses of action. What they pursued was a blatant move to control the whole society on the basis of their own private agenda, which was not made public to the Nicaraguan people before their revolution.

The cause of the civil war is not the design or aggression of the United States. The cause is the policy of the Sandinistas, which has polarized the society to such an extreme that it has created a broad-based insurgency made up of diverse elements of the population: peasants, devout Catholics, the Miskito Indians, and young draft evaders. They could have moved in a different direction and kept the country unified in a manner that was truly popular. Instead, what they have done is to create a new oppressive force and a civil war.

The way out of the impasse is the kind of political pressure that would force the Sandinistas to do what we hope will be done in El Salvador—that is, to force the government of El Salvador to engage in a serious, meaningful dialogue with the rebels. The Sandinista government of Nicaragua has to accept the fact (which they say is currently unthinkable and they will never do) that they must engage in a dialogue and discussion with the rebels fighting them. Despite the origins of this civil war, the rebels are a legitimate force.

I am not convinced that this means we should, however, be supporting the rebels; I'm deeply concerned that there has been no real meaningful, serious, deep purge of the Contra leadership, which is filled with Somicistas, people whose own plan for Nicaragua would bring it back to something akin to the old order.

The Contra war, in its own perverted way, gives the Sandinistas an excuse for repression and an external source of legitimacy.

A different kind of policy could be pursued that would put the maximum kind of economic/political/diplomatic pressure against the Sandinistas that might be as efficient and as satisfactory as support of the military effort funding the Contras. I think that this has to be given a serious try before we move into a policy of supporting the Contras. We're putting the cart before the horse.

Bill Leogrande: We've already heard an enormous amount of foolishness in this debate. The current policy of the United States is very simple: to overthrow the Sandinista government and to replace it, not with a non-aligned or independent regime, but with a government that would be compliant to the basic policy and interests of the United States in this hemisphere. The basic aim behind this policy is analogous to Afganistan. The Soviet Union went into Afghanistan as it went into Czechoslovakia, as it went into Hungary, as it was prepared to go into Poland if worse came to worst, in order to maintain regimes in its immediate periphery that were compliant to Soviet policy and Soviet interests. That's exactly the same reason the United States is trying to overthrow the Nicaraguan government. It's the reason we tried to overthrow the Cuban government before. It's the reason we overthrew the Brazilian government in 1964, and the Guatemalan government in 1954.

There's a long, long history of this kind of behavior, not just on the part of the United States or the Soviet Union, but on the part of great powers everywhere, and to pretend that somehow the policy towards Nicaragua is aimed at the establishment of democracy is just so much sophistry. Our Nicaraguan policy is a specific manifestation of a broader policy called the Reagan doctrine, which amounts to an effort to use military force to roll back the Soviet empire at its fringes. It is, in that sense, a very radical doctrine, a sharp departure from basic tenets of U.S. foreign policy since World War II, which were designed around a containment policy. The effect of this is to put the United States in the business of supporting proxy wars against Third World governments that we don't like.

In the Nicaraguan case, it seems to me that this policy is wrong and counterproductive. The idea that the Contras are not a proxy force seems to me to do violence to our notions of language. The idea that the Contras have somehow become a broad-based insurgency denies reality. I don't think you can believe that anybody, except perhaps the CIA people over in Langley, Virginia, knows whether there are 15,000, 5,000 or 25,000 Contras. The notion suggested by Mr. Radosh that this has become a broader based movement than the Sandinistas led, with more people involved, seems to me to be wrong. I don't know anybody, including Arturo Cruz, who would argue that the Sandinistas didn't come to power in 1979 at the head of a political movement which encompassed virtually every sector of Nicaraguan society. That is to say, the Sandinistas were indeed a revolutionary vanguard, in the sense of leading the struggle against Somoza. They were the ones who defeated the national guard. They had as much legitimacy to constitute a revolutionary government as the founding fathers of this country. Mr. Radosh's notion that the Sandinistas, through the abuse and horrors of the commandantes, have produced a civil war, seems to me to be silly business, as is the attempt to equate the Sandinistas' human rights records with those of Somoza, El Salvador or Guatemala. This notion that somehow, the Sandinistas have created this "totalitarian dungeon," as Ronald Reagan puts it, seems to me to fly in the face of the facts.

Why is our policy a nonsensical policy? There are two good sets of arguments to explain this. One set deals basically with legal issues. These say that the policy is a violation of our international obligations, that the administration, because of a lack of domestic support, has been forced to commit a series of violations of domestic law, and that the nature of the policy involves a repudiation of the most basic principles that are supposed to lie at the heart of what our government stands for: non-aggression and self-determination. Even beyond this moral argument, however, the policy is simply ineffective. The Contras have no chance of winning, and even if they did, there is very little likelihood that they would give us any better of a regime than the one that's in power today. Meanwhile, the pursuit of this policy raises the danger of wider war. It destabilizes civilian politics in surrounding countries and fuels the regional arms race. It has led to the increasing military presence of Cuba and the Soviet Union, which has accelerated over the course of the war enormously, and has led to a reduction of domestic political liberty and pluralism. There is no question in my mind that under the siege mentality that's come out of the war, there is a growing sense inside Nicaragua that many domestic opponents are a kind of fifth column in league with the Contras, and in point of fact, many of them *are* in league with the Contras. Many of them are quite open about their sympathy for the armed opposition to the Sandinistas, and even more so, about their hopes for a direct intervention by the United States.

Neier: I heard Mr. Leiken talking about security interests, but I did not hear what those security interests

Rachel and Esau

Haim Chertok

One of my first acts upon returning from synagogue every Friday night is to bless my two daughters with the traditional priestly benediction: "May God make you as Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, and Leah." This sequence of matriarchs is generational but not quite chronological, for the younger sister Rachel takes precedence over Leah, her elder. A conventional inversion, it reflects both the folk tradition as seen in the *midrashim* and the dominant view of the biblical commentators: priority falls properly to Rachel. After all, she is the beautiful maiden, the beloved wife, the mother of Joseph; pathetically dying in childbirth, she is popularly a compassionate intercessor as well. Unloved, weak-eyed Leah is ... well ... Leah.

Now Nachmanides was careful to point out that Jacob truly did not *despise* his first wife Leah; it was just that he, like our commentators themselves, loved her less. Typical of the *midrashim* is one that depicts God rebuking Jacob for the sole recorded instance when he loses all patience with Rachel's foolishness (Genesis 30:2; all subsequent references are to Genesis). Extenuation of the younger and fairer is the rule. It is as if on every Friday night, around hundreds of thousands of tables, Rachel supplants Leah and exacts her perpetual retribution for that cardinal night whereon Leah supplanted her in Jacob's wedding canopy, thereby requiring that Jacob work yet another seven years for father Laban in order to acquire Rachel.

And yet the narrative is a crosshatch of incident and evidence that lays on Rachel a burden of error, divine disfavor and punishment: she is haughty, she is long barren, she steals, she is a trickster, she condemns herself to death in childbirth. Whereas barrenness or premature death are not unequivocally signs of God's displeasure, neither does the biblical imagination comprehend them as simply adventitious. What is it—the predominance, perhaps, of a male perspective?—that has narrowed both popular and rabbinic Judaism to viewing Rachel through the prism of her husband's love and her son's merit?

The structural undercurrents of the narrative must be clearly delineated. The relationship between the two sisters themselves (as well as between each of them to their respective handmaidens and to Jacob) is most fully explicable as an extension of the frictional connection between Jacob and his estranged twin, Esau. Twenty years earlier Jacob had fled Canaan in fear of his life, having duplicitously taken blessing from father Isaac. Even after all this time—an exile of servitude that should be properly viewed as a period both of growth and of punishment—he feels himself in mortal danger. Both his wrestling match at the Jabbok and his encounter with Esau will validate the success of Jacob's redemptive quest in Haran. The process itself, however, has been largely veiled because it is enacted primarily by means of displaced symbolic segments seeming to issue out of the rivalry between the sisters.

But this externalization has entailed a coil of misapprehension. The essence of the psychological dynamic Jacob endures is that he must make amends for his undoing of Esau by sustaining (as Esau has sustained) a deprivation of what should have been coming to him by rights. This much, indeed, is generally understood: hence is he deprived, albeit briefly, of Rachel. The decisive twist, however, is that Laban's wedding night substitution of Leah for Rachel is *not* a *quid pro quo* for the suffering Jacob has caused Esau. It merely points toward it. Rather, the spiritual shortsightedness and affective blindness which temporarily let his unruly appetite reign, initiate twenty years of trial from which he will emerge atoned, symbolically at one with and coextensive with his brother Esau. The *sine qual non* is imaginative sympathy; no other payment can suffice.

Stated schematically, Esau with the tasty lentils is as Jacob with the beauteous Rachel. Jacob flees to save his life, but in the narrative this motive for flight is intertwined with Rebekah's pretext to Isaac (produced by her genuine disgust at the idolatrous practices of the Hittite women) that Jacob, unlike Esau, not marry in Canaan. But like Esau, Jacob is attracted and overcome by beguiling appearances. Like Esau, he succumbs and begins a reflex of suffering.

In switching his daughters, Laban is not only narrowly justified as a father but essentially right. Had it not been for the overarching symbolic process which Jacob must follow, his appropriate destination could truly have been none but the virtuous and highly available older sister. But penitential pressure prevails; plot symmetry dictates that he encounter tasty Rachel. A seeming complication, Laban's timely intervention, though plainly self-serving, does effectively ameliorate Jacob's moral condition. Such is the twisting trajectory of his career from Canaan to Haran and back, from Jacob to Israel (and ultimately back).

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Rachel derives her enduring privileged position, from which no chicanery she can contrive threatens to dislodge her, wholly from being the choice of a Jacob at his lowest ebb of prophetic evolution. At this stage, as a center of consciousness he is grossly unreliable. Compounding the irony, the "despised Leah" has been unconsciously but inevitably linked to a stereotypically invidious Esau: elder to elder, despised to despised, rejected to second fiddle. The fulcrum, of course, is Jacob himself.

Once beyond the orbit of his fearsome brother and domineering mother, it is plain that Jacob's imagination is captivated by the "pretext"—he seeks a wife. At Bethel he lays his head upon a stone and dreams of a ladder erected to heaven and a promise from the "God of Abraham thy father and God of Isaac" that his seed shall "spread abroad" in every direction. This famous vision has been endlessly exploited, but whatever else it portends, is it not as well the seminal vision of a young man disposed to find a suitable bride so as to spread his seed?

It is as if on every Friday night, around hundreds of thousands of tables, Rachel supplants Leah and exacts her perpetual retribution.

The measure of Jacob's callowness is his response to the dream: "'Surely the Lord is in this place: and I knew it not' ... and Jacob vowed a vow, saying, 'If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go ... then shall the Lord be my God....'" (28:16;20). Were the nimbus cast by generations of reverence not so persistent, it would hardly be necessary to note that Jacob's opening remark argues a belief in local deities, that his avowal of fealty to the God of his Fathers is merely conditional. He stands here in startling contrast to his Grandfather Abraham at our first encounter with him. In fact, it will take the twenty years in Haran to bring Jacob to Abraham's initial level of spiritual development. In brief, we have no small presumptive grounds for questioning the judgment of this young man.

Jacob next arrives at what could likely be the same well at which Eliezer encountered and recognized in Rebekah those signs of merit which identified her as the appropriate bride for Isaac. A great stone sits on the mouth of the well, and Jacob is informed that Rachel, a daughter of Laban, is approaching with her flock. His commission from Isaac had been to take for a wife a daughter of Laban, and he has dreamed a dream of fruitfulness along the way—oh, is the young traveler ever primed to fall in love when Rachel appears! The text, however, is alive with verbal signals and rife with dramatic irony that both Jacob and most readers seem ill-prepared to comprehend or heed.

As Rachel arrives, Jacob tells the shepherds "... it is not yet high day, neither is it time that the cattle should be gathered together.... " (29:7). His intent, of course, is that they should leave him alone with his kinswoman. What he strikes in the process, however, is the verbal note of prematurity, of something occurring *too soon* which colors the ensuing encounter—and the next two decades as well.

At the very sight of the young beauty, Jacob "rolled the stone from the well's mouth and watered the flock of Laban ... And Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted his voice, and wept" (30:10-11). Simultaneously energized and overcome, formerly delicate Jacob moves the great impediment, acting as the dragon-slayer with the distressed princess. However, the multiplex stone also stands in contrapuntal relation to the stone Jacob had recently erected at Bethel to mark his vow to the God of Abraham and Isaac. *Moving it* lends a sharply ambiguous cast to this first meeting with his beloved, a clear warning that his vows to God and to Rachel just may spring from contradictory currents of fealty or even selfhood.

Sure enough, after watering her flock, impulsively he kisses her. Now we rather warm to young Jacob-in-love, but this shouldn't blind us to what these actions portend. Eliezer had not been taken with Rebekah merely because she was attractive. In *their* well scene, Rebekah had hastened to water *his* camels. What is signal in this replay is the reversal of roles: Jacob performs the meritorious watering action; more pointedly, *Rachel does not*. Moreover, while commentators have spared few pains in condoning Jacob's affectionate embrace of cousin Rachel at first meeting, in the context it strikes another premature off-note. The text records no reluctance on Rachel's part to be kissed by the handsome stranger who identifies himself as her cousin only *after* they unclench.

In sum, virtually everything about this meeting at the well shimmers with equivocality. Stepping back from the immediate scene, the reasons become evident. Jacob's "business" in Haran is only secondarily to get a wife. He is ahead of himself. First he must act so as to merit God's promise which he received at Bethel. For Jacob to fall in love with Rachel because she was "of beautiful form and fair to look upon" may be easy to understand and to forgive, but it also is the very measure of the distance Jacob has to traverse before he will be ready for his major life task.

Loving *the younger sister* is of a piece with loving himself, *the younger brother.* Essentially it is narcissistic, an act of self-regard which is a stumbling block (foreshadowing, by the way, that very failing in Joseph, the first child of this young couple). It will be circumvented by the timely machinations of Laban and later surpassed by a more mature Jacob who must, if not come to love, at least learn to give the elder, the "other," the principle of the firstborn, its full due. Balance and justice reside in this. Of course God favors Jacob over Esau—Jacob *is* the chosen vessel—but the Bible makes it repeatedly clear that the principle of the firstborn's priority may be undone only at a heavy price. It will be paid.

There is yet a further subtle thread informing this misleading encounter between Jacob and Rachel that ties it to the larger deceptive weave. At first glance younger and favored sis Rachel seems a natural for favored and younger sib Jacob. Yet, when the brothers struggled in the womb of Rebekah, it was Esau who appeared first in the world and thereby seemed to prevail. Birthing imagery at the well is propitious and helps effect the link. Jacob rolling the stone from the mouth of the well suggests not only sexuality but midwifery as well, in the removal of a barrier from the mouth of the womb (this will come up again in a later connection). Now it is Rachel who enters first on the stage of Haran. A gray but palpable link to Esau has been sketched: in context, *arriving first* appertains specifically to a deficiency in character—a defectiveness.

As with Esau, Rachel seems to have all the advantages. As with Esau, such a view would be shortsighted. (Ironically, the weakness of vision is displaced onto Leah.) In this emotional algebra of simultaneous equations, the seconds on the scene—Jacob and Leah—are the truly preferred. The astigmatics—because they are so close to the picture they have lost the truer perspective—misconstrue: just as blind, aging Isaac prefers Esau, immature Jacob falls for Rachel. The saving irony: both father and son are outwitted by the play of events which tends toward fraternal reconciliation. The price: Rachel, symbolically like Jacob, must die!

The normative view of Laban's pivotal maneuver seems to me narrowly adequate: Jacob tricked Isaac; he is in turn deceived by Isaac's brother-in-law (and cousin) through a ruse exploiting the parallel inability of the victim to see clearly—in Jacob's case, either the identity of his bedmate or the deficiencies of his beloved. Much excoriated Laban had given fair warning that he was a sharpie when first he greeted his nephew with the announcement that "... thou are bone of my flesh."

But beyond credit for setting into motion a redemptive sequence of events, Laban deserves less biased reading. Like Esau, he is a victim of rabbinic overkill. Laban's action—the substitution of sister for wife—adumbrates no lesser personages than Abraham (who twice palmed off Sarai as his sister) and Isaac (who pulled it off one more time with Rebekah). The salient point is that Laban of Haran *does* embody the normative, patriarchal strain which sustained an injury at Jacob's hands. His deception is committed in the defense of the conservative principle of continuity and orderly succession to the *hupa* "It is not done in our place, to give the younger before the first-born" (29:26-27). Not, in fact, in any place! Whatever his failings, Laban's agency in effecting Jacob's rehabilitation is essential. He is no true villain.

The text ... is alive with verbal signals and rife with dramatic irony that both Jacob and most readers seem ill-prepared to comprehend or heed.

Jacob and Laban agreed that the young man would labor seven years for Rachel in marriage, but Jacob awakens conned on his wedding morning. Then he agrees to sleep seven nights with Leah before receiving Rachel for whom he will work an additional seven years. Seven years and seven nights feel like an appropriate period of service; Jewishly, seven conveys the notion of completeness, as in the days in the week. But little in Haran is as it seems. Within the context of birth and delivery, the significance of seven is reversed, seven months being the period of prematurity. As before, pre- or immaturity attaches itself to Rachel. Later it will not pass until Leah births seven children that "God remembered Rachel, and ... harkened to her, and opened her womb" (30:22). (Ultimately, Rachel repays Jacob's hard labor for her with hard labor of her own and dies delivering a probably premature Benjamin.) The urgent point in the inversion of seven is that it accords with self-regard; she is not what she seems and she is incapable of change.

The damaging evidence mounts. After Leah bears four sons, Rachel reproaches her husband: "Give me children, or else I die" to which Jacob retorts "Am I in God's stead, who hath withheld from the fruit of the womb?" (30:1-2). At last he angers. We at once recall a parallel situation when Isaac had besought God's help so that Rebekah would conceive. Rachel blames Jacob for her barrenness, a misapprehension that un-

derscores her appalling shallowness and inadequate conception of God's agency. It evokes as well Jacob's similar spiritual thinness earlier at Bethel. He has grown. This is an instance—others will follow—of Jacob's spiritual maturation being linked to the displacement onto Rachel of the very faults he must transcend.

There is yet a further dimension to Jacob's anger. Her threatening "or else I die" recalls the dire words of Esau—"I am at the point to die" (25:32)—when he exchanged his birthright for Jacob's bowl of lentils. Her words trigger, then, not merely a stab of remorse at his own earlier duplicity but perhaps as well a flash of recognition: though he and Rachel seem connected by parallel positions as favored siblings, *it is Esau who is Rachel's secret sharer.* Jacob has escaped with his life from Canaan only—if but fleetingly—to discern himself *married to Esau's surrogate*!

Rebuffed, Rachel's next tactic is to offer Bilhah, her handmaiden, to Jacob so that she "may be builded up through her," a ploy reminiscent of Sarah's exploitation of Hagar. And as with Sarah and Hagar, the stratagem seems to work—at first. Bilhah gives birth to Dan ... and then to Naphtali which brings an exultant Rachel to exclaim, "With mighty wrestlings have I wrestled with my sister, and have prevailed" (30:8). As Jacob outwitted Esau, Rachel seems to outdo Leah.

It is illusory. Leah, unlike Hagar, is a fully legitimate wife. For the first time in the sparring between biblical siblings, without resort to violence the older holds her own. Leah counters Rachel's gambit with Zilpah, the handmaiden whose importance was foreshadowed when her bestowal upon Leah was announced at the very gap between Jacob's lying down with "Rachel" and his discovery in the morning light that she is Leah (29:23-25).

Rachel's gain is nullified by the rapid birth of two sons to Zilpah. This curve of events prefigures a later narrative arc: Rachel will seem to triumph posthumously through the regency of her first-born Joseph in Egypt and his domination over his brethren. In the long run, however, the tribes of Joseph will be among the first to disappear. The last, laughing twist will give the laurels to Leah through her son Judah, the tribe through which the Jews have maintained their identity among the nations and through which the Messiah is prophesied to come.

Yet another Rachel stratagem. When Reuben gives his mother Leah some mandrakes, Rachel exchanges a night's conjugal rights to obtain the conception-promoting herb. Again things backfire. Leah conceives and bears a fifth son; Rachel remains barren. In addition to underlining Rachel's continued reliance upon superstition rather than God, this mandrake business marks a vital, symbolic juncture in Jacob's redemption. The matter of the stolen blessing received its due on Jacob's first wedding night, but the affair of birthright garnered from Esau under duress is still hanging fire. It is to this which the mandrakes of Leah properly refer.

The basic situations are pointedly parallel: Esau, faint with hunger, relinquishes his birthright for a bowl of Jacob's lentils. It is as if Esau is so overcome (or dense) that later, when he is done out of the blessings for the first-born, he fails to formulate (or recall) any connection to this earlier forfeiture. In Haran it is Rachel, famished unto dying for a son, who makes the unequal exchange: Jacob's bed for the ineffectual mandrakes. This time around it is the younger's turn to fail to perceive essential connections pertaining to birth: just as she—not comprehending that from Sarai on, first wives generally bear the essential sons—blundered in acquiescing to Leah and Jacob's original wedding night coupling, in again ceding Jacob's bed Rachel blunders again. Leah conceives Isaachar that very night!

Whereas through parallel situation and phrasal echo the text insistently yokes Rachel in her shortsighted impulsiveness to Esau (with all its ironic ramifications), *as a trickster she is stand-in for Jacob himself.* Her fleecing is a deliciously fitting piece of displaced symbolic action which moves us closer to a squaring of accounts between the brothers; it is a precondition for Jacob's return to Canaan. A particularly witty touch is that Reuben—in this sequence unconsciously embodying a first-born, man-of-the-fields Esau principle—is the instrument for providing Leah with the perfect bait for achieving Esau's symbolic revenge. This is of a piece with the myopia of Esau being trumped by the massive, life-long opacity of "clever Jacob" vis-à-vis his beautiful, shallow second wife.

The years pass and, foreshadowing the anticlimactically peaceful meeting between the estranged brothers, we hear of no further friction between the sisters. Despite his father-in-law's altering his wages arbitrarily, Jacob works faithfully. This is vital: Jacob, who in Canaan was essentially a man of wiles, must work out the deceitful vein in his character. When his twenty years of service to Laban is concluded, it is *Rachel* who steals her father's idols—the *teraphim*—and hides them in her saddlebags. Commentators have exercised remarkable ingenuity in rationalizing this apparently gratuitous theft by a Mother of Israel. It is, however, perfectly consonant with the Rachel whose knowledge of God is wafer thin: who requests a child not of God but of Jacob, who relies not on prayer but on mandrakes, who now wants the *teraphim* because, like the one for whom she is proxy prior to his dream-

vision at Bethel, she believes as much in local deities as in the God of Abraham and Isaac.

However, the larger narrative pressure fomenting her theft transcends her conscious motivation. When Laban in pursuit accuses his son-in-law (the reformed sharpie) of theft, Jacob unknowingly passes judgment upon both himself and his beloved: "With whomsoever thy findest thy gods, he shall not live" (31:32). The *teraphim* are hidden beneath Rachel as she sits. She will later die in childbirth: they prevail specifically over her womb. Moreover, in the same narrative arc of symbolic displacement, Jacob himself suffers death through his surrogate Rachel. Indeed, before Jacob can achieve redemption, *Rachel must die.*

We recall just prior to his first parlay with Esau, Jacob's famous encounter with the mysterious emissary at the ford of the Jabbok. They wrestle till the break of day. In spite of suffering a wound in his thigh, Jacob refuses to release his adversary: "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me" to which his antagonist responds, "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for thou has striven with God and with men, and have prevailed" (32:26-29). Demanding the name of his opponent, Jacob obtains his blessing.

What a mixed blessing it is! This match at the Jabbok is, of course, a round—not the last—in a lengthy bout. Emerging first from the womb, Esau had triumphed in the opening set-to. (With exquisite symmetry, Esau will metaphorically preside at the last womb-opening as well—the birth of Benjamin resulting in the death of Rachel). Thereafter in Canaan, Jacob wins all the skirmishes, but—as seen in the emblem of the wound he sustains at the Jabbok—only at substantial cost *which must be repaid.*

Haran is the inverse of Canaan: Rachel-the-preferred stands in for Jacob, but he must witness and bear the successive triumphs of Leah-the-elder as a judgment from God. Finally, the birth of Joseph signals not Rachel's maturation but the fulfillment of *his* period of servitude. Then, just prior to a renewed encounter with Esau, Jacob meets and exacts a blessing from the night-figure at the Jabbok. But it is *not* Jacob who prevails but rather Israel! Jacob, that cunning fellow, sustains a mortal injury in the same procreative region which will carry off Rachel. (There will be no further children.) In fact, the earthly lovers Jacob and Rachel die near each other *along the way,* Jacob when God confirms the blessing of His wrestling emissary and Rachel immediately after delivering Benjamin (35:18). They are a prefigurement of the Children of Israel who never make it to Canaan, who die along the forty-year (double Jacob's twenty) way.

Jacob and Rachel expire en route, but Israel lies eternally beside Leah in the burial ground of the Fathers and Mothers of Israel in Hebron. Rachel is Jacob's enduring love, but—notwithstanding the temporary hegemony of her son Joseph—this time it is the elder sibling Leah who is the preferred of God. There is an unarticulated, otherwise inexplicable response to this radical restoration: Esau, who had set out at the head of a war party, startlingly permits himself to be pacified when finally his long dreamed of opportunity for vengeance occurs. Neither Jacob's flattery nor the gifts can account for this. Esau, of course, senses little, but the objective narrative signal of restoration and recompense is precisely his abnegation of violence.

Thereafter, *but then only,* may the promise to Abraham be reiterated and renewed to Israel: "Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins; and the land which I gave unto Abraham and Isaac, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land" (35:11-12).

Older son Esau—the Chosen of his father—and younger daughter Rachel—the Chosen of her husband—are neither of them the preferred of God Who justly perceives the greater merit and potential for fulfilling a larger design in their rivals. The stronger one and the fairer one are secret sharers in a metahistorical drama beyond their (and our own) full comprehension. Nevertheless, their respective roles are vital to its fruition, and both exact their full due from the more favored personae whose spiritual and moral maturation is inconceivable without their agency. What astonishes is that personalities at base so closely congruent as those of Esau and Rachel should have generated such violently disparate verdicts from both the roster of revered rabbinic commentators and the generations of ordinary lay readers.

If the time is painfully overdue for Christianity to discard decisively its allegorical allegiance to Esau as proto-Judas-Jew, perhaps it is not premature for Judaism to reevaluate its traditional perception of Esau as proto-Roman-Christian. Whereas the consequences of this latter misperception have not been nearly as historically bloody, it seems to me nevertheless a textual distortion which no longer serves any justifiable purpose.

My daughters would recoil, I am certain, were I some Friday evening to replace Rachel with Leah in sequence in the prologue to their priestly blessing. I confess, however, that for some time now I have been making a private mental reservation, saying "Rachel" but actually intending "Leah"! Sometimes I wonder whether, at the critical moment, purblind but not totally deceived, Isaac did not do something of the kind himself. □

The Return of Values

Alan Wolfe

For our time," Lionel Trilling once wrote, "the most effective agent of the moral imagination has been the novel of the last two hundred years." Trilling was referring to a tradition that explored the manners and morals of personal life, finding in the world of small-scale interaction a greater human truth than in the more "social" works of self-consciously leftist writers like Theodore Dreiser. America was infertile ground for fiction of that sort; our social life lacked the "thickness" of tradition and social custom, Trilling argued. There was little gap between appearance and reality because the culture was so open that it lacked subtlety. One had to turn to Europe to learn something about manners and morals from fiction.

The astonishing and quite surprising success of *A Room with a View*, the Merchant-Ivory adaptation of E. M. Forster's novel, can perhaps be taken as an indication that Americans are beginning to miss that long-past world of moral fiction. Few writers were more concerned with the old-fashioned question of personal and moral responsibility than Forster. Writing in 1935, Forster argued that the political movements of his time, which we now call totalitarian, could not be understood politically; "we must peer deeper if we want to understand them," he wrote, "deeper into the abyss of our own characters." Because "politics are based on human nature," the novelist, by exploring the latter, might have something to say, even if indirectly, about the former.

Forster had a particular political position that may be of greater relevance now than it was at the beginning of the century. Distrustful of all ideologies, he believed in the old-fashioned idea that personal relations constituted the only realm in modern society that people themselves could control. Two ideas, both of them unique to modernity, left him cold. If people acted only as individuals, unconcerned with their personal responsibility toward others, they could not create a moral life. But if they submerged their responsibility toward others into abstract "causes," they would simply be replacing a false individualism with an insincere collectivism. Of all of Forster's novels, none explored at greater length the question of moral responsibility than *Howard's End*. The themes of this novel are of direct relevance to the moral condition of modernity.

How to live is the essential question of moral theory. Where to live is the essential question of modern life. For one of the most distinguishing features of being modern is the loss of a sense of place, the rupture from the land that was the basis of traditional society. *Howard's End* is about where one particular family, the Schlegels, should live. Margaret and Helen Schlegel are being expelled from their flat by a landlord who wants, as we say today, to "gentrify" his properties. Like modern people everywhere, they have become mobile. Margaret's friend Ruth Wilcox, who is even more old-fashioned and aristocratic than she, is rendered nearly incoherent by the news: "To be parted from your house, your father's house—it ought not to be allowed. It is worse than dying. I would rather die—Oh, poor girls! Can what they call civilization be right, if people mayn't die in the room where they were born?" Ruth Wilcox knows something about civilization; she lives in a property called Howard's End that is so much part of her that it anchors and centers her sense of belonging.

The plot of *Howard's End* revolves around the plight of a young clerk named Leonard Bast. He has a secure job in an insurance firm, but when told by the Schlegel sisters that his firm might go under (gossip they picked up from Ruth Wilcox's husband Henry, the capitalist owner of Howard's End), the young man quits his job and eventually finds himself unemployed. Since we know he will never find work again, the question explored in the novel is who is responsible for his fate. Informed that his false advice about the company caused a problem for the man, Henry Wilcox replies, again mistakenly, "a clerk who clears out of any concern, good or bad, without securing a berth somewhere else first, is a fool, and I've no pity for him." The whole matter, in his opinion, is a "deplorable misfortune." "I am grieved for your clerk," he tells Helen, "but it is all in a day's work. It is part of the battle of life." Against the Schlegel sisters, who bring up the point that "we, the upper classes" have obligations, Wilcox replies with the language of modern self-confidence:

> A word of advice. Don't take up that sentimental attitude over the poor. See that she doesn't, Margaret. The poor are poor, and one's sorry for them, but there it is. As civilization moves forward, the

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> shoe is bound to pinch in places, and it's absurd to pretend that anyone is responsible personally. Neither you, nor I, nor my informant, nor the man who informed him ... are to blame for this clerk's loss of salary. It's just the shoe pinching—no one can help it; and it might have easily been worse.

None of this is convincing to Helen Wilcox. She brings the Basts directly to Wilcox' house, there to confront him with, as she puts it, his "duty." Margaret becomes angry with her sister. She will approach Wilcox, but not in the language of duty, which he will surely reject, but in the language of character. She will appeal to him as a submissive woman asking for a favor. Flattered, he agrees to employ the man, but only on condition that no precedent be set. The matter seems to be resolved through expediency rather than explicit moral obligation:

> Henry would save the Basts as he had saved Howard's End, while Helen and her friends were discussing the ethics of salvation. His was a slapdash method, but the world has been built slapdash, and the beauty of mountain and river and sunset may be but the varnish with which the unskilled artificer hides his joints.

Eighteenth century political economists believed that the pursuit of vice could produce virtue, a comforting doctrine, but one that cannot succeed in Forster's fiction. For reasons too melodramatic to be summarized here, Wilcox's "slapdash" methods fail, and Bast is cut loose to join the modern ranks of the unemployed. He becomes a beggar, appealing to the shame he would bring upon his relatives. "Leonard realized that they need never starve, because it would be too painful for his relatives. Society is based on the family, and the clever wastrel can exploit this indefinitely."

How to live is the essential question of moral theory. Where to live is the essential question of modern life.

Yet it turns out that of all people, it is Henry Wilcox, the most supremely modern character in the novel, who misunderstands the "pinching shoe" that tightens when civilization advances. Henry, who is the embodiment of the "inner darkness in high places that comes with a commercial age," has been taught that the ties between people in a modern society are primarily economic; he fulfills his obligations to clerks by giving them work. When confronted with a moral claim, he is handicapped, producing the tragic climax of the novel. Henry Wilcox, because he is convinced that he has no direct moral obligation to strangers, finds that his ties to others are so strong that they destroy the world as he knows it. Economically, Forster suggests, we who are modern are individuals pursing our own interests. Morally, we who are modern are all tied to each other by invisible webs of personal responsibility. The question that modern people must ask, as he put it in his essay "The Challenge of Our Time," is whether we can "manage to combine the new economy with the old morality."

It would seem that we cannot, that we have, in a word, failed the challenge of our time. Capitalism has created fantastic wealth and opportunities for individual growth and creativity. But it has also destroyed direct ties of moral responsibility between individuals, turning these ties instead into questions of economic efficiency or public policy. The marketplace clichés put in the mouth of Henry Wilcox are there to be ridiculed; Forster, in the same circle that would produce John Maynard Keynes, could not take seriously the idea that the pursuit of self-interest would advance the interests of all. But Helen Schlegel, imbued with "esprit de classe," has an aristocratic ethic that is hardly helpful either. She is flighty and politically naive, believing in a code that has little room in it for obligations to complete strangers. Leonard Bast is kept from starvation by his family's fear of shame, not by their love; destroy the capacity for shame, as the modern world seems to have done, and one can no longer count on the modern family to be responsible, even to its members. Forster, somewhat surprisingly, doesn't address another source of possible moral responsibility, the state, for in reality the Leonard Bast's of the world would soon receive unemployment compensation. Yet not even that solution would resolve the moral gap revealed by the novel; the modern state assumed responsibility for the poor in the interests of order, not out of any sense of ethical commitment.

Modern people are rootless, characterized, as Forster put it, by "this continual flux in the hearts of men." Yet morality is rooted, for only those who have a sense of place, who are somehow connected to Howard's End, are civilized. Does this mean, as the philosopher Alistair MacIntyre has put it, that one can be modern or moral but not both? Forster, for one, did not want to think so. At the end of the book, Howard's End, the place, has survived, and all associated with it have learned a moral lesson. But we know that in reality it will not survive. The house is only an hour's train ride from London, and in the very beginning of the novel

the obvious question is asked: "Into which country will it lead, England or Suburbia?" Howard's End cannot survive, which means that England cannot survive, which means that the sensibility, so important to Forster, of personal relations and individual responsibility cannot survive. Written between 1908 and 1910, *Howard's End* ends on a note that foreshadows the doom of World War I: "Life's going to be melted down, all over the world."

