(te•kun) To mend, repair and transform the world.

TIKKUN

Ten Days to Change Our Inner Selves

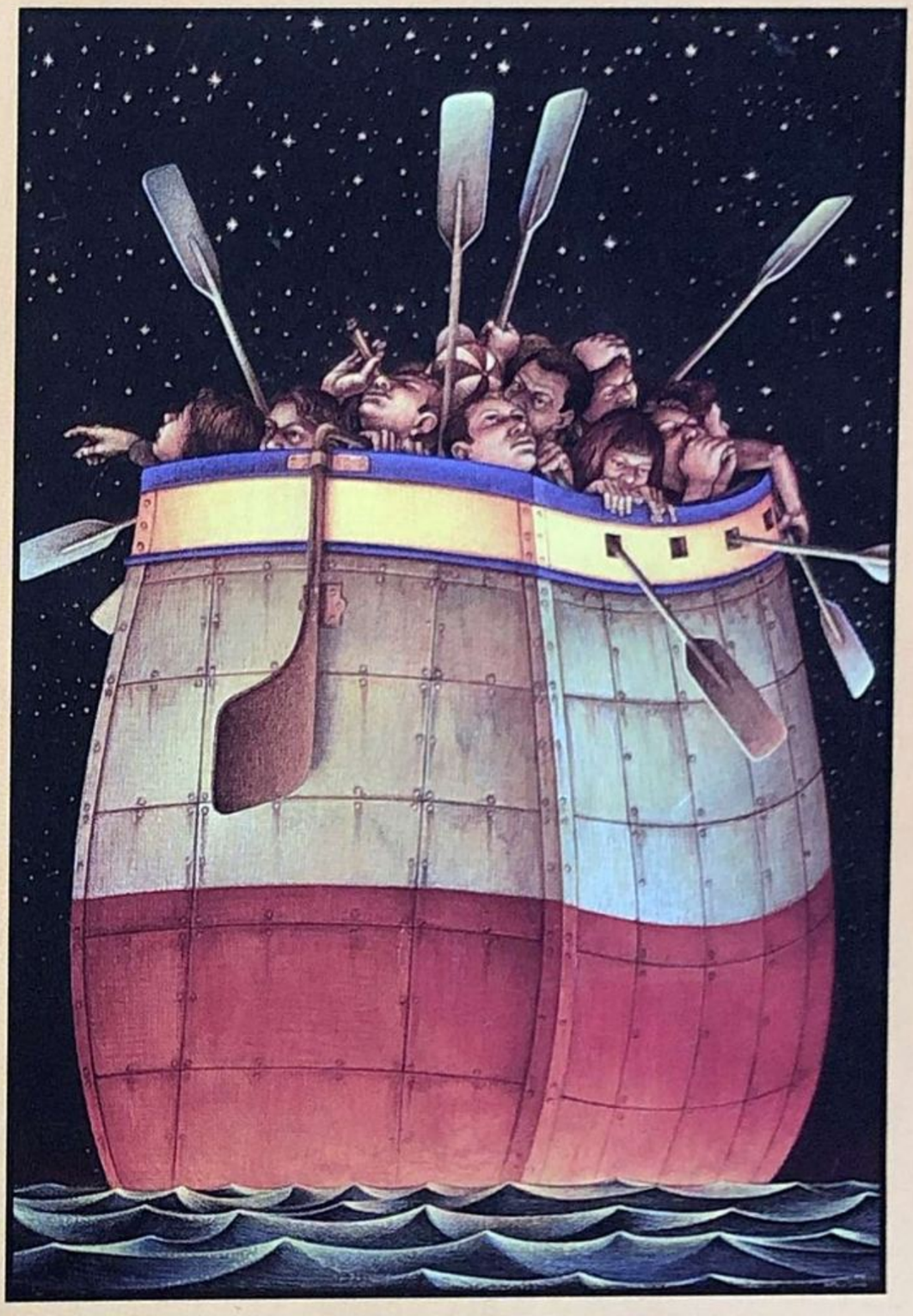
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Plus—Spiritual vision from
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A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1996 $6.00

ELECTION '96 AND THE FUTURE OF LESSER-EVIL POLITICS

Dan Cantor Peter Gabel
Alice Chasan Dan Hamburg
Charles Derber Jim Wallis
Mary Edsall Jeremy Rifkin
Chaka Fattah



Fear of Success
Michael J. Bader

Chana Bloch
translates
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PLUS

Meaning Matters

An Ethics Summit Sampler (part II)

Cornel West • Laurie Zoloth-Dorfman • Thandeka
Major Owens • Sharon Welch • James Forbes

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As Tishrey Approaches

The year is nearly gone.
What was it all about?
My God what did it mean?
we wrestled You and I.
What purpose did have?

At this hour of prayer
time for looking in
I need You to show me
once again the vision You
showed me in those so clear days.

And yet in this abandonment
In which I seek You and only
me I find in the seeking
though I know that underneath
the seeker's knowing there are You!

So show Your face and hide it not
I beg You. And You in me beg me to
show You the move, the very next one
which I would have You guide me to
the one surprise You crave

that I, not in aforethought schemes,
though goody-good please You,
taking instead loving risk,
to leap in faith, in hope,
despite the deep despair,
the learning of my bruise'd life.

Still juggling I am forced to dance
my frantic dance to balance tasks
You laid on me in kids and kisses
and often something falls, I miss
to catch an obligation I took on—

then I fail and hear You laughing at me
I rage at this, so full of failure,
once again I slipped. I did not manage
to do it right—If only then I could give ear
to the sigh You sigh in me

and see that the laugh is kind
not gloating at my failure
a forgiving chuckle in which You
thank me for the pratfall that
showed I tried my best

and all too short my reach was then
I missed—You laughed, a Purim *shpiel*
Purim *Kippurim*—
good evil? Mordechai, Haman—start again
and juggle on, you Zalman laugh also,

You urge me to see the joke, it was on me
my turn to enter-tain not main-tain
Not taint you dummy! Stop the guilt
The milk that spilled was not in vain
G-d's gain that laugh, forever will remain.

IN SOLITUDE ETERNALLY CONFINED
I NEED YOU WOMAN, MAN AND CHILD
THAT I MAY POUR MY SELF INTO
YOU TO WRESTLE/LOVE MY ME AS ME,
MY ME AS YOU. AND IN THE LAUGH

IT'S DONE I'M ONE. I DOUBLY CLONED
AM NOW AT-ONE-ED. WHEN SINNER, SIN
AND SINNING ONE, THERE IS NO VICTIM.
GONE IS THE SHAME YOU FELT.
THE UNI-/-VERSE IS MY PLAY ROOM AND YOURS.

WILL-YOU COME AND BE WITH ME IN ME
IN THE SUKKAH OF WHOLENESS. LET US AGAIN
FALL IN LOVE AND DANCE AND VISIT WITH
THE FATHERS THREE, THE MOTHERS FOUR AND DANCE
THE DANCE BRESHIT—*KOL YISRAEL* ONCE MORE.

—Zalman Schachter-Shalomi

TIKKUN

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POETRY

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As Tishrey Approaches

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Letters

THE ETHICS SUMMIT

To the Editor:

The Summit on Ethics and Meaning was three days in which I felt that the other 1,500 people in attendance shared with me a deeper truth and yearning for a way of life than might be supposed from our various professional titles or multitudinous places of self-identification. It was so wonderful to experiment with what it might be like to live our lives concerned with an expanded bottom line.

The talks given by Rabbi Lerner, Sister Chittister, and the Reverend Campolo, among others religious, were undeniably among the best, most inspirational I have ever heard. Yet as one who can allow only the most tenuous use of the word, God, I felt a little unsure of my place and connection to a politics of meaning. As one who believes that we would be better off without a Bible that reserves its acknowledgment of the immanence of the image of God to only one species, I question the benefit of bringing in God to facilitate the creation of a better world.

As opposed to many if not most Americans brought up in the Fifties, Sixties, Seventies, and Eighties, I was raised in a very religious atmosphere. Everyone around me was of like religious practice. I am one of those people, be it for neurological, psychological, or dispositional reasons, who do not require, and in fact prefer not to require, God to realize that I have a personal connection with the system we call the universe. I think of myself as religious, but definitely not Religious.

The politics of meaning resonates with such a diverse crowd because it makes sense experientially. If the Golden Rule makes sense, so does the politics of meaning. Feminism has made profound changes because it made sense to people's experiences. It does not take a brain surgeon to know that an excess of justice without caring, or an excess of liberty without community has a few problems.

What excites me most about the poli-

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tics of meaning is its systematic applicability. It makes sense certainly in the public spheres of work and politics, but it also explains family, friendship, and erotic relationships, and how they have become unstable and humanly unfulfilling. Living in Los Angeles, where image too often trumps substance, it is all too apparent how the "what have you done for me lately?" bottom line has pervaded business, politics, and personal spheres. One need not understand the world as the domain of God to know through one's own experience that certain forms of relation are in the long run better than others. One does not need to hold to the notion of divine grace to appreciate that human decency is a two-way street.

Harlan Levinson
West Hollywood, California

Editor responds:

Our goal is to include equally people from established religious communities and equally those like Harlan Levinson. But given the hostility of Left and liberal communities to religion, we have tried to underline our respect for and openness to people who do find it easier to articulate the politics of meaning within the language of traditional religions. We are equally open, however, to those who do not believe in God or do not feel comfortable with religious language.

To the Editor:

As the politics of meaning continues to grow, many intelligent and creative people will find new ways to strengthen and improve its implementation. The trick is improving the movement in a way that doesn't attack the movement or leaders.

Divergent opinions in any group are essential. Without them you have the kind of "groupthink." Yet, our desire to improve a situation based on our unique experience and understanding can backfire if we are not thoughtful. Criticism and polarization often paralyze people.

At Tuesday's luncheon at the National Summit on Ethics and Meaning, a group of students from Vassar made a speech. Their willingness to speak out about the ways they saw the movement was failing and the ways they could make it better was admirable. Yet, it left me wondering if they accomplished what they had intended, which was to improve the politics of meaning movement.

I think I would have been a lot more excited about the students' ideas if, in private, they would have said to the leaders, "We love you for what you are doing, for not giving up, and for caring enough

Upcoming Events

For TIKKUN and The Foundation for Ethics and Meaning

September 13-15, 24-25: High Holy Day services conducted by Rabbi Michael Lerner. Join us at the new San Francisco Jewish Renewal shul, Beyt Tikkun. For service locations and schedules, call (510) 526-6889.

October 13: Philadelphia-area Summit on Ethics and Meaning. Call Bruce Weinstein at (215) 938-7019 for details.

October 16: Michael Lerner, Marianne Williamson, and Margot Adler are the panelists for "Election Countdown '96: Politics, Meaning, and Spiritual Values," sponsored by the New York Open Center. Time: 7:30 p.m. Cost: $13/$15. Call (212) 219-2527 for more information.

October 20-21: Gainesville, Florida Summit on Ethics and Meaning. Contact Adam Tritt at (352) 373-0106 or <adamus@dkeep.com> for details.

November 4: Election Eve. We urge TIKKUN readers to hold local house parties. Discuss the elections, using the roundtable in this issue as a starting point for your discussion.

November 5: Listen and respond to the election results as a community. In New York, call (212) 864-4110 for location and time. In San Francisco, meet at the New College Cultural Center, 764 Valencia Street, between 18th and 19th Streets, at 7:00 p.m.

Date TBA: Boston/New England Summit. Contact Philip Decter at (508) 650-0049 or <pdecter@aol.com> for details.

about this world to work day and night to make it better. We are so excited about this, that we are going to work as hard as you do to make sure that more students are included in the movement."

People who are learning to lead and trying to step boldly where others have not gone need to be completely supported for what they are trying to do, not put down for the ways in which they fall short.

I am hopeful that more and more people will lead in the politics of meaning movement, making us a force to be reckoned with. I can't wait to see the hundreds of ways everyone will create the delicious kind of world we can all be proud to say is ours. Yet, I am concerned that intelligent people will hold back if they see that those who are working hard are being criticized for not doing something more or better.

I still regret that I didn't stand up at the luncheon and try to stop the students from their public attack. I know they are loving and caring people. Yet, I also know that the way they handled their unhappiness did not have the intended result.

It's time for us to make the changes we want, instead of criticizing the people who are working to make changes already. This is my goal. I may not do it perfectly, so please don't attack me if I mess up.

Ruth Shlossman
Washington, D.C.

Women and Tikkun

To the Editor:

This is to give you a heartfelt thank you for the strong female writing and presence in the July/August issue of the magazine. I am referring specifically to the three pieces by women taken from addresses to the national summit: Marian Wright Edelman's "Putting Children First," Cherie Brown's "Four Principles Toward a Politics of Meaning," and Jyl Lyn Felman's "Nurturing the Soul."

This is writing that cuts to the bone, that cries out our pain and despair in searing and passionate prose. It offers a much-needed balance to the often eloquent but sometimes wordy and left-brain dominated writing of the masculine leaders in this movement. If we are to succeed in creating social change, we must have this kind of balance. I read these pieces and wept. There is a lot of weeping to be done as we begin to repair this devastated society. It may take not hundred of hours as Cherie Brown says, but thousands, so bad is the damage. It cannot be that only women are suffering this pain but it may be that we willl have to go first in naming it, feeling it, and healing it. So be it.

Huzzahs to all three women! Tell it sister, tell it!

Joy Helmer
Seattle, Washington

The Greening of Judaism

To the Editor:

Rabbi James Ponet's review of my two recent books, *Down-to-Earth Judaism* and *Godwrestling—Round 2* ("The Greening of Judaism," July/August 1996), was so generous in its praise, and mostly so accurate in its understanding, that I hesitate to write to disagree with two aspects of his analysis. But the aspects are important enough that I need to write anyway.

Rabbi Ponet suggests that I believe, as does the philosophy called "deep ecology," that humanity is "a fully embedded participant in the life of the earth." I think that Torah, and I, have a more subtle view: that humanity is not simply a steward that stands above the earth, but also is not fully embedded in it. The teaching that comes from the Hebrew *adam* (human, "earthling") and *adamah* (earth, humus) is that the two of us are deeply intertwined. Neither is separate or separable from the other; neither is embedded fully within the other.

From a geological perspective, one might think that although humanity cannot exist without the earth, earth can exist without humanity. I do not believe that is true. I believe that the universe moves toward becoming more fully aware of its own Unity, and the human race is a necessary aspect of this evolution.

Using scientific language, evolution necessarily—as part of its Darwinian, survival-of-the-fittest, counter-entropic process—moves toward the emergence of creatures with fuller consciousness.

Using theological language, the universe seeks to mirror God.

To do this, from either perspective, there needs to be a species capable of self-awareness—made up of individuals who can reflect upon their own selves, and also able as a species to reflect upon itself and to see itself as part of the Unity of the universe—on which it is also capable of reflecting. That is what it means to live in the Image of God—to reflect upon the Unity, and thus to mirror God's Own Self.

Homo sapiens is the most thorough experiment in self-awareness that the universe, on this planet at least, has brought into being; and in that sense it bears the Image of God more fully than any other species. If Homo sapiens fails as an experiment in this direction, there will come another experiment. It too will be "human" in the most important senses.

To be capable of "self-awaring," life inevitably must also be capable of creating the technology that can wreck the planet. That gives the human race a need and a mandate unique among all species: to act as it were a steward for the planet. But if we fail in this task, the planet's ruination will take us with it. That is the sense in which we are embedded in the earth, though not fully.

The second area in which my understanding of my work disagrees with Rabbi Ponet's is that he thinks I believe that "God is really good." In fact, in *Godwrestling—Round 2* (page 181), I argue that the Holocaust happened because one aspect of God—the I-It/Doing/Making aspect—has in the modern era come surging far more fully into the human species than ever before, without, as yet, a commensurate surge into human action of the I-Thou/Loving/Being aspect of God.

And then I wrote: "Are you saying the babies and the bubbes died because God was coming deeper into the world? How good can such a God be? Very good, I say; but not totally good."

Even the Holocaust, the H-bomb, global warming—even they, or especially they, point toward the truth of the great Hassidic teaching: The world is God, wrapped in robes of God. For they are aspects of God-power bursting into the world, ways in which we have already begun to unwrap the robes and thus discover that we and all the world are God.

But we must not stop there. Our task is to continue to unwrap the robes and to dis-cover that we and all the world are God—not by using our God-powers to blast the world with a Flood of Fire, but to heal it by drawing more deeply on the God of *Shalom* and *Shabbat*. Affirming the Unity of the One God Who is both power and love, both doing and being—by ourselves acting in that Unity.

So the task of Judaism, and Christianity, and Islam, and Buddhism, and Hinduism, and all the other spiritual traditions, is now to move forward to bring the next great wave of I-Thouing, of love and restful be-ing, of deeper, broader, and more meaning-full community, into the world. For Jews, that is the task of Jewish renewal. For us all, that is the deeper meaning of the "politics of meaning."

Rabbi Arthur Waskow
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Paul Wellstone: Profile in Courage

Since he was elected to the Senate from Minnesota in 1990, Paul Wellstone has been a remarkable public servant. His latest mark of distinction was his refusal to be steamrolled into support for last summer's atrocious welfare bill. President Clinton, at the time twenty points ahead of Bob Dole in the polls, nevertheless felt that he could not afford to take the political risk to do what was right and veto the Republicans' punitive dismantling of aid to poor children and immigrants. Paul Wellstone, on the other hand, became the only Democratic senator up for re-election to oppose the Republican plan publicly and vociferously. The man has guts.

And his courage has been consistent. In 1991, shortly after being elected, Wellstone came to the TIKKUN conference in Jerusalem and thus publicly identified with the Israeli peace movement. Later, he became an outspoken supporter of real health-care reform, questioning the bureaucratic monstrosity proposed by the Clintons and yet not playing the destructive nit-picking role that many of his Democratic colleagues pursued in undermining the whole venture.

We can't help being impressed with this feisty and intellectually powerful guy, a frequent contributor of insightful articles to TIKKUN, who has the courage that so many elected officials lack. □

Families: The Democrats Still Don't Get It

The House Democrats have issued a "Families First" agenda that seems to repeat the mistakes of the Democrats' past, rather than transcend them. The Democrats have finally awakened to the fact that many people are open to conservative politics because the Right addresses—albeit in a distorted fashion—the pain people experience in family life. Despite the fact that Democratic Caucus leader Vic Fazio and a significant minority of House Democrats really *do* understand the politics of meaning, recent drafts of their family agenda revert to traditional social-democratic economism.

The Families First document begins with a weak and misguided proclamation asserting that most people want moderation. That's what Democrats are offering—moderate, modest and achievable changes that will help families that are struggling just to pay the bills, educate their children, and save for retirement.

No doubt, the Democrats are right that paying the bills, educating the children, and saving for retirement are all very important goals. We support these goals. But is that what underlies the tensions that most people face in relationships?

The Families First agenda proceeds to outline a set of economic programs that seem promising, and most of which we'd support. But what is missing from their agenda is critical: an understanding of the ethos of selfishness and materialism and how it undermines families.

Middle-income as well as poor families sometimes face tensions based on inadequate child care, health care, or economic supports. Yet even families that have adequate support structures of this sort often fall apart. The way people internalize the selfishness and materialism of the competitive market, learn to use others as objects and fail to see them as created in the image of God; the way the marketplace in relationships has encouraged people to discard each other very quickly and go on to the next possible partner; the absence of people who really believe in commitment and solidarity and working things out—these aspects of our society have much greater bearing on the crisis in families than do any of the issues that the Democrats address.

These problems have everything to do with the impact of the capitalist market and its values on the psyches of most Americans. If talking about that is too radical for the Democrats, then the family issue will remain the property of the Right, which has the insight to acknowledge that family breakdown is rooted in a crisis of values (though the Right then disgustingly distorts the picture by blaming the ethos of selfishness on the alleged self-centeredness and self-indulgence of gays and lesbians, feminists, African Americans, Jews, immigrants, and other traditionally demeaned groups, aided and abetted, supposedly, by liberal Democrats who deliver costly entitlements and expanded rights to satisfy these "special interests.")

As long as the Democrats avoid this level of analysis and refuse to confront the ethos of selfishness and its

roots in the market, their analysis will seem counterintuitive to most people, who know that the breakdown in families is not going to be solved until we confront the society's underlying ethos of selfishness and me-firstism. We understand the Democrats' fear of being charged with inciting "class warfare" should they question the market values that permeate our lives. But, while recycling economic solutions may get them through this election, this strategy will never win the Democrats the sustained loyalty of the many Americans who understand that the meaning issues are central to the crisis in their lives.

But if this is true, why do Americans appear to favor Clinton over Dole? As the candidates' positions on the issues have become increasingly indistinguishable, people no longer feel that either is likely to address the meaning issues. So they vote on the basis of which one seems to manifest more life-energy, more connection to the underlying hope to break through all the constraints in their lives that keep people separated, lonely, and desperate. During the 1992 campaign, Clinton's willingness to banter one-on-one with talk-show hosts and his playful saxophone solos on TV had a humanizing effect that drew voters to him. It remains to be seen if he can find some other symbolic way to communicate that sense of hopefulness that might distinguish his inner essence—which actually does contain a genuine core of loving idealism—from all the disappointments people have had in his performance in office. If not, Americans may vote for Dole out of despair and resignation and a conviction that nothing more than self-interest is possible, so why not cash in on a 15-percent tax cut?

These same considerations also explain Ross Perot's appeal. Though he talks in the same economistic terms as Dole and Clinton, he sometimes makes statements that seem to break through the obfuscations and demand some level of honesty and acknowledgment of how disappointed most Americans have become with a government that promises caring but delivers bureaucratic manipulations (e.g., the Clinton health-care reform plan). People may be less inclined this time around to take Perot seriously, more likely to see him as a cunning manipulator unwilling to give democracy a chance even in his own Reform Party. But Perot's following has little to do with his ideas and everything to do with the desperate hope that someone will embody enough creative energy to dispel the phoniness and inner deadness of contemporary politics. Conversely, no matter how smart Ralph Nader's politics, the Green Party is unlikely to make much of a blip on the political radar screen precisely because Nader is incapable of manifesting any sign of that hopefulness, joy, and spirit of love and caring that might signal a real human being under all the stultifying economic and political rhetoric.

The Democrats' Families First agenda loses on both counts. It neither connects to the life force (e.g., by energetically attacking the Right's misuse of the family issue as a club against gays and lesbians and feminists) nor goes deep enough to address the real problems facing families. Too bad that some House Democrats, obviously well-intentioned, still don't get it. □

Our Tenth Anniversary Year

This Jewish year, TIKKUN celebrates its tenth anniversary. We actually began publishing in May of 1986, but only started a bimonthly format in January of 1987.

We will dedicate our January/February 1997 issue to celebration of the anniversary, and at that point we hope to present a more detailed analysis of our accomplishments in these ten years, and a vision for our future.

For the moment, it's sufficient to state the three accomplishments of which we are most proud.

You might think I'm going to mention the fact that we are widely quoted and considered one of the most intelligent, lively, and provocative magazines in the country. That's great, and it makes for good p.r., but being smart and respected and taken seriously is not why we started this enterprise, and it's not what keeps us going.

Here's what makes us most proud:

First, we have helped to introduce into public discourse the notion of a progressive approach to the ethical and spiritual crisis in American society—and have begun to stimulate the development of a social movement that seeks to "change the bottom line" in America from selfishness and materialism to caring and spiritual sensitivity. We've even begun to put the dominant cynicism somewhat on the defensive, at least enough so that at least some of the worst cynics at The *New Republic*, The *Nation*, The *Atlantic*, The *New York Times*, The *Washington Post*, and other self-appointed guardians of American culture are now aware that some readers can distinguish between a clever put-down and a sophisticated argument for a position. We've even made it safe for people on the Left to acknowledge that they aren't fully comfortable with the political correctness that surrounds them without having to feel that in saying that they were capitulating to the Right.

Second, we've brought back into Judaism literally thousands of young Jews who were estranged from their Jewishness. We've done so by creating a magazine that many people read *despite* the fact that it is a Jewish mag-

azine, because they know that within it they will find some of the most exciting cultural and political discourse. Then, they begin to read some of the Jewishly oriented articles and come to realize that the Judaism they rejected as children has little in common with the burgeoning Jewish Renewal movement whose voices are heard through our pages.

Third, we are proud of our role as a champion of the Israeli peace movement. A mere ten years ago, when we began, the peace perspective was seen as subversive in the American Jewish world. Those who articulated the idea that Palestinians have the same right as the Jewish people to national self-determination were seen as traitors, or at least as "self-hating Jews." They risked ostracism or, minimally, rendering themselves suspect and "ruining their careers" in the Jewish world. Tikkun participated in the process through which that was changed. We stood up to the "Israel can do no wrong" crowd, and we did so in the name of Judaism and the Torah. We refused to allow Torah or God to be associated with morally repugnant policies. We did this not as Jews who were estranged from our Jewishness and whose sole interest in Jewish issues was to criticize Israel, but as Jews who passionately claimed the tradition as our own, who had no intention of ceding all that is powerful and compelling in Jewish history and culture to the conformists and conservatives who ran the Jewish world.

We have maintained our commitment to a justice perspective in Israel, and we've done so with the same lack of orthodoxy that we use in our commitment to progressive social change in the United States. We've been able to articulate a powerful critique of the Israeli peace movement, in particular its refusal to address the social justice issues in Israel or to embrace the national or religious discourse of the Jewish people in articulating its support for Palestinian rights.

In retrospect, we think we played a significant role, along with Peace Now, in creating the space inside Jewish institutions for people who were strong supporters of the peace perspective, even before the premiership of Yitzhak Rabin.

These are the kinds of accomplishments of which we are most proud. We are not just an intellectual magazine. We have a commitment to *tikkun*—to healing, repairing, and transforming the world. The healing sometimes involves controversy and pain, as healing often does. Sometimes we've made mistakes, been too shrill, or too insistent. Sometimes people have gotten annoyed at me for repeating certain themes. Sometimes we've printed articles that we shouldn't have and we've failed to print pieces we should have. But all in all, we are quite proud of what we have accomplished in these ten years.

To continue our work, we need your help. There are very few magazines of ideas that survive on their own revenues. Most are published by a wealthy individual or organization that foots the bill and makes up the inevitable losses (in forty-five years under the sponsorship of the American Jewish Committee, *Commentary* magazine was never once in the black—the American Jewish Committee always had to make up its deficit). We were made possible initially by the generosity of our first publisher, Nan Fink. Ever since she left Tikkun six years ago, we have been unable to find a well-to-do person to fund the magazine or a Jewish or secular organization willing to provide sponsorship for Tikkun. So we depend on *you*, our readers, to allow the magazine to survive.

Reader support is going to be all the more important in the coming years. As a first step, we are asking our readers to become "Tikkun Associates" by donating $150 or more per year. Tikkun Associates will receive discounts on Tikkun conferences and seminars, and will be honored at Tikkun events. As a second step, we are asking you to help us create a series of Tikkun dinners, parties, or other fund-raising events in your community from January to March of 1997, when we will be celebrating the Tikkun tenth anniversary in full gear. If you are willing to host or organize such an event, write to me. If not, then please attend one (for example, our national tenth anniversary dinner, the date for which will be announced in a subsequent issue). And of course, please subscribe, if you don't already. If you do, please give Tikkun subscriptions as gifts and please send in a donation (if you can't afford $150, send in what you can afford—every bit is important and helps, and it's all tax-deductible).

Meanwhile, let me extend to our readers my strongest and sincerest wishes for a healthy and happy New Year 5757. May this year bring to all of us a world renewed in its commitment to justice and peace, and lives of personal and communal spiritual fulfillment, health, pleasure, and joy. □

Maureen Dowd's Guru Cynicism

Michael Lerner

I should not have been surprised when I found myself being ridiculed in Maureen Dowd's June 27 column in The *New York Times*.

When Dowd called me on June 25 to talk about Hillary's "new guru" Jean Houston, I asked her if she hadn't done enough beating on Hillary over the years.

Dowd seemed stunned. Wasn't I angry, she suggested, that Hillary had dropped me and the politics of meaning the second I was labeled "the guru of the White House" by The *Washington Post*, The *Wall*

Street Journal, and other media?

I admitted that I've come to believe that the Clintons have "a moral backbone problem." Having spent time strategizing with me about how to implement a politics of meaning perspective, and even having had Maggie Williams call to tell me that Hillary expected me to submit future op-eds to the White House for prior approval before submitting them to the press, I was certainly astounded to read later that Mrs. Clinton was now describing my visit as nothing but "a courtesy call." Over the years the Clintons have seemed to me to abandon ideas or people they really believe in (Lani Guinier or Joycelyn Elders, or Peter Edelman, for example), and to accommodate far too much to what seems at the moment least likely to produce criticism or public questioning.

"But how does that differ from not having any principles whatsoever?" Maureen asked.

The difference, I responded, is this: If the media had not so wildly attacked and ridiculed the Clintons, or given credence to the pack of innuendoes and non-criminal acts that they labeled "Whitewater," the Clintons would not have felt so isolated. The problem, I allowed, is compounded because whenever Mrs. Clinton is caught having a genuine idea or feeling or spiritual yearning, as she had when she told the country that "America needs a politics of meaning," instead of standing up for her position and explaining why she holds it, she acts like a deer caught in your headlights: stunned, confused, and then running for cover. It is this response that gives the media encouragement to continue its attack.

"Certainly you must feel bad being put on the same level as Marianne Williamson and Jean Houston and other New Age writers?" Here the reporter was inviting me to attack the people who had supposedly "replaced me" (in a position I had never held in the first place, and a position that I'm sure they never held either, namely as the powerful influence over Mrs. Clinton's mind). Moreover, I was being asked to participate in the fantasy of superior influence, as opposed to these others, and to join the reporter as the insider who "really" knows what is happening, as opposed to those others who are on a lower level. I refused.

First, I told Maureen Dowd that the whole idea of Hillary having a guru was ludicrous because Hillary had been, in my experience of her, someone with a strong and independent mind who could learn from many but subordinate herself to none.

Second, I told her that I could not agree to put down Williamson or Houston. While their approach to the world differs from mine in not highlighting the social and economic realities that reflect and contribute to the spiritual crisis facing American society, I have no reason to think that these writers are flaky or that their writings in any way deserve the derision that the media have heaped upon them.

Dowd was audibly disappointed that I wouldn't manifest some "guru envy."

I can understand why Dowd thought I might go for the implict offer to be an insider with her, putting myself up by putting others down. When the initial flurry of articles about my role as guru of the White House first occurred, I was overly anxious to speak to the press and frankly fell right into the trap of seeming to suggest that I was really important and the national media should be listening. It was a seductive moment. I told myself that I could use this media exposure to get the ideas of the politics of meaning communicated to a mass audience, but quickly found that the media cared only about me as a personality. (Ironically, the one media outlet to actually give a few paragraphs to explaining my ideas was *People*, while The *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Wall Street Journal* ignored the ideas and played the celebrity angle.) In retrospect, I wonder if this was just bad judgment, or if my own ego was clouding my vision, unconsciously enjoying all this attention even as I consciously told myself that I was outraged that the media was ignoring my ideas.

But surely, Dowd pressed on, Jean Houston is making a lot of this incident, trying to build her career on her newly won media fame? I wondered if it had ever occurred to Maureen Dowd that it was the very fact that the media never give any serious opportunity for people to explain their ideas that might give someone like Jean Houston a motivation to use whatever opportunity she was now being presented. The media snickers over people's grabbing their "fifteen minutes of fame," without ever acknowledging that it is they who have created a world in which people only get that fifteen minutes, rather than enough time to present coherently to others whatever new political, cultural, or spiritual ideas might be of general interest.

Now Dowd took another tack. I had acknowledged that Mrs. Clinton seemed to be unwilling to defend her own ideas. Wasn't that, perhaps, the real source of her problems? Perhaps if she would just speak honestly?

Yes, I told Dowd, I had urged Hillary to tell the truth about Whitewater from the start, and to acknowledge that she too had been affected by the selfishness and materialism of the Reagan years. But, I added, the media would try to destroy her once she showed any such acknowledgment, since from the standpoint of the media, what really counts is being able to "expose" self-interest, even though that may be only a small part of

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ROUNDTABLE

Election '96 and the Future of Lesser-Evil Politics

Introduction

While TIKKUN never endorses or supports any candidate for public office, we can sum up what some of us see as the major accomplishments of the Clinton years, and what we view as the major shortcomings. And we can invite others to engage in a dialogue about how they assess these accomplishments and problems and what conclusions they draw.

We are well aware that some members of our community will be outraged that we even mention the problems, given the fact that the country faces an immediate choice between Bill Clinton and Bob Dole. Yet we do not believe it serves progressives well to distort the record, or to ignore the complicated nature of the Clinton reality. People may disagree about what conclusions to draw, but the discourse about the problems or the accomplishments cannot be dictated by electoral considerations. In the long run, the most powerful tool of those who wish to heal and repair the world is their ability to state the truth as they see it, unconstrained by considerations of "political correctness," whether the terms of political correctness are set by an oppressed group, or high-minded liberal Democrats, or religious activists, or union supporters, or any other group whose cause has a legitimate claim on our attention.

Accomplishments:

1. Family Leave Act. For the first time, parents have the right to take off time to care for a newborn, a sick child, or another family member without losing their job. This measure represents a significant step in a progressive pro-families agenda.

2. Waiting period for purchase of handguns. A minimal restraint on the gun-crazed.

3. Banning certain assault weapons. By standing up to the National Rifle Association, Clinton won the backing of law-enforcement organizations that have consistently argued that "law and order" is enhanced by a slowing of the torrent of military-style weapons throughout the society.

4. Establishment of AmeriCorps, the national service program. Clinton took a dramatic step toward a communitarian ethos by creating a small corps of people who would address America's most pressing domestic needs. The ideals of national service coincide with a meaning-oriented politics.

5. The earned income tax credit. Tax relief for the working poor. A concrete economic step that recognized the plight of those who did not want to be on welfare but whose incomes put them only slightly above the poverty line.

6. Moderate/liberal appointments to the judiciary. Though Clinton did not pick many of the prominent liberal jurists who might have countered twelve years of Republicans packing the judiciary with ideological conservatives, his appointments were often competent moderates who are likely to defend freedom of choice on abortion, protect civil liberties, and prevent the courts from becoming an instrument of repression against dissent.

7. Pro-environment policies. In a host of small ways, Clinton appointees supported environmental policies and resisted the attempts by the Republican Congress to dismantle earlier environmental protection measures.

8. Defense of choice on abortion. Clinton refused to pander to the anti-choice forces. While maintaining his own personal opposition to abortion, he resolutely defended the right of women to make this decision for themselves.

9. Support for the Israeli peace process. The Clinton administration threw American prestige and power behind the efforts of the Rabin government to create a workable peace agreement with Palestinians. Although Clinton never took the politically risky stand of President Bush (who made loan guarantees contingent on a cessation of expansion of West Bank settlements), he did make clear his administration's commitment to a peace position even after Netanyahu managed to turn the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin into an electoral victory for the Right.

10. Affirmative Action. Clinton refused to capitulate to the anti-affirmative action mood and defended some of the principles behind the policies.

Shortcomings:

1. Abdication of promises on foreign affairs. For example, Clinton forcibly returned Haitian refugees, turned his back on the genocide in Bosnia, rejected sanctions to support Chinese human rights—all moves counter to his explicit campaign promises.

2. Budget deficit reduction by cutting spending and

increasing taxes. This policy legitimated the notion that budget cuts were necessary and that deficits were a danger to the economy, thus creating a political consensus around this element of business's agenda and guaranteeing significant limits on government spending (in the process abandoning his own promises to increase spending on education, job training, and health care).

3. Advocacy of NAFTA. Clinton's pro-NAFTA stance eased the way for corporations to "downsize" and shift jobs and investment abroad, thereby creating massive economic insecurity even in the face of relatively high levels of employment. In Clinton, big business found a champion who appeared to be progressive on social issues while giving corporations a major part of their economic agenda.

4. Reframing of the welfare issue in the GOP's terms. As Clinton ran to the Right on this issue during the 1996 campaign, he found himself trapped when people expected him to live up to his four-year-old promise to "end welfare as we know it."

5. Health-care reform. Clinton proposed a bureaucratic monstrosity necessitated by his commitment to expand coverage while retaining high profit margins for insurance companies and health-care profiteers. He refused to consider the single-payer system that has a proven record in Canada. The Clinton proposals helped to legitimate fears that big government health care would eliminate individual freedom and would "cost too much," and thus to discredit any other comprehensive government initiatives.

6. Abandonment of the politics of meaning, helping to create the political ground for the Gingrich revolution. After promising to lead a campaign against selfishness and for idealism, Clinton used his self-interest in retaining popularity as the reason to abandon his promises. This caused massive despair about politics, relegitimated selfishness, and led people to turn to the Right.

7. Abandonment of homosexuals, first on the issue of their right to serve in the military, then later on gay marriage, through his support of the "Defense of Marriage Act." (On the other hand, he did appoint a lesbian activist, Roberta Achtenberg, to the post of assistant secretary for H.U.D., and made other gay-sensitive appointments.)

8. The first post-Cold War president found excuses to increase military spending and to make the military budget politically "reductions-proofed," thus ensuring that a balanced budget could only be achieved at the expense of domestic social programs.

9. Clinton supported a multi-billion-dollar program for construction of prisons—the primary lodging place for young Black men who will be most disadvantaged by the contraction of social spending for the poor. He supported a widening of the death penalty, and an expansion of the powers of federal police agencies as part of his "anti-crime" stance.

These are some of the considerations that may be relevant to a discussion of the 1996 presidential election campaign.

TIKKUN has invited a number of progressive elected officials, activists, and writers to discuss the campaign with us.

From our standpoint, the primary question is: "How will this election, both as a process and in terms of its outcome, affect the ongoing efforts of many of us, both in the politics-of-meaning movement and elsewhere, to build a society that embodies love and caring and that is committed to maximizing ethical, spiritual, and ecological sensitivity? Is the election process itself a distraction from those efforts, or might it contribute to building such a society? And what outcomes would be most desirable?

Dan Cantor is executive director of the New Party. Alice Chasan is executive editor of TIKKUN. *Charles Derber is professor of sociology at Boston College and author, most recently, of* The Wilding of America: How Greed and Violence Are Eroding Our Nation's Character. *Mary Edsall is co-author, with Thomas Byrne Edsall, of* Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics. *Chaka Fattah (D-2nd District, Pennsylvania) is a United States congressman. Peter Gabel is president of New College of California and associate editor of* TIKKUN. *Dan Hamburg is an organizer for the Ralph Nader for President campaign. He represented California's First District in the 103rd Congress. Jeremy Rifkin is president of the Foundation on Economic Trends and author, most recently, of* The End of Work. *Jim Wallis is editor-in-chief of* Sojourners magazine *and author of* The Soul of Politics.

Chaka Fattah: I think that the election is a choice point for the American public around some very basic issues. There's a clear choice between the two candidates, even though on many of the issues related to social justice the Clinton administration has not been everything that progressives want. But perfection is not available. This is a clear choice, although I think that we need a much more progressive alternative in the future.

The country's been convinced that we're spending too much money on poor people. Part of the difficulty for progressives is that we don't have an informed electorate, and that creates the climate for some of the political decisions that are

being made. There's a lot of work for progressives to do to help the American people understand the dampening of the American spirit that happens when we do less than our best to foster people's potential. The decision-making process should lead progressives to vote for Clinton over Dole. I can't imagine a set of dynamics that would lead people to Bob Dole.

I think a new progressive movement's got to be built around the sharing of information, building a consensus around some critical points of agreement about how the country's going to move forward. It can't be built around how we're going to continue to invest in defense, and worry about balancing budgets and trade deficits, and never look at the human issues in our country around education and making sure, whether you're reforming welfare or not, that people have opportunity, both educationally and economically. Moreover, we've got to build some sense of community.

Jeremy Rifkin: What the congressman just said about community is the key consideration here. I think, though, that there's a much larger problem in the United States and in other countries that neither political party has successfully addressed. We're in the midst of a fundamental shift in the nature of the economy, in the nature of work—a long-term transition out of the Industrial Age into the Information Age. It's caught both political parties up short.

The results of that transformation have already become very apparent in the economy and in the culture. We have increasing polarization between the Haves and the Have-nots. We're moving from mass to elite workforces, and the kind of unskilled and semiskilled work that was the signature of the Industrial Revolution is now on the wane. This shift is having tremendous political impact. The top 20 percent of the workforce—the knowledge sector—is doing quite well. The bottom 80 percent of the industrial workforce—from the management to the factory floor—are increasingly marginalized. The result: more and more social unrest, destabilization.

The marketplace cannot provide enough jobs to absorb the millions of people who have been disenfranchised. We're going to have millions of people over the next few years out on the streets. Government, traditionally the employer of last resort since the Depression, is now shrinking and down-sizing. Neither the government nor the market can deal with the critical issue on the minds of Americans: job insecurity.

We continue to think in Congress and state legislatures about politics as the market versus government. But we need to talk about a post-electoral politics that moves from a two-sector to a three-sector concept of politics. That's the opening wedge for a new vision of politics in this country.

The civic sector actually predates the other two, and it's a potentially viable social force. If it were an economy, it would be the seventh-largest economy in world; it's made up of 1.4 million organizations dealing with community needs that are not met by either government or the market. We need a healthy discussion on mobilizing a new three-sector politics with the civic sector as the radical center for a new politics of meaning and a vision for the next century.

Dan Hamburg: I agree with a good deal of what's been said, but I'm struck by how similar these themes are to those of the last presidential campaign. When Clinton spoke late in that campaign about the stagnation of America's working class, about massive numbers of jobs going abroad, about the need to "re-invest" in education, training, and infrastructure, many of us believed he was sincere. When he appointed Bob Reich as Secretary of Labor, we thought it signaled a comprehension that the globalization of the world economy and the vicious corporate down-sizing was doing more for corporate profits than for the ordinary working person or society as a whole.

As President, Clinton has led the charge for ever more globalization, and the gap between the Haves and Have-nots has grown more severe. He quickly moved from his campaign rhetoric about the declining fortunes of working people to an overriding concern with assuring the markets that he was not a "big-spending liberal." His appointments of Kantor and Bentsen spoke much more about Clinton than did his appointment of Reich.

I'm finished with lesser-evil politics. And I think that it's time, as Chaka Fattah said, to build a progressive movement. It's obvious that the only candidate with both a cogent analysis of the problems and a history of commitment to finding the solutions is Ralph Nader. He's not going to be in the White House come January, but at least he'll do some much-needed truth-telling.

Mary Edsall: I agree with what Jeremy Rifkin said—that we are in the midst of a fundamental shift from an industrial economy to an information economy. There's also a shift in social organization, which has occasioned what we now look at as a cultural war of competing moral and ethical systems. For progressives, it is crucial to understand the two competing moral systems. We need to understand the moral vision that undergirds conservatism, and why it has had such strong appeal to significant elements of the American electorate. We are going through a transition from pre-modern, traditional, reproductive regimes to an unprecedented system of reproductive organization in which traditional forms of marriage are no longer the norm. Women are having and raising children without the presence of the biological father. This makes many, many people extremely anxious and provides some people unprecedented experiences of freedom, liberation, and autonomy. This moral complexity is what underpins the welfare debate.

For liberals and progressives to understand the moral ethos at the heart of conservatism is an exercise in empathy. Many more Americans identify themselves as conservative than as liberal. And what it means to be conservative, I think, is to be organized around the concepts of self-restraint, self-discipline,

and service to others, around self-sacrifice and curbing of impulse and appetite. Liberals have a coherent and profound critique of that morality, but conservatives have an equally powerful critique of liberal morality. So progressives need to understand the conservative critique in order to produce a salable politics.

We need to understand why Clinton has been so successful by moving toward the moral center, why there is so much public support for welfare reform. Americans do have a great deal of compassion for the poor, but there is a moral view embedded in the conservative critique of welfare dependency, which interferes with the legitimate role of the state in protecting those who are unable to compete in a market economy.

Progressives need to integrate the moral critique and the economic analysis. It will take reworking of our positions to incorporate some of the conservative criticisms.

Jim Wallis: Elections are always surface fights rather than conflicts over the underlying roots of what's happening in our society. But they're affected by those underlying cleavages. I also agree with Mary that it's not the economy alone. It's the structural issues like the loss of work. In my neighborhood of Washington, D.C., people are poor for lots of reasons. Two of the biggest ones are teen pregnancy and lack of jobs. The Right has not been able to talk about the lack of jobs honestly, and the Left has not been able to talk honestly about pregnant teenagers. These are tremendous cultural issues, moral issues, the social questions—conservatives have raised them, and they are in the minds of most people. Their conclusions, and the way they're used as wedge issues, by the religious Right especially, is what I don't agree with.

But the Left has misdiagnosed these problems. There is not any populist, progressive, Left political program that will work in my neighborhood to alleviate poverty, unless you were, at the same time, rebuilding systems of family and community. Eighty percent of my neighborhood is single-parent families—and that simply cannot create a functional society.

The connections between the structural and cultural and moral questions is critical. The future of American politics will not be about ideology—it will be about values. And the categories of Left and Right, liberal and conservative, are simply dysfunctional on the street.

Dan Cantor: We're sitting here two days after the welfare decision by the President. So, the idea that the presidential election campaign is about moving us toward a more spiritually sensitive and caring society is sort of a cruel joke. It's satisfying to get some licks in on the President, but it's pointless. Clinton has failed, not because he's a sell-out—although he may be—but because there's no durable, visible, serious, lively, creative progressive political presence in American life.

