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

TIKKUN

NAOMI WOLF - MY SPIRITUAL PATH

ISAAC BASHEVIS SINGER - FICTION

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1998 $6.00

HENRY DREHER ON

THE POLITICS OF CANCER

MIDDLE CLASS INSECURITY
Charles Derber
Thad Williamson

PAUL WELLSTONE
Interview by Jack Newfield



TESTING KIDS
Svi Shapiro
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RACE MATTERS
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PURIM SECRETS
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JEWS & BUDDHISM
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T'Shuvah

All the pleas of generations
Did they reach You, did You hear?
Life oblations, fervent love deeds
Did these not tell You of our love?

God! In Your silent mighty secret
You Respond with riddles to our call.
Are You not the One who harbors bandits?
Why don't You bring on hatred's fall.

Yet, at times, a tear drops gently:
" 'Tis Your own sorrow for a world"
I feel how saddened, bashful
You are God, for Self and us.

Still our pain demands Your mercy
Not Your tears send but Your help.
May each man's hope be Your directive,
Every shudder sound alarm.

Let us all, men, dogs and God
Atone together and return
Or penance do for one another.
Forgive us, God for the sins we sinned
And we shall shrive You of Your own.

Why can't God say, "I am sorry?"

Every night the Sh'chinah grieves Her shiv'ah
At the lonely gates of Heaven.

—Abraham Joshua Heschel
freely translated by
Rabbi Zalman M. Schachter-Shalomi

EDITORIAL NOTE: *This poem, and others by Abraham Joshua Heschel in this issue, were originally published in Yiddish in 1933 Warsaw. They are printed here as part of the* TIKKUN *symposium commemorating Heschel's 25th yahrzeit.*

TIKKUN

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Letters to the Editor

Jewish Social Responsibility

To the Editor:

I was disturbed by the discussion about "Jewish Social Responsibility" in TIKKUN (Sept./Oct. 1997).

While I believe that as Jews we should recognize, expose and attempt to stop injustice, I am concerned about a pervasive assumption that there is one national Jewish "community" that shares a "covenant" explicit enough to enforce a "moral" agenda on "our" people. How do we define the boundaries of that community? Is it only those officially linked to synagogues? If you stop being observant or convert to another religion but still contribute money to Jewish organizations, are you released from the covenant? How is the moral agenda decided? What if a national Jewish organization decides that men and women can no longer worship together and rabbis who violate this moral principle should be shamed? What if caretakers of the faith decide to pray in front of the homes of lesbian and gay Jews for them to return to the heterosexual codes established in the Torah? Who is to decide that the boundaries for public chastisement of errant Jews should be limited only to concerns of economic justice, environmental protection and public health?

Jewish organizations and synagogues should be able to take positions on political and social issues and to create strategies for social change. But I believe that we do not have the political or moral

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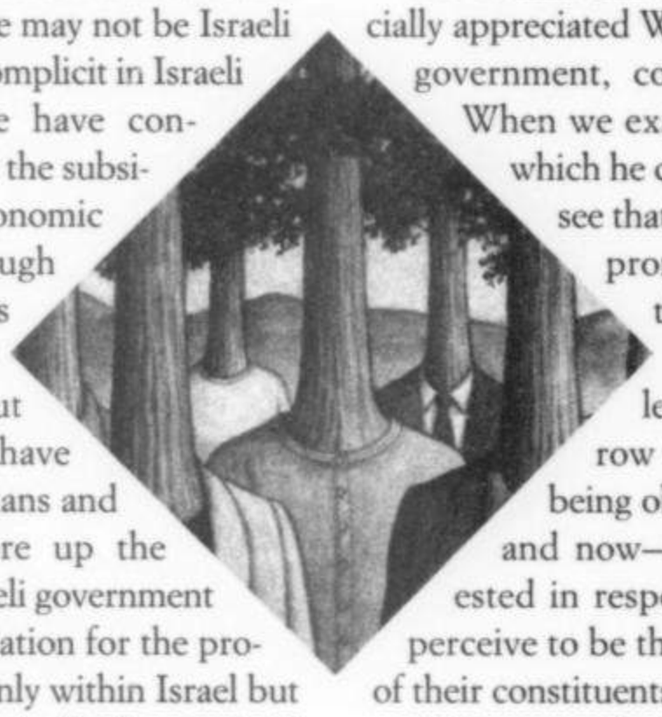
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authority to tell other Jews outside of these groups how they must interpret their God-given obligations to society. I would resist being a part of a group that asserts that there is only one correct understanding of Jewish ethics as applied in contemporary society. I think that this kind of thinking has contributed to the legitimation of the Orthodox rabbis in Israel as the ultimate judges of Jewish obligations.

While I support Jewish groups taking positions against the promotion of tobacco use and environment degradation and would even support illegal tactics in some cases, I do not believe that we are doing these actions to make Jewish entrepreneurs better Jews. I do not think we can define the meaning of their Jewish collective identity unless we are explicitly participating in the same collective vision that has been established by an agreed upon leadership.

The problem becomes more complex as we try to influence the policies of the Israeli government and criticize racist and violent acts by Israeli officials and civilians. Although we may not be Israeli citizens, we may be complicit in Israeli policies because we have contributed materially to the subsidization of Israeli economic development through taxes or contributions to Jewish organizations. Even without our permission, we have been used by politicians and fund-raisers to shore up the legitimacy of the Israeli government as an essential foundation for the protection of Jews not only within Israel but in the diaspora. Ironically, for most of American Jews, this has meant providing legitimacy for a government that does not recognize the religious and moral authority of our denominations, rabbis, and congregations. In this context, Jews who believe that our religious, moral, and political positions are being misrepresented must develop alternative collective "Jewish" public claims that challenge those misrepresentations. We must confirm that there are a plurality of Jewish interpretations of our Jewish commitments to the State of Israel.



I believe that we can draw on our moral and religious convictions to name and protest oppression, but we should not claim the moral authority to publicly mark the individuals who are the good and bad Jews.

BETH HARRIS
Seattle, WA

To the Editor:

When I studied Arthur Waskow's essay about "Redwoods, Tobacco and Torah," I was reminded that our tradition teaches us that the wonders of nature are not gifts for us to exploit and/or squander. All that we encounter has not been given to us; rather, it has been lent to us.

Everything which flies in the sky, is found in the seas, and grows in the ground is to be used by all of us very prudently, so there will be an abundance of everything which has been created by God for us to pass down—as our lasting legacy—to those generations who will succeed us.

It's within this context that I especially appreciated Waskow's challenge to government, corporations and us. When we examine the situations which he cites in this article, we see that his sharp criticism is prompted by the fact that all too often legislators and corporate leaders maintain a narrow view rooted in their being obsessed with the here and now—they are only interested in responding to what they perceive to be the momentary desires of their constituents and consumers.

However, Judaism and Arthur demand that we broaden our vision, so that constantly before us are the possible consequences of any actions we may undertake. They must always be considered before we make decisions which affect what we do.

This is what prompted the "Redwood Rabbis" to formulate their policy statement and demonstration of protest to which Waskow alludes. They and Arthur urge us to be involved in activities which help to "heal the earth."

I believe that because the Jewish com-



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munity has a mandate to preserve the environment, we must protest and resist any efforts which would harm and/or destroy nature's "sacred places" and any endangered species. If a member of the Jewish community fails to protect the environment, we need to remind that person of his/her ethical responsibilities.

Since our communal Jewish ethics must be unconditionally upheld, and because the authority of rabbinical courts does not touch most of us, then we should be prepared—if all else fails—to argue our case before the "court of public opinion," vis à vis the media wherein we may appropriately accuse, effectively provide evidence and ultimately punish wrongdoers who blatantly violate the environment.

There is no sector in private or public life which ought not function as a "repository of social responsibility." And, neither are any of us—as individuals—free to shirk those responsibilities ourselves. (I read somewhere recently that the only reason that we find 613 commandments in Torah is that the Israelites proved to be so irresponsible…when we assume and maintain a disciplined, responsible way of life, then there is no need for heaps of laws to be imposed upon us.)

Our Jewish community and "other communities of Spirit and Faith" do have the ability—and they should always display a willingness—to abide by lessons taught in "books of wisdom." And, Arthur's insights help to keep us focused on what our obligations are!

RABBI ALLEN I. FREEHLING
University Synagogue, Los Angeles, CA

Parkinson's

To the Editor:

You are usually sensitive and well-informed on human issues of illness and misfortune. However, in Jyl Lynn Felman's story (purportedly non-fiction) in your Sept./Oct. issue, you perpetuate a stereotype of Parkinson's Disease that is no longer true for most Parkinson patients. When L-Dopa was the only available treatment, the disease was controllable for only a few years, and then the medication only made the condition worse. Perhaps Felman's experience with her mother dated from that time.

More recently, new medications and surgeries have helped Parkinson patients function well in their lives and occupations for many more years than ever. Witness Janet Reno, Pope John Paul,



Muhammed Ali, and Billy Graham. Although the illness so far is incurable and progressive, the picture of a woman deprived of all speech, motion, and dignity is not the way it is for most persons with Parkinson's and does a demoralizing disservice to Parkinson patients and their caregivers.

From Felman's story, the reader would not know that Parkinson's does not usually affect mental function. Her mother is shown as a speechless, passive invalid who seems unaware and pathetic. All of the millions of courageous and persevering Parkinsonians deserve a more accurate depiction of how this disease affects their lives.

SHIRLEY BLUMBERG
Mammoth Lakes, CA

Multiculturalism

To the Editor:

Loolwa Khazzoom's article on Jewish Multiculturalism rang true to my own heart. My story may be reflective of those of other American Jews.

As a "Red Diaper Baby" in a secular but culturally Jewish home, the emphasis was more on being a part of humanity than on being a Jew. Most of my parent's friends' children, as myself, did not marry Jewish partners. Both of my children are biracial. I gave no Jewish identity to my older son. When my younger son was born, I realized he would always be a person-of-color and a Latino by virtue of his complexion and how he'd be viewed by others in our racially-centered culture, as well as the bilingual home in which he was being raised. I realized that it would take some concerted effort from me to impart a sense of Jewish identity to him; an effort that, if not taken, would be the last link within my family progeny to the ancient chain linking us to our people. I had lost this sense of identity and I wanted to offer its richness to my son.



Fast forward to a five-year-old and a search for the right school. I looked for the better part of a year, from elite private schools with far too few students of color, unacceptable in a city as richly cultured as New York, to more left-wing schools, throwbacks to the 1960s, where no Jewish education would be offered, to neighborhood schools, some more diverse than others.

I looked at Orthodox yeshivas. Some had what in politically correct lingo would be referred to as students "of color"; my son looked just like the majority of the other children. How wonderful, I thought, to have my son in an environment with Jews representing the vast diaspora of our people, where being a Jew and a person of color were not diametrically opposed attributes. However, one school's principal was actually discouraging to our application process because my husband was not Jewish, even though my rabbi said our son was halachically as Jewish as his own children and we had agreed to raise our son as a Jew. He said the overwhelming feeling of the parent-body of the school would not support our son's admission to the school. Ironically, the less religious Jewish Day School, politically progressive and accepting of different Jews' various modes of observance and attempts to reclaim Judaism as a spiritual path, was "whiter" in its student body. So, I pondered a difficult choice: a school where my son would fit in as a person of color and a Jew, but where the politics were conservative and, perhaps, the families would not identify as people of color or accept our unorthodox lifestyle, or a school more tolerant and less diverse.

I agree then, with Ms. Khazzoom that we must have a greater forum in which to embrace our diversity but we need a greater sense of tolerance too.

MARCY PERLMAN TARDIO
Brooklyn, NY

Jewish Literary Revival

To the Editor:

I enjoyed the symposium on the Jewish Literary Revival in your November/December issue, particularly the piece by Melvin Bukiet. I couldn't help but notice, however, that many of the contributors seemed to be engaged in what may be a peculiarly Jewish preoccupation, namely complaining about having nothing to complain about. Where will we get our material, they seem to be saying, now that we're no longer victims of the Czar, the Nazis, the sweatshops? This brings to mind the story of the old lady in the nursing home who keeps moaning, "Oy, am I thirsty. Oy, am I thirsty," until an attendant finally brings her a glass of water. She drinks the water. A few minutes pass. Then, she starts moaning, "Oy, was I thirsty. Oy, was I thirsty."

I suggest that we keep in mind that loss is the human condition. At least we've still got Love and Death to work with. Not to worry.

SUSIE KAUFMAN
Great Barrington, MA

Blacks and Jews

To the Editor:

Michael Lerner's misreading of our film *Blacks and Jews* is unfortunate because TIKKUN readers might be led astray. Far from being "cynical" as Lerner claims, our film presents five stories of rage, courage and hope from multiple points of view, allowing viewers to actively participate in constructing an analysis of how Black-Jewish relations break down...and how they can be built back up again. Critics of diverse backgrounds—from the *New Yorker* to the *Amsterdam News*, from Henry Louis Gates, Jr. to Roger Ebert—have hailed the film as one which will help shatter stereotypes and heal a damaged relationship.

During the Crown Heights riots, we show a Caribbean born journalist saving the life of a Chasid; in west Chicago we show a rabbi taking on real estate speculators and racism in his own community; we hear a former member of the Nation of Islam describe the need for Black nationalism while critiquing the anti-Semitism of Minister Farrakhan; and in Oakland we hear the teens themselves describe the political manipulations and media circus that followed their well-publicized expulsion from a screening of *Schindler's List*.

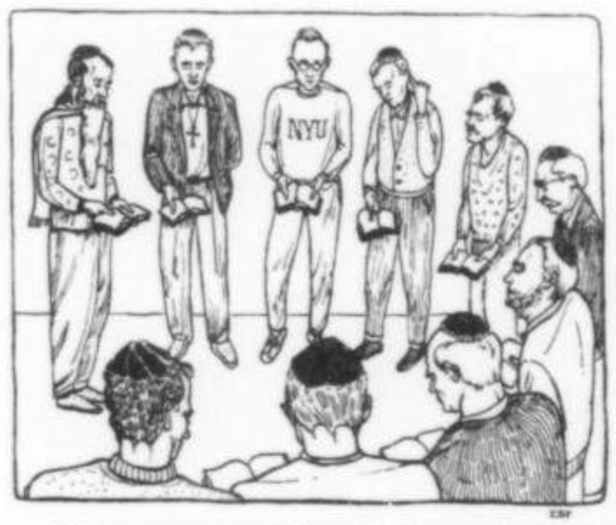
Lerner incorrectly attacks us for "hostility toward spirituality and religion." In the current battle over Jewish pluralism, here is Lerner questioning our spiritual credentials!

DEBORAH KAUFMAN
AND ALAN SNITOW
Directors, Blacks and Jews

Minyan

To the Editor:

I loved the story "Minyan" by Eliezer Sobel, printed in the August '97 issue of TIKKUN. Those ten guys described by Sobel are at one time obscene caricatures



and the truest profiles of what it feels like to be or have once been Jewish. As the last generation of children imprinted by parents who lived at the time of the Holocaust, we struggle in our relationship to Judaism; and whether we embrace it, rebel against it, or manipulate it to serve us, Jews cannot shed their Jewishness. Most of the women in my Jewish studies group thought it was hilarious—Seinfeld unleashed. Those who it made feel a little sad may have understood Sobel's deeper intention.

JANA WOLFF
Honolulu, Hawaii

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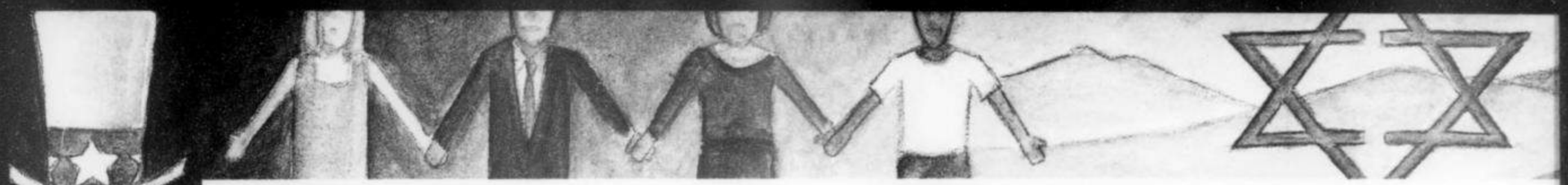
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EDITORIAL

America 1998: Powerlessness Corrupts

Michael Lerner

America's ruling elite and its large upper middle class have become convinced that they "cannot afford" to take care of the social problems in this society. Education, health care, child care, serious restrictions on ozone-destroying emissions, poverty, world hunger—whatever the problem, they have the same pat answer.

Yet we live at a moment when America has never been more powerful or richer.

It's tempting to explain all this in terms of the materialism and selfishness that are a concomitant of market society social relations. Certainly it's true that many corporate executives have been making out like bandits, with yearly salaries high enough to feed and provide housing for a city full of the hungry and homeless. Certainly it's true that moral callousness has taken over the public debate in *both* major parties, so that anyone who talks about compassion, caring, love, or responsibility for those less advantaged is dismissed as naive or stuck in a Sixties time warp.

Certainly, President Clinton has contributed dramatically to this problem by moving public discourse away from any vision of mutual caring and toward a new world order in which people will have no job security and will have to continually learn new skills to adopt to ever-changing market demands (regardless of how destructive those demands are in terms of building communities of caring, loving families, ecological sanity, or ethical sensibilities). The articles by Svi Shapiro, Charles Derber, and Thad Williamson in this issue of TIKKUN document the destructive impact of such policies.

But why are so many middle income Americans willing to buy into this world when they will almost certainly be the obvious losers?

The short answer is: Powerlessness Corrupts. When people come to believe that they can't change their world in any fundamental way, they resort to hoping that they as individuals will be the winners even if everyone else around them loses. So you get millions of low and middle income people voting for candidates who oppose tax raises on the rich, because in their fantasy life they imagine that they might someday be among the rich even though there is little reason to believe that is true. Rather than ask themselves how they could build a better society so that everyone who has the desire to contribute could find economic security, parents imagine that if they can get their own child into the right college (and in some parts of Yuppiedom, getting into the right college must start by getting their toddlers into the right pre-school), their kids, at least, will get the credentials they need to make it when everyone else is failing.

My teacher Abraham Joshua Heschel used to say that America was increasingly a society whose motto might be, "Suspect Your Neighbor as Yourself." The inevitable consequence of the frenetic struggle of all-against-all is a societal-wide depression. No wonder that no amount of repression can stop the escalating use of drugs. No wonder that people seek refuge from the dog-eat-dog ethos of "looking out for number one" in spiritual or religious communities that preach an alternative ethos of love, caring, and responsibility for the well-being of others.

Our point at TIKKUN is that the ethos of those spiritual and religious communities needs to be taken seriously by bringing them out of synagogues, churches, and mosques and into the public arena. We need to challenge the "bottom line" of the market by insisting on *a new bottom line* of love and caring and ethical/spiritual/ecological sensitivity.

Naomi Wolf's essay in this issue of the magazine shows how scary coming out as a spiritual person can be. No wonder it is hard to build a politics of meaning movement. Having been disappointed by the failure of past social movements, and hardened by the many little betrayals that people experience from others in daily life, so many of our friends have internalized societal cynicism and are too scared to allow themselves—or us—to hope for a different world. Instead, they demand that we be more "realistic," that is, that we accept that nothing can ever really be different, that we give up on social change and just focus on getting as much as we can for ourselves.

Yet what I've seen in my travels around the U.S. is that there is a tremendous hunger for a different kind of world, a world in which loving and caring could really be the bottom line. Deep as people's fears are, that's how deep their yearning is for something different. True, those yearnings get manipulated by right-wing religious figures and by some New Age spiritualists. But the yearnings remain, and if people could come to see how many others share that same yearning, they'd be encouraged to join a



progressive politics of meaning movement that makes the demand for a "new bottom line" the central challenge to the politics of accommodation to the market. Until such a movement emerges with enough public visibility to give people the courage to act on their highest ideals, they will continue to be "realistic" and accommodate to the competitive market and continue to support those political leaders who tell them that our society can't afford to be more generous, caring, ecologically sane, or ethically sensitive. That's America, 1998. ❑

A Silver Lining to Israeli Intolerance?

Does the rift between American and Israeli Jews become a silver lining that would allow the American government to push the Israelis toward peace?

We've pointed out in the past that Conservative and Reform Jews were all too willing to ignore the way that Israelis demeaned the "Other," when that Other was Palestinians or Arabs. Now that the Other includes Reform and Conservative Jews themselves, they are questioning their own blind support of Israel.

We have a more nuanced support for Israel. We want a strong and safe Jewish state. But we believe this kind of strength and security can only be achieved in a world based on mutual caring, justice, love of neighbor, and love of "the stranger," whoever that might be. So, precisely because of our caring for Israel, we've been strong advocates of peace and full reconciliation with the Palestinian people including the creation of a democratic, demilitarized Palestinian state (as outlined by Asmi B'Shara, M.K., in the Nov./Dec. 1997 issue of TIKKUN). Just as strongly, we've been advocates for a Jewish renewal in Israel that would replace a Judaism that uses state power to impose itself on the Israeli population with a Judaism that uses love, tolerance, and a commitment to social justice (not only for Palestinians, but for Sephardic/Mizrachi, Ethiopian, and Russian Jews) as its distinguishing features.

We've already seen what happens when a Labor government tries to move toward peace. The assassination of Prime Minister Rabin was not the random act of a crank—recent polls reveal that 25 percent of Israeli teenagers enrolled in religious schools support Yigal Amir, the murderer, and sympathize with his actions. For those who thought that the solution was to have a Likud politician do a repeat of Nixon with China or Begin with Egypt (the tough guy delivering a change of policy toward peace), Netanyahu has shown that this won't work either. No coalition, whether put together by the Right or the Left, now has the political strength to make peace unless they have overwhelming evidence that without peace Israel would face a deeper threat.

The only credible source of that threat comes from the U.S. Just as Israelis moved toward Rabin and peace politics after George Bush stood up to the Israeli lobby and refused U.S. loan guarantees to Israel unless it stopped expanding West Bank settlements, so today the only thing that could change Israeli policy would be overwhelming U.S. pressure that was explicit and unconflicted in demanding compliance with the spirit and substance of the Oslo Accords.

Such pressure is politically impossible today in the U.S. because of the fear by both Republicans and Democrats that they would alienate Jewish voters in key electoral districts.

And that's where the supposed "silver lining" comes in. By alienating many American Jews, the sectors of the Orthodox world who are willing to use Israeli state power to enforce their branch of Judaism and to demean Reform and Conservative Judaism are creating a new political reality. To the extent that American politicians do not have to fear the knee-jerk "Let Israel do whatever it wants" reactions of American Jewry, they become more open to the call to pressure Israel toward peace. These politician's motives may be suspect (having more to do with accommodating Arab oil sheiks than a conversion to an ethical framework for international affairs, as our policy toward China makes clear). But if they act to pressure Israel toward peace, they will be serving the best interests of the Jewish people, even if that is not their intention.

But as much as we want peace, we can't cheer the kind of demeaning of the non-Orthodox that has taken place in the last year. Far too many Jews are not only being alienated from their knee-jerk support for the Israeli government, but from Judaism and Israel. The image of Orthodox Jews literally throwing shit on Conservative Jews attempting to pray at the Wall, the false compromises that only enshrine a "status quo" that both requires religious weddings and then refuses to allow Conservative and Reform rabbis to perform them, the use of state power to manipulate for narrow self-interest—all this is mistranslated by the public as what Judaism and Israel are essentially about—and they become alienated from the entire religious and Zionist enterprise. This is too high a price to pay for peace, so we cannot accept this "silver lining"—it's just too cynical and destructive of the future interests of the Jewish people. ❑

EDITORIAL

Don't Split Spirit from Politics

The New York Times Magazine dedicated its entire December 7, 1997 issue to what it called "God Decentralized." Could the media finally be getting the message that human beings have meaning needs?

Don't throw away your crutches yet. The kind of spirituality that the *Times* can allow is a far remove from the Jewish renewal that we've been talking about in TIKKUN. For the *Times*, spirituality is to be honored as long as it doesn't challenge contemporary economic and social relations.

Consider, for example, *The New York Times Magazine*'s article on "Unorthodox Jews" by Rodger Kamenetz. We have great respect for Kamenetz and his work, *The Jew and the Lotus*. But Kamenetz tends to focus on only one strand in Jewish renewal, the strand that is heavily influenced by Buddhism and that looks to meditation and *niggunim* (wordless melodies) to revive Judaism.

After spending a week in silent meditation (not an easy task for someone like me) under the inspired supervision of Rabbi David Cooper (*God is a Verb*), I can report that Jewish meditation is a powerful and important contribution to the development of spiritual life. Together with daily prayer and introspection, meditation has become an important part of my life. My own experience with inner work and spiritual development makes me particularly thankful and excited about developments like the Jewish meditation center Chochmat HaLev in Berkeley, created by Avram Davis and former TIKKUN publisher Nan Fink, Jonathan Omerman's Metivta Center in Los Angeles, the work of many Jewish Renewal synagogues, Elat Chayyim (the Jewish Renewal retreat center), and Aleph (the Alliance for Jewish Renewal). Rami Shapiro's column, and the writings of Estelle Frankel and Karen van Hoek, are some of the ways we are using the pages of TIKKUN to introduce our readers to this aspect of Jewish spirituality.

Yet in the *The New York Times Magazine* article as in his recent book, *Stalking Elijah*, Kamenetz often talks as if the highest goal of Jewish spirituality was to create "equanimity" and "peace of mind." I remember in the 1950s, when *Peace of Mind* by Joshua Loth Liebman was a best-seller, my rebbe Abraham Joshua Heschel taught that the spiritual dimension of Judaism would unsettle the mind rather than bring it equanimity. Heschel became our greatest spiritual teacher, yet you found him not only in places of inwardness but also in the leadership of the struggle against the war in Vietnam. As Heschel made clear in his masterful work, *The Prophets*, Jewish spirituality was fundamentally linked to political and ethical critique. A central point of the prophets was that Jewish spirituality, embodied in Temple worship, was *not enough*. Meditative work and *tikkun olam* activity should be intrinsically linked: equanimity would then be a springboard to transformative social action.

The fundamental message of Judaism is that the creative spiritual force in the universe (Elohim) *is* at the same time the transformative power of healing and repair in the universe (YHVH). As I argued in detail in *Jewish Renewal: A Path to Healing and Transformation*, other religious traditions have focused on the spiritual reality of the universe, but have seen no necessary connection between spirituality and politics. Judaism, on the other hand, emerged from the struggle for liberation of the Jewish people, and the God that we embraced was a Power for Healing and Transformation of the universe. Spirituality had *in fact* become for many religious traditions an opiate that reconciled people to established reality. That danger exists in some sections of the Jewish renewal movement where "politics" is seen as "inappropriate" and counterposed to spirituality. When we truly understand the unity of all Being, it should be harder for us to ignore the pain of the homeless and the hungry. Yet at the Aleph biennial retreat (the Kallah), and in many spiritual and meditative communities, there is little interest shown in making these links or in developing strategies to bring spiritual practice into social change activity.

Jewish spirituality came as an alternative to those forms of spirituality, precisely because it insisted that the struggle against poverty, hunger, homelessness and other forms of oppression should be a central part of one's religious practice. Look, for example, at the statement of the International Rabbinical Committee on the following pages to get a full sense of this dimension of what Jewish renewal should be about. Ultimately, because the Jewish renewal we seek at TIKKUN must necessarily involve a deep inner transformation as well as a struggle for a transformed economic and social world, there is no either/or choice here. From our perspective, we need to learn from teachers of meditation who are Kamenetz's focus, but we also need to learn from Arthur Waskow's creative work in the Shalom Center, or the Jewish project on the environment, or David Saperstein's work at the Religious Action Center, or the editors of *Lilith* and *Bridges*, or Rebecca Alpert's work in creating a lesbian Jewish voice, or Irwin Kula's work in bringing Judaism to UJA machers. These, too, are our spiritual masters.

We congratulate those who are forging a path out of the spiritual wastelands that characterize too much of American Jewish synagogue and communal life. But a Jewish renewal movement that repeats the split between politics and spirit that our prophets fought against is doomed to repeat the mistake that Judaism came to repair. ❑

EDITORIAL NOTE: Formed in November 1997 as a response to the growing intolerance in the Jewish world, the International Rabbinical Committee is an interdenominational *as well as international organization of rabbis who are committed to* tikkun olam. *By modeling cooperation between Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist, and Renewal rabbis, this organization provides a way for Jews who yearn for peace and justice to show that they can transcend differences and work together. Has your rabbi joined? If not, urge her or him to do so by sending his/her name plus $100 to fund this venture to: International Rabbinical Committee, 26 Fell Street, San Francisco, CA 94102.*

International Rabbinical Committee

We are an interdenominational group of rabbis who have come together to support efforts for peace, social justice, tolerance, and tikkun olam. *We approach these issues from a deep commitment to Judaism and the Jewish people.*

Our committee purposefully crosses denominational lines to affirm our solidarity with the entire community of Israel. We are not seeking to develop a unified theological stance on most questions, nor are we seeking to convince each other about the appropriate approach to Jewish law and practices. Coming from different theological perspectives and intellectual traditions, we are committed to mutual respect and tolerance.

We come together at a time when mutual respect and tolerance can no longer be taken for granted in the Jewish world. There are those in the Jewish world who have been associating Judaism with political, cultural, and religious perspectives that neglect a central Jewish notion: that every human being on the planet is created in the image of God, is equally beloved by God, and is equally deserving of respect and caring from us.

This rabbinical organization is committed to taking seriously the Torah injunctions of "love your neighbor as yourself," "love the stranger," and "justice, justice shalt thou pursue." We will challenge every political, economic, and cultural institution or social practice that weakens our ability to treat other human beings as created in God's image.

Some of us see our primary rabbinical work as teachers and counselors in our own congregations. Others of us are scholars, social change activists, professors at universities or rabbinical schools. In each arena we have the opportunity to promote this understanding of Judaism.

Here are the central tenets of this rabbinic committee:

1 End poverty, hunger and homelessness.
We believe that the world has resources adequate to this task, and that it is time to mobilize the world's peoples to reallocate resources toward this end. It is no longer sufficient to talk about these goals as sweet dreams for some future utopia. We have the capacity to grow the food, produce the housing and clothing, and provide a minimal standard of well-being for every human being on the planet. We should make this a global priority, and every government should make this a priority for spending that takes precedence over any military expenditures.

2 Save the environment and transform our relationship to it.
We have been given the obligation to be stewards to this planet, but instead we have allowed the earth to be plundered, polluted, and destroyed. This must cease. Today, nobody says that they are in favor of environmental destruction. Instead, they talk about "not going too fast," or warning that "environmental restraints will cost jobs or higher costs for consumer items," or that "the market should be allowed to make these decisions." We believe that our obligation to protect the environment must come first, even if that requires some economic sacrifices, as long as those sacrifices are evenly distributed (we are all too aware of how in the past "sacrifices" have gotten loaded disproportionately onto the backs of middle income and poor people).

Our environmentalism, however, is not simply an endorsement of existing environmental groups and their lobbying efforts. We support a whole new way of thinking about the environment. We need to respond to the world with a new sense of responsibility, and to balance our desire to "use" the world with an attitude of awe, wonder, and amazement at the glory of creation and a commitment to ecologically sustainable economic and political policies. It is this spiritual dimension that is central to building a new environmental approach.

3 Challenge the globalization of capital.
Our economic life is increasingly out of control as huge multinational economic forces—so powerful that the

In that spirit, we believe that a primary concern of those who care about *tikkun olam*, the healing and transformation of the world, is to support the full emancipation and liberation of women in the Jewish world and in the larger society. We oppose homophobia and the oppression of gays and lesbians, and will speak out against efforts inside the Jewish world and in the larger society that demean homosexuals. We support the fullest civil rights for all people without regard to gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, or national origin.

7 We support the efforts to create peace and social justice throughout the world.

As Jews, our commitment is not only to the Jewish people, but to healing and transforming the entire world so that it reflects our highest vision of love, solidarity, justice, and peace. In the pursuit of these aims, we support the struggle for human rights and a growing conception of what those rights are about. We also stand in strong opposition to the use of torture or violence of any sort. We are committed to overcoming violence not only in the larger world, but in our own Jewish families as well. We strongly oppose domestic abuse, whether in the form of overt violence (all too often hidden and denied in the Jewish world) or in the form of verbal, sexual, economic, or psychological patterns of coercive behavior. We seek to develop in the Jewish community a sense of responsibility for the victims of these kinds of abuse.

8 We are committed to the survival and flourishing of Israel as a Jewish state and Jewish homeland.

We wish to see Israel embody Jewish values. For that reason, we strongly support the Israeli peace movements and the attempts to build mutual reconciliation with the Palestinian people. We seek to encourage peaceful methods of conflict resolution, and have no sympathy for those in the Palestinian world or in the Jewish world who have resorted to acts of terror against the civilian population. Neither can we support the continued oppression of Palestinians by Jews—whether that be in the form of occupation of lands formerly owned by Palestinians or whether that be by the allocation of resources in ways that discriminate against Palestinians living as Israeli citizens.

We support Palestinian national self-determination, including the creation of a Palestinian state, as long as it does not threaten the continued survival and well-being of the State of Israel. We believe that the U.S. and other countries can play a useful role by exerting their influence to push the parties toward peaceful solutions. We know that in both the Israeli and Palestinian communities there are forces that oppose a final settlement of the conflict, and we know that these forces often receive financial and political support from other countries and individuals. We believe that people and governments around the world that favor peaceful reconciliation should be equally strong in supporting, advocat-

democratic processes in any given nation are unable to require them to be socially responsible—are refashioning the world in the interests of maximizing profits. Economic institutions and arrangements need to be reshaped to reflect the democratic goals of the entire human race rather than the narrow profit-seeking of those who have previously managed to accumulate wealth.

4 A central part of creating a world based on the highest ethical truths of Torah is to challenge the ethos of selfishness, materialism and cynicism that are rampant throughout the society.

Not only does the world need a redistribution of material resources, but also a new valuing of the spiritual dimension of human experience and a restructuring of our lives in ways that allow us to be more in touch with the spiritual realities of our universe.

5 We believe that economic life, including the behavior of corporations and the way that we conduct our business and professional lives, must be reflective of Torah values and subordinate to those values.

In particular, we support a politics of meaning with its call for a "new bottom line," so that productivity and efficiency are no longer judged solely by the degree to which any corporation or institution maximizes profits, but also by the degree to which it tends to support ethical, spiritual, and ecological sensitivity and the degree to which it tends to support human beings to be loving, caring, and capable of sustaining long-term loving relationships.

We want this new bottom line to be brought together into all aspects of our public life, so that we begin to reshape our schools, our government, our professions, our media in ways that encourage people to see each other as fundamentally valuable and deserving of love and caring.

6 We wish to encourage and support a multicultural world based on mutual tolerance and mutual respect.

We resist the attempts to build a single homogenized world culture. We believe that the world is better served by a diversity of religious, ethnic and cultural traditions—each of which has learned to respect and honor this diversity and to divest itself of those elements that lead to hatred or the demeaning of others. Within the Jewish community, we support efforts to give higher levels of visibility and support to those from Sephardic or Mizrachi cultures, Black Jews, and Jews from working class backgrounds, and to sensitize the community to its own actual diversity. We reject those forms of multiculturalism that suggest a radical moral or epistemological relativism. We build our commitment to tolerance and respect on our understanding of the Biblical notion that every human being has been created in God's image.

ing and using their political influence to support the peace forces in both the Israeli and Palestinian communities.

But our concern goes deeper. Israel must be rescued from a distorted vision of Judaism that condones the demeaning of others and the implicit or explicit supposition that Jewish blood or Jewish life is more precious than the blood or lives of others. The values of compassion, loving the stranger, pursuing peace, and seeking justice must once again be placed at the center of Jewish identity and Jewish religious practice.

9 We are deeply opposed to the use of state power to impose a particular set of religious practices in any society.

So we oppose all arrangements in the State of Israel that require "personal status" to be determined by religious law. Similarly, we oppose the attempts to define "who is a Jew" for legal purposes by the criteria of one sector of the Jewish religious world. We oppose attempts by some sectors of the Orthodox world in Israel to use the government as a vehicle to impose their own particular perspective about Judaism, who is "really" Jewish, what counts as legitimate weddings or conversions, etc. Instead, we want to foster an attitude of mutual tolerance and respect among all sectors of the Jewish people, respecting differences while equally acknowledging our common history and shared concerns.