II

What makes *Howard's End* so instructive is that few novels like it are written today; Forster's fiction seems closer to the world of Jane Austen than Philip Roth. Moral fiction, as the novelist and critic John Gardner has written, is a relic of the past. If fiction is no longer capable of expressing a moral sense of social relations, and if religion and tradition have declined in the face of modernity, where do modern people turn to be instructed in their social obligations to each other? I believe that, in a peculiarly modern way, the social sciences have never departed from their origins in moral theory. (Adam Smith, celebrated as the originator of economic man, was a moral philosopher by trade.)

When we consider the question of what obligation modern individuals owe each other, the question explored at such length in *Howard's End*, we find three immediate answers, one for each of the major social sciences. Society works best, says the economist in tones reminiscent of Henry Wilcox, when there exists a market, a mechanism for enabling people to rationally maximize his self-interest. Let each person calculate the consequences of their own decisions, and what is best for society will be the aggregate of all those free choices. We tried that and it did not work, might respond the political scientist. Hobbes told us long ago that society is threatened by the chaos of the state of nature. Restraint—not necessarily the sovereign proposed by Hobbes, more realistically a society of law and governmental regulation—is needed to coordinate the chaos of individual choices toward a socially defined goal. Neither solution, responds the sociologist, is perfect. What actually makes society work is neither self-interest nor coercion, but, as Helen Schlegel argued in *Howard's End*, traditions, norms, reciprocity and all those other features of culture that modern society seems to be losing.

There is no axiom more common to the social sciences than the assertion that they are value-free efforts to describe reality, not value-laden efforts to propose how it should be run. Yet scratch beneath the surface, and not very far beneath it at that, and a moral theory seems to emerge. In economics particularly, a moral dimension is always present. Above all else, economists value rationality; in their models, no matter how complicated with algebraic formulae and sophisticated language, people are assumed to be acting rationally. When confronted with evidence that they do not, that they choose other values than self-interest, economists respond that these people have acted out of incomplete information, failing to "optimize" their conduct. Rationality, in short, is not a description of how people do act, as much as it is a statement of how they should; economists tend to construct the kind of society they would like, one which undergirds all their efforts at "scientific" description.

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Barry Schwartz has recently written a book (*The Battle for Human Nature*) which argues that economists lay claim to science in order to buttress their essentially value-laden claims about how people should act. We would not argue, Schwartz points out, about whether the earth should revolve around the sun; science has convinced us that it does. Similarly, if an economist can convince us that people will always buy cheap and sell dear, there would be no grounds to argue whether they should. Like Skinnerian psychology and sociobiology, which Schwartz discusses in the same terms, modern economics is moral theory in the modern dress of scientific rhetoric. (Donald McCloskey, an economist by training, has written a fascinating book called *The Rhetoric of Economics*, which argues that economics, like fiction, has its own style, metaphors, mode of argument, and irony.)

Once the notion is accepted that economics is an exercise in moral theory, then it becomes possible to argue about its first assumptions instead of assuming them to be true regardless of evidence to the contrary. This task has been undertaken exceptionally well by two economists, Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, in *Democracy and Capitalism*. They ask us to reject a set of assumptions in which economics is seen as involving choosing, while sociology and psychology deal with learning. They argue instead that we learn as we choose, that the economy is not only about producing goods, but also about producing how we

decide to treat the goods we produce. Seeking to synthesize the insights of liberal democracy and Marxism, rather than putting them in opposition to one another, they develop a richly eclectic model of human development emphasizing the capacity of people to make moral choices. What makes Bowles' and Ginntis' arguments so interesting is that they can be read as directed against two economists named Gintis and Bowles. For their earlier work (*Schooling in a Capitalist Society*), Bowles and Gintis, like many on the Left (including myself, I should add) developed a structuralist model that left little room for the capacity of humans to negotiate their way around the constraints of modern capitalism. Their new book is far more appreciative of the human capacity to make choices, and in that sense allows moral issues to be more explicitly addressed.

Political science has also been undergoing something of a rebirth of moral theory. The last word in moral political philosophy would seem to have been written in 1971 when John Rawls published *A Theory of Justice*. If ever a work in political philosophy was produced with public fanfare, it was this one: long, ambitious, with the stamp of Harvard University all over it. Rawls's genius was to ask people to make moral choices from an original position of ignorance about the consequences of where their choices would lead them. If you did not know whether you would turn out to be rich or poor, would you advocate large levels of inequality or greater equality? Especially in contrast to economists and their love of the market, Rawls seemed to be offering a justification for the kind of moderate equality produced by the modern welfare state.

There have been a number of critiques of Rawls, none more powerful than that offered by Michael Sandel in *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*. Individuals in Rawls's world, Sandel argues, pursue justice based on their internal decision-making systems, not out of discussion and controversy with others. All they do is engage in "matching ... pre-existing desires, undifferentiated as to worth, with the best available means of satisfying them." By ignoring the social context, the ties of obligation and communication that link people in society, Rawls posits exceptionally weak agents. Because the "original position" of the individual does not allow her to take the point of view of others, she does not really make choices. Rawls's moral theory leads to "a place devoid of inherent meaning, a world 'disenchanted' in Max Weber's phrase, a world without an objective moral order."

Efforts to restore a moral dimension to political theory are, in fact, flourishing. *Strong Democracy*, a book by Benjamin Barber, is an effort to rescue democracy from liberalism, to argue for a concept of democracy based on active participation rather than a passive assertion of rights. Examining in detail the failures of liberal psychology and epistomology, based as they are on a negative theory of human nature, Barber looks at how democratic traditions based on "talk," on the capacity of people to grow through conversation, might be revived in modern society. Russell Hanson's *The Democratic Imagination in America* argues in a similar manner that concepts of democracy have always changed in this country because they have been subject to serious and deep "conversations" about their meaning. Since the New Deal, our dominant conception of democracy has been instrumental and material; government works to the degree that it distributes material resources to the interests that make effective claim upon it. Hanson suggests that the price we have paid for such a conception of democracy is to strip away ethical discourse from political discussions leaving us with an impoverished civic language. Political theory can begin to enrich public language by engaging in new conversations about what the meaning of democracy should be.

Of all the social sciences, sociology (and, of course, anthropology as well) have been the most committed to an explicit moral discourse. Yet despite the influence of Durkheim and Weber, both of whom incorporated moral considerations into their theory, these social sciences have fallen in recent years into a discourse of bloodless, value-free, quantitative research technique. As a result, both of them are in ferment.

The major question facing a revival of moral sociology is whether it is possible to posit ties that can hold people together without subjecting them to historical traditions or political decisions over which they have no control.

Unlike economics and Rawlsian notions of justice, which base themselves on the assumption that the preferences people manifest (by buying something, for example, or by voting for a particular candidate) are stable, anthropology and sociology begin with the assumption that things are never quite what they seem. There is an interpretative dimension to these social sciences. In other words, what philosophers call hermeneutics. Clifford Geertz has almost single-handedly kept alive an interpretative tradition in anthropology, one that seeks to extract symbolic meaning from a wide

variety of seemingly ordinary practices. Interpretative social science, like literary criticism, appeals to the humanist, the historian, the decoder—none of them traditions easily compatible with counting, testing hypotheses, and writing scientific reports in the passive voice.

Sociology has been slower to be affected by the hermeneutic revival than anthropology, but now its time seems to have come. For a considerable period of time, the moral discourse in sociology was upheld by writers who saw themselves on the conservative end of the political spectrum. The founders of the modern sociology like Durkheim, Weber, and Toinnes bemoaned the loss of ties of tradition in the face of modernity, giving their work a romantic cast, a protest (often from the Right) against the liberal instrumentalism of capitalist society.

The major question facing a revival of moral sociology is whether it is possible to posit ties that can hold people together without subjecting them to historical traditions or political decisions over which they have no control. Can we have families based on mutual understanding rather than on received hierarchy? Can we have group loyalty without artificially generated emotionalism? Modern people, for better or worse, have realized their individuality which offers them opportunities for individual growth and development, rather an improvement over traditional society. Realizing that modernity was inescapable, Durkheim tried to find a source of secular morality, an alternative to either the market or the state. He was not successful. It is not clear that contemporary sociologists will be either, but attempting to reconcile modernity with morality is certainly the major task facing the more humanistic social sciences in the next years.

In *The Needs of Strangers*, Michael Ignatieff, a Canadian living in England, explores the question of how modern people can express their solidarity with each other, touching on a Durkheimian theme. The sources he uses for his essay are primarily literary: Lear on the heath, Augustine's ponderings about freedom, a conversation between Boswell and Hume as the latter lay dying, and so forth. Ignatieff's most important conclusion, in my opinion, is that unlike Lear, who is terrorized by nature, modern people are terrorized by the social, by the relations they have created between each other. From Ignatieff's analysis, one can clearly see the limits of the welfare state, an effort to create a sense of moral obligation among strangers, but one that creates bureaucratic resistance to caring at the same time. This eloquent book brings us full circle from Jane Austen. If Lionel Trilling is correct that novelists can inform us about the ties that make a moral life, the gap left by the disappearance of moral fiction may be partially filled by a moral social science using fiction as one of its main sources of understanding.

There is considerable public skepticism toward the social sciences, most of it justified if one examines the professional journals or attends the professional meetings. Economists, for all their scientific pretensions, have been completely unable to predict such fundamental matters as inflation, growth, and international fluctuations. Business firms and investment houses that recently competed with academia for economists have found them quite dispensable; modern organizations do not need the 20th century equivalents of magicians. Political scientists are unsure of who they are and what they should study; at the 1986 meetings of the American Political Science Association, a paper was presented on, of all things, the moral world of Jane Austen. Sociology lives on two tracks. At Harvard and Columbia, still the places with the best names, prize-winning sociologists are denied tenure while number-crunching "methodologists" are hired, yet the fired often have more prestige in the field than the hired, especially among younger scholars. As a result, there are no great institutions teaching sociology, but there are great sociologists, individuals carrying forward the classical tradition of asking the question of what it means to be modern.

In America now, the Right's faith in the market is matched by the Left's faith in the state. . . . Government may be an improvement over the market, but it hardly represents a moral force.

III

"It was impossible to see modern life steadily and see it whole," E. M. Forster noted in *Howard's End*. Forster published his novel in 1910. "On or about December 1910," Forster's friend Virginia Woolf wrote, "human nature changed." Forster and Woolf were modernists, part of the creative movement in art, literature, music, architecture, and ballet that swept the world's great capitals at the end of the last century and the beginning of the present one. (1910 was also the year in which Stravinsky premiered *The Firebird*, the periodical *Der Sturm* was founded, Roger Fry launched the first post-impressionist exhibit in England, and Albert Einstein

was exactly halfway between his two major publications on the theory of relativity.) A new world was coming into being, and the social scientists were as much a part of it as artists and poets.

Facing this new world of shifting human relationships, some social scientists tried to see the world steadily and others to see it whole. Economics and liberal political theory were convinced that a steady gaze was all that was necessary; focus in on the micro patterns, and the macro would fall into place. Sociology and anthropology were not so sure. By contrasting modern society to what came before (and in some cases to what, it was hoped, would come after), they tried to see modern life as a whole, to make some judgement about whether it was inevitable, necessary, or even good.

It is time to recapture an effort to see modern life whole once again. The market, the state, and society are three efforts to deal with questions of moral responsibility, but the discourse of modern society seems to concentrate only on the first two. The market offers the appealing prospect that one can pursue self-interest and benefit everyone else in the process. Were it true, it would be a great relief, but no one, not even those who advocate the idea most strenuously, really believe it is true. (Contemporary conservatives, among them President Reagan, do not believe that the market can be trusted to create a national security apparatus, nor are they market enthusiasts when it comes to explicitly moral questions like pornography, abortion, or drugs.) Libertine in its economic theory, the contemporary Right is stultifying in its moral theory.

For the past hundred years, the moral alternative to the market has been the state. If the quest for self-interest failed to take account of the unfortunate and the left-behind, the government would. In America now, the Right's faith in the market is matched by the Left's faith in the state. Although government may be an improvement over the market, it hardly represents a moral force. Indeed the modern welfare state, by sublimating the questions of personal responsibility to administrative agencies, allows people, in Michael Ignatieff's words, to be "responsible to each other, but not responsible for each other." No wonder that the Left, which once prided itself upon its ethical heritage, speaks a language of administrative efficiency (when it has a chance to speak at all) and no longer a language of moral responsibility.

Libertine in its economic theory, the contemporary Right is stultifying in its moral theory.

Modern political economies have only two political options, neither of which seem to satisfy: to turn things over to the market or to rely on the state. If they are ever to have a third choice, to recapture a conversation about moral obligation, it will be because social scientists from a variety of disciplines have left behind illusions about value freedom and have begun to address moral claims directly. There is such a development taking place in the social sciences. It is not an exaggeration to say that its future and the future of modernity are linked. □

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the *status quo ante*. The existence of a broadly based coalition government did not make painful decisions easier to arrive at—but once taken, it blunted the vocal opposition and criticism. We did not need a National Unity Government to leave Lebanon, but having one made life easier for the politicians who were at the helm when the withdrawal took place.

By August, 1984 inflation in Israel reached an all time high of 400%; foreign currency reserves sunk deep below the "red line" and continued to dwindle rapidly. It was clear from the outset that unpopular decisions had to be implemented soon. A reduction in real terms of income was certainly a *sine qua non*. The Unity Government experimented for almost a full year with half-hearted and short-term measures before it launched a multi-faceted, all-out and long-term new economic program in July, 1985. The main aspects of the plan were: a freeze of market prices and foreign currency exchange rates; a reduction of salaries in real terms; high rates of interest; balancing the budget; a reintegration of tax collecting; special measures to discourage imports and encourage exports without using foreign currency rates as a mechanism. These lines are being written fifteen months after the inauguration of the new economic plan, and so far it has worked amazingly well.

To be sure, Peres and his economic team had quite a bit of luck, too. The massive reduction in oil prices, the significant devaluation of the U.S. dollar compared to European currencies, and, not least, the support of the U.S. Treasury, all contributed to the success of the plan. But the main heros of this victory, it should be noted, were the simple people of Israel who collaborated with the economic planners with amazing self-restraint and prudence.

Was the National Unity Government necessary for this economic achievement? It certainly helped and made the struggle easier. Yet in economic affairs a "social compact" is not a matter for party coalition, but must rather be concluded between major economic and social forces, and must mobilize the goodwill of the masses. There are three main elements that must participate in this enterprise: employers in the business community, trade unions, and the government. The main achievement of Mr. Peres was not in his ability to control and coordinate the government (which, in fact, was often quite uncontrollable, with a minister of finance who had to be removed, and most cabinet ministers resisting the process of further cuts in their own budgets), but rather in his ability to forge a somewhat tenuous and fragile alliance with Yisrael Kessar, the vigorous and patient Secretary General of the Histadrut. Kessar, for his part, managed to carry out this economic program without major breaches in the delicate industrial peace he had shaped. Peres had considerable luck, but he also deserves credit for how he handled the situation.

The Unity Government was committed from the start to improving relations with Egypt, themselves in a state of deterioration after the ill-fated invasion of Lebanon. Mr. Peres invested much personal effort in this endeavor, and he finally succeeded in meeting with President Mubarak in a less than glamorous summit in Alexandria in mid-September, 1986, reestablishing ambassadorial relations between the two countries, and winning a commitment to allow symbolic Egyptian tourism to Israel. The stumbling block during the summit was, of course, Taba. The size of less than one tenth of Manhattan's Central Park, Taba acquired symbolic importance. Israel wanted to prevent the precedent of a full retreat to pre-1967 lines—probably with an eye to future negotiations in the West Bank and perhaps even on the Golan Heights. Egypt, for its part, insisted on the untainted holiness of the principle of territorial sovereignty. Peres fought hard to achieve a breakthrough in the deadlock, and in spite of much bickering with the Egyptians, and many spikes put in his wheels by his Likud allies, he managed by his illustrious patience to bring the issue before an agreed upon international arbitration and to defuse the Taba problem.

Efforts to swing the Palestinian population behind the King and away from the PLO failed miserably.

Mubarak rewarded Peres, however, by little more than gestures. The main obstacle to "full normalization of relations" between Egypt and Israel has little to do with Taba, or for that matter with the problem of Bedouins in the Gaza Strip, or the reparation of the Israeli families for the wanton murder at Res-Burka. The peace process with Israel cannot move beyond its current stage, because Egypt cannot turn its back completely on the Arab and Moslem world by making peace with Israel unilaterally and disconnecting with the Palestinian issue. The real key to peace with Egypt remains in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and is intertwined with Israeli relations with Jordan and primarily with the Palestinians.

The entangled maze of Israeli/Jordanian/Palestinian relations and negotiations during the last two years is too complex to be related in full detail here, but the net result of much expenditure of energy is very close to zero. The agreement concluded between Arafat and

King Hussein in February, 1985 stirred up some hope for a proper beginning of a peace process on the eastern frontiers of Israel. American diplomats shuttled back and forth, there were secret meetings between Israel and Jordanian officials held in the Middle East and Europe, Arab leaders openly (and American personalities secretly) kept open lines with the PLO. Yet exactly one year later, in February, 1986, the entire business blew up: King Hussein made a dramatic speech to his Parliament turning his back to Arafat and announcing his own resignation from the entire project.

Most observers in the West tend to blame Arafat and his colleagues for the failure. His reluctance, or lack of courage, to recognize Israel and accept U.N. resolution 242 is often pointed to as the main stumbling block. In the process, Mr. Peres scored well in terms of public relations. He accepted the Jordanian demands for an international peace conference as an important element in the proposed process, he made a dramatic public declaration in recognition of the Palestinians as a nation, and he made public his readiness to include in the Jordanian-Palestinian peace delegation Arabs from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip who would be accepted within the PLO. Mr. Peres appeared to be an honest peacemaker not only in the public's eye in the U.S. and Israel, but even among Europeans who tended in the past to be much more critical of Israeli politicians. It was obvious that he was stretching the ropes that held together his Unity Government as far as they could be stretched—made somewhat easier by the fact that in the end his openness for negotiations was never really put to a practical test.

Mr. Peres may justly be credited with a dramatic improvement in the public image of Israel which was at a rather low ebb during the last years of the Begin regime. This amounted to more than good press and diplomatic niceties, since some tangible fruits grew out of the process. The renewal of diplomatic relations with a few African nations, the resumption of semi-diplomatic relations with communist Poland, and a few initial improvements in relations with other communist states and even with the Soviet Union were all part of this process. Yet in the final analysis, these victories promote an atmosphere condusive to peace, but have not yet yielded substantive advances in peace making. Genuine advances towards peace are not really simmering in a peace-pot at the end of Mr. Peres' tenure—and the pot is certainly far from boiling.

The situation in the occupied territories yielded a somewhat more mixed picture. Mr. Peres promised an improvement in the human conditions of the Israeli occupation, yet the picture is actually much more ambiguous. The Unity Government may actually have seen an increase in administrative detentions and arrests, in the number of homes of suspected terrorists being blown up, and in the deportation of nationalist activists. Much of this was a reaction to a heavy wave of terrorism both inside and outside of Israel during the spring and summer of 1985, and seemed to lessen after the reduction in the number of incidents of terrorism following the PLO's blunder with the Achille Lauro incident.

The greatest harm done by the Unity Government was to the fiber and values of Israeli democracy.

On the other hand, however, the new policy of Hussein, aiming to allow him to regain influence in the West Bank, enabled Peres to score some achievements in the last few weeks of his tenure; he appointed three Palestinian notables to lead three of the most important West Bank municipalities (which were run hitherto by Israeli officers), and he facilitated the opening of a Jordanian-Palestinian bank in Nablus. Yet however valuable these steps were, few Palestinians could avoid noticing that David Levy, Minister of Housing, continued promoting Jewish settlement efforts in the West Bank and Gaza throughout the Unity Government. The Unity Government agreed on six new settlements to be created in the occupied territories, and although Labor leaders managed to hold this to only four, two thousand more apartments were added over the last two years in previously existing West Bank settlements, and the number of Jews living in those areas (not including greater Jerusalem) was increased by almost 50%. Besides the growth in settlement population, there was also the creation of new "strategic" roads and a growing Israeli control of water resources as well.

The Labor Party also stuck obstinately to the so-called Jordanian option, which has proved to be totally ineffectual. The idea was that Jordan would negotiate for the Palestinians, and that through these negotiations Peres could work out a peace treaty that would cede important sectors of the West Bank to Jordan, or to a joint Jordanian-Palestinian entity that would form a Palestinian state in confederation with Jordan. The PLO could then be ignored and Hussein would speak for the Palestinians. It was sometimes argued that the PLO's failure to win anything real for their people would create the circumstances which would allow the West Bank Palestinians to see that their interests might be better served through initiatives from Hussein.

The fact is, however, that efforts to swing the Pales-

tinian population behind the King and away from the PLO failed miserably. The argument that this was a result of intimidation and terrorism is too obviously the standard excuse occupiers use to explain away their failure to gain the compliance and cooperation of the occupied. The undeniable fact is that Mr. Peres leaves the Prime Minister's office with more than 90% of the Palestinians living under Israeli occupation still considering the PLO to be their sole political representative—despite all the mistakes committed and setbacks suffered by the PLO leadership. Yet Peres has never really come to grips with this important reality, and as long as he refuses to accept the necessity of talking with the true representatives of the Palestinian people, he will never create substantive changes in the basic situation.

This takes some new thinking from Peres. Although recently he publicly recognized the Palestinians as a people—an important advance—he is still afraid to recognize the Palestinian's right to self-determination, their right to select their own representatives and to decide for themselves what is best for them in terms of the political dimensions of their future sovereignty. This is a critical step, one which the Labor Party and Peres have yet to take.

In his final speech to the Knesset before the Rotation, Peres once again spoke forthrightly about the importance of peace, compromise, and other fine values. But in order to make these statements without creating havoc in the Unity Government, Peres has had to continually attack the PLO, and in so doing has actually strengthened the Likud. After all, the Likud is not fundamentally opposed to flowery statements about peace, as long as no concrete steps are taken to actually create that peace. Yet the critical concrete step is for Israel to be prepared to negotiate with the PLO. Peres boldly says that he is willing to negotiate with Jordan without preconditions. Better, he should say that Israel will negotiate with the PLO, but *with* the preconditions that the PLO will renounce and oppose all violence against Israel, and that it will clearly state its readiness for an historic and unequivocal concilliation with Israel. Peres, by adopting the rhetoric of Likud on the PLO, may actually make it much harder to achieve peace, while at the same time strengthening the very right wing message that will influence Israelis to vote against the Labor Party in the future.

The greatest harm done by the Unity Government was to the fiber and values of Israeli democracy. Mr. Peres has taken some pride in the presumed change in the political culture of the country under his stewardship. The Unity Government, says Mr. Peres, helped introduce a new style in public debate by making compromises and working relations between the two main antagonists demonstrably possible. The fair personal relations between Mr. Peres and his alternate, Mr. Shamir, and the personal style of Mr. Peres projected daily on television and radio helped, indeed, to cool off old tensions and grudges, and in comparison to the aggressive and belligerent style of Mr. Begin and the rather vulgar style of Mr. Shamir, it was certainly refreshing and relaxing. But all this was a thin veneer on the surface. Deeper down there was very little unity in the Unity Government. The forces were held together less as a result of persuasion or consensus, and more as a result of Likud's fear of losing their chance at the Rotation, as well as Peres' fear that he would spoil his newly gained positive image as an honest statesman if the coalition fell apart. As a result, serious public debate was stifled and distorted.

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The underlying disharmony and ideological conflict did not disappear, nor was there a genuinely deep process of national healing. The eruptions of open animosity in the speeches of Cabinet Ministers Sharon and Moda'i were only the tip of the iceberg. The ugly riots which erupted in Ashkelon in the wake of a terrorist murder in Gaza, only a few days before the Rotation, was a cruel reminder to Mr. Peres (who was present) that the undercurrent of disunity and major controversies could not be glossed over by good manners alone. If a new climate of opinion on underlying issues is to be forged in Israel, it will require vigorous and daring leadership. The Unity Government was not the right place from which such leadership could emerge.

The sad story of the Law Against Racism is but one example of how the Knesset, itself severely constrained by the needs of keeping unity in the Unity Government, became increasingly ineffective in carrying out its mission. The arrival of Rabbi Kahana in our Parliament two years ago stirred up a strong revulsion throughout our country as well as in the Knesset. Many members of the Knesset set to work to create legislation that

would limit the rights of parties that were explicitly racist. But the need to keep from offending the elements of the religious world who thought that some aspects of the bill might be applied to their won activity, eventually led Likud to insist on serious deletions in the bill. The final deal struck between Likud and Labor leadership produced a bill that was severely limited and distorted—a bill that Kahana himself ended up voting for!

Of course, any government cannot avoid making compromises with the world of facts. Opposition parties may be more purist, but when faced with the responsibilities of power, one must make compromises imposed by economic constraints, international consideration, and military realities. But in the situation facing the Unity Government, the compromises were not primarily imposed by "reality," but rather by the exigencies of domestic politics. Since each major party has a virtual veto over the decisions of the other, the government is able to act only on consensual matters and avoid any controversial areas. Faced with this kind of political impotence, each party ended up doing what it could to reach out to the smaller political parties, hoping to win their allegiance for the next electoral round when each party hopes to put together a coalition government that does not include their major political foes. As a result, politics in Knesset can, and often did, devolve into complex maneuvering in which the wishes of minority parties assumed far greater importance than they would command at the polls. The first victim of such maneuvering may be popular allegiance to democratic values themselves.

Indeed, democratic values were sometimes sacrificed on the altar of expediency. It was obvious that the blatant obstruction of legal processes by some of the senior officials of the Shin Bet (Israel's CIA and FBI combined) in the aftermath of the killing of highjackers of a bus, had to be promptly investigated. The security argument against such an investigation was too thin a veil to convince many Israelis. Even some who supported the right of the Shin Bet to kill terrorists during an anti-terrorist operation were shocked at the level of deception Shin Bet leaders had engaged in as part of their subsequent "cover-up." In the end, Mr. Peres and his government were compelled to allow such an investigation—but not before they tried some shameful manipulations intended to bury the matter. The abuse of "the security argument" and the blatant disregard for truth and justice may have worked to preserve the Peres government and the Rotation, but it also contributed to an eroding of confidence in democratic values and procedures that may come back to haunt all of us who believe in the importance of democracy to the ultimate strength of Israeli society.

Some nations may prefer a government that can take few actions and must move very slowly. For some, the present situation may be better than any major changes and people will settle for marginal improvements in the status quo. But in Israel in the late 1980's, the prevailing "status quo" is pregnant with grave dangers for the future of the country, especially in the area of war and peace, and in the area of democratic values at home. Yet the Unity Government is ill-prepared to provide any serious leadership beyond that which it initially agreed upon and has subsequently achieved.

This is not a great problem for the Likud. Freezing the status quo—the deadlock in the peace process, the continued occupation of the territories acquired in 1967, the growth of the free enterprise system—perpetuates a reality which is very much to their liking. But for those who recognize the need for major changes and breakthroughs, the perpetuation of the status quo is not simply "neutral"; it reenforces and strengthens the very reality that needs to be changed.

It may well be argued that Shimon Peres has done the best job he could possibly do, given the constraints of the coalition government. But that is precisely why he should have realized that perpetuating the status quo was helping the program of his opponents more than it was helping his own, and should therefore have been willing to precipitate a collapse of the Unity Government at an earlier time. Peres' concern for his own historical image as a man who lived up to his promise of a Rotation may have overshadowed his moral and political obligations to the country and to the people who, in voting for Labor, thought they were supporting a party that would be seriously committed to its own official program and campaign promises. Yet Peres certainly did achieve the goal of developing an excellent personal image. This may still prove to be his greatest achievement in political terms as well. Sooner or later the Israelis will be called upon again to decide who deserves to lead the nation into the 1990's. If Mr. Peres is able to maintain some of the personal credit he gained during the last years and, as a result, win the next election by a margin large enough to be able to forge a coalition without Likud, he then will be free to lead the country toward fulfilling the goals of his own political bloc. His short tenure with the Unity Government may still be on balance, in spite of its very real shortcomings and drawbacks, an important success. □

The Jewish Family: A Feminist Perspective

Anne Roiphe

The Jewish family—root of the Jewish nation, seed of the next generation, valiant survivor of the wars of destruction, persistent through the fashions of enlightenment, the high temperatures of melting pots—has evolved ways to absorb, incorporate or evade the "isms" that have threatened to sweep off its young, leaving behind a community that has turned into a pillar of salt, with backwards the only direction it knows. But today the Jewish nation is threatened not only by the familiar enemies of assimilation and intermarriage, but by the relatively new dangers of low birth rate and divorcing, dissolving families, delayed marriage and single life choices. The liberating effects of the sexual revolution and the feminist movement, while they have fostered a more equitable society, pose particular problems for Jewish life and insofar as they appear to further endanger Jewish continuity, have stimulated a conservative backlash.

The Jewish family, already a remnant of the millions who might have been with us, struggles with the same problems as beset the rest of society. We have trouble getting married, staying married, getting pregnant, taking care of our children, finding community, loving each other. Because of our educational and financial achievements we bring fewer children into the world than the rest of the American public. This may be a by-product of success in America, but Jewish men and women cannot as easily as their neighbors shrug off responsibility for group survival, for the numerical strength of their nation.

Facing this problem, some of our protectors have attacked feminism as the unwelcome guest at the wedding ceremony who has brought a curse rather than a gift. They see the lowered birth rate and the rising divorce rate as a concomitant of women's raised expectations for education, interesting jobs, financial equality and a life outside the home. They see a clash between the needs of Jewish life and the Jewish state and the apparently egoistic, self-concerned push of a feminism that inherently discourages nurturing and encourages adventuring.

In this view, Jewish feminists, no matter how much Talmud they know or how much they contribute financially or intellectually to the peoplehood, are subversive elements pulling against our ultimate survival. This position ignores the centuries of injustice built into Jewish secular and religious traditions in which women carried the full burden of childcare and domestic obligation while being denied the spiritual and intellectual satisfactions that comforted, challenged and supported their brothers and husbands. Opportunities for education, for participation in the centers of power, were closed to the vast majority of Jewish women throughout our history. It is true that Jewish women worked in the marketplace, but they worked to support the intellectual and spiritual life of their men, a life denied by law to them. Our personal talents were subordinated to the survival of the family, to domestic chores and subservient marital life. In fact, women—working in the kitchen, working in the marketplace, wiping and tending, hovering over sinks and toilet bowls, saving pennies for their son's education—carried the Jewish family into this century on their backs, on their knees. These women of valor sat at the Seder table exhausted from the preparations while their husbands, splendid at the head of the table, explained the history of the Jews to the children.

The inequity of the situation worked well enough for a long time, as survival itself was a constant problem and as the rule of Christendom or the laws of Mohammed offered no alternative to the constrictions of female gender. But with the winds of social change, prosperity, and the breakdown of Jewish isolation, our women leapt into the feminist movement and without their creativity and energy the movement would have been vastly impoverished. They are represented among prominent feminists in numbers way beyond their percentage in the general population.

The numbers of American Jewish women who turned away from Judaism, from Jewish life, because they were insulted by the rabbis' neglect of them, the communal rejection of their intellectual or professional participation, have never been counted. But we know from many personal reports that we lost many who turned away from the sexism in the synagogue or the home and escaped to a religiously neutral environment where they hoped their gifts could more easily be accepted. The recent rise of Jewish feminism, the creative work of Jewish women who have insisted on full religious participation, who have broken down barriers against women rabbis, as community leaders, as Torah readers, as learned scholars, have brought to the Jewish world

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a way of holding the ancient community together while correcting the cruelties of the past. Jewish feminism, as it struggles to invent significant rites of passage for females, as it encourages Jewish education and accomplishment in girls, strengthens the nation, allowing women to remain within, without sacrificing their possibilities or their dignity.

However, the Jewish family needs to raise Jewish children and in this we are all in agreement. The disagreement follows on how these children should be nurtured. It is easy enough to follow the design of the past and keep the woman at home for the first 20 years of her marriage, changing diapers, reading bedtime stories and cooking pots of chicken soup. But it takes only a little imagination to see that we might instead redesign the structure of family work and pleasure. We could declare that care of the child is the equal obligation of both parents. This means that the man does not carry the obligations of daily care of kitchen and nursery alone but that all work is shared equally and all burdens are distributed fairly and reasonably between the two parents. Feminism encourages nurturing in both parents and sanctifies the home by making it the tabernacle for both sexes.

This new structure would also mean that the obligations to study, to worship, to maintain the tradition and live a Jewish life are shared fully by man and woman and child. It means that men and women may have to slow down their careers at some point to stay home with babies. It may mean that men and women will have to temper their ambitions with considerations for their infants. We do not have to set up an absolute system that rigidly directs all people in one direction or another, but we can accept the principle of equal obligation on the part of parents both to nurture and to support their families. This is a standard feminist position that can be incorporated into Jewish life without risk to anything that is unique or valuable within the Jewish experience.

A truly feminist position does not mock the family and a Jewish feminist position must by definition cherish the home and value the work that is done there. A Jewish feminist will allow the man into the home as a welcome equal, as a true partner in this important endeavor. The home is only a devalued place to work when it is the exclusive province of the female. It can bring satisfaction to both partners when roles are not rigid and gender is not a definition of function. Feminists can focus on the home as the source of human meaning if it becomes the center for men as well.

A call to sacrifice for the Jewish nation that places the burden of sacrifice all on one group will not succeed. Together we have to face the problems of isolation, family destruction, and loneliness. One gender cannot tell another to give up its expectations for the good of the whole without offering an equal sacrifice.

We know that part of the weakness of the Jewish family, part of the reason for intermarriage, for the loss of connection, lies in the unhappy images Jewish men and Jewish women have of each other. Disguised as jokes are very ugly thoughts that Jewish men have about Jewish women and that Jewish women have about Jewish men. If we can understand and remove this gender hostility we can do a great deal towards strengthening the Jewish family, holding it together and bringing up our birth rate and making our homes warm and happy places that the next generation will wish to recreate for themselves.