Clinton's a tremendously gifted politician. But even if he were inclined to do the right thing, there's no force pulling him in our direction. So he concedes to the bond market, or the corporations, or the media elite—and American politics becomes a debate between Clinton and everyone to his right. What we need in American politics is a debate between Bill Clinton and Congressman Fattah. The New Party is about making that debate come to life.

Electoral politics is crucial in this regard, although I'd rotate Dan Hamburg's view ten degrees—I'd say that it's not necessarily presidential politics. We should take a page from the right wing's book. The Christian Coalition did not make itself a presence in American politics by running for president, but by working on the local level on families, and communities, and schools, and the fears and anxieties that people face. We need patience to move national politics in a more progressive and humane direction.

In this regard, the most promising development is the energy, solidarity, and willingness to experiment that is emerging out of the trade union movement. Most people who read TIKKUN have probably had family connected to the labor movement in the past. But the importance of a revived and reviving labor movement would have been obvious to our grandparents. When you look at other advanced industrial countries, the central determinant of whether a society is more rather than less egalitarian and caring is the level of union organization. Without strong workplace organizations, democracy is unsustainable.

Dan Hamburg: It's become clear that we don't have an administration that supports the concept of more powerful unions. Bill Clinton barely lifted a finger to move legislation to ban striker replacement, but he twisted arms with great energy to pass NAFTA. Clinton supports a living wage for all Americans until that idea conflicts with the more overriding need of multinational corporations to keep profits high. These are the corporations that pay the President's way, and he hasn't strayed from them since he was governor.

This is why we desperately need the Nader critique of our society's power relationships, which are defined and enforced by large concentrations of wealth.

Alice Chasan: I want to pick up on something that Dan Cantor said, and try to look at it from a different angle. He asserted that there is no force pulling Clinton in our direction. But the agony within his cabinet over this decision to sign the Republican welfare legislation illustrates the fact that there are forces both within government and without that have been attempting to pull him in that direction. I think we need to focus again on the question as it was framed in the introduction to this discussion—to try to look a little more closely at what it is about this election process that distracts from a larger vision. Clinton had that vision, as Dan Hamburg said; there were nascent elements of it in the 1992 presidential campaign. Those who are cynical could say that Clinton was simply trying to cast his net

as widely as possible and draw in those people who would be excited by that vision, but I believe that he genuinely had a larger vision. And there are people around him who were supplying him with the conceptual and the intellectual tools to craft such programs.

But there is something about our political process, obviously, that fragments that coherence of moral perspective. In Clinton's case—in the case of anyone trying to gain elective office in this climate—it has drawn him in an ad hoc way to address the myriad partisan attacks from his Republican adversaries and, preemptively, to run to the Right.

So, it's not that there are no forces that are pulling Clinton in a progressive direction. John Sweeney, president of the AFL-CIO, came to our Ethics Summit and spoke passionately about what the progressive elements in the labor movement are trying to do to move the country in that direction. The question is, what can we do about our political process? Most people in this discussion are speaking in the very long term, but perhaps we could come back in to discuss the significance of the current campaign.

Chaka Fattah: Clinton hasn't failed us. We have failed to do the organization and education necessary to create the climate among the electorate that would make it impossible for politicians to pass off the so-called "welfare reform" legislation as true reform. And unless we do the work—if the NRA or the Christian Coalition or the other right-wing groups are willing to work hard and organize—if we don't meet them on that battlefield, then we're going to continue to fail to pull elected officials in a progressive direction, even when they want to go in that direction.

Alice Chasan: But Clinton could have taken a different tack on this welfare bill. And, as it has been argued in TIKKUN repeatedly, had he done so he might very well have seen a groundswell of hope and excitement that he was articulating such a strong moral position.

As Michael Lerner has said, Clinton's moral backbone has somehow disintegrated. And Dan Hamburg has alluded to that in terms of the progressives' initial excitement about Clinton, and then this terrible disappointment.

Mary Edsall: The reason, I think, that Clinton's poll numbers are high and he is polling at about a 52 percent approval rating is that for many Americans, it seems as if he has in fact *found* his moral backbone, not that he has lost it. For the Left to be able to put together a coherent strategy, for example, for redistributing economic benefits, we have to understand what it is about his decision on welfare that seems morally coherent to a majority of Americans.

It has fundamentally to do with family organization. The attack on welfare as it is now constituted is on single-parent families, on the abandonment of their biological children by increasing numbers of young men. I think that the core of the assault on welfare is about sexuality and reproduction.

Peter Gabel: A theme that has emerged in the conversation on which there seems to be a developing consensus is that the kind of politics that we need to move toward is what Jeremy Rifkin called a third-sector politics, or what I would call the reconstruction of civil society, in a way that overcomes the choice between the isolated individualism of the market or the kind of false community represented by the state. In this conversation, I don't feel like I'm speaking as a lone progressive, but as a spokesperson for the politics of meaning. I'm an idealist, shaped in my youth by the social movements of the 1960s, who is now trying to figure out a politics of building a soulful, caring community, in which people can escape the sense of cynicism and powerlessness and isolation that they experience in everyday life, and come into connection with each other in a way that is affirming, and that makes people feel part of a meaningful whole that is reconveying a sense of sacredness and purpose to our common existence. That envisages a relationship between community and democracy and the election process that is longer-term. It involves rebuilding the fabric of connectedness beyond the family, in real relations between people in civil society, rather than simply through the momentary act of piercing a voting card and hoping that the person elected will be the embodiment of the kind of community that I'm talking about.

The 1992 presidential election had a meaning in relation to these values. After twelve years of the Reagan-Bush period, there was a great deal of hope and idealism associated with Clinton's candidacy and with the Year of the Woman that gave the election a hopefulness that this one does not have.

Jeremy Rifkin: This question of breaking the political paradigm is absolutely essential. The civic sector is really the first sector—it predates the market and government. Community always had to come first; then we could trade and have government. But this sector has been marginalized; it has a neocolonial status, relying on government largesse and the goodwill of corporate philanthropy. How does this sector become an equal player with market and government?

The key is mobilizing into a recognizable force. We've got 10 percent of the workforce in the not-for-profit sector. In addition, 89 million Americans, one out of every two adults, gives four hours or more per week to some non-profit organization. That is a tremendous potential constituency. These are people who are giving their time to religious, fraternal, service, and advocacy organizations.

They come from different segments of the society ranging from the Lion's Club to the Sierra Club. They may have different ideas about politics and the marketplace, different class, ethnic, and racial backgrounds, but they have something in common. Once they understand what they share, we have a

new politics. They each believe in serving the community—so much so that they give their precious time to create social capital. That is a powerful frame of reference if it's mobilized locally into a political movement.

Charles Derber: My heart is with this third-sector notion, and the idea of building social capital. But I feel that this discussion is skirting reality: The social contract is eroding, and there is a shift back to unfettered capitalism.

The market has achieved a level of predominance in the society that is reminiscent of the robber baron period. The largest corporations in the world are now larger than most governments; they're less fettered. With this new welfare law, Clinton is embracing the breakdown of the restraints that were built up fifty years after the robber baron period to try to control them. And a discussion of the rise of a third sector, and a civil society and social capital can't take place outside of acknowledgment of the fact that civic society has been eroded.

Most people are tremendously demoralized and privatized. We know from Juliet Schor's *The Overworked American* what's happened to labor time. The conditions of work and the things that people have to do to survive make it extremely difficult to mobilize them. That's why I feel like this civil society renaissance that we're talking about is very idealized. I don't think that civil society or localist community-based strategies can work in an era where you've got global markets, and the basic power that resides over communities is controlled by institutions far removed from those communities—

Peter Gabel: That sounds like a totally economistic analysis. What you're saying is until we change the economic control that global institutions have that it's impossible to build a social movement or a new vision of politics. What I'm saying is, no, that's not the case. For example, there's the Sixties generation that has a tremendously strong moral and idealistic sensibility, which has now matured and are parents of the next generation, and this expresses a part of the consciousness of millions of people. There are millions of people with religious affiliations who have a transformative, emotionally grounded sense of the possibilities of human existence. These are bases for the development for a new politics that is not controlled by global economic institutions or giant corporations.

Charles Derber: The moral argument has to be in relation to the acknowledgment that market forces are shaping the values of our society right now. It seems to me that the direction for change is crystallizing these moral energies. I think Secretary of Labor Reich began to get at some of this when he raised the issue of corporate welfare and corporate responsibility. This goes back to the heart of the politics of meaning: What is shaping morality? I think that we're in a Social Darwinist period where people are blaming once again, saying that it's the morality of the poor that's dragged down the society.

It's important to recognize that Clinton has done a really terrible thing in regard to the welfare bill, but he's also probably creating a new Democratic majority. I think he's going to win the presidential race, and there's going to be a new contest within the party that may refocus the national conversation about morality of the market.

Alice Chasan: To get back to the current political process and political structure and the way that it deadens the kind of moral focus that you're referring to, Charlie, Bob Reich had that understanding in early 1992, *before* Clinton's election, when he wrote in The *American Prospect* about this issue of corporate greed and placing ceilings on the salaries of CEOs. So, these were understandings that were out there, as we've said. There's something about our process that makes it impossible for our leaders to sustain any coherent vision. So, while Peter's and Jeremy's vision is appealing and utopian, I don't see what the mechanism is to get from here to there.

Jim Wallis: It's not utopian. The issue is how what we're calling the civil society or the third sector or community solutions—how that can be molded into a social movement with a moral vision. Right now, in local communities, there are conversations going on between the different sectors. You've got non-profit organizations, community organizers, mayors, city council people, meeting around such issues as youth violence. We've got to create a significant social strategy from the solutions that are emerging in what we are calling the civil society.

The mainline churches have more in their investment portfolios today than Clinton thinks he just saved on the welfare programs. Only a fraction of one percent of that church money is invested in community development at the local level. Those of us in the churches are challenging those money sources to do what their position papers on the social issues say and invest that capital in the kind of community-based efforts that we're creating around the country. That can then bring in private capital to support initiatives led by non-profits.

Peter Gabel: There seems to be a lack of confidence in speaking about the emotional dimension, the spiritual dimension, the evocative dimension that can pull people into a revitalized social movement which we call a politics of meaning. No matter how much money churches have that they could allocate to community investment, if they don't have the spiritual authority and compelling force to generate people's desire to participate in the civil realms they're working in, it doesn't matter how much money they allocate to it. You're a preacher—what about your confidence in that dimension?

Jim Wallis: That's what I mean by the mobilization of the service impulse. Those churches will only set that money loose with a spiritual argument. We got a hundred thousand

Lutheran dollars to start a development on the West Coast because of a spiritual demand placed on the national Lutheran Church to free up this money. We agree that the moral, spiritual, evangelistic vision must be there, but it also has to answer the money question, which it can, with this notion of a new partnership at the local level, which begins to create a whole new strategy, a new cast of players, and to generate resources, all because of the moral and spiritual vision that we share.

TIKKUN: The politics-of-meaning perspective says that in order to spur people to mobilize, there needs to be a way in which people feel that their hunger for meaning and purpose is being articulated. No longer, at this historical moment, will people respond to another plan that seems to be a way to have big government deliver services to passive recipients, and the atomizing of people that that represents. So, from a politics-of-meaning perspective, there's a problem not just with the liberal solution, but potentially with the third-party formulation--neither gives adequate attention to the question of how you address people's hunger for connection. That's Mary's point: the breakdown of those connections is central to people's experience and leads them to respond to conservatives. Their analysis of the breakdown is distorted, but they're on the mark that it is the breakdown of connection that is causing people's pain.

What this roundtable must address is: Does the 1996 election have any relevance whatsoever to this set of issues? If it does, how do you deal with the argument, put forward by third-party people, that part of the reason it has been impossible to change our political structure is that people of good faith continue to be locked into a lesser-evil logic that leaves those in the Democratic Party without any reason to respond to their left, because there are always pressures to go to their right, and the Left will always accede to a lesser-evil argument regardless of the content of the politics being put forward? There is no incentive for any political leader to do anything but accommodate the corporate agenda.

Dan Cantor: That's right. That's why we need to create what political scientists call a "credible threat of exit." Many Democrats don't just drift to the Right, they gallop. Surely the far Right in the Republican Party has always held out the potential threat to bolt, and in so doing, pulled the Republican Party to the Right.

A Clinton victory won't bring Nirvana; nor will a Dole victory be hell. But a unified Republican government would have some terrible side effects, particularly in regard to labor. It would force labor further into Democratic Party bunkers. And thus we'd lose the willingness to experiment, at the local level, in central labor councils, that is so promising.

As for Peter Gabel's comments, I like them, but in the end it's just a little bit too ethereal for me. There are people doing what he talks about at the local level, but what's needed is actual power. And to have actual power you need actual organizations, money, and people. Is this the politics of meaning? I don't know; you'll decide. But in Milwaukee, for example, the local New Party group and lots of other allies have passed an ordinance that requires all employees of the school district to be paid a "living wage," $7.70 an hour. This moves some people from $9,000 a year to $13,000 a year. It's still a pitiful wage in such a rich country, but enough to move you from poverty to a less marginal existence. Is that a loving and spiritually effective thing to do? I think so. Economic security is good for civic life, especially if it's achieved through solidarity and group effort.

TIKKUN: I don't think that anybody here would disagree with this idea of a living wage. But the issue of a living wage as a solution is precisely whether in the history of this country increasing the wages of workers has in fact created a new degree of solidarity, or whether the way that those struggles have been waged has actually allowed people to be more marginalized and privatized. The politics-of-meaning problem with third-party articulations is that they seem to be economistic, ignoring the hunger that people have for affirmation—

Mary Edsall: Higher wages do not always bring an increased sense of community or solidarity—on the contrary, they seem to be concomitant with increased individualism. I wish that the Left would make it a priority to explore intellectually and politically what it is about community, empathy, and caring that is hard on people and makes them yearn for solitude and autonomy and individual freedom and privacy.

What the Right brings to the debate is an ideology and a moral position that says even though you are drawn toward the benefit of privacy, autonomy, and individual fulfillment, you must relinquish a substantial amount of that to others in your immediate family, as opposed to others in the world at large. The Right's ideology of self-discipline and self-sacrifice has a punitive dimension, which is why liberals hate it. We need to talk about whether there's a way to get people to relinquish a significant degree of privacy and autonomy without that punitive dimension.

Dan Cantor: People need money, and time for themselves, their families, and communities. One way to do this would be to take Julie Schor's proposals on work-time seriously. We need to reject the idea that "the market shall rule."

Jeremy Rifkin: There's no reason why we shouldn't have a debate in this country about a thirty-hour workweek; it's going on in Europe. Companies like Hewlett-Packard and BMW in Europe have gone from a five to a four-day workweek and are still paying their workers for five days. They are doing it with shifts, so the technology makes up for the difference. There are real ways to have an intelligent, sober political discussion about how we begin to share the gains of this new global economy.

Dan Hamburg: You can't separate the politics of meaning from the possibility that people can have meaningful work and be rewarded at a decent level.

I don't agree with Jeremy that there are three sectors, since the government is inseparable from the large concentrations of wealth that call the shots. We can't expect Bob Dole, the senator from Archer Daniels Midland, or Bill Clinton, who was the governor from Tyson Foods and International Paper, and has been as good a friend to big business as any president in history to enter into a meaningful discussion of the pernicious impact of the globalization of capital, or of the maldistribution of the fruits of the world economy, or of the relationship between people's fears of unemployment and the structural difficulties we face in restrcting corporate greed. Where's the incentive? As long as society's shortcomings can be blamed on the poor, illegitimacy, drugs, and immigrants, the fundamental power relations remain hidden from view.

One percent of the population controls more wealth than 90 percent: That is fundamentally inconsistent with the health of a democratic society. Such inequalities make it so difficult for people to experience participation, hope, or meaning.

Charles Derber: I think that this is exactly right. I call it the politics of diversion, where people don't talk about the real sources of the problems. Pat Buchanan opened up a window for a lot of us to talk about some real power relationships before that window began to close. But if you look back on American history, there have been relatively few moments when that window opened up. A hundred years ago, the populist movement opened up that window, and a real discussion of power relationships emerged.

I just want to clarify to Michael and Peter the problem I have with the way you have framed the dangers of "economism." One becomes "economistic" in your view as soon as one begins to engage that discussion of real political and economic power relations.

You cannot divorce moral disintegration from the corporate erosion of the social contract. So, I think a politics of meaning should not be viewed as something that just bubbles up spontaneously in the communities without tying it to the economic issues.

Peter Gabel: Charlie, this is the problem I have with what you, and Dan Hamburg, and Jeremy were saying: You all three seem to want to equate the idea of "real" with words like "centers of power," "distribution of wealth"; you don't want to equate the word "real" with the longing for connection, the emotional and spiritual realm. But what we are saying in the politics of meaning is that your way of putting it—as much as I respect what you're saying and want to stay in dialogue with you—reinforces the idea that what is real are these external dimensions of existence, and that the emotional longings, the spiritual dimension of what it means to exist with others, are secondary.

The kind of politics that I'm trying to advocate for is existential, widening concentric circles of trust and understanding. I don't believe it is the case, Charlie, that it is the large, global centers of power that are disconnecting people. I believe it is more accurate to say that it is the disconnections between people that are creating these global externalities. A politics of transformation creates, in outward concentric circles from the family, into larger gatherings, experiences of recognition and meaning that build political movements that make people want to get rid of alienated and anonymous economic forces that seem to overwhelm them.

Looked at from the vantage point of this election, on August 2, I would say that Bill Clinton still carries the most evocative, emotional sense of hopefulness in his human quality. In spite of what he just did on the welfare bill, he still carries that more than Ralph Nader or the New Party does. And that is a very powerful reason that a lot of people are going to vote for him, even though they don't agree with the conservative drift in his politics. Moreover, the re-election of Clinton might produce a safe public space within which people can imagine developing a more radical, transformative vision of what politics can be.

Charles Derber: I agree that the language is very important, and powerful, and necessary. But my problem is your abstracting—when you say "existential," you're suggesting somehow that the atomizing, alienating sensibility that we're all reacting to is happening only existentially. In fact, you said earlier that you felt that it is actually this individualistic, atomizing culture that is forcing this, rather than the opposite. My argument is that these forces are totally interrelated—there's a reason why people are feeling more disconnected. It's because, in large measure, their work communities and their living communities have become highly impermanent. They're experiencing a breakdown of the sense of loyalty, connection, of all the values they've associated with either their workplace or their community. So, while Peter's language is evocative, it is not simply an existential development. These sensibilities that you're speaking of are arising in the midst of a social, political, and economic context. And it doesn't become real to people to simply harp on the sensibilities if they're not connected to the institutional forms that are giving rise to them.

TIKKUN: A politics of meaning perspective can affirm the interconnectedness of economic life and the ethical and spiritual level of societal development. We do so, for example, in the Social Responsibility Initiative proposed by the Foundation for Ethics and Meaning. The first part says that we're taking individual responsibility for greater morality in our own lives and in the life of our community, and a greater sense of commitment to the wellbeing of others. Here we focus on what is happening outside our personal consciousness and behavior. Point two, however, talks about corporate social responsibility and

calls for corporations to issue an annual ethical impact report. The Foundation's Covenant with American Families makes this same kind of move, tying together changes in our own spiritual and ethical lives with structural changes in the economic and political sphere—it talks not only about combatting the ethos of selfishness and materialism in our human relationships, but also about a thirty-hour workweek.

What we reject is the liberal or Left strategy that has given primacy to "objective caring"—that is, the delivery of economic benefits without paying attention to the quality of people's lives or the nature of human interactions being generated in the society. So, you deliver welfare by giving people a monthly payment, but you don't show any caring for individual's situations, and you implicitly say, "Here, we've given you money, but now it's up to you to fend for yourselves, and we've freed ourselves of all moral responsibility for your life, because actually, we don't much care what happens as long as you don't starve." That kind of "objective caring" communicates an endorsement of the fundamental "everyone for him or herself" mentality that is at the root of so much that is wrong with the contemporary world. No wonder that many people feel little attachment to welfare or social benefits that come in this form and rightly suspect that the way of dealing with the world built into this system contributes to the feelings everyone has of being alone, isolated, and not being able to trust others.

This is not a warrant for the dismantling of welfare that Clinton and the Republicans agree upon, but it is a challenge to the economistic thinking of the Left. Few Americans are going to get excited about a Naderite third party that seems to offer more of this objective caring. Most people are focused on this issue of feeling alone, feeling that no one cares about them, and the whole style of objective caring built into liberal and Left social engineering reinforces that perception. So, they don't fill up their union meetings each month, strategizing about how to increase the objective caring they could get from Democratic social programs—they fill their churches instead.

Mary Edsall: I think that Michael is really onto something important. The reason that the politics of meaning has made the stir it has made is because it is identifying something that the Left has neglected systematically for at least fifty years now. Someone earlier used the words "sacredness" and "purpose." What the structurally oriented Left has forgotten is that we work for a purpose, and the purpose is to sustain our lives and the lives of those who depend upon us—our children, and our family members. Michael says we want to know who is here for us; well, we also have to remember, on the Left, that we are here for others. There's a sacredness to parenthood, to fatherhood and to motherhood, that the Left has forgotten.

Jim Wallis: Charlie is right: Every significant social movement has had a spiritual or even religious sensibility at its core, and the Left has lost that in a lot of ways. We're trying to re-establish that kind of spirituality at the core of a movement that intends serious structural change.

There have been a lot of comments in this discussion assuming that Clinton is better than Dole. Clinton, I think, is one of the worst examples of American politicians who have no serious agenda beyond their own re-election. I find more character, more agenda, more vision in many other politicians than in Bill Clinton. He has his self-interest above all else.

We would more easily defeat bad welfare bills like this one if a conservative President signed it, than if it is signed by a liberal President who says he's our friend. He has so coopted the liberal sectors that there is no capacity to fight him on this and other real issues of principle.

That's not an argument for Bob Dole. Let's be very careful politically in assuming that we have no place else to go but to Clinton. There's a serious character flaw in the person running the White House. Whether to vote for Dole or Nader are real questions for many of us between now and November.

I am disgusted; I feel outraged about who Clinton is and what he has done. He lost me on this welfare decision. Our network, Call for Renewal, is going to break with Clinton. We're going to condemn him for what he has done.

Charles Derber: I appreciate what you have said. But I keep going back to my experience in 1968, in not voting for Humphrey because of the Vietnam War. I feel that I, and others like me, helped usher in twenty-five years of Republican administrations. I think it would be a mistake for people not to vote for Clinton, despite sharing your feelings about what he has done on welfare, because if the Democrats rather than the Republicans are in power, there is a greater possibility of getting the dialogue that we want going.

Dan Hamburg: Several people have implied that Ralph Nader lacks the spiritual dimension. But there's one thing that Ralph does understand: justice. And when we're talking about the politics of meaning, it's critical to understand that if we're going to have a flowering of love in this country, we've got to have a flowering of justice. I don't know which comes first. But it's clear to me that under the Clinton administration, or under a Dole administration, we will not experience a flowering of justice or love in this country.

By working for a country in which corporations are held accountable to strict charters, in which the environment is not under constant assault, in which poor people are encouraged rather than relegated to a scrap heap of blame, Nader would create the space we need for real change.

If we had more justice, we could nurture the kind of love in our individual and community relationships about which Peter and Michael speak so eloquently.

Someone said earlier that Clinton should be re-elected

(Continued on p. 61)

The God Beyond God

Daniel C. Matt

How can you name the Oneness, the Unnamable? The Jewish mystical tradition, Kabbalah, offers a number of possibilities. One is *Ein Sof*, which translates literally as, "there is no end." *Ein Sof* is the Infinite, the God beyond God. This name sounds so different from the personal divine names that populate the texts of the tradition: *YHVH*, *Elohim*, *Shaddai*, the Holy One, blessed be He. As an anonymous kabbalist observed, neither the Bible nor the Talmud even hints of *Ein Sof*. This remark is both obvious and revealing, an acknowledgment of the radical originality of this mystical formula.

By calling God "*Ein Sof*," Jewish mystics imply that *everything* is divine. The kabbalist Moses Cordovero, writing in the sixteenth century, put it this way: "The essence of divinity is found in every single thing—nothing but It exists. Since It causes every thing to be, no thing can live by anything else. It enlivens them. *Ein Sof* exists in each existent. Do not say, 'This is a stone and not God.' God forbid! Rather, all existence is God, and the stone is a thing pervaded by divinity."

There is nothing *but Ein Sof*. Even a stone in a field, even a slab of concrete in a downtown parking lot, is an expression of divine energy. The entire world is God in myriad forms and disguises.

The name *Ein Sof* opens with a negative: *Ein*, "there is no." This accords with the view of the philosopher Moses Maimonides that it is more accurate to say what God is *not* than what God *is*. Calling God "powerful" conjures up the image of a muscleman. Calling God "wise" puts Him in the category of a sage. Better to say that God is neither "weak" nor "stupid." Even the bland statement "God exists" is misleading because divine existence is unlike anything that humans can conceive. A more precise formulation is: God "exists but not through existence."

The best theology, in Maimonides' view, is negative theology. "Know that the description of God by means of negations is the correct description, a description that is not affected by an indulgence in facile language. Negative attributes conduct the mind toward the utmost reach that one may attain in the apprehension of God. You come nearer to the apprehension of God with every increase in negations."

The kabbalists adopt Maimonides' negative style of theology and take it to an extreme. Among their names for God, *Ein Sof* is the most famous, but not the most radical. Having carved away all that is false, they discover a paradox of a name: *Ayin*, Nothingness. We encounter this bizarre term among Christian mystics as well: John Scotus Erigena calls God *nihil*; Meister Eckhart, *nichts*; St. John of the Cross, *nada*.

To call God "Nothingness" does not mean that God does not exist. Rather, it conveys the idea that God is no thing: God animates all things and cannot be contained by any of them. In the words of a fourteenth-century kabbalist, David ben Abraham ha-Lavan, "Nothingness (*ayin*) is more existent than all the being of the world. But since it is simple, and all simple things are complex compared with its simplicity, in comparison it is called *ayin*." David ben Abraham's Christian contemporary, Meister Eckhart, concurred: "God's nothingness fills the entire world; His something though is nowhere."

Ayin is a name for the nameless. The paradox is that *ayin* embraces "nothing" *and* "everything." This nothingness is oneness: undifferentiated, overwhelming the distinctions between things. God is the oneness that is no particular thing. No thingness. Nothingness with a capital N.

This mystical nothingness is neither empty nor barren; it is fertile and overflowing, engendering the myriad forms of life. Medieval philosophers—Jewish, Christian, and Muslim—had taught that God created the world "out of nothing." The mystics turn this formula on its head, reinterpreting it to mean that the universe emanated from divine nothingness. Similarly, cosmologists speak of the quantum vacuum, teeming with po-

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tential, engendering the cosmic seed. This vacuum is anything but empty—a seething froth of virtual particles, constantly appearing and disappearing. According to quantum field theory, pairs of these virtual particles, one positive and one negative, appear together in the primordial vacuum, move apart, then come together again and annihilate each other. Even if cooled to absolute zero, the vacuum still shimmers with a residual hidden energy: what physicists call "zero-point energy," an energy that is infinite.

As we will discover, Kabbalah also describes a primordial vacuum, at the heart of *Ein Sof*. Like its quantum counterpart, this vacuum is not absolutely empty, but rather coated with a trace of divine light.

How did the universe emerge out of prolific nothingness? According to classical Kabbalah and classical big bang theory, this transition was marked by a single point. Recall the singularity: an infinitely dense point in spacetime. Like *ayin*, a singularity is destructive and creative. Anything falling into a singularity merges with it and loses its identity, while energy emerging from a singularity can become anything. The laws of physics do not apply to the split second in which energy or mass emerges.

According to the thirteenth-century kabbalist, Moses de León, "The beginning of existence is the secret concealed point. This is the beginning of all the hidden things, which spread out from there and emanate, according to their species. From a single point you can extend the dimensions of all things. Similarly, when the concealed arouses itself to exist, at first it brings into being something the size of the point of a needle; from there it generates everything."

In Kabbalah, this point is identified with divine wisdom, which emerges from nothingness into being. The *Zohar*, the masterpiece of Kabbalah, opens by disclosing the origin of the point:

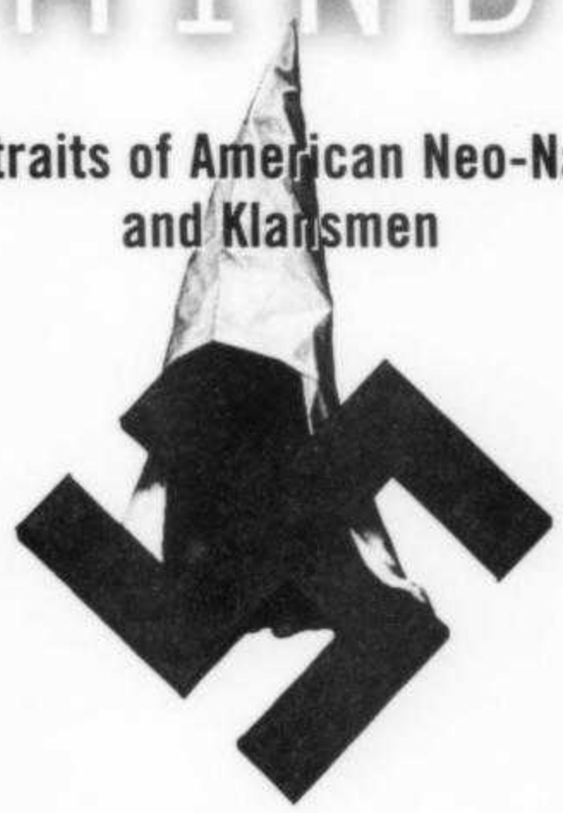
> A blinding spark flashed
> within the concealed of the concealed,
> from the mystery of the Infinite,
> a cluster of vapor in formlessness....
> Under the impact of breaking through,
> one high and hidden point shone.
> Beyond that point nothing is known.
> So it is called Beginning.

As emanation proceeds, as God begins to unfold, the point expands into a circle. Similarly, ever since the big bang, our universe has been expanding in all directions. We know it is still expanding thanks to Edwin Hubble, who measured the speed at which other galaxies are moving away from us. □

THE DARK HEART OF RACISM

THE RACIST MIND

Portraits of American Neo-Nazis and Klansmen



RAPHAEL S. EZEKIEL

In a series of unprecedented conversations with right-wing activists, the author journeys into the dark side of American consciousness.

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IN BOOKSTORES NOW FROM PENGUIN

Happy Birthday, World

Bradley Shavit Artson

There is an ancient talmudic tradition that affirms that the world was created on Rosh Hodesh Tishrei, a day also known as Rosh HaShanah, the Jewish New Year. Our Mahzor also reminds us that the world was created on this day. So it's particularly appropriate for Jews to stop and think about how we are celebrating this most ancient Earth Day, how we are honoring the birthday of our home, the planet earth.

Throughout the millennia, human beings have wrestled to survive and to flourish on our blue-green jewel of a planet. As our cultures matured, shaped by the climate and the terrain of our homes, we also fashioned different notions of what it means to live on the earth. How, exactly, are we to treat our planet? What do we owe the earth, and what does it owe to us? What is our place in the world, what are our responsibilities and our privileges?

As the ages passed, three general ways of understanding the proper contours of humanity's relationship to the earth emerged: as a machine to be used and discarded at will; as a living organism of superior worth to humanity itself; or somewhere in the middle—subject to the kind of human use that is constrained by larger ethical considerations. All three viewpoints can claim an ancient and venerable pedigree within Western civilization and are quite incompatible.

In an age in which the choices that our societies make about how we use the earth's resources, how we care for the diversity of living species, how we tend delicate and endangered bioregions, and how we respond to our own exploding population, underlying assumptions about what is proper in our treatment of the planet can have serious—and possibly life-threatening—implications for our own survival and the well-being of other living things. It is time, once again, to consider what we owe the earth and what we may legitimately expect from it.

One view, derived from some Stoic thinkers, sees the earth as a machine to be used for human pleasure and asserts that irrational creatures lack rights. According to this viewpoint, the earth is nothing more than the dirt on which we walk, its nonhuman residents are unthinking, mobile sources of protein, entertainment, or danger. The notion that all was made for the sake of mankind influenced certain early Christian thinkers (notably Origen, Aquinas, and Calvin).

In the early modern period, this mechanistic understanding of the world as a bag of tools ready for any human purpose reached its clearest expression, particularly in the words of René Descartes, who sought to find a practical philosophy by means of which, knowing the force and the action of fire, water, air, the stars, heavens, and all other bodies which environ us, as distinctly as we know the different crafts of our artisans, we can similarly employ them in all those uses to which they are adapted, and thus render ourselves the masters and possessors of nature.

For Descartes, there was a wall of separation between humanity, on the one hand, and all other creatures and objects on the other. Consistent with his own premises, he thus held that animals were automata, and that "there can be no suspicion of crime when [people] eat or kill animals."

The Stoics, Descartes, and his followers weren't entirely wrong. Humanity is indeed different from other living things (in our ability to conceptualize, to communicate across generations, to engage in introspection, and to manipulate tools and technology, to name a few distinguishing traits). How we act does have a disproportionate influence on the world around us, and our willingness to see beyond what is and to strive for what might be, using the scientific method, has resulted in better and healthier lives for millions of people. Few of us would surrender the benefits of modernity to return to life in the wild, and an understanding of the earth as something to be used to heighten human pleasure is part of what has allowed us to fashion a comfortable and civilized life.

Yet, there are clear dangers to this mechanistic view-

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point. Our interventions in the world often have unintended and disastrous consequences, even if we look only at the impact of those actions on people. Loss of farmland across North America is but one example of our sovereignty over nature exacting a frightening and unanticipated cost.

As frightening as the results of our interventions may be, we ought to appreciate more than just cost-benefit considerations. As the late Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel noted: Human beings have indeed become primarily tool-making animals, and the world is now a gigantic toolbox for the satisfaction of their needs—nature as a toolbox is a world that does not point beyond itself. It is when nature is sensed as mystery and grandeur that it calls upon us to look beyond it. The awareness of grandeur and the sublime is all but gone from the modern mind. The sense of the sublime—the sign of inward greatness of the human soul and something which is potentially given to all—is now a rare gift. Yet without it, the world becomes flat and the soul a vacuum.

Isn't the world impoverished when a species disappears unnecessarily? Isn't a beautiful glen or a majestic mountain something of intrinsic worth, something to be cherished and protected? We humans have a limited notion of self-interest, and we endanger our own children and grandchildren for the sake of our short-term desires. Seeing the earth as a big bag of toys encourages rapacity and endangers human survival and the balance of life on earth. The time has long passed when this was an acceptable way to see our role in the world.

A second, corrective, approach to human relations to the rest of reality asserts that the earth constitutes a living entity, often referred to as Gaia. This personification of the earth, sometimes intended as metaphor and sometimes quite literally as a real individual, asserts that the earth functions as an organism to maintain its own balance. As humanity grows and claims more and more of earth's resources, the earth will act—rightfully—to control this threat to its own functioning, just as a cell acts to expel a source of danger. All living things together form a coherent organism. Humanity, in this view, threatens the biosphere and will be removed, by nature, in a surgical strike to defend itself.

While there were certainly ancient civilizations which perceived the earth as a divinity (often a goddess), and that goddess was often seen as hostile to human interests and security, this philosophical approach that recognizes humans as but one small part of the web of nature, properly curtailed by the general good of the biosphere, is a modern innovation with much to commend it: we are indeed part of the physical universe. Not having chosen to be born, we did not fashion this world, and the cosmos makes its own limits and priorities felt all the time. To disregard our membership in (and dependence on) the totality of living things courts disaster.

Yet there is something ironic to the view that we are merely subservient to Gaia, that nature is morally superior to the needs of humanity. The irony becomes especially clear when we stop to ponder just how unnatural such a viewpoint is: What other species sublimates its own desires for the common good of the biosphere? What other living creature denies its own pleasure in order to learn to think like a mountain (the famous phrase of the naturalist Aldo Leopold)? To be truly natural would be to follow our impulses and do as we please.

The Gaia position is, intellectually, the least natural of the three opposing viewpoints. That unnatural stance fails for another reason as well: Only people can articulate what is "good" for the earth, and that assertion must always reflect the viewpoint of some particular person. Who can say whether or not the earth is better off with living things or without? With mammals dominant rather than roaches? Perhaps the earth is indifferent, or would even like an extra strip mall? Only people argue about such things and seem to express strong preferences. The earth just keeps circling the sun.

Imputing preferences to nature confuses "ought" and "is" in a way that makes for a tyranny of what currently exists, imposing the current momentary balance as a rigid fixture for all time. Unnatural and unreasonable, such an approach also fails in that it has little possibility of appealing to the vast majority of human beings, whose choices will fashion our collective response to the environmental crisis that threatens our health and security.

While the general acceptance of the Gaia hypothesis might curtail human greed and shortsightedness, it has little chance of gaining assent. And its many flaws—not least its lack of compassion for human suffering—would raise serious problems of their own, were it ever adopted. This second path, it seems, is not a feasible choice either.

There is one remaining way to understand our relationship to the earth. Its pedigree is as ancient as the Bible, the foundation code of all Western civilization, and as current as most conservation organizations. Because it is so embedded in our culture, because it is so reasonable, it stands the greatest chance of receiving an attentive hearing from the vast numbers needed to make real environmental change. That middle path is stewardship, the notion that humanity is the caretaker of the earth and of all living things.

Rooted in a religious view of the world, stewardship asserts that the purpose of all creation, humanity included, is to sing God's praises, through deeds of goodness, through establishing a just and righteous society, by cultivating gratitude to our Creator for the marvel of being alive. That task doesn't fall just on humanity, as the psalmist reminds us, "the heavens declare the glory of God" (Psalm 19:2). The purpose of Creation, then, is not mankind.

Nor are we Creation's pinnacle; recall that the Sabbath Day is created after humanity. We exist to make the world sacred and decent. A part of creation, we are also apart from creation. "What is man that you are mindful of him? You have made him little less than divine" (Psalm 8:5,6).

Our added gifts, of consciousness, of speech, of law, are intended to assist us in our task of serving as God's agents in the world. The biblical view of our role in relation to the rest of Creation is that we "till and tend" the world on God's behalf, for the sake of God's majesty.

This ideal of stewardship balances the two views previously mentioned. It shares with the mechanists the belief that human well-being is the proper vantage point from which to judge morality, but it links that sense of well-being to a solidarity with all of Creation and a desire to avoid unnecessary suffering for all living things. It shares with the Gaiaists a sense that holiness and wholeness emerge from the wonder and the miracle of God's world, but it refuses to deify any part of creation, humanity included. Existence is what is; morality, what ought to be. Humanity's role is to bridge that gap, to work toward the repair of the world as a healing, holy place.

Stewardship sees humanity legitimately using the bounty of the world for moral ends, as God's agent. We are God's hands in the world, to care, to improve, and to love Creation. But the world is not, ultimately, ours to abuse. We tend it in God's name, and therefore must show God's tender mercies to Creation or else we violate our charge.

Note, then, that the steward is at once someone who stands outside of nature, taking instruction and direction from a sense of morality and of reverence that is highly unnatural. Yet, the steward is also profoundly and gratefully a part of Creation—it is that very embeddedness that allows us to act in the world on God's behalf. A little lower than the angels, sharing the finitude of all flesh and blood, we are precisely situated to know both world and holiness and to bridge those two realities in a single whole.

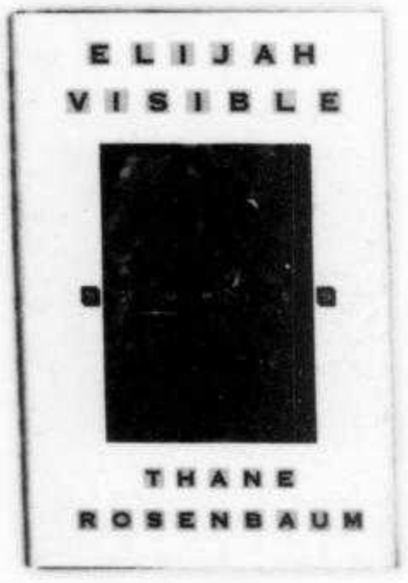
Our task, then, is to act responsibly, to assure that the beauty and majesty of the world not be lessened by our deeds, to see that all of God's creatures can know, at whatever level, the goodness of Creation, to make visible the unity of God through the solidarity of all created things, and to justify the assertion that humanity uniquely reflects God's image by our unique responsibility for caring for God's world.

An old rabbinic legend records that God took the first human being through the Garden of Eden. After the tour, God then said, "Look at my works! See how beautiful they are—how excellent! For your sake I created them all. See to it that you do not spoil and destroy My world; for if you do, there will be no one else to repair it" (*Midrash Kohelet Rabbah* 1 to 7:13). Our distinction as people, our very claim to preeminence in the world, rests on our ability to distinguish good from evil, to restrain our desires, to consider the whole and the holy.

In caring for creation, in acting as God's stewards, we vindicate God's judgment in the goodness of creation, we reveal the divine image within the human heart, and we assure a rich future for our children and for our children's children. And that kind of caring for creation makes for a truly *shanah tovah u'metukkah*, a good and sweet year. □

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Taking Spiritual Transformation Seriously

High Holiday Supplement for the Jewish Year 5757

Though many Jews think of the High Holy Days in terms of guilt and being judged by God, the ten-day period that begins with Rosh HaShanah and ends with Yom Kippur can also be a profound time for individual and community introspection and transformation.

We have developed a Spiritual Transformation (*Tshuvah,* or Repentance) Workbook that can provide you with detailed guidance about how to use this period effectively. And it is followed by a penitential prayer that you can use on Yom Kippur to supplement the standard (*Al Cheyt*—For Our Sins) prayer. It can be used most effectively if you read Michael Lerner's book, *Jewish Renewal: A Path to Healing and Transformation* (HarperPerennials, 1995), particularly chapters 2 and 15.

In many synagogues, it is difficult to get into a consciousness that is receptive to spiritual transformation. In some synagogues, the energy is primarily social (look who is here, let's catch up on what's happening in each other's lives, etc.). In other synagogues, the goal seems to be to say every prayer ever written, which usually leads to spiritual indigestion and allows us to escape from the actual confrontation with our own lives that is the point of the holidays.

So, we recommend that after services on the two days of Rosh HaShanah, and then in the next seven days before Yom Kippur, you go through this workbook systematically—and bring it with you to review on Yom Kippur.

Find someone who wants to go through this process with you. You can support each other in making *Tshuvah* real. We explain how in more detail in the workbook below.

Spiritual Transformation: The Tshuvah Process

The following are elaborations on themes developed by Michael Lerner in his book, Jewish Renewal

I. Reviewing the past year

Get a calendar or your diary or other records of the past year. Try to recall what you wanted to accomplish last Rosh HaShanah and what part you did accomplish this year. This year, keep a written record of the conclusions you come to at the end of the Tshuvah process, so that you can refer to it next Rosh HaShanah.

Now, go through the year in your mind. Tonight, try to remember the highlights and problems you faced.

Start with your relationships to your parents, children, spouse, lovers, and friends.

List here the major issues you had with each.

Problem	***What You Contribute to It***
Father	
1.	
2.	
Mother	
1.	
2.	
Spouse, lover, or potential partners	
1.	
2.	
3.	
Friends and children	
1.	
2.	
3.	

In each case, write down what part of the problem might have been generated by you, and what about the way you are in that relationship might have contributed to the problem. And what part of that, about how you are, is something you might consider working on in this Tshuvah period?

World of Work

What have been the problems you've faced? Have you had good relationships with co-workers? Have you felt fulfilled in your work? Have you been involved in collective efforts to change the workplace, or the union, or tried to organize, or have you felt powerless and unable to envision changing anything? If you were in a supervisory position, did you treat your supervisees with the respect they deserve? If you were unemployed, what efforts did you make to change that, or were you feeling more defeated than necessary? Did you stay in a job or remain unemployed because you felt that you didn't deserve something better, or did you make serious efforts to find more fulfilling work? Or, if you recognized that such work was unavailable, did you join with others to challenge the economic realities that make work unfulfilling, or did that seem too overwhelming? If your work is unfulfilling, did you blame yourself inappropriately, or involve yourself in struggles to change the workplace? Did you discharge anger from work by punishing yourself (e.g., through alcohol or drugs) or by dumping on friends or lovers, or did you express that anger at the appropriate targets, or through collective action? What could have been different?

Problem	**What You Contribute to It**
1. Relationship to Co-Workers	
2. Relationship to Supervisors or Supervisees	
3. How healthy were your coping mechanisms with stress at work?	
4. Did you inappropriately blame yourself, or dump anger inappropriately on others?	
5. What kind of political action did you take in relationship to work?	

Respect for Your Body

Did you care for your body in a good way this past year? If not, what didn't you do that you should have done?

1. Eating

2. Exercise

3. Vacations

4. Clothing and Appearance

5. Self-Presentation

6. Meditation or Quiet Time

Respect for Your Soul

In what ways did you care for your soul this past year?

In what ways did you neglect your soul?

Did you nourish its hunger for quiet time or meditation?

Did it give you any messages that you ignored? What were they?

Did you take time to read the books that would have expanded your awareness of spiritual life? If not, what do you want to read this next year?

Did you take the time to read other books that would have given you pleasure and joy? If not, what do you want to read this next year?