We believe that the Jewish world will be strengthened when the kinds of issues discussed above become a focal point of Jewish communal life, and people believe that they can approach the Jewish world to discover the best ways to apply these principles to the contemporary world. We want Jewish communal institutions to become known for their pursuit of these principles, so that Jews growing up in the Jewish community will feel that what they have experienced and learned in the Jewish world reflects these kinds of concerns. To some extent this is already happening in some sectors of Jewish life, and our task as rabbis is to support those developments and to extend them to all corners of the Jewish world.

We do not think that there is only one way to apply the principles, and we expect that a Jewish world shaped by these principles will still contain vibrant debate and disagreements. We see our organization as having as its charge to advance this discussion by attempting to apply these principles to contemporary realities to the best of our abilities, recognizing our own frailties and limitations. We will also seek to reach out to other communities to engage in common enterprises that foster a world based on these principles.

We invite rabbis who share these concerns to join our organization. Our organization will issue statements and help create public recognition that there is a significant Jewish religious commitment to the principles articulated above. We hope to develop policy papers and public meetings in which these perspectives are developed and applied to contemporary developments in the political, cultural and economic realms. We hope to be able to respond quickly to national and international events, as well as to shape a *tikkun olam* public policy perspective that will make known to the larger world a fresh approach to contemporary social and political issues. We may participate in public demonstrations, join coalitions, and in other ways help make known our perspective. We do not envision this as a mass organization of rabbis, but rather as a smaller group that is able to stay in contact with each other and work effectively to get our perspective known in the public arena. We will, however, take care to ensure that a democratic process is involved, and that no independent bureaucracy develops which starts issuing statements in your name without your consent. ❑

FOUNDING MEMBERS

Rabbi Leonard Beerman (Reform, L.A.), Rabbi Tzvi Blanchard (Orthodox, N.Y.), Rabbi Marcelo Bronstein (Conservative, N.Y.), Rabbi Judith HaLevy (Reconstructionist, Malibu, CA.), Rabbi Danny Goldman (Conservative, Buenos Aires), Rabbi Claire Green (Reconstructionist, Philadelphia), Rabbi Michael Lerner (Renewal, San Francisco), Rabbi Rolando Matalon (Conservative, N.Y.), Rabbi Michael Paley (Renewal, N.Y.), Rabbi Chaim Seidler-Feller (Orthodox, L.A.), Rabbi Gerald Serotta (Reform, Washington D.C.), Rabbi Myra Soifer (Reform, Nevada).

The following Rabbis were Additional Co-Founders as of December, 1997: *Rabbi Melanie Aron, Los Gatos, CA; Rabbi Philip J. Bentley, Floral Park, NY; Rabbi Philip Berkowitz, Wash Twp, N.J.Rabbi Seth L. Bernstein, Worcester, MA; Rabbi Mimi Biatch, Elmira, NY; Rabbi Barry Block, San Antonio, TX; Rabbi Claudio Kaiser Blueth, Lakewood, CA; Rabbi Lewis Bogage, Hazelton, PA; Rabbi Neal I. Borovitz, River Edge, NJ; Rabbi Jerald M. Brown, Northridge, CA; Rabbi Hillel Cohn, San Bernardino, CA; Rabbo Neil Commess-Daniels, Santa Monica, CA; Rabbi Wayne Dosick, Leucadia, CA; Rabbi David M. Frank, Encinitas, Ca.Rabbi Allen I. Freehling, Los Angeles, CA; Rabbi Elyse Frishman, Franklin Lakes, NJ; Rabbi Robert Gan, Los Angeles, CA; Rabbi Jonathan Gerard, Easton, PA; Rabbi Harvey Goldman, South Orange, NJ; Rabbi Eric S. Gorvis, Teaneck, N.J.Rabbi Roberto D. Graetz, Lafayette, CA; Rabbi Jon Haddon, Ridgefield, CT; Rabbi Joshua Hammerman, Stamford, CT; Rabbi Meyer Heller, Beverly Hills, CA; Rabbi Richard Jacobs, Scarsdale, NY; Rabbi Steven B.Jacobs, Woodland Hills, CA; Rabbi Norman Kahan, Great Neck, NY; Rabbi Perl Kasdan, NC; Rabbi David L. Kline, Monroe, LA; Rabbi Allen Krause, Aliso Viego, CA; Rabbi Daniel Kripper, Montevideo, Uruguay; Rabbi Claudio Kupchin, Leonia, NJ; Rabbi Lawrence Kushner, Sudbury, MA; Rabbi Valerie Lieber, Brooklyn, NY; Rabbi Allen S. Maller, Culver City, CA; Rabbi Batsheva Meiri, Rosly Heights, NY; Rabbi Aaron M. Petuchowski, Chicago, IL; Rabbi Allen Podet, Buffalo, NY; Rabbi Abraham Raich, Pueblo, CO; Paula L. Reimers, Burbank, CA; Rabbi Daniel A. Robberts, Cleveland, OH; Rabbi Aaron Rosenberg, Waterford,CT; Rabbi Arthur Rutberg, Columbus, GA; Rabbi Philip E.Schechter, Manalapan, NJ; Rabbi Barry L. Schwartz, Amherst, NY; Rabbi Merrill Shapiro, Longwood, FL; Rabbi Robert S. Sharff, Spring, TX; Rabbi Harold S. Silver, West Hartford, CT; Rabbi Hillel E. Silverman, Greenwich, CT; Rabbi Joel Soffin, Succasunna, NJ; Rabbi David J. Susskind; Rabbi Bradley C. Tecktiel, New Rochelle, NY; Rabbi Daniel A. Weiner, Harrisburg, PA; Rabbi David H. Weis, Northfield, NJ; Rabbi Kenneth J. Weiss, El Paso, TX; Rabbi Arnold Wolf; Rabbi Joseph Wolf, Portland, OR; Rabbi Daniel G. Zemel, Washington, DC; Rabbi Martin Zinkow, St. Paul, MN; Rabbi Arthur Zuckerman, San Diego, CA.*

HEALTH CARE

Cancer and the Politics of Meaning

Henry Dreher

What does "meaning" have to do with cancer? In the intersecting realms of psyche, soma, spirit, and the sociopolitical world we inhabit, meaning has everything to do with cancer.

Most tellingly, recent studies have demonstrated that psychosocial interventions that address people's hunger for meaning and purpose can be an important part of the healing process for cancer patients. Yet the medical establishment, firmly entrenched in a narrow, reductionistic vision of human biological functioning, has systematically denied the meaning needs of medical patients, neglecting to implement therapies that speak to these other dimensions of our existence. The interventions I refer to here include psychological and spiritual counseling, the teaching of mind-body techniques for stress management and healing, and group psychotherapy programs to help cancer patients cope with the reality of their condition and the rigors of treatment.

It is increasingly acknowledged that these kinds of intervention—which I consider meaning-based therapies—help cancer patients to cope with their conditions, strengthening their emotional resources and social support systems in the face of stress, fear, and pain. But what is hardly acknowledged is that meaning-based therapies have the potential to lengthen and even save lives, as shown in a surprising body of research that I will shortly describe. Meaning-based therapies should be viewed not only as emotional balms for people in distress, but as medical treatments unto themselves.

That the medical establishment has shown virtually no interest in applying these interventions in cancer hospitals and treatment centers nationwide is nothing short of a scandal. It may well take transformative social actions, similar to those championed by AIDS activists, to force medical powerbrokers to bring meaning-based therapies into the mainstream treatment of cancer patients. AIDS patients had to confront the NIH and FDA, both infected by the same pathogens: narrow conservative ideologies and poisonous ties to profit-driven medical insurers. AIDS activists used scientific truths and confrontational tactics to shift the tide of complacency, even to procure a handful of compassionate allies within these agencies. As a result, the pipeline for new AIDS drugs opened appreciably. But in the case of cancer, people with the disease are hardly well-organized for political action (with the exception of a highly active group of breast cancer patients); they often blame themselves for the disease; and they have not been armed with the knowledge of solid scientific evidence linking group psychotherapy (and other valid alternative therapies) to better outcomes for cancer patients.

As a guide and a spur to action, I will review this little-known body of scientific evidence—data suggesting that meaning does matter for people with life-threatening disease.

Life Extension with Psychosocial Therapies

In the early 1980s, psychiatrist David Spiegel of Stanford University initiated a study of a group psychotherapy program for cancer patients. Spiegel developed a treatment in which patients could share their emotional distress, support each other, and confront the existential issues that inevitably arise with life-threatening illness. His "Supportive/Expressive Therapy" was rooted in established traditions of group psychotherapy, but carefully tailored to the specific needs of people with cancer.

His study involved eighty-six patients with metastatic breast cancer, a disease with a bleak prognosis. He would follow these patients for years to determine whether Supportive/Expressive Therapy would help the patients to cope more effectively and live more fully, and he would also find out whether they lived longer than those in a control group with the same prognosis and medical treatment but no psychotherapy.

Spiegel has been candid about his initial bias: He expected his psychotherapy patients to become less distressed, more expressive, more able to procure social support, and more able to accept and transcend their diagnosis. But he did not expect them to live longer. Spiegel was irked by the advocates of mind-body medicine for cancer, most notably the team of O. Carl Simonton and Stephanie Simonton (who popularized guided imagery for cancer patients) and surgeon Bernie Siegel (who popularized the notion that psychological factors play a major role in overcoming cancer). Spiegel thought that the mind-body advocates were pushing outsized claims in their bestselling books, claims that psychological interventions could extend or save the lives of cancer patients. He fully expected to

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Henry Dreher is a regular contributor to health and medical publications, coauthor of The Type C Connection *and* Healing Mind, Healthy Woman, *and author of* Your Defense Against Cancer *and* The Immune Power Personality.

prove the psychological value of his therapy, but not its ability to improve physical recovery from cancer.

Ten years later, after tabulating the results of his study, Spiegel was forced to reevaluate his presumptions. The metastatic breast cancer patients who participated in Supportive/Expressive group therapy had lived twice as long as the non-participants. (The group members averaged thirty-eight months, compared with nineteen months for the control group members.) Only three patients had survived, but all three had been group therapy members. His results were published in 1989 in the prestigious British medical journal, *Lancet*, and editorials agreed that Spiegel's scientific methods were unassailable.

Since Spiegel's breakthrough, other studies have confirmed the potential of mind-body medicine to enhance the prospects of cancer recovery. UCLA psychiatrist Fawzy I. Fawzy provided group therapy to melanoma patients, a potentially lethal skin cancer, and followed their progress for six years. The treatment included relaxation techniques, cognitive therapy to develop active coping, and psychological support. Compared with non-participants with the same disease, the group members had one-third the rate of recurrence and death—a statistically significant finding.

A third less publicized study, led by Jean Richardson of the University of Southern California, showed similar results with a supportive educational program among patients with leukemias and lymphomas. Patients who participated in a brief supportive educational program had significantly longer survival time, and their improved recovery had nothing to do with greater medical "compliance"—with taking their medications and following doctor's orders.

Based on these three studies, the 1990s appeared to usher in a new flush of excitement about the role of mind-body interactions in the treatment of cancer. The findings of Spiegel and Fawzy in particular generated a rush of enthusiasm and the beginnings of a push for broad application. But now that energy seems trapped like steam in a covered cauldron; not much has leaked out into the world.

The astonishing finding that people can be helped to survive cancer simply by participating in psychotherapy groups has prompted no large-scale research effort, and no establishment-based call for widespread implementation of these interventions in hospitals and cancer treatment centers. According to a review by Dr. Fawzy and his colleagues at UCLA, 60 percent of cancer patients probably have no access to psychosocial interventions of any kind, no less the structured psychological approaches applied in the breakthrough studies.

Chemotherapy and Psychotherapy for Cancer: A Fair Comparison?

I do not mean to suggest that the jury has reached a final verdict on the life-extending value of psychotherapy groups. The three studies I've cited are strong, though

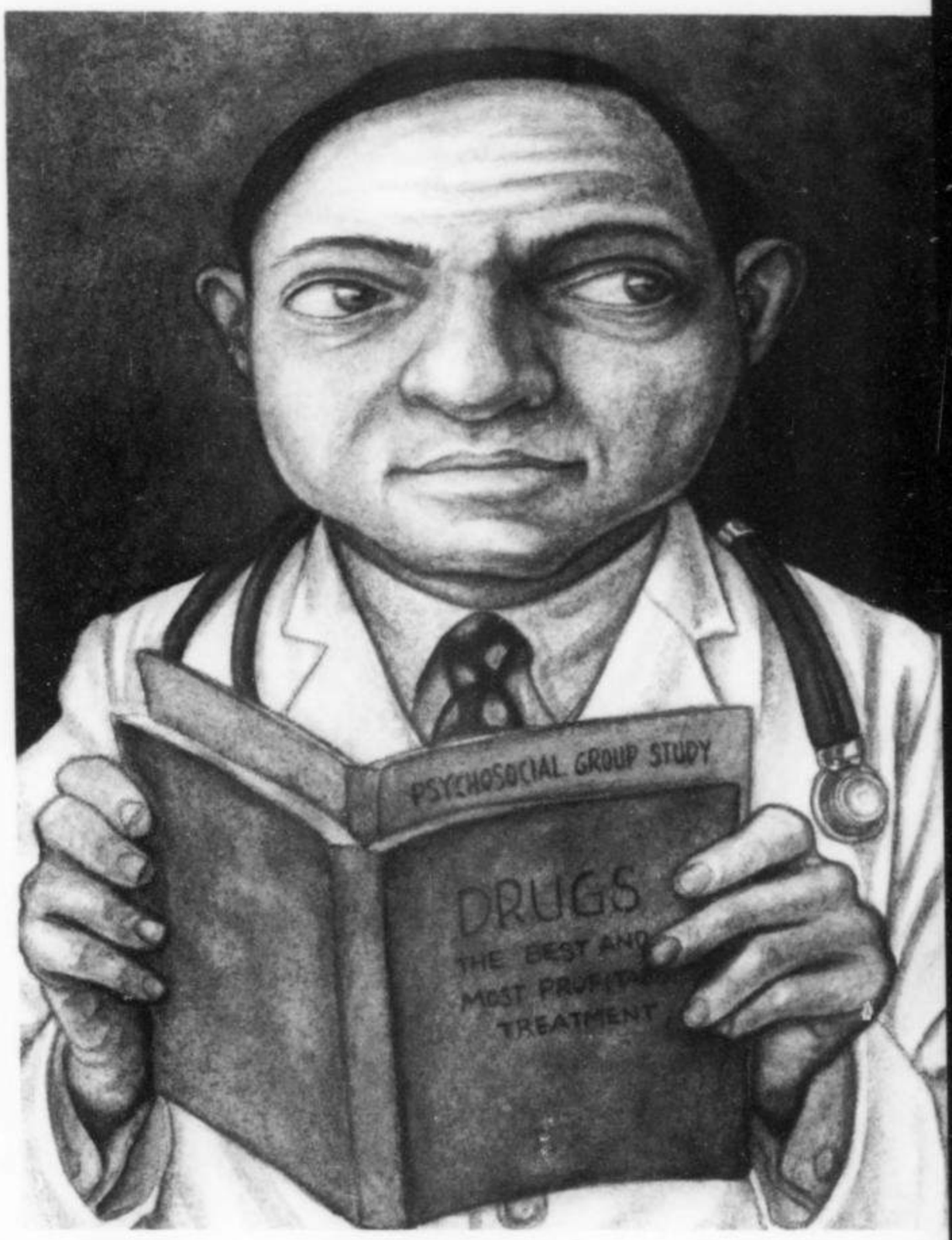


ILLUSTRATION BY RUSS ANDO

probably not definitive, evidence. However, strong-though-not-definitive is often the basis for the swift introduction of new drugs and surgical procedures. The problem is that mainstream medicine's criteria shift depending on the nature of the treatment being judged. I am not the only observer who believes that findings from the psychosocial research are as substantial and convincing as findings from trials of new chemotherapy drugs that lead to swift federal approval and broad application.

For instance, the chemotherapy agent paclitaxel (commonly known by its commercial name, Taxol), used most often for ovarian cancer, was quickly shuttled through the pipeline from clinical trials to broad-based applications with evidence that, in my view, is roughly similar to that produced by Dr. Spiegel in his renowned breast cancer study. And in 1996, the FDA issued a directive to shorten the pipeline for chemotherapy agents, facilitating the flow of expensive drugs, while a relatively inexpensive, nontoxic "agent" such as group psychotherapy was being provided no such largesse. More to the point, the issue is so far from the radar screen of biomedical attention that, to my knowledge, no single individual or institution within the biomedical establishment has even *addressed* the issue in these terms.

Let's evaluate the Taxol data as one point of reference. Taxol, a chemical derivative from the bark of the Yu tree, was found to be active against ovarian cancer and has been tested in hundreds of patients over the past decade. However, until recently, the only patients who received Taxol were those who relapsed after treatment with other chemotherapy drugs, in what is commonly called "second-line" therapy. For a drug to move from "second-line" to "first-line" treatment requires entirely new clinical trials to prove that it is the best initial treatment for a disease.

In 1996, Taxol became the first line-treatment for advanced ovarian cancer, a development trumpeted by media fanfare. Taxol's ascendance was, to my knowledge, based on a single study led by McGuire and colleagues published in the prestigious *New England Journal of Medicine*. That study involved 216 women with measurable disease, and it showed a significantly longer survival time (thirty-eight vs. twenty-four months) for those taking Taxol and cisplatin as compared to those taking cyclophosphamide and cisplatin.

Put differently, Taxol became the treatment-of-choice for ovarian cancer on the basis of one study that demonstrated fourteen months of life extension. Note that Dr. Spiegel's study of "Supportive/Expressive therapy" demonstrated nineteen months of life extension for women with advanced breast cancer. Moreover, unlike Taxol, which has severe side effects including hair loss, nausea, and vomiting, the only known side effect of Supportive/Expressive therapy is an enhanced sense of meaning and relatedness to friends, family members, and fellow group participants.

A major criticism of the comparison of Taxol and psychosocial interventions has been the claim that many more patients have received Taxol in clinical trials. But a closer look reveals that a total of 250 patients participated in the Spiegel, Fawzy, and Richardson studies—the three major psychosocial intervention trials proving survival benefits. Only 216 patients were evaluated in the watershed McGuire study, the sole basis for the drug's emergence as a standard therapy. Thus, the 250 patients in psychosocial studies can readily be stacked up against the 216 patients in the breakthrough Taxol study.

Of course, one such comparison is unlikely to sway the conservators of the medical status quo. But there are numerous other examples of chemotherapy drugs that have moved rapidly into clinical use the moment they demonstrate even marginal improvements in clinical outcomes. Some agents are added to chemotherapy regimens that have *no* appreciable survival benefit, but simply improve response rates—the number of patients who experience tumor regression during treatment. Others carry only minimal benefits in terms of survival.

Consider one example from the annals of hematologic oncology. Acute myelogenous leukemia (AML) is an aggressive hematologic (blood-based) malignancy that often responds to first-line chemotherapy; unfortunately, the majority of patients relapse within three years. The standard treatment for AML has been cytarabine combined with an anthracycline agent. In the past few years, idarubicin has largely replaced daunorubicin as the anthracycline of choice. The introduction of idarubicin has been based largely on three clinical trials conducted in the past five years. In these trials, the differences in survival between the two drug regimens were three months, six months, and twenty days, respectively. Idarubicin was introduced not so much for its survival advantage, which was modest, but because it produced a significantly higher percentage of initial responses to treatment.

I have no problem with how such drugs are introduced; if they are even slightly better, why not? My problem, again, is that a nontoxic therapy with evidently greater survival benefits than many widely used chemotherapy drugs should continue to be overlooked on the "more studies are needed" pretext. Three studies were all that were needed for idarubicin to supplant daunarubicin, even though the survival advantage was modest. Why aren't three sound studies enough for adjunctive psychosocial interventions to become part of cancer medicine, especially when the survival advantage is so marked? One answer is that shifting an experimental drug into the the cancer pharmacopoeia requires no shift in paradigms or perspectives, nor the effort required to fund and implement a challenging new program.

Then there is the recent Food and Drug Administration directive to streamline new chemotherapy drugs in the same manner as AIDS drugs. Specifically, the directive enables drug companies to shepherd drugs into use before they pass muster in phase III clinical trials, in which the new agents are compared to standard therapies. In other words, they no longer have to be proven more effective at producing clinical responses or survival advantages than other regimens; they must only be shown to produce tumor regressions. Of course, psychosocial therapies are not drugs and require no FDA approval *per se*. But other federal agencies, including the Institutes of Health, could "fast track" these interventions in comparable fashion by issuing a "clinical alert" regarding their effects.

But the federal fast-track is for pharmaceutical vehicles only. Here again we witness the biomedical bias against nonpharmacologic therapies. If federal agencies took nonpharmacologic therapies seriously, I believe that meaning-based therapies would qualify as safe adjunctive treatments with the *potential* to extend life, treatments that should be made available in every cancer treatment center and hospital. And *potential* is a litmus test no less stringent than that applied to chemotherapy drugs such as Taxol and idaurubicin.

When considered for broad application, should psychosocial interventions for cancer even be held to the same standard as chemotherapy agents ? In one important sense, they should not, since they are safe, nontoxic "agents" with proven psychological and quality-of-life benefits. Cancer

patients should not be denied programs that demonstrably improve their psychospiritual well-being simply because a debate rages in academic ivory towers about whether such programs might also lengthen their lifespans. As David Spiegel recently wrote, "The oldest adage of medicine is to 'cure rarely, to relieve suffering often, and to comfort always.' In this century we seem to have inverted this job description, acting as though our job were to 'cure always, relieve suffering if there is time, and let someone else do the comforting.'" In a health care system that could more accurately be called a health cure system, quality-of-life outcomes don't cut the mustard. That alone is a travesty.

At the same time, I do not wish to cloak my belief in the importance of the potential survival benefits suggested by the Spiegel, Fawzy, and Richardson studies in the more circumspect language of quality-of-life. Quality-of-life is an "end-point" with every bit as much validity as length-of-life, but let's not kid ourselves: most cancer patients are desperately concerned about the length of their lives and so are responsible health care professionals.

When psychosocial interventions are promoted *specifically* for their survival benefits, I agree that they should be held to the same standard as chemotherapy drugs. On that basis, I believe they are sufficiently close to meeting the chemotherapy criteria that potential survival benefits are a credible *additional* argument in favor of broad applicability. To extend the medical analogy, here we have an inexpensive, nontoxic pill that is nearly guaranteed to make you feel and cope better, and by the way, methodologically good evidence suggests that it could extend your life. Should this pill be promulgated for widespread use by cancer patients? Of course, with a simple caveat: the part about long survival needs more inquiry, so take your pills with hope but without illusions. That strikes me as an ethically and scientifically sound position.

Psychosocial Interventions for Cancer: Where We Stand Now

The question of where we stand with regard to psychosocial interventions for cancer has two parts: Is there sufficient ongoing research to evaluate the potential of meaning-based therapies? And, what is being done now to implement these therapies to benefit cancer patients?

In the area of research, the National Institutes of Health (NIH), its National Cancer Institute (NCI) and American Cancer Society (ACS) are supporting a modest number of studies of how psychosocial interventions can improve the quality-of-life of cancer patients. But overall, these agencies are sponsoring few investigations of the *medical benefits* of meaning-based therapies.

It appears that the only NCI-sponsored investigations of the recovery and survival of cancer patients undergoing psychosocial interventions are two ongoing replications by Dr. Spiegel of his own study. Only a few psychosocial intervention trials have received support from other sectors of the biomedical establishment. Surprisingly, the U.S. Army is sponsoring a trial at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center in Worcester, led by Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D, director of the Stress Reduction Program, and epidemiologist James Hebert, Sc.D. The research team will follow 180 early breast cancer patients to determine whether those who participate in Kabat-Zinn's eight-week mind-body program fare better than those who receive either nutrition instruction or the usual supportive care. (Kabat-Zinn is renowned for his teaching of the Tibetan Buddhist practices of mindfulness, which is both a meditation and a way of life.) Preliminary data has shown that the mind-body participants have experienced quality-of-life improvements and increases in melatonin excretion, which can be a positive prognostic sign for women with breast cancer. Hebert says that if the funds are available, he may have an opportunity to track survival for as long as twenty years.



ILLUSTRATION BY RUSS ANDO

The Army, along with the American Cancer Society and National Institute of Mental Health, has also funded a multi-million dollar study at Ohio State University led by psychologist Barbara Andersen, Ph.D. Andersen will randomize 234 patients with moderately advanced breast cancer into a control and a mind-body intervention group. By the turn of the century, Andersen and her colleagues will know whether the women who received mind-body therapy will cope better and live longer than those who did not.

In sum, in the United States the only studies explicitly designed to evaluate survival are those directed by Spiegel, Andersen, and, perhaps, Kabat-Zinn/Hebert. While these investigations are promising, the overall effort to study this question is disappointing in its scope, and we won't have

additional data on the survival question for several more years. In the interim, isn't there a medical and moral obligation to implement these programs now?

Little, however, is currently being done to institute psychosocial interventions around the country. Even if one leaves aside the survival studies as an impetus, established research on the quality-of-life benefits has yet to prompt a coordinated effort by the NIH, NCI, or ACS to implement these programs in cancer treatment centers and hospitals throughout the U.S. The NCI and ACS do fund such studies, but evaluating survival benefits are not their purpose, and the overall efforts are not well coordinated. Surprisingly, in fiscal 1993 Congress earmarked substantial funds for psychosocial programs and research relevant to cancer. However, a source with knowledge of congressional funding patterns asserts that target funding levels were met with programs that had virtually nothing to do with psychosocial factors or interventions.

While psychosocial interventions are offered in some teaching hospitals in association with psychiatric-liaison or behavioral medicine departments, such as Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center (MSKCC) and Johns Hopkins, there is no mandate and certainly no directive from any powerful group inside or outside government that such groups be made available to cancer patients. Although the NCI funds research and does not mandate clinical programs, the NIH and/or NCI could, through its publications and influence on health care institutions, take a much stronger position in favor of meaning-based therapies.

The only organization pushing for broad implementation of these programs in the political arena is the Center for the Advancement of Health. The Center, funded by the MacArthur and Nathan Cummings Foundations, promotes a biopsychosocial view of health and its translation in programs of research and medical care that are integrated fully into the mainstream. One of their key projects is a "cancer initiative" to raise awareness among policy makers and the public of the need for psychosocial interventions for cancer patients and their families. Under the leadership of its director, Jesse Gruman, Ph.D., the Center has flooded the media with research findings supporting psychosocial interventions for cancer. They have also lobbied federal health institutes for broad-based applications, including those in "underserved" areas of the country. Gruman emphasizes that survival as an outcome is not taken very seriously as a goal of research or an argument for broad implementation. "The potential of psychosocial interventions to change medical endpoints—specifically morbidity and mortality—has simply not caught on."

The Opportunity and the Obligation

Why was there no sense of urgency to move on the findings of Spiegel, Fawzy, and Richardson? I attribute this lack to multiple factors: the myopia of biomedical scientists who have no paradigm to explain this effect, the anxiety of psychosocial researchers who fear eroding interest in quality-of-life and the dichotomous thinking of both groups who pit psychological against medical outcomes.

But of course there is another factor—the lack of profit motive for broad application of psychosocial programs. If huge multinational corporations had vested interests these programs, as the pharmaceutical companies have in new chemotherapy drugs, we would see action: massive funding for research; federal funds and clinical directives for psychosocial programs in hospitals and treatment centers; implementation by HMOs and managed care companies; position papers from mainstream medical societies; and far-flung programs of public awareness.

David Spiegel suggests that the lack of profit motive is a key factor. "There is no mediating industry," comments Spiegel. "Who is interested in promoting good therapy for cancer patients? People who sell chairs? There is nothing like the drug industry out there with their detail people and their advertising firms saying, 'Hey, use this.'" While the psychological and psychosomatic medical societies have interests on behalf of professionals, obviously no comparison can be made with massive profit-driven corporations.

There is one available route for profits, however, and it possibly offers an alternative avenue for broad implementation. Consider the TV commercials being run by Cancer

A politics of meaning must not only be applied to health care delivery, but to the practices of medicine itself.

Treatment Centers of America, a for-profit concern with three treatment centers in the U.S. The commercials tout their complementary treatments for "mind, body, and spirit." Patients at Cancer Treatment Centers do have access to group programs run by psychologists, as well as nutritional and "spiritual" counseling. Perhaps other profit-driven managed care companies will pick up the mantle of meaning-based therapies once focus groups suggest that patients will select plans including such programs. But first the public must be fully aware of the benefits of meaning-based therapies.

Biomedical and biobehavioral researchers and clinicians should use chemotherapy as a scientific and moral analogy for action on meaning-based therapies. Recently, according to a story reported by Spiegel, one mainstream oncologist showed a spark of common sense and compassion that cut through the collective layers of denial and obfuscation. Spiegel tells about I. Craig Henderson, M.D., of the University of California at San Francisco, widely known as one of the country's leading experts in chemotherapy for

breast cancer. After Spiegel had given a talk at a medical society meeting, Henderson spoke in support of research and application of psychosocial interventions for cancer patients. He got up and said, "If you proceed on the basis of the published literature, there is better evidence right now that group therapy extends survival time with breast cancer than there is similar evidence for bone marrow transplantation."

Henderson's comment is instructive, particularly in an era of managed care when we agonize over the benefits, costs, and limitations of super high-tech medicine. Perhaps we don't agonize enough. Bone marrow transplants are the most expensive—and dangerous—cancer treatments available, yet despite their mixed record of success in metastatic breast cancer, millions continue to be expended on research and clinical usage. Maybe bone marrow transplantation will live up to its promise, but how in good conscience can a nontoxic therapy with arguably a better record of clinical results be pursued in such a half-hearted and disjunctive fashion?

The Politics of Meaning and Humane Cancer Care

The need for a politics of meaning to guide changes in the current health care system is evident from the anguished lamentations of medical patients and doctors nationwide. The list of insults is long: bureaucratic interference with doctors' autonomy, the pressure on clinicians to cut back on patient services, the shrinking of office visits down to egg-timer proportions, and the denial of expert care by out-of-network providers for patients with life-threatening diseases. Only a politics of meaning can elevate patients' rights and patients' well-being to the status of an intrinsically worthwhile "end-point," to borrow one of mainstream medicine's more deadening turns of phrase.

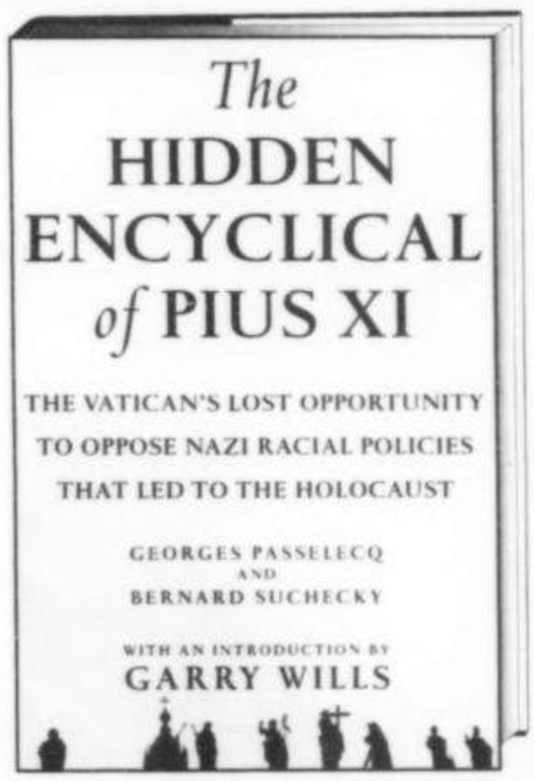
But a politics of meaning must not only be applied to health care delivery, but to the practices of medicine itself. A humane medicine is not simply one delivered equitably to all, as was envisioned by the long-ago jettisoned universal health care program. A humane medicine also delivers remedies that account for people's meaning needs. New fields of research (including "psychoneuroimmunology") are proving beyond a doubt that mind and body are inextricably bound, that thoughts and feelings influence our health and healing through labyrinthine biological pathways, that our social and spiritual lives are reflected in physical states. These developments underscore what physician Larry Dossey has long argued: that a medicine without meaning is not only bereft of compassion, it flouts scientific findings and is hardly as effective as it could be.

As I have argued here, the lack of broad-based psychosocial interventions for people with cancer is perhaps the most galling example of the systematic denial of the meaning needs of medical patients. This denial is based on a materialistic medical model that cannot account for the efficacy of nonpharmacologic and meaning-based therapies.

Mainstream scientists reject these treatments, but in truth, their bias has no foundation in science or biomedical ethics. Indeed, this bias is blatantly and dangerously unscientific and unethical. With evidence of both quality-of-life and life-extending potential, biomedicine's lack of an initiative is indefensible. Do they think broad implementation should wait until the year 2000? If more studies weigh in with survival benefits, will the nationwide initiative begin? Or will there be a call for more randomized controlled clinical trials? How much data will be enough? When will the link between psychological transformation and physical healing finally be given its due? When will biomedicine finally recognize its moral obligation to provide cancer patients with therapies that build strength, hope, and physical resilience?

Perhaps this recognition will come when the medical paradigm itself undergoes a seismic shift. For the current medical model is rooted in a deeply entrenched materialism and reductionism—a view of human beings as casings for a complex genetic machinery. The same cynicism that leads the media to ridicule those who elevate "meaning needs" and the spiritual dimension of life leads doctors to dismiss the impact of psychological, existential, and spiritual interventions on physical health. That is why a politics of meaning belongs at the forefront of the struggle for effective and humane treatments for cancer patients. ❑

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HARCOURT BRACE

SPIRITUALITY

Starting On My Spiritual Path



Naomi Wolf

EDITORIAL NOTE: This is the first of a series of articles in which we ask writers, cultural figures, and political leaders to tell us abut their own spiritual development. We asked Naomi Wolf to tell us about her experiences as she began to rediscover a spiritual path in the last few years. We pressed her to tell us about the resistances she faced, both in the people around her, and within herself.

I was raised in a home that was comfortable with the idea that there was a mystical dimension to life. But later, as an angry young feminist who wanted to get to the roots of women's oppression, I felt alienated from the patriarchal aspects of Judaism. For instance, once I talked to an important rabbi about the struggle I was going through. I shared some of my thinking about making the liturgy more inclusive, and cited the work of Rabbi Shira Lander, who was using the mikva as a healing and cleansing ritual for survivors of rape. The rabbi told me that if he had to choose between inclusivity and tradition he would choose the tradition. My heart closed down completely.

Of course, the progressive, post-Marxist world of which I was part was profoundly atheistic and hostile to religious and spiritual traditions. Not only was spirituality seen as part of what kept the masses tied to an oppressive social order, it was also seen as "not tough." There was a real macho posturing that made it seem really "wimpy" as well as "bourgeois" to be interested in spirit rather than in, say, guns for the Sandinistas and the redistribution of wealth. Additionally, some of the hostility to religion from feminists I was around at the time derived from their perception that 'God language' had been so co-opted by the religious right that to use it was to allow oneself to be co-opted.

So it felt embarrassing, a social liability, to admit an interest in God. It mattered to me that it would feel pathetic and nerdy to tell someone I was interested in spiritual issues in the progressive circles in which I spent my time; to confess *that* would be more uncool than to confess to various forms of vice or addiction.

But then I gave birth two and a half years ago. That was such a miracle that it's hard not to try to figure out how to address it. The manifest miraculousness of having your child wake up in the morning and look at you! It's hard not to speculate about "where did you come from?" The kind of love that being a parent brings out, that donkey-like, repetitive, abject, egoless love, is closer to a spiritual notion of love than any other kind of love I've experienced. Romantic love, perhaps all other kinds of love too, seem more tied up with the ego than does the love of a parent for a child. So having this kind of experience of love made it easier for me to understand some of what the spiritual traditions were addressing.