The Jewish mother joke of Borscht Belt fame, of Phillip Roth and Joseph Heller, of Woody Allen, of Lenny Bruce, is not a simple malicious slander on Jewish motherhood, or a random invention of self-hating Jews or their anti-Semitic friends. It is a stereotype, but one that has grown from bits and pieces of reality, one that has been fed by the general anti-Semitism of the environment, one that hurts us as we try to live with one another.

Today the Jewish nation is threatened not only by the familiar enemies of assimilation and intermarriage, but by the relatively new dangers of low birth rate and divorcing, dissolving families, delayed marriage and single life choices.

The Jewish mother, a joke but not a complete fantasy, describes a woman whose own creative energies have been stunted, misdirected, misused and wasted. She involves herself in her son's eating, toileting, playing, cleaning, studying, and sexual life not because she is naturally inclined to busybody behavior or genetically directed to excess anxiety over minor matters but because she, impoverished, blocked of opportunities to exercise all her muscles, can only be a reflector, a passive actor in the grand drama. Therefore she becomes a mirror that places itself constantly in front of its object, sometimes blocking the way, so that it will not hang empty, cracked upon the wall. The American Jewish mother, clever, resourceful, loving, focuses her light on her child like the sun through a magnifying

glass. She can burn him to a crisp, sear him pink, or send him fleeing in a frantic hunt for shade—a shade too many Jewish boys in the forties and fifties found with non-Jewish girls who sent off vibrations, cool and breezy, that promised to shelter these souls who had been scorched by the light from their mother's eyes.

Women—working in the kitchen, working in the marketplace, wiping and tending, hovering over sinks and toilet bowls, saving pennies for their son's education—carried the Jewish family into this century on their backs, on their knees.

Do not underestimate the hostility in the Jewish mother joke. What is funny and makes us laugh, tells us also what we hate and what we fear. The Jewish male is afraid of his mother who might control the very life out of him. He is angry at how she pushed him onward and how much he owes her and he isn't all that prepared to return her concentration on him with equal attention. He also feels guilt. No son can ever repay his mother for the sacrifice of her love of the piano, her desire to teach, her capacity to earn and feel competent among other workers. These sacrifices made without conscious protest, sometimes with resentment, sometimes not, engender guilt. The child naturally wants to grow up and grow away, but when he knows he is the all of his mother's life, the process is sticky. Guilt of man toward woman, woman toward man, child toward parent, though perhaps part of the human condition, multiplies like bacteria in a petri dish when the family demands too much sacrifice from one or another member. The escape from this guilty stew, from this burden of obligation, has often been to flee the Jewish community.

The general anti-Semitism of American culture in the twenties, thirties, and forties was heard by Jewish men who could not help but absorb the attitudes of the whole society. They were able to split off some of their self-hate by turning against the Jewish mother and ultimately the Jewish woman. The movie stars were blond and blue-eyed, the fashion models were corn-fed, the Jewish model of beauty was not appreciated. It was easy enough for the Jewish male on his way into the greater American society to cast his own anti-Semitism into a joke about his mother or his sister.

The Jewish woman who was forced to accomplish vicariously as her brothers went off to college and her husband went to law or medical school became angry herself. This anger might not have been conscious but must have taken a toll on her relationships with sons, husband, and father. It would seem likely that the woman of valor suffered from envy and fury as well as idleness. There is no question that her men wanted to take her services without being complained at, lived through, or obligated. There had to be difficulties.

The Jewish mother in her high aspirations for her son took good care of him, but in the process she taught him that she herself was worth little, her time, her mind, her needs should be subordinated to his. He saw her serving and shopping, cooking and folding and he saw the admiration she had for him and his brothers, and naturally he learned from her that women, Jewish women, are of secondary value. Her attitude toward herself, her lack of concern for his sister's report card, his sister's accomplishments, led him to look for a woman he could admire as well as adore in the strange land of the goyim.

The Jewish mother was primarily, in its most intense form, a first generation phenomenon. But the hostility Jewish men feel for Jewish women has continued and is now reflected in the popular Jewish American Princess joke. This humor, equal in bravery to the attack on Polish intelligence, Italian courage, Black honesty, lampoons the daughters of the Jewish mother for their assumed interest in material things, for their obsessive concern with their physical appearance. This joke has attained such alarming popularity that it has become a tributary into the mainstream of American anti-Semitism. It is a libel that comes from the mouth of college professors in the Midwest, farmers in the North and shopkeepers in the South. You also hear it from Jewish men everywhere. Jewish men don't seem to recognize how anti-Semitic these jokes are. They don't seem to understand that the Christian world uses these jokes to confirm and spread a distaste for Jews who they believe are greedy, money-hogs and spiritually inferior people.

Behind every Jewish Princess crack lies a man who views Jewish women as grasping, demanding, empty-headed, and selfish. Even if balanced by a wish to marry a Jewish girl this opinion of them is not apt to lead to romance or successful marriage. The non-Jewish woman who is assumed to have better values, to care about the poor and the disadvantaged, to nurture others rather than herself, to be disinterested in brand names and status symbols is automatically, by comparison, made more attractive, more prized as a wife and companion.

It is hard to believe that Jewish women, even those whose parents have newly-made money, new education,

newly-planted gardens in newly-populated suburbs, are inherently more venal, more concerned with display and less concerned with inner values than women of any similar economic ethnicity. Do we believe for a moment that all Italian girls are readers of Proust and Dante and can never be found at the cosmetic counter of their local shopping mall? Does anyone really assume that Christian girls buy their clothes at thrift shops and are never impressed by the make of a car?

The Jewish American Princess joke, when it comes from the mouth of a Jew, is an expression of contempt for the girl he should marry or has married. It reveals a hostility and resentment that goes deep into the social structure. Some of this is explained by the pressure our division of labor has placed on males to provide, to go out each day and work and bring home increasingly large amounts of money which is spent by the woman on houses, cars, and other goods that proclaim that the family is getting on. The man who must fight every day for his daily bread naturally resents the woman who spends his spoils, stays home and rewards herself for this hard day with a dinner out on his credit card. Though he consciously accepts the dictum that keeps his wife in his house for fifty years, taking care of his shirts and his children, nevertheless the man feels taken. He feels his work is endless and her pleasures and treasures too numerous. This division of labor causes the whispers of anger that get transformed into jokes about air-headed girls whose ambition in life is to have perfectly-shaped nails. If we wish to shore up the sinking Jewish family we must remove those obvious causes of resentment between the sexes that seep, like toxins, into the entire system. That Jewish organizations and Jewish spokespeople have not vigorously protested the jokes that are told about their daughters and sisters tells us that they are agreeing with the general cultural anti-Semitism. They are cooperating in a disguised mockery of themselves. They have permitted this because they share this anti-Semitism with the public. The Anti-Defamation League does not count Jewish women as Jews.

We must deal with the grain of reality that hides in this absurd portrait of Jewish women. Prevented from studying, blocked from worldly ambitions, directed to housework and childcare, many Jewish women with hours, even years to kill, with minds that have not been enriched with secular or non-secular education have undoubtedly become consumers of the first order. What else were they to do? From a social and religious tradition that directed them away from learning, and simultaneously valued learning above all else, they found themselves reduced to ornaments. Their worth, their status, their hopes in life directed toward catching the right man and winning the goods whose possession made them feel worthy, substantial, loved. Room for comic excess was built into their role. The subsequent emptiness was as logical as the swirling mud around the child's sand castle.

A truly feminist position does not mock the family, and a Jewish feminist position must by definition cherish the home and value the work that is done there.

As a new generation of Jewish women take their place in business and the professions alongside their brothers they are becoming the target of a new criticism. They are responsible for the low birth rate, the high divorce rate, and trouble in the Jewish family. What indeed do these critics want? A Jewish woman who is devoted to motherhood but is not a Jewish mother? A Jewish woman who is not superficial, has education but stays home? It seems like a simple case of entrapment.

The Jewish Prince is the butt of far fewer jokes, probably because it is men who create and pass on most of our humor. Also the anti-Semitic base of these jokes is more apparent when it attacks the higher status male than when it finds its target in the already subservient female. The Jewish Prince has nevertheless become known to Jewish women who may avoid him like the plague and seek to marry anyone else who doesn't fit the criteria. The Jewish Prince is the boy whose mother made his favorite dinner every night and brought him an extra sweater whenever there was a chill in the air. She probably preferred him to his father, who had grown away in other directions. She fussed and protected and hovered and admired until he developed an opinion of himself that mirrored hers. He grew into a man who expects women to stop whatever they are doing and worry about him. He grows soft and spoiled and cranky if things are hard or need a long-standing effort. He is the brother of the Jewish Princess and she is apt to resent him. She may, human understanding being what it is, confuse his weaknesses with being Jewish and reject Jewish men in her search for a life-long partner.

Now these stereotypes of Jewish men and women have only a measured degree of reality. In each family these broad social trends interact with the particulars of the individual personalities, their weaknesses and strengths. When we speak of them we are reducing

ourselves to caricatures, but caricatures that resonate with certain truths, or else we wouldn't laugh, we wouldn't have them around, feeding the anti-Semitism of the general culture with ugly visions of our people and their homes.

It seems clear that the Jewish male and the Jewish female harbor deep resentments one against the other. These angers can lead away from the choice of a Jewish mate or they can complicate married life, leading to divorce. They can play out against the children, driving them away from less than satisfactory Jewish homes. Of course, the grass is always greener and the social status appears higher on the gentile side of the fence and that is sufficient to cause some Jews to intermarry. Others are affected by the vagrancies of incest taboos to seek out the stranger for sexual liaison and marriage. The society at large, entering every home by television, movies and newspapers tends to blend us together, emphasize our sameness and encourage our national homogeneity as opposed to our ethnic and religious particularities. The new Hellenism is as difficult to combat as the old. Nautilus machines may have altered the ancient gymnasiums but the beauty of physical fitness and the increased emphasis on the self and the body are similar. If we add to the Jewish family problem the contempt of the non-Jewish world for our manhood, womanhood, value system, etc., we come to see that survival of the Jewish community must depend on our finding ways to love and support each other without one group oppressing and the other suffering.

As Jews we have always been proud of our family life, our ability to take care of the weak and bind together the relatives in a stronghold against the hostile stranger. We know that something in our home structures enabled our children to learn well, to succeed wherever doors were open to them, and to remain a creative force in this world under the most difficult of circumstances. But this success was bought at a price. Women who labored at dull tasks, whose intelligence was fenced in and whose personal goals were thwarted brought up these recent generations of affluent and educated Americans. We do have the opportunity to hold on to the strengths in our family life, to nurture and support and bind the next generation, if we will do it with justice and equality for male and female. Feminism has changed everyone's expectations of what the family can and should do. The Jewish family must change also. This can be accomplished without destroying the Jewish home or diminishing the Jewish birthrate.

In the early days of the feminist movement there was certainly a devaluing of childbearing and childcare. Because these roles were associated with all our other deprivations many women turned away with disinterest from the entire enterprise of bringing up the next generation. But as the movement matured we saw that a full family life, a loving connection to the next generation, was as necessary as our liberty and must be incorporated into our lives. This is not to say that children should be born to take away our liberty. We must, in the coming years, draw men into their proper and legitimate place as caretakers at women's sides, as sharers in the ever dramatic, though often draining, enterprise of raising our children. The birth rate will go up again as Jewish families recognize not only communal necessity for children but the increased personal pleasure a large family brings, not to an overburdened woman whose degree in art history lies moldering in her bureau drawer but to a pair of equally educated, intelligent, people whose choices are made without gender judgments. Our population experts tell us that each Jewish family should have an average of four children. This is possible if we do not leave families alone with the full burden of care and education for their children.

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This American culture is powerful and cannot be turned off. We can no more ask women to give up their intellectual and worldly expectations in the name of Jewish survival than we could convince the public to eat red meat, pour on salt and give up exercise because increased longevity was straining medicaid and social security. But we do have a magnificent opportunity to strengthen Jewish communal life by creating a wide and complete system of excellent daycare. If the Jewish centers were to commit themselves to top quality Jewish- and family-oriented daycare, expanding and refunding their present facilities with the same energy, enthusiasm and visionary passion that they gave to Israel in the beginning days of the State, we could support our enlarged Jewish families. This same system of daycare would become a backbone of communal life, drawing in and involving parents in courses, in religious groups, in expanding Jewish life. If the daycare we provide as a community is as sacred a task as any other we have ever undertaken, we could in a

matter of years enrich the Jewish family. This network of daycare programs should be offered to Jews on all economic levels, and support cannot stop as the child reaches school age. We need to continue with afterschool programs, camps and child oriented communal trips. We must begin to value our childcare providers, training them and paying them because they will be as important to our survival as our generals and our engineers and our industrialists. It has not been demonstrated by any psychologist or social scientist that children must be brought up by mothers alone. Group care of children is not a startling or revolutionary idea anymore and our economy as well as our value system demands two working parents for whom the solution is good daycare. If we have it to offer, parents will have children. If we have it to offer in a Jewish setting, families will live Jewish lives.

We must move in the direction of support for parents even to the outer edge of their children's childhood. Scholarships could be made available to students for college and graduate school through the very community centers where they first played in the sandbox and learned the meaning of Tzedakah.

Supporting the Jewish family means more than taking care of the child during the hours that parents are away. It also means offering marital counseling and friendship groups for parents who will then not be isolated with their troubles as they arise. It means creating a large array of programs to deal with difficult children, learning disabled, handicapped and gifted. The Jewish community has the resources to supply all these services through one center which supports the entire family.

In a Jewish family, bound into the community through such a Jewish center, the male and the female, the brother and the sister, stand a chance of cutting the resentments that hover over Jewish relationships today. This will not make everyone live happily ever after, but it may reinforce connections into the community and dampen the difficulties between the sexes that have plagued us through the years.

This does mean a reshaping of society and a redesigning of the American Jewish Family and this is no simple matter. It is hard for people to give up old patterns and move toward new ones, but when the stakes are as high as the survival of the Jewish people we may amaze ourselves at our capacity for adaptation and invention. We have done so before. □



Toward Democratic Education

Ann Bastian, Norm Fruchter, Marilyn Gittell, Colin Greer, and Kenneth Haskins

For the general public, the debate about public schools expresses a rising fear about declining school performance and, perhaps more basically, fear about the future for youth in our society. This concern seems a natural product of recurring economic and social insecurity. The country is in the midst of profound structural shifts in technology, in job and income distribution, in family life and in government commitments. These shifts intensify existing inequities and threaten familiar patterns of individual mobility and community cohesion. Yet the debate also expresses hope. People turn to the schools as a social tool, one of the few institutions which is public and local, for adapting to new demands and for protecting the coming generation.

Underlying the impulses of fear and hope is an unspoken tension between priorities for school change. We see this as a tension between two divergent goals for public education: a desire for schools to serve the competitive demands of a stratified society, and a desire for schools to play a socially integrative and democratic role, serving the right of all children to develop to their fullest potential. Some people do not see these as incompatible functions; others deny that they require different kinds of schooling. Yet, choices are being made, and in the current wave of school reform, democratic values of education have not been the central concern.

When we look beyond the universal call for excellence, we find new standards for achievement, but not new strategies for ensuring that all children will have the appropriate means to meet them. We find a new emphasis on accountability, but not institutional reforms which open the schools to those they serve. We find new tests for performance, but not analyses which measure the total school experience—including the patterns of inequality, rigidity and exclusion which remain fundamental barriers to learning for millions of American schoolchildren.

Indeed, the opening rounds of the school debate have been dominated by a neo-conservative consensus which, by design or by default, identifies excellence with an elitist concept of meritocracy. The thrust has been to reinforce competitive structures of achievement modeled on and serving the economic marketplace. This perspective misconstrues the crisis in education, which in our view is twofold: there is a catastrophic failure to provide decent schools and adequate skills for low-income students; there is also a chronic failure to provide reasoning and citizenship skills among all students. Moreover, school failure in the bottom tiers and narrow achievement throughout the system, cited to justify meritocratic practices, are in fact the result of such practices.

In establishing a framework for progressive alternatives, it is necessary to project a concept of education in which quality and equality are mutually inclusive standards. Improving instruction for all students involves creating more supportive, flexible, and collaborative school environments and enlarging the commitment to equality of results. Achieving these improvements is primarily a matter of political choices and priorities rather than a problem of technique. This political context of school change raises a new set of questions: Who are the constituencies of democratic school reform? How can they be activated to change the balance of power in school management and policy? What structural school conditions support their involvement?

The issues of institutional politics do not emerge easily from the current school debate, which has tended to narrow the focus to the immediate classroom arena and to a quest for "good schoolpeople." This narrow focus leaves the larger political field to entrenched bureaucratic interests and conservative forces, who already wield considerable power in setting the school policy agenda and who prefer meritocratic school re-

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gimes to democratic approaches that might raise expectations or shift school authority. To challenge the institutional arrangements of schooling it is therefore necessary to go beyond the politics of instruction. The history of education repeatedly warns us that when reform efforts ignore issues of institutional power, they are ultimately resisted, co-opted, or fragmented.

The crisis in public schools will not be effectively or fairly addressed without constituent participation in the change process. The frontline constituencies of education are parents, students, classroom teachers, support staff, local school administrators, and community members, including youth and education advocacy groups. They are necessary resources for school improvement; they are also necessary agents of change in a system that is increasingly distanced from those it serves.

We have chosen to center this discussion on the empowerment of parents, teachers and communities because these constituencies represent the most independent variables in the school change equation.

Empowering Parents

Involving parents in the school life of their children and in education as a public institution is not a new idea for school improvement. In principle at least, the elected school board and PTA or PA systems were constructed in recognition of parents' legitimate rights of consultation and their important support role in the education process. However, the parent role has been auxiliary and advisory, at best. Most typically, parent involvement is a token formality in both school governance and in the classroom. The parents' place is generally usurped by administrators, experts, and politicians, who may or may not speak in their name.

Nonetheless, the benefits of parent participation are manifold. A number of studies show that active parent involvement in schooling is a consistent correlate of improved school performance; this finding is underscored in a recent report by the National Commission on Secondary Schooling for Hispanics. Parents have a tangible impact on the motivation of students and teachers and on their expectations for achievement. Among the useful forms of parental influence are tutoring, co-learning, class visitation, extra-curricular activity, and consultation in individualized learning programs. Parents are also essential as advocates and monitors, especially in underserved communities, where struggles for access and entitlements remain central to educational opportunity. Parent advocacy for the individual student can spur the development of appropriate pedagogy and curriculum, as well as appropriate program and classroom placements. Parent activism as an element of school accountability has influenced the level of categorical funding, services for special needs, the procurement of teaching supplies and aids, the development of school performance information, and the quality of professional appointments. Parent involvement also affects school climate: it has an impact on teaching style, respect for cultural diversity, school order, observance of student rights, and cooperative practice among school people.

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With the decline of civil rights activism in the 1970's, widespread parent activism in urban, minority communities became more sporadic. The legacy of earlier organizing and recent battles over school funding cuts has spurred a number of local efforts to improve distressed urban schools, but without the context of an overarching social movement. In the absence of broader social activism, the intrinsic barriers to participation are more sharply felt. School advocacy organizations have identified these general problems:

- The majority of parents face consuming pressures of economic survival and family maintenance. For the poor, these pressures on time, energy, and income can be overwhelming. The need for both parents to work, the extraordinary burden on women heads of household, even the expense of childcare and travel to attend school meetings are real factors limiting parent inclinations to activism.
- Parents are often intimidated by cultural distances between themselves and school professionals. School practices are justified by educators who claim an expertise that working class and poor parents cannot match. Professional elitism fosters the perception of parents as an intrusion rather than a resource. It is ironic that those whom the schools have most failed are considered the least qualified to speak on educational defects. The gap is reinforced when school personnel are not indigenous to the school community. In New York City, for example, 75% of public school students are minorities, but 75% of the administrative and teaching staffs are not.

• Parents are often uncertain about who is responsible for school failure. Professional mystification frequently carries the implicit message that parents are to blame for their children's underachievement or alienated attitudes toward school. Parents may well reciprocate by holding teachers solely responsible for deficient school performance. An interlocking cycle of blame develops and, with it, a pervasive negativism that discourages interaction and cooperation.

• Parents lack clarity about what would improve the schools, which may reflect confusion among professionals as well. The absence of programmatic approaches to school improvement tends to isolate single issues, such as discipline, and tends to focus concern on the most tangible items, such as building repair.

• Parents are shut out of the school governance process. The existing participatory mechanisms do not provide genuine authority over key aspects of school management, such as budget and personnel, and are often controlled by professionals. Frequently, parent consultations are perfunctory and meetings are dominated by administrators. Beyond the local school, the bureaucratic structures of education, which have expanded considerably with the extension of mass public schooling, also pose formidable barriers. The centers of decision-making are systematically distanced from the local school, the level at which parents can most readily organize and sustain influence. It should not be surprising that parent disaffection is as often the expression of realism as of apathy.

Overwhelming as these barriers to parent involvement appear, there are signs that parent activism is reviving, particularly in the elementary schools. Parent-teacher organizations report that membership is at its highest levels since the early 1970's; the number of parents working as volunteers in schools has doubled in ten years to around 5 million in 1980. Observers have noted that this resurgence may represent a largely middle-class trend, corresponding to concern over a shrinking school revenue base and alarm triggered by the national commissions. Nonetheless, while barriers to participation remain high for working parents and single parents and for poor and undereducated parents, successful efforts to stimulate and support their activism suggest that avenues for more widescale participatory reform can be opened. There is a wide range of concerns that stimulates parent organizing, apart from critical funding and instructional issues. Perhaps the best overall example of sustained and effective parent involvement is found in Head Start, where many mandated parent councils have played highly activist roles managing and operating centers, and where parents have been hired and trained to work as paraprofessionals in the program.

Campaigns for school accountability, when they engage and inform parents in a genuine attempt at reform, show that barriers to participation can be transcended and that a sophisticated and resilient core of local school activists can be formed. Through sustained organizing, parents can overcome intimidation and self-blame, offer constructive criticism and assistance, focus on issues that are central to improvement, and create participatory vehicles. The key, however, is in generating a parallel institutional commitment to reform that recognizes the citizenship rights of parents in shaping school change. Parent involvement is most decisively discouraged when it does not make a difference. The incentives for parent participation do not arise out of moral or civic duties, but because children's well-being is at stake *and* because real possibilities exist to influence the outcome in an ongoing way.

Several structural approaches to promote parent empowerment have been raised or revived in the national school debate. One promising concept is the school-site council, or school-site management approach.

There is a growing call to restructure schools to compete for enrollments on the basis of performance and specialized programs. Fifteen states have recently developed initiatives in this area, some proposing tuition voucher systems. Given the vigor with which optional enrollment and voucher concepts are being espoused, it is important to clarify the different forms they take, as well as the dangers and potentials they represent in practice.

First, there can be no mistaking that the voucher programs advocated by the Right, including the Reagan administration's TEACH proposal, are designed to promote public funding of private education and the eventual displacement of public education. This intent was explicitly expressed in a recent commentary in the Heritage Foundation's *Education Update*, which urged Christian educators to support the TEACH initiative.

Clearly, the ultra-conservative version of vouchers is directed by the broader policy goal of divesting government services in favor of the private sector, including, in the case of education, religious institutions. At stake is not only the viability of public school services but, as these conservatives note, the public's capacity to regulate its investment in education. By eroding or dismantling coherent public school systems, by dispersing enrollments and atomizing parents into individual consumers, such voucher systems provide ample opportunity both to undermine community accountability and to circumvent mandates protecting both civil and equity rights. This danger is heightened by the Supreme Court's retreat on civil rights enforcement, from the

Bakke decision to the *Grove City* decision. *Grove City* bans discriminatory practices only in the specific program or department that receives federal funds, regardless of the discriminatory practices of the institution as a whole. The Reagan administration goes further by claiming that vouchers, since given to parents, do not even qualify as federal funding to institutions.

When vouchers are proposed entirely within the public education system, they present somewhat different potentials, although a parallel set of concerns. One immediate concern is that public voucher plans clear the path for extending vouchers into private schooling. This is certainly one motive behind conservative support for the choice movement in public schools. Yet if we set aside this political consideration, what are the positive and negative arguments for public school voucher plans?

It is necessary to project a concept of education in which quality and equality are mutually inclusive standards.

Public school vouchers are intended to encourage wider educational options and allow parents and students to vote with their feet on the ability of individual schools to meet standards and expectations. In theory, this voucher concept endorses the expansion of alternative approaches to meet the diverse needs it encompasses. Presumably, the result would be a mix of decent schools, from the traditional neighborhood school to the curriculum-specialized school to the pedagogically specialized school—and poorly functioning schools would simply go out of business.

But the theory of the open market is not the same as its practice. Where conditions throughout a school district are fairly equivalent, where populations are homogeneous and transportation feasible, it is possible that local schools will have equal resources to develop responsive programs and that students will have even chances of selecting an appropriate enrollment. Yet apart from some suburban school districts, most systems start with wide differentials between schools and between students. Enrollment options may compound these differentials by creaming the best-prepared students into limited, select institutions—leaving only undesirable and neglected schools for disadvantaged students to choose among. Choices in the school marketplace can end up as they do in the economic marketplace, where low income consumers are free to live in tenements, free to pay higher prices in ghetto stores, free to compete for too few jobs, but not free or welcome to live somewhere else.

An optional enrollment system that does not equalize resources, mandate open admissions and retention, expand guidance services for parents and students, and simultaneously upgrade the quality of comprehensive schools can become another mechanism for stratification and segregation. There are instances, however, where carefully designed and contained option systems appear to meet these criteria and work well. One example is the Medford District magnet program in Massachusetts, which was initiated in 1970 as the result of a desegregation order. Medford's Hervey school succeeded as a multi-racial magnet by offering many special features: single sessions, smaller classes, a multi-cultural education program, media and computer centers, an all-day kindergarten, door-to-door busing, and strong parent participation. Even with cutbacks and the closing of Hervey, the experiment has continued through the Brooks-Hobbs School. One critical condition of the Medford success was that it operated within one district, in a population where racial balance was not difficult to achieve.

Voucher concepts confined to public schooling can thus be vehicles for either divestiture or diversity, and the politics of schooling, not the abstract merits of choice, will determine which. In today's context, where meritocratic concepts prevail and educational stratification is accelerating, public school vouchers must be closely scrutinized for their impact on equity, civic accountability, and community integrity. Moreover, the present politics of schooling means that we cannot disregard the privatization agenda of the right wing choice movement and its vision of the educational market place. The fact that vouchers, public or private, have become their opening wedge for the deregulation and atomization of public commitments to education must weigh heavily in the debate. If we have learned anything from twenty years of school reform, it is that influence over the implementation of social policy counts for more than good intentions.

Empowering Teachers

The debate over the role of teachers in school decision-making has polarized around issues of autonomy and accountability. Highly bureaucratic administrative structures often strip teachers of the opportunity to shape their work creatively. Excessive standardization—along with large classes, supervisory duties, excessive paperwork, and fragmented work periods—reduces teachers to caretakers and technicians. To understand the ambiguous ways teachers are situated in the schools,

we need first to look at the processes that have devalued education as a vocation and a social service. This devaluation has involved a curious interweaving of trends emanating from the expansion of mass education in the post-war period. The baby boom, rising occupational and income standards, and popular demands for broader access brought an influx of teachers into a rapidly centralizing system. The teaching workforce was transformed from what had been in large part an educated woman's calling to a more diverse body of service professionals working as public employees within an enlarged and increasingly hierarchical institution. The pervasive outcome, both for teachers and for local school communities, has been to raise new barriers and distances in decision-making at both instructional and institutional levels.

We cannot construct a democratic mission for public schooling without taking on the task of involving local communities, however they present themselves.

As post-war public education consolidated, teachers experienced an increased need and opportunity for professional organization. By the mid-1960's, teacher organizing coincided with and reflected the upsurge in social activism among minorities, students, and public employees across the society. However, the channeling of teacher organizing into craft union formations in many cases produced a divergence from and conflict with its social movement context. There was a particularly sharp estrangement between the American Federation of Teachers and the urban civil rights movement, which initiated community drives for school accountability and control over new school resources.

Of course, there is real variety in how teachers' unions function locally, reflecting the size of the given school system, its governance mechanisms, state labor laws, the collective bargaining history, and rank-and-file attitudes. In addition, there are a number of significant philosophical differences at the national level between the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the National Education Association (NEA).

The national AFT has a tradition of bargaining militancy, reflecting the concentration of its 610,000 members in the older urban school systems. But the AFT has often been criticized for its resistance to social justice issues, its special interest politics, and its autocratic leadership style. The national NEA represents 1.7 million teachers in suburban, rural, and newer urban districts. It has a consistently progressive record on social justice issues and also an impressive degree of formal democracy. Yet NEA has been faulted for being overly defensive in education policy, and for relying on its size to exercise professional leverage, rather than developing potentially broad links to public constituencies.

Apart from these differences, teacher organizations in general face the problem that bureaucratic unionism has become a prevalent response to bureaucratic employer control, a substitute for the power teachers need over their immediate work environment. At the state and local levels, there is a tendency to reduce the collective support teachers need on the job to a reliance on the union apparatus at the bargaining table or legislative committee room. There is a tendency to reduce struggle over working conditions to brokering over terms of employment. A classic example is the AFT's pursuit of higher compensation, while for many years avoiding the issue of lowering class size—a position akin to demanding combat pay without questioning why the troops are at war.

Teachers need to be recognized as key actors in a decision making process that offers substantive control over the uses of testing, the selection of curricula, the construction of pedagogy, the linkage to supportive services, student grouping and placement, hiring and promotional ladders, the use of time and space, the purchase of supplies, and the fiscal priorities of the school program. Almost every in-depth study of current school practice concludes that a central determinant of good schooling is good teachers. Yet we must be clear that what makes most teachers good is not a mystical talent for rising above adversity, but the opportunity to shape the conditions and consequences of their work.

Recognition of the need for teacher empowerment has been growing in the current school debate. At the same time, the volume of prescriptive legislation and quick-fix formulas is rapidly multiplying. Even in the best programs for school reform, this tension between bottom-up and top-down approaches surfaces repeatedly.

Empowering Communities

Although schools are essentially local institutions, they are frequently isolated from the communities they serve. The distance of schools from communities is in part the product of the bureaucratization of educational policy and the erosion of parental and teacher authority. This distance also stems from a more general concentration of power in the hands of political elites.

Moreover, the prevailing notion that schools should be worlds unto themselves, with a distinction between academic and social missions, reinforces the alienation of schools from their community context.

In asserting that the isolation of schools from communities undermines school performance, we need first to clarify what is meant by community. The term should signify much more than local civic leadership, those citizens most widely referred to in appeals for citizen support of education. Local elites often do come to stand for "the community" when grassroots forces are not active, but elites do not necessarily share the same interests or options as parents, alumni, taxpayers, voters, workers, homemakers, retirees, church members, shopkeepers, social service providers—the entire range of citizens who, in multiple roles, comprise the community for which education is a vital function and institution.

Some schools will face the problem that the community defined by service from a local school or school district will not be coherent in other respects, including its expectations for education. Some schools will find that their service community is deeply divided on priorities and goals for school performance. Some schools may even find significant sectors of the community antagonistic to public education or resentful of the resources devoted to it. Nor are local communities, even those with a strong consensus, the sole or sacred arbiter of educational needs. Other democratic principles—including human rights, civil liberties, civic pluralism, and the needs of youth—are essential to the public interest in education.

Parent involvement is most decisively discouraged when it does not make a difference.

Nonetheless, we cannot construct a democratic mission for public schooling without taking on the task of involving local communities, however they present themselves, in the educational process. School isolation works to deny students a link between what they learn in the classroom and the environment they function in outside the school. The lack of relevance and connection is particularly acute for minority and low income students, whose social and cultural background is not reflected, or is negatively reflected, in standard curricula based on a white, middle-class mainstream and on elitist structures of achievement. Isolation also denies communities the potentially integrative and empowering capacities of the school as a community institution. School isolation denies citizens an arena where differences can be recognized and common interests forged. Finally, isolation denies schools the energy, the resources, and ultimately the allegiance of community members.

The consequences of this isolation are becoming especially damaging in the face of the growing and changing social problems such as chronic unemployment, decaying social and physical infrastructures, shifting family and childraising patterns, and rising personal distress. These conditions are found in a wide range of rural, urban, and industrial communities and have enormous impact on how children function in school. Yet, in too many places, the school retreats further into its fortress mentality, resenting additional demands and seeking new ways to exclude disadvantaged youth or deny responsibility for their needs. Whether beleaguered or indifferent, school authorities have not generally embraced the task of initiating stronger linkages with other human services agencies, with community organizations, and with the youth, parents, local school employees, and neighborhood leaders who represent natural school constituencies.

Youth advocacy organizations can be particularly useful in mediating school and community relations. Many advocacy groups have long-standing, if sometimes adversarial, involvement in education issues. The National Coalition of Advocates for Students, for instance, has nineteen affiliated organizations, operating in fifteen major cities and a number of rural regions, and includes national legal centers. Advocacy organizations not only represent parents and students in administrative hearings and appeals, but often organize and train parents and community groups in how to secure children's schooling rights and how to utilize the available channels of participation and redress effectively. Advocacy groups are usually professionally run organizations that cannot, or should not, substitute for the voices of community members. But those advocacy groups that give priority to organizing as well as providing service at the grassroots level can be a valuable conduit for community concerns.

Another readily available resource for building school/community links and improving school climate is using local residents as paraprofessionals. In more privileged school systems, volunteers often serve as tutors, teacher aides, and special instructors. For working class and poor communities, however, it is necessary to provide paid jobs. By 1982, there were an estimated 150,000 paid paraprofessionals in education. Paraprofessionals allow greater flexibility in the use of teacher time and are a key element in reducing teacher/student ratios, reducing teacher isolation in the classroom, encouraging small instructional groupings, and diffusing

the non-instructional workload. In addition, the use of local paraprofessionals is a concrete mechanism for increasing school accountability to the community. If parents are to become an effective school constituency, paraprofessionals can serve as informed representatives, an activating and a mediating group.

Progressive reform in education does not fundamentally hinge on issues of technique, but rests on political choices and priorities.

School efforts to tap community resources and develop supportive constituencies can be strengthened by efforts to use school resources for the community. The neighborhood school is ideally suited to serve as a community institution that reaches beyond the immediate school population and beyond academic functions. In low income communities, where both schools and other social services are pervasively deficient, the need to enlarge and maximize the use of school resources is pressing.