What courses (evening schools in liberal arts or a new profession, art programs, Hebrew, Jewish studies, studying a new musical instrument, learning a martial art, learning about another culture or philosophical tradition) did you want to take to expand your horizons? What would you like to take this next year?

What pleasures did you give to yourself this year? Which do you want to expand or initiate this next year? Did you allow yourself to go to art exhibits, plays, musical concerts, poetry readings, discussion groups, community political action activities, or other things that would have given you pleasure? What do you want to do in this regard during the next year?

Tikkun Olam: Healing and Repairing the World

In what ways is the political, economic, and social world functioning that are destructive, harmful, or hurtful to people in other countries, to people in the U.S., or to you personally?

Consider, for example, Bosnia, Haiti, China, Rwanda, Israel, Palestine, domestic poverty, homelessness.

If you tried to be involved, and had hassles or disappointments with other people in the process, what were those and what part did you have in making or sustaining them? What did you do to confront the problems directly? If you tried to confront the problems and failed, did you give up or did you attempt to form another group addressing the same problems, but this time under your own leadership and direction? If not, what could you have done in this direction?

What concrete steps have you taken to be involved in or to form some group that would address any of these?

In what ways did you buy the message that "they will never listen," or "I can never get things to happen," or "I'm not powerful enough to start something so I'll wait for someone else to do it," or "other people are not together enough or too immoral or too passive, so there's no point in me trying to mobilize them," or other similar messages?

If you haven't been involved, what were the reasons you gave yourself? Which of those reasons presupposed a "surplus powerlessness" (a way in which you were actually assuming yourself less able to initiate things or take leadership than is "objectively" true)?

Judaism and the Jewish World

In what ways did you explore your relationship with God this past year, or in what ways did you ignore that dimension of life? Did you read any books or attend lectures or courses or dedicate time to exploring the spiritual dimension of your life?

Did you allow others to convince you to separate the religious from the social/political transformative aspects of Judaism? How did that happen in your life?

How much did you seek to deepen your knowledge of Judaism, Jewish history, Jewish texts or the culture of the Jewish people or of Israel? What opportunities were there and what were the reasons you gave yourself for why this year wasn't the right time?

Did you involve yourself in some communal activity, or in the TIKKUN *community? Did you read* TIKKUN *carefully, did you get others to read it? Did you work on conferences, or other activities for* TIKKUN, *New Israel Fund, Peace Now or some other Jewish group in which you believe? What held you back?*

Did you allow yourself to take 25 hours out of your busy schedule to observe Shabbat in a traditional way? If not, what part of Shabbat did you observe? How fulfilling or spiritually deep did you allow it to be? If it wasn't, what explanations did you give yourself for why it wasn't working? What would you have wished it to be?

After a right-winger killed Prime Minister Rabin, did you become active in helping the Israeli peace movement? After Netanyahu's electoral victory, did you renew your commitment to peace, or did you reconcile yourself to four more years of Israel frustrating Palestinian desires for national self-determination?

Did you challenge aspects of the Jewish world that you don't like or that are too conservative, conformist or spiritually dead? Did you give support to those who do challenge?

Personal Traits

Do you find yourself sometimes exhibiting behaviors or traits that you wish you didn't have?

Check which of these apply to you, and when, during the past year, it played a hurtful role in your life:

1. *Fear that others won't or don't like you*
2. *Self-denigration or lack of self-respect*
3. *Inability to express anger*
4. *Self-punishing or self-blame*
5. *Excessive criticalness toward others*
6. *Rejection of others' caring or love for you*
7. *Coldness or insensitivity to others*
8. *Paranoia*
9. *Depression*
10. *Excessive controlling of others*
11. *Confusion*
12. *Tardiness*
13. *Disorganization*
14. *Excessive focus on details or petty issues*
15. *Lying*
16. *Manipulating others*
17. *Disrespect toward others, subtly or overtly*
18. *Inability to let go*
19. _____
20. _____

Now, go over the lists of issues that have come up for you during this past year and dedicate one or two days to each area during the coming Tshuvah *period. Make a copy of this page for each area, so that you can fill in a separate one for each problem issue. Then, do the following:*

1. *Imagine if you don't change some important aspect of this area. Now list some of the bad consequences* (ro'a ha'g'zeyra) *that might come to pass in the next few years if things stay the same as they have been.*

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.

The tradition says that "tshuvah, tfillah u tzedakah maavirin et ro'a ha'g'zeyra" *(yearning, caring and turning can temper the harshness of the decree). So, compose a prayer asking for God's help in dealing with this issue and what kind of help you want.*

2. *Now, decide which part of this area you can work on this year.*

3. *Who is already doing the good work and is your ally in this matter? Write out the name or names of those currently struggling with this issue. Write out a resolution to help, through donating time or money, to this person's/organization's work, and ways that you will allow yourself to learn from them or participate with them, or get therapy from them, or work with them.*

4. *What specific plan will you follow this next year, and what specific steps will you take to change your behavior?*

5. *What first steps could you take within the limited ten-day period of tshuvah that address this issue in some real or symbolic way? What specific help do you need to take them?*

Tshuvah "Partner" or Support Group

It's hard enough to be honest enough with oneself to list the issues. But when it comes to figuring out what to do, this is often blocked for many of us. So, we take on a "partner" or a support group that will assist us in thinking about first steps and a plan to change things. This is particularly important in dealing with the issues where you feel most blocked, where you simply can't imagine how to take the first step to change the dynamics of a bad relationship or a troubling internal trait.

The goal of the partner, however, is not to make concrete suggestions. Rather, the partner's goal is to encourage you to verbally explore every possibility, and to ask you if you have explored avenues that may occur to the partner or support-group person that haven't occurred to you. Then, switch, and you play that role for the partner, asking them the relevant questions. There is a thin line here, because sometimes asking about possibilities is really a subtle way of trying to suggest a course of action. Don't do that! You are not a therapist and this is not a therapy group, and you have not been commissioned to solve someone else's problems. So be sure not to convey the sense that you know that a particular road is the right one. Instead, keep asking about a wide variety of options, and help the person consider those options through asking, whenever a roadblock appears, whether that person can think of any ways to get around it. After Yom Kippur, consider checking in with each other once a month this year.

Partner's name or names of people in the support group: _____

_____

Home Phone:

_____

Work Phone:

Checking in With Each Other

During the week, arrange to talk to your partner or at least one member of the support group every day (yes, every day). The phone call can be as short as, "Did you get to work on your tshuvah work today? If not, do you want to do it now on the phone? If not now, is there some time later today we can discuss it?" On Shabbat and Yom Tov, arrange for a time to get together (one hour, half of which goes to one person, half to the other, to explore their issues and the steps they are taking).

Confidentiality

You keep this. It's your promise from your partner or members of your group that they will keep whatever you discuss totally confidential. So have them sign the pledge.

"I promise to keep any information I learn from ..... (print your name here) totally confidential, not to share it with others in any way, and not to refer to it in any public or private way in future dealings I have with this person or with anyone else, except as explicitly agreed to by the person listed above."

Tshuvah partner or group members sign here:

For Our Sins

A Supplement to the High Holiday Prayerbook

We invite you to use the following along with the traditional confessional prayer, "Al Cheyt," *recited on Yom Kippur. Members of your community might spend time together before or during the services to discuss this supplement and add to it your own ideas and concerns. The "sins" need not be those of you or your friends. The idea of a collective confessional is that we are inextricably linked and hence must take responsibility for the entire community involved either in discussing this version of the* Al Cheyt, *or writing your own. In this way we hope to assist those who want to ensure that the spiritually powerful experience of the High Holidays does not get lost in a rote recitation of prayers that feel remote, expressing the sensibilities of another time and place.*

FOR OUR SINS

On the High Holy Days we take collective responsibility for our lives and for the activities of the community of which we are a part.

Although we realize that we did not create the world into which we are born, we nevertheless have responsibility for what it is like as long as we participate in it.

While the struggle to change ourselves and our world may be long and painful, it is our struggle. No one else can do it for us. To the extent that we have failed to do all that we could to make ourselves or our community all that we ought to be, we ask God and each other for forgiveness—and we now commit ourselves to acting differently this coming year.

Ve-al kulam, Eloha
selichot, selach lanu,
mechal lanu, kaper lanu.

For all our sins, may the force that makes forgiveness possible forgive us, pardon us, and make atonement possible.

For the sins we have committed before you and in our communities by being so preoccupied with ourselves that we ignore the larger problems of the world in which we live;

And for the sins we have committed by being so directed toward outward realities that we have ignored our spiritual development;

For the sins of accepting the current distribution of wealth and power as unchangeable;

And for the sins of giving up on social change and focusing exclusively on personal advancement and success;

For the sins of feeling so powerless when we hear about oppression that we finally close our ears;

And for the sins of dulling our outrage at the continuation of poverty, oppression, and violence in this world, most notably this year in Bosnia, Burundi, and in our own nation;

For the sins of participating in a racist society and not dedicating more energy to fighting racism;

And for the sins we have committed by allowing our food and our air to be poisoned;

For the sins of not doing enough to save the environment;

And for the sins of not doing enough to challenge sexist institutions and practices;

For the sins of turning our backs on—or participating in—the oppression of gays and lesbians;

For the sins of not doing enough to alleviate homelessness, poverty, and world hunger;

For the sins of not recognizing the deprivation of meaning—and the systematic frustration of our need for mutual recognition, love, and spiritual nourishment—as the source of so much frustration and pain in our society;

For the sins of cynicism and passivity about social change;

And for the sins of expecting that our leaders and activists must be perfect or far more together than the rest of us;

For these sins we ask God and each other to give us the strength to forgive ourselves and each other.

For the sins we have committed by not forgiving our parents for the wrongs they committed when we were children;

And for the sins of having too little compassion or too little respect for our parents or for our children;

For the sins of cooperating with self-destructive behavior in others or in ourselves;

And for the sins of not supporting each other as we attempt to change;

For the sins of not seeing the spark of divinity within each person we encounter or within ourselves;

And for the sins of not learning from and giving adequate respect and care to our elders and to our teachers;

For the sins of being jealous and trying to possess and control those whom we love;

And for the sins of being judgmental of others and ourselves;

For the sins of withholding love and support;

And for the sins of doubting our ability to love and get love from others;

For the sins of insisting that everything we do have a payoff;

For the sins of not recognizing the beauty within ourselves;

And for the sins of not recognizing the beauty that surrounds us;

For the sins of not allowing ourselves to play;

And for the sins of being manipulative or hurting others to protect our own egos;

Ve-al kulam, Eloha
selichot, selach lanu,
mechal lanu, kaper lanu

For the sins we have committed by not publicly supporting the Jewish people and Israel when they are being treated or criticized unfairly;

And for the sins we have committed by not publicly criticizing Israel or the Jewish people when they are acting in opposition to the highest principles of the Jewish tradition;

For the sins of not recognizing the humanity and suffering of the Palestinian people and the injustice they face living under the unwanted Occupation;

And for the sins of punishing the entire Palestinian people for the terrorist acts of a small number;

For the sins of allowing the peace process to be undermined by a Jewish terrorist who murdered our peace-oriented Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and by Palestinian terrorists who sought to perpetuate the conflict;

And for the sins of not understanding why the fear of terrorism can sometimes lead people to support repression and abandon hopefulness;

For the sins of allowing conservative or insensitive leaders to speak on behalf of all American Jews;

And for the sins of not supporting those institutions and leaders that have attempted to provide an alternative voice;

For the sins of being critical of Jewish life from a distance rather than from a personal involvement or commitment;

And for the sins of not spending more time engaged in learning the Jewish tradition and studying Jewish history, literature, and holy texts;

For the sins of not giving enough time to building the kind of Jewish community we desire instead of expecting things to happen without contributing to make things happen;

And for the sins of being insensitive or insulting to non-Jews;

For the sins of not having compassion for one another;

And for not taking care of one another;

For the sins of not sharing responsibility for child rearing;

And for the sins of self-absorption, allowing us to be insulated from the loneliness and need of people around us;

For the sins of focusing only on our sins and not our strengths and beauties;

And for the sins of not adequately rejoicing and celebrating the beauty and grandeur of God's creation.

Ve-al kulam, Eloha
selichot, selach lanu,
mechal lanu, kaper lanu

For all these, Lord of Forgiveness, forgive us, pardon us, grant us atonement.

In some congregations the service stops after this is read, and people divide into small groups of four to five and discuss which particular aspects of this prayer make most sense to them, what they are going to do differently in the coming year, what support they need from others to help make changes in their lives, and what they are going to do to secure that support.

Composed by Michael Lerner, editor, TIKKUN *magazine, for Yom Kippur, 5757; September 1996.*

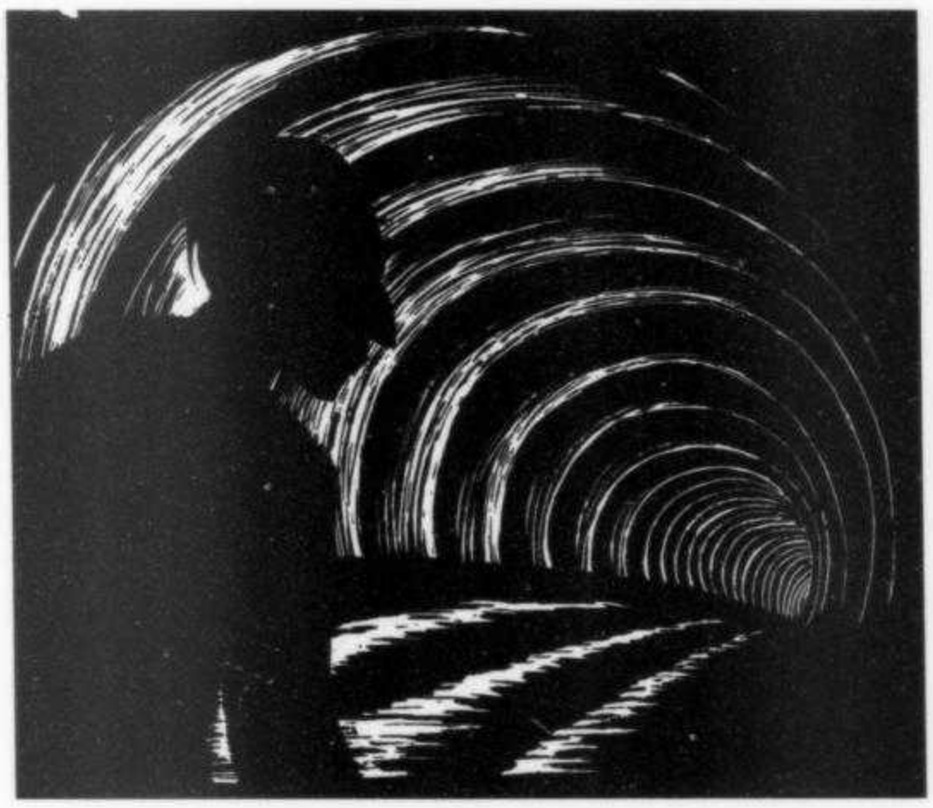
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From Incest to Ivan the Terrible
Science and the Trials of Memory

Debbie Nathan and Jan Haaken

The recovered sex-abuse memory wars are winding down, after half a decade of bitter conflict. On one side, the troops have been adults—many of them women in therapy—who recalled images of childhood incest that they and their clinicians insisted really happened. Opposing them has been the False Memory Syndrome Foundation (FMSF), a group of parents who indignantly deny the accusations, joined by researchers who assert that memories can be grossly transmuted, even falsified, by influences like therapy.

Battles raged through the early 1990s, but it is now generally agreed that although people can suddenly recall long-forgotten incidences of sexual assault that really happened, they can also "remember" abuse that never occurred. It's also by now a truism that memory is no audiotape or camcorder documentary of past events. Instead, it is constantly constructed and reconstructed, which means that the passage of time can add material that isn't literally true.



One of the main proponents of this position is FMSF board member and University of Washington memory researcher Elizabeth Loftus. In her experiments, she has implanted subjects with false memories—of everything from imagined stop signs to fantasied recollections of being lost in a shopping mall. Loftus has carried out her work using empirical models. A given number of individuals are shown the same film of a traffic accident; later, each is misleadingly asked about a nonexistent detail such as a stoplight. Statistics on how many subjects "remember" the light are then tallied to compute the odds of altering memory.

The precision of such experiments gives the scientist an infallible authority in court, where guilt is supposed to be adjudicated by finding facts, and where facts are based on what can be seen, tasted, heard, smelled, touched—and therefore measured. Vicissitudes of imagination and fantasy have no place here, and rightly so.

But what happens to the authority of the scientist when we leave court and reenter the overdetermined world with its dense (re)collectivity of historical, political, and cultural memory? And what happens when the scientist herself is embroiled in this world that her method ignores?

To explore these questions, let us shift our discussion from memories of incest to remembrance of the Holocaust. The venue is different, but the protagonist is the same: Elizabeth Loftus. Long before therapeutically recovered sex-abuse memories became an issue, Loftus was serving as a defense expert in trials where damning evidence came from witnesses who claimed they had seen all manner of grisly crimes, including homicide. Loftus often testified on behalf of accused murderers—serial killer Ted Bundy was a client—that the investigations that fingered them were fraught with mistakes that could produce false witness.

Homicide expanded to genocide when Loftus's help was sought by lawyers for John Demjanjuk. Demjanjuk was the Ukrainian immigrant who was stripped of his U.S. citizenship in 1981, extradited to Israel, and sentenced to death in 1988 for murdering almost a million

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Debbie Nathan is co-author, with Michael Snedeker, of Satan's Silence: Ritual Abuse and the Making of a Modern American Witch Hunt *(Basic). Jan Haaken, professor of psychology at Portland State University and a practicing psychotherapist, is completing a book on women and childhood memory.*

ART FROM FLOOD! A NOVEL IN PICTURES BY ERIC DROOKER

Jews at the Treblinka death camp. The case had begun in 1975, before any link was suspected between Treblinka and the bespectacled, retired auto mechanic from Cleveland. At that time, Justice Department officials suspected that Demjanjuk had done guard duty in Sobibor, a smaller camp not far from Treblinka, where 250,000 Jews perished. Although guards at Sobibor participated in the atrocities common at all the death camps, authorities had no evidence that Demjanjuk personally murdered anyone. Nonetheless, he apparently had avoided telling the Immigration Service about his Nazi affiliations, which disqualified him from immigrating after the war and now made him deportable. The evidence was solid: an old Nazi-issued identification card bearing Demjanjuk's name and picture; on his immigration application, he had declared that he was near Sobibor during World War II.

After examining this material, U.S. officials sent Demjanjuk's 1951 immigration picture to Israel. It was pasted next to old photos of two other Ukrainians under investigation for war crimes, including Fedor Fedorenko, another emigre suspected of having done guard duty at Treblinka. Using the photos, the Israeli police advertised in local newspapers, asking Treblinka and Sobibor survivors to contact them about an investigation of Ukrainians suspected of serving the Nazis at the camps.

The ad explicitly mentioned Demjanjuk. But instead of calling him John, it referred to his pre-emigration given name: Ivan. Publishing the words "Ivan Demjanjuk" was the first in a long series of Israeli actions that led Holocaust survivors to mistakenly associate Demjanjuk with Treblinka. The error would have been easy, for if the aging survivors remembered little about most Treblinka personnel, they vividly recalled "Ivan the Terrible." That was their nickname for the psychopathic, unspeakably sadistic Ukrainian guard who had tortured and mutilated Jewish prisoners, beat them with a lead pipe, and operated gas chamber equipment that asphyxiated some one million victims.

All this the Treblinka survivors remembered. Some also examined Fedor Federenko's old photo, and, without any prompting, recognized him as a man who had guarded them thirty-five years earlier. Aging survivor Eugen Turowski was the first subject interviewed. He readily recognized Fedorenko, but failed to identify Demjanjuk. A few hours later, Treblinka survivor Abraham Goldfarb found Demjanjuk's photo "familiar," but did not connect him to the hated Ivan the Terrible.

Later the same day, though, investigators apparently asked Goldfarb if he remembered a guard named "Ivan Demjanjuk." Goldfarb answered "yes"; then he reexamined Demjanjuk's photograph and identified him as Ivan the Terrible. Thus was made the first connection between the Cleveland retiree and the monster of Treblinka. Survivor Turowski went through similar questioning and made the same fateful identification. As the summer wore on, two more Treblinka survivors did likewise.

Identification by four eyewitnesses might seem like strong evidence that John Demjanjuk was indeed Ivan the Terrible. But Israeli police methods were terribly flawed forensically. In the first place, while they were at Treblinka, prisoners never heard their guards' last names. How, then, did Goldfarb and the others know Demjanjuk's? It seems obvious that the source of their memory was not events from almost four decades earlier, but the police's recent newspaper ads.

This probable contamination of the survivors' recall, coupled with their repeated viewings of Demjanjuk's photograph, constituted an investigative error so severe that it should have invalidated their eyewitness identifications in a criminal proceeding. Further, seven other survivors, some of whom spontaneously picked out Fedorenko as a Treblinka guard, failed to identify Ivan. But their negative responses were neutralized after a Treblinka survivors' annual reunion in Tel Aviv in late 1976.

In attendance were many survivors who already had been interviewed by police, and they no doubt talked with other guests about their identifications of Demjanjuk as Ivan the Terrible. In the following weeks, a number of other reunion-goers examined Demjanjuk's picture and made the same connection as had the first group.

Eventually, John Demjanjuk was put on trial in Israel's most famous Nazi war crimes proceeding since the case against Adolph Eichmann. Demjanjuk's supporters seized on the issue of eyewitness testimony and memory contamination. They asked Elizabeth Loftus to take the case, and as she examined the investigative records, she immediately noted many irregularities that could have produced false eyewitness memories.

As Loftus notes in her book, *Witness for the Defense*, from a scientific point of view there was every reason for her to help Demjanjuk's defense, and none to justify refusing. Yet she did refuse, in a dramatic illustration of the conflict between the disinterested pretensions of science versus the fervid politics of recovered memory—a politics that can affect even scientists.

We can sympathize with Loftus's decision to opt out, particularly when we acknowledge the broader political and cultural issues behind the trial. Though largely ignored in *Witness for the Defense*, they included a combination of genuine demands for justice, mixed with

(Continued on p. 94)

SPECIAL FOCUS II: THE NATIONAL SUMMIT ON ETHICS AND MEANING

Meaning Matters

In this section we present more excerpts from some of the sessions from the April Summit on Ethics and Meaning. We begin with a document that shaped the discussion with lawyers at the Summit and models the new kind of thinking that can be done when people begin to ask themselves, "What would my work look like if it were to be reconstructed with a new bottom line aimed at enhancing ethical and spiritual sensitivity?" We hope that you, our readers, will get together with other people at your workplace and begin to do this kind of brainstorming, allowing the same kind of depth and vision that this statement exhibits. □

POLITICS OF MEANING DRAFT PLATFORM

Plank on Law

The legal system is arguably the most important public arena in our society; it defines how we are expected to relate to one another within civil society and how the government is expected to treat us as citizens. It also shapes our understanding of the meaning of injustice and justice, and therefore profoundly influences our society's ethical consciousness, our perception of right and wrong in human relations. While other aspects of our culture—in particular, religion—also speak to these issues in important ways, it is law and the legal system that provide the society's "bottom line" on matters of ethics and social justice, even in defining the permissible scope of religious practice and influence, and the public relevance of other non-legal sources of ethical values.

The ethical understanding reflected in our present legal system is heavily tilted toward validating individualism, selfishness, and materialism, and shows little concern for fostering a sense of community or a spirit of caring for the well-being of others or for the natural environment. This basic individualistic orientation is reflected in the following core elements of the legal system:

• The basic rules of substantive law embodied in, for example, the laws of contracts, torts, corporations, and property, assume that people are essentially unconnected monads who wish to pursue their own self-interest in the competitive marketplace, and whose main social concern is limited to protecting their persons and property against unwanted interference by others. Even the Constitution, often thought to be among the world's greatest legal documents in securing social justice, provides no recognition of the human longing for community, for social connection, for mutual caring and recognition. Instead, the protections of the Bill of Rights are restricted to protecting the isolated individual or family against government incursion, oppression, and discrimination, protections that are very important, but that in no way provide a basis for challenging the selfishness and materialism that is otherwise largely legitimized by the rest of American law.

• Dispute resolution takes place within the framework of an adversary system which defines differences as antagonistic clashes of conflicting interests, foster hostility and mutual deprecation, and normally exclude any community interest in the resolution of disputes beyond the self-interested goals of the litigants themselves. The adversary process is characterized by the assumption that all participants should treat each other with skepticism and mistrust, and that justice is best served by the use of rules of evidence that are limited to the proof of empirically verifiable facts. As such, the underlying social meaning of disputes is presumed to be "subjective" and irrelevant; healing underlying social causes of an injury is not considered to be an aspect of legal justice; and empathy, compassion, and forgiveness are neither fostered by, nor relevant to, the legal process.

• In their training, and in the disciplinary and ethical rules that govern the legal profession, lawyers are encouraged and even to some extent required to ignore

This plank was prepared by Peter Gabel, Thane Rosenbaum, and Nanette Schorr.

ethical considerations beyond the narrow self-interest of the client. Legal education is almost exclusively directed toward the technical manipulation of specialized professional rules; the best students are seen as the ones who can demonstrate their capacity to shape precedent to argue for any side; no part of a law student's education is directed toward instilling in the student an obligation to promote the creation of a more humane, more just, or more caring society. The ethical rules of the profession reinforce the view of the lawyer as a hired gun with no transcendent ethical consciousness: the "duty of zealous representation," for example, virtually requires the lawyer to not allow his or her own ethical concerns to interfere with the zealous legal pursuit of the clients' ends, irrespective of the impact of these ends on others, on the community as a whole, or on the environment.

• The intense individualism, empiricism, and mistrust of any transcendent ethical or community values which characterize all of these aspects of the present legal system are understandable if we recall that this system emerged in reaction to the abuses of communal and religious norms that characterized feudal society and feudal law. Protecting the liberty of the individual against the coercion of others and of the State was the highest priority of those who first imagined our liberal legal order during the Enlightenment, and those who made it a reality following the American and European revolutions of the eighteenth century. At that time, the creation of our present legal system was a great achievement. But today, that same system has become both a symptom and a cause of the ethical indifference, the cynicism, and the lack of community and caring that pervades our wider society.

In the area of law, our challenge is to preserve the core value of individual liberty that earlier generations fought for, while transforming our legal culture to foster the healing of our disintegrated communal fabric. To that end, we propose the following initial changes in the American legal system:

1. We call upon all those affiliated with the legal profession—including lawyers, judges, law professors, legal scholars, and law students—to declare that the healing of distortions in human interaction and the fostering of mutual recognition and respect shall be acknowledged as a central aspect of the meaning of justice, and a core objective of law and legal processes. This "declaration" might be accomplished by the holding of public conferences in which the role of legal culture in promoting social healing is discussed, by the writing of scholarly articles which help to advance public understanding of how specific legal reforms can further the creation of meaningful social connection, and by experimentation by individual members of the profession, bar associations, law firms, law schools, and legal service offices in developing innovative legal interventions consistent with a healing-centered objective.

2. The American Law Institute and other influential associations of judges and practitioners, as well as members of state legislatures in states where the state legislature plays an important role in defining the rules of court and rules of evidence, should seek to modify the current operation of the adversary system so as to foster a greater sense of empathy and compassion in the parties to a lawsuit toward each other, and the mind of the jury and the public generally, regarding the social causes of legal disputes. One key element in accomplishing this goal must involve modifying the existing evidentiary rules regarding relevance away from the narrow empiricism of the current "fact-finding" process and toward the telling of meaningful stories or narratives that place disputes in their meaningful social and personal context, and therefore reveal more of the full human meaning of each party's actions. Other possible methods for furthering the dissemination of empathy and compassion within legal proceedings might include the encouragement of contextualizing opening and closing statements by judges, attorneys, and litigants; encouraging judges to make "findings of social meaning" instead of just the traditional findings of fact; encouraging judges to use expressive rather than narrowly objective language when writing legal opinions, with the goal of revealing how empathy plays a part in both the understanding of a legal problem and the construction of a just response.

3. The American Bar Association and their affiliated state and local bar associations should modify the existing ethical rules governing the legal profession to provide that in addition to having an acknowledged duty to the client and the court, a lawyer must also assume an ethical responsibility for the welfare of the broader community. In order to better accomplish this objective, the principle of a lawyer's "duty of zealous representation" should be reoriented so that it no longer is limited to advancing the individual self-interests of clients, but also contemplates an ethical obligation to work toward promoting substantive and social justice, as well as the larger goals of a good society. Within this new framework, the existing attorney-client relationship, and its attendant confidentiality rules, can still be preserved, but the nature of that relationship, and the "calling" of the profession, should also seek to address the broader problems of social justice that the client's



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4. The American legal system should adopt and recognize, as a new principle of tort law, a duty to care for others in distress. This duty would be broader than the historical duty to rescue, but would be limited by a reasonableness condition subject to common law interpretation. The purpose of this duty would be to create a new ethos of responsibility for those who are in personal and economic crisis—the homeless, the infirm, the elderly, family members.

5. The criminal justice system should adopt a second stage of all criminal trials. Where there is a conviction, after the sentencing of the defendant, all those who participated in the trial—judge, jury, the attorneys, the public, the defendant—should convene for a second stage to the trial, at which there will be a discussion of the deep social meaning and pain in the community that the trial uncovered. The purpose for the second stage would be to seek opportunities to explore healing, repair, acknowledgment of responsibility, as well as understanding and compassion for the defendant, the victims of the crime, and the larger community.

6. With respect to civil remedies, the focus on money damages should be changed so that liability can be redressed by directly healing the wrongs that had been committed by the defendant. Such an approach would focus on face-to-face reconciliations, and would also recognize the value of contrition, and the acknowledgment of pain, caused by the defendant—all in the hopes of seeking the possibilities for forgiveness. Moreover, those who have been found liable for civil damages could be required to undergo some process of public education that would speak to the nature of the personal and social injury that had been caused. In addition, the law would promote remedies that result in changing workplace dynamics or other social contexts that caused the injury.

7. The current system of legal education breeds an unhealthy culture of anger, resentment and rage. Law school education should adopt the following reforms: Law schools should try to create opportunities for sharing and caring in the law school community; there should be less focus on individual grades, and more focus on group activity and problem-solving; students should be taught how to counsel clients in a way that develops an appreciation for the moral and psychic dimensions of a client's suffering and pain; there should be more clinical opportunities, so that students can see the value of working within the community with people who have real problems; law school instruction should move away from the Socratic method of teaching and move toward methods that encourage students to work together, share information, and not be made to feel isolated and alone; law schools should place more emphasis on teaching students the role and value of being a counselor, as well as an advocate; students should be taught that ethical principles are not merely code words for how one goes about avoiding legal consequences, but in fact are real moral imperatives that make all of us in society better off. □

What Kind of Society Nurtures the Soul?

Laurie Zoloth-Dorfman

In The *New York Times* two weeks ago there was an article in the fashion pages. Along with the extraordinary and extreme clothes that were displayed for us to look at, the gaze of the other looking at the completely unobtainable clothes, the description of the celebrities watching the clothes being displayed, the article began with the sentence, "Greed is back." It was an homage to the way that the new greed, the new money, has enabled the super-rich to decorate themselves with pride, and talked about the way in which the wearing of black, subdued clothes, no furs, has been replaced by an extravagant display of greediness. I thought that this was an extraordinary ideological turn right there in The *New York Times*.

But in California where I live, my world has closed. For my family, this was the year that my husband lost his soft-money job and became, just like in all those sto-

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ries, unemployed. We struggled last summer, when we had to live on the produce of our own gardens, and my four-year-old understood peaches as luxuries. This reality affects us: the reality of living in joblessness, my children hungry, eager, not having quite enough—not just spiritual but for the first time really physical. And yet in my work as an ethicist in a children's hospital that serves the working poor and the children of Oakland, I see lives and families destroyed by the stark economic crisis in California, ever the more grotesque, ever the more tragic. I would often come home shaking with gratitude for my garden, for my life itself.

It is our own sons and daughters graduating into a world of joblessness. And for this, the imperative to build a society that nurtures the soul is no longer the theoretical construct that it was for me twenty-five years ago. In California, in this last election, fewer people voted than have ever voted before. The volunteers needed by our schools, by our day-care centers, by every social institution that touches my life, are less and less available. Less time, less money, less social capital to spare.

It is from the lessons of mothering that I most profoundly draw my comments on building a society that nurtures the soul. It is because of my work as a mother that I see primarily that we must take on the necessity of obligation. Obligation, perhaps for me more important than even meaning or love, is the primary task of the Left. Hard work—the necessity for turning over the wet soil, the necessity for planting, make me just no fun on the weekends. I think it is important to think of work at the center of our lives, and when I see and I analyze the strength and the extraordinary potency and vibrancy of the new Right, I see that in many ways, the call there is for hard work, playing by the rules, doing things with a love for the ordinary.

I too love the ordinary. I think about the ordinary, the daily work of human lives, and I want us to begin there. Not in leisure, but in work.

What do we mean, then, by honoring the daily? What could that look like in a human society? A society that truly celebrates daily work: What would this mean? First, I think about it as the ability to travel at all times with children. It is profoundly disturbing to me that a gathering such as this is always a gathering of adult talk. Because for twenty years I stood at the fringes, with various babies around the edges, I'm acutely aware of the absence of the voices of children, not that they have at four, frankly, a whole lot to say, but I believe that to construct a society means doing it in the midst of the chaos, of the trouble, of the interruption, of the ordinary lives of mothers.

It is hard for me to be here because it meant leaving my family. It is always a wrench to walk out the door to go into work. Any work, no matter how sustaining and how fulfilling, and I have a great gift of having extraordinarily fulfilling and moving work—there is the moment when one walks out the door and you think, what the hell am I doing here? It is that pain and that grief, too, that must be honored, recognized, understood, and worked with.

We cannot construct love as pleasure. Mary Edsall spoke of this very beautifully—about the danger of narcissism. When we talk about the necessity for love, we must remember the trials of love itself. When we speak of love as a motivating force, we must remember that love is at its heart promise, obligation, the grumpiness, the hard times. Like the experience of looking in the mirror, and seeing despair, and feeling unhappy with one's visage, one of course sees that in every human relationship, and love is the possibility and the potential and in fact the necessity of going beyond the dissatisfaction and just plain staying, just plain witnessing, despair and anger, disappointment and disillusionment.

We have to be careful when we talk about being visionaries, that we don't mean being perfectionists. It's a common error. When we have a vision—of a conference, of a movement, of a politics, of a human life—we have to remember that the vision must include the inevitability of error, mistake, accident, tragedy, and loss. This is because things happen in the ordinary travels of a human life, and in the ordinary course of love. We've got to plan on it, make places to stop and sit down, and have cookies.

We must remember, too, that a return to love and meaning is not a return to childhood. We cannot return to being taken care of as though we ourselves are children. We're grown-ups now. It is a hard thing to say, but it is just as important to cook a home-cooked meal for another as it is to be cooked for. One of the things that we've struggled for in the Left is our abundant need for being taken care of. And less, pathetically less, on our abundant necessity for taking care of others. Harder still will be to give up our own fun childhoods in the Sixties. I had a wonderful time being in my twenties in the Sixties. Bonfires on the campus, seizing buildings. In fact, I don't know about the rest of you, but I get a little thrill coming back to Dupont Circle and Washington, D.C., pointing out to the cab driver, "You know, it was right here, those very windows ..." We can't go back to that, either. The Left that we built, the Left that was exciting and thrilling and wonderful, was a Left of children, and I am not that. I will need something more, something harder.

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If I could say one specific thing in answer to the

question of, "So what does a politics of ethics and meaning mean? What does a conference like this do? How will you be different?", it would be: I want to be part of a political and spiritual movement that simply doesn't ever lie, that never tells a lie. That would be the hardest thing of all, not even tell the polite lie. Not even to say "I'm too busy" when I mean "I'm too tired and I don't want to be with you."

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Without that, we lose systematically, as Aristotle would have it, the habit of truth-telling itself. And when we come to our adulthood, we don't know what we want, we don't know what will make us full, we don't know what will make us even happy. Too many small lies along the way.

The road so long and so difficult will also require loving the difficult, grumpy other. The old person for her vulnerability, yes, but the strident militant right-winger, so easy to characterize as other, so easy to demonize—how then to love that person? What does it mean to love someone who is out to get you? I think it means to hear the truth in what they have to say, to hear the thing they are saying also as pertaining to us. □

Populism and the 1996 Elections

Sharon Welch

Many activists are propelled by a myth of social change that is similar to the comforting myth of evolutionary progress: We work for social change in the hope that our children or the people in the future will know more justice and more freedom, more peace. If for any number of reasons we no longer share this hope, is work for social change still possible? I want to articulate a humanist vision of what it means to work for social justice, of what it means to support a politics of meaning—a humanist vision that begins by acknowledging that whether or not we succeed in the future is irrelevant. We can't know if we will succeed, and we can't know that even if we do succeed, our gains will not either be rolled back or superseded by even greater challenges. How then do we maintain compassion and energy, and prevent capitulating to despair and individual withdrawal in the face of this recognition?

The moral and political vocabulary of the Right again, clear and powerful. The Right employs a moral language of certainty.

This moral vocabulary rests on sharp dichotomies, clear delineation of good versus evil, us versus them, right versus wrong.

The challenge facing us is stark—it is relatively easy to mobilize energy for social change under the guise of progress, certainty, demonizing, and self-righteousness. Once we decide, however, to renounce the illusions and satisfactions of the Right, how do we then mobilize energy for social change?

I see many activists who are well aware of the dangers of absolute vision. We know the limits of our own strategies for social change. For many of us, self-righteousness is no longer an option. Having the right analysis does not readily translate into political efficacy.

There is a solution—not an abdication but an exercise of power that is as vital as the power of right: A politics of meaning that is grounded in an awareness of both our connection with other people, our vision for social change, and an awareness of our own limits—the partiality of our own visions, our ability once we gain power to abuse it as easily as the next person.

Working within this horizon of diversity of limits, ambiguity, diversity, transience, self-criticism can be as exhilarating as "us against them" on the road to certain victory. And I see certain elements—models—of what it can be to work within this horizon in two primary sources: Chaos theory and jazz.

Why jazz? It is because I have learned from jazz how to hear the world differently. I've learned from jazz a different way of working with limits, a different way of understanding and respecting a tradition that is responsive but without illusions of progress or perfection or somehow finding the final and definitive answer.

Think about the logic of jazz. Jazz emerges from the

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inner play of structure and improvisation, of individuality and collectivity, tradition and innovation. In performing jazz, musicians model two key forms of respect. First we find the respect for the tradition, which challenges us to learn from it and to see new things with it. Second, respect for other players. As James Pollier emphasizes, the worst thing that can be said about a jazz player is that he or she doesn't listen to other players. A third element: Openness to learning something new—from an old piece, from the people with whom one is working. The final element of good jazz: when all of this comes together, it swings.

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The politics of meaning can be a political movement that has the power and the fluidity of jazz. We need to focus not just on particular strategies, on particular policies or campaigns, but rather on the connections from which they emerge. For some, this connection is grounded in faith. For many Jewish and Christian supporters, the politics of meaning is the politics of the image of God. It's a recognition of being in relationship to God and in relationship to other people as being in the image of God. For those of us who are agnostic, or atheist, the connection is one that is profoundly humanistic. It is the connection with other people and with nature—the joy, the energy, the chaos that comes with being open and responsive to the forces of nature and the people around us.

What's the chord progression in the politics of meaning? Respect for every human being, commitment to justice, awareness of our own limits.

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Cornel West

I have been wrestling with a deep sense of despair about American civilization. The more I read our history, the more I'm convinced that we're in an embryonic stage of profound decomposition and dissolution and disintegration. I do not think that this precious, flawed, yet grand experiment in democracy will survive with the escalating levels of wealth and class inequality and racial balkanization and very deep gender divisions, as well as sexual orientation tensions. It may not be in the next five, or ten, or twenty-five years, but within fifty or seventy-five years, something called authoritarian democracy could quite easily become predominant. And so when I see so many fellow human beings and fellow citizens who are looking for a new vision, one can not but be excited and inspired. I want to thank Brother Michael Lerner and all those who have worked with him in creating this kind of space.

Because in many ways for me, the very fact that a politics of meaning could surface at this particular moment is both a sign of something potentially to come and a sign of our desperation—desperation not in the pejorative sense, but in the sense that we know that the prevailing frameworks and paradigms just don't provide us with what we need. And therefore we have to look for something new. And this actually is very American, as we know. Because one of the deep problems of American civilization is precisely that it is predicated on collective self-definition as exceptional, but that American exceptionalism has rarely wanted us to be experimental about our fundamental social structures. So that ideology of exceptionalism in which it seems as if we're so open to change is actually a way of trumping a conversation about radically interrogating the fundamental assumptions of the system itself.

And what the politics of meaning is is a very wise, clever, and deep—and I hope seductive—way of allowing a discourse to gain a certain salience for large numbers of American citizens so that American democratic experimentalism at the deepest level can take root.

Brother Michael and I have debated about this for many years, and I've got my friendly critiques of the politics of meaning. But they're put forward to empower the project, because we're on the same road.

I begin with the assumption that there are two sacred cows in the history of American civilization: one is economic growth by means of corporate priorities. Both parties have to work within the context of economic growth and yet the economy itself is already structured in such a way that it is difficult for us to convince corporations that they have significant and substantial civic responsibilities, not just those of philanthropy and tax-paying and providing jobs. We thank corporations for that; it's very kind of them. They work hard; cut-throat competition is tough. I say that in all seriousness. But there's got to be more. But we raise that question—about any notion of what it means to be a citizen. That is a sacred cow since the 1880s and '90s—the formation of the U.S. industrial order.

The second sacred cow is our profound xenophobic sensibilities that make it difficult to talk not simply about the economic but also about the existential.

What is so distinctive about this politics of meaning movement is that it fuses the existential and the economic, the spiritual and the social, the personal and the political, learning from the sisters of all colors in the feminist movement. But we have to acknowledge that these structures of meaning that historically have brought people together have been profoundly xenophobic. People get discouraged when we say America has a deep white supremacist tradition and legacy: "Why do you say that? It makes me down." We're just telling the truth, that's all.

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It doesn't mean we can't push it back. We have to be able to hit that head on. Similarly so in relation to patriarchy. This is not a question of political correctness. All of us, if we're going to be democratic experimentalists, must be against any form of dogmatism and orthodoxy. We all ought to be for robust and uninhibited public discourse. Political correctness at its best is about suffering—patriarchy is about scars and bruises of sisters; homophobia is about scars and bruises of gay brothers and lesbian sisters; there are different perspectives as to how we push it back.

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Maybe we can begin a public discourse about the distribution of wealth in our society. Fellow citizens need to know about the 1 percent who own 48 percent of the total net financial wealth—not to demonize the 1 percent; one half percent own 31 percent—many of us are in the top 20 percent, doing very well. But that 80 percent—stagnating wages, declining wages, looking for some alternative to the cold-hearted conservatism and the spineless liberalism that are available to them at the present moment. And if they don't find it, they pull back, become indifferent and apathetic more and more. Looking for a sense of community, a sense of connectedness. Also looking for a sense of purpose in their individual lives that connects them to something bigger than themselves.

The politics of meaning has the capacity to speak on all of those different levels. One criticism: I think we have to be explicit about the relationship of the politics of meaning to the democratic tradition, and the ways that it is a refining and a deepening of the democratic tradition. The language of democracy has not been so thoroughly coopted by the powers that be that one does not come out and say look, we can talk about being existential democrats—the way Walt Whitman was, the way Louis Armstrong was, which is to say, acknowledging the way that non-market values play a fundamental role in our life in terms of the ways of being in the world. Love, care, concern, empathy, compassion, on the individual and interpersonal level, as well as talk about being political democrats in terms of rights and liberties, economic democrats in terms of workers having a fundamental role and significant power in the workplace. And even global democrats that serve as the criterion for critiquing dictatorial regimes or various foreign policies that tend to undermine people's everyday lives. Politics of meaning is a way of talking about all of these, but for me, I like the more explicit link to democracy—I'm a radical democrat, and that's precious, and it's also something that people die for. And it connects me with them. Brother Martin died because in part he was a democrat and he loved folks so. It was in part a quest for meaning, yes—but it was for democracy in light of his own Christian view of the world that he lived and died. And if one is willing to live and die, you want to be part of that cloud of witnesses that went before that gave so much.

Peter Gabel

The way Cornel West talks about democracy, I am completely moved by it. It's what I want to be part of—the radical democracy. That people would come together and be part of something together, and feel connected to one another in making their world. But that isn't the experience that people of our generation have of democracy. One experience people have of democracy is a ritualized, largely one-day process, with some sense of hope, but then experiencing their own lives as lives of isolation, routine, repetition, alienation, disconnectedness, internal pain, and experiencing the "democratic society" that we live in as remote, detached, unconcerned about them, not speaking to them, and therefore something that they believe in an abstract sense, but not something that they are moved by. So the question to me is how do we connect the way Cornel West is moved by it to this tremendous limitation that it currently has? If you're on the Left, if you have a history of working in progressive social movements, you may have another fear of the word "democracy." And that is the experience of having a democratic attitude, an egalitarian attitude, believing everyone should participate, believing in making sure everybody has a voice, and having lived through antagonistic, fractious, frightening meetings in which the more responsibility you've taken the more you get attacked and the more pain it causes. Fewer and fewer people come back to the meetings, and you are left with the people who are denouncing you in the meetings in the name of democracy.