Around the same time, I went to a consultant for writer's block (from which I was suffering at the time) and this consultant put me into a meditative state. I then had a spiritual experience, an overwhelming and inexplicable mystical encounter that turned my world upside down.

I recently read that 43 percent of Americans have had some sort of mystical experience in the past few years but have not been able to talk about it with people with whom they are otherwise intimate. So many people are having some kind of powerful spiritual encounter, but this experience is outstripping our abilities to put it into words. One of the dangers of any spiritual path is that there is a lot of self-delusion. There is a widening industry of books and tapes and gurus aimed at selling or packaging the mystical or spiritual experience, and I think we need to be very wary of that. The struggle for me was to use my critical mind to make sure that I could believe in what I had encountered.

I did a lot of reading about mysticism and spirituality after having had this experience. One of the tests that great teachers in the past have urged their disciples is to be sure that whatever mystical experience they claim to have had be reflected in the way one subsequently lives one's life.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARION ETTLINGER

Naomi Wolf is the author of the international bestseller Promiscuities *(Random House, 1997).*

This experience was really different for me than, for example, my accepting various political ideas or ideologies. One difference was that I really didn't want to have this experience, it was upsetting, it shook me, it scared me, it created upheaval in my life, it was painful and unwelcome (as well as joyful and liberating).

Part of what was shocking to me was getting that all the things that the world I knew tended to privilege—things like status, money, beauty, self, fame—were all stripped away and that the only reality is service, the joy and beauty of it. It was painful to realize the beside-the-pointness of the ego-needs which had previously preoccupied so much of my time and energy.

As I've moved into a spiritual path, I've come to realize that every choice matters. Before, if I was having a bad day I might have snapped at someone who was taking a long time with an airline ticket or I might have shaded some aspect of the truth in a conversation because I didn't really want to get too deeply into the truth at that moment, or I might have been lazy or sloppy with my choices because "it doesn't really count" or "no one is really looking" or "on balance I'm a pretty reasonable person so it doesn't really matter what I do in this particular instance." But now, as a result of my spiritual experience, I realize that every single choice really matters. To be careful of speech, for example, because one of my biggest vices was careless speech, gossip, or saying things that were witty that weren't really nice ("hey, it's a cocktail party, so what does it matter?"). Now, I'm conscious of how powerful the choice of our words is. I'm conscious that every single thing I put out is going to come back to me, and that every intention I have is going to manifest in the world. So I try to live more carefully now.

One thing that came to me in my mystical experience was that there was no one right way to spiritual truth, that there was no one true religion, that many paths could lead to the Divine. So I started to read voraciously from all religions. I found important truths in Buddhism (particularly its notion that one could be an activist without anger and without demonizing the opposition). I got big truths from reading about Jesus, from Kabbalah, from 20th century Jewish philosophers. But to try to talk to family members about the ways that my heart was being moved, for example, by Jesus' message was very distressing. I found that even to like the guy a little bit was to be seen as being totally disloyal to the tribe. I understand that his message was used in an oppressive way, but what has happened in the name of Christianity has often had so little to do with his original message.

I've had to be very cautious about the spiritual yearning that is at the center of my life now. I think it can be both trivializing and invasive to talk about these issues with people who don't yearn for a spiritual element in their lives. So I'm very wary of being seen as proselytizing. But if I get a sense that there is a hunger there, then I can feel more comfortable about sharing my own thirst for this dimension of reality. I think we have to be a lot more delicate about how we franchise God and how we bring God into the world. Part of that is to be very sensitive about the fact that my experience of God might not be yours.

Yet I also know that part of my reluctance to talk about all this is fear. Particularly as a woman. It's taken me nine years to build up enough credibility in the analytic/linear world that I can now speak and have some expectation of being heard to a certain degree. It's been a long haul, and very much a gendered haul. I've had to lay down brick after brick of linear, traditionally masculine, post-Enlightenment, rational thinking. Now if I say, "And...I had a mystical experience," it opens the door wide to the fear that I will lose that base of reasoned discourse that was so hard won. It's traditionally women who light candles and who see angels, so there is a fear of being dismissed as a woman. Humility and service, compassion and love, are traditionally



ILLUSTRATION BY NOGA WIZANSKY

gendered "female." This makes it hard for many men to open themselves to their own mystical or spiritual side, for fear that they will be de-manned by the larger culture.

Moreover, it's embarrassing. To talk about one's spiritual life is to make oneself naked. To acknowledge the role of spirit in the world and to let your relationship to it visibly shine is to make yourself as naked as you can be in the world. You are undefended by cynicism, by ego. To be truly present and truly live from your heart is to make yourself profoundly vulnerable and at risk. That is a leap of faith. If you venture something from your heart in relationship to spirit, it's your absolute truth, so if that gets rejected it's your truth that got rejected, not just some clever thing you said on a television show.

I'm a writer. I've been trained to use very specific and pointed language to identify something real. But in talking about the spiritual realm there are places where our and my language break down. Look at how the language of "the politics of meaning" was publicly attacked because it was nonlinear, because it described parts of reality that could not be quantified, even though it described truths that we all know to be true deep down. It's profoundly frightening to me to leave the skill and the defendedness and ego-security I experience as a manipulator of language, and to go into a place where language fails me. If I were to talk about this in public, there I would be, this writer, stammering. It could be mortifying. So it's not easy to come out as spiritual.

The strange thing is that when I do take a leap of faith and talk to an audience and tell this to them and talk about spiritual truths, it often resonates very deeply with people. I haven't been ridiculed—on the contrary, what I'm finding is a hunger that people have to go to this level.

I've also noticed that it's easier to talk about these issues with most of America than it is with the people within the Washington/New York media box. Spiritual truths are more unacceptable in that media/government/policy corridor than they are anywhere else in America, and that only confirms for me how much those elites are behind the rest of America. The press and government are engaged in ways of behaving that are threatened by a spiritual approach, so they are going to be hostile to it.

I confronted this personally when I was asked to be a trial host on a TV show whose format involved getting people to argue their politics with each other, and the more argument and yelling, the more fireworks, the more we were supposedly succeeding. But after the fourth session I was getting headaches and realizing that this way of interacting was degrading to me and in conflict with why we had been put onto this planet. So I had to quit. There isn't yet room in that context to say, "whoa, let's see if we can find some common ground here and build a different way of talking to each other." So my fears about being "out" as a spiritual person are well-founded, because I can no longer get those perks, because I can't do that kind of communication any longer. That kind of institution and the kind of heart I want to develop are increasingly out of sync with each other. So, I sometimes wonder if I might get to be so evolved that I won't have any job opportunities and won't have an income.

There is another fear: whenever you talk about God, there is always the fear that you will sound or be self-righteous or ego-maniacal. A lot of people use God as a resume enhancer or to sell their products or themselves. That's why I shut down when I hear people talk about God and seem to be suggesting that they have the highest truth (I want to switch the channel). It's right to be cautious and wary, and to stress, as I want to here, that I'm only a beginner, that I have a spiritual hunger and not the spiritual truth. Even saying, as I did, that I'm more cautious than I used to be about what I say and what I do, could be heard by others as self-righteous and judgmental.

One form that my spiritual life has taken for me is to do Shabbat every week. I don't have many ways in my daily life to ask God to join what I'm doing. So it's very important to me to have a place in which I can do something with other people in which I can ask God to join me. And it's wonderful to me to be able to give this to my daughter Rosa, and to see how naturally children take to it and experience the change of the air as Shabbat comes in and the sacred enters (you can see it in their faces). It balances a week of very worldly activities.

I've moved my place in the progressive world. When I first started moving in this direction, I felt so alone and marginal. But I keep meeting people like Michael Lerner, Jim Wallis, people at the Center for Visionary Leadership, and people at the 1996 Politics of Meaning Summit hosted by the Foundation for Ethics and Meaning and TIKKUN magazine—people who are both progressive and share a deep spiritual interest. So I am increasingly drawn to people who are doing politics from a faith center or a vision of common global family or politics that comes out of love. I'm happy to know that they are out there—I really didn't know that they were. ❑



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INTERVIEW

An Interview with Paul Wellstone

Jack Newfield

Paul Wellstone can talk like Hubert Humphrey and think like Robert Kennedy. He is now in his second term in the United States Senate from Minnesota (Dem.). Wellstone attended college on a wrestling scholarship and later became a community organizer and teacher at Carleton College. He was first elected to the Senate, in a major upset, in 1990. He has made economic justice and campaign finance reform his priorities. Wellstone is now considering a presidential bid in the year 2000.

NEWFIELD: Let's start with how you got reelected in November 1996. How did you do it—going against a national conservative tide, a million dollars in negative commercials against you. You were the only senator up for reelection who voted against the President's welfare bill. And you ran as yourself; you didn't run in disguise, and you didn't run away from your past. How did you manage that feat?

WELLSTONE: Well, I think that we won by a pretty good margin at the end for a couple of different reasons. First of all, I think it was important to be myself. I think to not weave or bob on different issues, and to be very clear about what I stood for really helped me. I think people will respect you if they think you're being very honest, if you're not trying to talk out of both sides of your mouth and you're treating people with intelligence.

And then the second thing people said is, "You know, we don't agree with him on all issues, but most of the time he's on our side. This is someone who really fights for us." And those were the economic issues. We just stayed so focused on work-a-day majority issues. It was a very populist, progressive economics campaign—from jobs to education to affordable health care to taking on some of the really big concentrations of power, big companies in America. As the Republican attack came in hot and heavy, I would travel—and I must have said this a thousand times—I'd say, "You know, it's true, all these attacks. I mean the big insurance companies and oil companies and pharmaceutical companies, they don't like me much but *they* already have great representation in Washington. It's the rest of the people that need it." I thought I would bore people, but people laughed each time I said it, so I kept saying it.



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF PAUL WELLSTONE

Another point that was important was the style of our ads. In 1990, they were very funny, almost zany. And that was good. This time I wanted to be more serious. I was a senator with a record. I did some talking head ads where I just faced the camera and made a substantive argument about jobs, about the environment, about reform, about health care, about education and children. And people really reacted to the sharp contrast from the substance of my ads to all the search and destroy opposition commercials, you know, slash and burn, all out personal attack ads. People really appreciated it, and I think that helped me a lot.

NEWFIELD: And you say you put more resources into a field operation than most other candidates.

WELLSTONE: Yeah. I think if you take positions which by definition are going to take on some of the real economic power in the country, you're not going to be able to have the same amount of resources for pollsters and TV campaigns and image makers. Second, I think a really good field operation, a really good grassroots effort, is worth two to

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Jack Newfield is the author of six books and a columnist for the New York Post. *He is currently completing a three-hour documentary film on Robert Kennedy that will be aired on the Discovery Network in June of 1998.*

five points in a statewide race. It's very important and we've lost sight of it. I think with progressives, we have this contradiction. We keep saying that we have to talk about issues that are connected to people's lives, but in the style of our campaigning we're not connected to people's lives. I think the two have to go together.

NEWFIELD: You like people?

WELLSTONE: Yeah, I love…that's really my point. I love to campaign, stump speaking. I love to touch and be touched by people. I can do it day and night. I love to drop into cafes and just sit down and talk to people and listen to people. Culturally, it's certainly easier for me to be connected to blue collar neighborhoods, by virtue of my own family background. And I was a community organizer for the better part of several decades, so all of the work in low and moderate income communities and communities of color is something I'm really comfortable doing. You know, sometimes I used to say to students, there are two types of activists I've met. There are those who are activists because they love people and they're great. And then there are those who are activists who actually hate people. And they're scary.

NEWFIELD: Why were you the only senator up for reelection who voted against the welfare reform bill in August of 1996? Did people tell you, "if you vote against this bill, it'll cost you the election?" Why were you the only one?

WELLSTONE: Well, a couple of things. First, on my vote, it would have been impossible for me to have voted for it. I mean, I remember having discussions over the weekend before the final vote and after the President was supporting it. And there were people back in Minnesota and certainly there were people here who had said, "Don't. Think of all the good things you do. Don't vote against this, because then you won't be back here to do some of those good things."

But I had taught classes dealing with welfare policy. I've done organizing with the very families that were going to be affected by it. I guess I really felt like I just knew the subject matter too well to be able to vote any other way.

And then, when you throw in the cuts and benefits to illegal immigrants.... I'm the son of a Jewish immigrant, born in the Ukraine who lived in Russia. It'd be like cutting my hand off.

Now, the other point is it was and is a hellishly difficult issue politically, because what has happened is people have made welfare a value issue. I mean, back in Minnesota, during the campaign, there were lots and lots of attacks about that vote. A lot of people came up to me and said, "Paul, we really like you, but we don't understand your vote. Don't you value work?" They didn't know about the cuts in food stamps…they just thought that if you voted against the bill, it meant you didn't value work. And if you voted for the bill, you did. So it became a really hard vote in that respect, and it was hard to explain it all.

NEWFIELD: Is this because the right-wing was able to define this issue in terms of values rather than economics?

WELLSTONE: Absolutely. Absolutely. Absolutely. And so in a way what I had to do in the campaign was to define the welfare reform vote in terms of values by just looking in a camera—which I'm told is unusual for an ad—and saying, "Look, this may have hurt my chances for reelection, but I was taught to stand up for what you believe in and that's what I've done." Which people could understand.

My last point is I've been traveling the country and I've spent a lot of time in low and moderate income communities, most recently in East L.A. and Watts. And I'll tell you,



I met with the editorial board of the *L.A. Times*, and I made a plea. I said, "Look, you know, I've been reading these different articles, and journalists are defining welfare reform as reduction of case load. Any fool can reduce the case load. All you do is just knock people off. But the only way you can define reform is whether there's reduction in poverty."

NEWFIELD: Let's talk a little bit about the 1960s and what influenced you positively about the Sixties? In terms of ideas, values?

WELLSTONE: Well, I'm going to think out loud. First of all, on the positive side. There is an analysis that's made all too often now on campuses which I think is insidious. I think it's narrow. I think it's self-serving, and I think it leads students and young people astray. The argument is that in the Sixties, you had all these young people who were involved in all these marches and demonstrations, and they were all so emotional and nothing was accomplished. It's a very narrow, self-serving, ahistorical argument. Because an aroused public of that kind, and that pressure external to the Congress, was key in passing all kinds of really important legislation: civil rights legislation, helping to end the war in Vietnam, and a whole lot more. So I think that a "movement politics"—if only I could snap my fingers and will it into existence—the mode of power coming from people who are organized and pushing hard for what they believe in, speaking for what they believe, marching for what they believe in, singing for what they believe in, is terribly important and positive.

NEWFIELD: Do you consider yourself a product of the Sixties?

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF PAUL WELLSTONE

WELLSTONE: Sure. Oh yeah, absolutely, it was my baptism to politics and I learned a great deal because I was lucky enough to be a student at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill when the civil rights movement was exploding all around me. And the thing that I learned from it that then really affected what I did in Minnesota was…I wasn't a hero like a John Lewis. Or Jack Newfield. But what I did learn from being a small part of it was I met all these people who, in James Agee's words, should be famous. I mean, I was around all these people who nobody knows about today.

NEWFIELD: Like who?

WELLSTONE: I can't even remember names anymore, Jack. But men and women who were so courageous and so inspiring and did so much to help other people. And that experience convinced me that big victories can be won by people in communities. Big victories can be won by ordinary people. And that's what has made me always very skeptical and suspicious of top down politics. Which of course may be one of the mistakes that we made in that decade and continue to make today. One of the people who most affected me in his writing was Michael Harrington, his book was very important to me.

NEWFIELD: *The Other America.*

WELLSTONE: Yeah. I was also very moved by—which ties into the travel I'm doing right now—by Nick Kotz's book, *Let Them Eat Promises: The Politics of Hunger*, which won a Pulitzer Prize. I think there he described that very moving scene of the interaction that Bobby Kennedy had with a little girl…

NEWFIELD: In the Mississippi delta…

WELLSTONE: …who was so malnourished, and had that vacant look, and Bobby Kennedy just, you know, broke down crying.

I liked a lot of C. Wright Mills's work. For example, I thought *The Sociological Imagination* was a great book. In particular I liked Mills's warning about the dangers of quote, crackpot realism, which in some ways I think we're very guilty of today. That is to say, letting people with power define for you what it is you organize for and write about and speak for. I think it's a terrible mistake. Saul Alinsky had a big impact on me because I became pretty much of a Saul Alinsky-type of organizer, except in a rural area, and I did a fair amount of writing about my own kind of community organizing work.

When I left North Carolina to teach at Carleton, I was twenty-four. And I was infused with this idea from my experiences in Chapel Hill and from what I had seen that I could use my skills as a political scientist to step forward and help empower people and be a part of struggles for justice. That I wouldn't sort of just be on the sidelines. That feeling was the biggest impact of the Sixties on me.

And as to the weaknesses of the Sixties, well, obviously, with 20/20 hindsight—being married and having children



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF PAUL WELLSTONE

and working and wrestling and also trying to be an activist didn't give me time for the real counterculture part. But I think there was a kind of unbelievable intellectual arrogance and distance from people's problems, not spending a whole lot of time listening to people. There was a kind of contempt for ordinary people that was scary. There was an elitism that was scary. And I think you know a lot of the people in the country had reason to sort of not feel terribly comfortable with what they saw.…

NEWFIELD: What did you get, if anything, out of the Jewish faith, the Jewish tradition? Did that enter the mix of formation of your politics in the Sixties?

WELLSTONE: I think actually the answer is no, not in the Sixties, but very much so in the Nineties.

NEWFIELD: How?

WELLSTONE: My father was, to this day, next to my wife, I think probably the most important person in my life. I was always embarrassed by him when I was younger, because he was very old country and he was almost fifty when I was born. He wasn't very cool, and didn't exactly fit in. But then, at about high school age, for about three years before I went away to school, every night, except on the weekends, I would meet him at ten o'clock in his little kitchen. My mother was a cafeteria worker. My father was, tried to be, a writer. Tried to be a successful writer. Didn't quite make it. Spoke ten languages fluently. Very wise person. Just such a profound person. And we would have…my mother would make sponge cake and we would have hot tea and sponge cake from ten to 10:30. This is something maybe families, fathers and mothers should do with their kids when they're teenagers. And he would talk about the world, and I would listen to him, every night. He was my teacher. There was Martin Buber, and there was Abraham Heschel, but it was never, it was not a religious, officially religious Judaism. He didn't go to the synagogue. I didn't go to the synagogue.

When I was younger, it wasn't so much Judaism per se that influenced me. We were very young, nineteen, when we were married. I had a child, and then I became involved in the civil rights movement and anti-hunger, anti-poverty

work, the anti-war movement. Now that I've gotten older, and my mom and dad are no longer alive, I think back more to them—I'm sure this happens to a lot of people—and I start thinking, "You know, why do you like books so much? Why did you go into teaching? Where did you get this…why do you do that…where is this from…." You know, it's like the Einstein quote. "The pursuit of knowledge for its own sake." The passion for the underdog, the strong desire for personal independence. These are the features of the Jewish tradition that make me thank my lucky stars I belong to it.

So much of that came from my parents, and as I've now thought more about myself, so did the values that are really important to me—books, ideas, education, opportunity, the First Amendment, which is so critical, I think, to the Jewish people being able to survive, much less flourish. A sense of…a sense that to love God is to love justice, which is very much a part of our Jewish tradition. All of that. So it didn't come from the synagogue, but it sure came from my mother and father. And they sure were Jewish.

NEWFIELD: Let's talk a little bit about an issue like campaign finance reform, because one of the things that I wonder about is (A) whether the average voter really cares about it. And (B) to go back to the lessons of the Sixties, whether you can do anything in the Senate without a grassroots movement for it.

WELLSTONE: I think people care. The Catch-22 problem is that people don't think it's going to happen. They feel absolutely disempowered about this, and therefore, there isn't nearly the amount of grassroots activism you need for the pressure external to this Congress, the mode of power, to make the changes that we need. So you know, we're not even going to be able to pass a quarter of a loaf of a bread, which is the McCain-Feingold bill.

I introduced this Clean Money/Clean Election option with John Kerry (D, MA) and then we got some other people to join us. They passed it in Maine, they passed it in Vermont. They've got initiatives in Washington and Massachusetts and Missouri. They're going to pass this in a lot of states. And I think it's more populist. It basically gets all the private money out. It's public financing. Just set up a clean election fund. And I think it offers a better chance for change because the pressure's going to bubble up from the work that we can do at the state level, and then put the pressure back here in Washington.

NEWFIELD: What should be our priority in the areas you care the most about: economic justice, jobs, health care? What's the next great fight? Is there an issue or a cause that can again generate a popular movement behind it like ending segregation or the Vietnam War did in the 1960s?

WELLSTONE: I think there's tremendous potential. I think that the void or the vacuum is, to go back to Michael Harrington's book, *The Other America*, is that there are two Americas today. But the other America is not just the poor or poor minorities. You've got one America with ever mounting access to the things that make life fuller in possibility. And you've got another America struggling to make ends meet. And you got one America traveling down the superhighway, and another America without the rudimentary skills to make a decent living. You've got one America that's got the money to purchase the security of gated communities and private schools, and another America that every day has got to face social decay in schools and libraries and hospitals that don't' work. And you've got one America that is trying to decide whether to go to Europe or Asia and another America that's trying to decide how to take the kids to a ball game.

This, the other America, is the majority. When I travel and spend time in cafes, which are my focus groups, it's amazing, no one ever comes up to me and talks about left, right, or center. Nobody ever even talks in that language. Nobody ever asks me whether I'm for an expanded welfare state or tough love or the free market. But it's very concrete. And it's all around on how to earn a decent living. It's all around how to give your children the care you know they need and deserve. It's all around affordable health care.

NEWFIELD: Let me ask you one last question. What are the odds that you will decide to run for president in 2000, and how do you make that kind of a decision? What goes into it?

WELLSTONE: Well, I mean, right now it's kind of 50/50. I can add up the pluses and minuses for doing it and not doing it.

NEWFIELD: What are the three biggest pluses in each category?

WELLSTONE: I think that the way I'll make the decision is I've been doing a fair amount of travel. I was in Iowa briefly on Saturday. I'll be going to New Hampshire in a couple of weeks. I've been in Colorado, I've been to Florida, I've been to California. This is independent of campaign travel, just focusing on poverty in the country. I'm doing it to sort of challenge the Democratic Party and the administration, the President, and the Vice-President. But I'm trying to do it with a twinkle in my eyes, so it doesn't come off bitter or shrill.

When I was in Iowa about a month ago, I was giving a stump speech that really was going well. I love speaking, and this was really going well. I was speaking on these economic issues, mainly, and one of the two gubernatorial candidates was there and was kidding me, saying, "Well, Paul, you've been here a couple of times. What's going on?" I said, "Well, you know, I came to Iowa to represent the Democratic wing of the Democratic Party." And the place just went wild.

NEWFIELD: Do you think the Vice-President is your strongest or weakest potential opponent?

WELLSTONE: I don't know yet. (laughs)

NEWFIELD: Okay, thank you for thinking out loud. ❑



The End of the Middle Class

Charles Derber

The "middle class squeeze" is a mantra of American politics. Every American president since Richard Nixon—none more noisily than Bill Clinton—has trumpeted some version of the middle class squeeze as the great domestic problem of the end of the century—and virtually all have been elected on their promise to undo the economic pressures and cultural forces breeding middle class rage. Republican analyst Kevin Phillips, in his powerful book *Boiling Point*, argues that the relentless economic sabotage of the middle class, dating from the early 1970s, created the Reagan revolution and today's right-wing populism. Liberal Democratic analysts such as Barry Bluestone argue that the middle class squeeze—manifested in stagnant wages, declining job security and benefits, increased tax burdens, and reduced government benefits for middle Americans—are finally making ordinary Americans mad as hell about Reaganomics and open to a new New Deal.

The idea of the middle class squeeze is ultimately misleading, however. What is going on is not a "squeeze" on the middle class but a mortal threat to its existence. The middle class as we know it is slipping into oblivion. The timing of its death is not precisely predictable and the process could be reversed by dramatic politial intervention. But if current trends continue, the middle class will be treated by future historians as an antiquated relic of the 20th century.

The idea of the middle class has always been manipulative, invented largely to disguise the perpetual polarization between a large working class and a rich and powerful upper class in what was supposed to be a classless society. Nonetheless, the idea of a middle class gained some legitimate credibility after the New Deal when millions of working class Americans finally gained a measure of economic and social security. The combination of New Deal social welfare protections, labor agreements offering secure work and steadily rising wages and benefits, and unchallenged American dominance of the world in the post-War era turned many workers into suburbanites with an unexpected claim on the good life, freed from the devastating insecurity and unpredictability that had historically been the fate of ordinary Americans. They could invest in a family, a house, and an education. The middle class led an *ordered* and *orderly* life, with a magical sense of personal control and freedom from catastrophic risk.

As we approach the end of the millenium, the New Deal social contract which created the middle class is dying. In its place is arising a new world of contingency. Jobs, benefits, and state entitlements are all being dismantled and restructured on a contingent model. Risks are being systematically shifted from the corporation and state to the individual worker. The real import is not a squeeze on the middle class but the destruction of the conditions that made a middle class possible.

ILLUSTRATION BY RUSS ANDO

Author of The Wilding of America *(St. Martin's Press), Charles Derber has a new book forthcoming that is provisionally titled* The Incorporation of America: How Corporations Are Taking Over Our Lives and What We Can Do About It.

The heart of this change is the end of the job. Long-term employment was the centerpiece of the social contract that gave birth to the middle class. Today, as James Meadows, AT&T's vice president of human resources, proclaims proudly: "People need to recognize we are all contingent workers in one form of or another. We are all victims of time and place." At AT&T, as in most other large corporations, there are fewer and fewer long-term jobs. "Jobs are being replaced," explained Meadows, by "projects" and "fields of work." People are no longer corporate employees but temporary "vendors who come to this company to sell their skills." Contingent work, as one scholar dryly notes, is the corporate equivalent of the "one night stand."

The number of contingent jobs is exploding, growing five times as fast as the number of conventional jobs. One of every four American workers is now contingent—either temping, contracting or working part-time. It is hardly surprising that current polls show that two-thirds of Americans feel work is less secure and that more than half say they expect this insecurity to last for many years. At least half worry about losing their own jobs. "For the first time in fifty years," says Richard T. Curtin, a University of Michigan survey researcher, "we are recording a decline in people's expectations. And their uncertainty and anxiety grow the farther you ask them to look into the future."

Most major corporations in America are contracting out jobs in big numbers. Nike, Bugle Boy, and Mattel, which outsource virtually all their manufacturing jobs to Asia, are leading the way. Bell Atlantic and UPS are more typical, with conventional full-time employees constituting about half the workforce and the other half a lumpen-proletariat of part-timers, temps, and contractors. In an ominous portent of future trends, Volkswagen has created a plant operated entirely by contractors and without a single VW employee. All functions in the plant, from line assembly to cleaning the floor to management itself, are carried out by other companies who bring in their own help.

Corporations spin the shift toward contingency as one of entrepreneurial oppportunity for the middle class. "Bid farewell to unconditional lifetime employment," says Kevin Becraft, director of employee relations at IBM, but say hello to "shared responsibility. Employers have an obligation to provide opportunity for self-improvement; employees have to take charge of their own careers." But the more sober reality is that the end of long-term employment pulls the plug on the lifeline of the middle class. While many contingent workers (including temps, consultants, part-timers and leased workers) may do well in good times, they face a chronic uncertainty about their long-term prospects that deeply threatens the middle class entitlements of home-ownership, higher education, and peace of mind about the future.

Secure retirement, a foundation stone of the middle class, is devastated both by the restructuring of benefits on a contingent model and the privatization of welfare state benefits. Corporate benefits, particularly pensions, are being shifted from guaranteed payments by the employer (so-called defined benefit plans) to risky contributions by the employer and worker (so-called defined contribution plans). Like temp jobs which shift the costs of the business cycle onto the individual worker, contingent benefits shift vast risk onto the individual retiree. Privatization of Medicare and Social Security likewise promise to end the government's underwriting of the middle class.

Since the election of Ronald Reagan, the federal government has worked closely with corporations to build the new contingent world. Reagan was the master ideologue who used the rhetoric of entrepreneurialism and free markets to justify the end of protective business and welfare state covenants. Clinton has put the Democratic Party's signature on contingency, committing both major parties to the end of the New Deal and the new notions of entreprenurialism and "flexible" labor markets. Clinton has used the rhetoric of communitarianism to legitimate daggers in the middle class heart, including the support of global outsourcing of labor and the end of the welfare state.

The end of the middle class has been underwritten by policies of both parties which have decimated labor and other countervailing forces to business. Reagan's savage destruction of PATCO (the air traffic controllers' union which went on strike) in his first year as president symbolized his overt use of the federal government's powers to weaken unions. Clinton has outdone Reagan in his support of corporate-driven globalization and corporate free trade agreements which profoundly weaken unions and the middle class. Clinton's support of the new proposed global economic constitution, the Multilateral Agreement on Investments, which protects investments around the world with no comparable protection of worker rights, symbolizes the priorities of his administration.

If the middle class is as deeply threatened as I suggest, why do we not see signs of a political revolt against corporate America? One reason is that not everyone in the middle class fears contingency. Millions of Americans seek part-time work even though they also need the medical and other benefits they are foregoing. Many highly skilled programmers, engineers, and other professionals can get much higher pay on contingent projects than on conventional jobs and relish the freedom, variety, and excitement of freelancing. These elites of the middle class are more likely to vote or be politically engaged in other ways than their less fortunate counterparts—and they will punish politicians who oppose the new labor market arrangements.

The political participation of the middle class majority—those whose wages and life prospects fall dramatically with contingency—is constrained not only by lack of time and discretionary income but by the absence of real political choices. President Clinton, as a "new Democrat," has effectively eliminated the Democratic Party as a vehicle for middle class resis-

tance to the new corporate contract. Clinton's embrace of fiscal austerity, free trade, and "flexible" labor arrangements makes him virtually indistinguishable from Republicans on core economic issues. Without a choice, the new middle class losers disengage from politics and embrace the passivity of the couch potato or the xenophobic solutions of a Pat Buchanan.

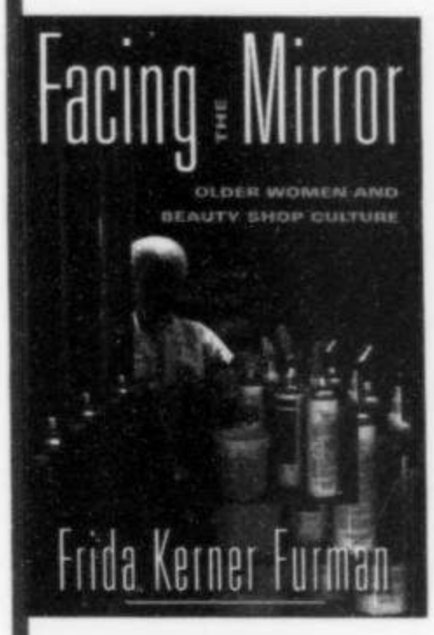
There are some encouraging exceptions to this otherwise discouraging cycle. The defeat of Clinton's fast-track "free trade" initiative in November 1997 may have marked the beginning of a fight for the soul of the Democratic Party, a fight likely to be played out in the Presidential primary race between Congressman Richard Gephardt, the Democratic minority leader in the House, and Vice President Al Gore. Gore speaks for the New Democrats while Gephardt advocates a populist Democratic Party speaking to the anxiety and grim circumstances of the middle class. If Gephardt were to pull off a surprising victory, the Democratic Party might again become a source of change, pulling workers and the threatened middle class back into political life.

There are signs that a middle class revolt could emerge as part of a revival of the labor movement and grassroots social movements. The old social contract created a middle class that was complacent about America and turned off by both labor and generic protest. A middle class threatened with extinction becomes increasingly less complacent and more receptive to a critique of corporate dominance. The public support of the Teamsters during the UPS strike marked the first time in decades that Americans cheered a union as it took on a major corporation. The focus of the strike on the condition of part-timers and other contingent workers helped America's middle class wake up to the deadly threat it faces. The creation of a labor movement with deep appeal to the middle class now stands as a real, if still largely unrealized, possibility.

Identity movements can also become a vehicle of working and middle class awakening, since those most devastated by contingency are female and minority workers. Feminist and civil rights groups are beginning to address the issues of economic insecurity, as are "third sector" community groups which increasingly understand that the health of both inner city ghettos and suburbs depends on a new social contract with corporate America. Teach-ins about corporate power that have taken place on hundreds of campuses—the biggest teach-in movement since the Vietnam war—suggests that students, perhaps dimly aware of the precariousness of their own middle class futures, could also join this movement.

Let us recognize that most of us now share the historic condition of contingency. It is time to find new solutions. Like the New Deal approach fifty years ago, it will require affirming the great responsibilities that corporations and the state owe ordinary Americans. But these will have to be rewritten in a new social contract, one which softens the sharp edges of contingency but will not recreate the shop-worn covenants of the past. ❑

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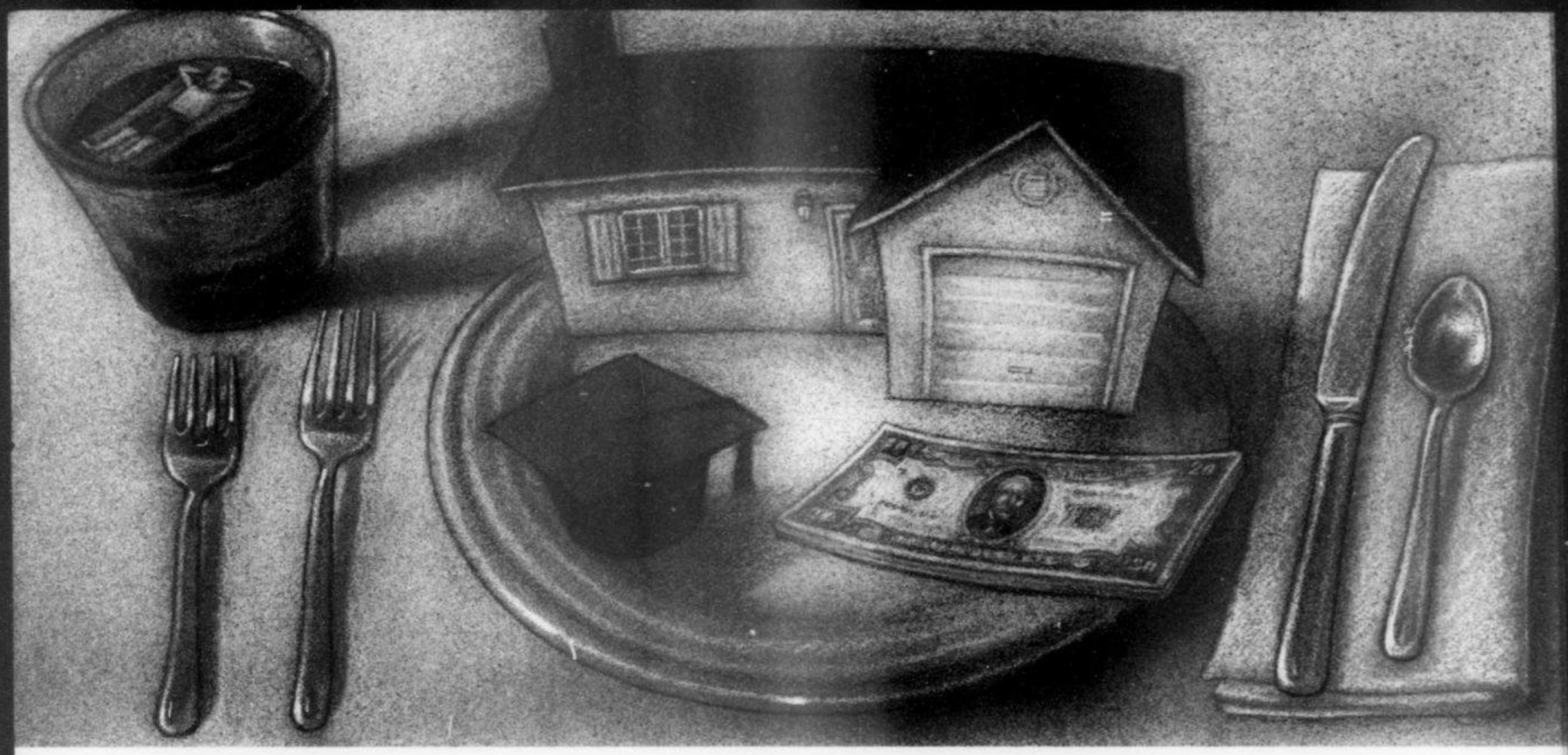
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ROUTLEDGE



Do You Know Where Your Next Paycheck is Coming From?

by Thad Williamson

People sometimes assume that a politics seeking to address the deep hunger for meaning in American culture must be opposed to demands for economic security. But that's not the case. The politics of meaning movement has critiqued liberal and progressive voices for focusing *only* on economic issues. We certainly recognize that economic security is a fundamental precondition of a good society. People can't build loving relationships and strong communities when they don't have economic security. When people are forced to move from place to place to find work, they don't have a chance to put down roots and develop the special connections which evolve when neighbors who know each other share a particular place for a long time.