There are models, particularly those developed at the height of community activism in the late 60's, of the school that is open from early morning to evening as a neighborhood center, with breakfast programs, preschool and after school recreation programs, adult education classes, childcare centers, and adult/child co-learning programs in subjects from computers to nutrition. Schools are equipped to serve as meeting sites, local athletic sponsors, and cultural centers for exhibits and performing arts. Where these activities now exist as an integral part of the school function, the sense of community access and of collective accountability is greatly enriched. Obstacles to opening up school facilities, such as increased custodial workloads, have been met by community members contributing to the maintenance of the school.

The school is also a highly appropriate site for the delivery of youth service programs, whether offered by public agencies or by community-based organizations. Examples of successful in-school projects cover a wide range of services: health education and assessment, substance abuse treatment, return-to-school support programs, childcare and family counseling for teen parents, and so forth. The coordination of such programs not only increases their effectiveness, but also works to transform the atmosphere, attitudes, and responsiveness of schools as institutions.

A public literacy campaign could be directed at children in school and at out-of-school youth and adults who have considerable exposure to formal schooling but whose school experience has been largely negative. The key target group would be minority youth, who suffer 60-80% drop-out rates in urban high schools, both those who are out of school and those who are floundering. A successful campaign would be directed not only at basic skills but at reversing attitudes of self-blame, alienation, and lack of confidence that result from school failure.

Ideally, the campaign would offer communities a range of options in establishing localized literacy services. A program could operate walk-in community centers offering free literacy services and open enrollment. It would also utilize community institutions such as churches, neighborhood associations, self-help groups, and community development agencies for recruitment and program delivery.

Our concept of a literacy campaign views the right to read as a fundamental right in a democratic society. Again, while literacy is critical to economic survival, it is also an essential condition of personal and social empowerment. A community-based literacy program could well be integrated with other community activities that enhance this sense of empowerment.

The optimal campaign would be national in scope, sponsored by the federal government with direct grants to community boards or agencies. The scenario could be played out on a smaller scale, sponsored by states, counties, or municipalities. There is no question that a literacy campaign as we have conceived it involves a novel and certainly complex organizing effort, whatever its scale. Perhaps the closest American precedent is the massive literacy drive conducted among GI's in World War II or the southern voter registration drives of the early 60's. In our view, the effort would be rewarded not only by inroads against illiteracy but by new expectations for literacy and by broadly based activism around educational needs, which can then translate into new demands, models, and initiatives for improving local schools.

Empowerment In Education

In relating school practice and school change to the role of parents, teachers, and communities, the central theme has been empowerment: the opportunity and means to effectively participate and share authority. Schools are not worlds unto themselves, which is why no one "best" school system can be devised however many times the attempt has been made. If the mission of schooling is defined by democratic standards, schools must respond to the societal conditions that influence them in order to perform well for all students.

To argue for the empowerment of school constituents is to recognize that they are essential elements of the school culture.

And if, as we contend, progressive reform in education does not fundamentally hinge on issues of technique, but rests on political choices and priorities, we must change the institutional politics of schooling. To argue for the empowerment of school constituents is thus also to recognize that they are indispensable agents of school improvement. Our goal is to add new forces to the institutional politics of schooling, to make school politics more participatory and more directed by the needs of the entire school community.

Central to the success of progressive reform is the concept of public ownership in education. Public ownership means government responsibility for maintaining school institutions financially and administratively, under constitutional principles. But public ownership also means access and participation by citizens. It means a democratic process guiding the governance process, which goes beyond the election of school boards or public officials.

Some would argue, implicitly, that the democratic process is too imperfect, contentious, or unreliable a mechanism to be trusted with the responsibility for the conduct of education. It is certainly true that democratic processes and citizen involvement, are often manipulated, since not all participants have equal resources with which to exercise influence. It is also true that the citizen majority at any given time or place can be ignorant, intolerant, myopic, or misdirected. It is true that democratic mechanisms can be mere formalities, giving the illusion of citizen control while power accumulates in the hands of elites and bureaucrats. For all of these possibilities, there is no shortcut and no purpose in retreat. If we seek a democratic mission for schooling, we have to confront the limits of our democratic capacities and push them back. We have to construct better opportunities for citizen action, as well as citizen education. We cannot achieve public responsibility without empowering the public. We cannot achieve public ownership if we do not fight over whose interests and agendas are already setting education policy.

A more challenging argument against this vision is made by those who feel that democratic school reforms will not make any difference. In this view, school outcomes cannot be dramatically changed without more sweeping systemic changes in economic and social structures. The argument has some validity. Schools are deeply affected by conditions of inequality and stratification that prevail in society at large. These conditions not only create barriers to school improvement but limit the impact of improvement where it is achieved. Unemployment rates of over 50% still await ghetto youth, whether they have graduated from high school or not, and certainly offer no incentive to graduate.

Yet we believe that schools, because they can belong to the citizens they serve and not to the marketplace, have the potential to be more than a mirror reflection of social injustice. When citizens claim ownership of education, schools can become countervailing institutions directed by democratic purposes. All children can learn, and learn more than we are now teaching them about the value of knowledge. If all children's economic or social needs are not being met, schools can at least address their human needs for mastery and skill, for thought and communication, for awareness and activity, for self-esteem and shared respect. If all children are not equally rewarded for learning, they can at least be equally prepared to contend with unfair realities and even to change them.

This is not to say that public ownership, in its fullest sense, will eliminate the historic tension between democratic and elitist missions of schooling. Indeed, this tension is likely to intensify with each step toward citizen involvement, since vested interests do not yield easily, and since the citizens themselves are torn between ideals and expediency. But progress can be sustained and meaningful if schools are seen as appropriate and necessary arenas for defining and asserting the public interest. On this issue, the current debate over school reform is critical in its own right. Beyond the immediate policy outcomes, the debate is pivotal to restoring public recognition that public institutions can meet human needs and should extend human rights, including the right to learn. □

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Washington Report

David Saperstein

In the Jewish community's "single-issue versus multi-issue" political debate, AIPAC, with its exclusive focus on Israel, is often held up as the exemplar of single-issue politics. Multi-issue proponents stress the danger inherent in failing to recognize the interrelatedness of American political concerns or to appreciate how ignoring other concerns can harm Jewish interests in the long run. Ironically, AIPAC's constructive actions on a potentially catastrophic aspect of the fight over the 1987 foreign aid package to Israel validates the arguments of multi-issue advocates.

For the first time this year, many Christian, food aid, foreign development, and human rights advocacy groups—with which multi-issue Jewish organizations are allied—called for cuts in foreign aid to Israel. Their stance came not from any opposition to Israel *per se* nor even to the Israel aid package, but resulted from systemic problems plaguing foreign aid—problems which have been long ignored by most of the Jewish community. If these are allowed to continue for another year, the consequences could be economically disastrous for Israel and politically harmful to American Jewry.

Foreign aid was "authorized" this year as one total package. No specific levels were set for the separate programs. Because foreign aid was subjected to the Gramm-Rudman cuts, its total was reduced from $13.3 billion in fiscal 1986 to a level likely to be around $12-12.5 billion in 1987. (These were the levels passed by the House and Senate respectively. At this time, it appears that Congress may, in fact, bypass the foreign aid bill and use a "continuing resolution" basing its levels on 1986 figures.) When Congress later "appropriated" the funds (i.e. divided them among specific programs), it began by honoring the President's request to maintain fiscal 1986 aid levels for Israel, Egypt, Ireland and Pakistan. This totalled $5.6 billion. One billion dollars had to be cut from the remaining funds earmarked either for security assistance or for developmental and humanitarian aid.

Only a vigorous effort by groups concerned about the worsening conditions in the Third World held the cuts in developmental assistance to $100-300 million. The great proportion of the cuts came from security assistance funds to countries other than the protected four. Most experts agree, however, that room for cuts in this category has now been exhausted. Future cuts will have to come either from the protected countries or, more likely, from developmental and humanitarian assistance.

Many pro-development aid groups insisted that if cuts had to be made in the foreign aid package this year, justice required that they be made *across the board*—including the Middle-East countries. The first priority, they argued, should be to maintain—or increase—developmental assistance to the most needy nations.

If next year Congress implements the 1988 Gramm-Rudman goals, there will be even more drastic cuts in the foreign aid package. One of two things could then happen: either aid to Israel will be cut or the Jewish community will have to justify protecting aid to Israel at the expense of devastating and disastrous cuts in developmental and humanitarian assistance.

How can the Jewish community avoid this untenable situation? Get involved in the aid package fight earlier and strongly support not only the Israel aid package but a larger overall foreign aid package. This is the only way to make certain that there is sufficient foreign aid for Israel and for the hungry and needy throughout the world.

This is a tailor-made issue for multi-issue Jewish organizations. Yet as the Religious Action Center worked on this issue this past year, the only other representative of a Jewish organization fighting actively for higher authorization levels was Esther Kurz, one of AIPAC's most talented lobbyists. It wasn't that the other groups opposed higher levels of aid, they just hadn't gotten involved. By staying aloof from the battle, they permitted Israel's interests and the community relations interests of American Jews to clash—something AIPAC was trying desperately to avoid.

This year, AIPAC played a crucial role in forestalling disaster precisely because it maintained a broad perspective on this problem. Next year, the entire Jewish community should lead the battle to secure higher levels for the whole foreign assistance package—for the sake of *all* the causes in which we believe. □

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Exchange

In the premier issue of Tikkun, *Christopher Lasch argues in "What's Wrong with the Right?" that conservatives fail to understand that the values they support are undermined by the economic and political order they uphold. He also criticizes the Left for dismissing talk about the collapse of the family life: "The family is threatened not only by economic pressures but by an ideology that devalues and defines freedom as individual freedom of choice—freedom from binding commitments."*

We present below two major challenges to Lasch, and Lasch's response. Richard Lichtman teaches social theory at The Wright Institute in Berkeley. His book, The Production of Desire *was reviewed in our first issue. Lillian Rubin is the author of* Worlds of Pain: Life in Working Class Families, *and most recently* Quiet Rage: Bernie Goetz in a Time of Madness. *Christopher Lasch is Chairman of the Department of History at the University of Rochester, and author of* The Culture of Narcissism.

A Socialist Response to Lasch—

Richard Lichtman

It is significant that Christopher Lasch begins his critique of the Right with a very positive reinterpretation and assessment. He immediately dismisses the sort of account given by Miles, which attributes the conservative revival to reaction against the threat to the *"status quo* distribution of power and wealth." In fact, conservatism is credited with a strong "populist flavor," having identified itself with "patriotism, ambition, competition and common sense," and many of the *"symbols* of popular democracy." It speaks for those who desire self-improvement and justice. And far from defending the present arrangements of power, many conservatives, according to Lasch, wish to limit the predominant influence of those educated elites who enjoy disproportionate wealth and use their privilege to defend unlimited abortion, attack religion and the family, degrade education, condemn capitalism and defend self-indulgent pleasure seeking.

Now it is not the empirical content of this claim that concerns me at the moment, but the underlying confusion which permeates the form of Lasch's analysis. What, for example, is "the Right"? Is it identical with contemporary conservatism or merely a political ally in regard to specific public issues? Does Jeanne Kirkpatrick long with Burton Pines to return to traditional American values? And what precisely are these values? Are they the values of Cotton Mather, Hamilton, Calhoun, the Know-Nothings, Gould and Fiske, or of Jefferson, John Brown, Debs and the militant labor movement of the 1930's? Or some third, fourth or fifth definable set of values? One might have thought that Jeanne Kirkpatrick is a perfect exemplar of the arrogant educated elites she professes to condemn, although it mightily strains one's best efforts to imagine her leading a "democratic movement against entrenched interests"(!). But it is not the confusion of terminology that is the worst part of Lasch's opening analysis. It is the much deeper failure to separate conservative rhetoric from reality. Lasch seems unable to distinguish between the actual political desires, values and programs of those who in fact exercise reactionary power, and the appeal these same invisible oppressors make to traditional "populist" and "democratic" concerns. Lasch appears to approach the basic issue when he refers to the Right as having appropriated "many of the *symbols* of popular democracy." But, of course, this symbolic appropriation is designed precisely to obscure the continuing and growing concentration of corporate capital which is the actual source of conservative policy and ambition. In truth, the major political-ideological development of contemporary conservatism has been its capacity to wrap its domestic and foreign exploitation in patriotic hyperbole, mindless optimism and self-glorifying appeals to self-reliance and individual initiative. No one better exemplifies this obscene masquerade than Reagan, who is the perfect embodiment of American self-congratulatory mindlessness presiding over a reign of sexual, ethnic, economic and international oppression. Having steeped himself in this profound conflation of power and ideology from the beginning, Lasch has little opportunity to offer us anything but obscurity, despite the occasional insight which breaks through the miasma of his analysis.

It is no surprise, then, that Lasch's account of the "Left" is as confused as his account of the "Right." Readers have undoubtedly noticed that the terms "Left," "liberal," and "progressive" are used interchangeably. (It is unclear how feminism stands in rela-

tion to this ill-defined constellation.) Of course, Lasch is responsible for the use of his own terms, but in fact, his obfuscation only reflects the fact that there actually exists no "Left" in the United States today. This point is vital and it is worth a moment's reflection to clarify the relative positions of supposedly "Left" and "Right" factions. In order to carry out this work, it will be necessary to present the briefest overview of the recent transformation of American capitalism. The basic considerations are these:

- American industry has been in decline since the end of the 1960's.
- To deal with this situation the capitalist ruling class has had to intervene more aggressively in world affairs and to become more oppressive at home.
- Since the beginning of the present decade the situation has worsened considerably and all hope of establishing a coherent economic program to deal with the growing crisis has been abandoned.
- Actually, more closely following Carter's later policy than opposing him, Reagan undertook a program of extreme austerity, draconian anti-unionism (the breaking of the PATCO strike, to begin with) and an unremitting attack on the welfare state.
- After a period of experimentation with détente, reduced military expenditures, and attention to human rights in the 1970's, Carter reversed this policy and began a period of increased militarization and foreign intervention on behalf of capitalist interest.
- However, as segments of the Third World fell away from American domination (Portugal, Zimbabwe, Iran, Nicaragua) the American ruling class responded to the threat to its hegemony by instituting, under Reagan, the largest military buildup in world history.
- Faced with obviously declining American industrial production and an ironic dependency upon Third World debtor states for continued financial solvency, the Democratic party became increasingly indistinguishable from Republicans in the promotion of military Keynesianism and global domination.
- The stimulation of the economy through deficit military spending—*the Reagan solution*—and the further maldistribution of income in favor of the wealthy, rather than solving the problem of economic growth and development, have merely sped the process of industrial decline and deterioration of the quality of life for a vast majority of Americans. It has also produced record trade deficits and American debt.
- The immediate relevance of these factors to our present concern lies in the fundamental consideration that under diminishing capitalist prospects for continuing profitability and expansion, the "progressive" coalition of the American post World War II boom has disintegrated. The liberal establishment which had presided over the accommodation of progressive American forces to the power of expanding capitalist domination now finds itself contending with Republicans for the task of administering a contracting economy. In short, with the end of American economic expansion, "liberalism" is left without a viable political program. In fact, liberalism, as an organized political force, no longer exists.

Reagan is the perfect embodiment of American self-congratulatory mindlessness presiding over a reign of sexual, ethnic, economic and international oppression.

This is not to say that there are no longer individual liberals or liberal militancy organized in specific groups devoted to specific aims such as environmental protection, women's rights, civil liberties, etc., but these forces have no program around which they might coalesce to promote a general program of social change. The fundamental reason for this impotent scattering of forces is the absence of a political economic alternative to the present condition of capitalism. Therefore, the liberal movements for social change which arose in the 1960's and supported the causes of civil rights, women's equality, voter participation, and international détente, have largely lost the cutting edge of their influence and now find themselves in a life and death struggle merely to maintain a continually endangered position.

As early as the mid-1970's, when the Democrats held massive majorities in the Congress and in public identification, the party was unwilling to challenge the power of the corporate capitalist class. Bills for National Health Insurance and full employment were thoroughly eviscerated. I do not make these comments in the expectation of providing any new insight; it should be well-known that the Democratic party is structurally tied to the expansion of capitalism. I simply wish to note that with the contraction of the economy, the liberal-democratic perspective lost its rationale and has been unable to create another. Ringing rhetorical remarks by Kennedy at the 1980 Democratic convention and Cuomo in 1984, are actually quite devoid of political-economic program. Unions have been only too eager to argue that labor struggles on their part would threaten "their" companies and prove self-defeating. And workers who have sought tax reduction rather

than political reform have inadvertently helped to diminish the living standards of those who depend upon governmental assistance. And this, in spite of the fact that there seems to exist considerable evidence that individual workers continue to support individual policies of the traditional welfare state. However, in the absence of any theoretical, programmatic opposition to capitalism, the threat to current workers' security is easily translated into racism, sexism, chauvinism and militarism on a functionally objective level.

As there is no organized liberal presence in contemporary American society, so, obviously, is there even less the possible pretense of a "Left." The "Left" can be defined in either strong or weak terms. On the first account, the "Left" is that organized system of political forces which owes its definition to the traditional values of socialism. In this sense, the militant wing of the British Labor Party is a Left movement. In the weak sense of the term, the "Left" is any structured section of political citizenry that is engaged in significant discourse with the principles of socialism. But, as in the United States, where there is no strong Left with whom to engage in discourse, there cannot be a weakly defined "Left" either, or any publicly situated leftist presence.

Lasch's account, devoid of any material foundation, continually swings between piecemeal analysis and moralism. Progressives and feminists are excoriated for their anarchistic view of the family, as though their redefinition encouraged an illusion which actually played some significant part in the family's present transformation. The profound illogic of Lasch's position is underscored by his observation that since our society is so deeply divided in its view of the family that it cannot even agree on a definition, the Left has obviously lost touch with popular opinion. But if our society is in fact so divided, should we not conclude the "Left" is at least in touch with one half of the popular opinion of that divided society? Note also, that when Lasch attacks the Right, he often does so with precisely those arguments he has previously used to discredit the Left. For example, his critique of Kramer's defense of the nuclear family includes the contention that "most people no longer live in nuclear families at all," despite the fact that Lasch had previously ridiculed attempts by feminists and the "Left" to redefine the family in accordance with present historical conditions. Again, he takes note of the fact that women enter the work force largely because they "have no other choice" and not because "they are besotted by feminist ideology and have no other way to fulfill themselves." Nevertheless, when Lasch attempts an explanation of the fact that a growing number of men have been leaving the family, he attributes this development to Hugh Hefner and the sexual consumerism of the Playboy lifestyle.

A great deal of significance is attributed to "consumerism," which is held responsible for the deterioration of loyalty and social permanence. And yet, Lasch himself notes that these values are themselves being undermined precisely because they no longer serve the present system of production. But then it is "advanced capitalism" which should be made to bear the brunt of this condemnation and not feminists, liberals or the Left. But the greatest lacunae in Lasch's argument is its failure to trace the difficulties of present society back to the selfsame "advanced capitalism" which is its primary cause. Had Lasch taken this challenge seriously, he would have had to grapple with significant alternatives to capitalism and this would have necessitated a consideration of the possibility of (careful now) Socialism. It is much easier to invert cause and effect by ascribing the discontents of contemporary society to professionals, who are said to have a "vested interest in discontent," as though their power extended to the capacity to illicit unsatisfied demand itself. This, despite the fact that Lasch himself later notes the "rich historical scholarship which shows that the expansion of the public sector came about, *in part*, in response to the pressure of the corporations themselves." Change "in part" to "predominantly" and the assertion holds. Ultimately, Lasch fails to trace the tendency of modern capitalism to create new demand for anything more fundamental than itself. But it is the tendency toward continually falling profitability which is one of the primary motives of the capitalist stimulation of demand; while the other principle cause of consumerism is the need for men and women to experience compensatory power in consumption for the absence of any significant power which they are able to exercise in the realm of production.

The pervasive inability to distinguish reality from appearance, affixed to the confusion of the meaning of such terms as "conservatism," leads Lasch to a vague and formless conclusion.

The fetishizing of consumerism extends so far in Lasch's argument that he even regards the reporting of the news not as "propaganda for any particular ideology," as much as an endorsement of the replacement of things by commodities and events by images, a general celebration of newness and novelty. Here, Lasch completely loses his way. His animus against consumerism,

which is a manifestation of his profound hostility to infantile "left wing" narcissistic indulgence (so evident in his diatribe against left-feminist accounts of the family) blinds him to the profoundly crucial fact that the news media do not perpetrate an addiction for newness but a wholly opposite mindless loyalty to the long standing American values of patriotism, anti-intellectualism, elitism, anti-communism and a general denigration of any critical investigation of the fundamental characteristics of contemporary capitalism—all, under the guise of liberal neutrality, of course. Despite Lasch's claim that people greet "all official pronouncements with skepticism," the truth remains, rather, that the great majority of Americans absorb, as though by osmosis, the vast majority of the administration's deceits, lies, and distortions on everything from nuclear disarmament to the highly moral principles of the Contra "freedom fighters." It is not by accident that Lasch comes to such an absurd and dangerous conclusion; it is the result of his reification of commodity consumerism as the essence of capitalism, and his failure to realize that such indulgence as capitalism promotes is wholly for the sake of its own interest in continued, permanent domination.

The pervasive inability to distinguish reality from appearance, affixed to the confusion of the meaning of such terms as "conservatism," leads Lasch to a vague and formless conclusion. Is it true that conservatives conceive of the economy "as it was in the time of Adam Smith"? Which conservatives? Certainly not the economic planners in the administration who know perfectly well what is in the interest of their corporate capitalist clients. Their policy has been consistently ordered to increase the power of corporate capitalism. Or, does Lasch mean the Buckleys, Novacks, Milton Freedmans, and George Wills whose position more and more dominates the media? Even their ignorance does not extend to the point of wishing to deny the existence of the system which provides their class power and privilege. The ordinary folk, perhaps? Would they like to return to individual business ownership free from government subsidy? When Lasch laments that conservatives condemn environmentalism as a "counsel of doom," rather than an opportunity to impose limits on our desire for unlimited power over nature, he would seem to be at a propitious point from which to realize that conservatives are not quite in fact as they present themselves in appearance. But Lasch is undeterred by the logical inference of his own argument and simply misses the opportunity to note the corporate-conservative alliance once again.

Well, yes, Lasch does tell us that conservatives do have a "distorted understanding" of "traditional values" and are actually celebrating rapacious, anti-traditional individualism. But Lasch began his essay by extolling the conservative defense of populist common sense. And he concludes by maintaining that conservatives actually appeal to a "pervasive and *legitimate* desire—for order, continuity, responsibility and discipline." (My emphasis.) The only difficulty seems to be that "it contains nothing with which to satisfy these desires." The real difficulty is rather that the sort of order and discipline that conservatives cherish is oppressive, exploitative and discriminatory. Lasch continues to compound his confusion by praising the conservative rejection of the separation of politics and religion, despite his observation that their religion is trivial and chauvinistic, "self-righteous and idolatrous." Alas, it loses the "transcendent and absolute nature of the Christian faith. For Christians and Jews, loyalty to God must transcend any earthly loyalties." The only comfort one can derive from this portentous and regressive pronouncement is the awareness that it contradicts Lasch's contention that a politics without religion is "no proper politics at all."

It is not gratuitous that Lasch finally sinks into so reactionary a conclusion. His appeal, as the appeal of Bellah et al. in *Habits of the Heart* (praised by Alan Wolfe in the same issue of *Tikkun*) is to a reconstruction of contemporary America that does not significantly confront the character of corporate capitalist power. Instead we are offered an appeal to some mythical American ideology. No meaningful analysis can emerge until we clearly face the absolute necessity of controlling the power of corporate-capitalist domination; until, in other words, the issue of Socialism is returned to the American agenda. But isn't Socialism simply impossible, at best, in the current American situation? Aren't we forced to appeal to our cultural heritage and its predominant values to awaken the progressive spirit of the American people? However, it is one thing to propose an alternative, which, despite the great effort which may be required to achieve it, promises to afford us some genuinely human achievement. It is quite another matter to suggest an alternative which cannot be of service to the cause of social justice, even if enacted, because it derives from a structure of power which is incompatible with cooperative self-determination and equal human worth. Socialism is in the first category: conservatism, liberalism and Lasch's pronouncements belong to the latter. □

A Feminist Response to Lasch—

Lillian Rubin

It is a testimony to the impoverishment of the American Left that the only thing most of its adherents can do these days, when they are not sitting and fuming quietly, is to emulate the Right. And among the most fashionable "causes" of both Right and Left now is the demoralization of the American family. "Progressive rhetoric," writes Christopher Lasch in *Tikkun*'s premier issue, "has the effect of concealing social crisis and moral breakdown by presenting them 'dialectically' as the birth pangs of a new order." With those words, Lasch launches into what is by now a familiar diatribe about what he calls the liberal "anaemic, euphemistic definition" of the family. And it becomes hard to tell whether we're reading Christopher Lasch or Jerry Falwell's latest sermon.

At issue for Lasch is whether blended families, single-parent families, gay families can rightly be called "families." His answer is no. These may be "perfectly legitimate living arrangements," he insists, "but they are arrangements chosen by people who prefer not to live in families at all, with all the unavoidable constraints that families place on individual freedom." How or why he comes to this conclusion is unclear, largely because this is a moral issue for him, not a social and political one, just as it is for Falwell and Reagan. Once cast in moral terms, one need neither present a reasoned argument nor attend to the real experience of people's lives. A preordained notion of right or wrong is all that counts.

According to Lasch's definition above, "constraint" becomes a crucial if not *the* central and defining feature of family life, while "choice" is the villain in those living arrangements to which he refuses to accord the status of "family." There's much to be said about his choice of words here. For even if we are willing to grant them some credibility, the issue of choice and constraint in family life is not so clear. The divorced mother of the 1980's, for example, all too often is raising her children alone out of necessity, not choice. But even when a woman chooses to leave a marriage, can anyone seriously believe that the shape of her life is less constrained after divorce, when she almost always becomes the sole emotional and economic support of those children?

And by what reasoning do we decide that two people who live and love in a long-term, stable relationship, perhaps even raise a child together, are any less subject to the constraints of family life simply because they sleep with someone of the same sex instead of the opposite one? Certainly for many Americans the commitment to a marriage is itself the constraining force. But surely no one living through an era when half of all marriages end in divorce can still believe that legal constraints alone provide the binding force on those who wed. And if it is the deeper emotional ties and attachments that make for stable relationships, then who is to say that heterosexuality supplies a monopoly on these?

There is no logic here. There is only an emotional and nostalgic wish for a past that never existed for most people anywhere in the world. The old family for which Christopher Lasch grieves was, historically speaking, a reality for a very brief period following the Industrial Revolution and even then *only* among a select group of people—the bourgeoisie. Moreover, it is this very bourgeois family, whose return he calls for, that broke down under the weight of the contradictions that surround it.

In the public arena, the family has been our hallowed and sacred institution, politicians paying it obeisance as they remind us and each other of its importance in American life. Yet both economy and polity have failed to support it. We are, after all, the only advanced industrial nation that has no public policy of support for the family, whether with family allowances or decent publicly-sponsored childcare facilities.

The old family for which Christopher Lasch grieves was, historically speaking, a reality for a very brief period following the Industrial Revolution and even then only *among a select group of people.*

Inside the family, too, there's conflict between our ideal statements and the reality of life as it is lived there. We are a nation that speaks of liberty and equality for all. Yet the family has been a hierarchically ordered institution in which liberty and equality largely have been labeled "for men only." As long as the traditional bargain in the bourgeois family worked—that is, a woman would trade equality and freedom for economic security—that family had a chance. But long before the emergence of the modern feminist move-

ment this bargain had already been breached, and men in large numbers were leaving wives who were ill prepared to do so to fend for themselves and their children.

We need only look at the work of family historians to see the difficulties of family life throughout the ages—the struggle for survival that, for most families, has been arduous and exhausting, if not downright torturous. And if these aren't convincing enough, a Dickens novel should do the trick.

The cruelties and oppression family members have visited upon one another, as they acted out their rage against their own instead of the enemy outside, have been well documented. And the issue of family instability that plagues us today has, in one way or another, been with us at least since the Industrial Revolution so effectively split work from family life and family members from each other. It was different then. It wasn't divorce that divided families; it was death and desertion. It wasn't drugs that crippled the children; it was being tied to a machine for twelve to fourteen hours a day.

Feminists have offered the first new vision in many decades of what, at its best, family life could and should be.

Yet Lasch, the historian, manages to write as if he knows nothing of all this. The family may be under threat from economic pressures, he concedes, but the real threat comes from a feminist ideology, which, in his words, "devalues motherhood, equates personal development with participation in the labor market, and defines freedom as individual freedom of choice—freedom from binding commitments." When over 50 percent of all married women with young children are in the labor force, it's time to stop blaming feminists for destroying the family. Whatever personal satisfactions these women may find at work, the cold hard fact of American family life today is that it takes two incomes to live decently and still pay the bills.

Here again, it's hard to tell Lasch from Schlafly. Both offer a hostile and oversimple view of modern feminism; both misstate feminist theory and ideology and misread our recent history. A social movement like feminism does not arise in a vacuum. Rather, feminism in this modern era came to life precisely because the family itself had already failed in its function to provide for its members that "haven in a heartless world" for which so many of us yearn. Not for women, not for children, and not for men either.

Lasch rails at women who have demanded change in the structure of roles in the family, all the while refusing to acknowledge the inequities of traditional family life, from female infanticide to battered women. He laments the demise of the family wage system—that is, the system whereby the wages of one worker could support a family—and argues that it is the breakdown of this wage system that has driven women into the labor force in such large numbers. But what family is he talking about? Except for a few of the economically privileged, this family wage that he mourns so deeply has never been enough to support the family adequately. In fact, women in working-class families have always had to supplement their husband's wage, whether by taking in washing or working in the factories.

It certainly is true that feminists have been in the forefront of the struggle for change in the family. But instead of being on an inevitable collision course with the family, as Lasch insists, feminists have offered the first new vision in many decades of what, at its best, family life could and should be: Two adults who are equally responsible for the economic, social and emotional well-being of the family, both sharing childrearing, one of life's most difficult but ultimately most gratifying tasks from which men have been excluded far too long by current familial arrangements.

No one will deny that there's a deep concern abroad today, that many Americans feel bruised and angry in the aftermath of two decades of social upheaval. It's undeniable, also, that such periods of social unrest anywhere have both positive and negative effects. But a little history is useful in putting both into perspective.

The sixties started with the movement for sexual freedom that coexisted with a movement to humanize the work environment. That, in some important way, was what the famous Free Speech Movement at Berkeley was all about—a movement to bring bureaucratic regulation within human control. The decade ended with the emergence of the modern feminist movement whose major commitment was and is to reorder the rules of love and work in the interest of a more human and humane society for all.

Yes, we sometimes got lost en route. Sexual freedom and the search for sexual intimacy became corrupted by the promise of instant gratification. The concerns about humanizing work and reordering life's priorities were trivialized and aborted by an ethic that exhorted us to "Tune in, turn on, and drop out." Words like struggle, commitment, responsibility were scorned. And the way of life—both good and bad—that such words undergird was consigned to oblivion. In that context, the human potential movement in psychology talked about developing our potential for intimacy,

self-awareness and personal growth but offered instead only a narcissistic sham where people searched frantically, but always in fleeting and inconstant encounters, for a connection both to a self and to an "Other." Finally, along with all its positive impact, the feminist struggle to make the family a more egalitarian institution, to equalize the power relations between men and women there and elsewhere, left both feeling sometimes wounded, sometimes embittered, and almost always without the old familiar ways of dealing with each other.

But on the positive side, important gains have been made, while we also seem to have come back to some balance on many of these issues. In the private arena, the tremendous sexual repression of the past has been lifted and, at the same time, an ethic that calls for more sexual responsibility has been emerging in recent years. We may still have a way to go to make our interpersonal relationships all that we want and need, but the enormous success among men as well as women of my own *Intimate Strangers*—a book that offers no easy answers, whether in the bedroom, the living room or the kitchen—is itself testimony to our willingness to engage the struggle.

In the public sphere, the gains are more visible. There is no longer *exclusively* women's work and men's work, whether in the elite building trades or in the professions. Sex discrimination has not ended, to be sure. But today's children will feel no surprise at the sight of a woman pilot or plumber. And already the sound of a male voice on an AT&T line no longer gives any of us a jolt.

Some of these changes are relatively broad and deep; others are still symbolic only. All of them stand, also, alongside a set of problems that have yet to be tackled—the increasing feminization of poverty, the double shift to which most women who work outside the home are consigned, the lack of childcare facilities. Still, the fact that there are problems yet to be met and mastered should not disable us from seeing and appreciating the gains.

Certainly there's work ahead if family life is to fulfill our ideal vision. But it is not a return to a past we need—a past where the constraints were so great that neither men nor women were expected to enjoy what we so delicately called "connubial relations," where divorce was either illegal or so socially unacceptable that the only alternative for men was desertion and for women, stoic endurance. Instead, we must reorder our social priorities in ways that support rather than hinder family life.

For at least the last one hundred and fifty years, the major threat to family life has been the organization of work. If the family is to survive, we need to think creatively about reorganizing the world of work to honor family life and give it the priority it deserves. This means, among other things, a shorter work week for both men and women, benefit packages that permit a substantial amount of time off when a child is born, adequate and affordable childcare facilities.

The Left has much to criticize itself for, not least for having lost touch with the American consciousness, with the hopes, the dreams and the fears of most of our people. But that doesn't mean joining the Right in their unrealistic attempts to turn back the clock to a world that never was. Nor should we be supporting their insistence that there are simple and easy answers to the hard issues our society faces, whether about the family or about any of the other arenas of both public and private life in which problems abound. It is indeed, as Lasch argues, time for those of us who call ourselves progressives or, dare I even say the word, radicals to take stock of where we have been and to begin to define an agenda for the future that takes account of the legitimate concerns of most Americans. But he is wrong when he seeks to do so by pandering to the worst elements of the existing popular consciousness.

For at least the last one hundred and fifty years, the major threat to family life has been the organization of work.