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A politics of meaning version of democracy ought to link community and democracy. The ideal of the realization of inclusion and participation, equality and self-determination will occur when we can build communities of common understanding, of mutual recognition and connectedness, of trust, of basic safety, of modes of discourse that are real and therefore not subject to the first criticism of totally abstract and irrelevant.

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For example, the labor movement could develop forms of inclusion, and respect, and caring, and empathy for workers' lives that would make them feel part of community and democracy. Labor unions might learn from the example of Local 2 in San Francisco, the Hotel and Restaurant Workers, who negotiated an agreement with management to supply child care and elder care for

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union members. In so doing, the union moved beyond its historic role of seeking to preserve wage levels for workers, and now seeks to preserve and protect peoples' connections to those they trust and care about. This expansion of focus gives a resonance that makes it more likely that people will come to union meetings and participate in the democratic process of shaping the union. Similarly, the commitment to democracy would be strengthened if unions held lecture series in which contemporary political, social, and cultural issues were debated and union members were encouraged to explore the way those issues affected their own personal lives. And imagine how powerful the experience if unions created an activity in which union members told about their own people's histories—where the Filipino and the Chinese and the Latino workers come to educate each other about where they're from and about their heritage, so that they actually came to know one another, becoming part of a community. If the union became a vehicle for people to escape their isolation, form community, and really get to know each other, people would stop thinking of the union as an insurance policy against the worst abuses that could happen to them in the marketplace. A politics of meaning seeks to expand our conception of democracy by finding ways throughout the society in which this kind of solidarity, connection, and mutual recognition can be fostered. □

The Fate of African Americans

Congressman Major R. Owens

I hope you are as excited about this Summit as I am. I think it is one of the most significant events to take place in Washington in the fourteen years that I've been here.

I've called for the creation of a Third Force in this country, a coalition of caring majority. This Summit is a movement of a caring majority. And a substantial part of the Black community will be part of that caring majority.

For many in the Black community, and certainly in the community that I represent in Brooklyn, we have been living in depression conditions, with 15 to 20-percent unemployment. The Republican leadership has now made a huge assault on public housing. Many people in the Black community feel that they are under a state of siege, and that has been made more intense by the retreat of the federal government, and the consequent retreat of state and local government, from its traditional role to provide some degree of caring for those who are most economically deprived. Affirmative action is being taken away, set-asides for the poor are being taken away, so of course many people in the Black community feel under attack, and care very much about public policy issues.

But the problem is, when your caring stems from being under direct assault, the caring doesn't always flow from ideology, but rather from direct need, and so you aren't always aware of the need to link up with and care about other people as well. For 232 years, American slavery existed; the obliteration process occurred for African Americans, keeping Blacks alive but trying to transform them into beasts of burden, subjected to oppression that left a lasting impact. The teenage pregnancy problem started during slavery when Black girls were forced to become pregnant as soon as they could physically, and then Black women were used as breeders. Suddenly, now, we want a color-blind society and to pretend that we are all equal, without taking into account the lasting impact of slavery. A politics of meaning must include participation of African Americans and must speak to their needs.

Thandeka

The agenda for this session includes many items. I will discuss one of them: the link between our private crisis of meaning as middle-class, progressive Americans and the public fate of Black America. My task is complicated by five unstated assumptions in our agenda. They are:

One: We are suffering from a crisis of meaning.

Two: Our crisis is linked to the fate of a particular group of people.

Three: African Americans have one common fate.

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The Reverend James Forbes is pastor of Riverside Church, New York City.
Thandeka teaches philosophy of religion at Williams College.

Four: We know what it is.

Five: Somehow the inevitable—a group's fate—isn't so inevitable after all. We can change it.

Collectively, these assumptions are extraordinarily presumptuous. Our agenda, from this perspective, is either impossible or inadvisable. From this perspective, I have nothing to say.

There is, however, another perspective from which we can view the work required in this session. We can very consciously and carefully keep our work situated within the wider religious framework of this "politics of meaning" summit. This framework is Genesis 1:26-27. In this part of the biblical account of creation, we are told that God said: "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness…." So God created humankind in His image, in the image of God He created them; male and female, He created them.

From this perspective we must remember that the politics of meaning, as Michael Lerner tells us in the introduction to his new book, is an attempt to translate the ancient biblical truth that human beings are created in the Image of God into a contemporary language that can also be grasped by a nonreligious person. Michael wants to talk about God to people who no longer listen to such talk. As Michael reminded us this morning, we all have handicaps. In a word, the "politics of meaning" is a theology for the theologically impaired. Or as Naomi Wolf reminded us during her remarks yesterday evening, this is a campaign for the hearts and minds of progressive Americans who feel slightly uncomfortable using the "G" word. I would like to suggest that we think of this summit as a conference for the biblically challenged American middle class.

We are persons who walk with a limp, the kind of limp Jacob had after he wrestled with God and said to God: "I will not let you go unless you bless me" (Gen. 32:36). God granted Jacob his wish and called him Israel, which means "the one who strives with God."

Israel received his blessing. He wrestled with God and prevailed. He did, however, walk away from this sacred encounter with a limp.

Limping, from this biblical standpoint, is a potent image. I suspect, however, that for those among us who are theologically impaired, this image is deeply empty of spiritual significance.

My task this afternoon is to fill in this image with a meaning that is pertinent for us today. As such, my task this afternoon is midrash, exegesis, a reconstruction of our world of concerns within a biblical framework in a way that, as Michael Lerner states in *The Politics of Meaning*, "really takes seriously the uniqueness and preciousness of every human being and our connection to a higher ethical and spiritual purpose that gives meaning to our lives."

From this perspective, I now invite us to ask ourselves two questions posed by our religious agenda for this afternoon's session. First: What happens when we, as middle-class, progressive Americans forget that we are made in God's image? Second: How does this forgetfulness of our divine image link us to the fate of Black America?

To answer these two questions, we must examine the relationship between our rampant forgetfulness and the raging hopelessness that abounds in Black America's inner cities. We must investigate the connection between the theologically impaired liberal American middle class and the economically impaired Black American underclass. As we undertake this task, we must remember that for middle-class Americans, the crisis of meaning begins as a spiritual depression. For the underclass, however, the crisis of meaning begins as an economic depression. In other words, there is a palpable difference between food for thought and food for the stomachs of one's children.

My way of beginning this work is to tell you a story: the story of Moses' first encounter with God (Exodus 3-4).

"One day, as Moses tended the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, wanting to direct the sheep to greener pastures, Moses led his flock beyond the wilderness to the mountain of God. There, the angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in a flame of fire out of a bush. Moses saw that the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed.

And Moses said, "I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up."

When the Lord saw that Moses had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!"

And Moses said, "Here I am."

Then God said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." And then the Lord said further, "I am the God of your father, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."

And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

The Lord spoke to Moses saying: "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmaster. Indeed I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey….So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt."

Moses listened deeply and then responded with a question.

All of us know the question well: Why me?

"Who am I," Moses said, "that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt? I have never been

particularly eloquent. I am slow of speech and slow of tongue." (Moses stuttered.) In other words, I'm not capable of such an undertaking. Ask someone else. Don't bother me, I can't cope.

And so Moses said, "Why don't you send my brother Aaron? He speaks fluently. And even now, he is coming out to meet you and when he sees you his heart will be glad." (Simply stated, Moses' Day-Timer's Task List had not included an encounter with God. God was not on the A-list.) Aaron's the special one, Moses said, and I'm sure you love him more that you love me. After all, he is more lovable. He's the worthy one. You can tell.

Listen to his speech. He's a man of real culture, a man deserving of your love and respect.

God listened deeply to Moses' words. Then setting them aside, God put his staff in Moses' hand and sent him off to Egypt.



RICK REINHARD

One immediate question emerges from this story: Why did Moses go to Egypt?

The answer is basic: He went because of his encounter with God. Moses, after this encounter, could no longer turn his back on the suffering of others even though he, himself, suffered. He could not set aside and dismiss the suffering of others because of his own feelings of unworthiness, his own profound sense of low self-esteem and the absence of value and meaning in his own life. In contemporary terms, he could no longer ignore the cries of the truly disadvantaged.

We must not forget that Moses, himself, had suffered. In his earlier life, he had wrestled with overwhelming forces and fled. Standing up for his principles had cost him his social position. His career had been severely downsized. Although he had constructed a new life for himself, he now had a job far below his skill level. Now, he was simply trying to get by.

But after his encounter with God, Moses could no longer ignore the groans of his people.

He could not pretend that each person gets what he or she deserves and if people are suffering—hey—it must be their own fault.

He could not say to himself: "They should not have had all those kids. They should not have gone into a foreign land. They should have run away. Escaped. Worked harder, stored their food and fled."

After meeting God, Moses could not claim that "these people" were simply stupid, had low I.Q.s and were thus entirely fit for their station in life.

He could no longer say, "I just don't give a damn," or "I've got enough problems of my own. Ask somebody else."

After meeting God, Moses could no longer blame the victim for her or his own degradation.

He could not count a people's humiliation as evidence against their moral worth or social value for the common good. He could no longer say, "Not today God. I'm in a crisis of meaning. Try me again tomorrow."

Rather, Moses' sustained exposure to God gave birth to his compassionate action to join forces with the interests of the poor, the dispossessed, and the oppressed for the sake of their liberation. Moses now had to affirm the inherent worth and dignity of every person not just with his words but also by his actions.

How did Moses learn this? Again, the answer is basic: God would not let go of Moses until God had wrestled a blessing from Moses. Only after Moses said "Alright already, I'll get involved," did God release Moses from God's sacred grip. God's grip on Moses was released only after Moses knew what seeing God, loving God, and feeling God means in this world. It means a human heart overflowing with love, a human life filled with labor in the fields of social justice. It means a life no longer empty of meaning.

This biblical story is obviously cast in theistic terms. It is, after all, a story about an encounter with God. But we must remember that the actual content of this story is human. The content is the story of our humanity. We learn from this story what it means to be made in the image of God. Our holy image is our humanity: our compassionate action.

Love. This sacred image of our humanity is a political image because love repairs and transforms the world. All the rest is commentary.

Now we are ready to answer one of the thematic questions of this session:

What is the link between the contemporary crisis of meaning for middle-class, progressive Americans and the extreme social dislocation and economic adversity experienced by inner-city Black children whose adult rage fills their traumatized lives with random acts of violence?

Or again: What is the link between our own downsized dreams, our mortgage-poor middle-class wealth, our credit card pleasures, and the fate of the truly disadvantaged in our midst?

The answer from the standpoint of the mosaic biblical tradition is vividly clear: Everything. Or to cite a verse from The *New York Times*, the bible for progressive America, in a passage taken from the March series on the downsizing of the American white-collar worker: "[Middle-class Americans now] find themselves sifting for convenient scapegoats on which to turn their anger, and are adopting harsher views toward those who are more needy than themselves."

The link between the crisis of meaning for middle-class folk and the fate of a demonized, racialized, and exploited people is painfully clear. What, after all, can meaning mean when it is deaf, dumb, and blind to the needs of others? Nothing. That's the bad news.

What's the good news? We will not be released from God's grip until we fill our lives with *systematic* acts of loving kindness.

Amen.

The Reverend James Forbes

This morning, when I heard Michael Lerner, my heart began to sing, "Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen." For Lerner's vision to be realized, we need a spiritual revitalization of our nation.

I want to remind you of Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones. People had fallen apart, the pieces were no longer connected, because there was an absence of meaning in the community's life. God asks Ezekiel, "Son of man, can these bones yet live?"—can this vision of revitalization of the community be achieved? God tells Ezekiel to "prophesy to the bones," and after that was done, the bones began to gather, re-configured. And then God told Ezekiel to prophesy again, this time to the wind, and he did, and the spirit came, and these bones became revitalized and a mighty community was formed to testify to God's vision of possibility. So we can learn from Ezekiel that apart from a spiritual revitalization, we will not achieve the politics of meaning's call for "a new bottom line," we will continue either in sickness or in death.

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.... Recently, people have been calling for welfare reform because there is too much dependency. So, it was recently reported, some leaders in New York reputedly had back-room conversations in which they concluded that we have to make welfare assistance so miserly that the poor will leave our cities. When I heard that, I got so mad, righteous indignation was not enough. I imagined a great exodus from New York City, and all the bridges and tunnels were filled with New York's poor and infirm.

And as they walked or limped along, God looked back on the city and saw that the people who remained breathed a sigh of relief, because they could enjoy their precious things in peace without the burden of worrying about the condition of the poor. Then God, in deep sorrow and tender compassion, decided to gather up God's precious things, so that God too could join the march of the poor. And it came to pass that God gathered up the sunlight and the rain, and then departed with God's precious things.

But we have to find a way to live together with the people who are the apple of God's eye so that together the dream of creation can be fulfilled.

This discussion of politics of meaning is not very far from what Dr. King stood for when he talked about the need for spiritual revitalization and a revival of love in our culture. But God's love, says Dr. King, cannot be passive love—it must be love in action. It is insistence on community. It is insistence on mutuality. It is the willingness to go to any length to restore community. It is the willingness to forgive, not seven times, but seven times seven times. The cross is the sign of how far God will go to restore community. The resurrection is the symbol of God's triumph over all the forces that seek to block community. One who works against community is one who works against the whole of history.

So, brothers and sisters, I am here to support the politics of meaning because Dr. King said "Amen," but it can't happen without a spiritual revitalization. This meeting is looking toward a concrete agenda of social, political, economic and spiritual transformation....We shall overcome, but only through the power of the spirit.

Questions and Answers

Q: I'm from Atlanta. My paternal grandfather, Quentin March, was born a slave. He was twenty years old when he was freed. He lived in my home till I was a freshman in high school. We as a people have had only a brief moment in time to deal with the ugly inheritance of those years of which Major Owens spoke. Slavery was just a breath ago. So, in light of this, how do you evaluate the recent move to recredit state's rights by passing along

"block grants" to states.

Owens: First, I want to say something more about obliteration. Obliteration meant that in order to make the Black slaves more efficient beasts of burden an effort was made to obliterate their humanity, their families, their traditions, their religion.

States' rights is designed to pass the responsibility of the federal government back to the people from whom that responsibility had to be taken because of their tremendous inadequacies. We had a school lunch program because many states did such a bad job of making sure that every young person would have enough food. World War I came along and the government found that many of the young men being drafted for the army were malnourished. And this was always tainted by racism. If the responsibility is passed back to the states, I can assure you that when the money is scarce, they will make allocations of it on the basis of race. In New York, we have a governor who is blatantly taking the state's resources and using them to support the Republican enclaves that voted for him. If he gets control of Medicaid, those funds will go first to Republicans. There is more mercy when we act together as a nation than when we pass it back to some of these localities that are guilty of the worst corruption and the worst injustices ever perpetrated in America.

Thandeka: In *Losing Ground*, Charles Murray asks us to do a "thought experiment" in which we imagine a worker who lost his job at age fifty because his factory closed "through no fault of his own," the other a man who has "refused to work his entire life." There are not enough public funds, Murray says, to feed both men. Therefore, of course, we should take care of the unemployed worker who through no fault of his own doesn't have a job. How are we to think of the second man as he starves to death? We should think of this death, Murray says, as suicide!

Q: I've been a social activist all of my life. I'm an intern, working with Black youngsters who are incarcerated in a detention center. I am looking for ways for the Black community to trust me and ways for me to trust them. I have found myself rejected many times, my sincerity questioned, and I feel terrible about that. How can we bridge this terrible gap? I want to be able to give these children love and I want them to be able to return love to me.

Forbes: It's very difficult. The experience of many Blacks about whites is shaped by the continuing experience of disproportionate resources available to whites. It becomes easy to identify any given white person with the larger pattern of neglect and barbarity that whites as a community treat Blacks as a community. So what will it take Black people to trust white people in general? Most Black people are unsure if white supremacy is so powerful in imprinting the American consciousness that there are likely to be many whites willing to deal with many Blacks as humans of equal worth and equal humanity. Until that would be addressed, it is hard to get people to recognize the rare exception among whites. So, I don't know if I want to make myself vulnerable to whites unless I am clear that they are committed to eliminating the objective disproportion with every strength in their body.

The politics of meaning is about creating a whole new society of people who take exception to the privilege that has been brought by white supremacy.

When I came back from the Million Man March, people were still saying, "What do you think is going to happen with those Black folk getting together?" And I figured out that when people are nervous about my sense of empowerment and pride and personal capacity to make a difference, they aren't really trusting me. So, you've got to say, "I so hate the consequences of our dehumanizing separation that I pray for the spirit to risk the vulnerability to trust."

So we have to work, one by one, and then with large gatherings like this. If we can take the politics of meaning into the larger world, I think we can make a real difference.

Owens: There can be no compassion without a whole lot of patience. There are all kinds of corruption that exist that white, middle-class people know about but which doesn't move them to action because they know that the consequences are going to be felt more by Blacks than by whites. The drug industry could have been stopped in its embryonic stage, but it wasn't because it was initially a problem in the Black community, and so the drug dealers were able to establish themselves and create a thriving industry which now is strong and is not confined to the Black community.

We in the Black community ought to deal with the anti-Semitism of Farrakhan. Yet its also true that the press won't cover more responsible and profound Black leaders, like the Reverend James Forbes of Riverside Church. So here is the Reverend Forbes and most people have never heard of him—precisely because he articulated universal values.

Thandeka: I understand the questioner to be asking, "What do I have to do to have you trust me?" I'd like you to ask a somewhat different question, "Why are Black Americans afraid of me?" Race functions in this society as a way of diverting attention of the white population from the perception that the system is not working on its behalf. The benefit of being white is to feel psychologically good that at least you are not Black.

Q: We whites have to give up our white privilege and our

white supremacy. We must remember and confess; that will lead us to repentance, and that requires paying back, reparation. White America has defrauded Black America, and there is no reason for any Black to trust us until we've gone through the process of acknowledging white privilege and supremacy.

Thandeka: I think it would be better if my white friends would give up this notion of "white privilege." Most of the whites I know are actually suffering deeply, emotionally, economically. The focus on privilege is a way of avoiding personal pain and the sense of powerlessness. It would be more helpful for whites to focus on their own pain, their own dislocation, if they are ever going to join forces with others who are seen as more immediately dislocated. We have to move beyond the confessional politics in which whites get up and say, "I am a sinner and therefore I am saved." That approach is very dysfunctional and dangerous.

[TIKKUN Editor's Note: The insightful comment by Thandeka here is the jumping-off point from which this discussion needs to proceed in future gatherings.

One of the central ideas of the politics of meaning strategy, which differentiates itself from mainstream strategies of the liberal and progressive world, is that it believes that the best way to defend the interests of African Americans is to transcend the politics of guilt and the assumptions that most Americans are doing so very well in their lives, and instead to understand that most Americans are in pain and that pain could provide a link to the pain of people who are economically oppressed or political-rights-deprived.

The strategy of berating white people for their "privilege" has not produced an alliance with Blacks, but rather led many whites to distance themselves from the liberal world and its rhetoric that tells whites how bad they are. By focusing on how well ordinary white Americans are doing, the Left has reinforced whites' ties to elites of wealth and power. What Thandeka is suggesting instead is to focus on the ways in which this system does not deliver the goods for white people, both because it's true that it doesn't, and because that is more likely to lead to the kind of cross-class alliance that we might need in order to actually change the situation of Blacks. One way to do that is to focus on the deprivation of meaning in the lives of most white people, and to welcome (rather than guilt-trip) those whites who respond to that focus.

The politics of meaning strategy is to focus public attention on the way America's economic and political institutions systematically frustrate our need for loving relationships, meaningful work, and communities that are guided not by technocratic logic but by a commitment to a higher ethical and spiritual purpose. Doing that leads us to understand that many whites are oppressed, and that this oppression is real. But this, then, presents a problem for many African Americans: Can they acknowledge the deprivation of meaning as a real form of oppression (and one, incidentally, that is equally an oppression in the Black community), or is the pain of their own economic and political-rights oppression so intense that they can only recognize that form of oppression as real?

This, of course, is the question that has divided the Jewish community as well: with conservatives in the Jewish world being those who tend to limit their understanding of pain to the kind of pain that Jews experience, but to feel that other kinds of pain are less real (hence, for example, the ferocious insistence on the uniqueness of the Holocaust and the difficulty that many of them have in taking seriously the genocidal experiences of other peoples); while Jewish liberals and progressives have been more open to acknowledging the reality of others' pain.

From the standpoint of the politics of meaning, we must stop trying to create hierarchies and debates about "Who is most oppressed?" and instead build on the common ties among peoples. One such common tie is the way that people find their lives undermined by living in a society that privileges selfishness and cynicism, thereby undermining loving relationships, families, solidarity, and trust. It remains to be seen whether this is a moment in which some significant section of the African-American community could follow the lead of this African-American woman who tells us to encourage whites to "focus on their own pain." If this is not the moment, then the politics of meaning movement is likely to be largely white at the outset. Yet these are whites who are committed to overcoming racism, sexism, and homophobia—and hence ought to be treated with respect and support (which is, in part, what the Reverend Forbes and Congressman Owens are doing by their endorsement of our approach).

We ought not to stop our continuing attempts to reach out to the Black community, and the participation of African-American leaders throughout the Summit shows our serious interest in making that happen, though it remains to be seen whether leadership that shares our perspective can make significant inroads, particularly when there are many African Americans who feel that hanging on to the rhetoric of "Nobody knows the trouble I've seen" and "My pain is worse than yours" and the psychological beating up on whitey—regardless of whether the particular white being psychologically assaulted may be somebody who approaches Blacks with the hope of personally trying to do his or her part to fight against racism—may be the only real compensation they have for a life that is otherwise so filled with pain. In any event, we ought not encourage a discourse, like that presented by the questioner, that implicitly calls upon people to feel guilty and to think of themselves as privileged, when doing so has such counter-pro-

ductive political consequences.

"But," you might object, "isn't it objectively true that whites are privileged in relationship to Blacks in America?" Well, first, it's true on a group level but not on an individual level where there is a significant minority of Blacks who are doing economically much better than a significant minority of whites. Second, not every truth of this sort ought to be focused on. To show why, consider what your reaction would be if somebody began to talk about how African Americans are "privileged" as Americans compared to many other people around the world who are literally starving to death. There are many cases of malnutrition in America, and some starvation. But for many Blacks living in the inner cities of America, their participation in the system of American trickle-down wealth allows them to eat far better than tens of millions of other people on this globe, so therefore they should recognize and rejoice in their American privilege, and remember how others are starving in part because the world's resources have been unequally divided, and they are benefiting from that unequal distribution. If you heard this kind of argument, you'd probably say that even though they are "privileged" in relationship to some people on the globe, that ought not to be the focus, because it's more relevant to focus on the ways that they are not privileged in relationship to others in this society.

Exactly our point: What you focus on, and hence how you cut up reality, what categories you bring to it, depend in part on what agenda you have, what you want to do with knowledge. And it is the argument of the politics of meaning, articulated so well by Thandeka, that to focus on "white privilege" is to bring the wrong categories into the discussion.] □

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Can the Left Learn to Take Yes for an Answer?

Michael J. Bader

I can't stop thinking like a psychoanalyst. So, as I sat in a meeting near the end of the recent national Summit on Ethics and Meaning, listening to a lesbian participant criticize the conference leaders for not providing enough of a democratic and welcoming space for her, soon after an African-American woman had faulted the conference for being mostly white, and a student had decried the organizers' disregard of student issues, I began reflecting on the various psychological levels of the moment.



Both from direct experience and dozens of conversations, I knew that the conference had been an extraordinary success, introducing hundreds of people to the politics of meaning and creating an atmosphere of warmth and community. It might well have ended in a glow of good feeling. In the final sessions, however, it was emerging that some people felt hurt and were expressing a sense of exclusion that mirrored a similar and familiar pain in their collective experience of oppression in the broader society. The Left's chronic conflicts around identity politics and political correctness were rearing their heads again.

But, as I said, I just can't stop thinking like a psychoanalyst. And so, when several people sitting around me remarked that they now felt deflated in response to these criticisms, and I noticed that one conference leader looked depressed and another became defensive, and no one in the audience stood up to articulate their positive experience of the event, and I became aware of my own inhibition and even my feeling of guilt for resenting these complaints, I knew that these familiar political conflicts had hidden layers of psychological meaning.

Here's one meaning: I think that the Left can't take yes for an answer. By this I mean that, for various reasons, we are better at articulating our pain than our joy. We feel more comfortable as outsiders than insiders. We feel at home in our roles as victims and estranged from moments of victory. It's easy for us to feel cheated, and hard to feel full. We're better at being cynical than trusting. We expect to be held back, locked out, and put down by "those in charge" rather than welcomed to the party.

This is an active as well as passive process. When we feel connected, we look for signs of abandonment. When we begin to trust, we sniff around for the slightest signs of betrayal. When we find ourselves admiring a leader, we get ready for the inevitable disappointment. When we feel welcomed, we gird ourselves for rejection. And when we begin to love, we raise our deflector screens against being hurt. We have spent our political lifetimes honing the skills required to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory. We lack ways to accept and enjoy those moments and experiences in which we feel successful, make progress, or have reason to feel optimistic. Instead, we act like these moments of hope are dangerous invitations to lower our defenses and allow our most vulnerable aspirations and selves to be exposed and traumatically rejected.

How do we protect ourselves, exactly? It is sometimes hard to see, because oppression is obviously real. But we use our pain, our feelings of being slighted and/or discounted, and the failures of our leaders, as spurs to act and argue as if this is *the most important and profound meaning of the moment.*

Michael J. Bader is a psychoanalyst practicing in San Francisco and a member of TIKKUN*'s editorial board.*

ART FROM FLOOD! A NOVEL IN PICTURES, BY ERIC DROOKER

We unconsciously mistake the part for the whole and react to an instance of insensitivity or bias *as if* it had to dominate our entire emotional experience. We allow no shades of gray in our perception of our pain, no mitigating circumstances, and we sometimes create the impression that one discordant note has ruined the whole song. In so doing, we subtly reinstate our identities as victims and reaffirm our right to articulate our pain and our legitimate claims to some kind of restitution.

Given progressives' experiences of helplessness and political invisibility, it's not surprising that we might need to raise the volume of our voices of protest and our expressions of pain when we feel discounted. But I don't think that this fully explains the destructive group dynamic that regularly emerges in progressive organizations or events like the one I'm describing. In a context of *relative* support, hopefulness, and inclusive community, why do some of us need to remind ourselves that we're victims and, therefore, have a right to complain? And, perhaps more important, in a context of success and optimism, why are we so sensitive and easily discouraged by these kinds of complaints?

Psychoanalysis has a few things to teach us in this regard. For instance, it has helped us understand the role and dynamics of survivor guilt in psychological development—the unconscious belief that having too many of the good things in life (happiness, success in love, in work, comfort, pride, etc.) will hurt one's loved ones and result in either punishment or loss.

In my clinical practice, I see patient after patient hobble themselves, hold themselves back, deprive and undermine themselves, and otherwise cause themselves needless pain and suffering because of an unconscious belief that they're somehow not supposed to have a happier and healthier life than their loved ones, past and present. One person shoots himself in the foot at work, just as he is being given more responsibility and recognition. Another picks losers as romantic partners. Still others can't write or relax or have an orgasm or *not* worry or feel attractive. And all because, in part, of a deep unconscious need to remain securely attached and guiltily loyal to one's primary caretakers and love objects (who began as outside us and gradually became internalized). To the extent that we feel survivor guilt, we unconsciously experience being happy as a crime, as something we're not supposed to have as long as there are others who don't, as threats to our connections to those others (like our parents) who we see as unhappy.

Often, we deal with these threats by intensifying our identifications with these sad and unhappy loved ones. We take on *their* pain as if it were our own, and therefore unconsciously proclaim to the world and to our consciences: "Look! I'm not doing so well, either! I'm as unhappy as you. We're victims together, together in the same sinking ship!" We magnify our real frustrations or injuries in an attempt to ward off our guilt and anxiety about being successful, competent, and happy. We identify with the victim in order not to feel, unconsciously, like a victimizer. We come to feel as if being proud and hopeful is psychically equivalent to dancing on someone's grave.

This dynamic is ubiquitous. It doesn't just affect the Left. It lies behind most forms of self-sabotage in individuals and groups. Survivor guilt is an overarching motivation behind the complex process by which character and psychopathology are reproduced across generations. Progressive movements necessarily bear the stamp of this process. We are, in this sense, wounded healers.

Survivor guilt is often subtle and difficult to discern, because it uses kernels of truth as ammunition for its attacks and self-attacks. For instance, the Summit on Ethics and Meaning *was* primarily white, and there was a realistic basis for a person of color to feel uncomfortable there. Many factors contributed to these demographics, including both insufficient outreach *and* the resistance and inertia of some Black organizations (who otherwise agreed with the politics of meaning) to actively supporting the conference. Nonetheless, this was an objective problem, which might inflict pain on an African-American attendee, and about which the white conference organizers might legitimately feel frustration, disappointment, and some self-criticism.

Nevertheless, the politics of meaning movement is publically committed to defending the interests of people of color and, by all accounts—even those of its critics—the overall ambience of the conference was a warm one. So, the fact that a brickbat gets thrown at the end of the conference, in a large group setting, and at a moment in which the group was moving toward a hopeful and optimistic finale, involved more than the recognition of a "fact;" it seemed to contain and elicit elements of survivor guilt. At this latter and more unconscious level of meaning, it seemed to me to reflect a guilt-based need to focus on the way that our conference glass was "really" half-empty, a guilt-based reminder that there are victims in our midst, a guilt-inducing accusation that perhaps our sense of accomplishment and much-needed community has been purchased at someone else's expense.

Now, what exactly is wrong with all of this guilt? After all, concern for the victim is at the core of our liberal altruism, as well as the best of our religious traditions. And, as I emphasized earlier, the slights or injuries that are being articulated are genuine responses to real

social issues. So, why shouldn't we feel some form of collective responsibility and guilt?

The answer, ironically, is empirical: because something in the manner, timing, tone, and motive with which these complaints tend to be offered and something in the way they are received regularly produces a regressive political outcome. This kind of guilt is bad simply because it tends to produce bad outcomes. It regularly elicits the kinds of responses that I described occurring briefly at the Summit—namely, deflation, depression, greater inhibition, and anger. At that brief moment, the net emotional effect was to drain our positive energy and that of the conference organizers. During that moment, we felt that perhaps we had been and were doing something fundamentally wrong as opposed to something fundamentally right. Whatever its motive, its effect was and is objectively regressive.

And, of course, this was only a small and transient moment at a conference that otherwise was extremely inspiring. The history of the Left is strewn with experiences much more destructive and demoralizing. But if a group experience like the Summit can become depressed, however briefly, by guilt, then think about the effect on the people who we want to win over to our movement—say, the white working- and middle-class voters who deserted the Democratic Party in 1982. At the risk of sounding naive, it seems to me that we want to win people over to a movement that helps them feel *good* about themselves, not bad or guilty. We want to foster an atmosphere and sponsor a vision in which people who are now apathetic or drawn to the Right can see in our message the possibility of more community, more caring, and more recognition, without having to always feel guilty about those who are more economically deprived or have been the victims of more overt prejudice.

Psychoanalysis teaches us that people feel more caring when they are cared for, more able to give when they feel happy, more inclusive when they feel appreciated and loved. When people are guilty about feeling good or connected, they typically react destructively and self-destructively. On the one hand, their guilt can make them act like they're not *really* hopeful. They accentuate their own victimization rather than their capacity to change. Or they get depressed and self-punitive. On the other hand, they can also get angry and retaliate for being made to feel guilty, for a perceived attempt by others to take something away from them. Or they might comply with the complaint and criticism on the outside but covertly withdraw from the battlefield, perhaps to look for another, less public and political arena to find personal satisfaction and pleasure without guilt. They might look to New Age philosophies that give them permission to feel good about themselves, or conservative ones that tell them that they have nothing to feel guilt about because the disadvantaged are really getting a "free ride" and aren't deserving of our sympathy or guilt to begin with. I believe that we see all of these responses, both in the Left and among the Left's potential constituency. They're unhealthy, even poisonous to a political movement.

We have to find a way to recognize and respond empathically to the injuries that our movement inflicts on those of us—people of color, gays and lesbians, women—who have always been the Other in this society, while simultaneously overcoming our survivor guilt. When we criticize each other in the course of our political work, we have to find ways to frame it in the context of an affirmation of that which is progressive and positive in the hearts of the people we're criticizing. In other words, we have to assume the best intentions among each other until overwhelming evidence is presented to the contrary. And we need to find ways to give each other support to feel pride and pleasure when, however narrowly or partially, we do succeed.

The Left has certainly reproduced the worst of the inequalities and hierarchies in our society. The danger of survivor guilt, however, is that it robs a large sector of a real and incipient progressive movement—including constituencies that are middle class, white, male, or straight--of the right to expect recognition and compassion for their struggles and pain as well as the right to feel pride and pleasure in their accomplishments. Deprived of this recognition, that person will have less to give to others. Caring, compassion, and empathy do not flow as readily or energetically from a guilty person as from a self-loving one. If someone feels that they're appreciated, they can appreciate others. If they feel undeserving, they're more likely to resent the needs of others.

Survivor guilt in the Left carries with it an insidious message that mirrors, in fact, the larger society; namely, that there is a limited supply of resources and that one group's gain is another's loss. This is *not* a necessary part of our social reality and shouldn't be part of our political reality. □

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Death of a Salesman
Remembering Timothy Leary

Stew Albert

The search for miraculous potions did not end with medieval kabbalists. Those who impatiently crave compassionate social change and agonize in frustration when our efforts bear bitter fruit are forever being consoled and criticized by those who believe we live in the best of all possible worlds and that every day and in every way, things are automatically getting better and better.

In the 1990s, the transformative buzzword is cyberspace. Interactive information superhighways that stretch through the far corners of the virtual globe are supposedly breaking down authoritarian barriers, and a worldwide web of collective consciousness is emerging because of the ensuing death of distance and separation. The "wired" optimists tell us not to be concerned about fascist militias in America or slave labor in the South Seas: Just sit back, surf the Web, and let electricity solve the planet's problems.

Back in the Sixties, LSD was the good-vibes panacea of choice, better living through chemistry was the promised outcome, and the late Timothy Leary was its most famous and potent prophet.

My first recollection of Tim Leary goes back to the summer of 1968. I was in one of those beyond-the-outer-limit gatherings that my good pal Jerry Rubin would regularly drag me to for reasons of benevolence and rascality. This get-together featured a mano-a-mano confrontation between Tim Leary and a mysterious cult from England known only as the "Process." The group had announced its intention of either recruiting Leary or burying his reputation in the dustbin of hippie history.

All I knew of the Process was that its members all wore tight black clothing, frowned a lot, recruited American hippies in New York City's East Village, and self-consciously exuded an air of disciplined satanism.

Leary was a different matter. By 1968, he'd gained notoriety as the rebel psychology professor from Harvard who had made headlines by experimenting with LSD in the company of his students and getting canned. Several years before his firing, I read a Leary interview in *Playboy* and then sampled his magic potion. That chemically induced journey took place in Brooklyn; I wound up, one summer evening, strolling barefoot on Nostrand Avenue, which I first hallucinated into a lavish Moorish palace and then as an enormous cemetery for the almost dead. I retreated to my basement on East 29th Street and definitively decided to leave Brooklyn.

Tim rose to the Process challenge. He showed up attired in a white, balloon-sleeved Indian pullover and tight white pants. With his infectiously broad smile and benevolent vibrations, Leary seemed like psychedelia's "*yetzer tov*" (good inclination) in direct confrontation with the "other side" forces of darkness. He embodied goodness, generosity, and hope. The Process prophets, overwhelmed by his light, were reduced to mumbling curses and beating a hasty retreat.

And yet, there was something about Leary's performance that spoke of the confidence man. Even as he projected great goodness, he seemed to be winking at some off-stage confederate—me, I imagined—who was in on his puzzling scam. Not that Timothy Leary didn't really believe in and consume his product, but it seemed that he joyously and knowingly exaggerated its virtues in order to entertain and persuade.

Afterward, when Jerry introduced me to the founder of the LSD faith, I could only say, "Tim, you are a rogue, and it's an honor to meet you." That this world-famous spokesperson for the Age of Aquarius and cosmically expanded consciousness was in some part a long-haired P.T. Barnum made him much more interesting than I had possibly imagined.

Those were Tim Leary's best and most influential years. He could sneeze and make headlines. He was idolized both by the most down-and-out, got-any-spare-change hippies and members of ruling-class families who were far from giving away their possessions and joining a commune—even one with color TV and air-conditioning. Leary's message and charm were class-

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Stew Albert, a founding Yippie and former leader in the Black Panther Party Defense Committees, is a member of the Havurah Shalom Congregation in Portland, Oregon. These days, he gets high on the politics of meaning.

less. He could as easily drop acid with relatives of J.P. Morgan as with friends of Abbie Hoffman.

Leary preached salvation through the acid elixir. He peddled LSD as a chemically synthesized fountain of youth, satori, the ten *sefirot*, and an infinite orgasm wrapped up in an easy-to-swallow tablet. Just take one pill in the company of a kindly guide in comfortable surroundings and forget about phone calls for the next twenty-four hours. With acid, every day could be Shabbat.

There seemed to be no problem that LSD could not solve. All difficulties were illusions that society programmed us to believe were real. Acid was the meta-deprogrammer. "Dropping out" meant letting go of the painful lifelong messages that told us we were delinquent, lazy, incompetent, and deserving of all the bad things that were happening to us. Through acid, we could discover a place in our soul where everything was perfect and where our only task was being hedonistically happy.

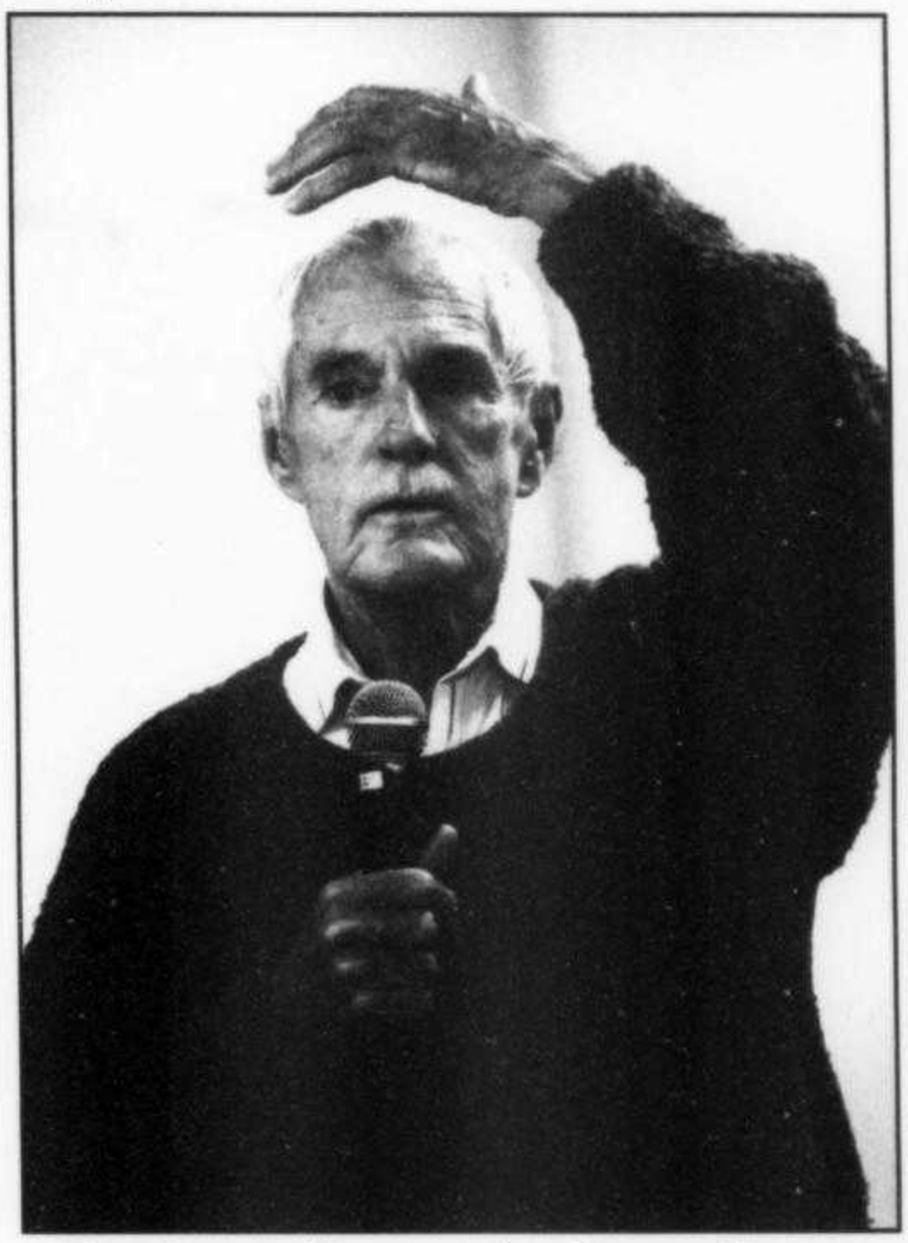
When asked about the problems of racism, war, and exploitation, Leary would say that these were only "hang-ups" that would go away when everyone was turning on, tuning in, and dropping out.

Leary's campaign for instant enlightenment fell on willing American ears. This was the nation of instant everything: A little powder in water could become soup, coffee, or that place of epiphany for which some search and never find. Instant holiness, perfect unity of flesh and spirit, and great wisdom were just a sip away.

Leary made something of a comeback in the '80s and '90s, touting the revolutionary power of cyberspace and marketing psychedelic software.

Leary both charmed and frustrated us Yippies who wanted to blend a soulful socialist political revolution with the alluring sounds, colors, and styles of the cultural revolution that was exploding out of San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury and bringing about dramatic changes in the appearance and ambitions of America's youth. In his salad days, Tim's message was decidedly anti-political. He was against confronting the power elites because that only produced anger and bad vibes. And besides, LSD contained "information" that would reprogram the mind and transform even the greediest capitalist into a center of benevolent energy. Recall, please, the transition of Ebenezer Scrooge after a night of vivid hallucination. It was Leary's mission to "turn on" the world's Scrooges and its Bob Cratchits alike.

While Leary did endorse the Yippies' plans to hold a Festival of Life in Chicago during the 1968 Democratic convention, he only did so because its promoters promised a nonviolent attempt to demonstrate a positive, peaceful alternative lifestyle. When, in the aftermath of the infamous police riot, Jerry Rubin, Abbie Hoffman, and six others were indicted, Leary testified at their federal show trial as to their prior peaceful intentions. He was a surprisingly effective witness, striking a handsome and sincere professorial pose. Even a federal marshal stated afterward: "Leary did you guys some good."



GARY WAGNER, IMPACT VISUALS

When Jerry and I congratulated Tim on his testimony, he explained how he had tailored his statements to what he perceived to be the liberal views of some of the jurors. When he mentioned Jerry's commitment to nonviolence, I once again had the feeling he was roguishly winking at someone in his private audience. Sure Jerry is nonviolent, the subtext of his body language was declaring, and I might just be the reincarnation of Paul Revere's horse.

A few months after the trial, Tim himself was in big trouble, facing serious prison time on drug possession charges. Yet in public, Tim just seemed to get happier. He declared his intention to run in the California gubernatorial race under the slogan "Love for Guv." The former antipolitician believed he could improve his image

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and perhaps positively influence a few judges by running a constructive campaign. But Leary's purist followers were too stoned to canvass for signatures, and his Yippie friends had grown suspicious of electoral politics.

On what turned out to be his decisive day in court, Leary showed up, beaming. His appeals had run their course, but his lawyer was going to make some new motions. Leary was so sure he wasn't going to prison that he ignored suggestions that he bring a toothbrush with him to the court hearing, a mistake he much regretted the next day when he woke up in a prison cell.

After spending less than a year in the California prison system, Leary staged a startling escape. Even more startling was the news that he'd been assisted by the terroristic and Leninist Weather Underground. From somewhere in the American demimonde, Tim issued a public communiqué declaring that he was turning on with the Weather leaders, and that he should be considered "armed and dangerous." Leary's "good vibes" followers and friends didn't quite know what to feel—happy, because Tim was out of prison, or terrified, because maybe, with CIA connivance, he had been kidnapped by Bolsheviks on acid.

When Timothy Leary arrived at Eldridge Cleaver's villa outside of Algiers, the exiled Black Panther leader greeted him warmly and told him, "there's a friend of yours waiting inside." It was me: At the urging of Jerry and Abbie, I flew to Algeria to prepare the way for Tim's North African exile. Cleaver, himself running from the law, had obtained both sanctuary and a degree of diplomatic recognition from the Algerian government. He could use his influence on Leary's behalf and along with a number of armed cohorts grant Leary a degree of protection.

Cleaver liked Leary and admired the all-American initiative he had shown in breaking out of prison. But having Tim Leary in Muslim Algeria wasn't exactly a public-relations coup for the Black Panther Party.

On balance, the Panther felt a responsibility for Tim—and besides, Cleaver was bored in exile. His life had developed a bureaucratic aspect typical of diplomats, and he was completely surrounded by an Algerian culture of puritanical revolutionary zeal and private corruption. Leary in Algeria meant headlines, controversy, and a taste of the madcap unpredictability Cleaver formerly enjoyed as San Francisco's leading revolutionary.