Today, it is increasingly obvious that American capitalism cannot provide and does not even value such economic security. What was once common sense among conservatives as well as progressives is now a mere echo in conventional political discourse. Even former Secretary of Labor Robert Reich, widely regarded as the most liberal influence in Clinton's first term inner circle, speaks regularly of adjusting to a society in which everyone must be prepared to change career paths multiple times. And that message has certainly reached American workers. In a recent Harris poll, 94 percent of salaried employees agreed that "it is their responsibility to do all they can to hone existing skills, develop new ones, and enhance their careers."

The suddenly fashionable idea that economic security can and should be casually tossed out the window of history needs to be challenged in a principled way by the politics of meaning movement. To be sure, a steady paycheck to each and all is not enough. It is equally important to address people's thirst for work that utilizes their talents and provides a sense that what they do matters, and to think through ways in which economic life could reinforce and strengthen, not undermine, the notion of community. Moreover, it needs to be acknowledged that in the context of a society that does not provide either security or a sense of meaning, many people will choose to give up security in order to do something which is uniquely important to them or which makes a particular social contribution. Still others are willing to forego economic security simply to avoid being part of the corporate-track rat race.

But these individual solutions won't create a healthy, meaning-oriented society. Indeed, the frequently forwarded "solution" to job insecurity, that middle class folks should learn to be more competitive and cutthroat, is a recipe for the continued unraveling of community. Without economic security, human beings will continue to be treated as little more than a bundle of skills. The middle class as we know it

ILLUSTRATIONS BY RUSS ANDO

Thad Williamson is a consultant to the National Center for Economic and Security Alternatives in Washington and a graduate student at Union Theological Seminary in New York. He is the author of What Comes Next? *(NCESA, 1997).*

may well disappear, as Charles Derber argues in his accompanying article. To reverse this trend, the fundamental question must shift from "What's going to happen to me?" to "What's going to happen to us?"

Conventional political discussion assumes that white-collar Americans will never think through, let alone act upon, the latter question. But this assumption is predicated on the notion that the future must be like the past. Although the economy is now humming along by conventional measurements, the bet here is that we are one recession away from seeing the economic security question reopened as a major public issue. Moreover, the very phenomenon of "downsizing" opens up several previously unavailable possibilities for serious change:

1. Fewer citizens and communities have their loyalty tied down to corporations today than in the past. Citizens and communities who once identified strongly with a company—and by extension, corporate America as a whole—might be able, for the first time, to envision being loyal to something else.

At a minimum, localities once defined by their relationship to a corporation might now—with sufficient policy backing—have the opportunity to recast their community identity along different lines. For example, as Michigan has already done, states could create funds aimed at assisting workers or local governments to take over productive facilities when corporations close a factory that may be inherently profitable but an inefficient use of capital from the corporate perspective. Or, on a more modest scale, as political scientist David Imbroscio has shown in some depth in his book *Reconstructing City Politics,* cities can pursue any number of policies aimed at building up a locality's own economic resources from within rather than following the conventional development path of seeking to attract corporate capital via tax giveaways and other subsidies.

2. The downsizing of America's management class also means that significant talent has been made available that might be applied to alternative forms of economic development. Common problems with smaller worker-owned firms and grassroots organizations include substandard financial practices and lack of organizational know-how. Today there are plenty of middle managers left adrift by the new economy, some of whom could potentially help fill the expertise gap that often afflicts grassroots economic endeavors.

3. More and more people are jumping off the breakneck bandwagon of corporate life, through various forms of "downshifting," from deliberately forgoing promotions in order to prioritize family time to out-and-out adoption of "voluntary simplicity" lifestyles. "Downshifting" is very much a response of the privileged, but the phenomenon indicates that many more people feel deeply alienated and would be open to serious change in the structure of working life—if they were sure they would have economic security. Indeed, anecdotal evidence suggests that not everyone who has been put out of the corporate treadmill wants to get back on—and no doubt many others would feel likewise if viable, livelihood-supporting alternatives existed.

4. There is now rising public sympathy for the struggles of the contingent and part-time workforce as exemplified by public response to UPS strike last August. This sympathy for the UPS workers is indicative of a larger frustration and rage at how the promises of secure, remunerative employment once made by corporate America have simply been removed from the table, a frustration progressive politicians have yet to tap in a productive way. The November defeat of fast-track trade legislation, over the opposition of the President, suggests that a corner may have been turned in the willingness of the public to permit politicians to simply equate what's good for corporations with what's good for the country.

Economists, politicians, and journalists have forwarded numerous theories as to why the economy has shifted away from the provision of secure, middle class jobs and towards a more inequitable distribution of wages. What is needed from progressive movements is not, however, a technical explanation of how much weight to give to each of the factors driving these recent trends. Rather, what should be emphasized is first, a coherent explanation of how the underlying logic of the economic system values neither economic security nor the development and sustenance of healthy human beings; second, a coherent vision of how we might build a political and economic structure which did place those values front and center; and third, a self-conscious awareness of the historical enormity of the decades-long task of building a different kind of economy.

In the past, liberal Democrats have emphasized support for unions, protection of existing jobs, and a long wish list of national legislative priorities as the best way to attain economic security for everyday Americans within a corporate capitalist framework. Simply put, the idea was that those lucky enough to have good jobs should get to keep them. Less attention was paid to those not fortunate enough to have a job worth keeping, whether what went on at the job sustained or threatened human well-being, or whether workers or community members had any control over the priorities of firms (or even their own unions).

A politics of meaning-informed view should uphold the notion of economic security but root it within a different framework. What should be emphasized is the need to build up an inclusive, rich concept of community in which persons in a given geographic area could share in the work of economic and political self-governance, secure in the notion that their workplaces would not disappear tomorrow and that they themselves would not be thrown out in the street at the next recession or round of merger mania. This vision of economic security would extend far beyond the old labor/protect jobs model to emphasize community participation in the decision making of firms, making work an interesting, life-enhancing experience, and seeking ways

to reverse the long trend in which pursuit of private consumer goods and entertainment have replaced personal interaction and experiences of sharing.

What steps, then, can be taken to forward a fresh, far-reaching vision of economic security for each and all, beyond the usual liberal wish list?

- We should further develop and drastically expand democratic economic alternatives that are committed to their communities, including municipal enterprise, community-rooted worker firms, and community development corporations. In the long term, if corporations cannot or will not provide stable jobs to communities over time, we must ensure that another institutional form capable of doing so evolves.
- Bolster smaller scale efforts to start building a different sense of community here and now. These efforts should move beyond the current civil society discourse on the need to "bowl" together to create ways to start sharing together too. The burgeoning community supported agriculture movement, "Time Dollar" and local currency programs, day care cooperatives, cohousing experiments, and community land trusts are all examples of this form of community-building. While none of these initiatives alone can make a drastic impact on a particular community, they are important ways to begin rebuilding the different cultural sensibility needed if larger-scale solutions are to become possible.



- Provide an income stream to all citizens, as a matter of right, regardless of whether one is lucky enough to have a good job or not. A discussion of ways to establish guaranteed minimum incomes—such as using profits from community-owned enterprises to fund a social dividend—is now a hot topic in Europe due to the work of the Basic Income European Network. A related possibility is to gradually shift to shorter work weeks and thereby spread the existing work around, as much of Europe is already doing, while supplementing workers' incomes with some form of "social dividend". Another important, if less dramatic proposal is that of *Business Week* economist William Wolman, who advocates establishing public job "catastrophe insurance" policies. Such job insurance would be more generous than current unemployment benefits, and would lend public recognition to the fact that almost any worker, no matter how diligent or productive, can quickly lose their job, through no fault of their own, in today's roller-coaster economy.
- Just as individuals should have some form of ongoing security and not be left to face the market unprotected, so should there be mechanisms to provide communities with ongoing economic security. Ultimately, this may mean not simply public assistance to community-based firms to help anchor communities, but establishing a full-blown planning agency which could provide funds to communities transitioning from one industry to another or recovering from a plant closing. An important precedent in this regard is how military base closures have been handled—the federal government, responding to very vocal political insistence, has set aside billions of dollars to help affected communities like Charleston, SC survive and even flourish after base closings.
- Another important lever which points to the same goal is the TIKKUN-sponsored Social Responsibility Initiative, which would make a firm's record in laying off workers and abandoning communities a key criteria in assessing a firm's total "ethical impact." A company with a poor record in this regard, unless the closings were absolutely necessary to ensure the firm's survival, could be denied access to government contracts and subsidies, and even, conceivably, lose its corporate charter. This plank of the Social Responsibility Initiative/Ethical Impact Report idea moves beyond much of the existing discourse on "socially responsible" business, which has not often challenged the prerogatives of corporations to shift capital and close plants at will.

These ideas are only suggestive of a larger range of specific, practical policies which might be implemented if progressive politicians and thinkers faced up to the full harshness of what the downsizing trends mean: that American capitalism does not value anyone's economic security or the need of human beings to grow, plan for the future, and not be consumed by anxiety; that all the career self-help books in the world cannot change that fact; and that a different economic system based on different priorities needs to be pieced together.

To be sure, serious progressive economists have been making similar arguments for a long time. But today the audience likely to be receptive to such an argument, honestly stated, is probably far larger than anyone suspects. Indeed, that audience is certain to grow in time, as conventional policy "solutions" continue to fall far short of addressing Americans' real economic pain, particularly the politically explosive pain of those who once felt entitled to economic security but now have learned the hard way that capitalism's promises cannot be trusted.

The logic of the choices before us remains unavoidably clear. If the notion of an economically secure nation of stable communities—the middle class ideal at its best—is to be saved from the chopping block of history, then the response of white-collar Americans cannot simply be to spice up their own resumes, nor to focus solely on the short-term, woefully inadequate political correctives offered by politicians in both parties. Ultimately, the wheel of history must be turned in an entirely different direction, or the very idea of a healthy, people-centered economy based on secure incomes will become but a historical curiosity in the new century. ❑

Simply Jewish



Rabbi Rami Shapiro

All of a sudden everyone is on the spirituality bandwagon. Not long ago the word was practically unknown in Jewish circles. Today it is fast replacing "continuity" as the buzzword of Jewish survival. What we need, however, is not another buzzword, but a clear and concise articulation of Judaism. With that in mind, I offer my own not-so-humble attempt to outline a Judaism for the 21st century. I call it Simply Jewish.

Simply Jewish rests upon two sources: Leviticus 19:2 and Micah 6:8. The first provides us with our mission: *Be holy*. The second with our means: *Do justly, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God*. These texts offer no fixed form or ritual. Instead they demand an unconditioned response to the immediate address of God: Be Holy, now, in the midst of what is happening.

Fleeing from the immediacy of God's call, we hide behind fixed forms and make idols of ancestral habit. We call this *Halacha*, and seem never to notice the irony. Halacha comes from the word *halach*, to walk. Walking must be fluid, open, graceful, and free if one is to maintain balance and navigate the ever changing terrain of life. When we freeze Halacha into fixed forms, we kill the spirit of Judaism, sacrifice soulfulness on the altar of conformity, and reduce the Call to an echo.

If we return to Halacha as the way we walk, if we free it to recreate itself over and again in natural response to the address of God as it presents itself to us moment to moment, we revive the spirit of Judaism and allow it to speak once again for soulful living. Yet this fluidity of form does not negate a cultural foundation. On the contrary, Simply Jewish understands Judaism to uphold three principles, five cultural pillars, and three categories of practice that each generation must reclaim for itself if its Judaism is to be authentic and intrinsically compelling.

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The principles at the heart of Jewish civilization are three: *achdut*/unity, *ki tov*/ the intrinsic worth of creation, and *mashiah*/the future perfection of life. In each age we are called upon to renew these principles in our lives. The form this renewal takes is driven by the contingencies we face. It is the present, not the past, that shapes our Judaism. The principles themselves, however, are timeless.

Achdut/Unity: All things are one in and with God. The interdependence of all things in God carries with it a moral imperative, Ethical Monotheism. Ethical Monotheism holds that the oneness of God necessitates one world, one race, and one moral code—justice and compassion for all.

Ki Tov/Goodness: *Ki tov*/It is good (Genesis 1:4) is God's judgment of creation. The world is not illusory or sinful. The world, with all its sorrow and imperfection, is yet worthy of our love, care, and respect. Judaism does not despair of this world, nor reduce creation to chance or illusion. Every living thing is a manifestation of God and deserves our respect and care.

Mashiah/Perfectibility: The idea of a future messianic redemption is Judaism's bold proclamation of eternal hope. The world can be perfected, and it is we who are called upon to perfect it. In this we are partners with God, made in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26) to bring forth the promise of creation.

While resting on universal principles, a living civilization also articulates a particular character. Judaism's character is rooted in five pillars: God, Torah, Israel, Mitzvot, and *Mentschlichkeit*.

Definitions of each pillar change over time, yet there can be no authentic Judaism without all five. Here is my brief definition of each: God is the Source and Substance of all reality. We seek to know ourselves as part of God, feeling connected to, and compassion for, all life. Torah is the mytho-ethical story of the Jewish people's encounter with God. We turn to Torah to deepen our own God-encounter. Israel is both a place and a people. We connect with Jews everywhere through a shared vocabulary (Hebrew), a shared poetry (prayer), a shared story (Torah), a shared homeland (Eretz Yisrael), a shared mission (Micah 6:8), a shared culture (Shabbat and Holy Days), and a shared vision of the world as a place worthy of our utmost love, care, and respect. Mitzvot are means to connect with God. *Mentschlichkeit* is the art of being decent, caring, courageous, and kind.

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Being Jewish and doing Jewishly must be synonymous: principles and pillars come alive in deeds. A Judaism without obligatory deeds is irrelevant. Yet a Judaism that does not allow for the creative evolution of the deed is dead.

Rami Shapiro, PhD, is author of Minyan *and* Wisdom of the Jewish Sages *(both from Bell Tower). He also directs The Virtual Yeshiva, an on-line resource for Jewish Renewal, at http://www.rasheit.org/.*

ILLUSTRATIONS BY KEVIN HARRIS

SIMPLY JEWISH

Simply Jewish honors both obligation and creativity by affirming three categories of practice provided by the Prophet Micah: *Do justly. Love kindness. Walk humbly with your God.* From these I derive the twelve mitzvot of Simply Jewish living.

Micah's first category of practice, *Asot Mishpat*/Do Justly, obligates us to three mitzvot:

Eco-Kashrut/ETHICAL CONSUMPTION: What you eat, wear, and buy impacts on your life, the lives of others, and the survivability of the planet. You are obligated to care for yourself (*shmirat ha–guf*), for others (*ahavta l'rayacha k'mocha*), for animals (*tz'ar ba'alei chayyim*), and for nature as a whole (*bal tashchit*) by linking your diet and your desires to the highest ethical and environmental standards.

Tzedaka/JUST USE OF FINANCES: How you earn, save, invest, and spend your money impacts both self and society. Take care to earn your money ethically, and use it wisely. Practice *tzedaka*, donating a percentage of your income to help people in need.

Tikkun ha-Olam/PERFECTING THE WORLD: You are an agent of holiness, a partner with God repairing the world with justice and compassion. You are obligated to support—with time, money, and other resources—those organizations and efforts you believe will make the world a more just and holy place.

Micah's second category is *Ahavat Chesed*/Love Kindness, and obligates us to four mitzvot.

Gemilut Chasadim/ACTS OF KINDNESS: Kindness toward yourself, toward others, and toward nature is essential to holiness. Understand the power of kindness, and seek out opportunities for doing kindness daily.

Lashon haRah/AVOIDING HATEFUL SPEECH: Words have power, both creative and destructive. Be careful to use your words to heal rather than hurt; to avoid speaking gossip; and to clothe truth in compassion.

Hachnasat Orchim/EMBRACING THE STRANGER: Loving your neighbor (Leviticus 19:18) and welcoming the stranger require an opening of self. Cultivate openness and friendship in yourself and others, and help free those caught in the shadow of "otherness."

Shalom Bayit/PEACEFUL HOUSEHOLDS: Celebrate family, and seek to improve your ability to love, befriend, and parent. Condemn domestic violence, and learn to defuse anger, end violence, and help those who suffer from abuse. Place *mezuzot* on the doorposts of your house to remind yourself of the holiness of home.

Micah's third category is *Hatznaya Lechet*/walking humbly with God, cultivating spiritual intimacy, engaging in practices that free the self from the limits of ego and the illusion of self-centered dualistic thinking. Simply Jewish obligates us to five such practices.

SHABBAT/DAY OF MINDFULNESS: Set aside the seventh day for rest and mindfulness; remembering and giving thanks



for all that you have and are. Make Shabbat, and find in her a refuge and a delight.

Limud Torah/LEARNING TORAH: Torah is a mytho-ethical compass pointing your way toward holiness. Study Torah weekly to reclaim the deep insight of timeless tales and eternal virtues.

Hitbodedut/GOD ENCOUNTER: Spiritual practice is opening to God, and awakening to the unity of all things in God. Open to God through daily prayer and meditation.

Teshuva/PERFECTING ONESELF: Respect your capacity for holiness, and your ability to choose blessing over curse, good over evil. Measure the quality of your actions nightly, and seek to improve them daily.

Brachot/THE WAY OF WONDER: Awaken your capacity for wonder through the practice of *brachot*, cultivating gratitude, grace, and awe by honoring the ordinary miracles of your everyday life.

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Judaism is at a crossroad. One road leads to a pretend piety, a retreat from the Call to Be Holy, and hiding behind a fetish of fixed form. In the end our pretense will prove hollow and without a nurturing passion.

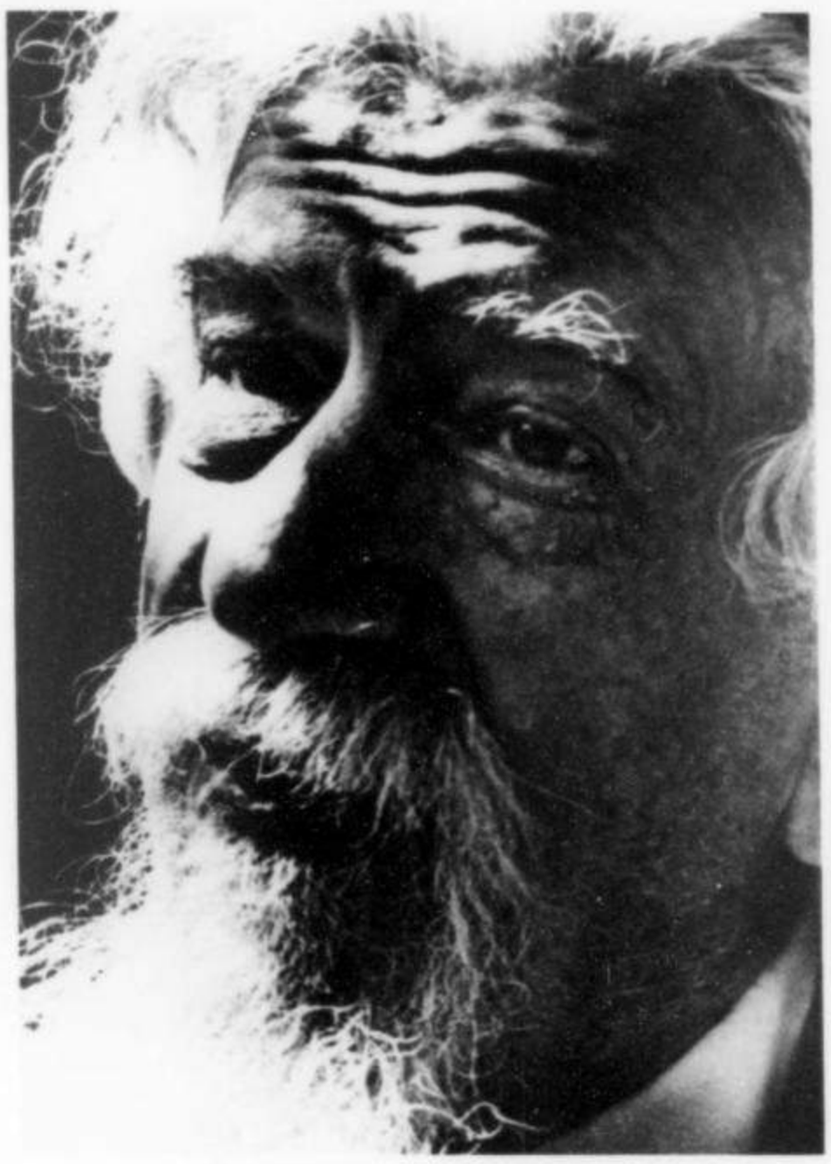
The other responds to the address of God here and now, finding in our response the power and passion to renew our mission of holiness not by imitating the past but by meeting the present.

Simply Jewish is my way of response. For some it is too thin. For others it is too fat. I invite you to write TIKKUN with your own version of an essential Judaism, stepping beyond rhetoric and sharing what you take to be the heart of the matter. Perhaps we can help each other to hear the voice Micah heard—that we, too, might know what God requires. ❑

ABRAHAM JOSHUA HESCHEL

I first met Abraham Joshua Heschel when I was twelve years old, and for the next five years I spent every Saturday afternoon reading (and later, rereading) a chapter of his incredibly moving God in Search of Man. *Although I had been to many synagogue services, and had met leaders in the Jewish world (people like David Ben Gurion and Abba Eban and Abba Hillel Silver), Heschel was the first person I ever met who took God seriously. And he made it safe for me to follow that same path.*

A year later, when I was thirteen, Heschel invited me to visit him at the Jewish Theological Seminary, and from thence began a relationship that would last till his death in December, 1972. It was because of Heschel that I studied at the Seminary, meeting privately with him to read and discuss contemporary philosophy, and it was the terrible way that Heschel was treated at the Seminary that convinced me not to attend the Rabbinical School after I had been accepted. Heschel visited me in Berkeley, and he credited me with pushing his thinking on Vietnam, but all that I was doing was to follow the implications of all that he had taught me.



Heschel's death in 1972 was a blow to all of us who had our thinking shaped by the man who would later be recognized as the most significant American Jewish theologian of the twentieth century. It was Heschel's legacy that played an important role in sparking the Jewish Renewal movement, and it was this same legacy that was central to the creation of TIKKUN *Magazine in 1986. We see ourselves as his disciples precisely because we do not separate Jewish spirituality from social action. There are far too many Heschelites today who want nothing to do with the contemporary struggles for social justice, particularly when they require challenging the Jewish establishment. Yet Heschel, following the lead of our Prophets, understood that to take Torah seriously you had to challenge the way Judaism itself was being misused by those who claimed to be its most powerful adherents.*

TIKKUN continues to mourn the loss of this great human being, and is delighted to present a symposium in his honor. Zecher Tzadik Livracha—*May his memory be a blessing.*

—Rabbi Michael Lerner, Editor, TIKKUN

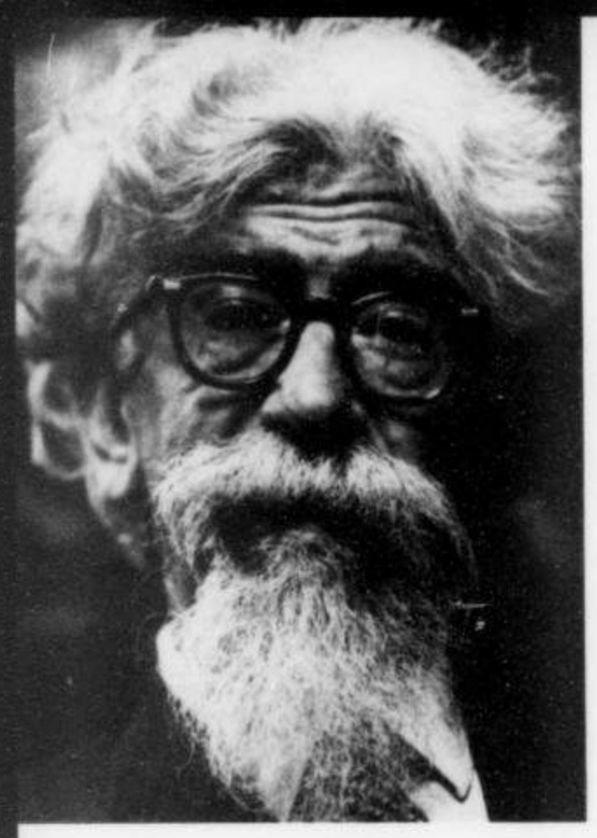
Susannah Heschel

Abba Hillel Silver Chair in Jewish Studies at Case Western Reserve University

Everyone who knew my father seems to have a special memory of him and a feeling of having had a unique relationship with him. Students and colleagues, Christians and Jews, casual acquaintances and close relatives all tell me that they felt he understood them, deeply and profoundly, and usually in ways that they did not experience from many other people. They felt respected by his attentiveness and gained an immeasurable sense of self-esteem through their encounters with him. What was it about him that evoked such responses? I believe there are two answers: his personality, which expressed an enormous depth of empathy and sensitivity, and his way of thinking, which placed conventional approaches to religion upside down and gave a unique voice to religious experience.

Even after twenty-five years, my father's presence remains vivid to me and my memories of him are visceral. When I think of him, my first memories are either of his humor and playfulness, or of his gentle, quiet conversations with me. I remember his delight in my childhood games, playing school or house or zoo with me, down on the floor with my dolls and toys. When he was little, he said, he didn't play, he studied, so my games were a new world. At my childhood birthday parties, he loved to make up games for the children to play (sometimes to my annoyance, since he usurped the center of attention!), and our most frequent after-dinner family activity was reenacting my day at school: I was the teacher; my mother and father had to play the mischievous pupils. But what I miss most is his sensitivity to me, his attentiveness

JOEL ORENT / FARRAR, STRAUS AND GIROUX



to all my worries and insecurities, his hugs and kisses, his holding my hand when we took walks on Shabbat afternoons, his enthusiasm when he first saw me at the end of a day at school. I was always amazed that he understood my adolescent insecurities and sympathized with all the frustrations I felt at being a teenager and at being a woman in a sexist society. More than sympathizing, he took a stand, asking me to make kiddush and havdalah, lead *birkat ha-mazon*, or have an aliyah; it was originally his idea that I apply to rabbinical school. I suppose I was surprised at his openness because he was so much older, and had been raised in a very different culture, in Chasidic Warsaw, but his responsiveness grew out of his deep commitment to justice, and to his rejection of halachic absolutism. Always, my father listened and took my problems seriously, but also gave me the feeling that everything was going to be fine; never despair, he always said to me, God is with you. More than anything, I miss my father's love.

To this day, scholars of religion have had difficulty formulating categories to describe piety in language that pious people find authentic. My father, although a Jewish theologian and scholar, found a way to express religious experience that people from all religions find resonant of their own inner voices. His language is powerful and evocative, standing in a tradition of classical medieval religious literature and even that of the psalmist. A pious person, he writes, "feels embraced by God's mercy as by a vast encircling space. Awareness of God is as close to him as the throbbing of his own heart, often deep and calm, but at times overwhelming, intoxicating, setting the soul afire." To be always conscious of the presence of God becomes "a matter of the mind…a mode of living." What kind of life is it? "Piety is the direct opposite of selfishness." To be religious is to be grateful and never take anything for granted. Instead of viewing the world and one's own life as a possession, a pious person feels bestowed by a gift from God, and wants to respond, not to accomplish but to contribute. The intense, private intoxication experienced by God's presence leads not to a withdrawal from the world, but, for Heschel, motivates a response of wanting to contribute to the world. We are, he wrote, God's partner in creation.

The roots of Heschel's theology lie in the intense religious community in which he was raised, that of pre-War Polish Chasidism. He described his experience: "I was very fortunate in having lived as a child and as a young boy in an environment where there were many people I could revere, people concerned with problems of the inner life, of spirituality and integrity, people who have shown great compassion and understanding for other people…very rich in moments of exaltation. This enabled me to stand a little bit above the circumstances of life and to take a perspective from which I could see the world, so to speak, from a higher point of view. In other words, I was trained as a child to live a life, or to strive to live a life, which is compatible with the mystery and marvel of human existence."

The religiosity with which his childhood was imbued led Heschel to see the experiences of piety and prayer as paradigmatic of the meaning of Judaism: "The secret of every being is in the divine care and concern that are invested in it. In every event there is something sacred at stake, and it is for this reason that the approach of the pious person to reality is in reverence." Heschel sought through his writings to convey that sense of reverence and make it attainable to all Jews, and his theology presents Jewish religious belief as it is experienced by pious Jews. His work begins by establishing the existence of a lively theological discourse within classical Jewish texts and recovering the diversity of Jewish theological expression. Heschel's work stands in contrast to many of his contemporaries, such as G.F. Moore and Ephraim Urbach, whose goal was to demonstrate a unified voice of the Talmud. Moore attempted to define a single "normative Judaism," while Urbach strove to reconcile the debates of the rabbis into a singular voice, but Heschel sought to expose the rich and intense conflicts that remained ongoing throughout rabbinic and medieval literature. He brought to the surface often subtle differences among the rabbis on central issues of belief, including the nature of the Temple sacrifices, the meaning of revelation, and the methods of exegesis. His surprising and fascinating discoveries revealed a multivocal Jewish theology in the Talmud, at the heart of what had long been considered a closed and rigid discussion of law.



Heschel with his daughter, Susannah.

The problem Heschel saw was that contemporary Jews were not being taught a multivocal Judaism. Instead, they were being fed a Judaism reduced to Halacha or equated with ethical behavior, neither of which was adequate in itself to represent Judaism, let alone sufficiently inspiring and meaningful to Jews. Such reductionism made Judaism appear shallow, boring, or simply unnecessary. As a consequence, Heschel believed, the most significant challenges to contemporary Judaism emerged not from science, philosophy, historiography, or other aspects

TOP: JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES / BOTTOM: LOTTE JACOBI ARCHIVES, DIMOND LIBRARY, UNH



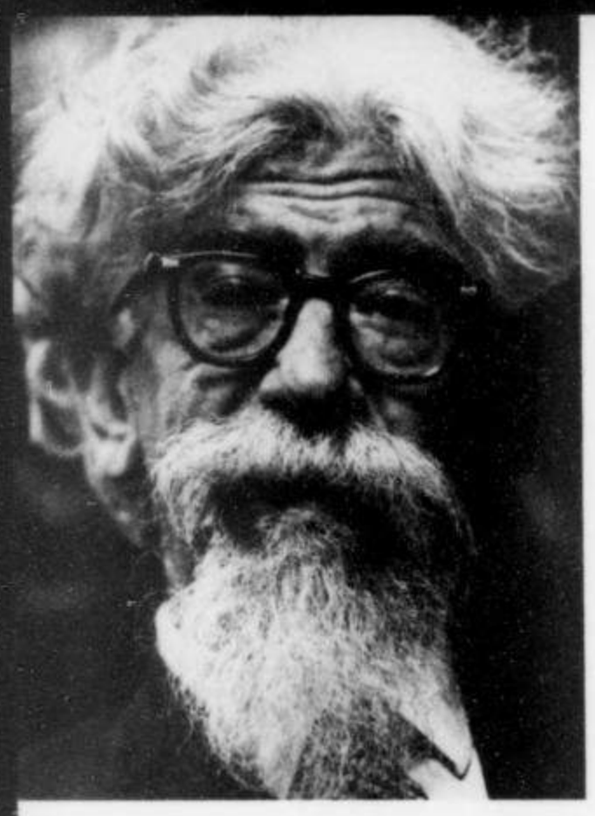
of secular modernity, but from the Jewish responses to modernity, both the defensive postures of Orthodox halachic rigidity and the liberal Jewish submission to the domination of secular dogmatics: "It is customary to blame secular science and anti-religious philosophy for the eclipse of religion in modern society. It would be more honest to blame religion for its own defeats. Religion declined not because it was refuted, but because it became irrelevant, dull, opressive, insipid." Heschel was as critical of Orthodoxy as he was of Reform and Conservative Judaism. Orthodoxy, he felt, had become intransigent and rigid about Halacha, without concern for the authenticity of observance: "The problem that cries for a solution is not everything or nothing, total or partial obedience to the law; the problem is authentic or forged, genuine or artificial observance. The problem is not how much but how to observe." At the same time, he also criticized Reform and Conservative Judaism for interpreting divine commandments as human creations: "Let us beware lest we reduce the Bible to literature, Jewish observance to good manners, the Talmud to Emily Post.... Don't we believe that God, too, has a voice in human life? Is it not the essence of prophetic Judaism to say: It is God who spoke to me, therefore I want to fulfill God's will?...a religious act is something in which the soul must be able to participate; out of which inner devotion, kavanah, must evolve."

Like other influential theologians of his day who worked in historical scholarship as well as original theology, such as the Catholic theologian Karl Rahner, Heschel presented a coherent theological program in the service of an encompassing vision. From the outset, he sought to develop conceptual tools appropriate to understanding Judaism, and to argue against conceptualizations that obscure the meaning of its theological insights and religious experience. Heschel's starting point is the divine proclamation, as shaped by the Bible, rabbinic tradition, liturgy, and Jewish religious practice. While anxious to show the diversity of voices within Jewish tradition, he also believed that there is an inner unity and intelligibility to Judaism.

Heschel's theological method begins with the premise that certain truths can be said to exist by demonstrating that the conditions for their possibility obtain. His argument is based on a reinterpretation of Kant on the question of knowledge. Kant had argued that it is through inherent structures of the human mind that sense perceptions are transformed into knowledge. This *a priori* of cognition, as defined by Kant, is reinterpreted by Heschel as a metaphysical *a priori*. That is, Heschel argues that our knowledge of objects presupposes a prior readiness to affirm the existence of objects, what he calls "an ontological presupposition." The starting point of knowledge is not perception, but a reflexive analysis of the structures of knowledge itself. The implication is that arguments for the existence of God, for example, require an *a priori* experience of God. Divine revelation is not meaningful if it is utterly alien; it must be heard by human beings who are already attuned and thus able to respond to it. Belief in God does not arise from philosophical proofs. According to Heschel, "our belief in the reality of God is not a case of first possessing an idea and then postulating the ontal counterpart of it....The ultimate or God comes first and our reasoning about Him second. Metaphysical speculation has reversed the order: reasoning comes first and the question about God's reality second; either God is proved or God is not real. However, just as there is no thinking about the world without the premise of the reality of the world, there can be no thinking about God without the premise of the realness of God." Our ability to come to know God and the divine revelation, then, depends upon where and how we begin that quest. Attaining knowledge of God will succeed only if that knowledge is sought using the proper categories and asking the appropriate questions.

Theology is not about finding the right answers, Heschel used to say, but about formulating the right questions. Religion is an answer to ultimate questions, but when "we become oblivious to ultimate questions, religion becomes irrelevant, and its crisis sets in." Yet what are the paths that lead us to ultimate questions? How is religious knowledge and insight to be attained? Jews are told that God spoke to us, and that we possess a record of the revelation, but how do we recognize and experience God's presence? What structures of human perception make religious knowledge possible?