Until now, I have been one of Christopher Lasch's defenders, arguing that, despite serious flaws in his analysis, he has had the courage and imagination to raise questions that others on the Left have failed to confront. But it seems to me now that his rage and fear about the state of society has led him to the kind of analysis this article displays, whether about the family or about the role of religion in politics. In both, he treads on dangerous ground. For despite a sometimes trenchant critique of the positions of the Right, the ultimate effect of what he has written is to show that they are not on the wrong side, only that they misunderstand the source of the problem. In doing so, Lasch has given over to the meanest and most reactionary forces in our land the power to set the terms for our own debate—a mistake the Left has made before and always has paid for dearly. □

Why the Left Has No Future—
Christopher Lasch

These stale polemics, full of moral outrage and theoretical hot air, inadvertently show why the Left has no future. Unable to explain the persistence of religion, pro-family attitudes, and an ethic of personal accountability except as an expression of false consciousness—as the product of brainwashing or of an irrational attachment to "simple and easy answers" after "two decades of social upheaval"—the Left finds itself without a following. Since it refuses to take popular attitudes seriously—to "pander" to "the existing popular consciousness," in Lillian Rubin's curious and revealing phrase—it can hope to reform society only in the face of popular opposition or indifference. The claim that the Left speaks for the common people no longer carries the slightest conviction. But the effort to maintain it without conviction is demoralizing, while the effort to get along without it—to abandon the fiction of democracy and to lead the people to the promised land against their own judgment and inclinations—is still a little awkward for radicals brought up in a democratic political tradition. Hence the note of anguish that runs through these communications, so revealing of the Leftist frame of mind.

Faced with the embarrassing gap between Leftist ideology and "existing popular consciousness"—a gap that began to reveal itself as early as the 1940's—the American Left has had to choose, in effect, between two equally futile and self-defeating strategies: either to wait helplessly for the revolution, while fulminating against "capitalism," or to try to gain its objectives by outflanking public opinion, giving up the hope of creating a popular constituency for social reform, and relying instead on the courts, the mass media, and the administrative bureaucracy. As militant outsiders or bureaucratic insiders, radicals have succeeded only in laying the basis of a conservative movement that has managed to present itself, infuriatingly, as a form of cultural populism, even though its own program, especially its economic program, seeks only to perpetuate the existing distribution of wealth and power—indeed, to reverse most of the democratic gains actually achieved over the last five decades.

An analysis of the capitalist economy, even a fresh and trenchant analysis (as opposed to Lichtman's lifeless theorizing), in itself would contribute very little to an understanding of the political situation in this country. Why should economic contraction deprive liberalism of its "rationale," as Lichtman maintains? One might expect that it would have the opposite effect, as it did in the 1930's. During the Depression, liberal democrats argued that questions about the distribution of wealth, obscured in the past by a long history of economic expansion, could no longer be postponed. Liberals' reluctance to press such a point today, when it would be equally pertinent in a climate of diminishing expectations, cannot be explained without reference to the collapse of the political coalition that sustained liberalism in the past; and this development, in turn, cannot be explained without reference to the cultural issues that have separated liberals from their popular constituency. The divisive political effects of this "cultural civil war" are documented in many historical studies—for example, in Frederick Siegel's useful survey of American history since World War II, *Troubled Journey*. I recommend this book to anyone who wants to understand why the Left has fallen on hard times, as a substitute for the kind of theorizing which assumes that invocation of the magic words, capitalism and socialism, will explain everything that needs to be explained.

To readers who are tired of formulas, I can also recommend a long list of works on consumerism, mass culture, and the mass media—among others, those of Jackson Lears, Richard Fox, Stewart Ewen, William Leach, and Todd Gitlin. Read Gitlin on the media coverage of the student movement in the sixties and then try to convince yourself that a reactionary political bias accounts for everything. But don't be afraid to rely on your own observations, which ought to be enough, all by themselves, to raise doubts about the dogma that the mass media purvey a right-wing ideology of "loyalty, . . .patriotism, and anti-intellectualism, elitism, anti-communism," and uncritical acquiescence. Ask yourself how it is possible for so many people to believe that the media, controlled by the "eastern liberal establishment," purvey a diametrically opposed ideology, one of undiluted liberal orthodoxy. This belief is no less misguided than the left-wing dogma that the media are wholly dominated by the "interests." But neither belief can be dismissed out of hand. Instead of replying to one dogma with another, we have to take them seriously enough to understand how they came to be held and what makes them seem like plausible descriptions of reality. The refusal to pay attention to popular perceptions or to listen to any views that don't agree with those one already holds is a recipe, it goes without saying, for ignorance.

As for the question of whether Americans believe

everything they see on television, fifteen minutes in a bar ought to settle the matter. Only political frustration, a relentlessly abstract quality of mind, or lack of any exposure to everyday life—or a combination of these disabilities—could have led Lichtman to say that the "great majority of Americans absorb, as though by osmosis, the vast majority of Administration deceits, lies, and distortions. . . ." It would be hard to find a single statement that better exemplifies the plight of the Left—its diminished capacity not only for rigorous analysis of social conditions but for ordinary observation, its suffocating self-righteousness, its inability to summon up the elementary political realism that would begin by trying to understand the basis of its adversaries' political appeal, above all its lack of any political prospects of its own. If the "vast majority of Americans" are as easily fooled as Lichtman thinks, they will never accept socialism, except at the point of a gun. It is hard to escape the conclusion that socialism—"careful now!"—appeals to Lichtman, as it appeals to so many of those "radicals" who covet the reputation of radicalism without its attendant risks, just because it is mildly unpopular (though destined, of course, for ultimate success) and therefore retains a faint afterglow of the dangerous and forbidden, at the same time providing all the intellectual comfort of a safe, predictable, fixed, unchanging body of dogmas.

Unable to explain the persistence of religion, pro-family attitudes, and an ethic of personal accountability except as an expression of false consciousness . . . the Left finds itself without a following.

Readers will find my position confusing only if they persist in thinking that any position not immediately assimilable to left-wing orthodoxy belongs automatically to the Right. The experience of adversity, under Reagan, has intensified the demand for ideological conformity on the Left and thus encouraged this kind of thinking, always appealing to those insecure people who yearn for the excitement of taking sides in the eternal struggle between the forces of progress and the forces of "regression." "Which side are you on, boys?" When the sides were more clearly drawn, the question made some sense. It still makes sense if it means that people who profess a disinterested love of truth and justice ought to be skeptical, on principle, of the claims of wealth and power and predisposed to side with the underdog. But the Left long ago lost any vivid interest in underdogs. It is allergic to anything that looks like a lost cause. Such moral authority as the Left enjoyed in the past derived from its identification with the oppressed; but its appeal to intellectuals, unfortunately, has usually rested on its claim to stand on the side of history and progress. What added to the thrill of choosing sides was the certainty that in socialism one chose the winning side, the "cooperative commonwealth" sure to prevail in the long run. The only morally defensible choice, however, is the choice of mercy, charity, and forgiveness over the world's principalities and powers, the choice of truth against ideology. To make that choice today means to reject Left and Right alike.

For those who refuse the choice when it is presented in this way, my argument remains a "muddle." (Others have been able to follow it without difficulty.) The muddle, I'm afraid, is in my critics' heads. Lichtman pounces on what he sees as a contradiction: on the one hand I reject the attempt to define the family out of existence; on the other hand I concede that most people no longer live in nuclear families. But the improvisation of new living arrangements in the wake of marital breakdown does not mean that these new living arrangements can best be understood as "alternatives" to the conventional family or that most people view them in that way. Lillian Rubin blunders into the same "contradiction." In her dreadfully confused discussion of choice and constraint, she reminds me, unnecessarily, that single-parent families often arise out of necessity, not choice. But this was precisely my point when I said that Orwellian sloganeering about "alternative lifestyles" and the "new diversity of family types" serves to disguise marital breakup as an exhilirating new form of freedom, just as some sloganeering about "women's liberation" disguises the economic necessity that forces women into the labor market. My intention is to promote plain speech and discourage euphemism. To this end, my essay distinguished between two types of living arrangements misleadingly referred to as "alternative" forms of the family: those makeshift arrangements (single-parent household, blended families) that usually result from divorce or desertion and those arrangements (gay "marriages," informal cohabitation, single persons living alone) freely chosen by people who reject family life altogether. By confusing these two quite different categories, Rubin loses the logic of my argument and then complains that "there is no logic here."

Let me try to restate my argument about the family in a form my critics can follow. In the interest of simplicity, I want to confine most of my attention to the first category of "families." The

second can be easily disposed of. Single persons living alone obviously can't be described very well as families (though people have tried). As for informal cohabitation, even if we could agree to call it a marriage of sorts, we would still have no reason to call it a family. In every society known to anthropology, with a few much-debated exceptions, a family consists of a man and woman united by marriage and living with their offspring. It is impossible to discuss family without reference to marriage, but it is also impossible to discuss it as if it were marriage and nothing more. Clearly it means a marriage plus children. Any other type of "family" is just word-play.

That leaves us with the first category. No one can object to the designation of blended families, extended families, or even, perhaps, to single-parent households as families. The question is whether these arrangements represent alternatives to the "traditional" family or its ruins. I think it would be hard to show that people have elected these arrangements in the spirit of social pioneering. All the evidence suggests that people prefer more conventional domestic arrangements but find it hard to hold them together. What is misleading is not so much the description of new arrangements as families but the additional claim that people now prefer "alternative families" to the "traditional nuclear family." On the contrary, most people still seem to cherish the stability associated with the "traditional" family, even though this ideal no longer conforms very well to everyday experience.

People still cherish the stability of long-term marital and intergenerational commitments, in other words,

The ram's horn sounding

Marge Piercy

1.
Giant porcupine, I walk a rope braided
of my intestines and veins, beige and blue and red
while clutched in my arms, you lie glaring
sore eyed, snuffling and sticking your spines at me.

Always I am finding quills worked into some unsuspected
muscle, an innocent pillow of fat pierced by you.
We sleep in the same bed nightly and you take it all.
I wake shuddering with cold, the quilt stripped from me.

Not, not a porcupine: a leopard cub.
Beautiful you are as light and as darkness.
Avid, fierce, demanding with sharp teeth
to be fed and tended, you only want my life.

Ancient, living, a deep and tortuous river
that rose in the stark mountains beyond the desert,
you have gouged through rocks with slow persistence
enduring, meandering in long shining coils to the sea.

2.
A friend who had been close before being recruited
by the CIA once sent me a postcard of the ghetto at
Tetuan
yellowed like old pornography numbered 17,
a prime number as one might say a prime suspect.
The photographer stood well clear of the gate
to shoot old clothes tottering in the tight street,
beards matted and holy with grease,
children crooked under water jugs,
old men austere and busy as hornets.
Flies swarmed on the lens
Dirt was the color.

Oh, I understood your challenge.
My Jewishness seemed to you sentimental,
perverse, planned obsolescence.
Paris was hot and dirty the night I first
met my relatives who had survived the war.
My identity squatted whining on my arm
gorging itself on my thin blood.
A gaggle of fierce insistent speakers of ten
languages had different passports mother
from son, brother from sister, had four
passports, all forged, kept passports
from gone countries (Transylvania, Bohemia,
old despotisms fading like Victorian wallpaper),
were used to sewing contraband into coat
linings. I smuggled for them across two borders.
Their wars were old ones.

Mine was just starting.

but find little support for them in a capitalist economy or in the prevailing ideology of individual rights. Liberal societies tend to undermine family life, even though most of them profess a sentimental attachment to "family values." This tendency has been present from the very beginning of the liberal capitalist order, in the 18th and 19th centuries.

In the first place, the family wage was a poor substitute for the self-sustaining domestic economy destroyed by industrialism. Not only did wages often fall short of a family's actual requirements, but the family wage system had the effect, precisely when it was most successful, of making women economically dependent on men—an unhealthy state of affairs.

In the second place, the ideology of individual rights was deeply opposed to "family values" (although the Right has never grasped this point). By defining the individual as a rational calculator of his own advantage, liberal ideology made it impossible to conceive of any form of association not based on the calculation of mutual advantage; that is, on a contract. There is no place in liberalism, or at best an insecure and precarious place, for those forms of association based on spontaneous cooperation. When people start to argue about their rights, about receiving their fair share of goods, spontaneous cooperation breaks down. When cooperation breaks down, conversely, people start to argue about their rights. It is less important to try to establish which came first, historically, than to recognize the antipathy between a contractual view of association, specifically of marriage and the family, and a view, on the other hand, that regards a promise not as

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Old debater, it's easy in any manscape
to tell the haves from the have-nots.
Any ghetto is a kleinbottle.
You think you are outside gazing idly in.
Winners write history; losers
die of it, like the plague.

3.
A woman and a Jew, sometimes more
of a contradiction than I can sweat out,
yet finally the intersection that is both
collision and fusion, stone and seed.

Like any poet I wrestle the holy name
and know there is no wording finally
can map, constrain or summon that fierce
voice whose long wind lifts my hair

chills my skin and fills my lungs
to bursting. I serve the word
I cannot name, who names me daily,
who speaks me out by whispers and shouts.

Coming to the new year, I am picked
up like the ancient ram's horn to sound
over the congregation of people and beetles
of pines, whales, marshhawks and asters.

Then I am dropped into the factory of words
to turn my little wheels and grind my own
edges, back on piecework again, knowing
there is no justice we don't make daily

like bread and love. Shekinah,
stooping on hawk wings prying into my heart
with your silver beak; floating down
a milkweed silk dove of sunset;

riding the filmy sheets of rain like a ghost
ship with all sails still unfurled;
bless me and use me for telling and naming
the forever collapsing shades and shapes of life,

the rainbows cast across our eyes by the moment
of sun, the shadows we trail across the grass
running, the opal valleys of the night flesh,
the moments of knowledge ripping into the brain

and aligning everything into a new pattern
as a constellation learned organizes blur
into stars, the blood kinship with all green, hairy
and scaled folk born from the ancient warm sea.

a contractual obligation but as a test of character. According to the first way of looking at things, you keep a promise as long as it works out to your advantage or—in a variant of this prudential morality only marginally superior—because it is desirable for you to establish the reputation of keeping promises. The second view, by contrast, refuses to regard promise-keeping as a matter of social convenience. It takes the position that a "promise-keeper," as K. R. Minogue puts it in *The Liberal Mind*, "has a different character from a promise-breaker, and [that] this character can only be adequately described if we consider it in moral terms."

As products of a liberal culture, we find it difficult to understand the importance other political traditions place on spontaneous cooperation and the value of promises. For the Greeks, the capacity to make promises was almost the definition of a political animal. Feudalism rested on a different but equally powerful conception of the importance of binding oaths. The modern conception, on the other hand—which is profoundly apolitical—is that the capacity for rational choice, rational calculation of utility and personal advantage, is what defines the citizen or the consenting adult, as we say. The modern conception gives little support to the binding promises that underlie the family, especially when we add to the ideology of individual rights the widely accepted belief in the universal obligation to be happy. Liberal ideology not only gives little support to the family, it cannot even make sense of the family, an institution that appears irrational in the sense that its members ideally do not think of their own interests and of the rights designed to protect them, and in the further sense that they promise to sustain each other through a lifetime. What folly!

The whole tendency of modern society, of modern liberalism in particular, consigns family life (by any reasonable definition of family life) to the realm of "nostalgia." Note that I don't blame the instability of family life on feminism. Since feminism is an expression of well-founded grievances, and since the economic and ideological assault on the foundations of family life antedated the emergence of a feminist movement, it would be foolish to blame feminism for the collapse of the family. But it is equally foolish to pretend that feminism is compatible with the family. Feminism is itself an outgrowth of liberalism, among other things, and it shares liberalism's belief in individual rights, contractual relations, and the primacy of justice, all of which make it impossible to understand the nature or the value of spontaneous cooperation.

Spontaneous associations like the family institutionalize (in the form of promises, oaths, covenants) a willingness to accept the consequences of your actions—in the case of the family, the act of procreation. The family implicates the older generation in the life of the younger. It counters the tendency, highly developed in humans and especially among human males, to run away from responsibility for the young. The family is culture's answer to the peculiar structure of human biology, to the absence of sexual periodicity which makes it possible for humans to breed with abandon, and to the prolonged dependence of the human young. The combination of these two biological traits would be fatal to the prospects for reproduction and cultural transmission without institutions designed to tie people to their offspring and to constrain both sexes to their care.

People still cherish the stability of long-term marital and intergenerational commitments, . . . but find little support for them in a capitalist economy or in the prevailing ideology of individual rights.

Because the monogamous ideal institutionalized in the family runs counter to human biology, it is appropriate to see the family as above all a system of constraints. In our enlightened age, the apparent irrationality of these constraints, of the very idea of constraints, provides much of the energy for the effort to work out "alternative lifestyles" (an effort, however, that is not nearly as widespread as our liberators would like to believe, since it conflicts with a stubborn popular realism in these matters). In the face of this revolt against familial constraints, it is important to stress their value, which lies not only in their negative effect, in making it more difficult than it would be otherwise for men to desert their women and children, but in the encouragement these constraints give to a full understanding of freedom itself, one that goes beyond the equation of freedom with unlimited choice and "nonbinding commitments."

Although the institution of the family forced men to become monogamous, a double standard of sexual conduct has always winked at their frequent lapses from this ideal, while punishing women for the same lapses, usually with brutal severity. The double standard was perhaps the most important single influence that eventually brought the family into discredit. The twentieth century, unfortunately, has tried to correct this

blatant injustice by instituting a single standard of sexual license, whereas the proper remedy is a more exacting standard of sexual fidelity and a more exacting definition of the responsibility of parents to their children. A "family policy" designed to shift this responsibility to the state is no solution at all. Nor is it a "radical" solution. It would merely ratify the pattern of bureaucratic individualism that already exists, in which the state takes over the nurturing functions formerly associated with parenthood and leaves people free to enjoy themselves as consumers. Such a solution makes children of us all. The world can do without a "radicalism" that proposes only to carry existing arrangements to their logical conclusion: the absorption of public life by the state and the destruction of intermediate institutions by redefining them as presssure groups or "lifestyle enclaves" (in Robert Bellah's phrase) in which individuals are left free to pursue purely private interests and pleasures.

Since Rubin invokes the sixties in order to support her dubious claim that the radical movements of that decade found their final perfection in feminism, it would be a good idea to remind ourselves that the sixties also saw a revival of the communitarian tradition that has always coexisted with the dominant liberal tradition. The dispute between communitarians and liberals hinges on opposing conceptions of the self. Whereas liberals conceive of the self as essentially unencumbered and free to choose among a wide range of alternatives, communitarians insist that the self is situated in and constituted by tradition, membership in a historically rooted community. Liberals regard tradition as a collection of prejudices that prevent the individual from understanding his own needs. They exalt cosmopolitanism over provincialism, which in their eyes encourages conformity and intolerance. Communitarians, on the other hand, reply that "intolerance flourishes most," in the words of Michael Sandel, "where forms of life are dislocated, roots unsettled, traditions undone."

Communitarians share with the Right an opposition to bureaucracy, but they don't stop with an attack on governmental bureaucracy; they are equally sensitive to the spread of corporate bureaucracy in the misnamed private sector. Indeed they tend to reject the conventional distinction between the public and the private realm, which figures so prominently both in the liberal tradition and in the tradition of economic individualism which now calls itself conservatism (with little warrant). Both liberals and conservatives adhere to the same empty ideal of freedom as privacy; they disagree only about what is truly private. For liberals and "radicals," it is freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of sexual preference that need to be protected, whereas those who call themselves conservatives value economic freedom more highly. The Left understands private life as primarily cultural, the Right as primarily economic. Communitarianism rejects both the left-wing and the right-wing version of the cult of privacy; and the promise of communitarian thought is already suggested by the difficulty of situating it on the conventional political spectrum. It breaks out of the deadlock between welfare liberalism and economic individualism, the opposition of which has informed so much of our politics in the past. Instead of setting up the protection of private judgment as the summit of political virtue, the communitarian point of view shows just how much the individual owes, not to "society"—that abstraction routinely invoked by the Left—but to the concrete associations (in both senses of the word) without which we would be unable to develop any sense of personal identity at all.

Orwellian sloganeering about "alternative lifestyles" and the "new diversity of family types" serves to disguise marital breakup as an exhilarating new form of freedom.

Lichtman and Rubin are right about one thing: this position is "dangerous," a word that comes easily to both these timid souls. It is dangerous, of course, not because it comforts the Right at the expense of the Left but because it gives no comfort to either. It discloses the core of assumptions common to the Left and the Right and thus dissolves the conventional and inconclusive debate between them. It dissolves all the stock answers, throws open the doors and windows, and forces political discussion out into the open air—always a danger for tender plants bred in the greenhouse. □

An Introduction to the Poetry of Dan Pagis

Translated by Stephen Mitchell

Dan Pagis, who died on July 29, 1986, was one of Israel's finest poets. Born in Bukovina in 1930, he spent three years in a Nazi concentration camp during World War II, and in 1946 emigrated to Israel, where he learned Hebrew and eventually became not only a poet but also one of the most accomplished scholars of medieval Hebrew literature.

Pagis' experience in the concentration camp is never far from the heart of his poems. In the words of the Israeli critic Gershon Shaked, these poems are "lucid as crystals, but behind the transparent façade there is always a riddle—the riddle of the survivor."

The following poems were selected and translated by Stephen Mitchell.

Autobiography

I died with the first blow and was buried
among the rocks of the field.
The raven taught my parents
what to do with me.

If my family is famous,
not a little of the credit goes to me.
My brother invented murder,
my parents invented grief,
I invented silence.

Afterward the well-known events took place.
Our inventions were perfected. One thing led to another,
orders were given. There were those who murdered in
their own way,
grieved in their own way.

I won't mention names
out of consideration for the reader,
since at first the details horrify
though finally they're a bore:

you can die once, twice, even seven times,
but you can't die a thousand times.
I can.
My underground cells reach everywhere.

When Cain began to multiply on the face of the earth,
I began to multiply in the belly of the earth,
and my strength has long been greater than his.
His legions desert him and go over to me,
and even this is only half a revenge.

The Souvenir

The town where I was born, Radautz, in the county of Bukovina, threw me out when I was ten. On that day she forgot me, as if I had died, and I forgot her too. We were both satisfied with that.

Forty years later, all at once, she sent me a souvenir. Like an unpleasant aunt whom you're supposed to love just because she is a blood relative. It was a new photograph, her latest winter portrait. A canopied wagon is waiting in the courtyard. The horse, turning its head, gazes affectionately at an elderly man who is busy closing some kind of gate. Ah, it's a funeral. There are just two members left in the Burial Society: the gravedigger and the horse.

But it's a splendid funeral; all around, in the strong wind, thousands of snowflakes are crowding, each one a crystal star with its own particular design. So there is still the same impulse to be special, still the same illusions. Since all snow-stars have just one pattern: six points, a star of David in fact. In a minute they will all start melting and turn into a mass of plain snow. In their midst my elderly town has prepared a grave for me, too.

The Last Ones

I am already quite scarce. For years
I have appeared only here and there
at the edges of this jungle. My graceless body,
well-camouflaged among the reeds, clings
to the damp shadow around it.
Had I been civilized,
I would never have been able to hold out.
I am tired. Only the great fires
still drive me from hiding-place to hiding-place.

And what now? My fame is only in the rumors
that from time to time
and even from hour to hour
I'm shrinking.
But it is certain that at this very moment
someone is tracking me. Cautiously
I prick all my ears and wait. The steps
already rustle the dead leaves. Very close. Here.
Is this it?

Am I it? I am.
There is no time to explain.

In the Laboratory

The data in the glass beaker: a dozen scorpions
of various species—a swarming, compromising
society of egalitarians. Trampling and trampled upon.
Now the experiment: an inquisitive creator blows
the poison gas inside
and immediately
each one is alone in the world,
raised on its tail, stiff, begging the glass wall
for one more moment.
The sting is already superfluous;
the pincers do not understand;
the straw body waits for the final shudder.
Far away, in the dust, the sinister angels
are startled.
It's only an experiment. An experiment. Not a judgment
of poison for poison.

The Readiness

I too, like all the apes in the neighborhood,
grumble from branch to branch:
the past age, which was filled with sun, has passed.
Now it's cold. The nuts are too hard.
The carnivores are getting more and more supple.

This is it, I'm emigrating. Good-bye.

Hey, what's happening,
my tongue's tied in knots,
my shoulders, where are my shoulders,
suddenly I've got stature,
erectness,
suddenly I'm threatened with
what, a high brow!
Bulbs, flickering bulbs.

How good this silence is. I'm almost, almost perfected.
I pick out an attractive suit,
get dressed,
light up a cigarette, slowly,
and sit down with the stopwatch, my only friend,
beside the table, in perfect readiness
for the invention of chess.

The Caveman is Not About to Talk

At time's tail-end, my great-grandchildren's great-
Grandchildren pause,
My skull in hand, and try to calculate
The centuries I ground between my jaws.

And what news of the mammoth will they wrest
From my laconic mouth? I've got time:
I'm not about to talk. They haven't guessed
My profile, even. Fine,

Let them enjoy the bones that I bequeath
In a clump of dust. But if they look beneath:
Here I am,

Still in my cave, complexion like a baby's,
Pink and soft and wonderfully at ease,
Never expelled from Mama's cozy womb.

A Lesson in Observation

Pay close attention: the world that appears now
at zero-point-zero-one degrees
was, as far as is known,
the only one
that burst out of the silence.

It hovered within a blue bubble, fairly large;
and sometimes there were clouds, sea breezes,
sometimes a house, perhaps a kite, children,
and here and there an angel,
or a garden, or a town.
Beneath these were the dead, beneath them
rock, beneath this the fiery prison.

Is that clear? I will repeat: outside there were
clouds, screams, air-to-air missiles,
fire in the fields, memory.
Far beneath these, there were houses, children. What else?

The little dot on the side? It seems to be
the only moon of that world.
It blew itself out even before this.

Spaceship

Soon I will have to begin. All around me
moons have lit up. Have burned.
I am receiving a different light, perhaps from inside,
like a dim streetlamp
in a city park I once heard of.
And I try to imagine: a city. How was a city possible,
for example? What were the prerequisites
for a tree? For the growth of a bench? For a child?

Now to take off.
There is no time left.
I am preparing myself
to hover over the face of the non-abyss
into my body and onwards

Written in Pencil in the Sealed Railway-Car

here in this carload
i am eve
with abel my son
if you see my other son
cain son of man
tell him that i

Bestiary

The Elephant

The elephant, a crusty old general, scarred,
patient, thick-skinned:
on his pillarlike legs stands a whole world
of belly. But
he is so strong
that he conquers himself
through himself: at zero-hour,
with cotton-puff caution,
with love dependent on nothing,
he steps
on sixteen marvelously accurate wristwatches,
ties four on each foot like skates
and glides forth smoothly
out of his elephant fate.

Armchairs

The slowest animals
are the soft large-eared leather armchairs
that wait in the corners of hotel lobbies.
They multiply
in the shade of potted philodendrons.
And though content to live
more slowly than elephants,
they are always just about
to leave on a secret, end-
less safari.

Fossils

They are all unparalleled deniers,
these creatures that go on living forever.
The royal arch-fly frozen in amber
scorns time and with a thousand eyes
takes his nap in the sun.
The arch-shell is an ear that refuses to listen.
The arch-fish renounced even himself
and left just the imprint of his bones in the rock.
The paragon of creation among the fossils
is the Venus of Milo,
she who forever abstains
with arms of air.

Balloons

Balloons at parties fondle one another
between paper serpents
and humbly accept
their limit, the ceiling of the room.
They are ready for any hint,
willing to obey the slightest breeze.
But even the eternally humble must come

to their appointed end.
The soul suddenly leaks out
in a terrified whistle
or explodes
with a single pop.
Afterward the rubber bodies
languish
on the edges of a filthy rug,
and the souls wander
through the in-between world just about
as high as your nose.

Biped

The biped is quite a strange creature:
through his flesh he is related
to the other predatory animals, but he alone
cooks animals, peppers them,
he alone is clothed with animals, shod in animals,
he alone thinks
that he's a stranger in the world, alone protests
against what is decreed, he alone laughs,
and, strangest of all, rides of his own free will
on a motorcycle.
He has four limbs,
two ears,
a hundred hearts.

Sominex

The old radio, its dial showing all the names of the cities, glows again in the dark. I didn't know it was still alive. Well then, I'm still young. The cities, enchanted and distant again, sing for me, give me the news of the years.

The door opens. Who is coming to see me, I'm coming to see me, to take me away. Look, it's hard to talk in one person, let's go back to you-and-me, the way we used to, all right? We'll have to leave in a moment, but there's nothing to be scared of, really there isn't. Before we finish, here is the weather report: it will be cold tomorrow. You're taking a scarf? Take it, take it, if it makes you feel any better.

The body you leave: they'll freeze it for a day or two, then (for an exorbitant fee) they'll wash it, diaper it, make a large baby. Then they'll call your son to identify Daddy among those other babies waiting to go back into Mommy's belly. You're laughing. But it's from the Bible, that amazing verse in the Book of Job: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall return thither." What does it mean, "return thither"? Have you ever thought about that?

And here's an urgent report that we've just received at the news-desk: we are now closing down for the night. Just one more minute before we leave. Look, this calm head, these relaxed, open hands—I never imagined that this moment could be so kind.

Fragments of an Elegy

I've closed your eyes.
I've returned your hands to their place.
The soles of your feet look at me with pity:
I am superfluous.
Now I find my hands.
What shall I do with my hands?
I tie my tied shoelaces,
button my buttoned coat.

The new cemetery is spacious,
entirely future. Far, near, incessantly,
the cantors are singing.

You are quiet, a little embarrassed:
perhaps the separation will be long.
The nails are growing, slowly, sketching a truce.
The mouth cavity is at peace with its maker.

But now the earth-fists
are knocking on the boards of the trap:
let us in,
let us in.

Friday Afternoon

Chaim Grade

On Friday afternoons Alterka's shop is as busy as a country fair. The work is enough to exhaust a lumberjack, but Alterka shows no sign of fatigue. With his blood-stained cleaver he cuts the geese up, while his wife, Lisa, speaks Russian with her more fashionable customers.

My mother sits beside her baskets and wonders: How is it that all these fine ladies need chickens, turkeys, and geese, but no fruit or vegetables?

"Malaga wine grapes, bottles of wine—who will buy? Who will buy?" Mother cries herself hoarse.

The ladies become curious—they know that the woman at the gate sells onions, raw horseradish, and overripe fruit. They walk over to look into her baskets, and burst into laughter: "She calls those frozen apples of hers 'Malaga wine grapes, bottles of wine' . . . "

Mother grows silent, scolding herself inwardly for envying the goose-dealer's wife. She lowers her eyes, as though she has decided to stop watching the goings-on in Lisa's shop, and forces herself to think of other matters:

She really cannot complain about her son. Every Friday, before sunset, he helps her bring her merchandise into the house and then recites the Kiddush for her. Often, when she is returning from the wholesale market, he waits for her and helps her carry her baskets to her stand at the gate. Yet she would have been a thousand times happier if he had remained a yeshiva student, and didn't help her carry her heavy loads. Such work was unworthy of a scholar.

Mother had not gone to bed at all the previous night; she had been busy preparing for the Sabbath. Now she begins to feel drowsy and dozes off—but almost immediately senses that someone has stopped beside her. Softly as a dove, she opens her eyes, to behold Reb Mayer, the egg-peddler.

Reb Mayer delivers fresh eggs to the homes of the wealthy. But Friday afternoon his work is done and, being a widower, he has no reason to rush home. He sees my mother sitting at the gate end, God be thanked, with no customers besieging her. He stops, takes the woven basket off his arm, and sets it down off to the side, so that no one will crush the remaining eggs, those rejected by his customers.

Reb Mayer is a fine, upright man, and Mother rises for him as though he were a scholar.

"What do you charge for this fruit?" he asks, and with two fingers, as carefully as though selecting an esrog for the Sukkoth festival, he takes from one of the baskets a wintry apple with a yellow-wrinkled skin.

Mother says that for this apple there is no charge.

Reb Mayer answers that he won't take it without paying for it, for it is written that "He that hateth gifts shall live." But if she were to accept an egg from him in exchange, then he would be willing to take the apple he is holding in his hand.

Mother peers into the woven egg-basket and tells Reb Mayer that he would be making a poor bargain to take such a wrinkled, last-year's apple in exchange for a fresh egg, radiant as the sun.

Reb Mayer answers that the two cannot be compared: they're entirely different kinds of food. To the All-Highest all things are possible, and He has created in His world a full and varied table, so as to give Jews the opportunity to pronounce many different blessings.

Reb Mayer wipes the apple with care, and with a glazed look pronounces the blessing " . . . Creator of the fruit of the tree." Mother, her hands folded over her apron, devoutly responds "Amen"—and blushes to the roots of her hair under her wig: Alterka's small eyes, she sees, have become moist and shiny, and over Lisa's round plump face has spread a smile. One might think that the goose-dealer and his wife are too busy with customers even to blow their noses, yet somehow they find the time to wink at each other about the widow and the widower who stand chatting amicably at the gate.

Reb Mayer brings her luck; three housewives stop at her stand. But Mother—who, with her hand propped under her chin and a pious expression on her face, is now ready to listen to words of Torah, though it is still only mid-afternoon this Friday—is thrown into confusion by these newly arrived customers. How can she so abruptly turn away from Reb Mayer just as he is speaking of Torah? Reb Mayer, however, is not at all offended; on the contrary, he addresses one of the women, an inveterate haggler:

"If Vella asks for ten groschen for a bunch of onions,

Prominent among Chaim Grade's works are The Yeshiva *and* Rabbis and Wives. *He is one of the greatest Yiddish storytellers.*

you must not argue with her. Vella will not cheat you."

The woman seems awed by this man and pays the full ten groschen. Now Reb Mayer, more sure of himself, turns to the second customer:

"How many Antonovkas do you want, a kilo?"

Deftly, like an experienced shopkeeper, he piles the apples into a paper bag and gives the bag to my mother to be weighed. In her confusion, Mother gives the woman too much, which upsets Reb Mayer:

"You're not obligated to do that, neither according to the law nor for the sake of justice."

Mother does not even hear what the third housewife wants. She stands aside, as though she is the stranger and watches Reb Mayer attend to the customer.

At that very moment there appears at the other end of the street, Reb Nossen-Nota, the synagogue Gabbai. He has just emerged, freshly bathed and combed, from the mikvah, and is thinking to himself how little pleasure there was in dealing with the shopkeepers just before candle-lighting time: if they have no fear of the sin of desecrating the Sabbath, will they be awed by a trustee? But there was no help for it, one had to be ready to sacrifice himself, if need be, to make them close their shops.

Passing by a grocery, Reb Nossen-Nota observes that the window is shuttered and the door three-quarters closed. "Hatzkel the grocer attends my beth midrash," muses the Gabbai. "On Festivals, he's more eager than anyone to be called up to the Torah. On the High Holidays he purchases the honor of opening the Holy Ark. And yet, with all this piety, he still keeps his store just a little bit open." Reb Nossen-Nota pokes his head through the door—and stands frozen with shock and amazement.