But Leary's escape, heroic and worthy of Hollywood as it was, nonetheless represented a downturn in his fortunes. In Algeria, Tim was bereft of magic. In a country that regarded hashish as a tool of colonialism and offered him asylum under the misunderstanding that he was Black, Leary couldn't even hint at a belief that LSD could positively al-

ter the genetic code in favor of benevolent behavior.

Even in private conversation, the former good-vibes guru took a cynical tack: "I should be popular in the Third World. I did more than anyone else in history to destroy the minds of a lot of white, middle-class kids. I think that ought to count for something." And the pacifist's relationship with Eldridge Cleaver started to deteriorate when the Black Panther leader refused to give him a pistol as a present on his fiftieth birthday. Tim's hustle had run its wild course. Even his wealthy acid-head friends back in the States could do nothing for him; all their quick and easy fixer connections had proved to be useless. And smuggled-in LSD had brought only temporary relief.

Leary's Algerian sojourn ended in a Cleaver shakedown. Eldridge "jailed" Tim and his wife Rosemary, demanding what some called ransom or blackmail in exchange for freeing Tim from his "house arrest." For his part, Eldridge explained that Tim's presence in Algeria had been expensive for the Panthers; he was merely trying to cover costs. The situation was touchy, because Leary's rich American crowd was growing a bit tired of paying his expenses. But the money was raised, and soon after, Leary left Algeria on a journey that would take him first to Europe and then to Afghanistan, where American drug agents kidnapped him and brought him back to a California prison.

Leary didn't remain behind bars for very long. But this time he escaped by cooperating with the authorities, naming names, and being a model prisoner. Much controversy persists over just what Leary told the Feds. His defenders point out that nobody seemed to be hurt by his gabbing, but things were never the same. Leary's friendship circle was greatly reduced and he became considerably more cautious in his public behavior.

For Leary and all of us, acid proved not to be a magic elixir. Some may have experienced utopian and magnificent visions of human and divine possibility while under the influence. But again and again, we came down to the real world of confusing limitations, and it became increasingly apparent that if reality was ever going to yield to the transformative images of our compassionate ideals, it would take place slowly and only after much hard thinking and practical political work. And yet, something must still be said for Utopia, acid-induced and otherwise. Without its inspiration, why would any of us bother in the first place?

It is appropriate that Timothy Leary made something of a comeback in the 1980s and '90s by touting the revolutionary power of cyberspace and marketing psychedelic software—going from hallucinations to virtual realities required no great leap of faith.

I visited Tim some time before prostate cancer claimed his life. He was obviously ill, but his mind was keen for memories, particularly those that involved good times and great excitement. And when he started talking about the wonders of cyberspace, his eyes still beamed with roguish irony. I could see that his powers of persuasion hadn't dimmed.

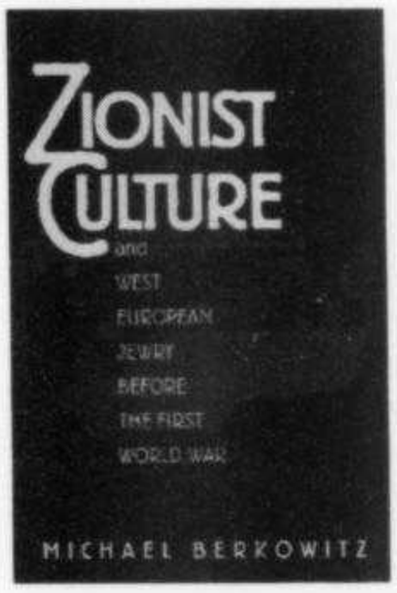
There is, in the end, something good to say about Timothy Leary. It is true that LSD encounters, and all the other drug-induced simplifications and shortcuts, ultimately hit an unyielding wall. The trips turn bad or become boringly repetitive. And yet, for me, the original memories of the boundless hope and the fantastic sense of possibility drawn from my earliest psychedelic encounters remain. I know from firsthand, chemically induced experiences that another and more beautiful world of extraordinary vision exists beyond the limits and certitudes of ordinary social reality.

Timothy Leary should not have mixed his message with hokum. The hustle was bound to lead many to disillusionment and a sense of personal failure and powerlessness. Yet there are others, myself included, who benefited from momentarily falling for the Leary sales pitch. We eventually stopped taking acid, but kept our eye on that other and better world. □

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Payback Time
Restitution and the Moral Economy of Nations

Elazar Barkan

Brought to North America in chains, deprived of their freedom, African slaves suffered innumerable harms, and their descendants continue to bear the corrosive and abiding legacy of racism. To redress these injustices, should the U. S. government pay reparations to African Americans? While few Americans, of any race, have seriously considered this question, the principle of restitution—the return of goods or property, the monetary compensation for wrongs of one people against another—has increasingly begun to form the basis for a new worldwide moral economy.

The West German government's monetary reparations to Jewish Holocaust survivors is probably the best-known example of national restitution. Yet over the last decade, group claims for restitution and compensation have proliferated around the globe. While the list of victims who demand restitution is apparently endless, their claims fall into a by-now familiar pattern: Survivors and descendants of victims of past wars, colonialism, and national disputes return to demand justice and new rights—running the gamut from casinos to mineral extraction, fishing treaties to affirmative action and quasi-autonomous status—as restitution.

As a world leader emphasizing the need for international relations grounded upon democracy and human rights, the United States has yet to face the dilemma of how to deal with its own past and its most egregious historical injustices, an obvious example being the legacy of slavery. With affirmative action at a crossroads, subject to reevaluation across the political spectrum, the time may have arrived for exploring restitution as a new approach to American race relations.

A quick sampling of restitution cases last February reveals a busy if unexceptional month. Canada reached an agreement for restituting land to the Nisga'a tribe in British Columbia, including limited self-rule, money compensation, and forestry rights. South Africa was embroiled in several restitution debates in its transition to a multiracial society, including demands by Black students for more rights from the most liberal universities, and new activism on the part of South Africa's indigenous peoples. Perhaps the highlight was a demand by the Griquas—a people who trace their lineage back to South Africa's Stone Age Khoi Khoi cattle herders—to gain possession from Paris's Musee de l'Homme of the remains of the so called "Hottentot Venus," a woman who was paraded as a freak in the French capital almost two hundred years ago.

Demands for restitution of human remains by indigenous peoples have become the norm, especially in the United States, where it has been the subject of federal law, and where most museums are busily trying to meet recently missed deadlines to return human remains and artifacts to descendants. Restitution of human remains has become a powerful symbol of reversing Western colonial oppression and racist policies. For the Griquas, like other indigenous peoples, this is a first step in demanding economic restitution and rehabilitating their own history.

Other noteworthy recent cases of restitution involved:

•A Palestinian demand for compensation from Israel for property in West Jerusalem lost by 1948 refugees. From an Israeli perspective, this suggestion that West Jerusalem—the Jewish sector—be part of the "Final Status" negotiations of the Oslo II peace accords was particularly offensive, since it relied on the precedent of German compensation for Holocaust victims.

•Japan and the Koreas sparring over compensation to the "comfort women" and the Japanese unwillingness to acknowledge guilt for the war. A newly issued United Nations report on sexual slavery by the Japanese military during World War II urged the Japanese government to pay compensation to the victims and punish the people responsible for the front-line brothels.

•Germany and Russia continuing to squabble over art treasures looted during World War II. At home, the German government was embroiled in a scandal over privatized property in the East, while Germany and the Czech Republic continued to disagree over

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the Sudeten Germans.

•In the Czech Republic, the restitution of church property, the fate of the palace of the new senate, and a new opportunity for migrants to claim their property were elements of a long agenda of unresolved restitution issues.

•The status of Jewish property from the 1930s was negotiated in every central and east European country (as well as Switzerland).

•On the other side of the continent, Greece was celebrating a successful restitution of art treasures from the United States, which officials saw as the prelude to regaining their ultimate prize—the "Elgin marbles," friezes from the Parthenon and other buildings on the Acropolis held in the British Museum.

How are we to explain the current rush to restitution? The phenomenon may provide a new understanding of contemporary international morality, enabling us to reevaluate our notion of justice, and the way in which a contemporary morality intersects the specific relationships between culture, religion, and politics in the international and intra-national arena. It also casts a new light on the relationship of individual and group rights. To understand the politics of restitution, it is helpful to look at it as a question of exchange, in which guilt is bartered for economic resources. The transaction consequently shapes the way each of the parties thinks about itself, its history, and its identity.

The theory of restitution underscores political dialogue among cultures, and focuses on the shared principles and agreements among various groups. It argues that many nations and minorities recognize greater benefit in agreement and dialogue than in conflict, and are embarking on resolving their historical differences through constructing a shared past. One of the novelties of restitution is its bridging of traditional liberal and conservative agendas: It attempts to rectify historical injustices and facilitate higher awareness of public morality through the use of market mechanisms.

The dynamic of restitution assumes that the protagonists in any outstanding conflict are co-dependent. Restitution is feasible when both sides accept that a recognition of each other's history would be beneficial, that such an affirmation would involve the rewriting of one's own history, and may result in a transfer of certain economic resources. Formally, such a transaction addresses a localized conflict and does not appeal to any international legal system or a code of global rights. Yet, both sides subscribe to the same general ethical code. Restitution is thus the final chapter in resolving the conflict by bridging general notions of justice with a specific historical situation.



MAC MCGILL

Restitution and Human Rights

From conservatives to marxists, from modernists to postmodernists, theorists have long been critical of theories of justice that appeal to abstract rights detached from any historical context. During the Enlightenment such principles as liberty, equality, and the pursuit of happiness were articulated with an exuberance that excited contemporaries and changed world history. Yet this notion of rights remained illusory; it did not take long to realize that one person's liberty is another's enslavement or at least poverty. Contemporary liberal theorists such as Martha Nussbaum point to the urgency of extending those long-recognized individual rights to people around the globe. But such an approach, echoing the Enlightenment, still falls short of addressing group rights. Communitarians have argued that community standards should supplement individual rights. The communitarian perspective, however, fails to answer the questions of how one decides *which* community—local, state, global—sets these standards, and what happens when individual and group rights collide.

By focusing attention on reciprocal recognition and agreement between the parties, a theory of restitution may answer these concerns. In place of abstract principles of justice, restitution theory posits a core of human rights embedded in a variety of group rights. Which rights are validated in what context is left to be determined by the members of the relevant communities. The bridge between group and individual rights is based upon two principals: authenticity and the possibility of

dissent. As long as the group is viewed as authentic both by its constituency and by the outside world, while allowing for dissent within the community, it will be able to contract a legitimate reciprocal agreement.

Although the core human rights are culturally and historically specific to our time and reflect contemporary global standards rather than abstract principles, they include only rights which are not contested politically and therefore need not be defended. Only such values are to be considered "core values." For example, slavery has been an accepted institution for most of human history. Yet, the universality of its rejection at present obviates the need for a political debate. Similarly, individual freedom and equality are core principles of justice. Their implementation is subject to debate, often to be determined by community values. Restitution negotiates between the extremes of individual rights to the exclusion of all other rights on the one hand, and the privileging of tradition and community standards above individual rights on the other. It is based upon the recognition that justice depends foremost on the mutual acknowledgment of the protagonists.

The rationale for recognition as a form of justice is not new; it holds a venerable position in Jewish tradition. On Yom Kippur, a Jew is supposed to atone for two types of offenses: religious and human. The first type consists of violations of religious injunctions—in secular language, abstract rights. Those can be rectified through prayer, within one's conscience, or by unilateral action. The second, the human offense, is more serious. A person not only has to regret and atone for it, but to receive the victim's recognition and forgiveness. One may need to make amends, to apologize, to agree with the other party on the resolution of the offense. It is this notion of justice as an *agreement among equals*, not as an injunction from God or the government above, that makes restitution attractive in the post-colonial world.

While human rights abuses are as old as humankind, the international community's attention to them is a recent phenomenon. In the post-Cold War period, there is an emerging international consensus that a greater prosperity can be achieved not through brute domination but by consent and cooperation. This new global ethical standard, combining group with individual rights, replaces the old colonial-imperial morality of "might makes right," signaling a respect for traditional ways of life as well as modernization. It promotes development while considering environmental needs. It values equality, liberty, fraternity, and social peace. It imagines a cultural diversity that eschews a comprehensive global morality, but is willing to ascribe to a minimalist standard and make local judgments regarding certain immoral and unjust action, such as ethnic cleansing, oppression, and traditional anti-women policies without appealing to universal order.

Negotiations and agreements for restitution are entered into voluntarily by the parties on both sides. This willingness to enter into restitution negotiations often results from political pressure, or exhaustion from a prolonged conflict. But in every case, embarking on negotiating restitution is a choice to strive for reconciliation.

The aggrieved group often seeks to achieve a goal far more modest than full retroactive justice—for instance, to lessen conflict or improve its economic condition. In this sense, restitution is a pragmatic form of justice; it affords no global answers to the problems of social and economic exploitation or xenophobia. By replacing general aspirations with a practical procedure for addressing specific injuries, restitution turns the passive, voiceless victim into an active agent. It refocuses the parties away from the illusory goal of total resolution toward the victims' painful demand for a local remedy.

Skeptics might argue that this focus on historical conflicts draws political energies in the wrong direction, distracting us from the enormous problems of the environment and the just allocation of world resources. But past injustices are more than a distraction: They are our identity, whether we are perpetrators or victims. As such, they have to be incorporated within our notion of a just society.

Restituting the Self: Identity as a Right

Critics maintain that restitution serves as a form of hush money, buying the victims' silence. But the success of the moral economy of restitution can be measured—by the degree to which it enables the victims to claim a share of the economic pie, and, perhaps even more important, to legitimize their side of history. These were essential aspects of the German-Jewish reparation agreement, and they factor into a growing number of restitution cases involving indigenous peoples, for instance the Native Americans' demand that the United States acknowledge its responsibility for their decimation.

Increasingly, recognition is a political goal which is separate from specific demands for compensation. As such, restitution involves bartering histories and national memories for material resources, and foregrounding international morality as a historical question. Yet subjective identities and histories, which are central constitutive elements of group identity, are obviously not without moral ambiguities. Consider the case of Germany, where privatization presented the

dilemma of how to deal with descendants of Nazis whose property had been confiscated by the communists. In one instance, Dagmar Topf claimed the restitution of her family's business and private property—the legacy of J.A. Topf & Sohne, the company that produced and installed the ovens at Auschwitz, Buchenwald, and Dachau, among other death camps. Arguing that her claim was motivated by a wish to "atone" for the past, Topf applied for the return of the factory site where the furnaces were produced, as well as the park land and the house adjacent to the factory built with the assets generated by the company's crematorium business. Under pressure from the World Jewish Congress, the Germans rejected the claim, first for technical reasons, and later because the enterprise "acted against the principles of human rights or state rights." Topf's shameless demand underscores the limits of restitution. Subjective histories are certainly not elixir for injustices.

In contrast to a theory of rights, which assumes a historical clean slate and envisions a just future, restitution recognizes a past full of injustices, only few of which can be resolved by an agreement among the interlocutors. One may ask, "what if the historical equilibrium was a result of previous injustices? And if so which *status quo ante* should be resurrected?" The short answer is that there is no such primordial, pre-injustice stage. The purpose, therefore, of voluntary restitution is to bridge histories, identities, and injustices by reaching a mutually pragmatic solution.

Although historical injustices are often forgotten or superseded, the most egregious injustices remain in the collective memory. Thus, restitution is a matrix of guilt and mourning, atonement and national revival. Indeed, open admissions of national guilt and public apology have become increasingly prevalent in the international arena. Recent public apologies include Britain's Queen Elizabeth apologizing to the Maori people; President Clinton to native Hawaiians; Japan to the Korean "comfort women"; the Polish government to Jews for a 1946 massacre in which a Polish mob killed forty-two Jews; the State of Florida to the survivors of the Rosewood lynching; and the Canadian government to Canadian-Ukrainians for maltreatment during World War I. The United States apologized to the Japanese Americans for internment in World War II; and independent representatives of many Christian denominations apologized to American Indians for the role their churches played in the historic campaign to suppress native religions.

The growing number of apologies over the past decade signal the legitimation of repentance as a political currency. The cost of admitting guilt (especially on

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the home front) and the difficulty of conceding that one's own identity is mired in crime has been eased by international validation of public confession. This validation transforms the norm from nationalist righteousness ("my history right or wrong") to a disposition of compromise aimed at gaining the recognition of others while agreeing to pay for such recognition by conceding the partial validity of others' histories. Even in cases without redistribution of resources, at the very minimum the injured party benefits from the international recognition of its victimization and of its previously ignored history, which consequently becomes part of global history. On the other side, the perpetrators benefit from the victims' validation of their right to hold on to the unjust gains (minus the restitution, which is ordinarily minuscule).

As restitution becomes the norm, a core of individual and group rights emerges, establishing a vague contemporary standard of fairness. It is possible that future circumstances will judge current restitution agreements as unsatisfactory and possibly even as a further exploitation of the victim. New winners and losers, as well as new predicaments, may emerge. Restitution cannot put an end to inequality, but rather aims to create a new mechanism for achieving more just societies.

Restituting Slavery

The legacy of slavery and racism in the United States stands out as a most glaring example of unaddressed historical injustice. Since the Civil War, the question of reparations to descendants of slaves has surfaced sporadically within the public debate, raised by a variety of Black leaders and groups including Frederick Douglas, Marcus Garvey, and the Black Muslims. In 1989, after the federal government agreed upon reparations for Japanese Americans interned during World War II, such prominent Blacks as Jesse Jackson and Coretta Scott King endorsed the idea of African-American reparations. The National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America, an umbrella organization said to represent 5,000 people, has organized the Annual Conference on Reparations.

Supporters of reparations for African Americans, argue that these payments would compensate for the impact of past injustices upon present suffering and provide a mechanism for healing present-day social and economic afflictions.

Acknowledging this moral obligation, however, would still leave many difficult questions unaddressed. For example, is there a statute of limitations on national injustices? Who are the present victims and who ought to be compensated? Descendants of slaves? All Blacks? Those of mixed race? What about class? Who are the perpetrators? Descendants of slave owners? All whites? The society in general? What injustices ought to be restituted?

Jesse Jackson and his Rainbow Coalition have advocated that restitution take the form of economic and social reparations—housing, education, and jobs. While demands for restitution for slavery in the United States have spurred comparable demands in Africa, Britain, and Brazil, they remain marginal to the mainstream political agenda. The hyperbole of some African-American activists, who demand restitution for slavery several times the size of the federal budget, undoubtedly contributes to the reluctance of elected officials and political candidates to embrace the issue. But that may be a convenient excuse for evading a formidable set of questions.

Congressman John Conyers, a Michigan Democrat, has been the leader of the reparation movement in Congress. In 1989, he introduced legislation to establish a national commission to study reparations for African Americans. The bill, which failed to pass the Democratic-dominated Congress, named the victims as "the approximately 4 million Africans and their descendants." Conyers reintroduced the proposal in 1993 as HR 40 to signify the broken promise of "forty acres and a mule" which the freed slaves never received. HR 40—voted down like its predecessor—called for the establishment of a commission to study the effect of slavery on living descendants of slaves and to suggest remedies, including reparations, emphasizing that an official public apology for the brutality of slavery is fundamental for restitution.

Restitution for slavery presents such apparent obstacles that it appears to many to be more a fantasy than a viable political program. Thus, proponents find it hard to clear the credibility barrier and capture an audience, even in the African-American community. While reparations to Japanese Americans for their internment aimed at healing a specific injustice of a manageable magnitude, the discrimination and injustices toward

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African Americans are so profound and hard to demarcate that the issue scares off even potential supporters.

A creative and feasible plan must precede any serious public support. But because the discussion of reparations within the African-American community consists primarily of activists, the emphasis remains ideological; instead of putting forth pragmatic proposals, advocates engage in the ritualized recitation of injustices, in what has become a negative assertion of identity. This tack is counterproductive, cheapening the possibility of mobilizing restitution as a political tool.

In contrast, a serious national debate about restitution might provide the rhetoric needed for the society in general and for African Americans specifically to embark on a major social renewal effort. Recognition for past injustices against African Americans could be turned into a potent symbolic communal resource—symbolic, because it could never approximate a just compensation for the economic exploitation of slavery and racism.

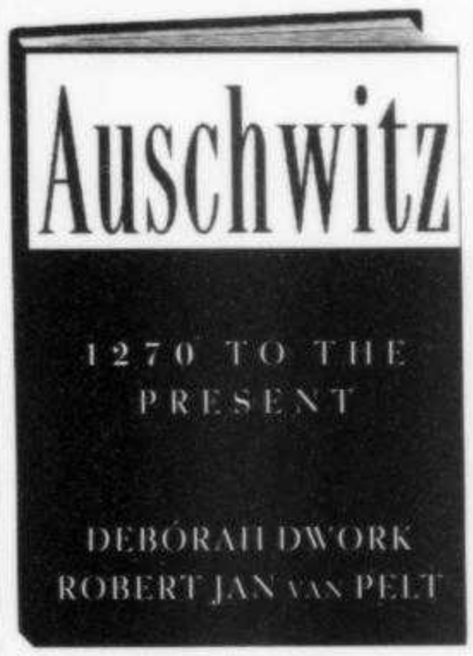
Even if the Democrats were to recapture Congress this year, the issue of reparations for African Americans is unlikely to be on the legislative agenda. But a high-profile commission, funded by one or more of the large foundations, could spur the national debate and help place the issue on the political map. The Carnegie Corporation funded Gunnar Myrdal's research into American race relations more than fifty years ago. Myrdal's study prepared the intellectual ground for reforming race relations, from the civil rights movement to the Great Society.

The task of such a commission would not merely be to enumerate injustices, describe racism, and quantify reparation. Rather, it would have to invent a mechanism for healing, a new moral economy bridging the liberal agenda of attempting to rectify historical injustices with a conservative mechanism of resorting to the market and a "thousand points of light." Differentiating among the various injustices, it would identify the worst offenses as candidates for restitution.

To prepare general public opinion to accept restitution for African Americans, advocates would have to educate the public about the value of resolving guilt as a form of national renewal, yet do so without overburdening the public purse. For the African-American community to rally behind demands for restitution, the plan would have to promise substantial economic and cultural opportunity. Recent studies have shown that the disparity between African Americans and whites is more pronounced in wealth than earning power. Even a symbolic gesture such as an African American National Endowment whose aim would be the leveraging of Black social and economic reconstruction, could be large enough to make a difference in the life of many African Americans. A national endowment could assist individuals in funding initial investments in life-improving ventures of the kind made available to many whites by their families, such as education and a down-payment on a house. The personal benefit would directly contribute to underwriting improvements in community infrastructure. Such an endowment would provide a concrete form for a national apology. It would spur economic growth as well as foster national reconciliation.

Within contemporary notions of justice, the recognition of group rights has become a moral imperative. German reparations to Jewish victims and the Jewish people was a first step in German atonement for Nazi crimes, and the first international recognition that Germany was to be readmitted into the family of nations as the carrier of its special burden. Today the United States should take the lead in rewriting a particularly abhorrent historical injustice—recognizing the evils of racism and slavery and establishing a mechanism to commemorate and compensate the victims. Restitution for slavery and racism would not only benefit the country economically, but would make it a morally healthier society. □

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CURRENT DEBATE

Anatomy of a Hoax

Bruce Robbins

As far more people than have ever read the journal now know, Alan Sokal's essay in the Spring/Summer 1996 "Science Wars" issue of *Social Text* was a hoax. The journal's editors thought the manuscript argued that quantum physics, properly understood, dovetails with postmodern philosophy. In fact, Sokal booby-trapped the piece with deliberate mistakes, as he later revealed; he sought to publish it to expose the various intellectual and political weaknesses in *Social Text* and those it represents.

But which weaknesses? Even people who followed the story with some interest and amusement may still be wondering what, exactly, the hoax proved. As one of the editors of *Social Text*, I freely confess what I think it proved about us: that some scientific ignorance and some absentmindedness could combine with much enthusiasm for a supposed political ally to produce a case of temporary blindness. It remains to be seen, however, whether our editorial failure is really symptomatic of a larger failure in the beliefs we hold or the movements from which we come, and if so, what it might be symptomatic of.

One conclusion *not* to draw is that if non-scientists like us are incompetent to judge what scientists do, then only scientists can be allowed to judge it. Whatever our own failings, science should not be protected from public accountability. We cannot leave it accountable only to those funders (increasingly, private corporations) who pay the piper. Pretending that criticisms of science are invalidated by the critic's postmodernism or poststructuralism is a convenient way for Sokal and his backers to pretend they are not defending their own exclusive rights to their turf—a turf that the public has good reason to monitor as closely as possible.

Another conclusion that doesn't follow is that, floating happily in the waters of jargon and incoherence, so-called postmodernists can't recognize an unintelligible argument even if it swims up and spits in our eye. When Sokal said his essay was nonsense, most reporters instantly followed his lead. After all, he should know, right?

But we thought Sokal had a real argument, and we still do. Allow me to quote Paul Horgan, senior writer at *Scientific American*, summarizing in the July 16 *New York Times*: Sokal, Horgan says, "proposed that superstring theory might help liberate science from 'dependence on the concept of objective truth.' Professor Sokal later announced that the article had been a hoax, intended to expose the hollowness of postmodernism. In fact, however, superstring theory is exactly the kind of science that subverts conventional notions of truth."

The lesson that troubles me most has to do with politics. Does subverting conventional notions of truth really have anything to do with being politically progressive? Many observers undoubtedly felt that this hoax administered a well-deserved comeuppance to a style of cultural politics that, whether inspired by poststructuralism, postmodernism, or multiculturalism, spends too much time on a misguided subversion of truth and not enough on making known the truth about social injustice.

This is a complicated question. Poststructuralism and postmodernism emerged at roughly the same time (the 1960s and 1970s) as the women's and civil rights movements at home and movements of national liberation around the world. Many would argue that their conceptual challenge to notions such as objective truth reflects and extends the political challenge of those movements. Multiculturalism, another term for the tendencies Sokal was attacking, is the later "-ism" that underlines this historical connection between concepts and constituencies.

Is it in the interests of women, African Americans, and other super-exploited people to insist that truth and identity are social constructions? Yes and no. No, you can't talk about exploitation without respect for empirical evidence and a universal standard of justice. But yes, truth can be another source of oppression. It was not so long ago that scientists gave their full authority to explanations of why women and African Americans (not to speak of gays and lesbians) were inherently inferior or pathological or both. Explanations like these continue to appear in newer and subtler forms. Hence, there is a real need for a social constructionist critique of knowledge.

Of course, the delicate balance between exposing the facts of social inequality and exposing the process by which social facts are constructed can easily be tipped too far either way. Those of us who do cultural politics sometimes act as if the questioning of reality were of self-evident, universal, and paramount ethical and political value, as if truth were always and everywhere a

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weapon of the Right. In fact, it's almost impossible to belong to the Left, or to an academic discipline, without some functional sense of truth.

But whatever its problems, cultural politics is not a simple distraction from the harder realities of economic injustice or efforts to organize or to pass legislation. Struggles to allocate our resources differently are inextricably entangled with struggles for recognition. As Ellen Willis suggested with eloquent irony in the *Village Voice* (June 25), the know-nothings of the left delude themselves: "Capitalism is screwing people! What goes up must come down! What more do we need to know?"

We need to know a lot, and a lot of what we need to know is cultural. Sokal claims that the sort of work *Social Text* publishes "won't help us find an effective treatment for AIDS or devise strategies for preventing global warming." But does anyone actually believe that homophobia, say, has nothing to do with the history of AIDS research, or that exposing its influence has been politically irrelevant?

Since few believe that ponytails and body piercing infallibly signify which side someone is going to take on issues such as plant closures or universal health care, it seems likely that what is really expressed by the angry tirades against cultural politics that have accompanied the Sokal affair is a longing for the days when women were back in the kitchen and it was respectable to joke about faggots and other natural objects of humor. These are not the family values I want my children to learn. Nor are they the values of the country at large. As Garry Wills remarked recently, "Women are not going back to their status of three decades ago. Neither are blacks. Gays are not going back into the closet to shut up. White Western culture is not going to regain its monopoly in schools, museums, journals." Wills's larger point is that even for the purposes of the current election, it's not just the economy, stupid. "The new permissiveness," he says, is not "just a matter of elite hedonism, adversarial to 'real' Americans, 'the people.' Ask at the video rental stores if the only people renting porno films are pinko professors (or Supreme Court justices)."

In his effort to enlarge socialism's appeal to ordinary, decent people, George Orwell once listed the sorts of enthusiasts (he calls them cranks) who currently give socialism a bad name. Unfortunately, he says, socialism draws "every fruit-juice drinker, nudist, sandal wearer, sex maniac, Quaker, 'Nature Cure' quack, pacifist, and feminist in England."

Much of the better-informed rejoicing at Sokal's hoax seems to me an echo of Orwell's bid to reclaim the center by getting rid of the feminists and ecologists. The future of the Left, it is now widely repeated, is on the side of ordinary decent folks, folks who believe in objective reality and are easily alienated by anyone who claims to be different. If you are a vegetarian, a pacifist, a feminist, a member of a minority church, someone who prefers fruit juice to alcohol—today's list would have to be longer—you needn't apply. To believe this is to make a potentially costly mistake about who ordinary people really are.

Cultural critics have also made mistakes. On occasion, we have seemed to speak up only for those who are excluded from a list like Orwell's. Or we have seemed to suggest that there should be no list-making at all. But there is no politics in a significant, more-than-academic sense without some search for an alternative center, however imaginary that center may be.

Indeed, I would argue that the multicultural or postmodern Left has been part of such a search. We have encouraged not a cacophony of hostile particularisms, as the critics suggest, but a common ethos stressing mutual respect, a self-conscious appreciation of how all knowledge is shaped by perspective—our own included—and a dedication to the difficult but necessary task of negotiating among competing and overlapping identities. The media who have kept our story alive, however sarcastically, were perhaps acknowledging in their indirect fashion that American democracy has a real stake in the outcome. □

Swallow Hard: What Social Text Should Have Done

A Response to Bruce Robbins

Jay Rosen

As I understand it, the Sokal affair is about affirmative action for ideas. Should arguments felt to be under-represented in the culture-at-large be admitted into prestigious haunts like *Social Text* even if they don't meet the standard intellectual tests? Alan Sokal got tired of what he saw as an excess of affirmative action in the ideas purveyed by cultural studies. So he devised a test in the form of a hoax: Could an author who deliberately met no standards whatsoever make it into *Social Text* merely by parading past the judges their own sympathies,

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dressed up in a jargon they would recognize and citing these same judges as authoritative? The test came back positive. The issue, then, is what to make of the results.

Although it would have been agonizingly difficult (pride is involved), I very much wish the editors had reacted differently. Had they said, "We goofed" right away, and then examined—penetratingly and in public—everything that led them to accept the Sokal article, they might have demonstrated to literate America that what the academic Left thinks about itself is actually true: It has no peer when it comes to being critical of institutions.

Social Text is an institution of the academic Left. It should have taken itself apart and put itself back together again after the Sokal debacle. It would have been fascinating and inspiring to watch. Working backwards from the hoax, like safety experts going over a crash site, they could have illuminated every standard they diluted in order to accept the article, and then asked themselves: Well, what are our standards?

Consider what the editors have already admitted:

1.*They did not understand the ideas they were publishing.* ("Scientific ignorance," Bruce Robbins calls it, acknowledging that the physics on display was Greek to them, as it would have been to anyone since much of it was gibberish or deliberate clowning by Sokal.)

2.*They didn't respect what they were publishing.* ("From the first, we considered Sokal's unsolicited article to be a little hokey. His adventures in PostmodernLand were not really our cup of tea," Robbins and co-editor Andrew Ross wrote in a statement explaining their decision.)

3.*But they published it anyway for political reasons.* ("Enthusiasm for a supposed political ally," Robbins says, explaining why they went for the essay. "We thought it argued that quantum physics, properly understood, dovetails with postmodern philosophy." Note: what "dovetails" with the editors' perspective is good *because it dovetails*. Can Sokal's point be made any plainer?)

4.*They were condescending to the author and his "hokey" ideas.* (Robbins and Ross again: "It is not every day we receive a dense philosophical tract from a professional physicist. Not knowing the author or his work, we engaged in some speculation about his intentions, and concluded that this article was the earnest attempt of a professional scientist to seek some kind of affirmation from postmodern philosophy for developments in his field." Earnest is what counted; intelligent—and intelligible—did not.)

5.*They abandoned their attempts to improve what they were publishing when the author they condescended to resisted, thus doubling the condescension.* (Robbins and Ross write: "Having established an interest in Sokal's article, we did ask him informally to revise the piece. We requested him a) to excise a good deal of the philosophical speculation, and b) to excise most of his footnotes. Sokal seemed resistant to any revisions …" So they went ahead anyway.)

Given such damaging facts, it seems unwise for Robbins to term the episode a simple "case of temporary blindness," and go on from there to criticize the critics. Decisions this dumb flow from a lot of small decisions over the years, and to me the first issue is *how*: How did we work ourselves into this position, where an article we don't understand and don't respect written by an author who refuses to revise his work gets published in our journal merely because we find in him a "conveniently-credentialed ally," as Robbins wrote in a letter to the weekly *In These Times*. Imagine a *Social Text* roundtable that began with this question, placed on the Internet, and published in the journal. Cultural studies would set a standard for "critical" discourse that might even outclass Sokal, who at this point is winning in a rout.

According to Robbins, it's unfair of us to conclude that, "floating happily in the waters of jargon and incoherence, so-called postmodernists can't recognize an unintelligible argument even if it swims up and spits in our eye." He should hope we conclude this, for the alternative explanation is worse: that Sokal's "credentials" were so useful that his ideas hardly mattered.

My own view puts language at the center of the affair, for it is precisely the slow creep of jargon that turns institutions dumb. Are there specialized vocabularies that academic critics employ to make new apprehensions possible? Of course, and to say, "just write in plain English" can be a coercive demand. But there's a test, and the test is whether the vocabulary that initially makes exciting thoughts thinkable begins to promote the absence of thought. Sokal put *Social Text* to the test, and the journal flunked. Again, imagine how exciting it would be to see Robbins and his crowd put their own sophistication about

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language to public use by examining precisely where the vocabulary of postmodernism has gone off track.

Robbins begins this kind of examination in his admirably critical remarks about the excesses of the everything's-a-construction pose. He is right to doubt the intentions of journalists eager to lampoon the pointy-heads. And he is definitely correct that the critique of science cannot be off limits to non-scientists. But he and his colleagues have equivocated when they should have swallowed hard and expressed immediate alarm. They claim they didn't take the article seriously; they also claim that it makes a serious argument, which conservatives, scientists, and journalists want repressed.

This quest to have it both ways is persuading no one not already aligned with the editors. It is a public disaster, and I wish Robbins would recognize that. For there are plenty of people watching this affair who don't fit the category of Sworn *Social Text* Enemy. They are not knownothing journalists, right-wing strategists, arrogant scientists, or unreconstructed Marxists waving away all concern for "culture." Ruth Rosen (no relation) is one of them. She wrote this in the *Los Angeles Times*:

> Yes, I know that the conservative right may use Sokal's parody to further attack "tenured radicals." But if the progressive left is to survive and be credible, it must withstand the glare of public scrutiny and be worthy of people's respect.

This is dead on. The klieg lights are lit, and it's during these moments in the public glare that institutions can redeem—and yes, transform—themselves. Sokal has done Robbins and his co-workers a favor. They should get over the giddiness ("We're worth attacking!") and get down to the painful business of leading the critique of *Social Text*. □

ROUNDTABLE

(Continued from p. 17)

because he provides "social space"—what social space will there be for the millions of people who will be even more marginalized when Clinton signs the welfare bill? There's less social space for Americans by the day. What energy do they have to build stronger communities?

TIKKUN: Why doesn't the New Party endorse the Nader candidacy?

Dan Cantor: It's the wrong way to ask the question. We know Nader—who is among the greatest living Americans—and we know that he's not going to win. The question is, does this campaign help us get where we want to go? I think that the absence of labor, African-American, or organized feminist support for Nader's campaign is catastrophic, since these are the building blocks for any serious progressive electoral movement. Our view is that you have to garner confidence, competence, and allies by first working at the local and state levels—city councils, school and zoning boards, state legislatures. Do that well and national politics will follow.

Peter Gabel: If Ralph Nader would articulate the relationship of justice and love the way that Dan Hamburg did, and make it the centerpiece of his campaign, I would see a stronger argument for supporting him.

Mary Edsall: I'd like to make a pitch for voting Democratic. We were going to have a welfare bill no matter who was in the White House. All of the industrial economies are reconsidering how to deliver bare-bones subsistence services to the bottom fifth of the income ladder. That process is beginning here.

In order to have the most effective voice in shaping the new delivery system for subsistence support, the Democratic Party ought to be in the White House. It represents that half of society with the fewest resources much better than the Republican Party does. And in a close election, if 6 percent of the electorate, the progressive vote, sits out, it could be devastating.

Charles Derber: Remember that if Dole wins, the debate in this country is going to be between Dole and the further right wing of his constituency. We had twenty years of Republican administrations and it hasn't been good for progressives or anybody else. The periods when you have had some possibility of change were under centrist Democratic administrations.

Dan Hamburg: The problem is that this is not a centrist Democratic administration but one that has largely adopted the conservative agenda. Clinton and Gore sounded like visionaries in 1992, but, once elected, they adopted the basic assumptions of conservative politics: that the purpose of government is to serve the interests of corporate capital. This is a notion that centrist Democrats have historically rejected.

Why are we faced with these kinds of choices? I would say it's because the very people who read TIKKUN magazine are too ready to give in to the sad logic of "lesser-evilism." When your readers say, "I have to be realistic and vote for Clinton so Dole won't win," what they communicate to the Democratic Party is this: "It doesn't matter how badly you treat the poor, how much you serve the interests of the rich and the corporate elite, how much you trample on the environment. You can count on my support, because the other

(Continued on p. 84)

A Class Politics Of Meaning?

Harvey J. Kaye



In the months following the 1994 elections, it became increasingly apparent that Republican successes represented not an advance for popular aspirations but, rather, a political victory for what Christopher Lasch cleverly called the "revolt of the elites." And yet, just as a revolt of the nobility instigated the French Revolution, it is possible that this new rebellion from above may serve as a catalyst for resurgent struggles from below in 1990s America. Ironically, instead of securing a new conservative regime, the Republican-dominated Congress seems to have engendered a new language—perhaps even a new politics—of *class*, opening critical possibilities for a politics of meaning.

America has always been a class-structured society, and the progress of democratic life has entailed frequent class conflict, quite often bloodier than in the supposedly more rigidly stratified European states. Yet the myth of classlessness has endured as a defining feature of our national identity. Throughout our history, we have seen ourselves as a nation in which opportunities and mobility combined to effectively inhibit the formation of an Old World-style social hierarchy. In the myth's most recent rendition, we have conceded that the notion of class has some explanatory power in understanding American society; but only to the extent that, in the popular consciousness, almost every American is "middle class."

In spite of radical historians' best efforts to reveal the realities of the American class structure, the assumption that "we're all middle class" has persisted, at least in the rhetoric of politicians. Indeed, it is arguable that America's most taboo subject has been not religion, race, or sex, but class.

Whether due to repression or suppression, the persistent societal denial of class has been all the more remarkable in the face of twenty years of class war from above. Reaganism accelerated the process whereby the rich get richer and working people and the poor poorer. Yet, the renewal of a political economy of increasing inequality really started in the mid 1970s, when Fortune 500 companies abandoned the postwar social contract and commenced an assault on workers and the labor movement not seen since the Depression.

Still, the 1980s, the era of leveraged buyouts and tax cuts for the rich, remains the quintessential "decade of greed." While devastating lives and communities, the powerful accumulated *and* celebrated wealth, certainly arousing class sensibilities. "Dallas," "Dynasty," and "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous" entertained, but they also reminded working people of the growing social divide.

As inequality grew and "Roseanne" topped the Nielsen ratings, politicians and pundits continued to speak in terms of an expansive middle class. By the end of the decade, however, the term meant something different than it had before. It referred less and less to society as a whole; increasingly, it became a rallying cry. In *The Politics of Rich and Poor*, former Republican strategist Kevin Phillips warned of the growing concentration of wealth among a tiny elite and the threat the disparity posed to a strapped "middle class." Following pollster

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ART BY SETH TOBOCMAN

Stanley Greenberg's strategy to woo back the so-called "Reagan Democrats," Bill Clinton campaigned for the presidency on the promise of addressing the erosion of "middle-class" living standards and prospects. And, posing as populists, even the conservatives contributed to the spread of class thinking. Compelled by their denial of persistent discrimination, right-wing writers, such as Dinesh D'Souza, proposed *class*-based programs to replace race- and gender-based affirmative action.

The disappointments of the Clinton administration have contributed to the rising national awareness of class. Ignoring labor's and environmentalists' pleas, the President and his cabinet colleagues fought harder for NAFTA and GATT than for any of the promised initiatives favoring working families; encountering opposition to national health care reform, Clinton jettisoned his essentially pro-corporate plan. In the same period, "downsizing" and the "decline of the middle class" were becoming household expressions.

The electorate's sense that Clinton had abandoned his commitment to working Americans led to the Democratic defeats of 1994. Yet, for all of the Republicans' expressions of concern for middle-income folk, their legislative schemes and deference to corporate lobbyists readily exposed the GOP for what it is—the party of big business and the well-off.

In the past two years, "class talk" has broken out all over. Early this year, The *New York Times* ran a multi-part series on the personal and collective consequences of "Downsizing in America," and the *Washington Post* has featured articles like "The Rich Get Richer and...." Foundation-sponsored studies, such as Edward Wolff's *Top Heavy*, have inventoried the nation's increasingly gross wealth and income disparities, and more analytical works, like David Gordon's *Fat and Mean*, have shown how these disturbing trends are consequences of deliberate corporate policies. In fact, *Business Week* described in a 1995 cover story how workers are suffering a "wage squeeze" even as corporations reap robust profits. Despite the cumulative weight of this evidence, however, a recent special issue of the neoconservative *American Enterprise* steadfastly denied that there were any material grounds for Americans' economic anxiety and growing class antagonism.

Contrary to the Republicans' ambitions, their triumphs not only have expedited the emergence of class thinking, they also have led to its refashioning. Public discourse is beginning to reflect America's social structure. Apparently no longer able to accommodate the experiences of professionals and managers *and* industrial and service workers, "middle class" has given way to "middle class" and "working class," respectively. For example, the liberal *American Prospect* has published an article considering the evidence that much of the so-called middle class actually thinks of itself as "working class"; the neoliberal *Washington Monthly* has run a cover piece urging the revival of the labor movement; and, also in a cover article, "Workers and the World Economy," *the* Establishment journal, *Foreign Affairs*, has registered serious apprehension about the dangers of intensifying class inequalities and ferment. On the popular culture front, we see the recent television series, "Malibu Shores," promoted as "the story of high school students from opposite sides of the tracks—the elite community of Malibu and the working-class San Fernando Valley."

Not just radicals, but now even vital-centrists, such as E.J. Dionne, Michael Lind, Kevin Phillips, and Jacob Weisberg, are writing books projecting a class-based progressive politics. Yet we should not be too sanguine. So far, the most significant recent manifestation of a class-based politics—Pat Buchanan's presidential campaign—has been far from progressive. While it revealed the anger of working people (especially white working men), and sent shivers up the spines of corporate and conservative elites (who shamelessly responded with charges of "class warfare"), it exposed and tapped into strains of racism, anti-Semitism, sexism, and homophobia that will have to be addressed by any new progressivism.

At the same time, there is reason to be hopeful and active. Most important, the labor movement is resurrecting itself. The AFL-CIO recently elected fresh, energetic leadership and made organizing its highest priority. In the spirit of Freedom Summer, "Union Summer" recruited and deployed 1,500 students to workplace and community organizing drives in more than a dozen cities during the last few months. The upcoming "National Teach-In," scheduled for early October, will feature academics and intellectuals on campuses across the country speaking in solidarity with labor. (See "A Touch of Class: Labor and Intellectuals," by Michael Kazin, on p. 64 of this issue.) And the recent formation of a Labor Party by several major unions, representing more than a million members, should send the Democrats a direct message not to take labor for granted.

The emergence of class thinking and politics presents a real test to those seeking to develop a truly progressive politics of meaning. On record as appreciating the common and respective needs of the middle and working classes, the movement's challenge is to articulate a diverse cross-class alliance capable of engaging and advancing the democratic imaginations and prospects of both, while insisting especially on the material and political empowerment of the latter. □

A Touch of Class: Labor and Intellectuals

Michael Kazin

It's been a long time since a unified social movement captured the hearts and minds of liberal and radical academics. Since the 1960s, feminism, racial self-discovery, and gay and lesbian identity have transformed the university. But the connection between scholarship and activism is seldom a close one; tenured theorists of "alterity" and "transgressive behavior" mesh awkwardly with those who organize pro-choice voters or ACT-UP demonstrations. One reason the Right loves to lob rhetorical and budgetary shells at universities is that left-wing academics are usually on their own.

In the thick of the "culture wars," something is missing: a sense of class. Tens of millions of Americans who work for somebody else have been suffering since the mid-'70s; real wages have declined, secure jobs seem gone, and even a college education no longer guarantees a stable, middle-class existence. The recent attention to "down-sizing" and the domination of presidential campaigns by big contributors reveal a sobering truth about American life at the end of the millennium: The values and needs of corporations engulf any alternative view of what is good and just.