There are paths to the perception of God, notably through nature, through deeds, and through the Bible, Heschel writes, but those paths are intended for the purpose of cultivating the inner life—in particular, attitudes of mind such as awe, wonder, and radical amazement. Just as Kant had argued that knowledge is gained only when perceptions are structured via the categories inherent in the mind, Heschel puts forth the argument that religious knowledge is acquired through categories of religious perception. "Awareness of the divine begins with wonder," he writes, and it develops into awe, which is "a realization that things are not only what they are but also stand, however remotely, for something absolute. Awe is a sense for the transcendence, for the reference everywhere to God who is beyond all things.... The loss of awe is the great block to insight. A return to reverence is the first prerequisite for a revival of wisdom, for the discovery of the world as an allusion to God." Awe entails an orientation toward the world and toward ourselves that encourages us to look at the world biblically, which Heschel defines as identifying oneself with God's perspective, "to look at all things from the point of view of God."



HESCHEL

Heschel's theology is not only an argument within the language of philosophy; it is also deeply rooted in the classical teachings of the Bible, Talmud, and Kabbalah—and, as Heschel would add, not only in the linguistic texts of Judaism, but also in the performance of mitzvot, in the memory of Jewish history, and in the moments of religious piety. All are given equal weight in his work, and none is privileged above others. As a European-trained scholar who wrote on virtually all modes and periods of Jewish texts (an exception might be Jewish political and economic history), Heschel presented Judaism in a new light through his original and challenging reinterpretations of the sources. His analysis of Maimonides, for example, was not concerned with the standard question of reconciling his philosophic with his halachic texts, but with the question of whether Maimonides, who speaks at length about prophecy as the highest attainment, sought himself to attain prophetic inspiration. On the question of revelation, Heschel ignored the rabbinic claims that prophecy had ceased and instead brought to light important medieval Jewish texts that demonstrate continuing belief in the ongoing experience of revelation. In his study of rabbinic literature, he made it clear that belief in a divine dictation of the words of the Bible is not to be found in the Bible itself, nor in post-biblical literature until the second century C.E.

Heschel's language is not only inspiring; it carries a theological reorientation. The very title, *God In Search of Man*, is a jolt, because it implies the subjectivity of God—indeed, that God is subject of theology. For Martin Buber, for instance, God is the object, the "Thou" we encounter; we humans are the subjects, the "I." But imagine with Heschel that it is God who is searching for us. Immediately our perspective shifts: we are no longer the powerful knowers, but the object of God's attention, desire, and need. Heschel writes, "The decisive thought in the message of the prophets is not the presence of God to human beings but rather the presence of human beings to God. This is why the Bible is God's anthropology, rather than humanity's theology." To be wanted by God, needed by God, changes the nature of our religious experience and also our sense of self-worth, elevating the importance of our humanity.

Many theologians, Jewish and Christian, continue to insist that the supernatural is utterly transcendent and that moments of revelation are nothing more than unmerited gifts. Any compromise of divine transcendence violates the basic assumptions of God's omnipotence, they argue. However, Kabbalistic traditions and, Heschel argued, even Maimonidean rationalist philosophy assume a continuity between the transcendent supernaturalism of the divine and the human realm. For the Kabbalists, while the entry of the transcendent supernatural into the human realm is a gift of God, it also entails a human participation in the divine life, a theological claim that Heschel develops in directions significant not only for his understanding of the nature of God, but also for his theological anthropology.

Heschel's most important and controversial theological claim concerns divine pathos, the belief that God is not impassive and immutable, but, on the contrary, is deeply responsive to human beings; indeed, that God is in need of human beings. He developed this idea in his first book-length study, a doctoral dissertation on "Prophetic Consciousness" that he wrote at the University of Berlin in the 1930s. In it, he presents his claim that God is marked in the Hebrew Bible not by impassivity, but by pathos, by empathic responsiveness to human beings. After arriving in the United States, Heschel developed that theme in his theologies of Judaism, *Man is Not Alone* and *God in Search of Man*, published in the early 1950s, in which he describes in particular the divine responsiveness to human deeds, the *Zorech Gavoha*, the divine need: "To fulfill the will of God in deeds means to act in the name of God, not only for the sake of God; to carry out in acts what is potential to God's will. God is in need of the work of human beings for the fulfillment of God's ends in the world." Later, in a three-volume book in Hebrew on rabbinic Judaism, *Torah min HaShamayim b'Espakloriah shel HaDorot*, Heschel analyzed discussions of divine pathos within rabbinic literature, demonstrating that concepts such as *Zorech Gavoha*, which is a central idea in medieval Jewish mysticism, is already present in the writings of the rabbis, who themselves claim to find the concept in the Bible.

Divine pathos, the theological proposition that stands at the center of Heschel's theology, has been highly influential among Christian theologians as well as Jews. Indeed, the idea that God suffers has become an increasingly central theological proposition within Christianity since the early 1970s. The problem itself is an old one within Christianity, debated already in the second century, in reference to the suffering of Jesus on the cross. Was it God suffering on the cross (Patripassionism)? Did Jesus suffer in appearance only (Docetism)? Such questions and their answers were debated and sometimes condemned by the early Church Fathers. Modern Christian theology, particularly liberal Protestantism, tended to ignore the issue, prefering a more optimistic view of Jesus as a righteous teacher with a uniquely profound religious consciousness. The later writings of Karl Barth, however, show its influence, and more recently Jürgen Moltmann, Edward Farley, Carter Heyward, Rita Nakashima Brock, and Eberhard Jüngel, among others, have all developed understandings of divine empathic suffering in their theologies.

In post-World War II Germany in particular, several Protestant theologians have expressed a dissatisfaction with notions of divine transcendence, immutability, and impassi-



bility, and insisted that Christian theology is a theology of the crucified. Starting with the death of Jesus and the identification of God the Father with the cross, they emphasize the suffering nature of that moment not in order to explore issues of theodicy, but rather as the key to understanding the nature of the divine. For the Protestant theologian Eberhard Jüngel, for example, God's self-identification with Jesus at the cross is taken as an example of divine freedom and self-surrender and contains "a deep insight into the peculiar ontological character of the divine being." For Jürgen Moltmann, it is the crucified God who stands as emblematic of the Christian message, and Moltmann is explicit in his citation of Heschel's theology of pathos as an inspiration to his own work.

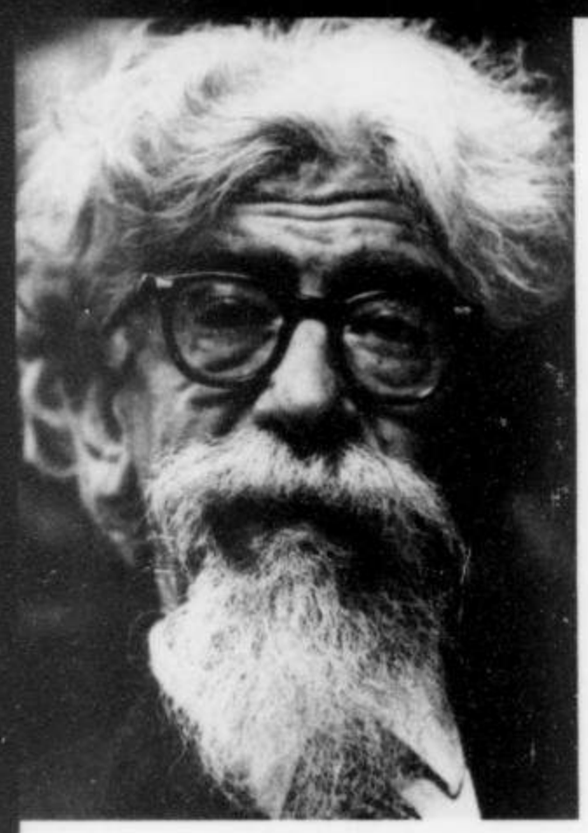
Although these Christian theologians all repudiate theological traditions of divine impassibility, Heschel's theology of pathos differs in crucial ways from the theopaschite claims of Jüngel and Moltmann. For Heschel, divine suffering is only one aspect of God's pathos; divine strength and rejoicing are also God's responses to humanity. It is not God's suffering and death that is the emphasis for Heschel, but rather the ontological dimension of divine responsiveness. Both the love and anger of God are in the realm of pathos, each based on God's exquisite sensitivity to human deeds.

Heschel's theology is one of the few in twentieth century Jewish thought that affirms the autonomous subjectivity of God and is willing to speak of divine attributes. In contrast to him, much Jewish theology of this century opposes the attribute tradition and even expresses an anti-theistic position. For Martin Buber, God exists when addressed as Thou, but ceases when thought about or described as It; for Mordecai Kaplan, God is the "power" that makes for salvation; for Emanuel Levinas, God exists in the interhuman sphere, summoning the self out of its autonomy. Some feminists, for example, have argued that divine attributes constitute an anthropomorphic projection onto God that will inevitably result in the creation and valorization of a male deity. As Mary Daly argued in her classic feminist critique, *Beyond God the Father*, rather than conceiving God as a being (a noun), God should be reconceived as "being" (a verb), along the lines of Paul Tillich's famous definition of God as the "ground of being." Marcia Falk's feminist Jewish prayerbook, *Book of Blessings*, exemplifies the anti-theist, anti-attribute tradition by formulating Jewish prayers to a divinity that is a "source of life."

Heschel's starting point was the Bible and its language, which is unabashedly theistic and attributional. In his view, however, the Bible should be read not for its literal descriptions of God in anthropomorphic language, but for its insistence on God's passionate responsiveness to human life. His emphasis is not on the particular attributes, such as divine wrath or mercy, maleness or femaleness, but on the centrality of passion within the inner life of God. Strikingly, God's empathic responsiveness to human beings is precisely the theological claim that stands at the center of numerous feminist theologies.

Although Heschel was deeply interested in traditions of anthropomorphism in Judaism, discussing it in his doctoral dissertation and in a subsequent, unpublished study that he wrote in Germany, his formal theological writings reversed the problem. The concern of the Bible, he argues, is not human beings' anthropomorphic projection onto God, but God's creation of human beings in the divine image. Heschel viewed divine attributes of compassion, for example, not as human projections onto God, but as examples of the divine within human beings, theomorphism rather than anthropomorphism. To look at another person is to be reminded of God, and the question is how we should live to best remind ourselves and others of God's presence. Heschel worried less about the meaning and authenticity of theological language than about the meaning and authenticity of human life. Always entwining theology with political concerns, his question was how humans are to behave if we are, indeed, the only authentic images of God. Theology, for Heschel, must be judged ethically and evaluated by the social consequences it creates. For that reason, too, he rejected the anti-theist, anti-attribute tradition as lacking the power to motivate social action. The absence of a commanding voice and of divine concern for human life renders theologies of God as a "ground of being" unsatisfying. Religious language, for Heschel, has to be powerful and challenging, not comforting, and prayer has to be subversive of our values, not affirming of them.

The link between the understanding of God and human deeds is what most markedly differentiates Heschel's theology from those of Buber, Kaplan, and Levinas, on the Jewish side, and Jüngel and Moltmann, on the Christian. Remarkably, Jüngel and Moltmann, the two most highly regarded Protestant theologians of post-War Germany, have written nothing about the Holocaust, the roots of anti-Semitism within Christian theology, nor about the Christian capitulation to Hitler during the Nazi era. Although Moltmann has been a strong advocate of theologies of liberation, he does not credit human actions with an effect on God. Similarly, deeds play little role in Jüngel's theology; his focus is on linguistic expressions of faith rather than social or political forms of Christian expression. Indeed, he is critical of political theology for what he views as its extreme emphasis on human agency. At most, human deeds are responsive to the divine initiative of grace; they are never, as in Heschel's theology, evocations of a divine response. According to Jüngel's system, the complementarity between



God and world occurred in Jesus Christ, but is now confined to the idiom of consciousness as expressed in the German idealist tradition.

For Heschel, by contrast, divine pathos is only one side of the equation; the other side is the human response that it calls forth: "To be is to stand for, and what human beings stand for is the great mystery of being God's partner. God is in need of human beings." In contrast to Moltmann and Jüngel, for whom the great moment of divine suffering occurred at the cross, and for whom the great example of the human relationship to God is Christ, Heschel sees an ongoing divine pathos, a dependence of God upon human beings, and he does not elevate the religious experience of a single Jew, Jesus, as paradigmatic for all human beings. As partners with God, we human beings bear an immeasurable responsibility for the state of the world and for its redemption. The response to God is not ontological, as it is for Christian theologians who see it exemplified in God becoming man in Jesus, but political and social, that is, expressed in human deeds. Human beings may be (and should be, Heschel says) reminders of God, since we are all created in the divine image, but it is our deeds that contain the actual presence of God: "Shechinah is the mitzvah," he writes.

Emphasizing deeds as the response to God makes the observances of Judaism more than commandments that we are obligated to discharge; rather, they are divine needs that we are asked to fulfill. They encompass, Heschel argues, far more than the ritual observances; the commandment of the prophet Micah, to do justice, is just as much Halacha as what we eat. The prophets teach us what it means to be religious: "to give voice to silent agony,.... To forfeit a sense of awe and reverence turns the world into a market place governed by attitudes of calculation and conceit." For the religious person, by contrast, the first principle is never to be indifferent. Indeed, he used to write, the opposite of good is not evil; the opposite of good is indifference.

The question Heschel posed is how we can fail to be in agony over the injustices we see all around us, yet think of ourselves as Jews. There is no distinction, for Heschel, between the political and the religious; they are identical. "Judaism is spiritual effrontery. The tragedy is that there is disease and starvation all over the world, and we are building more luxurious hotels in Las Vegas." To march in civil rights demonstrations in Selma, to protest at Arlington National Cemetery against the war in Vietnam, to speak out on behalf of Soviet Jews, all were religious experiences for Heschel—the political and the social are religious, and they cannot be separated. The prophets, exemplars of religiosity, concerned themselves above all with widows, orphans, and economic exploitation. In the present day, Judaism cannot be allowed to coexist with racism: "Racism is satanism, unmitigated evil.... You cannot worship God and at the same time look at a person as if he were a horse." Concern with social evils is in itself religious, which is why he returned from the Selma march and explained, "I felt my legs were praying."

Being Jewish, Heschel insisted, is not about ethnicity or survival, but about principles. "To be a Jew is not simply to be, but to stand for. Each Jew should be a representative of the Jewish spirit." To this day, the American Jewish community has concerned itself far more often with analyzing its demographics than with articulating its principles. At a meeting of the General Assembly of the Council of Jewish Federations, Heschel stated, "There are two words I should like to strike from our vocabulary: surveys and survival. Our community is in spiritual distress, and some of our organizations are often too concerned with digits. Our disease is loss of character and commitment, and the cure of our plight cannot be derived from charts and diagrams." Imagine if local Jewish federations hired Jewish theologians and ethicists instead of sociologists and demographers!

The moral commitment that defines being a Jew also stands at the center of Heschel's writings on Israel, which frequently come under attack as insufficiently Zionist. Arnold Eisen, for example, criticizes Heschel's definition of Judaism as a religion of time, rather than space, because it "serves to mitigate the religious significance of the Zionist return." The State of Israel lies in space, not time, Eisen notes. Yet given the developments since Heschel's death of right wing ideologies which elevate claims to the physical land over peace and, for some, even over human life, Eisen's criticisms ought to be reconsidered. For Heschel, the land itself is not holy, nor is God dwelling any more in Israel than anywhere else; I know he would have been quick to repudiate the idolatry of the land expressed by some contemporary Jews. He states it clearly, "We do not worship the soil." Instead, Heschel saw Israel deeply entwined with Jewish history and faith and thereby "endowed with the power to inspire" moments in which God's presence is palpable to us. In entering Jerusalem today, he writes, we are not alone, but accompanied by "streams of endless craving, clinging, dreaming, flowing day and night...psalms inhabit the hills, the air is hallelujah." What is the theological meaning of the State of Israel, for Heschel? First of all, he writes, our task is to bring together the divine with the human. "The heart of the relationship between God and human beings is reciprocity, interdependence. The task is to humanize the sacred and to sanctify the secular." Above all, he emphasizes, that duty applies to the political realm, because power can become "demonic when detached from moral meaning, from moral commitment."

The principles that Heschel set forth in his 1967 book, *Israel: An Echo of Eternity*, have become all the more urgent

today. When he wrote, in the euphoria created by the relief of Israel not having been destroyed in the war, he had not yet become fully aware of the extent to which the Zionist movement and the Israeli government were implicated in the dislocation and expulsion of thousands of Arab inhabitants of Palestine. Too many Zionists, whether cultural leaders or political theorists, were extraordinarily oblivious to the native Palestinians, and behaved with great callousness toward them in the earliest years of Jewish settlements. Only later, in the few years before his sudden death in December 1972, did he begin to speak out on behalf of Palestinians and with great criticism of certain Israeli government actions. I have no doubt that had he lived even a few years longer to witness the rise of the Likud Party and Gush Emunim, he would have become even more vocal. Still, the principles he articulated are clear: the land is not absolute and is not an object of worship. The power attained by the government of the state may never be used to oppress, but must always be combined with moral commitment. While religious Judaism increasingly has been appropriated by the political right, my father articulated a religious position for the political left.

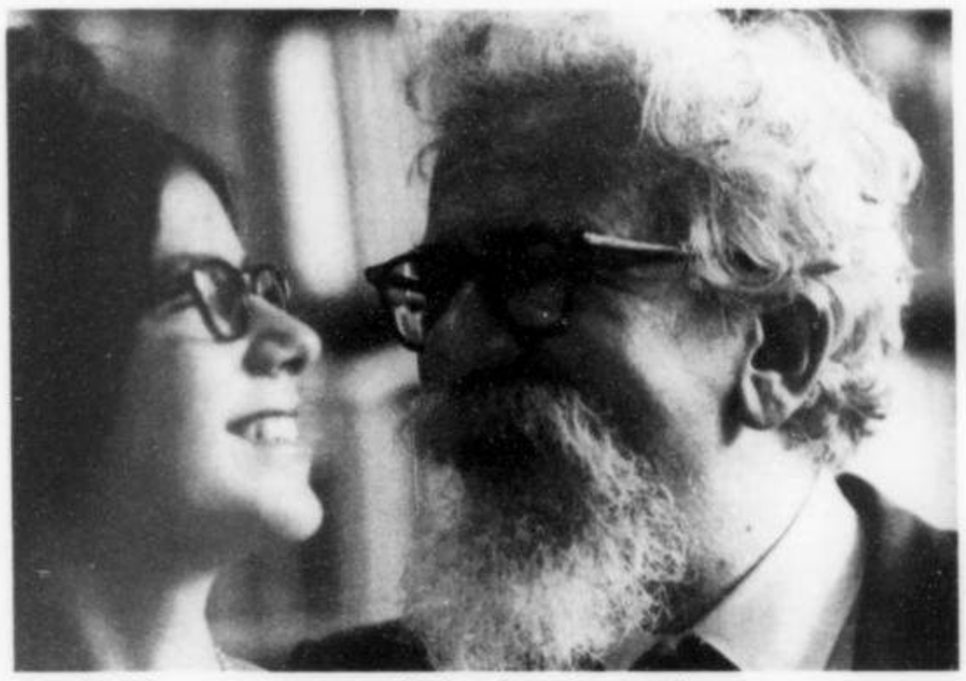
The vision of Israel that emerges from his book is a challenge, not a panacea. Israel is a measure of moral fiber, a demand that "justice prevails over power, that awareness of God penetrates human understanding." The State of Israel is not a gift to the Jews, nor an achievement on their part, but a test of the integrity of the Jewish people and the competence of Judaism.

His concern for the integrity of the Jewish people is precisely what motivated my father to speak out so forcefully against the war in Vietnam, a struggle which engaged him profoundly during the last seven years of his life. He founded an organization called "Clergy and Laity Concerned about Vietnam," but noted ruefully that had he called it "Clergy Unconcerned," the membership would have been booming. Vietnam was a deeply personal issue for him, and he suffered terribly over America's bombing and murder of innocent civilians. He was also lonely within the Jewish community. When my father traveled to Rome to meet with representatives of the Second Vatican Council, his trip was organized by the American Jewish Committee, which had long been engaged in Jewish-Christian dialogue. When he went to civil rights marches, or anti-war demonstrations, however, he went on his own; no Jewish organization stood behind him. On the contrary, he was attacked and vilified in the Jewish press and repudiated by many of his students and colleagues at the Jewish Theological Seminary. His former student and colleague in the Seminary's philosophy department, Seymour Siegel, delivered the invocation at Richard Nixon's first inaugural. Both Norman Lamm and Joseph Soloveitchik, leaders of American Orthodoxy, published attacks on his ecumenical efforts. The Israeli embassy exerted pressure on him to cease his anti-war efforts on the grounds that he was endangering U.S. arms shipments to Israel. Some of my father's students complained to the Seminary administration when he rescheduled classes so that he could take part in demonstrations. Very few accompanied him to those marches. I recall a faculty member lecturing me over dinner in the Seminary sukkah precisely where the U.S. should drop its bombs to achieve greatest efficacy; he used fallen pine needles to create a map of Southeast Asia.



Intellectually as well as politically, my father stood apart at his institution. While most of the other faculty members were academically isolated, Heschel was invited constantly to lecture and teach at universities in the United States and abroad. Chasidism and Kabbalah were not subjects offered at the Seminary where he taught, unless he included them in his own elective seminars. The study of Jewish theology was considered unimportant as preparation for the rabbinate. Once I overheard a professor advise a graduating rabbinical student who had complained that the curriculum did not provide him with the language to speak about God with his congregants: "Just don't worry about God, that's irrelevant."

Today, of course, many things are different. The famous photograph of my father marching with Martin Luther King, Jr. at Selma is now reprinted in children's Jewish history textbooks and the Jewish community today proudly declares that it was at the forefront of the civil rights movement. The campaign to free Soviet Jewry, which began with a speech my father delivered that was bitterly attacked in the Jewish press, eventually became one of the great success stories of modern Jewish history. *Nostra Aetate*, the declaration repudiating anti-Semitism that was issued by the Second Vatican Council, is hailed as a milestone in Christian-Jewish relations; it was my father who



BOTTOM PHOTO: COURTESY OF SUSANNAH HESCHEL

Heschel shares a moment with daughter Susannah.



convinced Pope Paul VI to eliminate a call for the eventual conversion of the Jews from the final version of the declaration.

How is a theologian to be evaluated? How do we choose which theological positions we prefer? Many factors enter our decision: does the theology adequately represent the history of our religious tradition, yet offer us paths to make needed changes? does it affirm positive moral values and offer a critical edge for rejecting ideas and behaviors that are unethical? does it motivate us to better our world? does it move us, touch our hearts, offer us a vision of who we might become?

So much of what Jews have created in the last twenty-five years stems from Heschel's inspiration: the Havurah movement, socially-conscious political activism, the revival of Jewish spirituality, renewed interest in Chasidism, creative Jewish theology, the renewed pride in being Jewish. What we are missing today, however, is the voice of moral leadership that we heard with Heschel. His prophetic tradition has been replaced by voices of witness that describe anti-Semitism, voices of doom that decry statistics of assimilation, and voices of anger that insist on narrow definitions of Judaism. They leave us with a cynical taste in our mouths; none gives us the transcendent religious vision we need. Today, in celebrating my father's memory, we have to bring to life the joyful and thoughtful aspects of Judaism he taught and exemplified: that we are all made in the image of God, that God's creation is filled with wonder and awe, and that God needs us as partners in caring for our fellow human beings and for all of creation. ❑

God and Human

Sacrifice You ask not for Your Self
But to gentle those betrayed by Your love.
Have pity Lord, not for glory's sake,
But for those forsaken by their own.

Blasphemy does not offend You more
Than cries of pain and human tears.
To You, no heresy is more obscene
Than deeds that cause human despair.

He who smears this sacred world—
It is You Most High whom he shames.
To serve with love Your people Lord
Such caring work Your Name sustains.

—Abraham Joshua Heschel
freely translated by Rabbi Zalman M. Schachter-Shalomi

Rabbi Eric H. Yoffie

President, Union of American Hebrew Congregations

I came late to the writings of Heschel.

I had studied a smattering of Heschel in my theology courses at the Hebrew Union College, but I do not remember his work making any impact on me. In truth, when I was in rabbinical school in the late 1960s and early 1970s, I had the impression that he was much talked about but little read. His pro-civil rights and anti-Vietnam protests had made him a hero to many of us, and my friends who knew him were deeply affected by the power of his personality; but I had never met him, and his influence on me was minimal.

A few years ago, for no particular reason, I took a book of his essays off my shelf, and began to read. I have never been quite the same since.

I discovered what many others have discovered: that he was one of modern Judaism's greatest religious thinkers; that he was not only teacher and scholar but a living exemplar of Torah; and that the connection he forged between personal piety and commitment to social transformation influenced the thinking and the conduct of an entire generation of American Jews.

But what most impresses me on this occasion of his yahrzeit is that all the critical needs of the American Jewish community in 1997 were passionately advocated by Heschel more than thirty years ago. The single most astute observer of the American Jewish scene, he understood the yearnings of our community long before its established leaders did, and he articulated them with deep insight and uncommon courage.

And he did so from a unique perspective. The product of an Orthodox upbringing, he came to America to teach at Hebrew Union College, the Reform seminary, before moving to New York to the Jewish Theological Seminary, the seat of the Conservative Movement. While the Seminary was his home for twenty-six years, he always spoke with a deep love of the Jewish people in a language that transcended denominational loyalties. Like the prophets, he was a man who felt fiercely, and he never retreated from the truth; but because he was a man of piety and compassion, his audiences rarely resented his message, although—if truth be told—they rarely heeded it. They simply were not ready for this foresight and vision.

And what did he say?

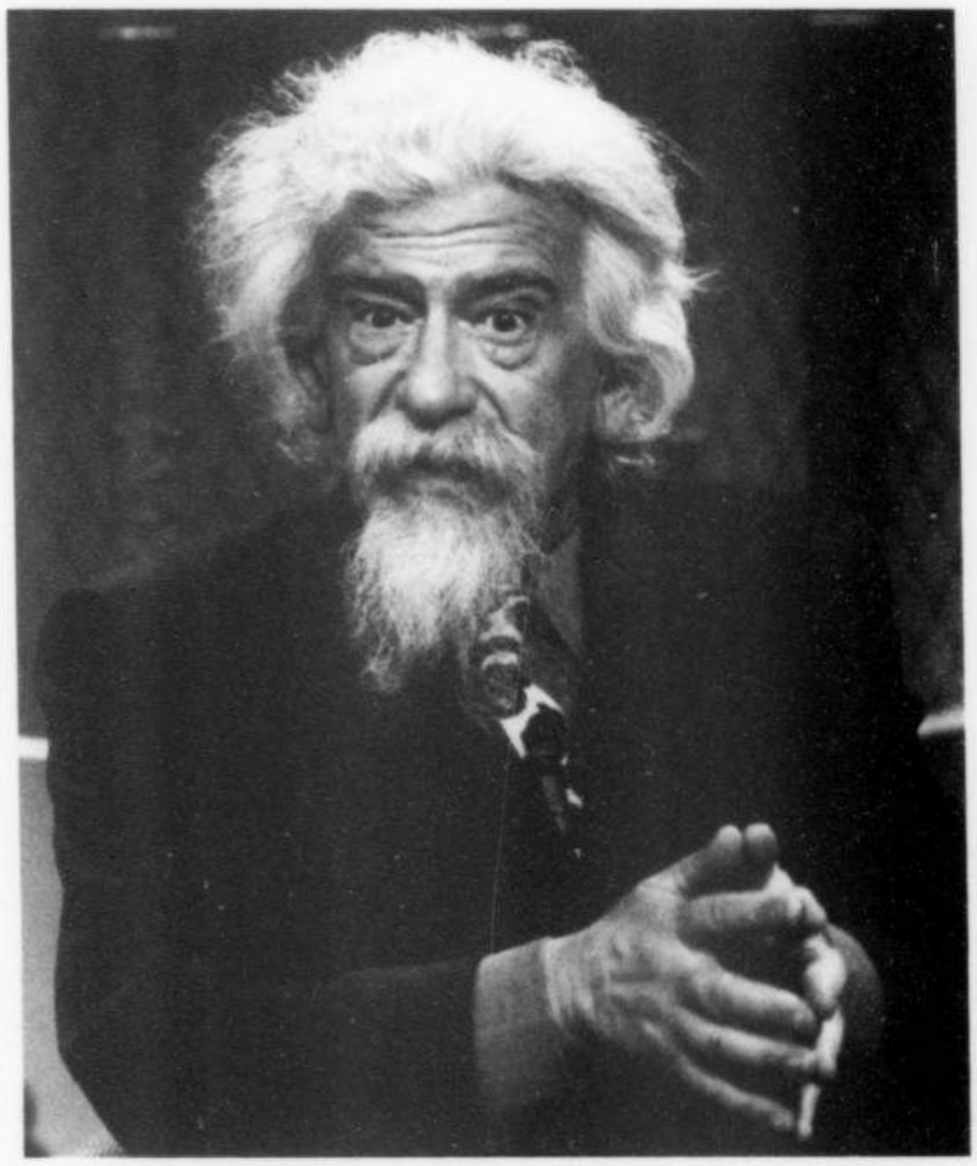
In a 1965 speech to the General Assembly of the Council of Jewish Federations, Heschel called on community institutions to reorder radically their priorities. "We are ingenious in fundraising," he said, "but shipwrecked in raising our children." Yes, saving lives was a crying emergency, but would the community respond to a spiritual emergency? Yes, we care for the mentally retarded, but would

LOTTE JACOBI ARCHIVES, DIMOND LIBRARY, UNH

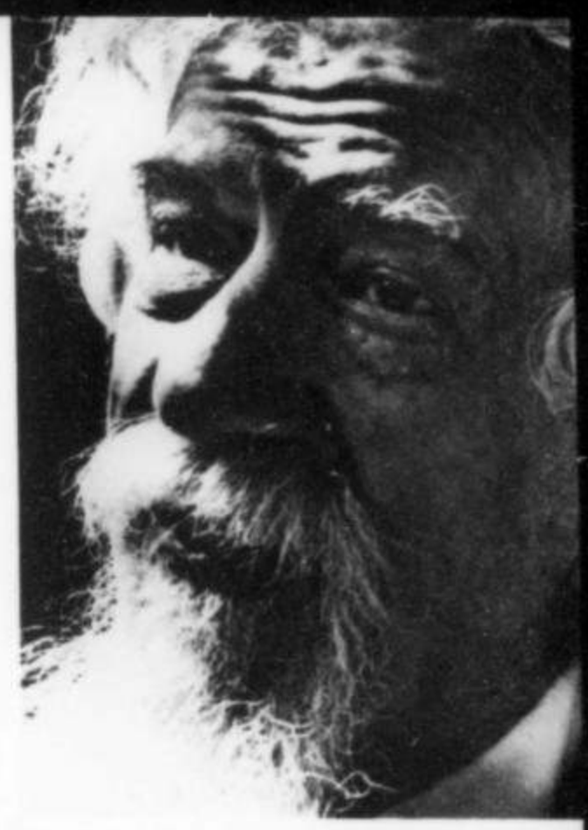
we also care for the spiritually retarded? He decried the anti-intellectual climate of Jewish institutions, and their obsession with surveys and the language of "survival." He declared that the community had been derelict in the most important areas of Jewish responsibility: in education and in conveying Torah to our children. And he spoke out for the young people whom the community had failed, demanding in their name that intellectual aid be provided alongside material aid.

In my view, this dramatic appeal is the greatest Jewish speech of the post–World War II period. It came years before students of my generation made similar demands on Federation leaders, demands which were no more than a faint echo of Heschel's brilliant and eloquent words.

Heschel was equally as courageous in his critique of the religious movements. Orthodoxy, he said, had stressed the supremacy of Torah and law, but had forgotten to cultivate awe of God. He told his Orthodox colleagues that acts of loving-kindness and study of Torah must go together, and that Torah was given for one purpose alone—to sanctify God's name. In an extraordinary speech to the Central Conference of American Rabbis, he chided the Reform rabbinate for turning Jewish observance into good manners, and the Talmud into Emily Post. Prophetic Judaism, he reminded his listeners, was predicated on a set of obligations that came directly from God; to turn mitzvot—commandments—into "customs and ceremonies" was a betrayal of their Reform heritage. And in an address to Conservative rabbis, he criticized them for promoting a system of "prayer by proxy," and of making worship into something cold, stiff, and dead. He called for the creation of a prayer atmosphere, created not by gimmicks, ceremonies, or speeches, but by the example of a person who prays.



COURTESY OF SUSANNAH HESCHEL



Who today could speak so fearlessly and yet so credibly about our Jewish plight? Who could be so honestly critical and yet so free from despair? Who could be accepted so readily and so widely as a Lover of Israel? Who could manage to be both pray-er and doer, mystic and ethicist, scholar and activist?

Ashrei hador—blessed is the community that had the privilege of this great man in its midst. ❑

Rabbi Mordechai Liebling

Executive Director, Jewish Reconstructionist Federation

I took this opportunity to reread my first taste of Abraham Joshua Heschel, his classic *The Sabbath*. Twenty years later it is still inspiring, illuminating and is, if anything, more relevant in the age of nanoseconds. Heschel saw technology as the attempt to conquer space; the war has been ratcheted up since in an attempt to conquer time itself.

It is in this book that Heschel first used the phrase, "Sabbath is a cathedral in time," reminding us that we have the power to create Shabbat wherever we are. Observing Shabbat allows us to temporarily liberate ourselves from the twin juggernauts of consumerism and technological time compression that make up contemporary life. He teaches, "the solution of mankind's most vexing problem will not be in renouncing technological civilization, but in attaining some degree of independence from it." We are not asked to retreat from the world but to assert human needs in the face of dehumanizing forces. He never allows us to forget that each individual must take responsibility for his/her relationship to God and to others, and that responsibility requires us to nurture the Divine in each of us.

As a Reconstructionist I am deeply committed to the principle of living in two civilizations—Jewish and American. Most often this is understood as having each affect the other, or at times attempting an integration in the best sense of the term. The fact is that we live immersed six days a week within the culture of America. Shabbat is the Jewish palace that we can build for a day. It is the experience that we can create that can help us live our Jewish values throughout the week. Heschel reminds us that Shabbat is to be like "the world to come"—the world as we would like it to be here on earth. He teaches that *menuha*, usually translated as rest and identified with Shabbat, is not the absence of work, but a positive act. *Menuha* had to be created on the seventh day—it is an entity. "It is the state in which there is no strife and no



fighting, no fear and no distrust… the essence of good life… a synonym for the world to come…." It is the opportunity to live for one day each week the way we think we ought to live—to reach for the best of ourselves in each interaction. This requires structure and practice, not necessarily the stricture of Halacha, but a carefully thought out set of behaviors that we want to practice or to avoid on Shabbat, (i.e. deciding not to use money for the day, one of the most radical acts in consumer culture; or focusing on enjoying and being kind to one's family.)

Heschel taught us that human dignity is attained in our relationship to God and in our relationship with each other and that each is dependent on the other. The observance of Shabbat can help us experience our dignity with the explicit impact of influencing our *vochadik*—daily lives. As a political activist in the 1970s contemplating a life in the Jewish community, Heschel's message to me through his writing and deeds was that living a Jewish life could make me a more effective change agent and a more complete person. He was right.

Epilogue: During the days that I was rereading *The Sabbath*, Yoni, my ten-year-old son, said he needed to speak with me. He said he was having a hard time focusing in school because he was missing his mom, my wife Devora, who died six months ago. He began crying and cried for quite a long time. Through his tears he kept saying, "I didn't have enough time with her, ten years was not enough. I didn't have enough time."

The teaching of Shabbat is to make sure that while we are here we create the palace in time to be with those we love. "It is only within time that there is a fellowship and togetherness of all beings." ❑

Rabbi Arthur Waskow

Director of The Shalom Center

For me, the crucial teachings of Abraham Joshua Heschel are that it is possible to carry on politics as if it were prayer—and that it is necessary to pray as if prayer were politics.

For the first, he came back from the great voting rights march in Selma, Alabama, saying that he felt as if his legs were praying.

For the second, he said that "the beginning of prayer is praise. The power of worship is song. To worship is to join the cosmos in praising God…. Prayer is meaningless unless it is subversive, unless it seeks to overthrow and to ruin the pyramids of callousness, hatred, opportunism, falsehoods. The liturgical movement must become a revolutionary movement, seeking to overthrow the forces that continue to destroy the promise, the hope, the vision."

I hear these teachings as questions to our own generation: not only, "Will you choose to walk this path?" but also, "If you choose this path, how will you shape it for yourself, how will you blaze it for others?"