The shop is packed with customers, yet such quiet reigns within that one might hear a feather drop. Evidently the customers know that they must be careful not to attract the attention of the "Sabbath Guardians." Hatzkel himself is so absorbed in weighing and measuring and counting money that he does not notice the Gabbai's long, curled beard protruding into the open crack of the shop-door. Reb Nossen-Nota, seething inwardly, waits to observe the grocer's expression once he sees him, the Gabbai, standing there.

And at last the long curled beard in the doorway does catch the shopkeeper's eye.

"Reb Hatzkel," roars the Gabbai, "what is the meaning of this?"

The preoccupied shopkeeper, showing no sign of embarrassment, says simply, "I'll be closing up right away."

"Turn the customers out!" orders Reb Nossen-Nota.

"This very minute," agrees Hatzkel. He runs out from behind the counter, and sees women standing outside who want to enter the store but cannot—the Sabbath Guardian bars their way. The shopkeeper hastily flings the door open, and the Gabbai all but tumbles head over heels as the throng behind him surges in.

"And you," rants Reb Nossen-Nota, beside himself with rage, "you shut your eyes so piously and sway so fervently when you pray!"

Hatzkel closes his eyes, as though indeed in prayer, and leans angrily forward toward the Gabbai.

"Do you pay my debts? Do you pay my taxes?"

"You pay your debts, you pay your taxes," comes the acid retort, "but you don't pay the pledges for charity you announce in the synagogue."

A charge that he used false weights and cheated his customers would not outrage Hatzkel so much as this accusation of failing to pay the pledge he had made for the honor of opening the Ark. He shakes his hands as though scalded and screeches, his eyes still closed:

"Get out of my shop!"

In the face of such impudence Reb Nossen-Nota is left speechless. He does not even try to resist when the shopkeeper, without further ado, shoves him out of the store and slams the door behind him.

"It's easy for him to talk," Hatzkel harangues the housewives before him. "He's got a hardware store, so he can afford to close early. Who needs locks or bars on Friday afternoon just before candle-lighting? But let him just try to keep a grocery and sell retail. Here it is, almost Sukkoth. The shop has to be closed for the first two days of the holiday, the day after that is Sabbath, and then comes Sunday—not to mention all the gentile holidays. Where is the Gabbai's sense of justice, I ask you? Where is his human decency, will you tell me?"

"Reb Hatzkel," interrupts one of the women, "I have no time. My fish will be burnt."

Once more the grocer begins to weigh, measure, and take money—hurriedly, since, after all, he does not want to be late to the synagogue for the Welcoming of the Sabbath.

What can one think, what can one say?" reflects the Gabbai. If Hatzkel speaks to him in such a fashion, how will others speak? He passes by several shops without even deigning to look inside. "May my sins too fall on their heads," he thinks. But as he approaches our courtyard, his self-confidence returns: this is his courtyard; he is the landlord, and his tenants will not dare to defy him.

All this boldness vanishes, however, when he sees the

horde of customers in Alterka's shop. Every time he, Reb Nossen-Nota, asks Alterka for the rent, the goose-dealer tells him: "Come back tomorrow." Reb Nossen-Nota is afraid to insist too strongly, for Alterka, a man who has shown himself capable of beating up a slaughterer, would be all the less likely to stand on ceremony with him. So now he, the landlord and Gabbai, speaks softly:

"It's time to close up shop."

Alterka does not answer; he pretends not to have heard.

The Gabbai speaks again: "Time to begin the Sabbath."

Lisa, chatting away in Russian with her better-heeled customers, stops just long enough to give her husband a look. Alterka's face turns blue, like a plucked, half-frozen turkey, and he emits a murderous growl:

"Come back tomorrow."

The Gabbai does not dare say another word. "I'd be risking my life," he thinks, and walks away. He is about to head straight for the beth midrash, when he catches sight of the fruit-seller still standing at the gate, deep in conversation with the egg-peddler.

"My son has strayed into other paths," Mother is complaining to Reb Mayer, "but he does keep the commandment 'Honor thy mother.'"

"Honoring one's mother is a very great merit," pronounces Reb Mayer. "My daughters have all married very well. They plead with me: 'Father, why should you keep on peddling? Come stay with us.' But I don't want to have to inspect their pots and pans to see whether they observe kashruth."

"It's best to visit children just on holidays," says Mother. "'Better a straw husband than golden children.'"

"So this is the kind of pious woman you are?" an angry voice breaks in. It is on Mother that the Gabbai now vents all his pent-up rage. "And here I've been charging her next to nothing for her space at the gate. I said to myself. 'She's a poor widow, a religious woman, she'll observe the Sabbath.' On people like you, it's forbidden to take pity."

"But there's still ten minutes to candle-lighting time," protests Mother, bewildered.

She does not know where to hide for shame—that she should need to be reminded of the Sabbath's beginning! And even worse, in Reb Mayer's hearing. It is just at this moment that I appear on the scene. She gives me a deeply forlorn and guilty look, as though I have caught her committing the most heinous transgression. Reb Mayer, for his part, does not find it to his taste to stand and listen to the Gabbai's accusations, and he likes even less my staring at him.... He vanishes in the wink of an eye. Mother hurriedly takes her stand apart.

"Carry the baskets into the house," she tells me.

The Gabbai now draws himself up, hands behind his back, like a general surveying troops who have been derelict in their duty, and shouts at the top of his voice:

"I closed my hardware store two hours ago, and you can't tear yourself away from your rotten apples. No wonder your son grew up to be such a brazen libertine. I see you wear both a wig and a kerchief—that's probably your way of atoning before the Almighty because this jewel of yours walks around bareheaded, without a hat."

"Get out of here!" I fall upon him. "Your so-called piety is worthless before God! You flay the skin off your poor tenants' backs!"

"I'll hack off your hands and feet and put you in chains!" screams Reb Nossen-Nota. "You think I don't know you write articles in the newspapers against the landlords? You rabble-rouser! I'll see you rot in jail yet!"

"Bloodsucker!" I fire back.

The Gabbai stands open-mouthed: This ill-begotten brat of this beggar-woman who sits at his gate, lives in one of his apartments—this scum dares to speak this way to him, the landlord of the entire courtyard? No, he simply cannot believe his ears.

By now a crowd of passers-by has collected around us. Alterka deserts his turkeys and all his fashionable customers and comes running, breathless. He swells with delight to hear me berate the landlord, the Sabbath Guardian—the ally of his, Alterka's, enemies, the ritual slaughterers. But my mother clasps me to her with trembling hands; I can hear the feverish beating of her heart. Overcome with grief and agitation, she can barely speak:

"My child, don't shorten your life with such a sin—after all, he is an old man."

"I a bloodsucker?" The Gabbai in high dudgeon harangues the staring passers-by around him. "These people live in my house for years without paying a penny. If I say a word, they threaten to have the newspaper write about me. If I weren't a Sabbath observer, they'd obey me like puppy dogs. But they know that, out of fear of desecrating the Name of God, I don't want people wagging their tongues against pious Jews—so they take a ride on my back."

Alterka the goose-dealer, rubbing his hands with glee, baits the Gabbai:

"You'd better get away. He might really beat you up. You're playing with fire!"

"With such an atheist," the Gabbai says fearfully to himself, "who can tell! And to think this is someone I used to allow through the door of my beth midrash! One ought to scorch with fire the place where he used to sit."

But Reb Nossen-Nota is destined to face terror yet again this day. As he turns to walk down the street, he suddenly sees women lugging baskets in their hands and running in panic, like chickens with outspread wings. The Gabbai, more dead than alive, looks around desperately.

The peddlers who have no permanent stands are unable to obtain legal permits to do business. They stand in the streets with their wares, always keeping an eye out for policemen. But the police, in their dark blue uniforms, have a way of coming upon them stealthily. Abruptly, with no warning, one woman catches sight of a gleaming black boot kicking her basket. The merchandise scatters into the gutter, and the policeman hisses:

"Patent masz?"—"Do you have a permit?"

The other peddlers begin to run. But rows of policemen close off the street on all sides and the women fall into their clutches.

The street is filled with tumult and weeping. The peddlers' wares are scattered and roll on the pavement, and the women are taken to the station-house.

The Gabbai, recovering from his needless fright, draws his own moral from the incident:

"Had the women gone home at the right time, well before sunset, they would have avoided this punishment from Heaven and wouldn't be in jail at candle-lighting time."

And Reb Nossen-Nota enters the well-lit beth midrash for the Welcoming of the Sabbath.

Mother is one of the lucky ones: she does business at the gate of the courtyard, and therefore has a permit. As the arrested women are led past her, her heart is torn with pain. She has not yet recovered from her earlier humiliation, and her face burns with shame. She looks down at the ground and her tears flow as though the cobblestones were her Sabbath candles. □

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A Vision of Finitude: David Hartman's "A Living Covenant"

Rabbi Daniel Landes

The only halfhearted claim made in David Hartman's passion ately argued *A Living Covenant* is that it is not a political manifesto, but rather a theological treatise. It is both—and on both counts Hartman's work is indeed an important contribution.

Hartman's attempt to develop a seriously modern and authentically Jewish theology is a significant step in establishing a common discourse between Jews. He desires to move Torah into the center of Jewish and especially Israeli life. Todo so, he projects an understanding of Torah that will be a challenge to the ultra-Orthodox as well as the religious Zionists, the messianists as well as those secular Jews interested in thinking about the ground of their beliefs.

Hartman's central focus is on Jewish Law, or Halachah. By exploring the underlying meaning of Halachah, Hartman seeks to create a philosophy of Judaism that expresses some important aspects of modernity—an emphasis on human adequacy and the autonomous moral spirit, a commitment to the ethical, a universalistic world view that expresses itself in pluralism, and a strong emphasis on a this-worldly focus as consistent with religious commitment.

Halachah has had a difficult time of it in modern Jewish thought: Reform theologians dismissed it as evolutionarily primitive; Martin Buber rejected it as rigidly formalistic and hence not capable of being a true response; and Zionistic thinkers such as Gershon Scholem saw it as a deferred living, and, therefore, as an obstacle to be overcome in order to achieve national liberation. Some have killed it with kindness: Herman Cohen idealized it into a universal notion of ethics, Franz Rosenzweig froze it into a crystallized point of perfection and eternity far from the rush of real life, and Mordecai Kaplan delegalized it, thereby trivializing it into a set of folkways.

Even those who lived carefully by its dictates did not refrain from missing or abusing its integrity. Many, especially defenders of the law, *pilpulized* it into a scholastic argument for the received wisdom or practice of their respective community; the Satman Rav demonized it into a sharp weapon of hate against any supporters, fellow travelers, or beneficiaries of the Zionists; Rav Kook spiritualized it into a mystic rite of personal, societal and national transformation; and Yeshayahu Leibowitz objectified it into a servant's blind service to his master.

Rabbi Joseph B. Solovetchik, Hartman's teacher, has taken it seriously. His major lifework has been the in-depth study of Halachah on its own terms, to sketch major contours of its thought processes, and to reveal the mind-set of the Halachic master and the man of faith. His thought confronted an American Jewish community in danger of being overwhelmed by modernity. The problem, according to the Rav (as he is known in the Orthodox community), was not the claims of conflicting truths, but, rather, that a thoroughly secular modernism seemed to render religion irrelevant. At best, Judaism was reduced to a pleasant retreat where one fled from the conflicts of "real life" to achieve peace of mind. The Rav rejected this emasculation of Judaism. To be properly understood, observed, and experienced, Torah demanded man's full intellectual creativity, effort of will, and emotional sensitivity. The Rav's unstated proposition, derived from the mystical formulation of his ancestor, Hayim of Volozhin (1749–1821), is that the Torah is intimately connected to divinity and constitutes the foundation of the universe, for which the latter was created and is currently maintained. For the Rav, Torah has ultimate ontological significance—that is, it is the very basis of existence.

Hartman's problem with the nature of traditional theology, especially as interpreted by the Rav, is that it does not sufficiently stress human adequacy, and that it often seems to promote withdrawal and self-defeat. While Hartman admits that the Rav also has the Halachic observer surging forth to victory at a subsequent point, he feels that the anti-heroic mode is dominant in the dialectic. Indeed, Hartman seems to want to banish self-defeat as a major religious category. He understands the Rav's dialectic to be a guard against hubris. Hartman believes this protection to be unnecessary because the Halachic Jew's religious life is "permeated by creatureliness and the demand of the mitzvot," (p. 88) both of which combine to produce the virtue of humility.

Moreover, Hartman's real concern seems to be that the arena for moral heroism is no longer only the home, the marketplace, and the study hall. It has expanded to encompass the national community. Hartman's fear is that the religious personality which is suspicious of human adequacy will not be able to build and maintain the State. Rabbi Solovetchik's Halachic man reconciles the element of tradition that favors man's dignity and covenantal mutuality with God and that which concentrates on his resignation before God's will by moving "along a zig-zag line; progress frequently superseded by retrogression; closeness to God, by the dark night of separation." (p. 87) Hartman counters that:

> The problem with this solution is that it is implausible when compared with our experience. Does Solovetchik's redemptive cathartic experience teach us always to withdraw from an enemy who still

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harbors in his heart thoughts of destruction? As he admits, nothing guarantees that in the act of recoil and in self-defeat one will also move forward to new victories. In reality, the act of self-defeat or self limitation may be an invitation to further destructive action on the part of one's enemy. (p. 87)

But it is specifically here that self-defeat must be learned. For self-defeat is not an ultimate state and the inability to employ it could court real and absolute defeat. The victory-minded personality gets caught in the trap of seeing every recoil as a prelude to disaster: not to win is to lose. That was the mind-set that froze Israel in Lebanon. They simply could not leave without the victory—itself often an undefinable category—they originally sought. And on the micro level, the inability to move back is what puts incredible strains upon relationships and manufactures heart attacks in the workplace.

For David Hartman, the world is not big enough for the victory-minded man and for God's active direct presence. Hartman is committed to both the traditional Halachic practice and to a God who at once transcends the world as its Creator, and is immanent as the Revealer of the Law within the mitzvah. But Jewish prayer in its paradigmatic state, the Tefillah or silent Devotion, is a prayer or petition of request for a series of interventions by God on behalf of man's biological, familial, social, economic, and political welfare. Hartman believes that if God responds to man's petitional prayers, then human beings will be pictured as being incapable of tending to their own needs. Hartman rejects older religious visions of human beings being wholly dependent on God, and wants to play down aspects of religion that seem to emphasize human inadequacy before the Infinite. A bit of fancy reinterpretation is needed to make this practice fit within his theology.

Hartman's notion of petitional prayer is the expression of intimacy between two lovers, Israel and God. The request of the prayer is transformed into a confession of vulnerability:

> When you discuss your needs in a love relationship, you do not necessarily expect your beloved to solve your problems. Reassurance and comfort may be gained simply through knowing that your beloved listens to you in your anguish and that you are not alone in your plight. I understand petitional prayer as expressing the need of covenantal lovers of God to share their total human situation with God. (p. 164)

The daily service epitomizes the dialogue that takes place. The worshiper (read lover) goes from the *Shema*, the reliving of the Sinai theophany, in which the whole human is commanded, to the *Tefillah* where he presents his bare self to the covenantal God. Thus prayer, which is described in the Talmud as "supplication for mercy," is an affirmation of the human—both that he is adequate to act, and that all of his personal concerns are worthy and not trivial. The communal dimension of prayer is shown by the decision to institute a standard liturgy and service on the order of the daily sacrifices. The alternate version of the Talmud that

Halachah has had a difficult time of it in modern Jewish thought.

"prayers were instituted by the patriarchs" indicates the naturalness of prayer and that each individual must offer his own prayer. Indeed, for Hartman, the free spontaneous prayer which he identifies with *Tefillat Nedavah* (a "gift" or free-will offering) is the paradigm of prayer. Hartman claims to follow "in the spirit of Maimonides," the Guide who maintained that meditative worship of God—intoxicated worship—is the highest level of prayer, surpassing the uttering of requests and the offering of sacrifices. Now, however, the highest content of prayer becomes the "dignity of the individual.... Rather than self-negation and self-effacement, prayer reflects the worshiper's confident mood of being fully accepted by God as a total person." (p. 179)

I suspect that Hartman's solution has made prayer a little too easy, and has eliminated the real struggle that most serious religious people face in approaching God's presence. In Hartman's account, the worshiper is essentially engaged in a monologue in celebration of his self and in near obsessive discussion of his own needs. The monologue needs to be balanced with some concern for the Other and some critical self-judgment, but both the prayer categories of praise and of self-judgment are ignored by Hartman.

Hartman's emphasis on human adequacy bears real fruit in his discussion on Rabbinic responses to their own personal suffering. The rabbis experienced God's presence in their lives in three ways: as Creator and continual sustainer of physical existence; as the Lord of History who in liberating Israel from Egypt created a nation and who continues to provide for them; and through the Torah which is God's direct and personal will.

The Rabbinic Jew, therefore, living with this three-part sense of God's will and presence, is vulnerable to tragedy, experiencing it as alienation and estrangement from God. Hartman correctly sees such unbearable emotions for the believer neither as a psychological aberration nor as an unsophisticated supernaturalism, but as inherent to the condition of one whose life-defining relationships have gone suddenly awry. The problem for the believer is not one of theoretical philosophic theology trying to reconcile God's just lordship over nature with the presence of horrendous and meaningless suffering. The crisis, rather, is one of covenantal anthropology: "How do we respond to events that can call into question our whole identity as God's relational partners?" (p. 187)

Central to formulating a response will be the use of certain concepts which are not to be taken as revealing the *why* of suffering and evil, but rather that the *what* of suffering's nature is neither senseless nor signals a rupture with God.

Hartman carefully delineates two strands of Rabbinic interpretation regarding the use of reward and punishment as an explanation of suffering. The first follows the plain meaning of the Bible that God's justice takes place within this world. The weakness of this approach is that it generally did not succeed in motivating people to proper behavior. Hartman observes that both the Bible and Rabbinic literature "at-

test that Jews *failed* to find direct, stable and predictable connections between their behavior ... and subsequent events." (pp. 184-5) The strength of this approach lies in the worldly promise of joy, that reward will take place in the here and now: "To give up anticipation of reward in this world for mitzvot could destroy the vitality of the sense of personal relationships with God that animates covenantal religious life." (p. 194) One can roll with the punches if there is also the promise of the warm embrace.

Hartman ... wants to play down aspects of religion that seem to emphasize human inadequacy.

The diametrically opposed Rabbinic view is that which denies any reward in this world. This has been taken to imply that ultimate reward and punishment are in the next world; the wicked are rewarded in this world so that they might not be rewarded in the next; the righteous are punished in this world rather than in the next. This image affirms that the world does not appear just, but that there is an order behind it. Mitzvot are the key to emerging from the absurdity of perceived life to the sublimity of true existence. As such, the Rabbis offered a corollary that despite the flux of this world, which renders everything uncertain, the ability to perform mitzvot—given reasonable precautions—is always protected.

Both views assume a personal God and a world of pain and suffering. They certainly differ on their affirmation of this world as a worthy place to be. Nonetheless: "All that the Talmud demands of its readers is that they find some approach that will enable them to maintain their commitment to the mitzvot in the world as they experience it. There is even nothing to prevent the same person from alternating between the different approaches at different moments in his or her life." (p. 194)

With this as a background, Hartman brilliantly applies the lover model of the believer's relationship with God to the problem of suffering. The exemplar is Rabbi Akiva who brought *The Song of Songs* into the canon by declaring it to be the Holy of Holies of the Bible in its physical and romantic imagery of the love between Israel and God. Akiva as an observer mediated between the two classic formulations of reward and punishment—affirming instances of joy as a properly deserved reward in this world, and interpreting suffering as a prophylactic for the next world. In his own situation, he took a third path. When he was martyred he recited the *Shema* (confession of God's unity) joyfully, explaining:

> All my life I have read this verse: 'And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might' (Deut. 6:5—the second verse of the *Shema*), I loved Him with all my heart and I loved Him with all my wealth (i.e., might), but I was never called upon to face the ordeal of 'with all my soul' (i.e., at the cost of my life). Now that I experience 'with all my soul,' and the time for reading the *Shema* has arrived, and I have not thrust it aside, therefore I am reciting the *Shema* with joy. (JT Sotah 5:5)

Hartman interprets this event as demonstrating a Rabbinic ability to create from even agonizing events an opportunity to love God in a special manner. Akiva is unconcerned with the notion of his suffering benefitting him. All he knows is that now he can love God unconditionally. This is a situation certainly not to be sought, but once brought about to be transformed into a mitzvah. A preceding phrase in the Talmud explains that "the time arrived for reading the *Shema* and he began to recite it." Philosopher Eliezer Berkovit's reading here is germane to Hartman's argument: The recital of the *Shema* was not motivated by martyrdom. It was at the moment in which the morning *Shema* is normally recited. Akiva was able to translate the performance of this daily routinized ritual into a unique fulfillment of loving God.

Suffering thus is a possible opportunity to deepen one's love of God. Hartman is quick to point out, however, that "chastenings of love" are not described in the Talmud as a propositional judgment nor are sufferers urged to accept "them or their rewards." (Berkahot 5b) "Rather, they are asked whether such a conception can enhance their religious appreciation of God." (p. 198) The Talmudic citations, nonetheless, reveal that given a chance the rabbis would rather be freed from this incarceration of suffering, than derive any spiritual benefit.

The believer often experiences suffering as deserved punishment. Hartman's interpretation of the Rabbinic response that in such cases "one should examine his conduct" (Berakhot 5a) is neither a theodicy excusing God, nor even a guilty verdict meant to pin, much less crush, the sufferer. At the same time, there is no attempt to ease the conscience or to glide over the notion of sin. "One should examine misconduct" is rather meant as an affirmative "catalyst for active moral renewal."

The individual's confrontation with a confusing and apparently unjust world is paralleled on the national level by the Jewish people's degraded status among the Gentiles. The traditional Jewish self-perception is that of an elected chosen people. The reality is that Jews are persecuted or, worse, ignored. For two thousand years, Jews as a people did not play a world role or occupy a culturally significant position. Hartman's notion is that while Judaism continued to proclaim an eventual triumph of its message and of its community in the eschatological future, it forged a policy of seeking partial victories in the unredeemed present. His historical paradigm is the return of Ezra and Nehemiah to Zion after the Babylonian Exile. This was not the end-of-days event promised in Jeremiah 31 or Ezekial 36 in which God, by overcoming sin within man, will, in fact, create a new man with whom a new covenant shall be written.

The return of Ezra and Nehemiah was not accompanied by eschatological victory nor by a radical change in human behavior. Citing these conditions they declare that *u-ve-khol zot* "yet despite all this we are making an agreement in writing, sealed by our leaders, our Levites, our priests." (Nehemiah 10:1) For these Jews, redemption is not an all or nothing proposition. They renew the existing covenant, and build a new commonwealth in this imperfect world. The Talmud relates a story based on Nehemiah about the quest for total victory over

all passional human instincts, as they are the sources of sin. But this impossible quest to eliminate the evil inclination in humans would by definition require the destruction of life itself, which is animated by both good and evil inclinations.

Hartman detects the changed and limited notion of victory in both Talmudic God-talk and within the Halachah. God's might and awesomeness are understood now to be manifested in divine self-control and restraint from full participation in history. The Rabbinic understanding of God's providential hand is in directing from afar and incognito what looks like the caprices of human politics and economy, as in the Esther story.

Halachah replicates this Godly restraint and self-control within human action. Human beings emerge from their real political powerlessness in Exile (*galut*) by exerting control over dimensions of their personal and communal lives through Halachah. Consequently, they achieve an actual, albeit partial, victory over the larger historical catastrophe. Thus, in a classic example, God explains why he favors Israel: they say grace over a minuscule meal of only an olive or an egg even though the command to bless God is only if one eats and is "satisfied." Israel chooses to be satisfied with little and to bless God for it. Finally this acceptance of God during a time when providence is hidden—seen within the recovenanting in the Esther story after the destruction of Haman and his plan—is considered by the Talmud to be superior to the original forced covenant at Sinai when God in His full majesty dominated the people. In Hartman's words: "What began at Sinai as an externally imposed system of norms had become a successful internalization of those norms when Purim was identified as the celebration of the free acceptance of the Torah" (p. 219) within an unredeemed world where danger always lurks.

The Jew, then, has always lived in two worlds: this world, in which divine providence is hidden and man lives by the constraints of natural and social reality, and the eschatological redemption that is just around the corner, in which God's presence will be revealed and His power unleashed. This dual consciousness is inherently unstable resulting in periodic outbreaks of dangerous messianic frenzy. Clearly Hartman is worried about *Gush Emunim*, and not only memories of other messianic movements.

The rest of Hartman's work is dedicated to resolving the gap between the two worlds, and rendering a one-world theology. His starting point is to contrast "two competing covenantal paradigms" with regard to how they view the action of divine providence within history. The traditional model is Exodus, which is an expression of full unilateral divine power as grace. In this view, God works freely, spontaneously and miraculously. Man's goal is to gain the merit of this supernatural intervention. Thus, prayer in a time of crisis is a call to rely only on God. The Exodus model presumes the messianic era to lead to a total transformation of human nature in which sin will be vanquished.

Hartman posits an affirmation and celebration of finitude.

The second paradigm for understanding God's providence within history is Sinai, which manifests both divine self-limitation and serious human responsibility. As in creation, Maimonides has taught, all subsequent orderly processes of nature have been set into motion and are therefore manifestations of His will. So too is Torah the vehicle of God's will; God is within Israel through the Torah. This extension of Maimonides' thought from the natural to the value creating world emphasizes human adequacy and autonomy. It is human decision making through the Torah that directs men's actions. Indeed, for Maimonides the principle of "all is in the hands of heaven except the fear of heaven" is expanded to the entire gamut of human responsibility and adequacy. The purpose of prayer in crisis for Maimonides, therefore, is to motivate an assessment of and change in one's moral behavior.

Maimonides' messianic hope is also of this "one-world" type. He envisions an ideal political kingdom, but one which is defined as a socio-political reality where moral responsibility would be fulfilled. The messianic period will commence when subjugation by the nations is eliminated. Messianism is hence a covenantal category wishing to fulfill morality and not to radically transform history and nature. The messianic era will still have evil, but it will provide a full recognition of human adequacy and autonomy. The messianic period is the culmination or peak of human responsibility and action and not a resolution or end of this difficult world. Maimonidean messianism, according to Hartman, is thus an ethical ideal that all can work towards with fervor as opposed to an apocalyptic hurdle that one must leap across with frenzy.

Hartman's emphasis on a Jewish one-world mind-set leads him to a radical dismembering of doctrine. He rejects all categories of resolution and redemption as being other-worldly and preventing man from taking this world seriously: "In this view of covenantal faith, which is essentially a protest against the world as presently constituted, human beings are strangers wandering in an unredeemed world that awaits the realization of the eschatological vision." (p. 258) The desire for redemption, according to Hartman, is actually a pantheistic quest for immortality based on the bifurcation of man into body—this-worldly materiality that will fade—and soul—the Godly essence implanted into man.

Hartman posits instead an affirmation and celebration of finitude. Man's finitude is intrinsic to his definition as a unified being created by God. This finite creation is called by God, "very good" (Genesis I:31). Thus we are dignified human beings and we do not need immortality and resurrection to confer that status upon us. Moreover the acceptance of our finitude bestows a blessing of humility—we know that we shall perish and therefore our judgments will be softened and our religious goals will become less rigid and overreaching. The concept of eternity in telling us that we are separate from our bodies, encourages fanaticism and extreme actions. Finitude, on the other hand, teaches that "we are not the absolute masters of nature," but nonetheless calls us to responsibility. Eternity encourages laxness in an undue reliance upon God within and beyond history. Finite man has sanctity because of his potential for sacred and moral action.

Finite man meets God in two modes. He meets God as the Creator within an aesthetic awe of the universe.

This awe leads to the realization that God in His infinity lies outside of mere relation to man: "In the aesthetic, cosmic dimension of religious experience, being is celebrated not only from the perspective of the interest of our covenantal community, but also simply for its own sake. Our response in that dimension is awe and rapturous love for the divine artist ... It can be accepted that there is a divine drama independent of ourselves and not subject to our noblest aspirations for history." (pp. 266-267) This contemplative love for God is joined by the quite different covenantal love. Here man meets God as the Voice at Sinai and relates to God in a sense of mutuality through the performance of the mitzvot. Man does not, however, meet the personal God who intervenes within nature or history. That is because He is not there to be met. In nature God has manifested "His power in the world through *impersonal* patterns of order"; in history, through the command of mitzvot. Exodus is both a "founding memory" in which Israel was unilaterally saved by God and imbued with a sense of trust to emerge independent and adequate, ready for the challenge of the mitzvah; and a permanent reminder that the mitzvah is not an inward spiritual category, but rather the creation of a social reality.

The model of relation between Israel and God that Hartman evokes is one of a mature love in which neither partner looks to the other for redemption from failure and problems. Nonetheless, the history of shared experiences of joy and suffering along with care and sensitivity is a source of acceptance and love. Conversely, eliminating God from direct involvement in history gives Israel worth and freedom from "the sense that at any moment one can be judged guilty and severely punished." Finally, "the eternal covenant invites all who are prepared to live by the mitzvot to see their own history and religious reality with the same potential vitality as any other period in Jewish history." (p. 277)

That brings us back to Hartman's deepest passion: Israel. Hartman sees its religious significance not in supernatural, but rather in natural terms. Israel allows the Jewish people to live a wider life and therefore widen the scope of covenantal Halachic action. Therefore, secular Zionism's quest for normalcy is perceived not as a revolt against Torah, but rather as a necessary condition for living this fuller life before God. Zionist fulfillment in Israel also puts a new set of demands on our historical agenda:

> The Zionist quest for normalcy should free the Jewish people of any myth about the unique moral and spiritual powers of the Jewish soul. In taking upon ourselves responsibility for a total society, we must allow ourselves to be judged by the same standards as we have judged others. The Torah challenges us to become a holy people. It does not tell us that we are immune from the moral weaknesses and failures that affect every human being. The Jewish nation is not free from the same potential corruptions that affect any human community that has taken upon itself the bold challenge of living with power. Our newly gained sense of belonging and power enables us to look critically and honestly both at ourselves and at the Halachic tradition without the apologetic stance so characteristic of a community that saw itself as a persecuted and vulnerable minority. A community that feels dignified and secure in its identity and place in the world can allow itself the mature activity of honest critical self-appraisal. (pp. 296-297)

David Hartman's work is a compelling argument for a this-worldly Halachic Judaism and the creation of an open, universalistic and pluralistic Jewish life in Israel. It is especially moving in its evocation of a new covenantal anthropology—the autonomous individual who defines his relation to God through the act of the mitzvah and in the love of the Creator within the committed community. To accomplish all this, Hartman jettisons notions of transcendence, including immortality and resurrection by God's redemptive presence in history, reward and punishment, the mission of Israel among others. I believe that this is a crucial mistake on his part.

Hartman assumes that transcendence's major function is escapist. There is certainly an element of that latent within. But transcendence has also provided comfort for those in dire straits. It represents a trust in the Creator, that his Mercy can extend beyond the confines of this limited world. Somehow it is hard to imagine Jews facing death uttering a rewritten *Ani Maamin* that affirms in perfect faith "that this is the only world and that we should rejoice in our finitude."

In a more normative sense, eternity and resurrection affirm the worth of this world and action within it. For one only merits a next life if one has excelled in the challenges and duties demanded of him in this one. Thus, one cannot allow himself to become so absorbed in either suffering and joy or material gain and loss, that one forgets what is truly lasting in this world—moral and sacred deeds.

Hartman implies that man cannot stand with full dignity as long as he is dependent upon the transcendent potentiality of his life. Man is only dignified if conscious of his finitude. But the notion of eternity and resurrection are not meant to overcome life. It is death that overcomes life and subjects it to undignified inertness. Eternity is set against death (not life) and proclaims that it will not be the final victor. Resurrection proclaims the sweetness of life—body and soul together—and its ultimate victory.

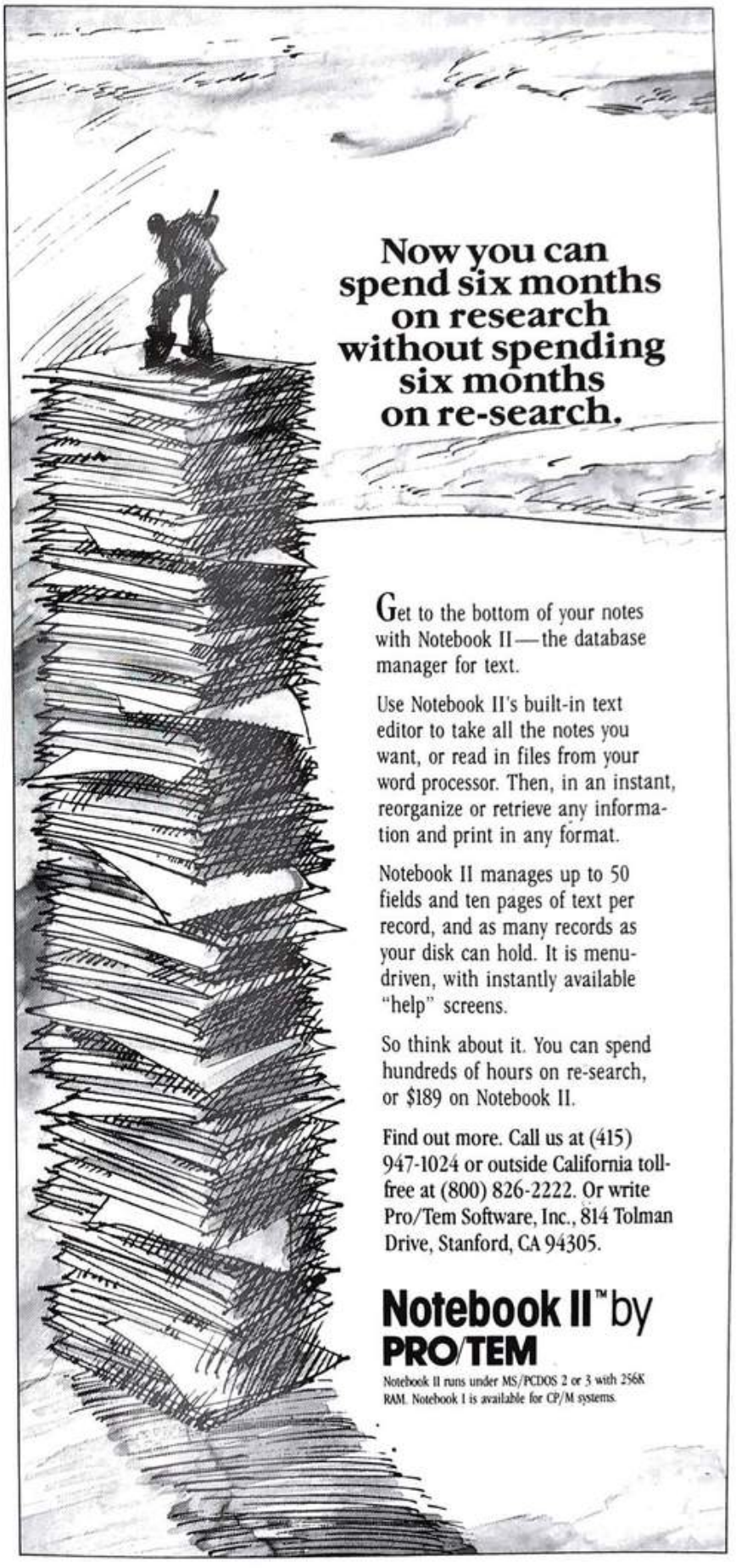
Hartman's discussion of God seems to contain an unusual tension. He labors mightily to demonstrate His presence within the human's performance of the mitzvot and within the ordered patterns of causality. Love of God is either covenantal or contemplative. But by restricting God from responding to an individual or to the nation, Hartman does to God what he would never do to another: define His personality, eliminate His adequacy and autonomy, and prevent Him from relating. In flip-flopping from hidden transcendence (God's) to immanence (man's), Hartman seems to ask that we oscillate between pantheism and humanism. As theology and as a religious stance, it is schizophrenic and not satisfying. But what of his claim that God's involvement in history would crush human autonomy? This is a red herring. Responsible Jews know that man must act fully. The *Chafetz Chayim* once stated that everything in the world has a purpose. His student asked what was the purpose of atheism. The Master replied: "that when one is in need, that you should not pass him by believing that God

will take care of him." This "atheistic" quality of sole responsibility must accompany all moral acts. Nonetheless, we know that relationships are not possible if one prevents another from acting. God's selective and personal involvement in history and in our lives can neither be prevented nor denied by His covenantal partner.