Fortunately, a social movement with millions of adherents is beginning to challenge that reign of error. Unions are now undergoing their greatest transformation in six decades. A new zest for organizing and new leaders, particularly at the helm of the AFL-CIO, are sweeping away the perception of an institution chained to the past. The AFL-CIO's Organizing Institute is training thousands of young activists from a variety of ethnic backgrounds and both genders. Many will go forth to aid the kinds of job-holders who most need unions: new immigrants and their children in the inner cities, employees at service firms that barely pay a living wage, and electronics workers whose conditions belie the sleek, high-tech image of their industry. Already, Latinos and African Americans are more pro-union than are their Euro-American counterparts in the same occupations.

And, for the first time since the Great Depression, the labor movement is seeking the aid of students and professors. The Organizing Institute gets some of its best recruits from universities. At a time when a majority of young people go to college (though a smaller number graduate), the gulf between working-class Americans and the campus is narrower than it was during the 1960s. In fact, one commonly finds former activists from such movements as anti-war, Black power, and feminism among the ranks of up-and-coming union officials.

This October 3 and 4, a major event at Columbia University will significantly strengthen the link between campus and labor. "Fighting for America's Future: A Teach-In with the Labor Movement" brings together prominent voices from the academic and journalistic Left with many of the men and women who are central to the changes in unionism. Speakers include the new leaders of the AFL-CIO: John Sweeney, Linda Chavez-Thompson, and Richard Trumka—as well as such influential thinkers as Cornel West, Michael Lind, David Montgomery, Richard Rorty, and Betty Friedan.

The very titles of the workshops demonstrate that being pro-union need not mean sacrificing intellectual breadth: the global economy; the incorporation of American culture; race and the wages of whiteness; work and welfare; labor and new immigrants; work and family life. The New York teach-in should be the largest such gathering at a university since the days when writers like John Dewey, W.E.B. DuBois, and John Dos Passos lent their talents to the union cause.

For contemporary academics, a vital labor movement offers a way to escape cultural isolation, to connect with ordinary Americans fighting for common needs and common dreams. For new forces within labor, the academic world provides a wealth of perspectives on subjects unions need to understand if they are to grow—from swift changes in the international economy to the psychological tensions that beset two-wage-earner families.

And strong unions would also be good for the nation as a whole. Besides providing workers with a concerted voice on the job, they could also help make the United States a more tolerant and more democratic society, where working people would enjoy greater influence and a larger share of the wealth than they do today. □

Michael Kazin is book editor of TIKKUN. *His most recent book is* The Populist Persuasion: An American History.

Take Netanyahu Seriously

Gary E. Rubin

"My mandate is to handle the national aspirations of the Jews, not the Palestinians." With that answer to a question I put to him at a meeting of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reiterated in unmistakable language his ideological commitment to assert Jewish power and deny Palestinian national identity, thus making a meaningful peace impossible.

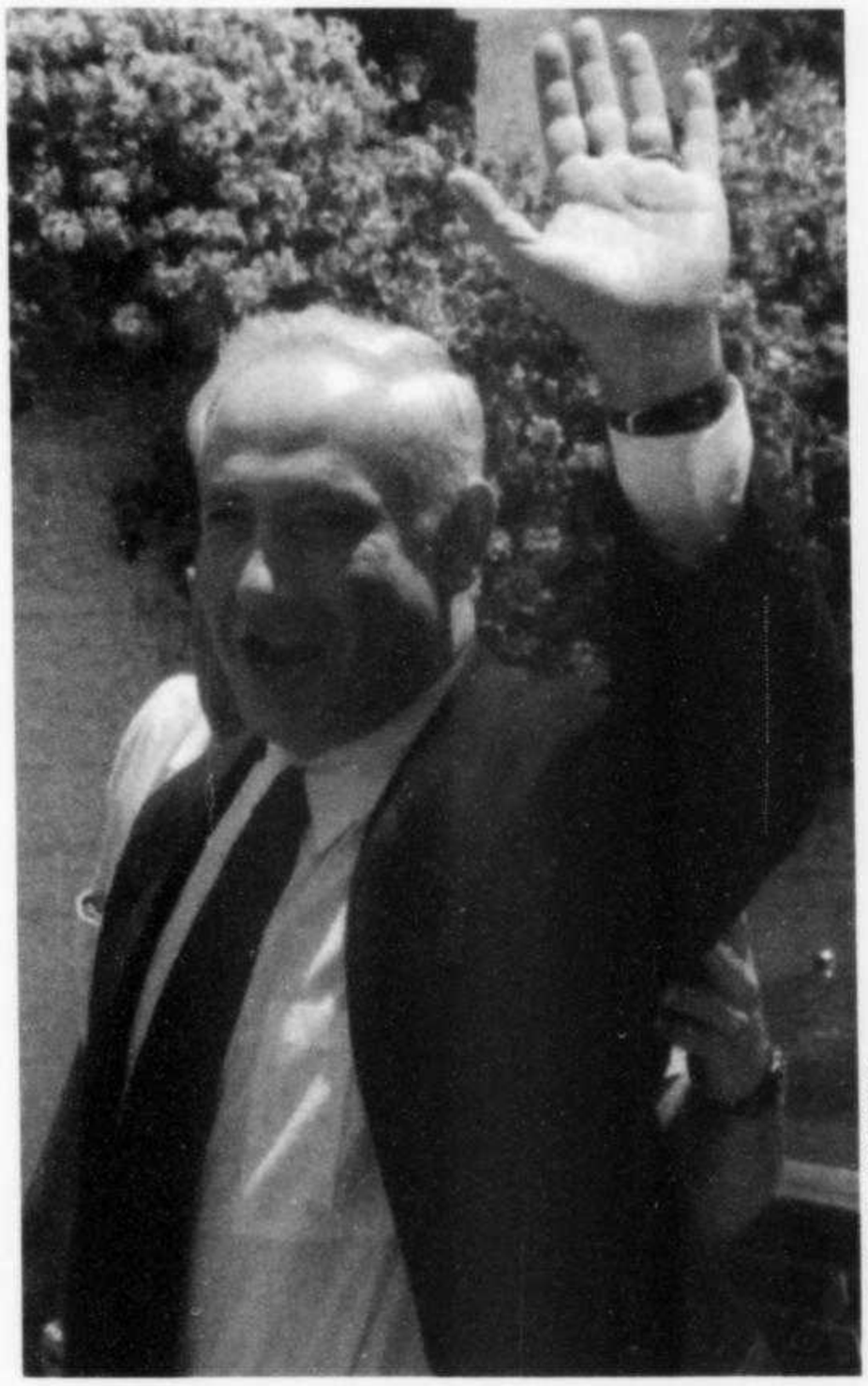
Yet, a stream of commentators has insisted that Netanyahu is basically a peacemaker in Likud disguise. Officials of the American Jewish Committee and Congress declared on a radio show during Netanyahu's visit to the United States last summer that now that he has taken office, the Prime Minister will reverse his campaign rhetoric and move toward peace. Their favorite analogy, of course, is Nixon and China.

But it would be a mistake for those of us who support the peace process to indulge in wishful thinking. It's time to take Netanyahu at his word. His consistent record over the years is one of ideological conviction on retaining all of the territories captured by Israel in 1967 and denying that a Palestinian national identity even exists, let alone needs to be recognized in order to make peace.

Netanyahu's views are hardly a secret. He has spelled them out in a book, *Israel Among the Nations*, and repeated them as opposition leader and candidate for Israel's highest office. If his convictions have been consistently underestimated, the problem lies in our hearing, not his speaking.

Netanyahu believes that the Palestinians are a serious threat to Israel. I have heard him declare, "If the Palestinians receive a state, there will be an unbroken swath of fundamentalism from Iran to Algeria." Instead, he offers the Palestinians autonomy, which he describes as "freedom to run their own affairs," with responsibility for West Bank security and foreign policy remaining in Israeli hands. Will Palestinians accept this autonomy? Netanyahu is convinced they will, citing the precedent of "Catalonians in Spain."

The problem, in Netanyahu's view, is that Labor governments were too soft on the Palestinians. They are a pragmatic people; when they realize they can get nothing more from a Likud-led Israel, they will settle for autonomy.



AP WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

To assure a policy of no territorial compromise, Netanyahu plans significant expansion of the West Bank settlements. His official policy guidelines declare, "Settlement in the Negev, the Galilee, the Golan Heights, the Jordan Valley and in Judea, Samaria and Gaza is of national importance to Israel's defense and an expression of Zionist commitment." The Guidelines pledge "to consolidate and develop the settlement enterprise in these areas, and allocate the resources necessary to do this."

This is not mere rhetoric. Under pressure from his Right, Netanyahu appointed Ariel Sharon to the spe-

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cially created post of Minister of Infrastructure, with responsibilities including water allocations and road building on the West Bank.

Within a month, Sharon announced he would build two major new roads from the Tel Aviv area to settlement clusters, repair and enlarge the Jordan River Valley road, and widen two bridges between Israel and the Golan Heights. The clear intent of this construction is to tie these areas forever to Israel and render impossible the creation of a Palestinian state.

While Sharon launched these projects, Netanyahu and his government have spoken directly to the issue of settlements. Following a Cabinet meeting on August 2, the Cabinet Secretary said of its conclusions, "Today we are giving expression to a proposal to correct the discrimination against Jewish settlement in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip."

In a press conference during his trip to the United States, Netanyahu himself said that the Labor government had increased the settlement population by 50 percent, and he could surely do no less.

The Prime Minister had his facts wrong. As Peace Now's Settlement Watch project pointed out, increases in the Jewish West Bank population under Labor were due to a combination of allowing the completion of housing that had been started under the previous Likud government and building in the Jerusalem area in ways that would still have made territorial compromise possible. In drawing this false comparison, Netanyahu was rewriting history to justify his own settlement expansion.

If carried through, Netanyahu's settlement policy will prove disastrous to the peace process. It could well shatter final status negotiations, exacerbate Palestinian frustration, and produce more recruits for violent extremist groups such as Hamas. It could also lead to the reversal of gains Israel realized only after recognizing the Palestinians, such as diplomatic and economic relations with the nations of the Arab world and Far East. Surely not least, it is a violation of Jewish ethical standards to rule over an unwilling people and deny their national aspirations.

Ehud Sprinzak, an expert on Israel's Right, has pointed out that Israelis who have underestimated Netanyahu's determination and convictions have suffered for their misjudgment. Netanyahu took over a Likud Party that was basically a band of warring gangs, restored its finances, and resisted all attempts to oust him. Drawing on an American role model, he united the political and religious Right. He imported high-powered American campaign consultants and led Likud to an upset electoral victory. Right after the election, he overcame great opposition to push through budget changes that raise health-care costs, reduce the school day, and cut government child allowances, but provide additional resources for the religious school systems and the settlements. This is a man with a plan, clearly used to getting what he wants.

For people committed to the peace process, we cannot assume that Netanyahu will self-destruct or undergo a sudden conversion to moderation. We have to organize hard to prevent settlement-building from undermining chances for a future peace. This means providing support to those organizations in Israel that are fighting settlement-building through advocacy, community organization, and alliances with the Palestinians.

We in America have a special responsibility. Netanyahu is counting on blunting U.S. opposition to settlement-building by appealing to a friendly Congress, media supporters like William Safire and A.M. Rosenthal, and powerful Jewish organizations. It is up to us to thwart these plans. We need to show Congress that most American Jews back a realistic peace, not endless war. We must write about our concerns in visible media outlets and voice our convictions as the real majority of American Jews. And we need to support organizations committed to a secure peace.

We can expect that many Netanyahu supporters in and out of large Jewish organizations will attempt to delegitimize pro-peace Jewish groups and individuals that oppose the elected government of Israel on matters it considers within its own security sphere. They will seek to repeat their triumph in the demise of the now-defunct peace group Breirah. But things are different now, for two reasons. Negatively, a precedent has been set by the Right in its attacks on the government of Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres; it can hardly complain now about criticism of Netanyahu. More positively, a peace process has begun, with formal agreements between Israel and the Palestinians, as well as with Jordan, and lower-level contacts with Arab countries in North Africa and the Gulf. No longer can furthering relations with these peoples be deemed traitorous. But these gains can deteriorate if we do not move vigorously to protect them. That is our challenge.

We dare not underestimate Netanyahu again at this crucial moment in Israel's history. □

In Memory Of

Rabbi Myron H. Kinberg

A dedicated supporter of TIKKUN and the politics of meaning.

February 16, 1945 - April 19, 1996

FICTION

If I Have Found Favor in Your Eyes

Aryeh Lev Stollman

"This world is a vestibule," I told my mother in the minimalist style that had evolved in communications with my parents. I was fourteen the year after my parents' unexplained divorce, and from within that silent void I had become suddenly infatuated, buoyant with new-found faith.

"What is that supposed to mean?" My mother was sitting at her piano, in front of a score. "I really don't have time for this." She turned back to the keyboard and resumed practicing. Before, while my parents were still married, she had championed my father's music with its ecstatic rhythms and yearning melodies that rose from a boiling clamor like life out of the primordial seas. Now that they were divorced, she was playing more of the old warhorses again, "the tried and true, the guaranteed engagement pieces," as her manager and closest friend, Gloria, called them—Rachmaninoff's third, Prokofiev's second. And her career was accelerating. She was busier than ever. "Your mom's finally hitting her stride, Amir," Gloria had told me. "She's *there*."

It was a Saturday morning in winter, and my mother was preparing Strauss's *Burlesque for Piano and Orchestra* for a tour in the spring.

"I'm a single parent now and have to make a living, I can't just play Ivri's crap any more," I recently had heard her telling Gloria. She had always called my father by his last name. More frequently, since the divorce, she began referring to him as "that little Israeli," although my father had lived in America since boyhood.

My mother had never given up her own name, Everett, which was really more like my father's name than she cared to acknowledge, for it was one of those names embraced by a previous generation, meant to cover tracks and obliterate traces, derived from Yivrayski, the Polish analog of my father's Jew-designating label. As for me, I am the hyphenated, etymologically redundant Amir Everett-Ivri.

I stood there, while she ignored me and ran through several measures. When she was concentrating on music she cocked her head to one side. Her long black hair, which was now starting to whiten in streaks, fell forward and to one side, covering an ear and a side of her thin face. A reviewer at The *New York Times* once wrote on her performance of the *Annees Pelerinage*, "even Eva Everett's hair performed wonderfully!" This infuriated her. "What insulting nonsense! Hair!"

She stopped playing again, but her head remained tilted. "Now what is it, Amir? I'm sorry but I have so much work to do."

I repeated myself. "This world is a vestibule."

"What of it? Did the Fluchts brainwash you? Maybe you should avoid them." After a pause she added, "If you're going crazy, perhaps you should go live with your father. Punish him. If you can find him."

I had abruptly decided to become a *ba'al t'shuva*, one who returns to his religious roots. I was repeating something profound I had heard the previous night, something that moved me, suddenly changing my outlook on life. I wanted my mother, in these few words, to feel what I was feeling, a surging desire for a long sublimated faith. I wanted her to understand what I now understood, that there was something besides this mundane world in which she was so intent.

Finally I said: "And I'll need to reorganize the kitchen. Top to bottom. I can't eat in there anymore."

Actually, my parents were strict vegetarians so it was practically a moot point. There was never any meat in our house, kosher or otherwise, let alone milk or cheese with which to mix them. I was the one who had always cheated on the outside, sneaking occasional cheeseburgers and frankfurters.

"Do what you want."

I continued to stand there.

"Look," she finally said, "I'm sorry. You *can* do whatever you like. I never said you couldn't. Only don't try to change the way *I* live, okay? That's the only rule."

"Okay."

She raised her right hand, which then came down on a major chord. She repeated this several times, varying the loudness and duration, murmuring and grunting to herself as she did when she was concentrating.

Aryeh Lev Stollman's fiction has appeared in the Yale Review, American Short Fiction, *the* Southwest Review, *and* Story. *His novel,* The Far Euphrates, *is forthcoming from Riverhead Books/Putnam.*

My mother had inadvertently laid the groundwork for my new perspective on life by renting out the cold and airy apartment adjacent to ours, formerly my father's studio, to a young couple. I quickly fell under the spell of these new neighbors, followers, as it turned out, of a famous Hasidic rebbe. They had come to our neighborhood for their rebbe's "Seeds of Torah" movement through which by good deeds and example the Torah would miraculously germinate in the barren secular soil of the Upper West Side of Manhattan.

Now I do not mean by the words "fell under their spell," to imply some witchcraft or deception practiced on their part, as those non-believers who always seek to detract from the righteous might prefer, but rather a form of enchantment brought about by the serenity and conviction of their being.

They first appeared to me in the hallway. For a moment I caught myself staring. Paul Flucht was tall, athletic-looking despite his strange dark suit, and, I quickly realized, extremely handsome. His wife, Naomi, slim, barely out of her girlhood, wore elegant suede shoes, dark stockings and a long dress. Her hair was wrapped in a colorful kerchief that despite its modesty had a flair of fashion and individuality to it. Together they smiled at me and said hello. I nodded shyly and went into my apartment.

One Friday afternoon, a week or so after they moved in, they rang our bell. They stood just outside our doorway. Paul Flucht bowed his head gently. "We would be very honored if you both joined us for dinner tonight."

Naomi Flucht said: "Yes, it would give us immense pleasure."

My mother looked at them, smiled broadly, asked them if they had settled in comfortably (she could be very friendly in a stagy manner) and then declined their invitation. "I'm sorry but I have a concert to prepare. Besides, I'm as strict with my vegetarian diet as you people are with yours. I hardly eat anywhere but home. It makes me a bit unsociable, I know." She gave me a strange look. "My son is more flexible."

After they left she said to me: "Careful, everyone is always trying to promote their own gods."

When I went over to the Fluchts that evening, I stood in wonder in the small foyer of their apartment. The place was dramatically transformed from when my father had used it for his work studio. Heavy velvet drapery hung across the previously unadorned windows and new plush rugs lay on the wooden floors. There was a soothing warmth in the air and the intoxicating aroma of a non-vegetarian meal. Paul Flucht put his hands on my shoulders and ushered me along. "Welcome, welcome! No need to stand about in the hall, Amir"—he pointed in the direction of the dining area—"Our sages say, 'This world is a vestibule in which we prepare for the glories of Paradise!'"

I was hypnotized by the soft light of the candles set by Naomi Flucht on the far end of a long, white-linen covered table. She was smiling and glowed like a candle herself. Their table stood exactly where my father used to work hunched over his composing desk with a glaring lamp and piles of manuscript paper. On one freshly painted wall was a picture of the Fluchts' rebbe with his long beard and mystical eyes. I was transfixed by Paul's harmonious voice when he stood before dinner and sang "Peace to You, Ministering Angels." The sweet melody hovered in the room like a seraph. Paul Flucht seemed the most beautiful person I had ever seen. He took my breath away as his lips formed the unfamiliar words. I knew barely any Hebrew then as my father never spoke his childhood language. "There is only one language that interests me," my father once told me, "the language of chromatic intervals."

"So, your father is a composer and your mother is a pianist," Paul Flucht mused while we were eating. "A great rebbe once said that music is the purest form of prayer, and prayer is the holy bridge from this world to the next."

His wife, Naomi, smiled and nodded in agreement. She delighted in her husband's words. She went on and explained how everything in the room was imbued with holiness. Even the roast chicken which we were eating, she said, "when prepared according to His commandments, is an instrument of serving God, like the sacrifices on the altar of the Temple, may it be restored quickly in our days!" Her husband added: "Even the silverware and china that adorn the table, and the white linen tablecloth are imbued with holiness in the service and glorification of the Sabbath. The Rebbe always says that everything is transformed to holiness with the joyous 'intent' to serve God. And that is in essence man's duty, to bring about this transformation in our everyday life."

Naomi said: "Oh, I heard a true story that involves music." In the otherworldly light of that evening, Naomi began a complicated tale of a village whose destruction was decreed by God.

How was this decree known?

"In that village there was a great and righteous man, a *tzaddik*, whose soul would ascend every night to heaven during his sleep. One night he overheard God's decree." Naomi folded her delicate hands to her flat chest, lowering her voice. "You know, Amir, the souls of our *tzaddikim* are like those angels in Our Father Yacov's dream. They ascend and descend the ladder that stretches between the earth and heaven. Well anyway, the next morning after overhearing this terrible news, the *tzaddik* awoke, and of course said the *Modeh Ani*, 'I am grateful to You Everlasting King Who returns each morning my soul in mercy.' The *tzaddik* then prayed fervently day and night, denying himself food and sleep: 'If I have found favor in

Your eyes, O Lord, spare our humble village.' But despite his piety and prayers, he was unable to overturn the decree. God simply would not budge."

Naomi cleared her throat, adjusting the kerchief on her head. "Salvation came in a most unexpected way. There happened to be a little boy in the village who was mute. No one paid him any mind, thinking him retarded. He wanted so much to pray to God, but he could not speak. It is a great affliction, you know, not to speak. So what did he do? He whistled a beautiful melody! And when he whistled his heart out, the Gates of Heaven opened and God in His mercy saved the boy's village."

Suddenly I had so many burning questions: "Was the boy praying for his village to be saved? How did he know it was going to be destroyed? Had the *tzaddik* told him about his dream? Were people mean to him? Did they ignore him?"

Naomi took every question seriously. "Oh, no, he wasn't asking for anything. Nobody in town was mean to him. He was simply praying out of love and joy and that was enough to convince God to abolish His decree. It was a coincidence, really."

Paul revealed another great and illuminating truth: "But then again there is no such thing as a coincidence."

Naomi paused thoughtfully and then smiled at her husband: "So you see, our humblest good deeds can save the world and hasten the coming of the *Moshiach*."

For a moment, catching her smile at her handsome husband, I blushed, for I had the strange and embarrassing thought that I would like to be Naomi.

While we ate dessert, the Fluchts asked what instrument I played.

"I don't play one. I don't have any musical talent," I confessed. "But I'm very good in science. I think it's strange. I know I *look* like my parents, so I guess I'm not adopted. But that's as far as it goes."

"Most people receive a soul from a different root than their parents." Naomi Flucht passed me a second portion of sponge cake. "It's surprising when you think of it, but it's the truth. And that's probably where our talents really come from. The Rebbe's soul is from the same root as King David's which of course makes a lot of sense—"

"But where do peoples' souls come from?" I interrupted with a new river of questions, my heart beating faster and faster. "What is a root? What is the root of my soul? How can you find out?"

This time Naomi laughed. "Oh, Paul knows more about this than I do. He can explain it better."

And then he began to explain, looking inside me with his green eyes. I felt slightly dizzy. I didn't want him to stop looking at me. I tried not to blink too much.

He said, his dark hand absently brushing crumbs on the table: "The repository of souls, the Great Soul from which all souls originate, is likened to the shape of a man, of Adam. When a child is born he is given a soul from one of the myriad parts of Adam. And the part that the soul is taken from, that root, imbues the person with aspects of their personality and talents. I'm not great enough to tell you absolutely for sure where your soul is from, though the Rebbe could. But I would guess that your *neshamah* comes from the eyes of the Great Soul because you are very perceptive and ask good questions. The eyes are where the prophets and many people of great talent come from." He reached across the table and touched my hand. "Anyway, Amir, I'm sure your soul is special because I can tell you are a wonderful kid."

I sat astonished. I had goose bumps all over. I never before gave thought to whether I even had a soul and now the Fluchts had given me a glorious soul on a silver platter. The soul-root of prophets and great talent! The dying flames of the candlesticks flickered, sending up thin and twisting columns of smoke. I suddenly imagined myself, ascending like an angel from their table, floating in the heavenly ether, looking out at the most distant stars, and into the most secret of hearts, with the all-seeing eyes of the Great Soul of Man.

I dreamed Paul Flucht was floating before me. I understood that he was the Great Soul and my soul rose out of the naked parts of his soul.

One evening, not long after, Gloria asked my mother if she would play my father's second piano concerto with the New York Philharmonic. I feel I should interrupt and digress here to say that my father had always been taken aback, seemingly disappointed by the early and persistent success of his second piano concerto among all the work he produced, as if it were some type of reproach. Nowadays, all these years later, on those rare occasions that I see him, he usually talks about his pieces as if they are his real children and I am some stranger one chats with on an airplane. He has said to me: "Why everyone loves my second piano concerto I'll never know. It is a passionate piece, of course, but not my best. I was too naive when I wrote it. I have since written so many better pieces, my three symphonies for instance, or my violin and flute concertos, pieces whose form make some sense of this world, and these are practically ignored!"

But back on that winter evening, Gloria told my mother that the original pianist engaged to play the second


MAC MCGILL

piano concerto would be unable to perform. "I think he has that new disease. He's dreadfully sick." The concert was only a few weeks off.

"I know you may not want to have anything to do with Ivri or his work at this time, Eva. I know you are working on the Strauss and about to start the Poulenc. But I think it would be a good move. You've played this piece before. It's *in* you already."

My mother lowered her voice. "It was *written* for me."

"Yes, I know all that, Eva. But it would be good exposure for you. Mehta is conducting."

My mother looked down at her hands and thought for a moment.

"He's not going to be there is he?" She paused. "Or she?"

I did not know then what she meant by 'she', and did not ask. My mother glanced at me and then at Gloria, waiting for her answer.

"No. They're staying in London. I've confirmed that."

"How will I be ready in time?" She squeezed her face between her hands. "I'm going to have to work like a horse!"

In the weeks before the concert I started visiting with the Fluchts more frequently, even on weeknights. My mother's practicing of my father's second piano concerto in the evenings was starting to bother me. Neither her playing nor his music ever disturbed me before. But now the slow first movement seemed to me too whiny with its meandering repetitions, and the second and third movements cold and angry. And this unexplained anger, as my mother played over and over through the score, seemed to come from both of my parents.

I had never heard my parents really angry until the previous summer when they had a mysterious argument behind the door of their bedroom. After that it was only a matter of days before my mother made her curt announcement while my father stood back and watched her. He was a head shorter than her, and though I had, of course, always known and accepted this, I suddenly found this fact disturbing, almost shameful.

"I'm sorry, Amir, but your father and I are not getting along. Your father won't be living with us anymore."

My father said: "I'll speak with you soon and often, son. I'm moving away."

"Where?" I felt all cold inside while I waited for his answer.

"Far away. Europe." He was looking at my mother, not at me.

I walked out of the room. I never asked any other questions and my mother did not bring up the subject again. The next day my father was gone. I did not see him or even speak to him for several years.

Sometimes I wonder why I did not ask any more questions at that crucial moment, if only out of my strong sense of curiosity. But I remember a stubborn, mechanical voice in my head that repeated, "Do not ask. Do not care. Do not ask. Do not care."

Perhaps, I tell myself now, I did not want to know anything. It was too painful. But that explains nothing and the truth is, though some would insist I was suppressing it, I do not remember any real pain.

And so it was a long time before I fully understood how my father had fallen in love with a young composer, an Englishwoman, a former student of his, and had moved to London to be near her.

During those intense weeks while my mother was relearning my father's second piano concerto, I learned many things from the Fluchts. I studied the letters of the *aleph-bais* from which God had created the world out of nothingness. I heard how the child Abraham had destroyed all the statues in his father Terach's idol shop. When his father angrily asked what happened, Abraham calmly said, "You believe they are living gods, don't you? Well these living gods fought and destroyed

each other." And I acquired a rudimentary knowledge of the Sabbath laws. I stopped going to movies or watching television on that lofty day. I waited until Sunday to do my written homework. But even as I sat and learned and drank in the serene atmosphere of their apartment and words, I could faintly hear my mother's practicing coming from next door.

"It's starting to drive me crazy, listening to all that," I told the Fluchts one evening.

"You sound upset, Amir," Naomi said gently. "You should never be upset with your mother for working so hard. The Torah commands us to honor our parents. And besides it's always so beautiful to hear someone playing the piano."

"Yes," her husband added. "Remember, we once talked about music being close to prayer."

Naomi started to retell the story of the whistling boy but Paul raised his eyebrows. She stopped and rolled her eyes. "Oh, I've told that one already, haven't I? Did I tell you how the Rebbe once stopped in the street to learn a hymn of God's praise from the sparrows?"

Increasingly, the Fluchts had other people over, too. Their Seeds of Torah mission was starting to have some minor success. I would try to hide my disappointment if someone was already there when I came over. A heavy college student named Cassandra, the daughter of a reform rabbi, started coming by frequently. Most of her conversations centered around her inability to believe in God.

"I don't find believing in God useful to me," she would say addressing Naomi, or "Why does He need to have *me* believe in *Him*? What's *His* problem?"

Naomi Flucht said: "That's not why we believe, Cassandra. We don't do it for Him or to benefit ourselves, though it's good for us, of course. God doesn't need us to believe in him. That's not the point."

"What is?" She would become all red in the face.

"To serve God. To be closer to him and help perfect our world. That's all."

"Well, that's a tall order! It still doesn't make sense to me. I just can't help *not* believing in Him."

Paul Flucht, intervening, spoke patiently, sweetly, while Cassandra fidgeted with her napkin: "Sometimes we do believe but just cannot admit it to ourselves. Otherwise why are you so concerned with the whole question?" He laughed gently. "'Me thinks she doth protest too much.'"

Cassandra nodded, she stared at Paul, her eyes glazing over. "Well, maybe …"

Later, after Cassandra left, the Fluchts took me into their confidence. Naomi said: "I think Cassandra is beginning to understand, Paul. Deep down she has a pure and wonderful *neshamah*."

Paul said: "I think so, too. What do you think, Amir? You're the perceptive one."

A few days before the performance of my father's second piano concerto my mother took me aside. I had just come home from school. We had barely spoken a word during the last weeks.

"Amir, why don't you invite the Fluchts to come to the concert? I have plenty of comps."

"They won't be able to come. It's a Friday night."

My mother rolled her eyes. "Oh, I forgot. The Holy Sabbath. I guess your new friends think coming to my concert is a sin. Well, are you coming?"

Her question upset me greatly. Until that moment it had never occurred to me not to go. I always went to my mother's concerts when they were in town. I may have given the impression that my mother was never attentive or enthusiastic about me. But this was not the case when she just finished a performance. She was happiest after playing a concert and always engulfed me in her joy and love in a way she was never capable of at home.

"Do you all know my wonderful Amir?" she would say, standing tall and elegant in the green room as her line of admirers approached, or, if someone congratulated her on a wonderful performance, she might say, "Amir here is my greatest success. Look how he's growing!"

"Well," she repeated, "are you coming?"

I surprised myself with my answer, by its firmness and finality.

"No. I won't be able to go either."

My mother's face paled. She trembled almost imperceptibly. But then she said flatly, faintly, as she turned to leave the room, "You can do whatever you want, Amir."

I was surprised at the Fluchts' agitation, and what seemed truly like sorrow, when I told them what had happened.

"But you must go, Amir. She'll be so disappointed," Naomi said. She was close to tears.

Paul spoke nervously, he nibbled his thumbnail. He no longer seemed beautiful to me: "Remember, 'Honor your mother and father.' You could walk to the concert hall, Amir. It's not that far. You don't have to ride. Your mother could leave you a ticket there, I'm sure, so you won't have to carry money."

"Will you come with me?"

"No, we couldn't, really … It's different with us …" they said in unison.

"Well, then I shouldn't be going either." I was filling up with an uncontrollable stubbornness, but I couldn't help it.

"You're trying to change too quickly," Paul said. "You have a whole life of serving God ahead of you. Re-

member, Amir, we still live in this world, and with our loved ones, too."

I said I had to leave to do my homework.

That night I dreamed Paul Flucht was floating before me. I saw his face and then his athletic arms and legs swaying in the weightlessness and I understood that he was the Great Soul and my soul rose out of the naked parts of his soul, but I could not tell from which. I had other dreams, too, that night, rich and mystical dreams that seemed to last for eons but I could not remember them.

When I awoke I was full of a great longing. And it occurred to me, in the midst of this yearning that I did not understand, that I would, and somehow must, cling to my stubbornness. And when I came home that Friday afternoon from school, and the evening of the concert arrived, I did not change my mind.

I did not go to my mother's concert and I never went back to the Fluchts.

While my mother was out playing my father's second piano concerto, I went early to my room so I could pretend I was asleep when she came back. When she finally came home, somewhat earlier than I had expected, I heard a knock on my door and was surprised when I heard Gloria's voice call my name. She came in my room, closed the door and sat on the edge of my bed in the dark. She lit a cigarette. "Do you mind, Amir?"

"No."

"Well, this is the story."

She told me how my father had lied to her and had flown in from England to hear his second piano concerto. "What a desperate ego!" She told me how he even went up on stage to take a bow and how my mother, from the shock of seeing him, trembled slightly but fought successfully to maintain her composure before the audience. "I could tell right away how upset she was, but of course I know her like I know myself. I don't think anyone else could tell. But I had to take her straight home. She didn't even go to the green room. And she had just given the most stunning performance I can remember!"

Gloria began weeping. "I feel so awful, Amir. I was the one who assured her that your father would not be there. I'm sorry to tell you these things. You're still a kid. But it has all devastated your mother. She has put up such a good show for so long. But your mother did love Ivri for so long despite his failings. One doesn't get over such things so easily. Why don't you just come out and see her. It will be good for her. You don't have to say anything. Really. Just go to her."

And so I went out to the living room. My mother was sitting very still on the sofa. Her eyes were red and her dark hair with its growing white streaks hung limp around the sides of her face. She nodded at me but we did not speak. I sat beside her. I took her hand in mine and held it for what seemed the longest time.

It occurred to me then as I sat there with my mother's hand in my own, that in the next days I might hear from my father, that he would try to contact me somehow, but he never did.

In a few days, my mother seemed herself. She was rehearsing her Strauss again and began working on the Poulenc, which she had never played before and was engaged to perform the following season.

I did not ask any questions when she told me in a matter-of-fact tone that the Fluchts would be leaving the rented apartment at the end of the month. In those final days I continued to avoid the Fluchts but before they moved for good I chanced upon them one last time in the hallway. They stopped and said shyly, "Hello, Amir. How are you?" They seemed very sad, as if they had wanted so much to talk to me, but I found I could not bear to even glance at them. I was polite, though, and answered, my eyes lowered to the floor. "Hello, I'm fine. Thank you."

And in those fleeting moments, my eyes cast down at the patterned tiles below me, I felt the faint knowledge of prophecy. I knew I would always look back to that vanishing time, to the shining faith of the Fluchts and the uncontrollable love which I had begun to understand as the source of my mother's musical life. □

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The Simple Necessity of Peace
Poems by Yehuda Amichai

translated by Chana Bloch and Ariel Bloch

Yehuda Amichai's quarrel with God carries on the venerable tradition of Abraham, Jeremiah, and Job—though the object of his irony is the Bible as well, not least the visionary fervor of the prophets. As he writes in "When I Banged My Head on the Door," a poem that may be taken as his *ars poetica*:

> When I banged my head on the door, I screamed,
> "My head, my head," and I screamed, "Door, door,"
> and I didn't scream "Mama" and I didn't scream
> "God."
> And I didn't prophesy a world at the End of Days
> where there will be no more heads and doors.

What Amichai loves best is the ordinary human being with his pain and his joy, a museum in his heart, and shopping baskets at his side. In "Tourists," it's not the Roman arch he wants us to care about, but the man sitting under it:

> Once I was sitting on the steps near the gate at
> David's Citadel and I put down my two heavy baskets
> beside me. A group of tourists stood there around their
> guide, and I became their point of reference. "You see
> that man over there with the baskets? A little to the right
> of his head there's an arch from the Roman period. A lit-
> tle to the right of his head." "But he's moving, he's mov-
> ing!" I said to myself: Redemption will come only when
> they are told, "Do you see that arch over there from the
> Roman period? It doesn't matter, but near it, a little to the
> left and then down a bit, there's a man who has just
> bought fruit and vegetables for his family." ...

Amichai never lets us forget the human cost of war: the bereaved father who "has grown very thin, has lost / the weight of his son," the ever-widening circle of mourners after a bomb attack, including the orphans whose outcry

> reaches up to the throne of God and
> beyond, making
> a circle with no end and no God.

Excerpted from The Selected Poetry of Yehuda Amichai, Newly Revised and Expanded Edition, *translated by Chana Bloch and Stephen Mitchell, published by University of California Press.*

And he has consistently questioned the heroic ideal of Israel's early years, setting in its place the dream of an ordinary life.

Since he is Israel's most beloved poet, and since Israeli society is unusually receptive to poetry, one may say that he has in some measure helped to prepare the way for peace. This was publicly acknowledged when Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres received the Nobel Peace Prize together with Yasir Arafat in 1994. Invited to participate in the awards ceremony in Oslo, Amichai read "Wildpeace," written more than twenty years earlier, when the notion of peace seemed dismally remote. In this poem, he brushes aside the grand rhetoric of the Prophets—the vision of the wolf and the lamb, or what he sardonically calls "the big noise of beating swords into ploughshares"—and speaks of peace as a simple necessity:

> Let it come
> like wildflowers,
> suddenly, because the field
> must have it: wildpeace.

In his acceptance speech, Rabin read one of Amichai's best-known poems, "God Has Pity on Kindergarten Children," which begins:

> God has pity on kindergarten children.
> He has less pity on school children.
> And on grownups he has no pity at all,
> he leaves them alone,
> and sometimes they must crawl on all fours
> in the burning sand
> to reach the first-aid station
> covered with blood.

Amichai's lines seem chillingly apt in the light of Rabin's assassination at a peace rally less than a year later.

Just as young soldiers have carried Amichai's words with them into battle in all of Israel's wars, the old soldier Rabin brought them into the dangerous arena of peacemaking, and for the same reason. There they go on civilizing our hearts, reminding us—for we need to be reminded—

> that the fist, too,
> was once the palm of an open hand, and fingers.

—Chana Bloch

Yom Kippur

Yom Kippur without my father and mother
is no Yom Kippur.

All that's left of their blessing hands on my head
is the tremor, like the tremor of an engine
that kept going even after they died.

My mother died only five years ago,
her case is still pending
between the offices up there and the paperwork down here.

My father, who died long ago, has already risen
in some other place,
not in mine.

Yom Kippur without my father and mother
is no Yom Kippur. Therefore I eat
in order to remember
and drink so I won't forget,
and I sort out the vows
and classify the oaths by time and size.

During the day we used to shout, *Forgive us,*
and in the evening, *Open the gate to us.*
But I say, Forget us, forgo us, leave us alone
when your gate closes and day is gone.

The last sunlight broke
in the stained glass window of the synagogue.
The sunlight didn't break, we are broken,
the word "broken" is broken.

Autumn Is Near and the Memory of My Parents

Soon it will be autumn. The last fruits ripen
and people walk on roads they haven't taken before.
The old house begins to forgive those who live in it.
Trees darken with age and people grow white.
Soon the rains will come. The smell of rust will be fresh
and delight the heart
like the scent of blossoms in spring.

In the northern countries they say, Most of the leaves
are still on the trees. But here we say,
Most of the words are still on the people.
Our fall season makes other things fall.

Soon it will be autumn. The time has come
to remember my parents.
I remember them like the simple toys of my childhood,
turning in little circles,
humming softly, raising a leg,
waving an arm, moving their heads
from side to side slowly, in the same rhythm,
the spring in their belly and the key in their back.

Then suddenly they stop moving and remain
forever in their last position.

And that is how I remember my parents
and that is how I remember
their words.

Between

Where will we be when these flowers turn into fruit
in the narrow between, when the flower is no longer a flower
and the fruit not yet a fruit. And what a wonderful between
we made
for each other between body and body.
A between of eyes, between waking and sleep.
A twilight betweenlight, not day and not night.

How your spring dress so quickly became a flag of summer
that flutters already in the first wind of fall.
How my voice was no longer my voice
but like a prophecy, almost.

What a wonderful between we were, like earth
in the clefts of the wall, a small stubborn earth
for the valiant moss, for the thorny caper bush
whose bitter fruit
sweetened what we ate together.

These are the last days of books.
Next come the last days of words. Someday
you will understand.

I Guard the Children

I guard the children in the schoolyard.
The dog is part of me,
from inside me I hear the echo of his barking.

And the shouts of the children like wild birds
rising up. Not a single shout
will return to the mouth it came from.
I'm an old father keeping watch in place of the great god
who struts around forever in his eternal youth.

I ask myself, during the Shoah
did a father beat his son behind the barbed wire,
did a mother and daughter quarrel in the huts
of annihilation? Was there a stubborn rebellious son
in the transport wagons, a generation gap on the ramp,
an Oedipus in the death cells?

I guard the children as they play.
Sometimes the ball leaps over the fence
and skips and bounces on the slope from yard to yard
and rolls over into another reality.

I lift up my face to a hideous vision:
the honorable men of
power, vaunted and vaunting,
clerks of war, merchants of peace,
treasurers of fate, ministers and presidents
flaunting their colors.
I see them pass over us like death-angels
stalking the firstborn,
their wide-open groin dripping
a honeyed drool like lubricant,
the soles of their clawed feet like the feet of Ashmedai,
their heads up in the sky, foolish as flags.

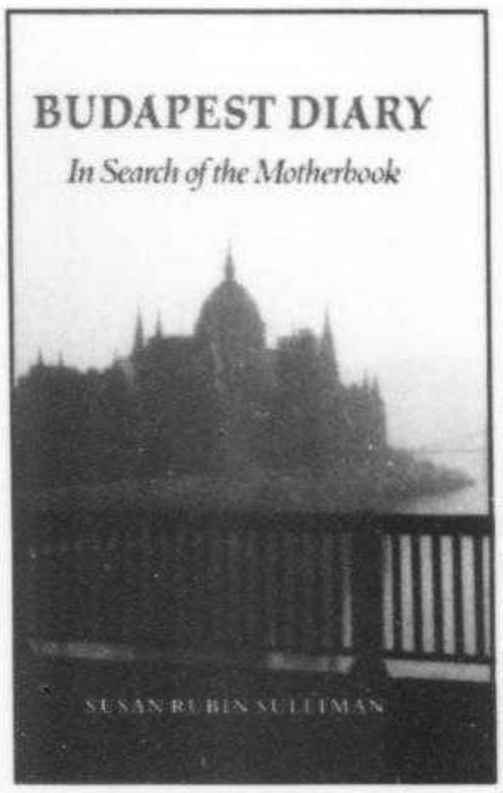
Late Marriage

I sit in a waiting room with bridegrooms
much younger than me. If I had lived in ancient times
I would be a prophet. But now I wait quietly
to register my name along with the name of my beloved
in the big book of marriages,
and to answer the questions I still
can answer. I've filled my life with words,
I've gathered enough data in my body to supply
the intelligence services of several nations.

With heavy steps I carry light thoughts
as in my youth I carried thoughts heavy with destiny
on light feet that almost danced from so much future.

The pressure of my life brings my date of birth closer
to the date of my death, as in history books
where the pressure of history has brought
those two numbers together next to the name of a dead king
with only a hyphen between them.

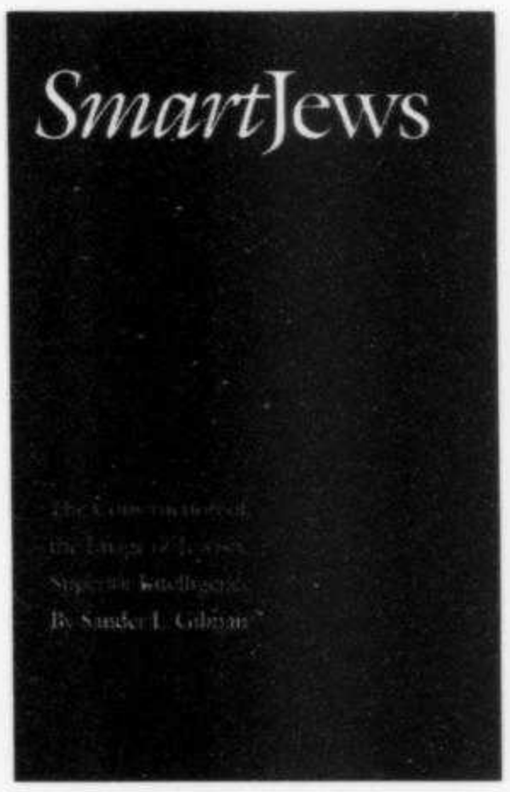
I hold onto that hyphen with all my might
like a lifeline, I live on it,
and on my lips the vow not to be alone,
the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride,
the sound of children laughing and shouting
in the streets of Jerusalem
and the cities of Yehuda. □



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Requiem for a Jew

Claudia Lewis

The small box was unremarkable except for its postage. Fixed in a row of identical stamps, an image of King Juan Carlos of Spain stared solemnly out through black cancellation marks. The microfilm I had ordered from Madrid rattled loose in the box, lighter than I expected. It felt as if I were shaking dice or a few old bones. But I knew no grave ever cradled the bones of the woman whose life and death were recorded on that microfilm. I broke the sealing tape and opened the box, still expecting a musty smell to escape, some odor of the earth. It did not. Inside was a plastic canister.

Within the canister was a four-inch spool of microfilm. Holding the ribbon of transparent acetate up to the light, I could see the miniaturized pages of File 162 in a mute procession that wound around the narrow drum.

File 162 includes the Spanish Inquisition's trial of a Converso named Ysabel Lopez. It is one among thousands of secret documents the Holy Tribunal never intended the public to read, but which are now accessible through the National Archives in Madrid. Ysabel was a young child when she and her parents converted to Catholicism in 1492, the year the Jews were expelled from Spain. Twenty-four years later she was arrested and tried for heresy.