For Rabbenu Heschel, these questions had real answers. I commend to everyone two recent books that unfold these answers: Susannah Heschel's wonderful collection of her father's essays, *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity*; and Edward Kaplan's *Holiness in Words*, his study of the way in which Heschel wove his prose to bear in its very fiber his teachings about wonder and responsibility. Kaplan's book includes an excellent study guide that will serve well all who wish to learn from Heschel.

During these twenty-five years since Rabbenu Heschel died, his Chassidic *neshama* must have been dancing to see an extraordinary renaissance in American Jewish life: new midrash and whole new ways of creating midrash; new music, dance, and drama; new categories of body-thought like drushodrama; feminist theology and eco-Judaism; dialogical davening and ecstatic chanting; the reawakening of a new Chassidic energy and the legitimation of Jewish studies in secular academia.

But his Prophetic arms and legs have had much less to celebrate; for there has not been an analogous renaissance in the creation of a prayerful Jewish politics.

There have been hints, moments, pointers:

- Efforts to imagine a restorative, rather than punitive, form of justice;
- Pesach Seders held at the edge of the Nevada nuclear-test site, a Tu B'Shvat Seder held in the midst of the ancient redwood forest—each ending with an illegal walk-in onto the property of an earth-destructive agency;
- Efforts to hold Jews ethically accountable for their actions as heads of great corporations;
- Decisions in some synagogues to make bringing a can of food for the poor as much a part of the Yom Kippur service as reading the Haftarah in which Isaiah demands that we feed the hungry;
- The creation of some versions of the Pesach Haggadah and the Al Chet for Yom Kippur that speak explicitly of resistance to oppression and healing of the earth, today.

A trickle of experiment.

Yet the Heschel who acclaimed Shabbat as the "day on which we stop worshipping the idols of technical civilization," the Heschel who cried out that our "victories in the war with nature…have come to resemble defeats…. Selling himself into slavery to things, man becomes a utensil that is broken at the fountain"—that Heschel calls us to more than this trickle of experiment.

How do we actually turn Shabbat from a day when a small minority of Jews sit in uncomfortable pews to mumble dry prayers into a day when not only Jews but millions

JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

of others join in a great celebration of the radically amazing universe?

How do we turn our reading of the Book of Ruth into a great movement to insist that everyone, even and especially the despised and outcast of our society, is entitled not to a dole but to a worthy job at worthy rates of pay?

How do we turn our reading of the Sabbatical and Jubilee years into a great movement to insist that everyone must have the time, the income, the freedom, the obligation, to rest and reflect, to love and make family, to dance in community?

How do we turn our Torah of the nonviolent midwives who resisted Pharaoh into new and more effective forms of nonviolent resistance to oppression?

Not till the creative energy that is transforming the Up-to-Heaven aspects of Judaism has been brought to these down-to-earth parts of our lifepath, not till these trickles of experiment have become a mighty stream, can we say that our generation has actually learned from the life and the teaching of Rabbenu Heschel.

Or that we have learned to renew Judaism as a way of healing and transforming our lives. ❑

Edward Kaplan

Author of Holiness in Words

I came to Heschel through the civil rights movement, French poetry, a fascination with mysticism—bored with Judaism as I knew it, yet seeking "ultimate reality" or God. The year was 1965. My father, Kivie Kaplan, a social action leader in Reform Judaism, was part of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) since the late 1940s, and had recently been elected its national president. We had attended annual NAACP conventions in such places as Jackson, Mississippi and Birmingham, Alabama, and we joined the march to Mongomery in 1965 with a delegation from the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. The Reform rabbis were courageous and devoted to "prophetic Judaism." And yet something was missing from all this, a spiritual dimension. I called it poetry, the inner life, which my studies of French literature, did somewhat provide. But Judaism did not call to me.

Knowing that I was interested in "mysticism," my father wrote Heschel to send me some of his books, which he did. Reading *Man is Not Alone,* I was overwhelmed by the magnificent style; this was the first writing by a Jew which convincingly evoked for me the savor of God's presence. That same year I met Heschel in his book-laden office at the Jewish Theological Seminary. When I entered he was speaking on the telephone about an anti-Vietnam war demonstration. Then he turned to me and asked what I was studying. Embarrassed by my unpractical concerns, I replied: "French literature." Heschel: "The richest literature in the world, what in particular?" Even more uncertain, I admitted: "Poetry." "Oh, that is very important work," he exclaimed, a statement I never heard from my professors. We spoke for two hours and the bond was formed.



Heschel invited me to take walks with him on Sabbath afternoons down Broadway or Riverside Drive. What did Heschel see in me? I felt that he valued my devotion to literature, to the power of words, and I felt our relationship was quite special. Later I learned that many people had experienced a similar closeness with Heschel—or rather, we received the gifts of his remarkable ability to appreciate who we were and where we stood. In fact, Heschel seemed to be attracted to "outsiders" with whom he could share his moral commitments, his sensitivity to literature and the arts, and whose potential for religious commitment he gently nurtured. He patiently listened when I complained about conventional Judaism. I trusted the man who had written: "religion declined not because it was refuted, but because it became irrelevant, dull, oppressive, insipid."

Heschel's "depth theology" manifested itself in his anguish over the war in Southeast Asia. To him, ending the Vietnam war expressed his concrete relation with God and reverence for all people as images of the divine. I participated with Heschel in rallies which took the form of interreligious worship meetings, learning how prayer and political and moral commitment are inseparable.

I was embarked on a spiritual journey which remained, however, intellectual. When I realized that I was committed to dealing with my life's perplexities through Judaism, I began systematically to study Heschel's works. His poetic style became my vehicle of religious experience and insight. The words of the Bible became alive to me, as he wrote, "a live wire charged with [God's] spirit. To this very day they are hyphens between heaven and earth."



Heschel marching with Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.

COURTESY OF SUSANNAH HESCHEL



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HESCHEL

After Heschel's death in 1972, the author opened my life not only to "religious thinking," but eventually to Jewish observance and study. My articles and essays on his works led to a book, *Holiness in Words*, all of which attempt to explain how reading Heschel can help us recover the fervor of Judaism, the power of "piety," attachment to God. Heschel's manner of joining mysticism and the moral life is unique, and he ushers readers into "radical amazement" at the miracle of life itself, teaching us "radical reverence" for all human beings, a spiritual ethics, and sacred humanism.

The man is gone but we can *read* Heschel in the way he deserves, meditatively, with full participation of intellect and emotion, critical distance and love. Beginning in solitude, then sharing Heschel, we will build communities that embody "the ineffable delight of being a Jew." ❑

Arthur Green

Philip Lown Professor of Jewish Thought at Brandeis University

As a rabbinical student at the Jewish Theological Seminary in the mid-1960s, I had the great privilege of studying privately with Abraham Joshua Heschel, surely the towering religious figure of American Jewry in the post-War era. I had read several of Heschel's theological writings years earlier; they had played an important role in drawing me, the product of an assimilating second-generation American Jewish home, into a lifelong love of Judaism, and of Chasidism in particular.

It was in the 1960s that American Jewry began to come to terms with the great tragedy of European Jewry; the very term "Holocaust," as applied to those events, was born in that decade. More than any other American Jewish figure, Heschel, whose mother and sisters had died in Warsaw/Treblinka, stood as a symbol of Polish Jewry and of all that had been lost. His book, *The Earth Is the Lord's,* was the best-known collective memorial to Eastern European Jews available in those days. He seemed to embody both the greatness and the tragedy that were our lot.

But being a young follower of Heschel was not easy. "Where is the pain, the anger, the outcry?" we used to ask. Elie Wiesel's *Night* appeared, telling us the unvarnished truth that God had died on the gallows at Auschwitz. Richard Rubenstein's *After Auschwitz* told us it was blasphemy to continue to believe in divine providence any longer. Heschel still spoke of faith, of sacred deeds, of the beauty of holy living. How could he do it? How could he go on speaking the old religious language without the events of his own lifetime rendering his words hollow?

Heschel's answer to this challenge was just where he said it would be: not in words, but in deeds. We came to understand that it was Heschel the Holocaust survivor who marched with Martin Luther King, Heschel the Holocaust survivor who helped inspire the first activists for Soviet Jewry, Heschel the Holocaust survivor who spoke out with such passion and courage against an unjust war, proclaiming (in a wonderful Yiddish-accented parody of John F. Kennedy) "I am a Vietnamese!" It was in these acts and others that Heschel offered his response.

The shadow of the Holocaust marked all of its survivors; indeed it continues to shape the collective behavior of the entire Jewish people more than half a century later. But survivors were transformed in a variety of ways. Some previously pious Jews gave up every shred of religion; others, including many Orthodox survivors, became more self-isolating and extreme than before the war. Some survivors, convinced that the Jews remain "a nation that dwells alone," learned from the Holocaust that Jews must stand up always and only for their own kind. Heschel belonged to a small but important group who insisted that the Holocaust's message was uncompromisingly universal and of absolute urgency. Having lived in Germany through the mid-1930s, and being in touch again with post-War German religious thinkers, Heschel knew much about the guilt of bystanders. The reality of the Holocaust would never permit him to join their ranks.

It was too easy, Heschel felt, to blame God for the Holocaust. The failure, he insisted, was essentially a *human* one. It was the depravity of human beings acting in defiance of faith that had given us the concentration camps. It was human beings, transgressing what he insisted was religion's most essential teaching, the creation of every person in God's image, who had brought about the unimaginable degradation of their fellow humans. In the privacy of the survivor's own prayers God might indeed be questioned; Heschel's attraction to the Kotsker rebbe, closeted away in his study for nineteen years, was probably his way of identifying with the most searing of religious questions. But our



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Heschel teaching rabbinical students, 1972.

task, Heschel insisted, was not that of reconstructing religion but of rebuilding humanity. If humanity had failed, the only thing to do was to *be more human* and to show others how to be more human, This could be done only by example, and example is what Heschel provided.

Heschel's thought is a rejoining of the prophetic and Chasidic legacies. He liked to tell the Chasidic tale of Rabbi Raphael of Bershad, who invited a group of his disciples to come share with him a ride in his coach. "But there is not enough room!" a disciple cried out, "The rebbe will be crowded." The master replied: "Then we shall have to love each other more. If we love each other more, there will be room for us all." Heschel understood that all of humanity rides in that coach, one that can be either the divine chariot of God or the crowded, sealed railway car. The choice, he insisted, is a *human* one, and we who have escaped the terrors of hell are here to help all our fellow humans make that choice. ❑

David J. Shapiro

Poet, art critic and professor at William Paterson University

I am an *am ha-aretz* and my right to speak of Rabbi Abraham J. Heschel may rest on no legitimacy greater than his own assertion that man is always image and dust. I am aware too of the great benefit I have had in playing sonatas with his musician-companion Mrs. Heschel and hearing in her musicianship and kindness an echo of his musical voice. This summer in my melancholy, I found no book more tonic, more cheering, more Emersonian in its aphoristic power than Susannah Heschel's magnificent anthology of her father's essays. No matter what my work or research, it was that book I kept near me for its cantorial sentences and its consolation. As the grandson of Berele Chagy, I have had since childhood a sense of the power of singing words. And I find in Rabbi Heschel his ability to resurrect words, to combine words and sounds, with a dazzling sense of witness and commitment in the smallest syllable, with an outpouring that he underlines in his sense of the Chasidic movement. He understands contrition, and he is always natural and supernatural at once.

As a Jew raised not only by the golden liturgy, but finally inflected by Spinoza, Kafka, and Proust, I furnish at least a testament to the Rabbi's powers that I find his poetry so convincing. And I must say how much I learned from his rebuke to the Romantic worship of Nature, to which every secular pantheist poet falls a prey. I think as a pluralist that his strictures against a positivist pluralism are thoughtful and severe. His confidence in discussing the Divine "pathos" is truly more than impressive. In these passages he builds up a network of filiations for his own sacred sense of suffering, and he does this with not the least hint of literalism or naiveté. One of his most powerful moments, for me, is when he discusses allegory in language and rebukes the sense of the Bible as non-allegorical. Finally, he is willing to say that the Bible itself may be regarded as a Mishnah. This is truly not just a radical permission, but the wisest mystical sense of the incompleteness of all Jewish interpretations. He has inherited Chasidism with an enormous sense of restraint.



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As an American poet, I see Heschel as indeed a poet, a poet whose scholarship attains a height known only to those who have heard the golden voice of Meyer Schapiro. Both men not only had the highest sense of scholarship, but both understood the tragic monument of Eastern Europe as part of a legacy to be revitalized and celebrated. Heschel's celebration of Eastern European piety might be comparable to the ecstasy of Schapiro in remembering the world of Soutine, Chagall, and the mosaics of medieval Israel. Heschel, also, like Schapiro, never forgot the fundamental need of deeds for justice.

I must say as a follower of Martin Luther King and a participant in the anti-war movement, I get a great sense of edification, consolation and sheer comprehension from the Rabbi's luminous words regarding the corruption of the Vietnam war. He spoke clearly when I recall few others speaking at all from the Jewish perspective. Consider what the American moral landscape would be like without him: a wasteland of the voiceless cowards. Here a rabbi's voice erupted in a corrupt empire.

To Camus, Rabbi Heschel said, the central philosophical question is suicide. But for himself, this therapist of the Chassidic tradition, this doctor of the soul, the meaningful question was: What are you willing to be martyred for? His

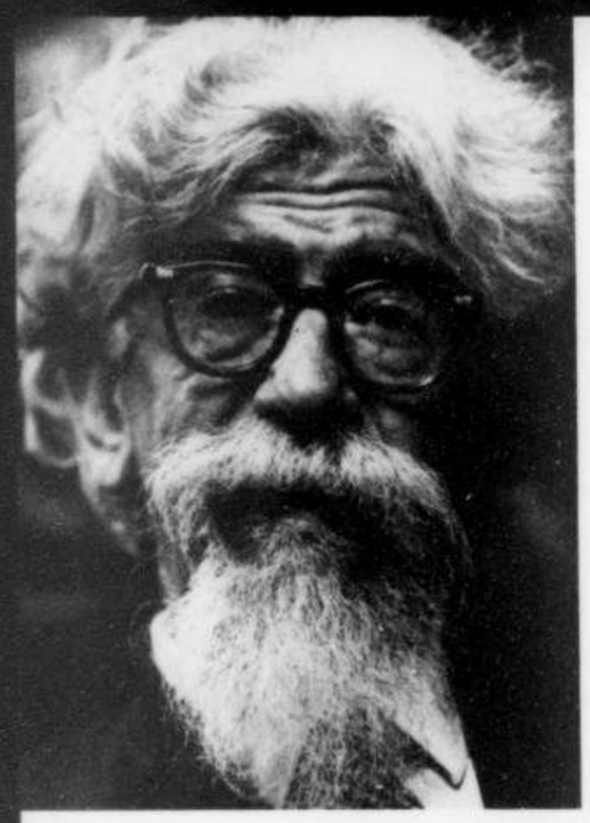
Brother God

God, confined One, straight-jacketed
In labyrinths of the Infinite
Afoot, on sidewalks, fleeting.
Oh! how divinity masks you God!

Almighty—is not your only attribute.
You're sad and bitter too.
At times You treat me, like a child
Treats those his seniors, with some awe.

Our Brother, which art in Heaven,
At endlessness final light,
Tender down to us
And gently kiss each creature in soft embrace.

—Abraham Joshua Heschel
freely translated by Rabbi Zalman M. Schachter-Shalomi



life was a celebration of celebration, of the wonder that leads to Law, and the Law that leads to Wonder, and of us lifting ourselves to deeds of justice as we would lift our eyes to nature, not to be seduced by beauty, but to see in the sublime a portent of the God that made us out of dust into his image. His sense of freshness—that we must always, like good Chasids, long for a change of perspective with no loss of traditional freshness—is indeed the freshness of his "radical amazement," one that denies neither art nor science, but gives them the highest standards of Unity:

Blessed is He who created the Creation
Blessed are they who created the blessing.

(from "Wild Psalm to Michal Govrin"). ❑

Rabbi Rachel T. Sabath

Faculty member at CLAL: The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership.

Texts often speak to us through the teachers who taught them to us. While Abraham Joshua Heschel may not have predicted, much less responded, to the challenges of my life as an observant liberal woman rabbi, he did provide many of the tools that have made my religious choices possible and powerful. What Heschel's teachings did for my religious choices was something that no other thinker or teacher could do: he transformed my halachic decisions from a focus on observance to a focus on an expression of awe. Rather than being concerned with the legalistic implications of observance, Heschel served to refocus my attention on performing mitzvot not as laws or even as commandments, but as articulations of what he calls—and what I interpret to be the obligation of what I experience as—"radical amazement."

Of great concern to many postmodern Jewish theologians is the reality that Heschel's language indeed reflects explicitly and implicitly the religious experiences of men. While many feminist thinkers include Heschel among those whose language excludes the experiences of women, my reading and interpretation of his writing does not distance me in this way. To the contrary, I have often felt an inclusive sensual feminist sensibility in the very tone of his language. A spirituality which lifts the individual's experiences of being human and holy only encouraged me to see my own often uniquely female experiences as sacred.

To insist that experiences of awe and amazement—as well as traditional observance—are legitimate responses and occupy a central place in how one might live Jewishly, made many other rational and feminist arguments against traditional practice less relevant. Heschel taught me that, beyond any ideology, and encompassing all ideologies, God is at the center and the Torah is an opening to understand God's attempt to describe "the secret of being human and holy."

I see it as my sacred task to translate the words and texts of our tradition into a language that is maximally understandable in my time and to my generation. My hand is less forced to make a rational argument for Judaism and more compelled to make a spiritual argument for Judaism's meaningful relevance.

For me as a feminist, liberal, observant Jew attempting to act upon what I understand God demands of us, Heschel transformed the conversation from ideology to spirituality. Using Heschel's terminology and theology gave me a way of articulating why—for example—I chose as a liberal rabbi to observe Shabbat according to halacha. The autonomous choice to observe when coupled with Heschel's argument that "to celebrate the Sabbath is to experience one's ultimate independence of civilization and society, of achievement and anxiety," made my somewhat unusual—for the Reform community—practice more comprehensible in ethical spiritual terms. ❑

Prayer

Answer, O Lord, Our never ending yearning!
Break Your vaunted silence, Cosmic King!
Release at last those prisoners who, from ages past
Begged You to reveal Yourself.
Leave us not imprisoned in the maze.
Reveal to us Your goodness, not Your cleverness.
Enthrall us not, but teach us joy.

Why do You abuse our trust
And mock us in our pride for You?
Is our cry too great for You to bear?
See! How we cloak our longing in human passion,
Our thirst for You in lustful act,
While Your enduring silence is our Hell on Earth.

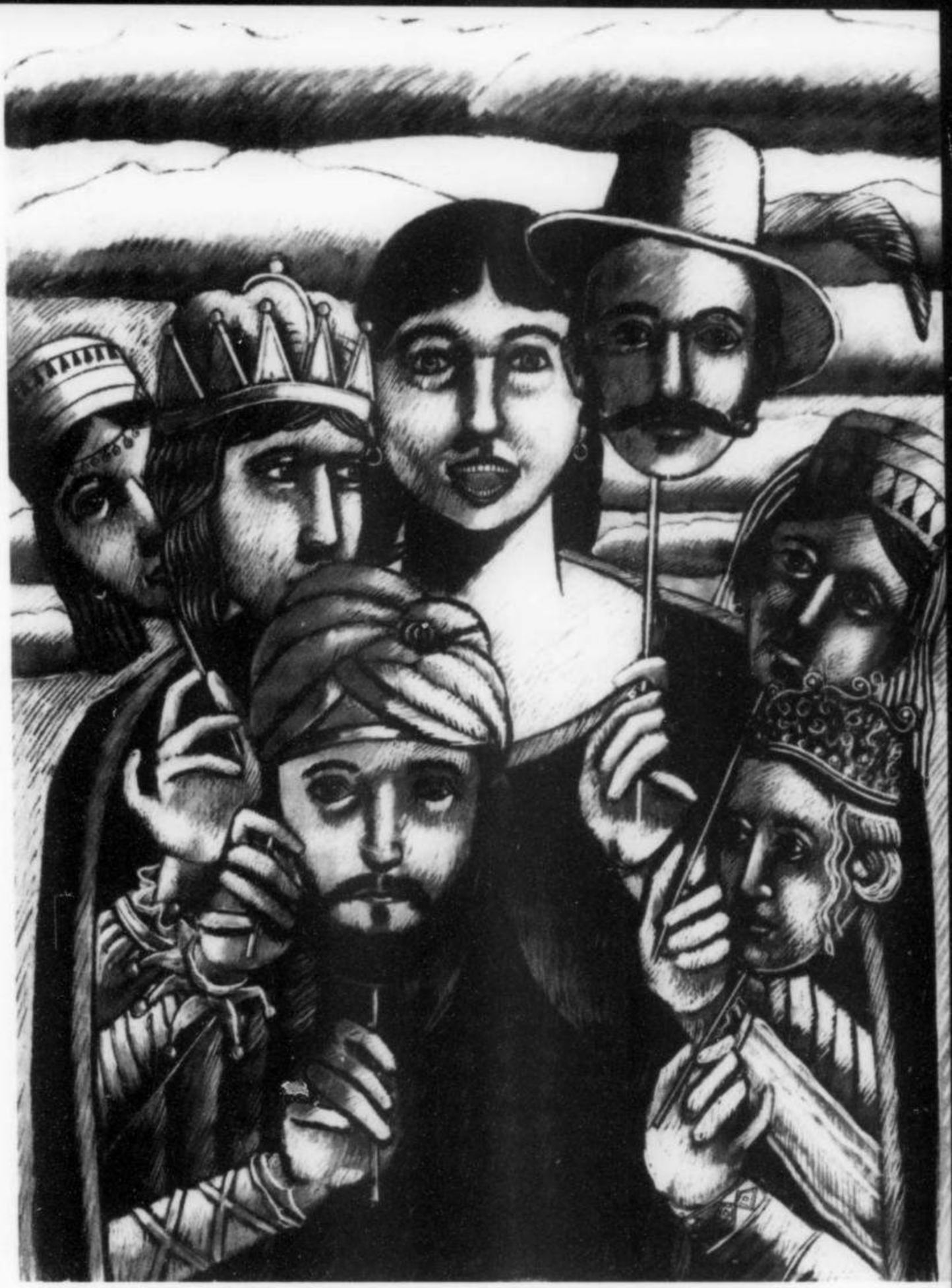
Yet I feel Your ear close to my lips;
And know that even Your caprice
Is gentler than my greatest pity.
But at times my gall bursts, brutalized,
And with a thousand others screams
That God, and God alone, our adversary is!

Then, to You, my voiceless word I cannot speak.
And stronger than my faith is my despair.
O Lord, I gladly would exchange
All holy graces, spirit rungs you grant
For just one light-filled word from You.

—Abraham Joshua Heschel
freely translated by Rabbi Zalman M. Schachter-Shalomi

JUDAISM

Purim: The Limits of Control



Karen van Hoek

Purim is often perceived as simply a celebration of a triumph over anti-Semitism, a straightforward story often thought of as "Good guys versus bad guys, and thank God the good guys won—this time." But while Jewish survival is unarguably an important theme, reducing the holiday to just that causes us to miss an opportunity to confront the more complex issues lurking just beneath the surface: questions about the nature of authority and control, and the power dynamics of Self and Other. Underneath the theme of anti-Semitism, the Book of Esther tells a more subtle story about addiction to control and the consequences that follow.

Imagine having complete control over everyone and everything in the world. It would be a secure existence, but a lonely one: other people would exist only as projections of your own ego, with no independent will of their own. You would have no possibility for intimate contact with others, since intimacy requires that there be two independent beings choosing to interrelate. A world under complete control would be safe, predictable, and unbearably empty.

The Jewish mystical tradition tells us that God confronted this dilemma, and chose to give up control. The first step in the creation of the world was the *tzimtzum*, the contraction of God's own Self in order to open a space in which other beings could exercise free will. Were God to undo the *tzimtzum*, we would be overwhelmed, absorbed back into the Divine consciousness and no longer able to exist as separate selves. The fact that the Universe endures and that we continue to exist as independent beings is testimony to God's decision that the possibility of intimacy with an Other is worth letting go of control.

We humans, created in the Image of God, are also confronted with the conflict between exercising control and holding open the space for an Other. Although we cannot truly get complete control over other people, we have the potential to treat people as extensions of our own egos, trying by manipulation and intimidation to force them to play out the roles we assign to them. We can even treat parts of ourselves as Other and as objects to be controlled, keeping ourselves under observation and attempting to make ourselves conform to rigid standards of behavior.

Much of modern Western society is caught up in an idolatrous cult of control. The rational mind is exalted for its alleged ability to exercise control, and we are trained to repress or deny the "messy" parts of ourselves, the parts which threaten to get out of control: emotions, sexuality, bodily functions, and all experiences and perceptions which don't fit the narrow standards of approved rational thought. As Michael J. Bader points out in his essay on the current fashionability of cynicism (TIKKUN, May/June 1996), the cultural demand for self-control requires never letting down one's guard by displaying vulnerability, hopefulness, or openness to connection with other human beings.

ILLUSTRATION BY RICHARD ROSS

Karen van Hoek teaches cognitive linguistics at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.

A spiritual path which offers healing for individuals and society has to make us aware of the limitations and pitfalls of control. Judaism does this in part through the cycle of the holidays. At Passover we re-enact letting go of everything to make a dash for freedom. At Shavuot we celebrate the overwhelming encounter with an Other at Sinai. At Sukkot we deepen our awareness of vulnerability and of the fragility of the structures we create to protect ourselves from the world. And starting off the cycle of holidays in the spring is Purim, when we directly confront the desire to get everything under control—and laugh at it.

At Purim, we directly confront the desire to get everything under control—and laugh at it.

The Book of Esther opens with King Ahashverus's attempt to coerce obedience from his wife, Vashti. After she is banished or killed (the text doesn't specify) for refusing to submit to his demands, the king passes a law that all wives must obey their husbands. Shortly thereafter, the king's courtier Haman is drawn into a battle of wills with the Jew Mordechai, who refuses to bow down to him. Haman requests that the king order the annihilation of the Jews. His choice of words is telling: "There is a certain people who follow their own laws, and do not follow the king's laws. It is not in the king's interest to tolerate them." In Haman's mind, the logic is perfectly clear: these people will not submit to control, therefore they must be destroyed.

Women and Jews are given remarkably parallel treatment in the story, as Rabbi Arthur Waskow has noted. Both are seen as Other by the dominant members of society, non-Jewish men. Both have had to suffer the consequences of being identified with the shadow side of the self: the irrational, emotional, uncontrollable aspects of self, the aspects which must be repressed and denied if the illusion of control is to be maintained. It is no accident that Nazism, which idolized power and the fantasy of invulnerability, was not only anti-Semitic but also profoundly anti-female.

In the story of Purim, Haman's ambitions are thwarted by someone who is both a woman and a Jew, thus doubly identified with the Other. Queen Esther puts a stop to the madness by refusing to comply with the denial of self which absolute control requires. She identifies herself to the king and to Haman as a Jew. Haman's downfall swiftly follows, and the Jews in the kingdom successfully defend themselves against their enemies.

Framed in this way, Purim is more complex than simply a celebration of the defeat of one anti-Semitic thug. Purim—a word which means 'lots'—is about the ways that people respond to the chaotic, uncontrollable elements in life. To the extent that we demonize Haman, declaring his violence utterly alien and incomprehensible to us, we miss much of the power of the story. While it may be hard to identify with the urge to commit genocide, we all have experience with the fear of giving up control.

Jewish tradition underscores this point with the teaching that one is obligated to drink on Purim *ad d'lo yada*, "Until you don't know the difference between 'Cursed be Haman' and 'Blessed be Mordechai.'" Mordechai was drawn into the power struggle with Haman when he refused to bow down, that is, to give up control. While we can easily distinguish between Mordechai's reasonable self-assertion and Haman's pathological need for control, the custom of temporarily blurring the distinction suggests that often things aren't so clear. The need to exercise control over one's circumstances forms a continuum with the urge to claim power over others, and it is often hard for us to be sure where one leaves off and the other begins.

The costume-ball aspect of Purim further emphasizes the point that the good guys aren't always so obviously different from the bad guys. While the carnival-like revelry is a way of letting go of control and celebrating the chaos and craziness of life, the custom of wearing masks may also be a reminder of the ease with which we play out all the different roles in real life. It is not always so simple to be sure whether we are exercising healthy self-assertion or whether we have overstepped those bounds into unreasonable efforts to control others and ourselves. And yet the hilarity of Purim suggests that maybe our best response is not to take ourselves too seriously, but to step back and laugh at the whole dilemma.

Women and Jews have both been identified with the shadow side of the self: the irrational, emotional, uncontrollable...aspects which must be repressed if the illusion of control is to be maintained.

The tradition teaches that while the other holidays will end with the coming of the Messiah, "the days of Purim will never cease." Perhaps this is because the delicate balance between surrender and control is woven into the fabric of Creation, from the moment when God first contracted God's own Self to allow for the possibility of intimacy with an Other. We will live in the tension between the two extremes for as long as the world endures. ❑

JUDAISM

Purim: From Duality to Unity

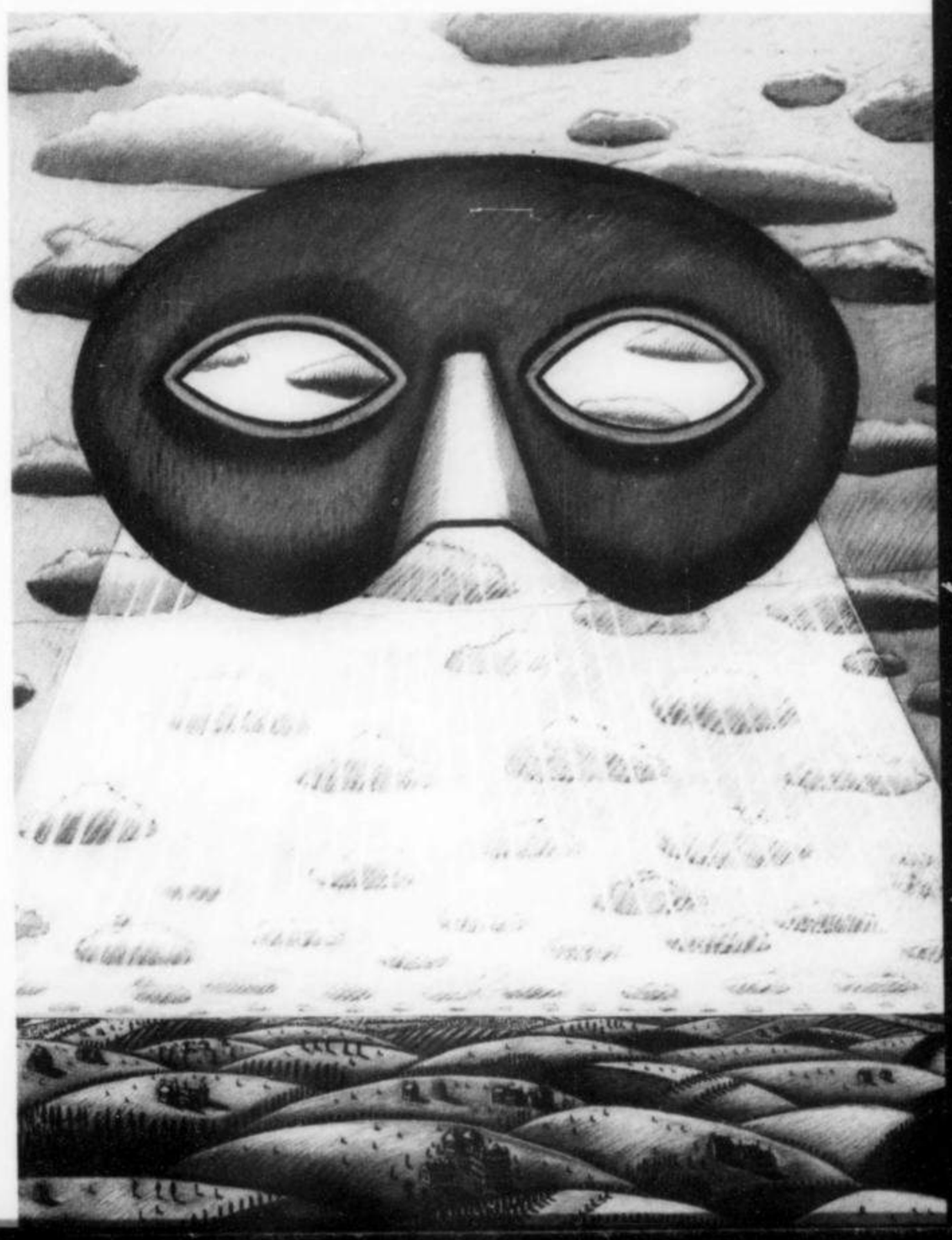
Estelle Frankel

Using a Midrashic play on words, a Rabbi once referred to Yom Kippurim as Yom K'Purim—a day like Purim, but not quite as holy as Purim. This cryptic teaching is a bit shocking to those of us who grew up thinking of Yom Kippur as the holiest day of the year, and of Purim as a lighthearted and irreverent children's holiday for masquerading and noise-making. Not only is Purim seen as possibly more holy than Yom Kippur, there is an opinion in the Talmud that even in the Messianic era (when evil will be wiped out) Purim will be among the few holy days Jews will still be required to observe! What is so special about Purim that the Talmud rendered it "post-messianic," and how is it similar to Yom Kippur, the holy day of at-one-ment? In this essay I will offer possible answers to these two questions while also considering how aspects of my own life have been illuminated by viewing them through the lens of the Purim story.

The book of Esther, which we read on Purim, is a story filled with mystery, surprise reversals, and hidden identities becoming revealed. In fact the Hebrew expression *Megillat Esther* (the scroll of Esther) can also be understood as a play on the words *megalah hester*, revealing that which is hidden. For the name Esther, aside from its possible association with Ishtar, the Near Eastern goddess of love and war, in Hebrew means "hiddeness"—from the Hebrew root *seter*.

Even Purim's holiness, as the name of its heroine, Esther, suggests, is hidden from us. To find it we have to search beyond the literal story; not only does Esther hide her true identity as a Jewess from King Ahashverosh until the perfect moment for self-revelation, but the very name of God is hidden within the narrative of the Megillah. Throughout the text we hear about *Ha'melech* (the King), but we hear nothing about the ONE who fashions the heart of Kings and Queens. The closest we come to finding the YHVH name of God within the text is as a hidden acronym. As Esther invites King Ahashverosh to a feast with Haman she says: *"Yavo Ha'melech V'haman H'ayom"* (the King shall come with Haman today). (Esther 5:4) As Esther utters this invitation to the mortal King, she secretly offers up a prayer that God, the King of Kings, also be present!

The deliberate omission/hiding of God's name within this book of scriptures reflects the new reality that the Jews of Persia were experiencing—that of *Galut* or exile. Not only were they living geographically exiled from the Holy Land, but their experience of reality was that of *Galut Ha'Shechinah*—the Divine Presence in exile. The God *of* exile is a God *in* exile. Unlike the God of the Bible whose divine intervention in human affairs is directly perceived, the God of Exile works behind the scenes, cloaked in the mysterious unfolding of history. Living in exile, the Jews faced the challenge of maintaining faith in spite of the apparent eclipse of Divine providence and the loss of the sacred Temple rites which had been the focal point of Jewish religious life. Without the Holy Temple, the Jews of the diaspora had to begin to develop a new Jewish spirituality that would be relevant to their new historic context in order to survive. The Purim story takes place during this pivotal point in the diaspora's struggle to renew Judaism—a renewal that ultimately resulted in a profound paradigm



ILLUSTRATIONS BY RICHARD ROSS

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shift which placed prayer and study of the Oral Tradition, *Torah She'be'al peh*, at the center of religious discourse.

In many ways the era in which the Purim story unfolds reminds me of our times. Just as the Jews of Persia had to evolve their understanding of Judaism in order to survive the cataclysmic destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem, our generation faces the challenge of creating a Judaism that can speak to our post-Holocaust and post-patriarchal theological concerns.