Curiously lacking from this work is any sustained or even casual discussion of the meaning of Israel's election. I am not sure if Hartman believes in it. His clear message that Jewish ethics are not necessarily superior to those developed by others; his rejection of the idea that "there is only one true perception of divine revelation and redemption in history," which implies that there may be at least several perceptions of *equal* validity; his belief that human existence has intrinsic self-justification; and the absence of definition of sanctity and its ontological status, all lead me to think that he does not. He does make some noises at the end of the book about Jews becoming the paradigm of pluralism, but this is not developed.

More curious is Hartman's reluctance to criticize directly or by reference any modern value. His advocacy of autonomy, adequacy and self development neglect the flip side—obsessive self-concern and desire for self-fulfillment, which can encourage hedonistic, aesthetic and emotional responses. These last three modes can act in concert with morality but they are also able to conflict or subvert it. A regulating mechanism would be the notion and practice of self-sacrifice to serve God. But since, as we have seen, Hartman rejects that route, the only defense is a profound humility emerging from finitude. I do not believe, however, that the knowledge of one's death will necessarily impel one to choose mitzvah over pleasure.

In terms of the Jew's passion for transcendence and love of God, Hartman has unnecessarily pegged too high a cost to pay for his covenantal anthropology. Nevertheless, *The Living Covenant* is an important work. Hartman's evocation of what it is to live a Halachic life in the real world, his concept of the messianic era as a catalyst for and not an inhibitor of moral action, his argument on behalf of a universalistic commitment and for self-criticism are compelling and necessary in order to counteract the chauvinism, moral apathy, smugness and naivete that dog the creative renewal of authentic religious life in Israel. Virtually every page contains a provocative insight and every chapter a call to action. □



The Inner and Outer World of Hell

Michael Berenbaum

The Destruction of the European Jews: Revised and Definitive Edition, By Raul Hilberg. Holmes and Meir, 1985, Three volumes, 1,274pp., $159.50.

The Holocaust: A History of the Jews of Europe During the Second World War, By Martin Gilbert. Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1986, 959pp., $24.95.

On March 13, 1938, a young Austrian boy's sleep was interrupted by the rumbling of tanks. He awoke in a country overrun by Nazis. On the eve of his bar mitzvah, Raul Hilberg began the long journey that would take him from Vienna to Vermont.

First he served in the army and then he worked for the War Documentation Project in the Federal Records Center at Alexandria where he discovered the documents that were to preoccupy him for life. On to Columbia University, where despite the protests of distinguished political scientists, he insisted on writing a dissertation on the murder of the Jews—a topic which was then of little interest.

The fruits of 13 years of labor yielded a 790 page, double columned book titled *The Destruction of the European Jews*. The young scholar still found himself ignored by the scholarly community and embroiled in controversy within the Jewish community. Historians did not want to read of the murders of the Jews and Jews had difficulty reading beyond the first pages where Hilberg wrote: "Insofar as we may examine Jewish institutions, we will do so primarily through the eyes of the Germans: as tools which were used in the destruction process." Nor were they prepared to listen to what he said about the Jewish community, Jewish complicity and the limited impact of isolated instances of resistance. Hilberg wrote: "Preventative action, armed resistance, or revenge are almost completely absent in the two thousand years of Jewish ghetto history. Instances of violent opposition, which may be found in one or another history book, are atypical or episodic. The critical period in the 1930's and 1940's is marked by the same absence of physical opposition."

Three years later when Hannah Arendt wrote the widely condemned *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Hilberg was lumped together with Hannah Arendt and Bruno Bettelheim as one of those who blame the victim for his fate. His competence to speak of the Jews was challenged, as Hilberg does not read the languages of Eastern European Jews, Yiddish, Hebrew, or Polish. Consequently his work was dismissed. For more than a decade and a half, he was not invited to speak at Yad Vashem and was at times barred access to its library.

A lesser work might have faded into oblivion, consigned to the dusty bookshelves in the rear of the library, read occasionally by graduate students writing dissertations. A less determined scholar would have turned to another subject. But while good scholarship may be read for a while, great scholarship endures.

In the early 70's when the Holocaust suddenly became central to the consciousness of Jews and of concern to publishers, teachers and scholars, Hilberg's work was given a second reading—and then a third.

Other books were written which tried to cover the same territory with less painful conclusions. They became fashionable and sold well, but Hilberg's work endured and his reputation grew. By the mid-70's, scholars as different as Richard Rubenstein and Emil Fackenheim were calling Hilberg's book "magisterial," and Yehudah Bauer, the distinguished Israeli historian whose work is often critical of Hilberg, referred to him as a giant. Even Lucy Dawidowicz, whose book, *The War Against the Jews*, is methodologically the antithesis of Hilberg's—and who relegated his work to footnotes—came to regard him as indispensible.

Through the years, Hilberg kept refining his first book, sharpening its perspective, correcting its errors, and incorporating the research of a generation. He worked in the backwoods of Vermont, far from the centers of Holocaust scholarship. In dimly lit libraries, in archives, he sat with his life-long companions, the documents of destruction.

For Hilberg, each of these fragments further reveals the answer to the puzzle: How did it happen?

The opening three sections of the book provide the overall framwork. The middle six chapters give the details and the final three units consider the implications of the destruction. According to Hilberg, the process of destruction began with definition. The Nazis defined Jews biologically; their enemy was Jewish blood. Defining the Jews demanded the cooperation of the Health and Church ministries, of the Jewish community and of the Judiciary. Expropriation of property and concentration of Jews into one locale was the second stage. This also involved the Finance and the Treasury ministry, banks and businesses, lawyers and investors, as well as ordinary citizens. The final stage was annihilation—first by *Einsatzgruppen*, mobile killing units, and then by gas, which was perfected and culminated in the factories of death.

Students of the Holocaust often depict the Nazis as either maniacal madmen or mindless bureaucrats obediently following orders. Yet the Nazis were too disciplined to be mad, and

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Hilberg definitely proves that the bureaucracy was far from a passive functionary in the destruction process. It was constantly innovating, turning the order for the Final Solution into an effective, efficient, disciplined apparatus of destruction. Hilberg traces the evolution of this killing process; he details contract negotiations for Zyklon B, documents the special handling instructions, the controversy over patents and the economic profits that accrued to the manufacturer. Each step in the process is described in understated prose. He resists the temptation to moralize, allowing the logic of the process to unfold in lucid scholarship.

Hilberg has not backed away from the most controversial aspects of his thesis. In the opening chapter he details the various ways in which Christians and Jews have dealt with each other over the past two millennia. Much of what the Nazis initiated, Hilberg documents, was modeled on prior experience, and the Jewish response to persecution followed the traditional patterns of the community. He concludes: "Both the perpetrators and the victims drew upon age-old experience in dealing with each other. The Germans did it with success. The Jews did it with disaster." And for Hilberg, the Holocaust is the unfolding of a Jewish disaster.

Jewish historians search within the ashes of the Holocaust for a usable history. For some there are incidents of heroism: resistance in Warsaw; blowing up a gas chamber in Treblinka; an escape from Auschwitz, or the spiritual resistance such as *minyanim* in the bunkers; schools in the ghetto; historians collecting documents in ghettos and camps to record and detail the destruction so that Jewish memories—and perhaps the memory of Jews—would survive the destruction.

Precise logic and cold facts in Hilberg's voluminous work make this search more difficult. The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising is covered in 15 pages of this 1,274 page work. And even then Hilberg must write that the revolt began only after more than 400,000 people had been deported. Although Hilberg describes the uprising as "literally a revolution, for after 2,000 years of a policy of submission, the wheel had been turned and once again Jews were using force," he also presents the results: "Several thousand Jews had been buried in the debris, and 56,065 had surrendered. Seven thousand of the captured Jews were shot, 7,000 were transported to the death camps at Treblinka, 15,000 were shipped to ... Lublin. Nine rifles, 59 pistols, several hundred grenades, explosives and mines were captured.... The losses to the Germans and their collaborators consisted of 16 dead and 85 wounded."

Because Hilberg views the event from the perspective of the perpetrators and from the story their documents reveal, much of what he writes can be perceived as harsh, cold and compassionless, bereft of moral outrage and anger. Yet the willingness and the discipline to follow this material through to its very end—to the logic of the Final Solution—is a moral task of enormous proportions. And over time, Hilberg has come to better appreciate the circumstances of the victims. His writing on Czerniakow is sympathetic, yet he does not retreat from seeing the Jewish community and its organization as part of the destruction process. And he proves his point.

No event has an anonymous victim.... We know someone who was there and the quality of life that came to an abrupt end.

His work is encyclopedic. Where else will one find a complete list of all the defendants at Nuremberg and their sentences; the linear footage of Nazi documents and where they are to be found; a cost accounting of the benefits and debits of killing the Jews; a detailed description of German corporate involvement in the destruction processes and the structure of the political, economic, military, party, and SS command in every theater of operation?

Hilberg shies away from asking larger theoretical questions, be they historical, psychological or metaphysical. He has said: "In all of my work, I have never begun by asking big questions. I was afraid I would come up with small answers." Those who are inclined to ask the larger questions will be dependent on Hilberg for far more than small details.

Throughout his work, Hilberg tells us how it happened. Only once does he tell us why—and then only in one word, *Erlebnis*. "The enemy onslaught did not come from the void; it was brought into being because it had meaning to the perpetrators. It was not a narrow strategy for the attainment of some ulterior goals, but an undertaking for its own sake, an event experienced as *Erlebnis*—lived and lived through by its participants."

And we were its victims.

Philip Hallie, whose writings on the people of Le Chambon sensitively probed the meaning of good in a world of darkness, has written that the Holocaust is the story of stories. Nowhere is this more true than in the writings of Gilbert. Martin Gilbert has told their story with passion, power and elegance. Gilbert's *The Holocaust* is the narrative history of the experience of the victims. Organized chronologically rather than geographically or by processes, Gilbert has combed the memoirs, testimony, recollections and contemporary writings of the victims and survivors—and, more than occasionally, the perpetrators—to tell a story that is gripping and moving. Most importantly, as Jacob Neusner has correctly pointed out, Gilbert has rehumanized the victims, giving voice to their suffering and agony, and retrieving from oblivion the names of those who endured the anguish. No event has an anonymous victim. Whether at Babi Yar or on a transport to Treblinka from Warsaw, we know someone who was there and the quality of the life that came to an abrupt end. In an economy of words, Gilbert provides us with a wealth of details about the victims.

No event is without its narrator. The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising is not probed from the documents of destruction, but by the people who lived it as history; Yitzhak (Antek) Zuckerman and Geigele Peltel (Vladka Meed) serve as major narrators. The inner world of the concentration camps and the gas chambers is understood by those who were there, by the testimony of those who survived; by the scraps of paper, hidden adjacent to gas chambers and crematoria, rediscovered after the war and written by those who did not outlive the Nazis; by the documents and

the testimony of the designers and the perpetrators; and by the recollections of former inmates.

At times, *The Holocaust* has the power and drama of a novel. For example, the 1941 rampage of murderous mobs of Ukrainian hoodlums in Lvov incited by the Germans within hours of the occupation is not described as a disembodied event, but as the tale of two brothers Rabbi Yechezkel Lewin, editor in chief of the Jewish weekly and rabbi of the Reform synagogue in Lvov, and Orthodox Rabbi Aaron Lewin. The memories of eye-witness Leon Weliczker, then sixteen years old, provide the grim details.

And so it is throughout this long and detailed work. The story is told and retold. Not overly analytical or reflective, Gilbert organizes the narration, but seldom intrudes into the unfolding of events. Historians might feel uncomfortable with Gilbert's light touch. They might prefer a sharper focus on regions, issues, individual ghettos and camps, processes, implications, and policies. They might search for a broader consideration of certain phenomena such as the Judenrat or resistance. They might also feel better if he spent less time with the victims and more time on "the real stuff of his history," political or military events, on rescue attempts or the failure to rescue, which he conscientiously relegates to background detail. But throughout the work, Gilbert refuses to compromise or to deviate from his stated purpose: to tell the story of what happened to the Jews from the perspective of those who were there.

He has read widely and wisely, and he has chosen exquisitely. The book is not, however, without its flaws. Gilbert correctly writes: "Statistics can dull the mind, and examples can numb it." The pace of the book can at times—but only at times—leave a reader numb and unmoved by the most powerful testimony. But, as with Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*, the reader recognizes that at the end of agony, there is art and, most importantly, truth.

No scene in the art of the Holocaust has captured the horror of anonymous death more vividly for me than the execution scene in *Seven Beauties*. The major character and his companion are sitting under a tree when far in the distance they see the execution of a number of Jews, an act that fails to interrupt the lunch of the commanding officer. The long angle of the camera's vision accentuates the impersonal quality of the detached and momentary killings that have little lasting impact for the executioner. The victims do not protest; there are no final farewells, no acts of heroism, not even a moment's hesitation. The deed is done in the distance.

Gilbert has refocused the angle of the lens, restored personality and humanity to the anonymous dead.

Neither book is intended for the popular market or the occasional reader who may read a memoir or even see *Shoah* and feel that he understands what he must about the Holocaust. Nor were they written for those who study the past to find simple exhortations about the present. Serious scholarship deserves to be taken seriously.

Taken alone, Gilbert's vivid picture captures the drama of death but leaves unanswered where, how, and why! Read together with Hilberg, the reader may learn more than he can understand, more than he may want to understand about the inner and outer dimensions of hell. Yet even when these two voluminous works are read together, the *why* of the Holocaust remains unanswered. □

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Worthy of Your Consideration

In this column are listed some books we think you might want to consider the next time you go to a bookstore or library.

The Button by Daniel Ford (Simon and Schuster, 1985, paperback $8.95). A detailed look at our nuclear defense system that shows that its primary orientation is offensive and would work best in a first-strike scenario.

The Unwanted: European Refugees in the 20th Century by Michael R. Marrus (Oxford, 1985, $24.95). A detailed account of all the problems faced by refugees from oppression. An important reminder for those who are now well-situated about how very recently their own families were counted amongst "the homeless" of the earth, and how callously they were treated.

Lovers & Cohorts by Herbert Gold (Donald I. Fine, 1986, $17.95). Twenty-seven of the most delightful stories written by one of America's most gifted American Jewish writers, culled from 40 years of distinguished work.

In Evidence by Barbara Helfgott Hyett (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1986, paperback $8.95). After conducting interviews with American liberators of Nazi concentration camps, Hyett took the details, maintained the language, and wrote a series of powerful poems arranged to create a narrative sequence.

All of Us Here and Other Poems by Irving Feldman (Penguin Press, 1986, paperback, $8.95). Poetry that opens us to new experience and yet is easily accesible.

Love and Tradition: Marriage Between Jews and Christians by Egon Mayer (Plenum Press, 1986, $17.95). A sociological study of many of the issues that arise in intermarriage, providing an overview of survey data rather than a phenomenological or experiential focus.

The British Empire in the Middle East 1945-1951 by William Roger Louis (Oxford, 1985, paperback $19.95). The blunders of a collapsing empire adequately documented.

Midrash, Mishnah and Gemara: The Jewish Predilection for Justified Law by David Weiss Halivni (Harvard Univ. Press, 1986). A scholarly overview of the development of the halakhah, sensitively attuned to changes in explanatory and justificatory frameworks. A wonderful introduction to the richness of the Talmudic mind.

Life and Fate by Vasily Grossman (Harper & Row, 1986, $22.50). A great classic historical novel focussing on the Battle of Stalingrad in 1943 but encompassing an overview of the similarities between Stalinism and Nazism. Suppressed in the Soviet Union where it was written, it has recently emerged in the West to justified acclaim.

The Dance of Leah by Richard J. Fein (Farleigh Dickinson Univ. Press, 1986, $22.50). A moving personal account of the impact of Yiddish on this author's life. Like most of us, Fein is not a native speaker of Yiddish, and his journey of discovery into the richness of that language is simultaneoulsy a recapturing of elements of Jewish experience that must be preserved.

Crisis and Covenant: The Holocaust in American Jewish Fiction by Alan L. Berger (SUNY Press, 1985, paperback $10.95). What does the Holocaust do to the Jewish conception of a covenant with God? Exploring both literature and theology, Berger demonstrates the continuing power of the Holocaust to shape contemporary Jewish self-understanding and imagination.

The Genesis of Faith: the Depth Theology of Abraham Joshua Heschel by John C. Merkle (Macmillan, 1985, $19.95). A Christian theologian attempts a systematic presentation of one of Judaism's most important religious thinkers. Merkle's useful perspective deepens our appreciation of a thinker whose important contributions are not yet fully incorporated into contemporary Jewish thought. Hopefully, Merkle's book will stimulate a larger audience to read Heschel's brilliant works. □

Borders: A Review of "Angry Harvest"

Elisa New

In Part I of Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*, a Polish farmer describes the transports of Jews that arrived in his town, Auschwitz. Recalling especially those Western European Jews who arrived on luxurious passenger trains, he recounts how, as the trains rolled onto the platform, one could see women who would in a matter of hours be dead donning their furs, powdering their noses; men still played cards, laughing and joking. In the packed cattle cars that rolled in from further east, the already starving Jews knew that what was before them was ghastly, but few understood any better the gesture of the Polish farmer along the track who would draw his finger slowly across his throat. And if an odd smile plays on this farmer's face as he describes the scene to Lanzmann, it is a smile more ambiguous than we might expect. A similar one crosses the faces of numerous Jews in *Shoah* as well—the lone survivor of Chelmno standing with an abstracted smile amid Poles who watched his townsmen murdered, the barber in Tel Aviv who was once a barber in Birkenau. Inscrutable and haunting, these smiles suggest a link between Poles and Jews—not of comparable suffering—but of a symmetrical bewilderment without outlet, of a store of memory for which there is no facial expression. *Angry Harvest*, the new West German film, does the bold work of interpreting those smiles and that symmetry. It offers us a look at the bonds and betrayals that characterized the relationship of Jews to Poles under the Nazis, excavating the complexities of a relationship ill understood when oversimplified.

Angry Harvest begins on one of those trains carrying a young Jewish woman with her husband and child from Vienna. We hear the woman soothing her child as the three prepare to jump, and next we see her alone, staggering on high heels in a fur coat through the forest, stealing food from a farmer out for a shoot. In this early juxtaposition of her fur and his gun, the film underscores its first irony: the silk slippered lady become hunted animal, bounty falling into the hands of a man, Leon, whose blackmarket trade in meat and game has made him war wealthy. The terrain on which they meet is the border between Germany and occupied Silesia. This border, offering a topos for the themes of choice and loyalty that drive the film, defines *Angry Harvest*'s governing metaphor.

For it is, first of all, a geographical border that Leon's property straddles and that represents the ambivalence of a Polish patriot whose brother is with the partisans, yet who has become a German citizen and blackmarketeer. Leon is, in addition, a man straddling class borders, a man of that queasy category of comfortable and literate farmer—not peasant, not gentry—whose uncertain place in Polish society is underscored in the film by the vastly stratified marriage options the war presents. We see him approach Eugenia, (Margit Carstensen) the pinched and upright daughter of the local grand dame. Hat in hand, now in a position to help Eugenia, even marry her, still Leon knows his place; he is deferential, subservient. The camera lags with the exquisite slowness of his approach. A few minutes later we see him—and the shot is quick—happen in the woods upon Magda, (Isa Haller) the easy and fetching town slattern, making noisy love with a boyfriend on a pile of leaves. If he ducked his head automatically before Eugenia, now he watches pruriently from above, fully at ease. This dialectic of the above and below with its sexual dimension is only reinforced by Leon's Catholicism. Kneeling in Church, a man who once aspired to the priesthood but who gave up his vocation to manage the family property, now Leon is a middle-aged sinner confessing to the low sin of masturbation he cannot tame by fasting or cold baths or prayer, looking to the Church to raise him up. Such are the borders: of nation, of class, of sexuality and of what must be called grace on which Leon founders, deadlocked. The priest—obtusely—urges him to solve his problems by marrying, but Leon's sexual frustration is only metaphor for a greater stasis; we sense he is looking not just for marriage but for some richer, more sacramental release from frustrations which are not only sexual, but national, social and especially religious. As a Pole of his time and circumstances, Leon will find mobility only on the vertical plane: only in domination and submission, in the exploitation of fresh chances or the acceptance of a new humility, will he discover a medium for effecting his own transformation.

When Leon meets Rosa on the border of his land, he meets such a medium. A cultivated Viennese woman, yet a Jew and thus damned, Rosa is a person utterly above him yet utterly at his mercy. In his passion for Rosa—a passion at times abject, ennobling, religious; at other times exploitative, brutal, low—we see etched allegorically the place of the Jew in the class and the imaginative structure of Polish life. Jews of Rosa's class are not unfamiliar to Leon. Her class double in Leon's Silesian town is Rubin (Gunter Berger); her story is paralleled and amplified by Rubin's. A wealthy Jewish orchard owner who cannot give up on getting a decent price for his land, Rubin lingers in town as the Gestapo closes in on all the Jews, taking them away in trucks to be shot. Cybolowski (Wojtech Pszoniak), Leon's rapacious partner and bad angel, urges Leon to grab what he can, to snatch Rubin's land with the help of the local land board. If Leon—the former theological student—cannot bring himself to

Elisa New's work has recently appeared in Prooftexts *and* Raritan. *She is completing a dissertation on theology in American poetry at Columbia University.*

this cupidity, he cannot quite help either. For when Rubin, stiffly dignified in the face of catastrophe, humbles himself in Leon's kitchen, offering Leon the orchard at the meager price of his passage out of Silesia, Leon pettishly refuses, pretending not to have the money.

He offers the money to Rosa instead—on the condition that she will only stay with him. This offer crystallizes all the film is about, shows us the role of the Jew not only in the class scheme but in what I have called the imaginative structure of Polish society. For even as Leon stands to gain much from Rubin's offer, we sense that he refuses Rubin not out of parsimony, but out of his need for something fuller than a commercial transaction. Just as it is not enough that he has Rosa's body, he must have her faith—she must marry him and convert to Catholicism—Leon's decisions are driven by a complex hunger for the Absolute: for beauty and the peace that comes of good acts; or, paradoxically, for the satiation that comes of clear sin. T. S. Eliot, writing of Baudelaire, described the "damnation" that is "itself an immediate form of salvation," noting that monumental sin is closer to grace than the "ennui of modern life." It is precisely such ennui Leon struggles against, that salvation his transgressions pursue. By refusing the money to Rubin and instead offering it to Rosa, Leon would suffuse his love for her with sin and so sanctify it. If Rubin might fill Leon's need for a medium through which to struggle free of his class stasis, in Rosa Leon finds not only class gain but a whole range of, if you will, sacramental possibilities: whether he marries her or prostitutes her he is spiritually engaged with the sacred and the profane, with Ecstasy. And such passion is, the film suggests, characteristically Polish. There is a scene in Lanzmann's *Shoah* when Lanzmann asks some townswomen of Auschwitz about the Jews whose houses they now occupy. The women laugh, describing the Jewish women who were "...rich, and so beautiful, all our men wanted to be making love with them." Unarguably the women's voices betray some triumph that these Jewish rivals with their unroughened hands are gone. But there is admixed in this laughter as well, what?—nostalgia? tenderness? regret?—to have lost such beauty from their midst. Rosa's beauty in *Angry Harvest* is of this kind: a beauty supersaturated with myth, a beauty not entirely her own but overlaid with the adoring and awed fabulation of the Pole who cares for her.

And care for her Leon does. Finding her faint and starving in the forest, Leon brings her home to his kitchen. He feeds her milk and honey, an allusion to all the Promised Land this Jew will ever get. He takes her to his cellar and nurses her tenderly as a father: curing her fever with cupping glasses, changing her drenched shirt with averted eyes. But as Rosa revives, he falls in love with her, and the cellar where he protects her out of love becomes the jail where he keeps her, site of her subjugation to him. As the border is allegory for all the ambivalence that wracks Leon's life, the cellar below and the kitchen above define the topography of his moral lie. Rosa sleeps below, protected from the Nazis but adjacent to the barn animals. When she forgets that she is hunted, he takes her upstairs to listen to the sound of Jews being shot in the forest. Kneeling at her feet in the barn, he makes of her an icon. The pose is not contrived; it is utterly native to this man whose chief love object all his middle-aged life has been the Virgin. But sure enough his passion turns and he rapes her in the hay; worship only feeds the erotics of domination, her Jewish lowness only intensifies his sinful desire, his Polish *virtu*. In another scene, in the kitchen, Leon and Rosa bicker amicably as she cooks him roast goose. But as he swills vodka, their domestic equality disintegrates: he bends her over the kitchen table, crudely noting that he could never do thus to Eugenia. Because Eugenia is high born? Because she is Catholic? The film leaves us to ponder. Leon's exploitation is always followed by contrition; he would give Rosa the world, more important his money; but his gift is tainted by a self-aggrandizing *noblesse oblige*; Leon prides himself on paying for what is his for free. Such payment serves his own need to sin, to escape the pale, blackmarket ethics of the border for damnation if he cannot have grace.

Armin Mueller-Stahl plays Leon with a touching unsteadiness. He is tender and brutal, grasping and magnanimous, neuter and then powerfully virile. After Rosa is dead and her husband, Dan (Wolf Donner), safe now with the partisans, comes with Rubin's daughter to inquire for her, Mueller-Stahl's unshaven face registers all the vicissitudes of Leon's character. Declaring evasively, abruptly, that he hasn't seen Rosa for a month, he then breaks down to tell Dan how much he loved her. With a choked, "Wait!" he runs to his strong box, giving Rubin's daughter the money he refused her father. Finally, he goes to the cellar and buries the woman he loves, weeping as the dirt covers her face. Using the money Leon gives her, Rubin's daughter escapes Europe with Dan. Finally, married to Magda, Leon receives letters from the daughter and Dan, now married in New York, in which they bless him for saving their lives. Indeed in this gift Leon redeems both of his dead Jews, Rosa and Rubin: paying back Rubin posthumously, giving the young back to the young, restoring the moral order that his blackmarket passion violated. Turning his eyes heavenward, he has transcended that provincial anti-semitism and the need to feel superior that let Jews burn for their sins: he has found grace.

Leon prides himself on paying for what is his for free.

Rosa, played by Elisabeth Trissenaar, is a complex and troubling Jewish protagonist, not a heroine but something much more wrenching, a victim. One might argue that Rosa the woman represents a type as universal and compelling as Rosa the Jew. In Rosa's sexual enslavement to Leon it is possible to see reflected the historical situation of most women, women whose only alternative to subjugation to a man is flight into a predatory society. Indeed, as much as Rosa's specific abjection points to the more general emasculation of her people, in her forced passivity the film suggests links between marriage, religion and the totalitarianism that is their nightmarish extension. Such structures of hierarchy and domination, Holland hints, enable Leon's Catholic arrogance, his sexual stormtrooping; they make every woman, in Sylvia Plath's words, "a bit of a Jew."

Yet to so generalize is to miss the

point of a film which insists on the particularity of the lives it reveals. Finally, Rosa's power to move us derives not from her representativeness, but from the way in which she is trapped in a specific sexual relationship, in a specific dank cellar. The agony of Rosa's situation is that it is *hers*; whatever the larger historical forces shaping her fate, she must, in Kierkegaard's terms, meet that fate in the self given her. And lacking certain emotional reserves, she is a woman not made for deprivation. Leon's cave-like cellar offers her not only physical shelter but a place to bury her psychic self. As she has lost her husband and child in the woods, she has lost herself as well: she paddles childlike through mud in Leon's yard, sleeps in his bed, dons the costumery of his fantasy life as though there were nothing before and nothing after; her only hold is on the present. Rosa is lovely, girlish, yet emotionally friable, wasp-tempered and finally hysterical under stress. In her submission to Leon she has both the bountiful and unstudied beauty that perfectly accommodates her to Leon's vision of a woman to worship—and the vacated character that permits him to offer her money. Like Leon, paradigm for all those Polish farmers, for all the choices they made, Rosa, living in a no-time that seems the vicarious no-time of the camps, has her own choices to make but no resources to make them. If she is not so foolishly heroic to flee, to look for her husband in the forest, neither does she strongly resist the lover who is also her jailer.

As the Germans crack down and suspicions circulate that Leon is hiding something in his barn, he buys her another hiding place in the cellar of neighbors. Rosa begs him not to send her away but he refuses, so she slits her wrists, choosing death rather than life. It is this choice that makes Rosa so notable a character. She serves to memorialize those who chose an option—when there were options—not as easily accommodated to our remembrance as that option the Bible enjoins: "choose life." She stands for people for whom the price of living through such horror was perhaps too high, people of characters no more monolithic or heroic for their living in a crucible. Rosa has a foil in the film in Pauline, the local priest's sister, a sweet and foolish woman who dotes on Leon. When Pauline excitedly agrees to carry a message from the partisans, it is only to panic in the face of real danger. She breaks into a run and is shot dead by the German she sees in the vicinity of her rendezvous. *Angry Harvest* underscores such symmetries, reminding us of what is sometimes forgotten in records of the Holocaust that allow people to become inspiring or demonic woodcuts. It emphasizes the common and evanescent humanity linking Pole to Jew, the humanity of people who botch errands, who survive by luck and die by impulse; whose lives remain ambiguous even in apocalyptic times.

Agnieszka Holland's directing focuses subtly on this complexity without calling attention to itself; the film has a certain mimetic humility of surface. Eschewing the stylistic obliqueness of her mentor, Wadja, Holland's interest is unabashedly historical. She would, to borrow terms George Lukacs applied to the historical novel, connect the "typicality" of dramatic action to a total world. She is thus interested in how historical transformation is registered in small nuances of character, in how symbols (the border, the cellar, the Virgin) can describe larger social processes. This narrative approach gives the film the feel of a novel by Tolstoy or Mann, and the viewer looking for directorial innovation may leave disappointed. Yet, as Lanzmann's film allows the enormity of Nazi crimes to accrue in force through tireless repetition of the same questions, the same shots of boxcars, Holland allows her richest historical observations to sift through the cinematic surface, through the net of a style that accepts—at least in this film—the circumscriptions of realism. She makes the most of a few shots: the flutter of a burst feather bed falling from Jewish windows; the tin cup of milk and honey Rosa gulps greedily.

Scrutinizing the bonds between Poles and Jews, *Angry Harvest* penetrates those moments in *Shoah* when Lanzmann's camera lingers around the mouths of Poles and Jews inexplicably smiling for want of a better expression. *Angry Harvest* is not only a fine film but an important contribution to our archives, for it breaks that seal on the past secured by the twin untruths of Polish demon and Jewish martyr, by the oversimplifications that impede our better understanding of history. □

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To answer Mr. Radosh's question, if it were not for the war context, would I be endorsing a variety of measures against the Sandinistas on the basis of their human rights record, the answer is, "of course." I believe that the mechanisms that are available to the United States to exercise pressure on governments that commit human rights abuses should be used against the Sandinistas. I have, for example, been highly critical of the Reagan administration for not opposing loans, in the multi-lateral development banks, to a variety of governments that have committed serious human rights abuses. U.S. law requires that the U.S. should oppose loans to those governments.

As far as the human rights record is concerned, I think it's very important to criticize the abuses committed by the Sandinistas, but we must not criticize abuses that have in fact not taken place. I have seen, for example, figures on the numbers of political prisoners and these figures are utterly absurd to anybody who has examined the situation in Nicaragua with any care. There *are* political prisoners in Nicaragua, there *are* severe abuses in the pre-trial detention mode of those persons who are imprisoned on political grounds, but let's deal with reality rather than fantasy.

Leiken: I think that what we just heard was an example of the way in which The Americas Watch has confused the question of human rights with their political stance and the way in which they are constantly shifting the two around. In the guise of an objective account of the human rights situation in Nicaragua, Mr. Neier shifts the subject to Colombia, Guatemala, and Peru, to other countries that have guerrilla wars. He approaches the human rights question in Nicaragua entirely in terms of Nicaragua's external security problems. But human rights violations are not the result of the war. In some cases, as in Nicaragua, they are the cause of the war.