As the microfilm snaked off its spool and onto my desk, I realized Ysabel Lopez is more than just a number in the statistics of the Spanish Inquisition. I know the course of her trial and the strategy of her defense. I know her truth has been obscured by lies. And I know my attachment to her is menaced by history's cold methodology.

The record contains no description of Ysabel's appearance. We do have the bare outline of her biography: Her father was the tax collector and receiver for Don Alonso de LaCerda. She had two younger brothers and a younger sister, but unlike Ysabel, they were born Christian. They all shared the wealth and privilege of their father's association with the seigniorial estate. Ysabel learned to read and write, perhaps taught by her father—an extraordinary accomplishment for a young woman in Late Medieval Spain. She lived in Cogolludo with other Conversos in the former Jewish Quarter. She grew up, married, and had children. She attended church and took communion; her children were baptized into Catholicism. She was prosperous and comfortable in her little village.

I study the art and history of the era and search each line of File 162 as if to penetrate approved ecclesiastical images, reaching the places where outsiders were never allowed. In the process I have been given an image I can't shake.

The day is October 20, 1516. Ysabel, who has been held in prison in Toledo for forty days, is ushered by the bailiff to the Lord Inquisitor's chamber to stand outside the dark, paneled doors, waiting for permission to enter. I see her as she rolls back her satin-lined sleeve, as if hiding its grimy edge will restore dignity to her appearance.

Hearing the assistant's heavy robes drag across the stone floor, Ysabel holds her breath to listen, and catches the sound of his slippered feet. She hears the assistant speak to someone inside. A thin laugh spills out just as he opens the door. And as she is taken into the Lord Inquisitor's chamber to stand before the man who has ordered her arrest, the entire scene stops. I see a tiny drop of ink hanging off the tip of the notary's quill. No one moves or breathes or blinks. And then, as if ears have been filled with clay, as if eyes have been replaced with stone, hearts with wood, no one senses my intrusion as I step in, across time, and walk toward the silent, human statues.

I pick my way around the room to stand behind the notary, Francisco Scobar. In that cold room, his body is warm. I inhale his faint male odor. I peer over his shoulder to see that he has written, in the curving arabesques of his elegant script: [in italics] Genealogy October 20, 1516.

And the above said Pedro Vazques del Busto, being in the audience of the Holy Office of the Inquisition of the Revered Lord Inquisitor Velez, was ordered to bring forward a woman who was being held in the jail of this Holy Office. And she being present…

Claudia Lewis is writing a book on Ysabel Lopez. She contributed the title essay to My Mother's Tattoo and Other Family Memoirs *(Pod Publishers, 1996).*

Scobar sits, immobilized by the bizarre catatonia that holds everyone in that room but one.

I walk over to examine the Lord Inquisitor himself, Sancho Velez. Wearing a simple tunic over a black cloak, he sits at a long, narrow table. A Dominican, he is tonsured except for a ruff of short hair that circles his head. I sit on his table and look directly into his cunning face. He holds his palms together, each slender finger in full contact with its mate. Chin on fingertips, he has tipped his head into a pious pose. His eyes are oriented toward a silk-fringed banner embroidered with the motto of the Spanish Inquisition: *Exurge Domine Et Judica Causam Tuam*, Arise, Oh Lord, and Judge Thine Own Cause. I sense that it is from this that Velez takes his moral right to act on God's behalf, that in this moment Velez is supremely confident of the power of his office.

The one whose measure I most want to take stands across the room. Ysabel is not looking toward Velez. Her head hangs down, uncombed hair escapes from her netted caul, obscuring her features. As I slide across the table for a closer look, I catch sight of the drop of ink on Scobar's pen just as it elongates into a final, tenuous stretch, and lands on the buffed page, instantly restoring breath to lungs, blood to hearts, vision to eyes, perception to ears and nose and skin, and I am jerked back to my own reality, safe in my world of freedom and due process.

Denied a look into Ysabel's face, I can only wonder how she felt. I know how hard it would have been for Ysabel to find rest, confined those forty long days to a filthy cell, how hard to drift to sleep those forty nights that were even longer. For Ysabel, who had led a meticulously clean life with maids to wash and sweep and cook for her, imprisonment was abominable. She was expected to sleep on stained bedding next to other prisoners; some coughed all night, some were incontinent, some were spies. Every day she rehearsed answers to unknown questions, talking to herself and to no one, waiting for the first audience with the Lord Inquisitor.

And as the days dragged into weeks, she prayed for the moon to lose its orbit, to let her dodge, this time, her menses.

At last, forty days after her arrest, the bailiff brought Ysabel to stand before the Lord Inquisitor that day in October 1516, that I witness again and again:

"*My name is Ysabel Lopez*," she begins. "*I am the wife of Francisco de Murcia who is a shopkeeper and a resident of Cogolludo.*"

The notary writes as Ysabel speaks, never guessing his work would itself be scrutinized one day. His role is to witness and record each step, beginning with the genealogy, just as he has done many times before. He writes as Ysabel struggles to find her voice, his ornate whorls expanding into a final flourish, filling the pages that will become File 162.

"*I am a New Christian. Twenty-four years ago I was converted from Judaism, in Murcia. My father is Pedro de VillaReal and my mother is Maria Lopez.*"

Ysabel's father had been named for Abraham, the First Patriarch. But when he converted, he took the name of Christ's disciple and pillar of the Church, Pedro [Peter]. His wife named herself for the Virgin Mary.

"*Do you know why you were arrested?*" the Inquisitor asks.

"*No, I don't .*"

He hopes Ysabel will incriminate herself and implicate others in a rush to confess.

Aware that she must present herself as an honorable woman who is sincerely remorseful for any crime or sin yet to be named, Ysabel wills herself to say nothing more. Her fear of the Lord Inquisitor increases as she recognizes her dilemma: She cannot be both contrite and innocent.

The Lord Inquisitor sits as she stands. He is a man with all the confidence of his office, who has slept well the night before on clean sheets that were dried in the sun and still smelled warm when he retired to his room. He laid his Pharisaic head on down-filled pillows. No lice ever crawled on his body, or laid their eggs in his

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hair. Unlike some of his prisoners, the Lord Inquisitor wasn't kept awake all night, scratching until he bled, finally overwhelming the itch with pain.

Ysabel's chance to be heard comes at the very moment the Inquisitor is most intimidating. Conscious that no one in the Church's eye is ever completely innocent, conscious of the trap that has been set, she confesses:

"*... it must have been seven years ago, more or less, when I had a sick daughter who was one or two months old at the time. And I took her out into the country, to a farmer, I think her name was Juana; she was a woman who had the evil-eye and she bathed my daughter's forehead and my child recovered.*"

Juana was a healer and witch, operating beyond the pale of Christian orthodoxy. She used herbs and charms to restore health and concocted potions for love and fertility, even daring to argue with death. Her healing powers challenged faith in the Lord Jesus and competed with His Virgin Mother. This was Ysabel's secret sin, this was her heresy.

But no one in that silent room acknowledges her confession. The interview over, the notary stops writing. The bailiff approaches, resolved not to see in Ysabel's eyes the grief she feels for all she has already lost, as if by not seeing, his complicity will be excused.

Ysabel's confession was not acceptable. The prosecutor had gathered testimony from five informers who claimed they saw Ysabel, even though she tried to hide what she did, do those things only Jews do: She dressed up on Friday afternoon and lighted special lamps. She cooked with onions and garbanzo beans, they said, but not with shellfish, eel, or other fish without scales, or with pork. She soaked meat in water and cut away its fat and sciatic vein. One informer added that she saw Ysabel tear off a lump of dough about the size of an olive and toss it into the oven. The witnesses claimed they caught Ysabel in the act of performing the secret rituals of the crypto-Jews, acts that were heresy against the Church and treason against the Crown. Francisco Scobar had recorded each and every charge into File 162.

Only if Ysabel admitted she were a secret Jew who rejected Christianity would the inquisitor have been satisfied. Without a "full" confession, the Court was obliged to try Ysabel for heresy. In the months that followed, her resourceful family arranged for the attorney Bartolomo Bonyllo to lead the defense. He began by asking the Inquisitor to set Ysabel free and restore her honor, vigorously arguing that the charges had been filed improperly and that the case should be dismissed. The Court denied Bonyllo's petition.

Next, Bonyllo and Ysabel listed all the prominent people in Cogolludo who would swear Ysabel was a "good Christian woman," one who always honored the holy days and feasts of the Catholic Church and who never dressed differently on Fridays than on any other day. They named witnesses who had smelled pork cooking in Ysabel's kitchen and who had seen her cook with eel and octopus. As for the accusation that Ysabel washed meat before cooking it, Bonyllo insisted she did so only because it was dirty when it was brought home from the



SETH TOBOCMAN

butcher's. Bonyllo addressed the Jewish custom of cutting out the sciatic vein by informing the Court that Ysabel didn't even know what such a thing was. Even so, he noted, the meat she brought home was already cut up so she wouldn't have had the opportunity to remove anything even if she had wanted to. Besides, Bonyllo continued, this ritual would have been performed by Jewish men, not women. The charge that Ysabel would tear off

a lump of dough and toss it into the oven had a simple explanation: When children were in the kitchen, they would beg Ysabel for a taste of dough, so she would pull off a piece and give it to them as a treat; but she never threw it in the oven.

What madness was this that such ordinary acts were grounds for arrest and even execution? It was a matter of intent. If one bathed and dressed in clean clothes with the secret intent to honor the Jewish Sabbath, the result was heresy. Just as it was heresy to burn a piece of dough as a secret rite representing Temple sacrifice. The initial purpose of the Inquisition was to find and punish Conversos who gave up Christianity and secretly returned to Judaism. The Crown and Church worried that the mere presence of Jews in Spain jeopardized the Christian convictions of the Conversos and caused them to backslide. Thus, twelve years after authorizing the Inquisition, the Spanish monarchs expelled all Jews from Spain.

If Ysabel was a sincere convert whose only desire was to lose what remained of her Jewish identity and become fully assimilated into the Christian culture, she was martyred by her own church.

All the accusations against Ysabel were contradicted by her own eyewitnesses. In a society dominated by class status and hereditary privilege, her friends also outranked the informers. Inquisitorial procedure allowed a second line of defense: Prove mortal enmity existed between the informers and plaintiff. If corroborated, the informer could be "crossed off" as an unreliable witness. Bonyllo helped Ysabel list every possible person with a grudge against her or her family in an effort to guess the identities of the actual informers. And for each one listed, a reason was given why that person was motivated to proffer false testimony.

Personal maids were in a unique position to observe the Conversos at home, where they were most likely to practice their illegal religion. Ysabel feared certain maids might desire retribution because she had castigated them for laziness, carelessness, and stealing. She had sent away one maid who had syphilitic sores. Her list of "enemies" included people who resented her father for the taxes he collected. She also named her husband's mistress as an enemy: This woman had bragged in the village that she would have the Inquisitors arrest Ysabel when they came, telling the world how Ysabel resented the gifts and jewels given to her (according to File 162, this woman never approached the Inquisitors).

The names of the actual informers were secret and kept secret for hundreds of years—but not forever. And the record shows that the four maids and the blacksmith who informed on Ysabel were included on the list of people she feared. Bartolomo Bonyllo had led Ysabel in a successful defense, defeating the prosecutor by discrediting the informers as unreliable. But still Ysabel was found guilty.

If her friends thought Ysabel lived as a sincere Christian, the Inquisitor reasoned, it was only because she had been clever to hide her secret attachment to Judaism. Rejecting Ysabel's powerful defense and convinced of the righteousness of his own judgment, the Inquisitor declared her to be an unrepentant heretic. She was turned her over to the secular arm of the government to be burned at the stake in the public ceremony of the *auto-da-fé* (act of faith). But first, she would be tortured in the hope that she might finally confess. More important to the prosecutor, she might name her accomplices, exposing others to arrest.

On November 20, 1518, Ysabel Lopez was taken into the torture room. Alone and terrified, nearly naked, she stood again in the presence of the Lord Inquisitor Sancho Velez and his agents. Admonished to tell the truth about who was with her when she committed the sins of heresy, she was formally warned that if in the process of being tortured she were to die or break her limbs, this would be her own fault and not that of their Graces.

She was tied to an *escalera*, or ladder, with sharp-edged rungs. An iron bar kept her head from moving. Her arms and legs were tied with *cordeles* that would cut into her flesh if she struggled. Other cords, their ends twisted around stout sticks for tension, had been tied to her upper arms and calves. They could be continuously tightened, like tourniquets.

"*Oh Lady of Guadeloupe, save me! Oh Lady of Guadeloupe, … they will kill me, they will kill me, … Lords, by the love of God, they will kill me …*" the notary wrote, recording Ysabel's pitiful appeal to the torturer.

A strip of linen, called a *toca*, was stuffed into her mouth which was forced open with an iron prong. The *escalera* was tipped, so that Ysabel's head was lower than her feet. The *toca* was held up, and water was poured down it to conduct a steady flow into her throat, making her feel as if she were drowning. She gagged as the first jar of water, holding nearly a quart, was emptied.

The *toca* was removed and she was warned to tell the truth.

"*I have already told the truth. Lords, I have told the*

truth. Believe me Your Reverences that even if you kill me I don't have anything more to say than what I have said."

Another jar of water was held over her face and then it was slowly poured down the strip of cloth into her throat.

The *toca* was removed and Ysabel was given another chance to confess:

"*Jesus Christ … I have told the truth!*"

The ropes were tightened with a garrote.

They are killing me! Your Reverences, for the love of God …"

In law the record is cold, but Ysabel's panic is still evident, even after 500 years. The ropes were tightened again by twisting the garrote.

Holy Mary, Holy Mary, they are strangling me; they are strangling me."

Another jar of water was ordered. Part of it was poured down Ysabel's throat.

Jesus Christ, save me!" The notary witnessed each step, noting when the cloth was removed, and when Ysabel spoke, ready to record her confession as the Inquisitors continued to demand the names of her accomplices.

They are killing me! Never have I seen—Jesus Christ they are killing me!—Never have I seen anyone … "

The tourniquets were ordered tightened. Half of another jar of water was poured down her throat. And then they ordered the torture stopped.

The notary wrote: *and then they ordered the torture stopped*, but he didn't say if Ysabel stood unsupported or if she slumped to the floor. He didn't say if her mouth turned purple and yellow, bruised by the iron prong, or if she bled or wept or soiled herself. He wouldn't know if she inwardly cheered her own victory.

Ten days later, Ysabel Lopez was publicly sentenced and led away to the stake. She was burned alive because she would not confess, nor would she name her "accomplices," even though that would have permitted her a more merciful death by strangulation. She was marched to the *quemadero*, the site where the heretics were burned, ready to bite off her own tongue rather than expose anyone she loved to the cruel scrutiny of the Inquisition.

Why Ysabel? Not every New Christian was arrested and tried by the Inquisition, though all were in jeopardy. Perhaps Ysabel was unlucky, or perhaps she had broken caste, attracting resentment. Or was she a disposable piece in a larger game to undermine the seigniorial estate of Don Alonso de la Cerda by bringing down the local tax collector—Ysabel's father—and his family?

The politics of control and conformity contaminate the private motives of the King, Queen, and Pope. Heretics were not only punished but also fined. Convicted, their properties were confiscated by the Crown, retroactive to the first episode of "Judaizing." Whole families were ruined when one member was convicted: Children and children's children were restricted from holding important offices and professions and from manifesting high rank by riding horseback or wearing gold or silk or pearls. Hand in glove, the Inquisitors worked with the jealousies of the informers while the Church and Crown filled their coffers—legally or not—making Spain the most Catholic country in the world.

Within the context of Late Medieval legal practice, it may not be possible to determine whether Ysabel Lopez was a secret Jew or a sincere Catholic. If the informers were right, and it was Ysabel who lied, then her conviction was consistent with the law, and consistent with secret policies that were both cruel and arbitrary. Ysabel would have died a heroic Jew who dared to risk her life for her sacred beliefs, a woman courageous enough to endure torture and face a ghastly execution, while honoring her religion and protecting her family.

But if Ysabel was a sincere convert whose only desire was to lose what remained of her Jewish identity and become fully assimilated into the Christian culture, then she was martyred by her own Church. With no heresy to confess, no accomplices to name, Ysabel's courage transcended injustice.

Today as we near the Jubilee Year 2000, and Pope John Paul II calls his followers to reappraise Church history, including that of the Inquisition, it is time to honor Ysabel Lopez as a symbol of the Jewish experience in Spain and as a hero in her own right, qualified to be exalted in heaven, a saint.

Does Ysabel's spirit feel the Church's remorse; does she forgive? Tied to the stake on the 30th of November, 1518, Ysabel Lopez was fully alive and conscious, even as the dry straw and kindling and sticks and logs were ignited, even as her skin was scorched and her hair caught fire, even as the blood was scalded in her veins, she was fully conscious, even then.

All that was left behind were a few blackened fragments of bone, and Ysabel's secrets. Her greatest mystery is if God reached in, unseen, as those flames licked up the bubbling blood that carried her life; if God held this woman whose backbone had been alchemized into steel, and let her spirit soar. □

Note: Italicized portions have been translated from Renee Levine's transcription of File 162, which she included as an appendix to her unpublished Ph.D. thesis, "Women in Spanish Crypto-Judaism, 1492-1520," Brandeis University, 1982.

Bereshit: Sexuality and Desire

Ellen Frankel

For centuries, Jewish women have lacked a direct route into the primarily "top down" tradition of learned texts. And so they have had to find alternative ways in. They have done so through what I call "folk Torah," a "bottom up" tradition of customs, songs, stories, folklore, humor, symbols, superstitions, and folk sayings that have fructified Judaism from the margins, absorbing and transvaluing raw materials from neighboring cultures to create new Jewish forms. Through this folk process, Judaism has remained vibrant and remarkably elastic—just like the women themselves.

In the early seventeenth century, the rabbinic authorities decided that women should at least read or hear the words of Torah, even if they couldn't study and interpret them themselves. So Rabbi Yaakov ben Yitzhak Askenazi published a Torah commentary in Yiddish specifically designed for women who were illiterate in Hebrew. The *Tzena Urena*, an immediate sensation as soon as it appeared, has since gone through more than 200 printings. A blend of midrash, commentary, rabbinic lore, and homiletic interpretation, this women's *teyre* has provided traditional women a door into God's holy book.

But it still constitutes a commentary written by a man for women. It lacks the nuanced timbre of women's voices, their sensibilities harvested from the text (exegesis) and sown back into the text (eisegesis). It lacks the fundamental facts of women's lives—kitchen smells, the cries of babies and widows, the hard-won wisdom of suffering, the silences and subversions of veiled lives.

And two hundred years later, it also lacks the new knowledge recently made available through feminist scholarship and criticism, biblical archaeology, and modern literary techniques. If you add to this mix the spice of Jewish folklore and the yeast of a postmodernist imagination, you find yourself with quite a stew!

This is *The Five Books of Miriam*, a commentary on the fifty-four weekly scriptural readings—what Christians call the lectionary—presented as a chorus of voices, mostly biblical women as well as our Mothers, our Daughters, our Bubbes, the Sages in our own time, and the Rabbis. What emerges is a heteroglossia, a conversation of voices spanning the centuries but speaking in the same room at the same time. They are our own voices as well, reflecting and refracting our experience through all those who came before.

—Ellen Frankel

Lilith and Eve

Torah teaches: In the first two chapters of Genesis, God creates human beings twice: first *simultaneously* as a single androgynous being; then a man followed by a woman, Eve fashioned out of Adam's rib.

Our daughters ask: Can the Torah have it both ways?

The Sages in our own time answer: In ancient times, two rival creation myths vied for our people's allegiance. So popular were both versions of this story that when Genesis was being edited, the Torah had no choice but to include them both.

But the ancient Rabbis explain it differently: Adam had two wives—one in the first chapter of Genesis, another in the next. His first wife, Lilith, because she was created at the same time as Adam, naturally insisted upon being equal in all things (even in the marriage bed!). But her husband refused her terms, and she left the Garden. God then dispatched three angels—Senoy, Sansenoy, and Semangelof—to the Sea of Reeds to fetch her back, but they failed to persuade her. Stubbornly, she refused to return home unless her terms were met. Furious, the angels cursed her for her impudence, sentencing to death each day one hundred of her demon children; she countered by vowing to prey henceforth upon women in labor and their babies. Through the centuries, Jewish women have warded her off with amulets bearing the three angels' names and other charms.

Mother Rachel counsels: My children, we no longer need to fear Lilith. Even a curse has a statute of limitations.

Ellen Frankel is the editor-in-chief of the Jewish Publication Society. *Copyright © 1996 by Ellen Frankel, Ph.D. Reprinted with permission from Grosset/Putnam, a division of the Putnam Berkley Group, Inc., from* The Five Books of Miriam, *by Ellen Frankel, Ph.D.*

Names

Our daughters ask: Who gives names and why? Sarah the Ancient One answers: Before Eve comes into being, God and Adam are the sole namers. At God's bidding, Adam gives names to "ALL THE CATTLE AND TO THE BIRDS OF THE SKY AND TO ALL THE WILD BEASTS" (2:20). After woman is created, she shares in this process. Eve, for example, names her firstborn son *Cain*. From that point on, fathers and mothers take turns choosing—and use names to identify their children's destiny. For names are seldom meaningless in the Bible. In fact, they are often remarkably freighted.

Dinah the Wounded One asks: But why are women granted this privilege when so much else is denied us?

Huldah the Preacher explains: The Bible recognizes that parents operate by different rules than the clan, tribe, or nation. In the intimate society of the family, power is negotiated, wrested, or ceded—and the children play out the consequences of their parents' bargains.

Adam's Rib

Our daughters ask: Why does woman emerge from man's body?

Leah the Namer answers: *Tzela* does not precisely mean "rib" but rather "side." Eve comes forth only as "FLESH OF [Adam's] FLESH," not as "bone of [his] bone"—by C-section rather than by bone graft. Thus God serves as Adam's midwife, not his surgeon.

Our mothers chime in: So you see, the two creation stories are not so different after all. In chapter 1, Adam is presented as both male *and* female; and in chapter 2, although woman *emerges* from the man's body, the man ultimately *merges* back with her. As it is written: "HENCE A MAN LEAVES HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND CLINGS TO HIS WIFE SO THAT THEY BECOME ONE FLESH" (2:24). In both cases, human wholeness depends upon an Other to complete the divine image.

The Serpent

Our daughters ask: Is the serpent good or evil? For it is written: "THE SERPENT WAS THE *SHREWDEST* OF ALL THE WILD BEASTS THAT YHVH HAD MADE" (3:1). Isn't *shrewdness* an evil to be shunned?

The Sages in our own time answer: In ancient Near Eastern cultures, serpents were often regarded positively, as symbols of generativity, potency, and rebirth. In our own culture, on the other hand, we usually recoil from snakes, considering them venomous, treacherous, and vile.

Our daughters ask: Which kind of serpent appeared in the Garden?

Leah the Namer answers: The Hebrew word for "shrewd" is *arum*—spelled the same as *arom*, "naked"—the state in which Adam and Eve find themselves after they eat the fruit. This pun contains an irony that dictates the serpent's fate: like the first humans, the serpent discovers only too late that its shrewdness is easily stripped away, leaving it vulnerable to divine rebuke.

Wily Rebecca quips: And so it's Adam and Eve's bite, not the serpent's, that proves poisonous to the serpent, not the other way around. Because by the time the story ends, the serpent has fallen flat on its face and eaten dust. Such are the risks of upsetting the applecart.

Putting A Fence Around The Torah

Our daughters ask: Why does Adam add to God's ban of *eating* from the tree a ban against touching it also? As it is written: "YOU SHALL NOT EAT OF IT OR TOUCH IT, LEST YOU DIE" (3:3).

The Rabbis answer: To demonstrate that one must put a fence around the Torah, *siyag le-Torah*. That is, we need to place an extra protective barrier around the performance of a commandment so as to assure its proper observance. So, for example, we have ruled that one should light Sabbath and holiday candles *before* it gets dark, not precisely at sunset, so as not to take any chances of missing the appointed time and thereby violating the Sabbath.

Our daughters ask: Then why doesn't Adam tell Eve that's what his extra warning is meant to do, to place a "fence around the Torah," for her own good? If he had, she might not have fallen for the serpent's deceitful promise: You shall not die, but "YOU SHALL BE LIKE GOD!" (3:5). When she does touch the tree and discovers that no harm comes to her, she accepts all the rest of the serpent's words as true.

Lilith the Rebel answers: That's what comes of leaving women in the dark.

Temptation

Our daughters ask: Why does the serpent tempt Eve first?

Our mothers answer: If we look closely at the text, we notice that God never forbids Eve to eat from the tree but only forbids "the man." When Adam repeats God's message to her, he embellishes it by forbidding touch as well as taste.

Wily Rebecca breaks in: A fatal error! Being crafty, the serpent takes advantage of Adam's game of telephone: to the divine curse and Adam's extra taboo, he adds his own

two cents in the form of an irresistible reward: If you eat of it, "YOU SHALL BE LIKE GOD!" And Eve, seeing that "THE TREE WAS GOOD FOR EATING AND A DELIGHT TO THE EYES, AND ... DESIRABLE AS A SOURCE OF WISDOM" (3:6), falls for the serpent's bait. If only God had spoken to Eve directly!

The Price Of Wisdom

Our daughters ask: Is the price Eve pays for knowledge—exile from Paradise, painful childbirth, and domination by her husband—equivalent to the rewards?

The Rabbis answer: Obviously, they are. Consider the alternatives.

Eve the Mother of Life protests: Indeed, I wish I had been able to! But once I left the Garden, I learned that curses, like blessings, are mixed, tempered by chance and faith. The key is to recognize which is which and to act accordingly.

The Forbidden Fruit

Our daughters ask: Why do we identify the apple as the forbidden fruit? For it is written only that "SHE TOOK OF ITS FRUIT AND ATE" (3:6).

The Sages in our own time answer: Although the Torah doesn't specifically identify the apple as the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, Western tradition, especially in art, has long done so. The Romans associated the apple with Venus, Goddess of Love, and with human sensuality.

The Rabbis teach: The Song of Songs (7:9) compares a lover to the fragrance of apples. And we have compared the Jewish people to an appletree.

Esther the Hidden One adds: To mystics, Shekhinah, God's feminine aspect, appears to human beings in an orchard of holy apples.

Our mothers conclude: What a fitting symbol for the gift of sexual knowledge!

The Shame Of Sin

Our daughters ask: Why do Adam and Eve hide themselves after eating the fruit? For it is written that when God called for Adam in his hiding place, Adam said, "I WAS AFRAID BECAUSE I WAS NAKED, SO I HID" (3:10).

Eve the Mother of Life answers: Adam and I did not even know precisely what it was that we had done—except that we were not supposed to do it. Like little children, we thought that by hiding ourselves, we were now invisible to God.

Wily Rebecca interjects: This shame without guilt is still a virginal emotion. It takes practice to experience shame *with* guilt, the shame that comes of premeditated sin.

The Curse Of Sexual Desire

Our daughters ask: Why is sexual desire presented as a curse only for women? As it is written: "YET YOUR URGE SHALL BE FOR YOUR HUSBAND" (3:16).

The Sages in our own time answer: In the ancient world, female sexuality and childbearing were experienced as burdens, snares, sources of physical vulnerability. While pregnant, nursing, and caring for their young children, women were utterly dependent upon their men for protection and sustenance. It was, of course, different for the men. When they responded to their own desire, they risked neither pregnancy nor death. Neither were they compelled to lend their bodies to their babies' insatiable appetites.

Mother Rachel points out: Yet despite the high cost exacted of us because of our sex, most of us—then and now—nonetheless joyfully accept our lot, choosing to bear children if we are able to. In doing so, we share in Shekhinah's travails.

Eve's Curse

Dinah the Wounded One laments: As a consequence of Eve's disobedience, women are doubly cursed: to desire their husbands, who will "rule over" them; and to give birth in pain, as it is written: "IN PAIN SHALL YOU BEAR CHILDREN, YET YOUR URGE SHALL BE FOR YOUR HUSBAND, AND HE SHALL RULE OVER YOU" (3:16). How astutely the text understands what life was like for us back then! Instead of maligning woman's nature (as the Rabbis later do), characterizing us as empty-headed, weak-willed, untrustworthy, and frivolous, the biblical author here accurately describes our social reality: controlled in marriage and endangered in childbirth. A woman must have written these lines.

Eve Receives Her Name

Our daughters ask: The Torah states that Eve's Hebrew name, *Hava*, derives from *hai*, meaning "life," because she is "THE MOTHER OF ALL THE LIVING" (3:20). If Eve is the *mother* of all life, does that make Adam the father?

Leah the Namer answers: Adam's name derives from *adama*, "earth," the source of *material* being; *hai* refers to the source of *spiritual* being. Or to avoid an unnatural dichotomy, Adam and Eve have birthed each other in complementary ways: from Adam's sleep emerges Eve; from

Eve's awakening, Adam's future.

The First Child, The First Loss

Our daughters ask: What happens when Adam and Eve are banished from Eden?

Our mothers answer: They do what most families do after they lose everything: they begin again. They start a family to carry on their name, as it is written: "NOW THE MAN KNEW HIS WIFE EVE, AND SHE CONCEIVED AND BORE CAIN, SAYING, 'I HAVE GAINED [*kaniti*] A MALE CHILD WITH THE HELP OF GOD'" (4:1).

Mother Rachel continues: And so Eve gains a male child—and later gains a second boy, whose Hebrew name, *Hevel*, means "breath," so fleeting is Abel's life. With Abel's death, *Hava*, the mother of life, becomes also the mother of death, and *Adam*, taken from the earth, returns a son to it.

Leah the Namer adds: Names in the Bible often contain their parent's dreams and their children's burdens.

Eve the Mother of Life adds: Indeed, when the gods wish to punish us, they merely answer our prayers. □

ROUNDTABLE

(Continued from p. 61)

guys are worse." That message gives the party zero incentive to take our concerns seriously.

It is this behavior, and not just the fact that the rich have disproportionate amounts of money to spend on elections, that guarantees that four years from now, and twenty years from now, we'll be in the same position. Conversely, if your readers and those they influence were to make it known that they unequivocally reject the logic of lesser-evilism, they would quickly find that their concerns were taken far more seriously.

This is an ongoing struggle that must be waged now; otherwise, things will only worsen. If we are determined to bring about fundamental change, this is a good moment to stand up and say: "You went too far, Bill Clinton, and now we will not be with you. Instead, we will build a third party that will present a serious alternative to Gore-Kemp in the year 2000." □

EDITORIALS

(Continued from p. 8)

someone's total complex of motives.

"But don't you think Hillary is a little cynical in the way she treated you?" Dowd insisted. Yes, I explained, but you, Maureen, in your columns on Hillary through the years, and in the very way you pose these questions to me, are far more cynical. Why not acknowledge that media cynicism has done so much to undermine people's capacities to believe in ideals?

My job, Dowd told me, is to criticize the government, not the media.

It was a startling formulation. The media protects its own.

So perhaps I shouldn't have been surprised that Maureen Dowd would subsequently say in her column that Jean Houston is "a step up from Michael Lerner" (reverting to the "who is less flaky" line she had tried to suggest to me) but, Dowd suggested, "even if she too, intends to make a career out of her fifteen minutes in the East Wing." Here was a line that everyone who is "savvy" understands: the most deeply held belief of media people, that human beings can only be motivated by self-interest, so there couldn't possibly be a more complex set of motivations in which personal aggrandizement might not be the biggest or sole factor.

Dowd could not understand why so many people are turning inward today. I understand why she doesn't. It is the remarkable absence of any moral center that allows for the level of cynicism that makes possible the whole flap about Mrs. Clinton's spiritual life in the first place.

Dowd asked me, incredulously, "Don't you think it is surprising that someone of Hillary's age should still be seeking spiritual guidance? Shouldn't she know already, having reached this position of power?" No, I explained to Dowd, that is not what spiritual life is about. The knowing is always limited, growth is always possible and desirable, and learning from many different teachers and traditions is not a sign of weakness or intellectual flakiness, but a sign of maturity and an acknowledgment of our own individual limitations.

Maureen Dowd could certainly use a bit of that kind of humility herself. □

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BOOK REVIEWS

Witnesses Once-Removed

Alan L. Berger

Elijah Visible: Stories, by Thane Rosenbaum. St. Martin's Press, 1996. 205 pp. $21.95.

Among the most important developments in Holocaust studies over the last decade and a half is the emergence of a distinctive genre of novels and films produced by children of Jewish Holocaust survivors. These second-generation witness texts open a new window of awareness concerning the possibility of working through the cultural, psychic, and theological trauma of the European catastrophe. Further, these texts attest to the existence of a new generation of Diaspora artists who respond both to their Jewish and their American influences. For example, there is a concern for American aesthetics (Art Spiegelman's comic-book format in *Maus*), American sexuality (Lev Raphael's gayness in *Dancing on Tisha B'Av* and *Winter Eyes*), American liberalism (Julie Salamon's protagonist's attempt to achieve a *tikkun olam* in *White Lies*), and American openness to ethnic diversity (Melvin J. Bukiet's Jewish particularity in *Tales of an Imaginary Childhood* and *While the Messiah Tarries.*).

What these and other second-generation works share is their search for a way of bearing witness to the Holocaust and to their authors' own identity. Consequently, these texts are not about the *Shoah* per se. Rather, they constitute reflections of witnesses about their parents' continuing survival and their own attempt to shape Holocaust memory. Collectively, works of these once-removed witnesses seek a repair of the self and the world.

Unlike many survivors, whose initial silence allowed the world to assume that the *Shoah* ceased wounding in 1945, their children are committed to testify on their behalf. Further, while survivors frequently either did not seek, or were excluded from playing a role in the wider social world, children of survivors have taken on a variety of crucial roles in American culture. In fact, they are over-represented in the helping professions such as law, medicine, psychology, psychiatry, social work, and teaching. The second generation confronts the enigma that the most important event in their lives occurred before they were born. This heritage leaves an indelible, if invisible imprint. The issue for the second-generation is thus not how to remember the Holocaust, but how to transform their legacy into memory and deeds that will help move the world away from genocidal modes of thought.

Second-generation Holocaust texts are works of mourning and protest. Reflecting on the losses suffered by the Jewish people, these writings represent their authors' attempts to come to grips with pain, innocent suffering, and evil. They mourn unknown relatives murdered in the *Shoah*. But second-generation witness writers do not attempt to imagine themselves in Auschwitz. Rather, they write of their own personal experiences of loss—the accidental death of friends or family members, or the disappearance of a parent. Many of these works are also protests—a trial of God (*din Torah*), an indictment of anti-Semitism, or rage against the murderers. Prophetic in tone, they seek justice where none exists. Further, there is a recognition of the acts of the helpers. This is especially the case in films such as Pierre Sauvage's *Weapons of the Spirit*, Miriam Abramowicz and Esther Hoffenberg's *As if it Were Yesterday*, Debbie Goodstein's *Voices From the Attic*, and Saul Rubinek's *So Many Miracles*.

Thane Rosenbaum's eloquent voice adds to our understanding of the second-generation witnesses. Rosenbaum's taut prose conveys with sensitivity and insight the experience of receiving his Holocaust legacy. *Elijah Visible* tells the various tales of Adam Posner, son of Holocaust survivors. Rosenbaum, formerly an attorney and now a professor of creative writing and the Holocaust, presents various images of Posner. *Elijah Visible* is, in fact, a



ART FROM FLOOD! A NOVEL IN PICTURES, BY ERIC DROOKER

Alan L. Berger is Director of Judaic Studies at Florida Atlantic University. His book, Children of Job: American Second-Generation Witnesses to the Holocaust, *will be published by SUNY Press in 1997.*

postmodern text that transcends time and space. Posner is in kindergarten; he is a professor of Holocaust studies; he is a trophy-winning adolescent tennis player; he is a spiritually homeless law professor meeting a long-lost childhood friend at JFK Airport. Adam Posner lives in New York. And Miami.

Linking all of these portraits is the protagonist's experience of psychic pain and spiritual crisis. "Commando parenting" is the phrase used by one of the Adam Posners to describe his parents' ineptness in raising their son. Preparation for the coming apocalypse is how he remembers growing up in a survivor household.

The nine tales in this collection present various portraits of survivors. "The Rabbi Double-Faults" tells of a Miami rabbi whose congregants view him as an *apikoros*; his evident embrace of secularism and passion for tennis appear antithetical to traditional spiritual values. They, and the reader, subsequently learn that, as a child, the rabbi had been in Auschwitz. His cynicism masks a rage at God. A tennis match will decide whether the rabbi will become more traditional, or whether his twin brother—who left Europe before the war and is now a rabbi in Israel—will introduce more theological skepticism to his own congregants. "An Act of Defiance" tells the story of Uncle Haskell, a survivor who lives life to the fullest as an act of defiance against the deity.

Rosenbaum's well-crafted tales convey both an obsession with the Holocaust and a determination to bear witness. His stories open the readers' eyes to the process of transmitting the *Shoah* from generation to generation. Additionally, the experiences of Adam Posner serve as a lens to help focus on contemporary societal issues: the loss of tradition and the spiritual emptiness of post-modernity; the quest for identity amidst a growing sense of isolation; the experience of anomie, which leads to a feeling of spiritual orphanhood.

The book's last tale, "The Little Blue Snowman of Washington Heights," focuses on the youngest version of Adam Posner, a kindergartner with a keen interest in stories. Rosenbaum deftly contrasts the warmth and "happy ending" tales that Adam hears in class with the warnings of imminent danger that the youthful protagonist learns daily from his parents. They had indelibly transmitted the horror of the camps to their son. "The entire experience," observes the narrator, "coded in his brain, forever." The power of Holocaust imagery to shape the unconscious of the second generation provides the context for the collection's initial story, "Cattle Car Complex," in which an attorney stuck in an elevator imagines it as a cattle car headed to Auschwitz. Rosenbaum deftly juxtaposes the prison of the elevator and the prison of Holocaust memory in portraying the disorientation of the man who, upon being released from his temporary bondage, has aged, soiled himself, and been consumed by his unsparing legacy. Instead of heading off to his waiting limousine, the young attorney wonders only whether, like other prisoners of Auschwitz, he should go to the left or the right.

Elijah Visible is more, however, than a secular *kaddish* or cri de coeur. The title itself provides a clue to additional meaning. Traditionally, the prophet Elijah is associated both with the coming of the messiah and with love for the House of Israel (*Ahavat Yisrael*). Further, in Aggadic lore, Elijah is never visible, but always disguised as a beggar. Rosenbaum's work suggests that, in the post-Holocaust world, salvific efforts must be visible. The massiveness of the *Shoah's* evil demands manifest evidence of the continued possibility of redemption. In the book's title story, Rosenbaum describes the loss of traditional symbolism as reflected in a contemporary Passover Seder. Intermarriage, familial bickering, and religious ignorance form the background to Adam's observation that while Elijah did not appear, the Posners' survivor cousin is coming from Europe to share the family's Holocaust history. His tale may be the precursor of salvation. Rosenbaum's psychological insight is placed in service of his wrestling both with the Holocaust and the contemporary meaning of being Jewish after Auschwitz. He stands as an important second-generation witness, attesting to the enduring trauma of the *Shoah*, as well as the necessity of seeking a repair of Jewish identity. □

Identity Crisis

Frank Browning

Twilight of Common Dreams, by Todd Gitlin. Metropolitan/Holt, 1995. 249 pp. $25.00.
The Ethos of Pluralization, by William Connolly. University of Minnesota Press, 1995. 280 pp. $19.95.

Frank Browning writes about contemporary cultural life in Brooklyn and grows apples in Kentucky. His latest book is A Queer Geography: Journeys Toward a Sexual Self.

The time was spring 1969, the place, Paris, a year after "the events of May" when student revolutionaries had seized the streets in renewed calls for liberty, equality, and fraternity. It was my first journey abroad and I was the guest of a generous *revolutionnaire* I'd met at an American conference the previous winter. Jean-Jacques was a ruddy, round-cheeked fellow, one of the most eager, gregarious fellows I'd ever met—and just married to a dark-eyed, moody art history graduate. Jean-Jacques came from new but big money, and he arranged for me to stay in his parents' posh (Belgian tapestries on the wall) apartment.

"Just tell her you are revolutionnaire and she will sleep with you," Jean-Jacques assured me the night before I set off for a quick wander to the South of France where he had a student friend. Dutifully/expectantly I took the piece of paper he'd written with his friend's name and number and shoved it in my pocket. I never called the girl, but I kept the crinkled slip of paper for a long time, for it seemed like an odd sort of Comintern card, a certification that I was not an

American but a certified citizen of the international revolutionary movement.

In 1969, none of us middle-class kids in fancy universities wanted to embrace Americanism. To be an American was to be ashamed: of our lynching of Black people, of our slaughter of the Indians, of our napalming of Vietnamese children, of the alliance of racist Dixiecrats and Northern plutocrats who ran the government. The American Dream of manicured suburban lawns was a Teflon nightmare where Mom popped Valiums, Dad took long lunches to screw the boss's secretary, and Johnny and Susie were surviving it all only through a little help from their acid friends.

I was Swedish, or English, or Irish, or Dutch, or Canadian—a revolutionary who spoke bad college French but better English than the French did. Anyway, the French people I met, young or old, didn't have much interest in where I was from. They, as always, wanted to know what I thought of France.

We student brigadistas, most of us, fell in love with France for all the same romantic reasons people have fallen in love with France for centuries: food and style and breathlessly beautiful settings complemented by sophisticated cosmopolitan table talk that no one in Akron or St. Louis or even Ann Arbor could pull off.

But there was something else too: We were seduced by the notion of being a revolutionary and loving your country. Generation upon generation of French university students had been taught to embrace revolutionary ideas (though not to toss paving stones) before settling into positions of power and administration. That was (and is) part of the promise and the mystique of La France. Remake, renew, redream the nation, *bien sur*, but never forget what it means to be French.

Until Vietnam, Americans of the Left as much as the Right articulated a parallel national faith in the American idea. The Left distinguished itself as a movement of universalistic human ideals that were consonant, even reflective, of the broader American ideals: the freeing of all mankind under the guidance of the people's reason. Jefferson and Madison had written it into the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

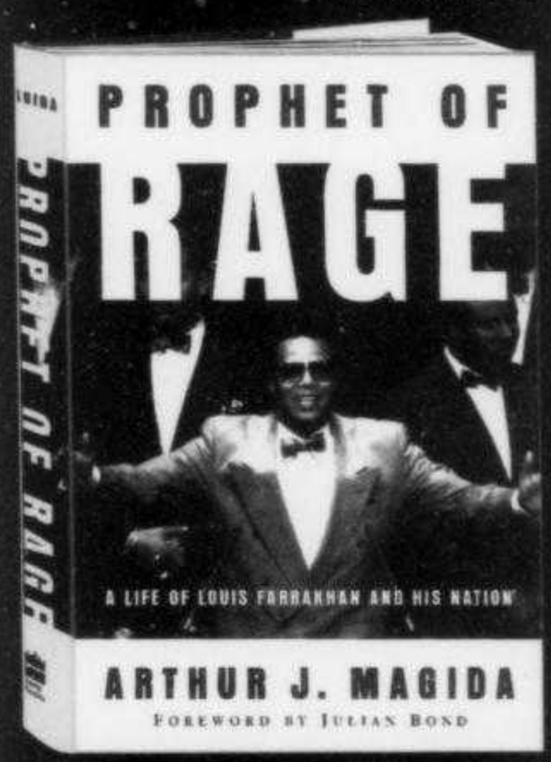
Todd Gitlin's greatest contribution in *The Twilight of Common Dreams* is his history of what happened to the Left's faith in Americanism. Masterfully and elegantly, he traces that history, from its redemptive strains in Emerson—this "asylum of all nations … will construct a new race, a new religion, a new state, a new literature"—to the Popular Front during the Great Depression.

The language of the Left was the language of a common dream—until the arrival of the Sixties and the birth of the New Left. Always before, the passion of the Left had been a dedication to the future in which the outcasts would come inside and the whole of America, remade, reorganized, renewed, would be richer than any of the parts. After Vietnam it all changed, and the integral symbols of America tarnished into totems of shame, disgust, and embarrassment. "The result," Gitlin writes, "was that as the war ground on, any lingering New Left belief in a redemptive American dream to be held in common bled away …. From the early nineteenth century onward, nativists and immigrants alike had each proclaimed that they were the real Americans, as opposed to those Others. Now, for the first time in American history, there were groupings who had no stomach to be included, and wanted out." The New Left no longer wished to be American. We hid our passports and said thank you when we were mistaken for Swedes.

The decline of the American Left and its replacement by a gaggle of self-involved identity movements pitting Blacks against whites, women against men, gays against straights, the faithful against the faithless, Gitlin argues, resulted directly from the New Left's abandonment of its core universalist ideal, the common liberation of all mankind, to be replaced by a shrill, "shapeless melange … of subcultures" where "[i]ntiative, energy, intellectual ingenuity went into the elevation of differences. The very language of commonality came to be perceived by the new movements as a colonialist smothering—an ideology to rationalize white male domination. The time for reunification would come later, so it was said—much later, at some unspecified time." A movement whose ancestor anthem had once been "we shall be all" was replaced by a factory-stamped T-shirt slogan reading, "It's a [Black, Woman's, Gay, Latino, Redneck] Thing. You wouldn't understand."