As a Jewess living in the diaspora, I also struggle with the issue of living outside of the Holy Land. After making aliyah and spending the 1970s living in Jerusalem as an Orthodox Jew, personal and family matters forced my return to America. For years I fought and struggled with this aspect of my fate. Yet, as time has passed, it has become more apparent that the fullness of my destiny is being revealed to me here in exile. Though at times it seems as though my Jewishness is compromised by living in the diaspora, there are also ways in which it has grown and deepened in response to the challenge of incorporating feminist, Eastern, psychological and universal perspectives into my identity.

Over the years, as I deeply missed Jerusalem, I found it comforting to think of Esther's plight. From the time she was forcibly taken away from her people to be part of the King's harem, until she was able to use her position to save the Jews of Persia, nine long years had passed. Sometimes God's will or the deeper meaning of events are not revealed to us immediately. I learn from Esther that faith demands patience, and that even in exile one can find one's destiny as a Jew. In fact, whenever life presents difficult situations that challenge my faith, I draw strength from the story of Esther. I tell myself, this is not the whole story. It's just one chapter whose meaning has not yet been revealed.

When the Jewish mystics of old glorified Purim, seeing it as a holiday for the messianic era, perhaps they were attempting to view the Exile not just as Divine punishment, but also as a holy possibility; as an opportunity to deepen and bring light out of darkness.

In actuality, Judaism flourished in the Babylonian diaspora just at the time when things were stagnating in Eretz Yisrael. The Talmud compiled by the sages of Babylonia became the authoritative source of Jewish law, whereas the Jerusalem Talmud remained much less important. Sometimes painful realities, like exile and loss, can catapult us into new levels of consciousness that we would never have achieved had we not suffered. We find our greatest gifts, at times, out of our struggles with the darkness. On Purim, as we emerge from the darkness of winter, we celebrate the light we bring out of our encounter with the darkness—the Torah wisdom that is revealed in exile.

In keeping with the spirit of Esther's and God's hiddenness in the Megillah, we, too, conceal our identities by dressing up in costume on Purim. This concealment can also be an opportunity to reveal new aspects of oneself. In the Jewish women's groups I lead, members often dress up on Purim as their "Shadow selves" or as an aspect of the self which is ordinarily hidden. This ritual, both playful and therapeutic, enables us to reintegrate unconscious material while expanding the boundaries of our self definition.

Purim's theme of hiddenness is also reflected in the fact that the miracle it commemorates is itself subtly hidden in the course of historic events. In Jewish thought, Purim's miracle is considered a *nes nistar* (a hidden miracle), in contrast with the *nisim galuyim* (overt miracles) associated with the Exodus from Egypt in which the very laws of nature were transcended. The *nes nistar* or hidden miracle of Purim is "cloaked" within the natural chain of events. It seems fitting that the Hebrew month in which Purim falls—Adar—is related to the Hebrew word *"aderet"* or cloak. The entire sequence of events, beginning with the dethroning of Vashti, the choosing of Esther, the plot to kill Ahashverosh, Haman's decree, Ahashverosh's bout of insomnia and the belated, yet timely, reading of his book of chronicles in which Mordecai's loyal effort to save the king was finally remembered—all appear as a sequence of seemingly unrelated events that occur over a period of nine years. The miracle of Purim is not that anything exceptional or transcendent happened, but that all these events, when strung together like beads on a chain, form a sublime serendipity.

Sometimes painful realities…can catapult us into new levels of consciousness.

On Purim we attempt to read secular history as sacred writ—as the slow, yet meaningful unfolding of the will of God. Even the seeming eclipse of God's divine providence has its place within the story of the Megillah. The *nes nistar*, or hidden miracle, reveals that nothing happens by chance alone. Even Haman's lottery—the drawing of *purim* (lots) becomes part of a divine plot as well as the name of the holiday. That which seems to be arbitrary or even unlucky, becomes meaningful in the Megillah's reading of history. On Purim we are invited to enter into a state of consciousness in which the hidden and miraculous hand of the divine is revealed to us from within the ordinary course of events. This, perhaps, is the reason for Purim's post-messianic relevance.

Even the mitzvah to become intoxicated by wine on Purim hints at a deeper mystical intent. The Talmud asserts that "one must become intoxicated on Purim to the point where one can no longer differentiate between cursed is Haman and blessed is Mordecai" (in Aramaic *"M'chayav inish l'besumay b'poraya ad de'lo yada…"* Megillah 7b). This rather strange command for a people governed by extreme restraint of impulses throughout the rest of the year is

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CURRENT DEBATE

Public School Reform: The Mismeasure Of Education

Svi Shapiro

This past summer the legislature in my home state of North Carolina passed into law the so-called "Excellent Schools Act." While this legislation will certainly affect the lives of students and teachers here, the significance of what has been enacted goes well beyond the borders of North Carolina. In many ways the legislation reflects and crystallizes much of the thinking as well as the public discourse on education in this country at this time. Certainly the act is of a piece with the White House's current push to mandate national tests to measure educational standards in our public schools. The North Carolina legislation included the following items:

- Increased attention to state-mandated performance standards throughout K-12 schooling.
- Incentives for teachers and schools to achieve these standards; for teachers who exceed them in the classroom by 10 percent or more there are bonuses of $1500: for schools that meet their goals teachers would receive $750.
- Teachers in schools where students are doing poorly in the classroom will have to take a general knowledge test (if they do not pass it they get two more chances before losing their jobs).
- Local boards of education are able to decide whether a teacher should get tenure after four years in the classroom. In addition there is a "streamlining" of the appeals process for removing teachers, primarily through limiting the appeals process.
- Related legislation has also placed a Damocles sword over the heads of school principals who fail to ensure high or rising scores on achievement tests; failure to do so leads to the possibility of suspension or removal from their position.

The bill was originally proposed by Democratic governor Jim Hunt, considered one of the national leaders in public school reform. It was supported by both Democrats and Republicans in the state. Harold Brubaker, Republican Speaker of the House, summed up support in these words; "for the first time ever we are holding educators to the kind of accountability and performance measures people in the private sector are faced with on a daily basis."



ILLUSTRATION BY JIM FLYNN

In return for these changes teachers were promised a 6.5 percent increase in salaries and a long-term commitment by the governor to raise the pay of North Carolina teachers at least up to the national average (the state like most in the South has languished in standards of pay). The key concern at the center of the proposed changes, however, is the effort to ensure that public schools more fully reflect and conform to the needs of business, and that the criteria used to judge business success or effectiveness are more completely and consistently employed in public education. No one has expressed this more often and more persuasively than President Clinton, who has argued that the most important reason for school reform is the "need to be competitive in the 21st century." As the language of "performance goals" more and more dominates the public debate on schooling

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so the business concern with output and productivity comes to define our vision for school success. At school, as in the workplace, success is understood only in the most immediate and crude terms of empirically verifiable and quantifiable data, especially as schools become focused on tests that measure student performance in ways that are standardized and intellectually reductionist. As Alfie Kohn has noted, "The emphasis [at school and work] is on results, on turning out a product, on quantifying improvements on a fixed series of measures such as sales volume or return on investment." We have entered an era where, to an unparalleled degree, the language and thinking of business shape the thinking and vision of education.

Of course one does not need to be a genius to grasp the detrimental effect of all this on the lives of teachers and students. Under the regime of increasing standardization, schooling becomes simply the search for prefigured "right" answers, and the capacity to regurgitate bits of information that are on somebody else's list of what is intellectually correct or appropriate. Worst of all is the notion that only those things that can be measured in some kind of precise and quantifiable way have educational value. The arts or other creative areas of the curriculum which do not easily lend themselves to this "regime of measurement" are bound to lose out and be marginalized (or try to transform themselves into some grotesque form of measurable competencies which is now commonly the case).

Where teachers' livelihoods are made dependent on improvements in test scores, it will be only the most exceptional among them that will seek to make their classrooms places that are creative and expansive in their practices. Focusing on what is most shallow and homogenized in teaching negates those learning possibilities that emphasize the development of a critical intelligence, the stimulation of our imagination, or the quest to make meaning out of our own experience. All of these depend on cultivating attitudes that question so-called correct answers or knowledge and to seek, instead, what is unfamiliar, even irreverent or subversive. Real education encourages students in the search for the unpredictable or the unexpected. It helps us transcend the "givenness" or the taken-for-granted in our intellectual or cultural world.

Critical observers of schooling in this country have long noted how public schools have been shaped by industrial images—classrooms as factories, students as raw materials, teachers as workers, the pedagogic process as one of inputs and outputs subject to behavioral and technical manipulation. Today, under the pressures of both the White House and the state house, the concern to fit schools to such a vision has rarely seemed so apparent. And rarely have more "progressive" visions of education seemed so marginalized. This pressure has been fomented by the sense of panic about falling school standards that has suffused the public discourse on education since the publication of the 1983 "Nation at Risk" report. Hardly a day seems to go by without the publication of yet another report claiming that test scores in math, science, or reading have dropped, or that other countries continue to outscore the U.S. in measures of school achievement. It seems not to matter that careful scholars like Gerald Bracey or David Berliner have refuted the veracity of many of these claims. They have shown, for example, that invidious comparisons with SAT scores makes no sense when it is recognized how much more socially diverse is the present population of SAT test takers compared to the limited and disproportionately privileged groups taking it in earlier times. Nor does this country do especially badly in comparison to most other nations. Perhaps most significant is how little correlation there is between these measures and levels of economic growth or productivity. It is paradoxical indeed that while schools were blamed for the economic plight of the 1970s, the present economic boom is little credited to education.

Part of what is so debilitating about the North Carolina reforms and their counterparts elsewhere is the reduction of teacher's work to the crudest kinds of monetary incentives. Of course this is not about the reasonableness and justice of teachers being paid a little better. There has always been a great hypocrisy in the language we use to describe the value of those who help raise our children and how much society is prepared to pay those who do such work. No, the problem is the notion that better teaching can be paid off like piecework; count up the test results and give bonuses to the most effective workers. This vulgar notion that good teaching is reducible to higher scores on the test is surely the most limited of ways to think about the nature and purpose of teaching. The pressure to convert the breadth and complexity of children's development to the crude simplicity of a numerical score is a trivializing and insensitive travesty apparent to most teachers who understand just how little is captured by this about human intelligence, creativity, or sociability.

Finally, we are talking about a process that further accentuates the competitive culture of schools. In this regard critics of schooling have long rejected the claim that schools are ideologically or morally neutral institutions. They have, especially, noted the centrality of individualist and competitive values in what is sometimes referred to as the "hidden curriculum" of education. Schools in this view are a primary mechanism for inculcating the necessity and inevitabilty of a success-oriented, achievement-centered, hierarchical and egoistic culture. Schools provide the vehicle for sorting, and legitimating, what will ultimately become the class and other social divisions of American society—giving an intellectual rationale for how we allocate and distribute material and symbolic rewards. Within this context standardized tests are of enormous consequence. They provide a common-sense legitimacy to notions about the unequal distribution of intellectual capabilities. They offer a "scientific" justification for the hierarchical and

unequal relationships between human beings. The ubiquitous "bell-curve" upon which an individual's success and failure is plotted gives an apparent naturalness and inevitability to the social and cultural divisions of our world. And certainly to the extent that they are attended to with increased concern, even alarm, they reinforce the culture's obsession with winning, "getting ahead," and the pursuit of individual success.

Whether they like it or not, in the present climate teachers and school administrators are forced to give inordinate attention to those things that differentiate and rank students, rather than concern themselves with developing an ethic of care and mutuality. From my own experience in working with teachers, this emphasis is at least an uncomfortable one. Many teachers are animated by a moral impulse to bring young people to a greater appreciation of the social relations of care, compassion and mutual concern. The intense emphasis on standardized testing which now permeates our schools, however, promotes the opposite feelings; the culture of individual success always implies doing better than one's neighbor—sometimes at any cost. Whether or not we wish to acknowledge it, this is a process that encourages students to lie, cheat, or do "whatever is necessary" in order to do well. The self-interested ethic of the marketplace becomes the ethic of the classroom. It is a short distance from this to what Charles Derber has called the culture of "wilding"—a culture whose driving force is an unbridled concern with increasing one's own share of the pie.

Especially damaging in all of this is the pernicious myth of meritocracy. How we perform on these standardized tests is, we are to believe, a matter of individual ability and intelligence and the level of effort particular students can bring to bear on the task. Absent or silent in this view are the effects of the social context on how students relate to, or achieve, in school. Yet there is absolutely no doubt that school success is, in reality, overwhelmingly influenced by this context. We have known for many years that the single most important predictor of school achievement is one's social class. One only has to look at the numbers put out by the Educational Testing Service related to SAT performance:

Annual Family Income	SAT scores
Under $10,000	873
10,000–20,000	948
20,000–30,000	962
30,000–40,000	993
40,000–50,000	1015
50,000–60,000	1033
60,000–70,000	1048
70,000–80,000	1062
80,000–100,000	1090
over 100,000	1130

Sociologists, socio-linguists and others have given us a significant understanding of why this is so. Though complex, it is a process that brings together the differential expectations of teachers, the attitudes of students towards the institution of school, the cultural and linguistic knowledge that students bring with them from home and the streets, as well as the educational and economic resources available in the community. Far from an innocent vehicle for impartially discerning merit among students, it turns out that schools are deeply implicated in the cultural and material inequities of class, race, gender and region; who does well in school and who does badly is much better explained by the social circumstances within which our kids grow up than by whether their teachers are especially talented or even hard-working. In this sense North Carolina's intention to punish teachers where students do poorly, or to make them take a general knowledge test, is laughable were it not so insulting and threatening to teachers. The most realistic way to avoid such consequences is for teachers to find jobs in the upscale suburbs or neighborhoods of our cities.

Of course one may well ask why it is that such knowledge is excluded from the framing of the public debate—and legislation—on education. There is no easy response to this question. Certainly, however, part of the answer lies in our culture's deeply-rooted attempt to deny the existence or salience of social class in the shaping of our lives and experience. Instead we have a latter-day myth of "rugged individualism"—the notion that each person's success or failure is entirely explained by their own talents and efforts. In the face of the overwhelming reality that school success is more dependent on a child's social class than on any other single factor, placing the onus on the efforts of the individual teacher or student is a massive exercise in cultural denial and ideological confusion.

Particularly sad in the distortion of educational values and goals implicit in recent reforms is their effect on teachers' motivations and aspirations. The idealistic intentions that usually bring people into education—a desire to make some contribution to a better world, to improve the lives of kids, to offer a caring environment for children, and so on—become perverted by the limited pursuit of higher test scores and the crass exploitation of a few extra dollars for achieving "better" results. What sense of vocation can teachers be expected to bring to their work in a climate that stresses such crude, reductionist and narrowly-defined educational goals? Like so many other areas, teaching has become not only a de-skilled craft but also a degraded one.

It is certainly paradoxical that at a time when there is so much talk about improving the professional quality of public school teaching, reforms increasingly limit and circumscribe the work of teachers. While on the one hand there seems to be an effort to decentralize power in school systems—so that greater decision-making possibilities exist at the local school level and among teachers themselves, the increasing centrality of standardized tests in guiding the curriculum means that the real power over pedagogy remains far removed from the actual work of teachers. Teachers, in

effect, can have more say over less and less things that really matter in the educational process. Some of the most acute observers of the public school scene have noted for several years now that teachers are treated more and more as impersonal instruments in a bureaucratic process than as thoughtful and creative intellectuals whose personal vision of education really matters. Their concern with meaning and imagination becomes irrelevant as teaching is controlled by external test results and text-books, instructional materials,or software which manage the teaching process and curriculum content—all of which attempt to produce, in the words of Michael Apple, "teacher-proof" classrooms!

More insidious than these, however, are attempts, such as those in the North Carolina law, to weaken the tenure, job security and appeal rights of teachers. While ostensibly making it easier to "weed-out" poor teachers, such changes in the professional security of teachers will undermine the confidence of those who might wish to break from the "daily grind" of test-driven classrooms to create more daring and challenging environments for their students. This country has a long history (some of which is vividly reconstructed in recent Hollywood movies) of the authoritarian exclusion of such teachers. As local school boards increasingly have the power to terminate teachers' contracts, right-wing activists will have greater opportunities to eradicate from the schools teachers who provide any kind of a liberal or dissenting view of culture or history in America. It would be politically naive in this context to expect anything less. One only has to look at the continuing battles around matters of curriculum, textbooks, and literature, issues of sexuality and so on, to understand how attempts to weaken tenure laws can only increase the threat to teachers who are committed to classrooms where students might encounter ideas and beliefs that contradict traditional or more conventional worldviews. More conformity in classroom instruction rather than more compelling, interesting, or provocative teaching is the certain consequence of such changes.

We have come to understand from our recent studies of culture and literature that it is often the silences in our discourse—what is not said—that tell us what we truly value. While a steady public drumbeat calls us to connect education with competition and individual success, schooling seems ever more remote from what John Dewey called "the making of a world" that is democratic. One looks in vain in the discourse of teaching "excellence" for a concern with education as a potentially powerful vehicle for the renewal of a culture of active and meaningful citizenship; one in which education has a principal role in nurturing the skills, values, and commitments necessary to a culture in which individuals care about, and participate in, the making of a society that is just, compassionate, and free. For our schools to serve such democratic ends, rather than act as the training sites for the techno-corporate world, would mean a transformation in both our vision of educational purpose and in the practices of the classroom. When schools become places concerned with the meaning of citizenship and democracy rather than test scores and success, the educational agenda comes to be about matters of self and social awareness and the care for life. Schools are understood, preeminently, as places where students learn to critically examine the institutions, beliefs, values, and behaviors that constitute our world so that they understand the ways we promote or impede a world that treats human beings with dignity and respect. Students are encouraged to become critically conscious individuals able, as the great Brazilian educator Paolo Freire described it, to "problematize" our world—to question what is familiar or taken-for-granted in how we as human beings, both individually and collectively, understand and act toward others.

The impulse for such a concern is an ethical one. It is the quest for a world that is more just, more compassionate, more loving, more democratic, more free. It is the struggle for a world in which unnecessary suffering is reduced and joyful existence expanded. In this sense the critical citizenship we seek in our schools relies on the nurturing of an ethical sensibility that reveres life, that seeks a world of dignity and caring, and sanctifies creation. While often marginalized, a powerful and rich educational tradition speaks, both philosophically as well as practically, to this notion of education for critical citizenship. It articulates a view of education that is inseparable from the quest for a renewal of the American values of democracy and community. It insists that literacy today must be a critical literacy that teaches students to understand the underlying moral and ideological meanings that permeate our cultural "texts," from books to movies, from fashions to popular music. It is an education that is about nurturing the sense of social responsibility, developing an awareness and respect for our differences as human beings, and the capacity to engage in the determination of our shared future. It means an education that teaches us, above all else, to care about the fate of human beings and of the earth itself—a concern for unnecessary poverty and violence, for racism and prejudice, for the destructive and wasteful uses of our material resources, and for the inviolable sanctity of life. Such a language and vision offers a significantly different agenda for educational reform than the present, corporate-driven approach to our schools. More than anything it reminds us of the significance of the public nature of these institutions as sites for the potential renewal of that sense of mutuality, community and human agency in the seeking of a more just and compassionate commonwealth.

While the juggernaut of testing and competition continues its relentless shaping of our schools we can hear the rumblings of alternative educational discourses and agendas. Parents continue to tell pollsters the importance they attach to their children's schools being caring environments. The "Character Education" initiative promoted by

the Clinton administration and various professional groups has promoted the importance of civic values in kids' education—though in ways that seem to emphasize moral conformity and the acceptance of authority rather than the feisty anti-authoritarianism required of a democratic culture. Religious and communal groups struggle with how to address issues of sexuality in schools, though typically here in ways that emphasize its dangers and evils rather than its pleasures. And in pedagogy itself educators try to promote some degree of creativity and meaningfulness in student learning by promoting a more integrated approach to the curriculum, or by emphasizing a "constructivist" approach to knowledge where the process of understanding rather than simply getting the answer right is paramount.

Yet all of this offers little to an educational vision which truly foregrounds the struggle for an education that prepares human beings to grapple with the transformation and repair of our world. There is little here that helps us break out of the deadly language of "excellence," "basic skills," "competencies," and "standards" that has dominated the goals of education in the last two decades. Such a change will mean that we see education as, in the first place, inextricably connected to the social, moral, and spiritual vision of our nation and our world. In this sense education is never morally or ideologically neutral. It can only be about maintaining and reproducing the world as it is, or about challenging and changing it. Notwithstanding the present hype about peace and prosperity, our world continues to be a place filled with the unnecessary suffering of violence and wars, poverty, meaningless work or unemployment, intolerance and racism, dangerous concentrations of political and economic power, the despoliation of the planet, civic withdrawal and isolation, and the dehumanizing commodification of everyday life. In such a context any education that does not define its purpose, preeminently, as the quest for lives of greater moral and spiritual meaning, and communities more caring, just, and democratic, is, surely, irresponsibly misdirected or dangerously distracted. ❑

A Response to Svi Shapiro:

Why Overreact?

Bruce S. Cooper, Ph.D.



ILLUSTRATION BY JIM FLYNN

My home state of North Carolina, under the able leadership of Democratic governor Jim Hunt, has passed the "Excellent Schools Act" with backing from the Republicans in the legislature. The new law puts the Tarheel State on the cutting edge of the "standards movement" in the US. The statewide effort seeks to leverage change and improvement by (a) setting high standards, (b) testing children to see that they reach that level, and (c) reassuring the parents and community that the teachers and school administrators have the training and skills to prepare students not only for these basic competency tests but also for the world of work, civic life, and family responsibilities.

Why Svi Shapiro, in his article, "Public School Reform: The Mismeasure of Education," goes off the deep end over North Carolina's efforts is not entirely clear. Rather than celebrating the state's progress, Shapiro overreacts, misrepresents the issues, and confuses the reader with a host of distortions, high-minded academic liberalisms, and the kind of "soft thinking" that has landed our education system in its current mess. Why Shapiro takes this tack, one cannot tell, although perhaps he has been reading too much "constructivist," "relativist," left-wing claptrap to realize what he is saying. Here's a brief refutation and clarification of his ideas:

1. Knowledge is not the enemy of creativity and caring: Shapiro tries to convince us that a system of accountability like North Carolina's will snuff out creativity and turn teachers into drill sergeants and students into automatons, memorizing stacks of facts and regurgitating minutia on multiple choice examinations. Hardly. Teachers can and should teach the facts and figures of their subjects and lessons—embedded in the context and situation that students understand. All good teachers do.

But the facts flow naturally from the subject, whether the "facts" of history (the Boer War was fought in 1899-1902 in South Africa, pitting the British descendants against their Dutch-related neighbors) or science (the effect of sunlight

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on silver nitrate is to change its color and density). But details of the war hardly prevent the teacher from also explaining the evils of warfare, the causes of deadly conflict, and what nations can do to prevent such hostilities. It's silly to attack the need for cogent, correct details to accompany the more creative parts of learning. After all, if Eugene O'Neill had not known the English language, the history of drama, and the details of life in the South in the 1920s, *Long Days Journey into Night* might never have been written and the Nobel Prize for Literature forfeited.

And why should any teacher or administrator fear a factual test, of all things, if students have been carefully taught? I could conceive of Shapiro complaining, next, that another test was too abstract, requiring insight, creativity, and the ability to generalize. Factual tests are easier to write, take, grade, and interpret—and they do give some sense of students' familiarity with such key areas as grammar, vocabulary, syntax, historical developments, scientific laws and rules, and geographic locations and conditions. Nothing wrong with knowing that the American Civil War occurred in the 19th century.

2. Testing the "ends" does not dictate the "means." Shapiro is wrong in another important way. He confuses the role of the North Carolina state policy in setting results and outcomes—the "ends" of education—with the relative autonomy enjoyed by all teachers and schools in determining the "means" for getting to these results. That is, under the new law, the state will assess students' progress in basic skills, leaving it up to teachers to apply their own style, creativity, resources, and knowledge to the curriculum, lessons, materials, demonstrations, discussions, and pedagogy.

In fact, Shapiro admits that under NC law, schools and teachers have more leeway and discretion under "school-site" decision-making than previously. Hence, it's essential that if the means are open and free to personal and local interpretation, then the state or school system is obligated to check up to see that the results are consistent and well-taught. Thus, a teacher is free to instruct about the "digestive system" in biology using computers, diagrams, dead chickens, or models, as long as students master the basic vocabulary (ingestion and stomach acids) and concepts (peristalsis, excretion). This division between ends and means should in fact make teaching easier and stronger, since the teacher knows the subjects and details which are required and can consequently build the lesson and experience confidently from there.

3. Rigor and results are hardly the concern of the "business community" alone. Shapiro tries to convince us that the new state law will "commercialize" or "productize" education, turning kids into products, and teaching and learning into a productivity function like the work of an assembly line. Untrue. All learned professions, skill areas, and essential fields of life require some "bottom line," a test and certification that some standard is met.

How would Shapiro like to drive on highways with motorists untrained, untested, and unlicensed in the basics of driving, safety, and courtesy? Imagine lying on the operating table and being cut open by a surgeon who had not passed rigorous tests of knowledge, skills, and practices in human anatomy and surgery? Or think about crossing a bridge built by an engineer who had passed no standardized tests and received no diplomas or licenses in structural engineering?

Why are teaching and learning any different? Surely, the citizens of North Carolina have the right to expect their students to pass basic tests in key subjects and the teachers to be well-prepared in their subjects and skilled in their art. Shapiro's screaming about the effects of standards sounds a bit thin and tinny. Take this statement: "While the juggernaut of *testing and competition* continues its relentless shaping of our schools, we can hear the rumblings of alternative educational discourses and agendas.... And in pedagogy itself, educators try to promote some degree of creativity and meaningfulness...by promoting a more integrated approach to the curriculum, or by emphasizing a 'constructivist' approach to knowledge where the process of understanding rather than simply getting the answer right is paramount." In fact, knowledge ("getting the right answer") and wisdom are *both* truly important and hardly mutually exclusive.

4. Standards for all does not usually mean competition for each. I remember during my first year at University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill that we had only one real standard: we all had to pass a swimming test in physical education. This was not a race; no rewards for passing it more quickly or better. As each of us pushed off from poolside, everyone else cheered us for all four laps. We weren't satisfied until *every member* of our class had passed. State standards in K-12 education can have much the same effect: they set a common "bar" or level, and we all become invested in seeing that everyone (our school and classmates in particular) pass the test. We can then declare: 100 percent of our fifth graders can now read and write at an acceptable level—not, *I* read better than anyone else.

Shapiro immediately assumes that when North Carolina set a basic level of performance that one student would beat another to that standard. No, not true. Everyone can win. If ten "win" by reaching the standards, this does *not* mean that ten lose, as when we have limited "places" and only the top 10 percent "get in," as with college admissions. State standards are set for everyone; there's room in the "winner's circle" for an entire school, class, community. We're in a "win-win" situation, not a zero-sum game where someone must fall if someone else is to rise. In fact, I've been in schools and classrooms where all the students are cheering and pulling for their classmates to improve and reach the basic standard. Thus, when Shapiro writes the following argument, it appears misdirected (perhaps it should be addressed to the president of Duke University or UNC-CH):

> Whether they like it or not, in the present climate teachers and school administrators are forced to give inordinate

attention to those things that differentiate and rank students, rather than concern themselves with developing an ethic of care and mutuality. From my own experience in working with teachers, this emphasis is at least an uncomfortable one. Many teachers are animated by a moral impulse to bring young people to a greater appreciation of the social relations of care, compassion and mutual concern. The intense emphasis on standardized testing which now permeates our schools, however, promotes the opposite feelings; the culture of individual success always implies doing better than one's neighbor—sometimes at any cost.

Standards, caring, and mutual support are not antithetical, as Shapiro portrays them; in fact, one might argue that helping every student to succeed can actually bring a group of learners together and thus build a helping, supportive learning environment for all.

5. Teaching is a profession. Teachers are the world's largest and arguably most important profession. In fact, without teachers, no other profession (law, medicine, engineering, architecture, accounting) would even be possible. Standards do not weaken professions: they set the possibilities and targets for their work. When medicine sets a standard—the elimination of HIV-AIDS or cancer within, say, ten years—this goal "challenges" the profession, not demeans it. The key element in all great professions is that they set their own standards, give their own tests, and determine who gets admitted and who does not. Hence, the American Bar Association sets the Bar Examination and candidates "pass the bar" or not; similarly, the American Medical Association and its specialization affiliates fix the standards and test and review candidates. Teachers, and their unions, have not fought for the right to control licensure and certification, turning that process over to the state.

Teachers have control, then, over neither their own professional job standards nor the testing of the results of their labors (the states tend to set the testing for students). Yet, in the classroom, they enjoy enormous trust and autonomy, with supervisors visiting officially only about once or twice a term. Thus, Shapiro misses the point when he writes:

> It is certainly paradoxical that at a time when there is so much talk about improving the professional quality of public school teaching, reforms increasingly limit and circumscribe the work of teachers. While on the one hand there seems to be an effort to decentralize power in school systems—so that greater decision-making possibilities exist at the local school level and among teachers themselves, the increasing centrality of standardized tests in guiding the curriculum means that the real power over pedagogy remains far removed from the actual work of teachers.

This statement overlooks several key points. First, Shapiro again confuses means with ends. The state has the right and responsibility to the electorate (also the taxpayers) to ensure quality. Second, a test every year or two hardly determines the curriculum: teachers do—by what they teach and how they teach it. We know there is no one best way to teach any subject and that what works for one teacher will not for another. Third, testing only occupies a small part of the teacher's day with students, allowing plenty of time for creativity, caring, growth, discussion, and interaction.

Fourth, importantly, teachers and their associations and unions can only blame themselves for the limited voice in decision-making on what's taught and tested. If the powerful NEA (2.2 million members) and AFT (almost one million members) would set their sights on being more vocal and influential on the curricular and pedagogical side of policy-making nationally, regionally, and locally, nothing could stop the teachers. But teacher leaders have decided to fight for higher salaries, better benefits, better conditions of employment, and a louder voice in the election of political leaders (through lobbying and politicking). Rarely do teachers strive for control over the educational process, leaving that to state education departments and local boards of education (with the President and federal bureaucrats exerting influence from the bully pulpit and through limited federal funding for Title I, bilingual education, and special education programs).

Thus, to blame North Carolina's standards law for disempowering teachers is to misinterpret the history of the teaching profession and teacher unionism over the last thirty years.

Conclusion

One wonders, then, why Svi Shapiro condemns the wholehearted effort of Democrats and Republicans in North Carolina to upgrade the results of schooling grades K-12. One senses that he took on the philosophy of constructivism and relativism and had nowhere to use it. So why not attack the political leadership in the state? Why not pretend that standards and testing are incompatible with teaching goodness, caring, citizenship and democracy? But are they? Why can't a teacher see that students can read, write, think, compute, speak clearly and logically, know some basics of science, geography, economics, and technology *and still* be honest, hardworking, sincere, mutually supportive, and well-meaning? Surely, being able to read and being kind are not mutually exclusive, nor is being aware of one's civic duties and being good at mathematics.

To portray this as a dichotomy, stating, "When schools become places concerned about the meaning of citizenship and democracy *rather than* test scores and success, the educational agenda comes to be about matters of self and social awareness, and the care for life" is nonsense. But, to make the opposite argument, what good is all this awareness and concern if a child leaves school unable to read, write, think, do mathematics, or other "basics" of life in a postmodern society? Schools, in fact, can and do perform functions of teaching the skills and promoting the attitudes, always have and always will. North Carolina, then, is leading the way toward ensuring that every child can "swim" in the modern world, morally and skillfully. ❑

CURRENT DEBATE

A Response to Bruce S. Cooper:

Education and Meaning

Svi Shapiro

For one so enamored by the "facts," Bruce Cooper's response seems blissfully out of tune with school realities. While he bemoans my warnings about classrooms becoming places increasingly filled with students deadened by the stultifying environment of schools where knowledge is relevant only to the next test, he seems utterly unaware that this is precisely what so many of the recent descriptions of contemporary American schools do show. A legion of careful and thoughtful observers of these schools make very clear just what the impact of educational reforms on the lives of both students and teachers really is. We are creating environments that for many are simply killing the spirit of intellectual inquiry, and emptying out the space for creative or imaginative activity.

One does not have to study Dewey or Piaget to recognize that education in any real sense is the quest for meaning and significance in our world. To suggest that there is nothing wrong with students knowing the facts about this or that is surely fatuous. Testing, especially when made the center of academic life, reduces education to memorization, and the "hunt" for the "right" answer. This trivial pursuit turns knowledge into little more than bits of disconnected and meaningless material which has little to do with any significant notion of being culturally literate.

By suggesting that the ends do not dictate the means—that this regime of testing does not limit or circumscribe the creative or critical character of the classroom—Cooper is simply disregarding what is central to my argument. This is not a matter of teaching techniques, of "diagrams" or "dead chickens." We are talking about schools and school-systems whose whole measure of purpose and success is about the quantifiable data of standardized tests. While we should not discount the creativity and ingenuity of teachers even in the most oppressive of conditions to make schoolwork, in some degree, interesting for kids, this is beside the point. Cooper writes as if the "ends" of education are self-evident, as if what constitutes our vision of education is beyond serious discussion. But educating our children is not to be confused with the training of bridge-builders or surgeons. Our children's education is about so much more than facts and information and analysis—it concerns their development as moral beings, as citizens of a democratic nation, and as members of a global community. And that development is coming at a time when crucial and fateful decisions about the quality of our human community are at stake. Testing does not nurture or encourage the capacity of students to question the "givenness" of our world; it teaches them to fill in the blanks on the test sheet, not to ask why we have the tests in the first place. Of course conservative observers of education like Cooper are unlikely to look with much enthusiasm upon classrooms or schools that take seriously the job of helping young people become critical participants of our culture, questioning deeply the priorities and concerns of their world.

Cooper is most removed from social and educational reality when he evades the question of competition in our schools and in our culture. Sadly, our schools are not "win-win situations" as he calls them. They are anything but such places. Schools are fully involved in the business of determining who gets what in our society. They are crucial vehicles for handing on the advantages and disadvantages of our gender, class and race shaped society. Nobody who reads, for example, Jonathan Kozol's book *Savage Inequalities* can be anything but saddened and enraged by the role our schools play in passing on the pain and inequities of racism and poverty. And educational historians leave us in no doubt as to the pernicious role that testing has played in this process. In the face of this, Cooper's assertion that schools are places where everyone can win is ludicrous. It is also a reprehensible exercise in denial of our culture's deep commitment to the values of social sorting, hierarchy and elitism.

Let me say that Cooper is right to argue for the importance of standards, and he may be correct in arguing that teachers have often left it to others to define and control the educational process. Indeed questioning the standards by which education is to be judged is at the heart of my piece. But unlike Cooper I am quite sure that the increasing emphasis on testing in our schools is incompatible with teaching for a world of greater justice, caring, and democracy. It will reinforce what we already know—that schools don't offer much to those who are poor other than more failure and indignity, and it will provide renewed affirmation of the ability and intelligence of those who are affluent. Nor will the moral curriculum that is implicit in the regime of testing add to the culture of caring, whether in our classrooms or outside. To the contrary it will accentuate our culture's attitude of me-firstism, self-advancement, and winning is what it is all about.And it will not promote the values and capabilities that are needed in a democratic society. Playing the test game promotes behaviors that are antithetical to these; intellectual conformity, a cynical and instrumental view of knowledge, and an overly simplistic view of problem-solving. We do indeed need standards for education, but ones that are imaginatively and courageously attuned to the task of ethical, spiritual, and cultural renewal. Cooper's disparaging dismissal of any such goal is the cynical voice of accommodation to this era of extraordinary greed, unrestrained egoism, and misplaced triumphalism. ❑

Reflections on Race

David Shipler

Despite all that has happened to advance racial progress in the last forty years, powerful prejudices remain not far below the surface of American life. Traveling the country to research my book, I found images and stereotypes emerging in patterns that seem to organize themselves in five bundles: those involving the body, the mind, morality, violence, and power. Reactions to skin color and facial features, assumptions about intelligence, beliefs about family values, fear of physical attack, and hierarchies of control and influence still govern much of what blacks and whites think about each other. These are not new attitudes; what is relatively new is that they are expressed less openly than they were before the civil rights movement, taking subtle forms that may look acceptable at first glance but may be damaging nonetheless.