The promise of the Sandinistas was that the revolution would be an alternative, it was going to be a whole new kind of society. To justify it now in terms of its being similar to, or not quite as bad as Colombia, or Guatemala, is abusive sophistry. I think the thrust of Mr. Neier's remarks is that we shouldn't be concerned about the banning of *La Prensa* since this sort of thing is a common Latin American practice. I think again, you are putting a human rights organization in the service of human rights practices which you should be criticizing, which you should be opposing, which you should not be finding ever more sophisticated ways to make appear less serious or finding ways to shift the subject from.

Radosh: Mr. Leogrande said that the U.S. was wrong about the Bay of Pigs and it is wrong now about Nicaragua. Well, I would say that we—not we the U.S. government, but we the American Left—were wrong about Cuba. I can remember using all the arguments about Cuba that Mr. Neier or Mr. Leogrande use today about Nicaragua. For example, we thought that Castro wanted a humanist revolution, neither capitalist nor communist—a non-aligned Cuba, a Cuba that was not Marxist-Leninist, but that was free, a different society. Castro, of course, as it turns out, says he was always a Marxist-Leninist. He was just hiding his agenda until the time was ripe. What we have now is a Cuba that is a militarized society, a vicious police state, a repressive society. Even Mr. Neier agrees in characterizing it this way, if I read his recent piece in the *New York Review* correctly. He characterizes Cuba as a country with one of the worst human rights records in the hemisphere, a left wing equivalent to the authoritarian right wing regimes, perhaps as terrible in its treatment of political prisoners.

Cuba did not turn out to be the way we all swore it was then, and of course we all argue that Cuba's drift toward the Soviet Union was the result of the U.S. pressure instituted against it. Well, we begin to read, on the basis of records now coming out years later, and on the revelations of people like Carlos Franqui, that that was not the case. In fact, it was a bitter internal struggle which we were totally blind to, a struggle between the liberating revolutionaries like Franqui and the hard-line Marxist-Leninists led by Fidel and Raul Castro and Che Guevara. What they instituted in Cuba was a rigid Soviet-style state with a unique Cuban background, which of course the American Left has always said really made it different, but in fact it was not different. How much better would it have been, if, instead of fighting only against the U.S. policy in Cuba, we at the time had seen the true situation, and extended our hand to the democrats who opposed Fidel Castro. Batista was better. It was a freer country under Batista than it is under Castro. As horrible as the supposed Batista tyranny was for years, despite the fact that Batista was a tool of the U.S. and the U.S. had hegemony and control in Cuba, all of which is true, and despite Cuba being part of an informal American empire, things were better for Cubans under Batista than they are under Castro. I don't care how many schools and hospitals Castro has built. As somebody said the other day, Pinochet is sending out propaganda about all the schools and hospitals he's built, too, in Chile. That cannot be a criteria for deciding whether a society is good or not.

Mr. Neier is correct in saying that we don't go to war simply because a country has a bad human rights record, that there are scores of countries with terrible human rights records.

Indeed, I have always opposed the brutal human rights records of the right wing authoritarian regimes, many of them supported by the United States.

I think one of the reasons the situation in El Salvador has grown slightly better is because Democrats or opponents of the U.S. policy were able to mount sufficient pressure, and Congress said no funding unless the human rights situation improves. The administration clearly wanted to ignore the human rights situation. But now when it comes to Nicaragua, I am quite disturbed by what I see as a counter tendency. I think, and I am not clear whether it's conscious or not, that people like Mr. Neier are doing exactly the same thing in reverse, that is to say there is a tendency to whitewash and downgrade the extent of human rights abuses in Nicaragua, to "prettify" them.

Leogrande: I want the transcriber to be sure to get Mr. Radosh's quote "the supposed Batista tyranny"—the supposed tyranny of Batista and that things were much better under Batista than they had been under Castro. The 20,000 people that Batista killed between 1952 and 1959 might think differently about that. Mr. Radosh said that schools and hospitals are not criteria for deciding whether or not you have a good society. I suppose perhaps not, if you have the money to use private ones, but if you don't, it seems to me that schools and hospitals were an improvement over not having schools and hospitals. It may not be the only criterion of a good society, but it certainly is what I count as one criterion for improvement in a society.

But the issue of Cuba actually is more interesting even than those little short snipes. Radosh says we should have helped the democrats in Cuba. But the question is how. The United States government did everything they could to get rid of Castro except to send in the 82nd airborne to kill him. They poisoned his cigar, tried to get the Mafia to try to assassinate him, and sent our forces to the Bay of Pigs. We conducted a covert war against him for close to ten years, all to no avail. And the reason it was to no avail was because even though he was a communist, even though he jumped into bed with the Soviet Union, the Cuban people still supported him. Now that might seem odd to us, we might find that hard to understand, especially if we didn't know anything about U.S.-Cuban history. But it's a reality, and I don't know of anyone who doubts that in reality, in 1961 and 1962 and on throughout the 1960's, a majority of Cubans supported their government, especially supported it in its confrontations with the United States. And I submit to you that we are setting in motion, or have already set in motion, exactly the same sort of dynamic in Nicaragua. Our policy toward Nicaragua today is not and cannot be free of the legacy of our historical relationship with that society, which is one of imperialism. In 1909 we overthrew the only quasi-independent government that Nicaragua had. We were identified as the enemy by the George Washington of Nicaragua, Augusto Sandino. We're the ones who put in power and kept in power the last dictator, Somoza. However our policy may have changed in the last ten years, or not changed, we cannot pretend that that part of our history doesn't exist, because Nicaraguans know that prior history.

We are, in fact, continuing a long, long history and legacy of trying to control the domestic politics of Nicaragua. I would suggest that we ought to have a great amount of humility about our capacity to export democracy around the Caribbean Basin. The interventions earlier in the century were aimed at securing security and economic interests, but the Marines went abroad under the cloak and banner of democracy. This was not necessarily a hypocritical move; we really thought that we were going to bring democracy to these unstable, authoritarian little countries. We built schools, we built hospitals, we held free elections, we created professional military establishments. And then we left. And in our wake we left the dictatorships of Trujillo in the Dominican Republic, Papa Doc Duvalier in Haiti, Batista in Cuba, Somoza in Nicaragua. So it seems to me that we ought to be humble about thinking that we know better than other people how they should organize their own lives and politics.

Tikkun: There is one issue that I want to throw before you that hasn't yet been addressed, and that is about anti-Semitism in Nicaragua. What's the truth of it, and is it relevant to this policy discussion? Is it irrelevant that the Nicaraguan government is alleged to be close to and support the PLO? Should that be something that a Jewish community in the United States takes into account when determining its relationship to the Nicaraguan revolution?

Leogrande: It is relevant as one issue in a range of human rights issues, and obviously a very important one given the history of anti-Semitism in this century. The relationship between the Sandinistas and the PLO goes back a very long time to the very early years of the Sandinistas when the PLO allowed them to send combatants to training camps in the Middle East for military training. One gets the sense that the Sandinistas' closeness to the PLO and their hostility toward Israel is partly a function of their general ideological stance, which is one of solidarity with the Third World revolutionary movements, of which they regard the PLO as one, and partly a function of the unique relationship that the Somoza regime had with Israel. Somoza was

one of the promoters of the establishment of the state of Israel, and had quite good and reasonably close relations with Israel during the 50's and 60's. The Israelis in 1977, of course, became a major arms supplier to Somoza when the United States cut back its military assistance to the regime. So I think that there are two elements at work here: there's the ideological element on the one hand, and the-friend-of-my-enemy-is-my-enemy element on the other.

Tikkun: The Jewish people of the United States might take the same reasoning and say, "a-friend-of-my-enemy-is-my-enemy." Or should they? In other words, if that's a reasonable position for Nicaragua to take, is it a reasonable position for Jews to take?

Leogrande: I think it depends concretely on what the Sandinista government does in its relationship with the PLO. If it were to become active directly in the Middle East, then I think that that becomes a much greater concern. But it seems to me at this point that that's a relatively small aspect of Nicaraguan foreign policy.

Neier: Most of the things which involve the alleged anti-Semitic acts by the Sandinistas took place prior to the time that The Americas Watch started monitoring Nicaragua. We sent our first mission there in March of 1982. The episode involving the burning of the doors of the synagogue took place in 1978 when Somoza was still in power and the Sandinistas were a revolutionary force. Some allege that it was the Sandinistas who did it; there isn't any way that we can look into that and make any useful determination. There are also the allegations involving the actions against various prominent Jews in Nicaragua shortly after the triumph of the Sandinistas; again, we haven't looked into that. Our monitoring starts at a later period. The things that one is aware of in the later period are some anti-Semitic expressions, particularly in *El Nuevo Diario*, the newspaper that certainly takes the same line as the party. Obviously those are obnoxious. So is the anti-Semitic sermon that was given by Archbishop, now Cardinal, Elondo. Elondo is the foremost anti-Sandinista, and he gave a sermon in 1984, which was reprinted in *La Prensa* that sounded like an older variety of anti-Semitism, not the sort of racial anti-Semitism that we've known for the last century, but the traditional Christian anti-Semitism of an earlier period. The anti-Semitic stuff in *El Nuevo Diario* is somewhat similar to the sort of thing that we get from those who derive an anti-Semitism out of PLO support or whatever.

Radosh: I think one thing all the Nicaraguan elements might be united on is anti-Semitism. Connor Cruise O'Brien in *The Atlantic Monthly* cites Sandinista Foreign Minister Miguel D'Escoto as saying something to the effect that the Jews killed Christ. So there does seem to be in all elements of Nicaraguan society a pervasive anti-Semitism. I would say that it seems that a great many Nicaraguans from all sides are anti-Semitic—the problem is that the Sandinistas are in power, and this is compounded by the PLO tie. Again, we have the Castro analogy. Castro, for a while, always used to compare Cuba and Israel as small, beleaguered powers pushed in and forced on themselves because of neighboring hostile states. Then, when he tried to get the leadership of the non-aligned Third World movements, he quickly shifted his position without anyone being aware that he had broken ties with Israel. This led to the famous U.N. "Zionism is Racism" speech, and he tried to gain leadership in the Third World by attacking Israel, which is disgusting. The tie with the PLO is a dangerous one and not to be downgraded, but to be looked at very closely. It's something to definitely be concerned with and not underestimated. Again, one cannot excuse it by pointing to what we would consider a backwards or reactionary Israeli policy of arming Third World dictators. There are peace movements in Israel who oppose this kind of thing. The Peace Now forces, for example, are saying to the Israeli government that Israel should change its foreign policy and they don't try to excuse Israel's bad foreign policy by using the political and military diplomatic alliances of other countries like the Sandinistas' Nicaragua with the PLO.

Tikkun: Shifting back to U.S. policy in Nicaragua, there's a set of points that I'd like to ask all of you to address. Although there are human rights violations in Nicaragua, the level of abuse is not sufficient to distinguish it from dozens of other abusive regimes in the world. If American policy is to be determined by an effort to stop human rights abuses, Nicaragua would not reasonably be the first choice of intervention. Consequently, it seems surprising that Nicaragua is a major point of our intervention. Further, the U.S. does not even attempt to overthrow oppressive regimes that are overtly antagonistic to the U.S. One might, for example, think of Syria as a human rights abuser that is clearly aligned with the Soviet Union, one which is against us and our interests. So what we have here is something that has to be understood in terms of a global United States policy. It is a reversal from a policy of containment to an aggressive rollback policy on the part of the United States. The same government that's pushing this rollback in Nicaragua is also talking about trying to do the same thing in Angola. It seems that what we have in Nicaragua is really the first step in what would be a

real change in the direction of American foreign policy, a new move to try to roll the Soviet Union back onto the periphery. Some of the policy-makers fantasize that eventually they'll overthrow Soviet regimes in Eastern Europe. Is there any plausibility in looking at what the United States is doing in Central America in terms of rolling back communism?

Neier: I would think much better of the United States policy in Nicaragua if I thought it were a useful way of rolling back Communist tyranny. I don't have any doubts that it is desirable in the world to roll back Communist tyranny. I think that probably the largest number of sufferers—not probably, definitely—of tyranny in the world are those suffering from Communist tyranny. Communist 'tyranny has proven to be particularly difficult to deal with, and if I thought that what the U.S. was doing in Nicaragua served that purpose, I still might not favor exactly what the U.S. is doing in Nicaragua, but I would certainly be inclined to think more kindly of it. In fact, I think the United States is not prepared to challenge Communist tyranny in places that it has largely ceded to the Soviet Union. My guess is that if you look at all of this in the largest geopolitical and historical terms, the administration is exacerbating the problem of Communist tyranny, specifically Soviet tyranny. I think that the posture of the Soviet Union in response to a rollback policy would be all the more to deny efforts being made to create alternative societies within parts of the Soviet empire. One of the great struggles in the world today is the struggle of those movements within the Soviet empire to create independent existences, alternative cultures. One of the foremost duties of anybody who is committed to human rights is to assist in that effort and not to do the things which geopolitically will help to make it more difficult for those movements.

Tikkun: So what you're saying is that you think that Solidarity or other movements in Eastern Europe might be weakened by the United States' intervention in Nicaragua?

Neier: I can remember traveling around Europe when Martial Law had been declared in Poland and the U.S. was broadcasting the "Let Poland Be Poland" film. Everywhere I went in Europe I saw posters saying "Let Central America Be Central America." I think it's urgent that the world as a whole perceives the difference between the United States and the Soviet Union, and that the world opposes the kinds of things that the Soviet Union does to crush independent and alternative movements. That's the largest geopolitical question.

The other question, which I don't think one can evade, is that the means by which the United States is attempting to overthrow the Nicaraguan government, if it is presumably a means that is motivated by a concern for human rights, makes the human rights situation worse. That is, the forces we are sponsoring have selectively targeted Sandinista supporters and murdered them; they have also engaged in indiscriminate attacks against civilians. I don't believe one can be said to be promoting human rights if one sponsors forces that engage in those kinds of attacks on civilians.

Radosh: To return to an earlier issue for a moment, I would like to argue against aid to Jonas Savimbi in Angola. Indeed, very responsible Republican conservatives have produced extremely cogent arguments against aid to Savimbi, emphasizing the shortsightedness of U.S. policy. But I think that you can take a different position on Nicaragua even if you don't support the so-called Reagan policy.

I don't analyze the situation in Nicaragua in terms of the Reagan doctrine. As a historian looking back, I think a more apt analogy could be made to the Truman doctrine. The American Left, including myself, always opposed the Truman doctrine. For example, we opposed aid to Greece and Turkey in World War II when the pro-Communist side lost. I'm aware that the Greek monarchy was, as we used to say, an "unpopular monarchy," representing a minority of the people, and the Communist side had strong support, and it was a civil war. In retrospect, I'd say the Truman doctrine was correct. Thank God the Communist side lost in Greece. We would have another pro-Communist, Stalinist regime, the equivalent of those in Eastern Europe, if the Greek Communists had won. It would have been a disaster. Surely Greece had to go through the periods of right wing reaction, the general's coup supported by the United States, but what was the outcome? A democracy in Greece led by the Greek Left. You wouldn't have had that kind of a development if the side I supported in 1948 and on through the 1950's had won. I'm glad they lost. I think, in retrospect, the Truman doctrine was correct, and, therefore, I think that something like the Truman doctrine today would be much more sensible than a Reagan doctrine. Now, as we look in Nicaragua, I cannot at this point support the Contras for many of the reasons Mr. Neier states. However, I'm again deeply saddened that someone like Mr. Leogrande or someone from the American Left cannot get themselves to say *anything* critical on the smallest level of the Nicaraguan government. You have a reprehensible state of emergency, a farcical legal system, a farcical election, you have people convicted for political crimes. If you oppose the Contras, you have a responsibility to tell the commandante, "Stop confusing dissent with

counterrevolution," to oppose their repressive measures, and to say, as someone concerned with self-determination and the right of peoples, "We must oppose the policy of the Nicaraguan government as being essentially anti-humane, reactionary and repressive."

I think Mr. Leogrande would say, "Aid the Sandinistas, welcome them into the family, and let them have their breathing space for the revolution." He thinks everything would get better because their agenda is basically a good one. That's where the real disagreement lies. I think their agenda is Marxist-Leninist, and that if we stop all kinds of pressure against them, they'd move in one fell swoop to implement a Cuban-style state.

Tikkun: Assuming you're right about their agenda, doesn't the United States have friendly relations with countries like China that do have that kind of agenda?

Radosh: The situation in China, judging from the recent works written by outside observers, has changed considerably for the better towards democracy as a result of the economic changes and the loosening-up.

Leiken: We cannot approach this question of Nicaragua by comparing the human rights violations that are committed there with those committed in other countries, or by comparing Nicaragua with countries that are more opposed to the United States. We have to see that in Nicaragua the human rights abuses are systematic in nature. It is very important to the Sandinistas' political survival that their human rights violations be invisible to outsiders and that they be quite systematic about eliminating their opposition. It's a much more scientific practice of human rights violation, and that's what makes the Soviet Union and the Soviet empire a much more dangerous human rights violator on the international scale; it is systematic and much harder to expose. We're also talking about the creation of a system, of a kind of rule in Nicaragua, which I would distinguish from China, in that China is not part of the Soviet empire and, therefore, does not constitute a security threat to us, or to other independent countries.

Tikkun: But does Nicaragua actually present a plausible security threat to the United States? Are the Nicaraguans really going to come charging up through Texas and overthrow the most powerful government in the history of the world?

Leiken: This is why I've emphasized since the beginning the Nicaraguan strategic connection with the Soviet Union. Nicaraguans have developed a political relationship with the Soviet Union, and Soviet advisors have been involved since very early on in the regime. Thousands of Cubans were involved in both civilian and military security tasks; Soviet arms were coming in as early as 1980. It's the ideological connection reinforced by the concrete physical strategic connection with the Soviet Union that poses a threat.

Tikkun: Is the idea that Soviet troops would eventually land in Nicaragua and be that much closer to the United States?

Leiken: I don't think so. There are a number of ways that the Sandinistas could use to become a strategic threat, and some of them have already been deployed. One is terrorism—the Sandinistas right now, for example, are (and were in the past) able to blackmail the Costa Ricans by either threatening to, or actually going ahead and sponsoring terrorist acts and bombings. In San Jose right now the new Costa Rican government is attempting to carry out the promise of an economic recovery that it made in the election. It is very easy for the Sandinistas to discourage investments and to make Costa Rica look like an unstable place through blackmailing and putting pressure on the regime. The Sandinistas have sent two forces on two different occasions into Honduras. They were defeated, but the attempt was there. They have sent support to the Salvadoran rebels. Finally, I think they would build a large military machine. If they were to dominate Central America by a variety of means, by creating movements in those countries which were not just revolutionary but pro-Soviet, you could have a United Soviet Socialist Republic of Central America. Don't laugh, because the Sandinistas' documents in the 1960's and 1970's talked about that as one of their slogans. If you had that on the Mexican border, coupled with an unraveling political and economic situation in Mexico in which leftist opposition would develop, that opposition coming from the Left, through Cuban and Nicaraguan and Soviet indirect support, would become linked with the Soviet Union. I don't understand why people have such a hard time with this. I'm not saying there's going to be a conspiracy to unravel, to destabilize, but the Soviets fish in troubled waters.

Tikkun: Assume that everything you say is true. Why wouldn't it be a better use of U.S. resources—our financial and leadership resources—to go into Central America and get rid of these troubled waters by providing economic stability to a sufficient degree so that the guerrillas couldn't fish there anymore? Instead of allowing repressive or oppressive regimes, or extremes of poverty, we could get rid of poverty before we had to engage in military struggles.

Leiken: This wouldn't work for two reasons. First of all, I think we should give economic support to those countries, but I think it would be an illusion to think that economic support would be sufficient, particularly on the levels that will be given by a Congress concerned with Gramm-Rudman and the deep economic recession that our country is facing. Secondly, I don't think that even larger levels of support could turn those countries; they're not going to become stable in the near future.

The Soviet empire, particularly in the Third World, is experiencing a crisis—for the same reasons that the U.S., French, and British empires went through a crisis—because these countries basically want to be independent. This is a moment in which the Soviet empire is weakening, and he who thinks that it will weaken through a policy of economic aid or simply by encouraging peaceful dissent just doesn't understand the nature of the Soviet mood. Just as with the Sandinistas, force is necessary to make the Soviets move; and just as the Sandinistas were correct in assuming that only armed struggle would get rid of Somoza, only armed struggle will weaken the Soviet empire and bring about what Mr. Neier says he supports—rolling back the Soviets.

Leogrande: Mr. Radosh wants to know why I can't find anything nasty to say about the Sandinistas. First of all, I have talked about the reduction of liberty in Nicaragua during the last few years. I agree, for the sake of the record, with much of the characterization of the human rights situation that Mr. Neier has put forward. As for the farcical elections, however, I'd point out that the Sandinistas got 67% of the vote in an election which was more open than the election in El Salvador or Guatemala, and more honest than the election in Mexico. Which is not to say it was a perfect election, by any means, but it was hardly the kind of Soviet-style election that the Sandinistas' enemies have tried to characterize it as.

I'd feel a lot more comfortable criticizing the Sandinistas for their human rights practices if my own country wasn't engaged in a war, an illegal war, of aggression against the Sandinistas. It seems to me that my first responsibility as a citizen is to look after my own house. This notion that the Sandinistas would behave better internally, be more open, more pluralistic, if we would just pressure them a little more—well, it is hard to imagine the scenario whereby a government that has ideological proclivities which are anti-democratic in some way, will under pressure become more open when we have a long historical record of regimes with staunch democratic records and traditions becoming less democratic under that kind of external pressure. So the logic of this case escapes me, and unless we can be shown some plausible way in which this will work, it seems to me we have a right to be skeptical about it.

We also have about four or five years worth of Contra war in which the human rights situation and political liberty have gotten worse. So we have a certain historical record to work with which shows that the situation has in fact not been remedied by the war.

The bigger question I want to address, though, is why do we hate the Sandinistas so much? Why is the United States and the people who support the Reagan administration, and even those like Mr. Radosh who don't really support the administration's policy, why do we hate the Sandinistas so much? One of the arguments that has been put forward is that the Sandinistas have such a terrible human rights record. I think that position has been thoroughly demolished, and I don't think anybody would claim that that's the principle reason for wanting to get rid of the Sandinista government, because demonstrably we don't go after regimes with much more grotesque human rights records and try and overthrow them. If we were really in favor of overthrowing governments that are gross abusers of human rights, we'd have been fighting against the South Africans a long time ago. No, I think Mr. Radosh has given us the key to it in his two phrases regarding Batista's "supposed tyranny" and "China's democracy." The real definition of democracy in all of this is a country that sides with the United States in the Cold War. That's what really counts, that's what we're really looking for. And I submit to you that this is nothing new, it is a notion of "The Free World," of "our side" versus "their side"; and there's no such thing as a non-aligned neutral, there are only people who stand with us, and people who stand in the "new scientific system of repression of the Soviet Union," which is just another way of saying that there are totalitarians who are the bad guys, versus authoritarians, who are our guys and eventually will become democracies. They're "incipient" or "latent" democracies, a sort of interesting political teleology which we don't need to go into.

Is it the security threat, then? Mr. Leiken gives us a long list of things, but at the core is this notion of the Sandinistas being tied to the Soviet Union. That doesn't seem to me to be enough, however. You have to ask what it is that they might actually or plausibly do that would pose a threat to the United States. We're told that they may blackmail the Costa Ricans; they haven't got anything on us, in terms of blackmailing the Costa Ricans over the last few years—nobody's blackmailed Costa Rica more than the United States. We haven't used the threat of terrorism, we've used the threat of withholding economic assistance.

"They'll subvert their neighbors, they'll create a large

military machine, they'll come to dominate Central America with pro-Soviet regimes, and then they'll go after Mexico." I'm reminded of the argument made in the 1960's that after South Vietnam, then all of Indochina, then Thailand and India, and soon we'd be fighting on the shores of Australia. It's just not plausible; it didn't work out that way. The security threat the Sandinistas pose is not a plausible threat. If they were actively attacking their neighbors, the United States would be down on top of them with a ton of bricks, and they know it very well. If they were to allow Soviet troops or Soviet missiles or anything that could pose a really direct threat to the security of the United States, similarly, the United States would be down on them in a second. The idea that they might interdict the sea lanes and disrupt oil shipments and so-on is a lot of foolishness. It simply is not a credible argument. The only version of that argument that has the slightest credibility is this notion of interdicting supplies to Europe in the event of a conflict between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, and even that is a highly improbable scenario which can be prepared for, it seems to me, in other ways than trying to fight counterrevolutionary wars all through Central America.

The reality is that the Sandinistas don't, in fact, pose a very grave threat to the security of the United States, and what's even more important than that, what security threat they do pose, what legitimate security interests the United States does have in the region, can in fact be met short of getting rid of the Sandinista regime. It seems to me the one thing that has become clear in the long and agonizing history of the Contadora process is that if the issue is really Nicaragua's foreign policy, if it is really Nicaragua's relationship with Cuba and the Soviet Union that is so disconcerting to the United States, then that issue can be solved by Contadoran agreement. So it's not really the security issue either that's at the heart of this. It's not about human rights, it's not about democracy, it's not about security, and it's not even really about the Soviet Union. What it's about is colonial empire. It's about the right of the United States, which it arrogates to itself, to control the destiny of countries in its own immediate backyard. It's a kind of great power arrogance that goes back to the turn of the century; it has been clothed in a new anti-Communist garb in the post World War II period, but the basic outlines of it have not changed since the turn of the century. It is the rawest kind of great power politics and promotion of a particular notion of self-interest and I think it is an erroneous notion of self-interest. □

Letters

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stuck in that place. And until we move beyond, there is no way that we can wholeheartedly love God. This is not a matter of philosophy or religion, if these terms refer to something one practices in one's head or at special times. It is a matter of life and death, everyday life and everyday death.

As for my phrase "a lesser god": We can appreciate ordinary Biblical narratives from any number of viewpoints. But from the point of genuine religious insight, for someone who has had even a peep into reality, the narrative becomes a lie whenever it introduces God as a character. "God" is then a limited being, usually an ill-tempered or obsessive father figure: Nobodaddy, as Blake called him. Thus in the *Akedah*, on the narrative level, he resembles the tsar who put Dostoevsky through his terrible mock-execution. As a parable, though, the story has deep spiritual meaning. Not as an integration of love and severity, which are mutually exclusive; here the Zohar's insight seems shallow to me, and quite mistaken in thinking there can ever be too much loving-kindness. After all, killing is not a stronger form of spanking. ("This hurts me, Isaac, more than it hurts you.") To me, the parable means that to love God ultimately means to leave behind wife and children and everything we love. As a Zen master once told me, "First kill your parents, then kill your lover, then kill God."

The Book of Job is unusual for a Biblical narrative in that it presents, in the Voice from the Whirlwind, a God who is *not* a character—who becomes his own Sabbath vision of the world. If this God has a name, it is the name spoken from the Burning Bush: *ehyeh*, I am. When Job, through his catharsis, earns the vision and opens his heart to the terror and serenity of it, he undergoes a spiritual transformation that no other Biblical character has undergone. He is able to leave behind all his knowledge of good and evil and take a large bite from the fruit of the other Tree (now what was its name?). And his story becomes the whole story.

Notices

CONCERNED ABOUT ISRAEL'S DIRECTION? Enter the struggle for the future of the Jewish State. By joining Friends of Labor Israel, you become eligible to receive a ballot in the May mail election of American delegates to the World Zionist Congress, to be held in Jerusalem in the fall of 1987. The aim of Friends of Labor Israel is to impact upon the World Zionist congress so that Zionism can remain the movement for justice and Jewish fulfillment in Israel rather than becoming an excuse for Jewish domination in the Middle East. Come down off the fence! See to it that *your* voice is heard in Israel. Send $5.00 to Friends of Labor Israel, 27 West 20th Street (9th floor), New York, NY 10011.

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1. The Psychodynamics and/or Phenomenology of Everyday Life. Micro or macro analysis of some aspect of our daily experience. Deadline: July 1, 1987.

2. Jewish Theology and Social Reality. How does our understanding of each illuminate our understanding of the other? Deadline: Oct. 1, 1987.

3. The Sociology and/or Politics of American Jewish Life. Focus can be on established institutions, alternative communities, the unaffiliated, etc. Deadline: July 1, 1987.

4. New Directions in Jewish Thought. Awarded for the most original essay on any aspect of Jewish history, theology, literature, Biblical criticism or Israel. Deadline: Nov. 1, 1987.

Purpose: To stimulate serious intellectual work in these areas.

Award: $250 for the winning essay, which will also be published in *Tikkun*.

Conditions: Each essay must contain original ideas, not summaries of work previously published. It should indicate intellectual competence and depth, but should be written in a language accessible to people who are not scholars in the field. It should be written with passion and communicate a clear sense of why the insights being articulated are important and how they contrast with previously existing thought in this area. Manuscripts will not be returned, and those receiving an award become the property of *Tikkun*. Each essay should be 3,500-5,000 words.

TIKKUN SABBATICAL FELLOWSHIP. $4,000 award for a senior academic who will spend his/her academic year working part-time at *Tikkun*'s office in the San Francisco area.

Designed for an academic on sabbatical leave who wishes to work as a senior editor conceptualizing and editing pieces, working with authors, and developing the intellectual perspective of the magazine. We will consider candidates with expertise in any of the following areas: social theory, philosophy, history, literature, feminism, religion, any aspect of Judaica, or politics. Application by March 15, 1987. Include a sample of your recent writing, a resume, and a detailed letter (three to four pages) describing your ideas for what intellectual directions *Tikkun* should pursue and how you could make a contribution.

HELP TIKKUN IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD. Encourage others to read *Tikkun*. If you wish to start a study group, we can provide *Tikkun* in bulk for reduced rates (order ten or more: $3.50 per copy; order twenty or more $3.00 per copy). Please ask your local bookstore, or nearby college bookstore, to stock *Tikkun*. Call us for info on our national bookstore and newsstand distributors.

For information about purchasing space for your notice in the Notices Section, contact Amy Wachspress, *%Tikkun*, 5100 Leona Street, Oakland, CA 94619.

Excerpts from the Founding Editorial Statement

TIKKUN: To Mend, Repair and Transform the World

The notion that the world could and should be different than it is has deep roots within Judaism. The refusal to accept the world as given, articulated in the Prophetic call for transformation, has fueled the radical underpinnings of Jewish life. The idol-smashers of the last 150 years, Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud, articulated a fundamentally Jewish sensibility.

Tikkun Magazine hopes to provide a voice for those who still dare to hope, for those who are not embarrassed to dream, for those Jews and non-Jews alike who are still moved by the radical spirit of the Prophets and who insist on keeping their message alive.

It is not only Jews, much less religious Jews, who are able to hear the Prophetic voice and respond to it. **Tikkun** seeks to create an intellectual arena in which non-Jews as well as Jews, religious as well as secular, can explore the fundamental intellectual, cultural and political questions of our time.

* * *

Jewish religion is irrevocably committed to the side of the oppressed. Jews have a deep commitment to the liberal ideals of democracy, human rights and fundamental liberties. But we are not uncritically committed to liberalism. When liberal values are used as a cover for materialism and individualism, we demur. We stand for freedom, but not for giving corporations unlimited freedom to exploit the people and resources of the planet.

* * *

Many Jews are alienated from the Jewish world, not because it is too different from America, but because it's values are too similar to the dominant American values. Yet within Jewish history and Jewish tradition there exists a core of wisdom, borne from the struggle against oppression, that has much to contribute to our common intellectual and political life.

* * *

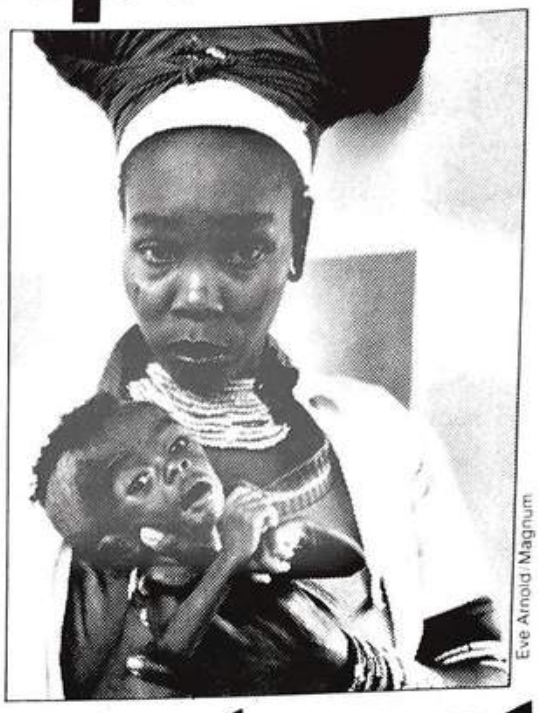
We strongly support Israel, and are lovingly critical of specific Israeli policies and critical also of those in the religious world who mis-identify contemporary Israel with the messianic goals that we need to strive for. We are committed to the struggle against nuclear war and nuclear weapons as a central moral imperative of our time. We also support the struggles against apartheid in South Africa and for economic and political equality for Blacks in the United States; for an end to world hunger and for a reorganization of the world's resources and productive capacities so that poverty can be eliminated; for the kind of social reorganization that promotes respect and dignity for women and the end to patriarchal oppression; for the empowerment of working people and for the creation of peace in the Middle East.

The full Founding Editorial Statement appears in **Tikkun,** Vol. 1, No. 1, available from **Tikkun** magazine.

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Apartheid



Eve Arnold/Magnum

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- Black workers earn as little as $30 per month, and unemployment is over 25 percent.
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For them, TIKKUN will be a revelation. We are sharp, we are not predictable, and our range of interests defies any easy pigeon-holing.

2. Your friends who want (or once wanted) to change the world. Now surrounded by a culture that proclaims any larger changes to be utopian (or, worse, destructive), they spend most of their time making a career, but deep in their hearts still nourish the dream.

TIKKUN will revive their spirits. Instead of the old slogans, they will face creative new ideas and new ways to understand why liberals and progressives have failed and how that could be changed.

3. Your friends, or relatives (child? parent?), the alienated Jews. They are sure that the Jewish world is too conservative, and positive that Judaism itself is sterile and outdated.

TIKKUN will show them a whole new aspect of Jewish life. Jewish feminism, a community of Jews who root their involvement in liberal/progressive politics, thinkers who challenge the traditional "holy cows" of Jewish life, Israelis who criticize some aspects of Israeli policy, a Judaism that engages with the most challenging aspects of modern philosophy and culture, Jewish atheism, and a deep respect for intellectual honesty wherever it may lead.

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Tikkun (tē•kün) . . .
to heal, repair and transform the world.
All the rest is commentary.