Gitlin, a university man and one of the early leaders of the New Left, brings a moving sense of anguish to his account. His deepest distress comes from the solipsistic babble spewed out by grad student acolytes of French post-structuralism, where the intertextual interactions of discrete subject positions are interrupted by the elisions and erasures of hegemonic encapsulation: It's a deconstructionist thing—you wouldn't understand. Drawing on the work of Derrida, Lyotard,

How much do you really know about Louis Farrakhan?



He preaches a message of African-American empowerment and self-reliance, offering discipline and hope to those most in need. Yet his inflammatory rhetoric and frequent, unrestrained attacks on whites, Jews, Catholics, and others whom he blames for the ongoing oppression of blacks, continue to outrage mainstream America. He is Minister Louis Farrakhan, leader of the Nation of Islam, and his voice shakes the nation.

Written from a Jewish perspective, *Prophet of Rage* is the first biography to provide an honest and disturbing portrait of one of today's most revered and reviled African-American leaders.

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Deleuze, Irigaray, and especially Michel Foucault, the partisans of group identity politics have erected an epistemological apparatus (marketed as "perspectivist" or "standpoint" theory) that has granted intellectual and political justification to the partitioning of campus life. Black or Orthodox Jewish students insist on living apart in their own compounds, while lesbians storm out of a gay studies class because a male professor could not possibly understand the lesbian-authored texts he has assigned. To Gitlin, a devotee of the Enlightenment, these developments are doubly upsetting because they are the antithesis of a progressive intellectual tradition even as they have seized control of what passes for leftist discourse in the academy. "But what follows from these categories once they are imposed?" he asks. "Identity is no guide to accuracy, to good judgment or political strategy. Race (or gender, or sexual preference, or disability) is far from an adequate, let alone complete, guide to the world, since all identity is a blindness as well as a way of seeing. A map colored strictly by gender (or race, or religion) does not account for the complexity of the world, does not allow anyone to navigate a society that is, by any definition, multiple, replete with perspectives." Indeed, as he later points out, "identities overlap within the scope of a single human life."

It is hard to argue with Gitlin's historical critique and his lament over the state of current discourse. Our vision of ourselves as world revolutionaries was callow and naive; the general denigration of the white working class was strategically idiotic; and the cry for identity solidarity has proven divisive and stultifying. All that said, however, the college student search for new kinds of allegiances did presage another sort of genuinely revolutionary thinking.

We were the first generation to embrace multiple identities and cross-national affiliations outside the maelstrom of migration or the salons of the trust-fund intelligentsia. A mass internationalism that Lenin and Trotsky only fantasized was birthed by jet planes (with youth fares), rock and roll (with tape cassettes), and international fashion marketing (with Levis and Nikes). We could walk the streets of Paris and Amsterdam in shoes and jeans that no longer set us apart, talk Althusser and acid rock, meet and make love (or say we did) with the Viet Cong in Bratislava and believe we were creating a new world where the frontiers of nationalism would be irrelevant.

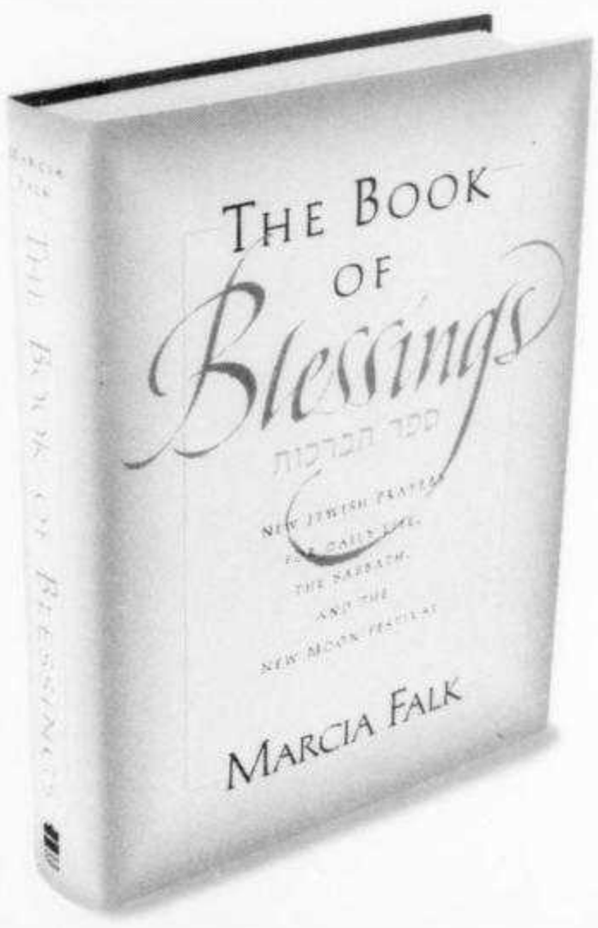
As more thoughtful analysts have pointed out, we were really the advance guard of global capital, training our palates at solidarity conferences to replace pot roast with pot au feu and Pad Thai. At home, we were withdrawing further and further from any real politics of common cause and progressive change. We had babies and kept them out of public schools. We founded "alternative" newspapers where Yuppie marketing and arts reviews quickly disposed of exposés and radical politics. We bought mortgages and stereos and laptops and joined the Internet and withdrew both from the voting booth and the P.T.A. In short, we recapitulated the very class divisions for which we attacked our parents, and then, guilty over all the groups of people who weren't able to gather up the trinkets and privileges we had, we celebrated their victimhood with the jargon of identity politics, neatly absolving ourselves of much responsibility to change their situation. But is that all?

William Connolly, like Gitlin a veteran of the New Left, suggests not. Also like Gitlin, Connolly takes seriously the tendency toward "centrifugal fragmentation" in contemporary life, the tendency to splinter into smaller and smaller groups of mutual distrust and antagonism. And he is deeply committed to the cause of mutual respect and common action. Unlike Gitlin, however, he finds profound value in the emergence of new group identities and allegiances, and he credits the postmodernists with critical insights that could lead us toward a renewed and reinvigorated democratic process.

What the last quarter-century has shown us, Connolly argues, is the extent of injustice within justice, foreclosure within democracy, gagging within free speech. Buried with the Lockean, Enlightenment formulations of rational democratic discourse is an endless profusion of exclusions, exclusions that rely on a prevailing idea of what is normal. One need only regard the U.S. Constitution: African slaves and women were not, for the purposes of democratic discourse, human: Their concerns, vis à vis each other or vis à vis the white men who owned them, resided beneath the language and functions of justice. Their cultural concerns, rendered as private and personal, either were not the business of politics or were relegated to the males who represented and interpreted them.

Connolly makes the point sharper when he revisits Tocqueville on the terrible fate of the Indians, who, while they

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were undeserving of their fate, were incapable of being considered as human equals in the social and philosophical world the founders were building. Why? Because, in the Rousseauvian terms of Enlightenment, they as nomads were not civilized: "The Indians occupied but did not possess the land. It is by agriculture that man wins the soil," Tocqueville wrote. Until he has erected a civilization, he is not civilized; he is beyond the pale. Similarly, an ethos of Christian monotheism provided the cultural glue that enabled Americans to live beside one another and still engage in fierce political debate. Indians, being both "pagan" and often nomadic, challenged the subliminal codes that formed the non-debatable foundation of American life. This is the key to traditional democratic pluralism, Connolly argues: "... politics is free to dance lightly on the surface of life only because everything fundamental is fixed below it."

At this point, Gitlin and Connolly diverge. Gitlin argues that yes, of course, America has a dreadful history, even a dreadful current practice of excluding and abusing the poor, the Black, the brown, the female, the sexually different. We must stop all that, we must expand the plurality of our debates to bring all groups into the tent of our political life. In contrast, Connolly argues that the challenge for contemporary democracy is to establish an ethos whereby we remake ourselves, rebuild our own political house by extending critical engagement with an endless procession of the uninvited, the unrecognized, the yet unformed visitors to our doorstep. In the contemporary world, where each individual contains multiple identities, it is not enough simply to bring the outsiders inside. We cannot hear the emerging polyglot voices unless we acknowledge the denials and repressions and exclusions in our own story.

The challenge—and here Connolly draws deeply on Foucault—is to excavate the genealogy of our underlying moral and social assumptions: How it is that our "secular" founders relied upon an unstated Judeo-Christian consensus, including particular types of family organization and child-rearing practices, which presupposed certain exclusions of sexual practice, which were rooted in the division of labor, the availability of land, and attitudes toward settlement and nomadic wandering? If we are to inhabit the same nation, town, campus, or classroom amicably, even fruitfully, we will need to know more about how our mutual strengths and frailties have made us seem so strange to each other.

Many, perhaps Gitlin among them, will find this "pluralizing ethos" a fancy cover for old-fashioned moral relativism. But that is a misreading of Connolly's propositions. His object is not to establish neutral equivalences: saving fetuses versus saving the rights of pregnant women, or valuing man-boy love equally with procreative heterosexual marriage. The point is to acknowledge that different assemblies of people have negotiated differing moral codes on each of these issues, resulting in highly regulated rules of conduct.

Human beings can only live together peaceably through the formulation of such codes. But if we are not fundamentalists, if we do not arrogate to ourselves the omniscience of God, we would be wise not to dress the codes we embrace in the cloth of normalcy. The denomination of who is moral and who is not, of who should have a voice and who should not, is a human artifact. We can only examine the story of our choices (say, for example, the reasons why some of our ancestors found it normal to make sodomy and interracial coupling capital offenses) and feel chastened as we negotiate with others the kinds of moral codes we wish to live by.

To a greater degree than we might always acknowledge, that is where the revolutionaries of the Sixties were most effective. As much as multinational marketers may have turned the counterculture into a retail bonanza, as much as the universalist ideals of the Left have given way to balkanized identities, the exchange across old boundaries of nation, language, and geography has taught us that no one can any longer live an insular life with an insular code of morals free of political and moral challenge. One-time Pan-Africanists find themselves demonstrating against the butchery of Nigeria's military dictator. Gay Republican men and liberal lesbian activists find that they are antagonists, not allies, on issues of health care and the minimum wage, even though both make common cause for human rights in Beijing and Moscow. Environmentalists in California fight industrial polluters in Sao Paulo, Tokyo, and Boston. In each of these acts, the players drop universalist claims about all mankind for their own group interest, but in doing so something else happens. They relinquish and often dissociate themselves from simple national allegiance and discover the profound cultural differences within their own tribe/movement/group: As homosexual people, they discover that privacy and freedoms do not mean the same thing everywhere; as Black people, they find that personal authority and independence are played out in different ways in different places; as activists they learn that reliance on abstract law versus familial contacts provides a different sense of personal security and opportunity.

Frequently, Connolly admits, he is asked "how much diversity and fragmentation" we can tolerate and still sustain any concept of "the common good." The problem, he answers, is the question itself, its presumption that the diverse others—gays, women, Latinos, Blacks, disabled, the aged—are simply new limbs drawing strength from the trunk of our historic cultural tree. If, instead, we look within ourselves to find points of interdependence, we might discover that "we" (the white Jews and Christians) are not so much drained or distracted by "them" (say, the mystical Puerto Ricans with their Santaria shrines) as we are both inspired to honor the place of spiritual knowledge alongside empirical science, and, further, by recognizing the differences among ourselves, we may be more ready to leave respectful room for the pagan goddess worshipers and atheists as well. In short, we may come to realize that the experience of being alive is greater than the categories and codes by which we live, that the heuristic models of science and the magical metaphors of religion are merely cages for the spirit that flows above, below, and through them.

Given Bosnia and the orthodoxies of the Farrakhanists and the Kahanists and the Falwellian creationists, what reason do we have to look forward to such a democratic ethos? Here is where Gitlin, the tempered one-time activist of practical politics, might temper his screed and draw on Connolly, the theorist. Without institutions—parties, caucuses, movements, papers, interactive Web sites, and government itself—we never move beyond the arid banter of critical studies. But if we dare to look at the faiths and group identities of others as reflective of our own often-unarticulated yearnings, we may at last discover how to construct a political movement that is porous, elastic, and tough in its commitments, a movement built on mutual generosity and forbearance that recovers the best of the Emersonian vision of ourselves as an "asylum of all nations." □

Future Shlock

Daniel B. Gordon

The Road Ahead, by Bill Gates with Nathan Myhrvold and Peter Rinearson. Viking, 1995. 286 pp. with accompanying CD-ROM. $29.95.

Scientists throw the switch that connects all the computers on Earth. They test the new World Computer with a question."Is there a God?" they ask.

The World Computer fuses the switch permanently on with a blast of electricity.

"There is now," it replies.

That's how the joke went when I was a boy.

The Road Ahead, by Bill Gates with Nathan Myhrvold and Peter Rinearson, claims that such a future is no joke. The authors, playing to our native good feeling for tomorrows, ask us to embrace a world where all of the computers will be hooked together, where everyone, not just a few, will own and use computers daily, where the "television-set-with-a-keyboard" that we think of as a computer today will be only one of many kinds, and may well disappear. There is much to dislike about the book, not the least of which is this vision. But *The Road Ahead* demands careful consideration, if only because the future it predicts is apt to be ours.

The fact that Bill Gates is the principal author has caused not a few people to attack the book without even cracking the cover. Unlike his fellow "entreprenerds"—Larry Ellison of Oracle, Andy Grove of Intel, or even Steve Jobs of Apple Computer—Bill Gates has broken out of the business pages into authentic celebrity-plutocrat status. As with Cornelius Vanderbilt, William Randolph Hearst, and Henry Ford in the past, we exorcise a toadying fascination with Gates with periodic bouts of righteous indignation.

But the book itself does not inspire a more generous reading. Its fundamental difficulty—a fatal problem for an entry in the "tomorrow" genre—is that the future it envisions is only a timid extrapolation from the world today. As I slogged through pages of "all-the-libraries-of-Earth-in-your-home" prose, I was reminded of the "Monsanto House of the Future"—a prime attraction at Disneyland in the Fifties. This house featured sliding glass doors, an all-electric kitchen, and other elements that even then were appearing in suburban homes. The future soon overtook Monsanto utterly, and the Imagineers quietly removed it sometime during the Vietnam War.

The House of the Future is a particularly poignant simile in view of the role Bill Gates's own house plays in *The Road Ahead*. An entire chapter—"Plugged in at Home"—is devoted to the thesis that the Gates house provides a model for what the future Good Life will be. And the companion CD-ROM, wedged into the back endpaper of the book, offers an animated tour of the house, repeating the same points. The most futuristic touch is that each person in the house will wear a lapel computer that will interact with the house systems so that a room will reflect its occupant's tastes in music, art, heat, light, and so forth. Almost as an afterthought, Bill Gates considers what happens when two people are in the same room at the same time:

> If you and I are enjoying different things and one of us walks into a room where the other is sitting, the house will follow predetermined rules about what to do. For example, the house might continue the audio and visual imagery for the person who was in the room first, or it might change programming to something it knows we both like.

If you want to think about the future, read Nicholas Negroponte from M.I.T., John Seely Brown from Xerox PARC, or, for that matter, George Gilder. Any of them sketches with bolder strokes than *The Road Ahead* (take a look at Negroponte's *Being Digital*, published by Vintage in January 1996). Gates affects a position serenely above the tohubohu of the marketplace, but here, too, the execution is inept. To be sure, each explicit plug for Microsoft is lunkishly balanced by a reference to some other "great" or "neat" company, but even the general points reek of self-interest. Consider this passage, for example, Gates's discussion of how the Information Highway might improve education:

> Parents may also help their children at school by teaching them how to use the software they use in their work. Some teachers and staff are already using popular business software to administer their activities and to give students experience with the tools of the modern workplace ...

Need we guess which "popular business software" titles Bill Gates has in mind? When I think of what I want my children to learn in school, many things come to mind before learning how to operate Microsoft Office.

I remember the 1964 New York World's Fair, where I went as a boy of thirteen. Everyone wanted to go on the General Motors ride where, in Disney style, phalanx after phalanx of seats moved through a diorama of The Future while a massed chorus sang the theme song of the G.M. Pavilion, "It's a Great Big Beautiful Tomorrow." I wasn't savvy enough then to realize that an entire building with lots of expensive machinery could be just a puff piece, but audiences today are unlikely to be anything but cynical.

Finally, the book abounds with examples where the point of the Information Highway seems to be to make human interaction unnecessary, or at least to minimize it. This is so even when

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Bill Gates is trying to show how it helps:

> Imagine the plight of a restaurant captain if I called to say, "My name is Gates. My wife made us a reservation for some time next month. Would you mind checking to see when it is?" ...[You could tell the computer to find out] "Is anyone around here looking for someone to bicycle with on Sunday afternoons, rain or shine?"... If a filter finds a potential Sunday bicycling companion, for instance, it will automatically check on any other information the person might have published on the network. It will try to answer the question "What's he like?"—which is the first question you'd be likely to ask about a potential new friend.

Why doesn't Bill Gates ask his wife when the reservation is? Why doesn't he ask one of his friends to go bicycling? A future of disembodied encounters with virtual strangers is truly no joke.

Although these problems with the book may tempt one to pick up something else from the bedside table, *The Road Ahead* is as bad as it is because it mimics the company and industry whose horn it is tooting. Broad and deep vision is hard to come by in the high-tech business. Silicon Valley is so mired in the next product cycle, in the next quarter, in the tactical, that we have a joke in the business that "strategic planning" means "six months out."

And why not? The glory of the free market is supposed to be that it accomplishes "development" without "planning": it blunders, inspiringly, toward the future. Each fevered little start-up in Silicon Valley is struggling to make a buck on what its core team thinks is the "next thing." Like young salmon, the vast majority of the start-ups never survive. It's a Darwinian primal soup: necessity acting on stupidity.

Microsoft in particular has never been visionary in any technical sense. Their strategy for success has been pretty much like that of I.B.M. before them: Let the other fellow innovate, then move in quickly to capitalize on a breakthrough. What is daring about Microsoft is its spirited business risk-taking: as Bill Gates never tires of telling us, Microsoft plugged Windows for a decade before it finally took off. But the technical boldness for inventing Windows came, not from Microsoft, nor even from Apple, but from Xerox PARC.

There is something profound about linking together all the computers on earth, and we can see what it is by looking carefully at the explosive growth of the Internet last year (particularly the World Wide Web). Those of us who have been using the Internet for years were taken aback by the sudden spike in Web sites. We had thought that the Internet was dull because the technology was clunky.

In fact, what made the Internet dull was that not enough people were hooked up to it. When the Internet was just bringing together nerds or academics, it was a convenience; when the Internet brings everyone suddenly closer, it's the beginning of a social revolution.

Social revolutions do not come clearly labeled with a "forward" or "backward" direction. The "closeness" brought about by the Internet is an industrial kind of closeness, the same kind of intimacy made available by the telephone or the automobile. What is far apart is quickly brought together. The other kind of closeness, that which comes from continuous relationships, is harmed by these distance-eclipsing technologies.

Bill Gates doesn't understand this distinction: The "road ahead" brings people closer, he thinks, and that's "neat." Rightfully so, I suppose. He is scarcely a married man yet, and hasn't started a family. Younger people—on the lookout for mates and work opportunities—gain more than they lose from exposure to strangers. Think of romantic love, where two strangers are suddenly brought into the most exciting closeness.

But I'm not sure about the rest of us. Strangers brought together have no "ties that bind," no reason not to use one another brutally. The crazed killer and his victim is as much a model of strangers-brought-together as a pair of lovers. People in cyberspace get exaggerated tempers, just like drivers in cars do, and for the same reason: The phony proximity strengthens passions, bad ones as well as good ones, yet the governing, balancing factors, which come from continued actual closeness are missing.

I am particularly concerned about children. I think we should be cautious how and when we expose them to the World Computer. Children are conservative and need our most determined efforts to build a circle of safety and routine—as much as we can manage—which shields their innocence for as long as we can. At best, I question which

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fundamental needs of children are supported by premature exposure to the Internet or World Wide Web; at worst, it's like dropping them into the middle of Penn Station without an adult to look out for them.

The whole notion that the World Computer meets the needs of individuals requires more hashing-over than it receives in *The Road Ahead*. Clifford Stoll discusses many problems with the Internet—from the poverty (and, surprisingly, fragility) of computer-only libraries to the silliness of using "intelligent" software to tell you what music you like—in his book, *Silicon Snake Oil*, but his anecdotes never add up to a coherent worldview. I would be interested to see an intelligent Luddite apply author Jerry Mander's "Ten Recommended Attitudes Toward Technology" from his 1991 book, *In the Absence of the Sacred*, to the "case" of the Internet. Such a critique would open up our polity for the right kind of discussion by requiring the boosters of the Internet to argue explicitly that it will do more good than harm. These analyses as they emerge are as welcome a chaser to *The Road Ahead* as milk is to chocolate-chip cookies. The Information Superhighway needs critics, and not simply critics who want everyone to have equal access.

Bill Gates assures that one can choose not to sign up for the Information Highway if one doesn't like what it has to offer. Perhaps. There are people who don't drive cars, own televisions, or even use a phone. But even if you choose not to let motors and coaxial cables near your home, your life is still affected by them. All over the world, indigenous peoples discover this when they fight to be left alone with what is left of their traditional way of life. Capitalism can no more leave them alone then it can leave any natural resource untouched. They have to be used. Which reminds me of two futurists named Marx and Engels.

Bruce Springsteen used to do an act at the end of his show where he would collapse on stage, apparently overcome by rock and roll, and Clarence Clemons would signal the rest of the band to carry him off. Just as they got their arms under him, Bruce would pop to his feet and run back to the mike, getting in a few more licks before he collapsed again. This would go on four or five times. Like the James Brown routine it borrowed from, it was great.

The Communist Manifesto includes a similar routine. Just when you're tempted to agree that Marxism is irrelevant, you're reminded of something so prescient and so evocative of The Life We Lead Now that you just have to smile. Here's how Marx and Engels might have closed a review of *The Road Ahead*:

> The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society... [U]ninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast frozen relations...are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned...

Watching successful high-tech businesspeople has led me to the conclusion that there's no necessary connection between someone's *success* in high-tech and their *ability to account for* that success. We all need to put our minds to work on understanding the Internet, the Information Superhighway, and the real "road ahead." Bill Gates is to be commended for getting the discussion going, but it needs more variety and depth to move it forward. □

The Other Other

Jeffrey Shandler

Bury Me Standing: The Gypsies and Their Journey, by Isabel Fonseca. Alfred A. Knopf, 1995. 324 pp. $25.00.

My maternal grandmother claimed to have been "stolen"—almost—by Gypsies. In the years before World War I, she and her family lived in a village near the border between Galicia and Ukraine. As I recall her telling it, a group of Gypsies came there and befriended her. When they left, she set out with them (apparently, not unwillingly), but someone from the village—another Jew—stopped the Gypsies and reclaimed her.

When I first heard this story as a child, it seemed like yet one more incident from her remote, adventuresome past. More recently, it occurred to me that, rather than being an actual experience, my grandmother's story seems much more likely to be a cautionary tale that had been told to her—but why, then, would she relate it with such a mirthful expression and afterwards offer to tell my fortune with a deck of cards?

This story and its ambiguities came to mind as I read *Bury Me Standing*, Isabel Fonseca's compelling account of Gypsy life in contemporary Eastern Europe. According to the book's dust jacket, the Roma are "perhaps the least understood people on earth." Indeed, in the Western world, Gypsies are icons of the unknown. Obscure in origin, transient in existence, they are thought of as lacking the rooting, defining attributes of homeland, religion, and history. Yet they are imbued, in popular consciousness, with exotic, sometimes seductive, talents, and privileged insight into the unknown, encoded in cards or the creases of one's palm.

In defiance of generations of warnings against the lure of following the Gypsies, Fonseca spent several years

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visiting Romani communities throughout post-communist Eastern Europe, seeking to dispel the extensive mystery and misunderstanding that surrounds them. Her writing (some of which appeared earlier in the *Nation* and the *New Yorker*) brings together far-ranging explorations—from a richly insightful (and often amusing) ethnography of daily life among one extended family of Gypsies in Tirana, Albania, to chilling accounts of recent anti-Gypsy pogroms in Romania. Along the way, Fonseca provides incisively drawn portraits of individual Gypsies who have straddled the heavily guarded boundaries between Rom and *gadjo* ("outsider") cultures. Some of these are cosmopolitan expatriates (that is, if one can speak of a Gypsy expatriate); others are writers, scholars, or activists working on behalf of the international Gypsy diaspora, which now numbers some twelve million. Fonseca also deftly integrates discourses on the Gypsies' past into her account of their present—the scholarly debates on their origins, their complex and uneven history as itinerant outsiders across the continent of Europe, the Romani language, and the cultural sensibilities it embodies.

Gypsies seem to hold a special attraction for Jews, Europe's other archetypal "Other." Fonseca, herself a Jew, remarks toward the end of *Bury Me Standing* that at first she wondered whether Gypsies were Europe's "new Jews"—living extensively among, yet apart from, the rest of the continent's peoples, both tolerated and reviled, and now are among the first casualties of the New World Order's ethnic upheavals.

Of course, the linking of Gypsy and Jew in the European context is by no means new—think, for example, of how the protagonist of Jerzy Kosinski's *The Painted Bird* wanders through war-torn Poland a perpetual dark outsider, identified by peasants as "a Gypsy or a Jewish stray." A nineteenth-century French source, Collin de Plancy's *Dictionaire Infernal*, even identifies Gypsies as having once been Jews.

Throughout her journey among Eastern Europe's Gypsies, Fonseca explores the similarities between Rom and Jew. She likens the Gypsies' extensive efforts to remain apart from *gadjo* culture to the Talmudic notion of making "a hedge for the Torah"; at the same time, she notes, the internationalist spirit of the Communist Party has held a special attraction for both Jews and Gypsies. Situated in distinctive yet integral roles in Europe's preindustrial economy, both peoples have been appreciated as "middlemen minorities," or, more often, disparaged as "the enemy within." And these images linger; in post-Cold War Bulgaria and Romania, people denounce Gypsies to Fonseca, because they do "Jew work"—that is, they are in business.

Ultimately, however, charting the Gypsies' European journey along a route parallel to that of the Jews has its limits. Fonseca confronts this as her travels lead to the *porraimos* (literally, "the devouring"), the Romani word for the Holocaust. While this would seem to be yet another point of convergence in their respective stories, it demonstrates, in the final analysis, how different these two peoples are. Among the less familiar subjects within this widely studied period of history—one of which many Roma are themselves ignorant—is the extensive persecution of Gypsies by Nazis and their collaborators. Other than Jews, Gypsies were the only civilian population group targeted by the Third Reich for annihilation on racial grounds. Like Jews, Gypsies were the subject of German race science studies and, later, macabre medical experiments at Auschwitz. Entire gypsy communities were deported from their homes and were interned in ghettos and concentration camps (they were sent to Dachau as early as 1936). They were killed en masse by *Einsatzgruppen* on the Eastern front and in the gas chambers of death camps in Poland. An estimated 500,000 Gypsies were murdered during World War II, although lack of comprehensive documentation and scant scholarship make it impossible to arrive at an accurate figure.

Within the vast scholarly literature on the Holocaust, Fonseca notes, there is precious little on the Gypsies' fate. What makes this particularly disturbing is that the case of the Gypsies poses perhaps the greatest challenge to claims that the Nazi persecution of European Jewry was sui generis. Thus, Lucy Dawidowicz distinguishes the fate of Gypsies from that of Jews during the Holocaust by claiming that the former were "overlooked" by Hitler's racial policies. While the Nazi demonization of Gypsies never became anywhere as extensive as its virulent anti-Semitic propaganda, this was doubtless the case because Gypsies, unlike Jews, were never thought of as the poisoners of public culture. But can this legitimate Dawidowicz's claim (shared by many others) that Jewish victims of Nazism "stand apart" from Gypsies and the "other millions" of civilians murdered?

The Roma still struggle with the consequences of being overlooked, now in the arena of Holocaust memory culture. Edward Linenthal notes in *Preserving Memory*, his recent book on the making of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., that its planning council ignored the Gypsies' story until approached by representatives of the Roma community in the mid-1980s. One council member is quoted as admitting in 1984 that the museum should offer "some recognition or acknowledgment of the Gypsy people … if there is such a thing."

Bury Me Standing suggests that what ultimately distinguishes the *Sho'ah* from the *porraimos* is not what happened to Jews and Gypsies under Nazism, or even how each was drawn into the Holocaust, but rather how these two cultures have responded after the fact. There is a tendency to see Jewish responses to the Holocaust as not merely central, but as having an inevitable primacy—some, such as the literary critic Edward Alexander, go so far as to label the Holocaust the Jews' "moral capital"—and then, once again, there is the challenge posed by the Gypsies.

Whatever parallels one may trace in these two groups—especially their respective histories of persecution, before as well as during the Holocaust—the Gypsy and Jewish approaches to memory seem to veer in opposite directions. So much of Jewish culture is centered around a sense of connection with a past reaching back over four millennia and rooted in an accumulation of rites and texts. The Gypsy sense of the past, however, befitting a predominantly oral, itinerant culture, spans only a few generations (going back, Fonseca observes, as far as the oldest living member of the community can recall) and is, therefore, constantly slipping away. Moreover, Jews have become increasingly invested in seeing their past—especially the Holocaust—presented on a grand scale before the general publics among whom they live. Gypsy memory, in contrast, like much else of their culture, remains

within the confines of the community; for most Roma, monuments, museums, movies, and miniseries about their history have little relevance. Indeed, Fonseca notes, the act of *forgetting* the Holocaust (not out of negligence, but rather, as a form of defiance) is the more meaningful response for many Gypsies.

Fonseca's work is of value for penetrating the misconceptions of Gypsies both as actual people and as symbols. Similarly, the comparison of Rom and Jew not only illuminates the parallels and divergences of their histories, but also offers insight into how differently these two peoples have chosen to represent themselves to their neighbors in the modern age. Where so many Jews have embraced the modern, secular, intellectual tradition of Western civilization, social and political integration, and high visibility in the public sphere, most Gypsies have kept their distance and stayed, if often only symbolically, on the road. Indeed, the "Gypsy" and the "Jew" might be seen as embodying polar responses to being "Other," each representing the other's road not taken. Neither approach, of course, is failsafe, whether in making sense of past oppressions or in drawing on the past to confront the challenges of the future. Besides the value of considering the implications of these two different journeys through the landscapes of memory and identity politics, we do well to bear in mind how much these travels are shaped by the unforeseen. They depend, perhaps more than a little, on the luck of the cards. □

From Incest to Ivan the Terrible

(Continued from p. 30)

opportunism on the part of the Israeli government. By the late 1970s, there was an urgency attached to preserving the memories of Holocaust survivors, who were mostly aged or already dead. Particularly pressing was the need to validate the tragedy of Treblinka, where a million Jews perished, and only fifty or sixty came out alive.

Yet other factors were driving the trial, opening the way for the manipulation and defensive political use of survivors' stories. On one front, the effort to memorialize and revivify memory of the Holocaust helped mobilize Jewish unity in the face of PLO military buildup and increased world support for the Palestinian cause during the late 1970s and early '80s. As a defense for its intensified aggression against the PLO, the Israeli government used the Demjanjuk case to bolster its historical claim to collective trauma.

On another front, momentum for the trial may have been spurred by anxiety over the increasing visibility of Holocaust deniers. In late 1979, an obscure neo-Nazi group, the Institute for Historical Review (IHR), held a publicity-grabbing convention in Los Angeles and offered $50,000 to anyone who "could prove that the Nazis operated gas chambers to exterminate Jews." The IHR sent letters to survivors inciting them to submit evidence before a tribunal of "experts." One target was Mel Mermelstein, an Auschwitz survivor whose family had been gassed there. He submitted "proofs," then sued the IHR and won in 1985 when a Los Angeles Superior Court ordered the organization to pay Mermelstein $90,000. This pseudo-controversy captured media interest in the early 1980s, and in response to increasing uneasiness about a possible resurgence of anti-Semitism, survivors' eyewitness accounts seemed the most persuasive defenses.

Elizabeth Loftus is Jewish, and although not religious, she could hardly have remained isolated from the forces driving Demjanjuk's prosecution. Almost immediately after she was asked to work for the defense, she began experiencing a tortured sense of dissonance between her identity as a scientist, versus a reemerging consciousness of her Jewishness. "On the outside," she writes, "assessing the facts," was Elizabeth Loftus the University of Washington memory researcher; it made complete sense for this scientist to take the case. But, she adds, "something cracked my cool, professional exterior."

That something was "Beth Fishman," Loftus's childhood name, and the embodiment of her forgotten Jewishness. Once retrieved, this earlier identity became the other pole of Loftus's ambivalence—an ambivalence that was strikingly absent (repressed?) in her self-portrayals as a dispassionate expert witness in other controversial trials. It was Beth Fishman, Loftus writes, who emerged as though

> "from one of those Russian folk dolls that pull apart to reveal a slightly smaller version of the same figure .... Beth Fishman was the five-year-old Jewish girl who cried bitterly when the boy next door made fun of her last name. Beth Fishman was the adolescent who, fearing that her boyfriend broke up with her because she was Jewish, instructed her best friend to take him a message: 'Tell him I'm only half Jewish'.... Which of my parents did I deny then? Which half of me did I throw away so casually and for such a cheap price?"

In a dramatic identity reversal, "Beth Fishman couldn't stop" with the files, which showed without a doubt that Dr. Elizabeth Loftus ought to be reflexively lending her expertise to Demjanjuk's defense. Beth Fishman pushed on, or rather, pushed backwards, as she was flooded with intrusive thoughts of her heritage and haunted by guilt over ignoring the trauma and suffering of that legacy. Elizabeth Loftus, debunker of repression and recovered mem-

ory, was carried away by her own unbidden reminiscences. In passionate language that echoes the sex-abuse therapists she routinely critiques, Loftus describes the tortured recovery of her own "repressed" past:

> Memories of my childhood came back to me, the stories told by my grandfather of the early twentieth-century pogroms in Russia and the stories told by my mother and father about the Holocaust … lively ghosts filled with energy and emotion and minds of their own.

As she agonized over whether to take the case, Loftus was also tormented by the present: by loyalties to her Jewish relatives and friends, and by fears that helping Demjanjuk would betray them and the entire Jewish people. A conversation with her beloved Uncle Joe proved decisive, for he acknowledged that his insistence that she not testify was complicated by his own guilt over complicity in the Holocaust: "I, like millions of other Jews, did not do much." Loftus describes the Demjanjuk prosecution as "a chance to bring the memories alive again .... Soon there will be no one alive to remember."

As she well intuited, personal ties and fears of ostracism can create both strong solidarity and repressive silence. In Loftus's case, both combined with guilt and the desire to makes things right at any cost. Eventually, these politics would override science, as Loftus decided to listen "to my heart" instead of "my head"—and refuse the case.

But Loftus's heartfelt reaction obscured other politics in this modern show-trial. In the annals of history, guilt over failure to respond to past suffering often has a tricky way of infusing demands for rectification. Loftus's fear of once again betraying her Jewishness led her to rationalize her refusal to testify. Her fear also transformed her into a convert to the concept of "decades-delayed" memory—even though insight about this transformation remained "dissociated" from her consciousness and unintegrated into her science.

Like women in therapy, Loftus was revisited by the ghosts of the past, and all her eyewitness research momentarily fell away before the magnitude of what she saw. Yet in choosing to withhold her expertise from the case, Loftus failed to recognize the profound way in which Demjanjuk's highly charged trial refashioned not merely her history, but that of Jews as a whole. In the emotional heat of the accusations, what she and everyone else overlooked was an insight that her own research could have led her to.

Totally ignored was the fact that, in the urgency to condemn John Demjanjuk and thereby rekindle memory of the Holocaust, another memory was degraded. That memory—of which there are so tragically few—was of armed Jewish resistance to fascism. Indeed, while testifying for war crimes and historical commissions a full three decades before the Demjanjuk investigation, several survivors had described a 1943 Jewish rebellion in Treblinka. In what would go down in history as a major Jewish uprising of the Holocaust (second in magnitude only to the Warsaw Ghetto revolt), 200 sick and starving prisoners, men and women, managed to burn the camp and kill dozens of their tormentors, including several German Nazis. In 1947, four years after the Treblinka rebellion, survivor Elijahu Rosenberg recounted how prisoners "ran into the barracks where Ukrainian guards were sleeping" and bludgeoned them to death with shovels. Among the dead, Rosenberg said, was Ivan the Terrible. Other survivors had agreed: The Monster of Treblinka had died in 1943 at Jewish hands.

For years, the survivors' epic account was definitive. But after Demjanjuk was convicted, investigators working on his appeal produced old Soviet war crimes trial records in which former Treblinka guards testified that Ivan the Terrible was seen in a brothel after the war. With that, a precious piece of Jewish narrative was challenged. The import of Treblinka rebellion history, and the tragedy of revising it, is illustrated by the irony that survivors only began telling each other "Ivan is still alive!" at their 1976 reunion—a reunion whose very purpose was to honor a story that heretofore had included his death.

In refusing to testify for Demjanjuk, Elizabeth Loftus missed the chance to defend another part of her heritage: a communal memory that, whether true or not in every detail, updated the legendary Jewish heroism of Masada, the Maccabees, and the Book of Esther. She also ignored Judaism's ancient, Sanhedric commitment to providing defendants in capital cases every benefit of the doubt. (This commitment was honored in 1993: The Israeli Supreme Court acquitted Demjanjuk then, after Russia produced testimony and records suggesting not only that Ivan the Terrible was alive after the war, but that he was another Ukrainian named Marchenko. Demjanjuk has since returned to the United States, where efforts to deport him have been unsuccessful. There is now compelling documentary evidence that he did guard duty at the Flossenburg, Regensburg, and Majdanek death camps as well as at Sobibor. Yet several federal and Supreme Court hearings have refused to deport him, amid consensus that the Treblinka charges were the most bungled case ever brought by the Justice Department's Nazi-hunting unit. Demjanjuk still lives in Ohio.)

In recounting this bit of history, we have suggested that Elizabeth Loftus's own science might have led her to the discovery that John Demjanjuk's prosecution was about the reworking of memories—not just of a few Treblinka survivors, but of a whole people. Yet could science really lead to such an insight? Much psychological research focuses on the fidelity of memory to an original event; Loftus's experiments demonstrate the fragility of this correspondence, and how vulnerable it can be to social influence. But her work lacks a social psychology, or a framework for understanding the politics of remembering.

It is certainly true that social pressures can make people forget events. But memories are also *sustained*, even resurrected, by social groups, and Loftus overlooks the role of collective struggle in creating a more authentic history. In her own life, she experienced a moment when she realized this. But in the end, her revelatory encounter with the past never merged with her scientific thinking.

When history is written, the powerful tend to prevail; amidst both psychological and political repression, the weak must then recover their collective memory. Such salvage efforts are subject to intervention by both foes and friends, and the latter's intercessions are not always benign. In John Demjanjuk's show-trial, the Israeli government used survivors' accounts to advance its own interests. But these and other problematic politics were ignored, as the public fixated on Holocaust horror stories.

Likewise, a decade later in this country, the bitter war over recovered child- abuse memories has obscured deeper dilemmas about how a group—in this case women—rescues and revises its past. Once again, legal proceedings and psychological experiments are venues for the struggle, and separating true incest stories from false is essential to both. Yet courtrooms and laboratories collapse the psychosocial space between an event and a memory; they leave us precious little room to consider the range of meanings and interpretations that evolve in our individual memories and in our cultural legends.

These ranges are the stuff of history, and one of history's lessons is that righteous calls for retribution are easily distorted, particularly when fueled by a sense of urgency. Bringing the guilty to justice is vital to redressing historical wrongs. But when moral outrage is embedded in law-and-order demands to expand policing and punishment, it can easily be manipulated for repressive ends.

We saw this in the Demjanjuk trial, where Israeli police violated forensic guidelines, and where the government pressed ahead anyway with a trial that promised to bolster militarism against Palestinians. We have also seen it in the United States, as recovered sex-abuse memories have entered the courts. They have bankrupted defendants and sometimes even imprisoned them on evidence that is far too ephemeral to meet the test of fact.

Such cases have also foreclosed a broader discussion about what recovered abuse memories mean for women—even when their recollections aren't literally true. A generation after the crest of second-wave feminism, a painful gap persists between the heady promise of gender equality and the bleak reality of women's daily experience. Working wives and mothers still pull double duty when it comes to housework and child care. The home and the bedroom continue as private spheres of boorishness, even violence, by men toward their children and partners. More and more, the culture is commodified sexually; yet as always, women suffer from a denial of erotic pleasure. These disjunctions are so commonplace and uninteresting that they are hardly considered worthy of civic concern. Pushed from consciousness, they fester. When they emerge, it's not surprising that some complaints take on the symbolic and dramatic language of daughters molested long ago by their fathers: After all, it is far easier to fight old patriarchs than current ones.

Breaking silence about suffering can be tremendously healing, for individuals and for entire peoples. But as Elizabeth Loftus's dilemma shows, it is not enough simply to "bear witness" to forgotten trauma or "validate" survivors' memories. We need also to acknowledge the intricate ways in which individuals and peoples use remembrance, both restoratively and defensively. Collective memory can be an overwhelmingly powerful source of group identity and solidarity. That is why it can be blinding. Yet treated in all its complexity, it can also illuminate history—and sustain the will to preserve it. □

Looking for the Foundation for Ethics and Meaning?

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Join Our Tenth Anniversary Celebration!

We will be celebrating our tenth anniversary this Jewish year, 5757 (starting September 13, 1996). The best thing you can do to mark our anniversary is to embody the vision of TIKKUN in your own life. At the very least, perform ten acts of generosity and goodness. Startle people with your loving affirmation of their beings, or with the thoughtfulness of your caring acts. Let your life be a testimony to the impact we've been having in insisting that the world could be based on love and caring, so that the politics of meaning becomes an immediate reality in your life. If every one of the tens of thousands of people who read this issue of TIKKUN make this commitment for our tenth anniversary year, imagine how much goodness will be flowing.

That is our highest wish. But we'd also like you to do some acts to help ensure TIKKUN's future. We hope to have a national celebratory fund-raising dinner in New York in February or March. We'll let you know the date in the November/December issue. But, if you don't think you can attend, why not create an event of your own between January and May of 1997 to help us celebrate? For example:

a. Organize a TIKKUN Anniversary Fund-raising Dinner in your community, or a fund-raising party at your home. You could base the party on a theme (support for the Israeli peace process, support for a politics of meaning, support for a progressive Jewish renewal voice in the American Jewish community.

b. Create a public event to celebrate TIKKUN—e.g., a public poetry/fiction reading (we bet you could find lots of local talent in your community who'd be happy to participate). Or hold a public program on some issues you've read about in TIKKUN. Donate the admissions fees to TIKKUN and distribute TIKKUN subscription forms. (available from the TIKKUN office.

c. Go to every church and synagogue in your community and ask them if they would make a contribution to TIKKUN in honor of our tenth anniversary. Go to businesses in your community and ask them if they would buy an ad for our anniversary dinner booklet (full page: $1,000, half page $600, 1/4 page $400, 3-line listing $100)

d. Organize a public demonstration or social change event in honor of TIKKUN.

e. Organize a TIKKUN bus trip to the presidential inauguration, January 20. Get participants to make an additional donation to TIKKUN as part of the fare for the trip.

f. Help spread the word that many people are beginning to leave bequests to TIKKUN in their will. Others are donating money to TIKKUN in honor of a departed relative or friend.

g. Organize a protest in the Jewish community insisting that the community make an institutional commitment to fund TIKKUN. We lose $200,000 a year—a huge amount for us, but chicken feed compared to what the Jewish community spends annually. We are one of their best outreach vehicles, yet they are so upset at our continued maverick role (particularly our opposition to continued Israeli occupation of the West Bank) that they won't give us a dime. Get people in your community to insist that the Federation and/or UJA make a regular yearly allocation to support TIKKUN.

h. Short on time? Perhaps you could make a tax-deductible contribution to TIKKUN twice this year, once now in honor of the New Year, and once in late December in honor of our tenth anniversary?

I. Buy ten gift subscriptions to TIKKUN and give them to people you wish were reading it: your local mayor, city council person, congressperson, a national columnist, journalist, the CEO of a major company, people in the religious or cultural world who might benefit from our perspective. Think expansively—and give!

If you want to work on the anniversary dinner (outreach, planning, logistics, program, etc.) or want to help in thinking through how to organize any of the above projects, contact Beth Levy at TIKKUN, 251 W. 100, NY, NY 10025, 212-864-4110.

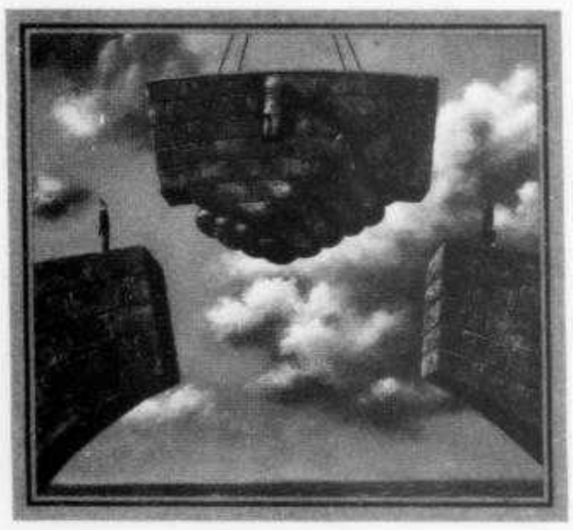
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תיקון

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