Not all blatant bigotry has disappeared: a white attorney in Atlanta told me about a black couple he is representing who were recently denied a motel room in south Georgia; a white couple got a room a few minutes later. But such obvious discrimination is rarer than it used to be. More common today is the experience of a black man who worked for IBM in New Orleans. He had been on the job for three years before he realized that a "happy hour" was being held after work at a local bar; only white men from the office were present—no minorities and no women. It may have been explicit racism, but I suspect it was less conscious, perhaps just a bunch of guys getting together with people who were most comfortable to them, people most like themselves. The result was harmful, though, for deals were being made, business plans discussed; the black man, cut out of the network that could lead to his advancement, finally left the job in frustration.

Many middle class blacks complain that even when they get hired and are "in the room" with whites in power they find themselves up against such glass barriers, often based on assumptions that they are less intelligent or less capable. The black man will be picked to organize the softball team but not the research study. The black woman will be chosen to organize the annual picnic but not the sales plan. Blacks often see themselves stereotyped into roles that prevent them from moving ahead.

This experience should not be surprising if you look at surveys done by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago. These studies reveal that most Americans still believe blacks are less intelligent than whites, lazier than whites, and more likely than whites to prefer living on welfare over being self-supporting. These are just thoughts, but if they are allowed to run their course they cannot fail to be translated into behavior.

Society has erected a set of inhibitions to translating such beliefs into actions. Affirmative action is one such mechanism. It is not about quotas anymore. Rather, it insists that highly qualified candidates from a group that has previously suffered discrimination now be given a chance. In the case of the man at IBM, it would have forced the white managers to look at him and others like him as serious candidates for promotion. Combined with sophisticated diversity training, it would have produced a realization that the blacks (and women) were being excluded form the informal routes of advancement.

Is it better to be at an elite college and be thought to be inferior, or to be thought inferior and not be at the elite college?

One argument against affirmative action is that it stigmatizes blacks by creating an assumption that they are less capable and are in a job, for example, only because of race. But that assumption about black inferiority has been in place in American culture for several hundred years (you can find it in Thomas Jefferson's writings). I would ask, "Is it better to be at an elite college and be thought to be inferior, or to be thought inferior and not be at the elite college?" That is the unfortunate choice. Before affirmative action, many elite institutions had very few blacks.

In a season with many new books on race, including mine, a simplistic debate has taken root. It seeks to pit the "optimists" against the "pessimists," those who see progress against those who do not. But the complexity of the racial crosscurrents cannot be reduced to an index of progress. The advances since Jim Crow laws are so obvious they don't need to be restated. But the decay is also well-documented. There are more black executives and more black prisoners than a decade ago. Which statistic shall we focus on?

(continued on page 78)

David K. Shipler is a Pulitzer Prize-winning author whose most recent book is A Country of Strangers: Blacks and Whites in America *(1997).*

FICTION

Shadows on the Hudson

Isaac Bashevis Singer

Just one issue after publishing a symposium on the revival of Jewish literature in America, TIKKUN *returns to one of the masters of Jewish fiction by offering an excerpt from Issac Bashevis Singer's* Shadows on the Hudson, *a novel only recently translated from Yiddish.*

Someone woke him and he opened his eyes to see a policeman. Bright day had dawned and cars were already rushing back and forth. For a moment he had no memory of what had happened. What am I doing here? Why am I lying on a park bench? Did I get drunk? Then he remembered.

"You're not allowed to sleep on a city bench," the policeman said, almost apologetically.

"Oh, sorry."

Grein rose and started walking. He had fallen into a deep sleep and woken with an ache in his bones. Well, look what I've come to! He sensed that the policeman was still watching him, so he wanted to disappear all the more quickly. He turned into a side street and had walked for nearly half a block when he saw a synagogue, open and lighted inside. Without thinking, he went in and saw something he had long forgotten. Since coming to America he had been to synagogue a great many times, but only on the Sabbath or the High Holy Days, not in the middle of the week. Here, however, a minyan of Jews was reciting the morning prayers before going to work. The prayer leader was swaying over the lectern. Jews in prayer shawls and phylacteries were either standing in place or walking about. One was praying without a prayer shawl—obviously an unmarried man. Grein stared and stared. He already only half recollected how phylacteries were worn—the leather straps, the rolled-back sleeves. A little old man with a gray, close-cropped head and the face of a butcher touched the ritual fringes of his shawl to the phylactery on his head and kissed them. A tall young man turned a page in his little prayer book. So all this still exists! Grein said to himself. They would have prayed together here regardless of whether I had come or not. At a loss about what to do, Grein remained standing at the door. As long as they don't ask me to pray! he hoped, but at that very moment a small man approached him to ask, "Do you want a prayer shawl and phylacteries?"

"Yes."

"A quarter," said the little man.

Grein started searching for a quarter, but having no coins he gave the man a dollar bill.

"I'll give you change later."

"It's not necessary."

"Thank you." And he unlocked a cupboard and removed a prayer shawl and phylacteries.

I really don't know how to put these on, Grein mused. Only now did he realize that he had never worn a prayer shawl on a weekday because he was already an unbeliever when he married. He took up a small prayer book and read over the laws. Yes, you put on the prayer shawl first, before the phylacteries. The one he had been given was large, not the kind worn in America but of an old-fashioned European amplitude with broad stripes and long ritual fringes. Am I permitted to put it on? the question flashed through his mind. I am impure! Nevertheless, he enfolded himself in it, then rolled up his sleeve, wound the first phylactery around his left arm, and placed the second on his forehead. No one was watching him. When he came finally to binding the leather strap around the fingers of his left hand, he was a little confused before he remembered that he had to wind it so that the strap formed the Hebrew letters denoting the word "Almighty." What am I doing? he asked himself. His night on the bench had left him somewhat dazed so that his mind was now working slowly, half asleep. He had no strength to stand, so he sat and began reading that section of the Pentateuch prescribed for the morning service which dealt with the consecration to God of the firstborn of all creatures:

> *And when the Lord shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites, as He swore unto thee and to thy fathers, and shall give it thee, thou shalt set apart unto the Lord whatever is firstborn; all the firstlings of the young animals that is a male shall be the Lord's. But every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb, and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break its neck.*

In what way is the ass guilty? Grein asked himself. Why does it deserve to have its neck broken? How could God issue such commands? Apart from that, one thing was certain:

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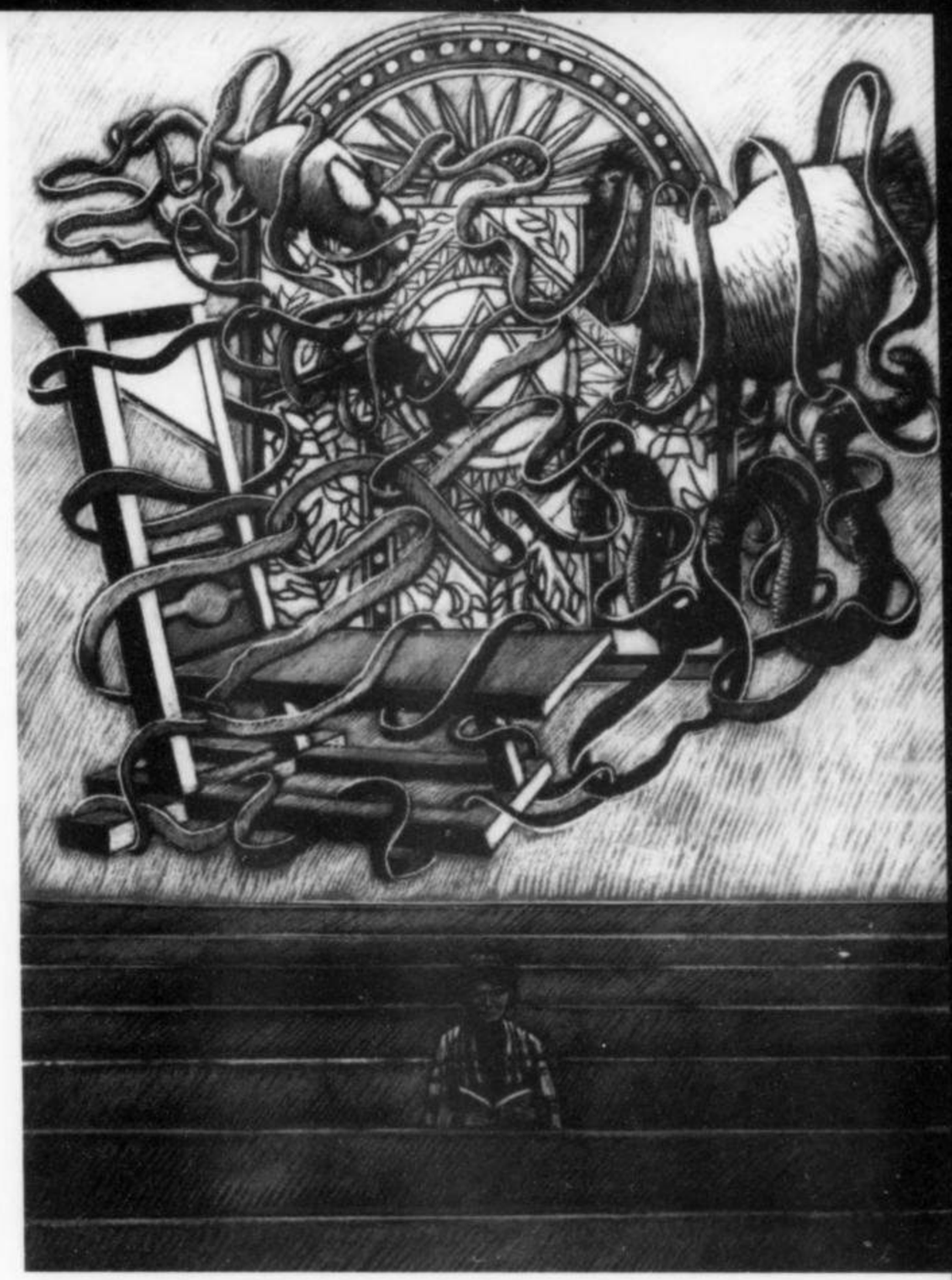
the Jews who were praying here seduced no women, drove no people to death, sickness, madness. They had raised their children through generations in chastity and purity. If any remnant of proper Jews was to survive, it would come from the men gathered here. Whereas my family's Jewish life ends with me: I am an adulterer, a murderer, a liar. My children have totally rejected their heritage. I have broken the eternal bridle which God's immutable law places on human conduct. I belong with the Bolsheviks, the Nazis, the criminals of all nations. I embody the limbo of the underworld.

He recited a little more of the liturgy, paused, went on, and stopped again. All manner of ugly and desperate thoughts kept intruding. Perhaps he should sink even lower. Perhaps he should literally commit a murder. He could get a revolver somewhere. He would shoot his daughter, her debaucher, Leah, and then himself. There must be some sort of thrill in packing someone else off to the next world, otherwise they wouldn't write so much about it or trumpet it so frequently over the radio and on television. Perhaps he should perpetrate some massive fraud. But who would allow themselves to be defrauded by him? Perhaps he might go somewhere where orgies were held. As long as one was falling, one should fall to the bottom of the abyss. He paused awhile and then recited: "The Lord is gracious and full of compassion…slow to anger, and abundant in goodness.… The Lord is good to all, and His mercy is over all He has created."

But was this true? Grein demanded of the prayer book in his turn. Was God really good to all? Had He been good to the six million Jews in Europe? Was He good to all the oxen and pigs and chickens that people were slaughtering at this very moment? Was He good to the tens of millions of people dragging themselves through life with cancer and dying lingering deaths? Was He good to the millions of innocent people rotting in Stalin's slave-labor camps whom only death could redeem? And even assuming that their souls would all eventually rise to Paradise, was it necessary for the road there to be paved with so much suffering? Could anyone really call such a God good? And could one go on serving Him day in and day out without any certainty that He either wanted or valued such service? No, I can't do it!

He felt an urgent desire to snatch off the prayer shawl and phylacteries as quickly as possible. He stopped reciting the liturgy.

As he was glancing at the prayer book, Grein noticed that some of the other worshippers were conducting private conversations in the middle of the service. He scrutinized each member of the congregation. Who were they, these Jews who came here day by day, Sabbath after Sabbath? Why had they not turned aside from the path of their parents and grandparents even in uncongenial America? Were they immigrants? Were they born in America? Did they come from learned or simple homes? Was their coming to pray connected with some philosophy? Or was it just routine for them? But what, actually, did "routine" mean? It

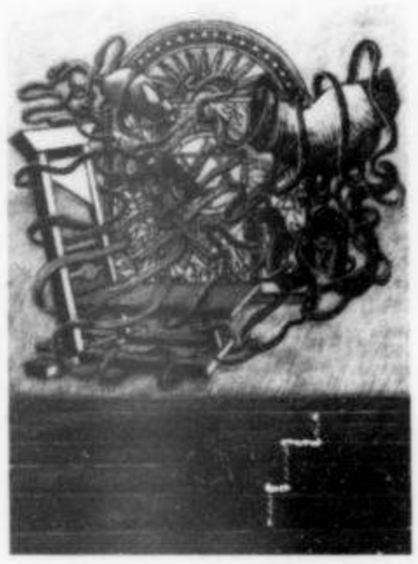


ILLUSTRATIONS BY RICHARD ROSS

wasn't easy to get up at daybreak and go straight to synagogue: it demanded effort, discipline, expense. New York was not some small Polish village where everyone lived a short distance from the dusty lane in which the prayerhouse stood. Here the Gentile influence was all-pervasive. Here there were countless impediments and temptations. Here, above all, one had to have a strong character.

But these worshippers looked neither like strong-willed people nor like deep thinkers. They were simple Jews, probably small-time shopkeepers, office workers. They wore cheap American clothes—shirts of all colors, straw hats, loud ties, wristwatches with metal straps.

The congregation stood for the recitation of the Eighteen Benedictions, but Grein remained seated. Well, let Anita be a whore! he thought fiercely. She's right, too. Why not enjoy life as long as one can? That was *her* way of enjoying it. People had tortured each other long enough in the name of God! It was high time they did as they pleased. Did the wicked kill each other? So did the pious. Since God had created a world in which only the fittest survived, then combat was perhaps the highest commandment. Who had given teeth to the tiger, horns to the buffalo, poison to the serpent? Who had made the jungle? Who had infused humankind with anger, ferocity, hunger for power? Free will? What ethical lesson was taught by consumption, cholera, floods, famines? Why did God require five-year-



old children to die from starvation? And even if He did require it, it's His concern. I won't praise Him for it!

Grein hastened to free himself of the prayer shawl and phylacteries. He was a little taken aback by the heretical thoughts which had assailed him in the synagogue, of all places. As he started to remove the phylactery on his forehead, it occurred to him that if everything he had just argued was true, then Hitler was right! This was precisely Hitler's rationale! This was the way all vicious murderers had thought throughout the ages, placing, as they did, man and man's will at the center of the universe. Does this mean I'm on their side? Do I agree with the Nazis who ordered Jews to dig their own graves? Humanism posited man as the measure of all things. So what did that say about humanism? Human beings must develop, progress—not technologically but morally—or else what purpose did they serve? But then why did one individual suffer while a second enjoyed a surfeit of the best that progress could offer? Wasn't progress itself the result of countless outrages? Wasn't the French Revolution a milestone in the progress of mankind? And weren't the humanists delighted with the French Revolution and its guillotines? Who were humanism's heroes? Generals, always military leaders. Wasn't Stalin, too, a product of the kind of humanism that placed man's will at the center of all human endeavor? Everything Stalin did was supposed to be for the good of humanity.

Well, I can believe neither in God nor in man. That's the bitter truth. Grein sat quite still. Nevertheless, if one had to choose between God and man, then God was preferable. Man was certainly negligible. Even if God was a murderer, He was at least a great murderer, a clever murderer, a murderer who tyrannized over billions of worlds for all eternity. Even Spinoza's conception of God as Immanent Cause was more comforting than all promises made by men.

Grein stopped and began to recite the Eighteen Benedictions. He could not simply sit here with his mouth shut; he had to play by the rules of the game. He murmured the words that had been repeated thousands of times by his father, his grandfathers, his great-grandfathers all the way back to the first century and the time of the Men of the Great Assembly. These words at least expressed the benign wish that both God and man should be good, merciful, holy. Jews had contrived to create a good God, and it was He whom they served. Let the real God be as clever a murderer as He wished—the Jews of Poland, of Spain, of Babylon, of the Holy Land had their ideal God: a God who was good to everyone and was merciful to all His creatures, a God who supported the fallen and set upright those who were bowed down, who was righteous in His ways and compassionate in His dealings, faithful to those who called upon Him in truth.

Could Grein turn away from all these tenets? Could he make peace with reality? No, he could not. This picture of God was in his blood. Just as he could not eat a rat or a bedbug, could not walk stark naked through the streets, or relieve himself in the middle of Times Square, so he could not make peace with murder, plunder, wantonness even though he himself was guilty of them all. He was like a thief disgusted by stealing, like a murderer whom killing filled with horror. He was an unbeliever who was compelled, in times of trouble or at the sight of injustice or shame, to raise his eyes to heaven and appeal to the God whose existence he denied, and this because among Jews God was a sickness, an obsession, a mania. For a Jew, the thought that God was good and just was the quintessence of life. Whether he wanted to or not, a Jew perpetually had accounts to settle with the Almighty: he praised Him or blasphemed Him, loved Him or hated Him, but he could never be free of Him. Whatever other complexes the Jew suffered from, the God complex was his ineluctable fate: he could as little escape from Him as from his skin, his blood, his marrow. Whenever a Jew imagined that he was fleeing from God, he was in reality turning blindly in circles like a donkey in a mill or a caravan lost in the desert. Actually, this was true of the whole of humankind. One could as easily free oneself of the concept of God as one could free oneself of time, space, causality. The good and the just, the true and the omnipotent had to be indwelling somewhere.

So what was the sense of fighting against one's own nature? Where had his own attempt to flee led him, Hertz Dovid Grein? Where had it led the world? I must play this game until the end. Without it I can't breathe. Without it I have no identity.

He bowed in the prescribed manner at the moment in the liturgy when the prayers proclaimed: "We ever thank Thee, who art the Lord our God and the God of our fathers. Thou art the strength of our life and our saving shield." He repeated the words slowly, seeming to turn them over in his mouth, the better to savor their taste. Then he concluded the recitation of the Eighteen Benedictions:

> *My God, guard my tongue from evil, and my lips from speaking falsehood. May my soul be silent to those who insult me; be my soul lowly to all as the dust… Speedily defeat the counsel of all those who plan evil against me, and upset their design.*

Yes, he was compelled to speak to the good God and thrash things out with Him. It made no difference whether He was there or not, whether He was truly beneficent in His inscrutably divine manner or whether He was bad, indifferent, or an Almighty devil. Since it was Thursday, the day of the week on which the liturgy prescribed the recitation of special prayers of petition, Grein began to repeat: "We have trespassed, we have dealt treacherously, we have robbed"—the confession which the observant Jew made every Monday and Thursday, on Yom Kippur, and on his deathbed. ❑

A House of One People

Bernie Glassman

Yesterday I spent the afternoon at the home of Sheila Hixon. It was the second anniversary of the passing of her husband, Lex.

Lex Hixon was known by many names during his lifetime. To the Sufis who gathered for *ziker* every Thursday evening at the Masjid el-Farrah in downtown Manhattan, he was Sheik Nur, given this name by Sheik Muzaffer of the Jerrahi order. When he studied the Vedanta tradition he adopted the name, Ramakrishna Das. I named him Jikai when I empowered him as a Zen teacher in my own Soto Zen Buddhist lineage. In the Eastern Orthodox Church he answered to his birth name, Alexander. He also studied Tibetan Buddhism, and, more than 30 years ago, long before it became fashionable, he spent extended months with the Lakota Sioux. Lex Hixon was an interfaith world all unto himself: a rare being who not only felt at home in various religious traditions, but celebrated each with boldness and passion.

Many of the rooms in Lex's home are shrines within the different traditions which he studied. His wife, Sheila, took us from one shrine room to another, making sure to close the doors between them. "Lex always did that," she explained. "He believed in maintaining the beauty and completion of each tradition. He didn't believe in combining them or letting them run together, each had to have a wholeness. Lex loved the specificity of each religion." In other words, Lex loved the differences.

He and I talked often about the world of interfaith encounters. My own vision of such a world is called the House of One People. The House of One People will be not only a space where people of different religions will dialogue or hold joint celebrations, but also where all of us, while upholding our separate paths, will be one people. It will be a place where unity manifests difference.

One obvious obstacle to a House of One People is that not all people want to come together in a spirit of oneness, certainly not those who spill blood in the name of Christ or Allah or Jehovah. Celebrating diversity, however, is also not simple. In our secular society it's all too easy to minimize the differences between the religions. Many claim that it's all one God and that religions are only different manifestations of the same ultimate reality. Christ, Buddha, Muhammad, and Confucius are all put neatly into one category, as though they're interchangeable.

People do this for a number of reasons. We like to think that underneath it all, we really are the same. That if only we could cut through those topmost superficial layers, we'd realize our oneness and get rid of all misunderstanding. In that context, dialogue and joint celebrations would simply mean glossing over some minor differences and meeting in the great space of professed unity, which transcends all differences.

But in human nature, and in religious traditions, this is not so. We are one. And we're also different. There are powerful and profound differences between our religions that can't be eliminated through wishful thinking. Hans Kung, who has written extensively on the importance of a global ethic, points out that interfaith dialogue is for those who are prepared to hold fast to the truth of their own point of view. "Capacity for dialogue and for steadfastness are not opposites," he warns. You can't try to eliminate differences for the sake of unity.

That's not easy for us to hear. If we hold onto our differences, how will we realize our unity? How will we realize a House of One People where we will actually *be* One People, at the very time that we follow our separate religious paths? And how will we explore the spirituality that is common to all religions, and practices that help us see our oneness and diversity as two sides of the same coin?

In the following issues I will ask leaders of different religious traditions to speak to the concept of the House of One People, to inquire whether there is a spirituality common to the various religions and practices, rituals and observances that would allow us to fulfill a commitment to religious truth, as each of us sees it, and a commitment to peace among all religions.

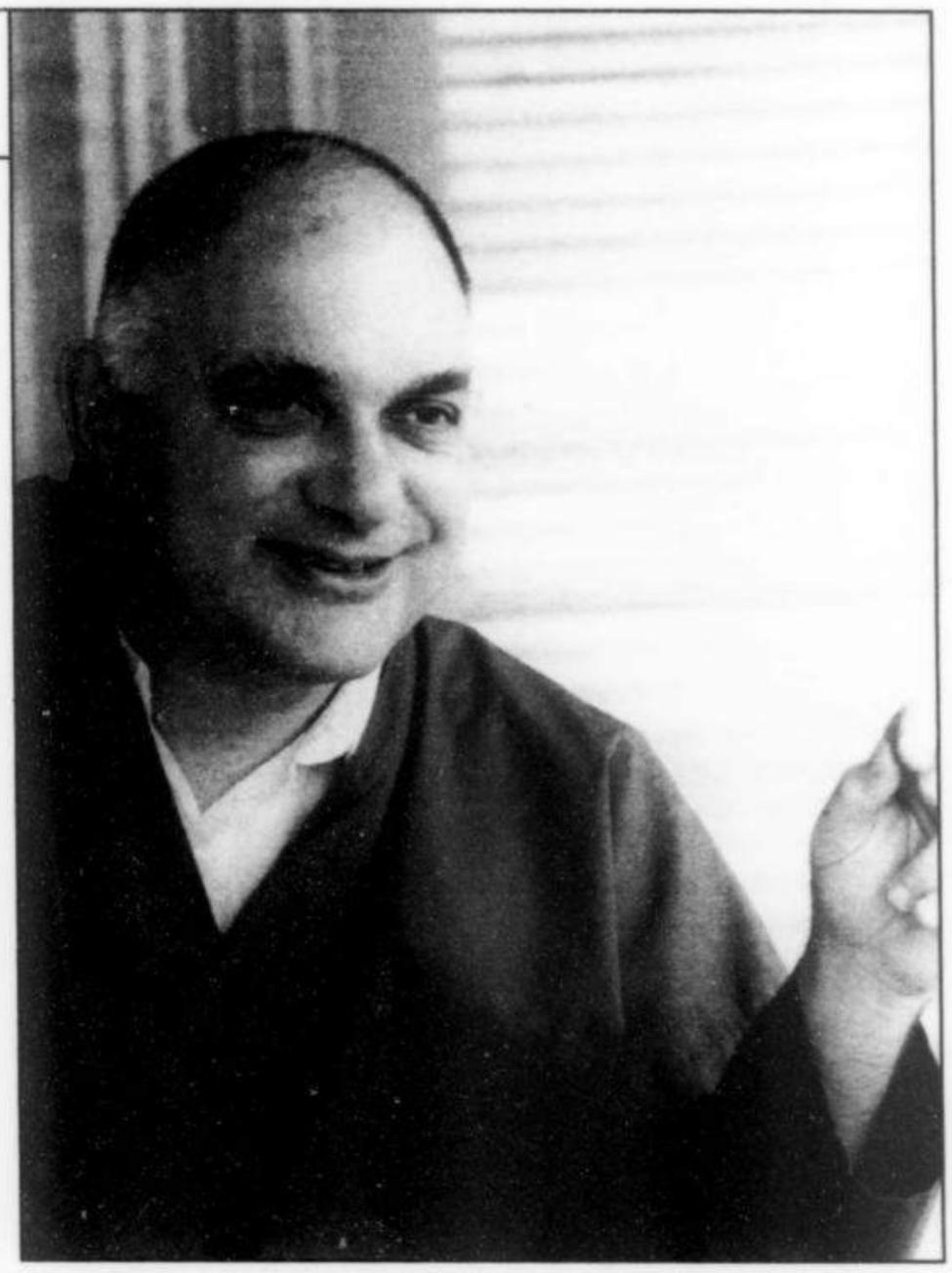
My hope and wish are that one day we will have a House of One People in every city, in every country in the world. No House will look and feel the same as another, and that won't matter. For in honoring our diversity, we'll discover our oneness. By accepting our differences, we'll come together as one people. ❑

Bernie Glassman is abbott of the Zen Community of New York and the Zen Center of Los Angeles. He is the co-founder of the Zen Peacemaker Order and the founder of the Greyston Mandala in Yonkers, New York.

Buddhism, Activism, and Unknowing

A Day with Bernie Glassman

Christopher Queen



Since the 1980s, Roshi Bernard Glassman has become a familiar figure to readers of Buddhist journals like *Tricycle* and *Shambhala Sun*. But now the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times*, and *Time* magazine can scarcely report on the explosion of interest in American Buddhism without mentioning "street retreats"—penniless week-long excursions into lower Manhattan led by Roshi Bernie—and the Greyston Foundation, a mandala of for-profit and not-for-profit businesses that serve the poor in Glassman's adopted neighborhood of Yonkers, NY. Indeed, the vision of urban renewal and human reclamation only dimly imagined by Sixties radicals is vividly embodied in the work Glassman and his community have done in this often forgotten corner of affluent Westchester County.

The Peacemakers

The Zen Peacemaker Order was founded in the summer of 1996 by Roshi Bernie Glassman and his wife, Sensei Jishu Holmes. The order is based on three principles: *plunging into the unknown, bearing witness* to the pain and joy of the world, and a commitment to *heal oneself and the world*. As a university lecturer on Buddhism, I have followed what Glassman and others have written about the rise of socially engaged Buddhism in the West. His is a particularly good story: a Jewish boy from Brighton Beach becomes head priest and teacher of a major branch of Japanese Soto Zen, then contributes to a worldwide shift in the practice of Buddhism—from a religion of contemplative retreat and devotion to one that plunges into direct engagement with society's discarded people, places, and problems.

Glassman started his work with those on the fringes in the 1980s, with the Greyston Mandala. Then, the Greyston network of companies and agencies committed to community development were fragile startups. Today, the thriving organizations include the Greyston Family Inn, with fifty units of permanent housing and a handsome street-level daycare center serving fifty children; the Greyston Bakery, a million-dollar gourmet confectioner providing job training and employment to homeless and formerly homeless men and women; Greyston Builders, specializing in the renovation of affordable housing; Maitri Center and Issan House, a housing center and walk-in clinic for people with AIDS and HIV; and Pamsula, a handicrafts company that recycles used and discarded clothing, providing employment for low-income women. Still growing without Bernie's direct involvement, the Greyston Mandala is now renovating two abandoned apartment buildings.

When I arrive in Yonkers, the Peacemaker community, which today includes Zen teacher and hospice movement leader, Joan Halifax, is sitting down to a picnic dinner. Some order members speak of their plans to return to Oswiecim, Poland, for another Thanksgiving retreat at Auschwitz and Birkenau. This, they say, is the experience of *bearing witness*. Bernie is chatting affably with tablemates and working on a plate of salad, beans, and rice. He's beginning to let his hair and beard grow out in preparation for an upcoming street retreat. He welcomes the newcomer warmly without being effusive. A complete stranger, walking in, would see that Bernie was at the center of everything, and then wonder how he does it.

PHOTOGRAPH BY PETER CUNNINGHAM, STILL FILM

Christopher Queen is Dean of Students for Continuing Education and Lecturer on the Study of Religion at Harvard University. He is co-editor of Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia *(SUNY Press, 1996).*

Gazing around the room at the thirty order members, candidates, students, and visitors, I am reminded of a time when small gatherings of spiritual seekers and social misfits sat on the floors of city brownstones, sharing visions of a new America and a world at peace. In those days, the politics and religion were inchoate and raw, like the drunken ravings of Jack Kerouac's Ray Smith and Japhy Ryder and the angry memoirs of Malcolm X. Today's group is infinitely more evolved—Buddhists with a sense of history stretching back 2,500 years and deep feelings for the mystery of life in its most extreme manifestations.

Later, in the Peacemaker Order's offices, I leaf through voluminous notebooks outlining its scope: mission and vision statements, business plans, and endless committee and board minutes and reports. I read about a growing network of Peacemaker Villages, local groups engaged in service and activism affiliated with the Peacemaker Order through publications, funding arrangements, training, and planning. Some include Upaya, a foundation headed by Joan Halifax devoted to death and dying hospice work and environmental activism; the Latino Pastoral Action Center devoted to inner city community development; and the Prison Peacemaker Village, which has created a hospice network in prisons.

I learn of plans for a Peacemaker Institute, which will offer practical training in peace activism, mediation, community development; academic study of peacemaking traditions; conferences and internships for practitioners; a peace library, web site, and publications; and a Children's Peace School.

Then, I make my way to the Glassman-Holmes home where a space-age-chiropractic-massage-and-vibrating-lounger-chair with NASA-style controls rests in a corner. An electrically heated, liquid-filled toilet seat graces the bathroom. I tease the Roshi of the Streets about these Sharper Image catalogue items. "Jishu gave me the toilet seat for my birthday," he shamelessly replies. We settle down on couches to talk.

The Interview

QUEEN: What is engaged Buddhism, anyway? Some people say your street retreats are just consciousness-raising for the rich—you don't hand out blankets or food—in fact you soak up some of the limited good will that still exists on the streets of lower Manhattan.

GLASSMAN: The same question could be raised about the Buddha. How did he benefit mankind by sitting in meditation? This is a problem with the term "engaged Buddhism" in a broad sense. Anything anyone is doing to make themselves whole in their own life, or realizing the Way, or becoming enlightened—whatever term you would use—these are all involved in service, because if we realize the oneness of life, then each person is serving every other person and is reducing suffering.

QUEEN: You and Thich Nhat Hanh [a Vietnamese monk who works with American veterans of the Vietnam War] are very non-dualistic about this: not separating your own suffering and its relief from that of others. But Dr. Ambedkar, the Untouchable leader in India during the fight for independence, said no religion should romanticize poverty. Aren't you doing that by spending a week on the street and then coming home to a hot shower?

GLASSMAN: I think that the person who has lived with the Untouchables can work with the Untouchables in a way that others cannot. You can't become Untouchable in this way, of course. At the same time I believe that those who came out of that experience have a deeper understanding of it, and we should learn from them. I want to figure out how to learn from those who have suffered in a certain way, even though I can't fully enter that realm. So we go on the streets. I know we aren't homeless and I make that quite clear. At the same time, those who come will experience something that is closer to that world than those who haven't been there. This is the meaning of "bearing witness." It's like entering a church knowing you're not God or the priest. But you will experience something different from someone who stays out of the church or someone who is just hired to fix the roof.

The Magnet of Suffering

QUEEN: Why are you attracted to places of great suffering—the inner city, Auschwitz, the notorious needle park called the *Letten* in Zurich where thousands of junkies used to buy, sell, and shoot up in broad daylight?

GLASSMAN: I don't know. The words that come to me are *the desire to learn.* I don't know what it is, but it happens a lot to me when I encounter a situation I don't understand. It generally involves suffering. When I enter a situation that is too much for me and that I don't understand—I have a desire to sit there, to stay a while.

QUEEN: You talk about an energy that surrounds such places.

GLASSMAN: Yeah. There's a magnet that pulls me so that I want to stay there. I haven't figured it out, but I'm not sure it's so unusual.

QUEEN: Is it possible to imagine a twisted individual who derives some kind of sadistic pleasure from being near human pain and suffering?

GLASSMAN: Sure. But the people and situations I'm talking about are a metaphor for our whole society—all the attachments and addictions. In the drug zone in Zurich the metaphor is so naked you couldn't miss it unless you ran away. You had addicts shooting up and dealers making money from their suffering. A few blocks away were the large banks laundering the dealers' money, with the good citizens of Zurich looking away, trusting their police to keep everything under control. But if you stayed and looked, then the human condition is laid more bare there than it is in a bank lobby.

Unknowing

QUEEN: Let's talk about the first precept of your order, Unknowing. You have a Ph.D. in mathematics and have acquired expertise in countless areas of Buddhist teaching and practice, psychology, business management, finance, and so on. Yet you teach Unknowing. Is this some kind of a Zen trick?

GLASSMAN: In Zen the words *source* and *essence* are the equivalent of Unknowing, and they come up again and again. We have the *absolute* and the *relative* perspectives about life, and Unknowing is the one source of both of these.

QUEEN: Early Buddhism in India is very comfortable with notions of knowledge, wisdom, and technique. Yoga, meditation, and philosophy were all developed by experts, the virtuoso monks. But in China a mistrust of words and concepts and intellectualism came into the early Zen tradition from Taoism and we hear about book-burnings and Zen masters who do wild, irrational things to break their students' dependency on logic and learning. Is this part of Unknowing for you?

GLASSMAN: Yes, and for me it fits in with my Jewish background. In contrast to the whole rabbinical tradition of Talmudic learning and scholarship comes the mystical tradition of Kabbalah and Chasidism, where all the earthly qualities and emanations come from the infinite *Ein Sof.* And the Sufis have some of the same ideas. But the important thing is that Unknowing was emphasized by my teacher Maezumi Roshi, and it fits my temperament. It just makes so much sense to start from Unknowing.

QUEEN: But how does this work when you are dealing with people with no educational opportunities, who have a desperate need for knowledge and expertise? Ambedkar was just as jealous for education as he was for economic opportunities for the Untouchables who converted to Buddhism in 1956.

GLASSMAN: Yeah. But the other side must be stressed. At every moment one starts from unknowing *so that* all the acquired knowledge will arise spontaneously and be used in a new, creative way.

Life in Community

That evening, the Peacemaker community participates in evening exercises. The program was a full-dress rehearsal of the *Kanromon,* "The Gate of Sweet Nectar," a traditional Zen ceremony for feeding the hungry spirits, chanted partly in Japanese and partly in English translation. Roshi Bernie, Sensei Jishu, and several senior order members are in full priestly regalia, while others wear the Zen student's bib, or *rakusa*. An orchestra of gongs, bells, and wood blocks is positioned near the door to accompany the formal procession, liturgical movements, and periodic *gassho,* or bowing. Choreography is everything here, but the places, movements, and sequences are still being worked out, as Roshi frequently stops the whole thing to correct the person playing the wood block or the person rounding the line of officiants slightly late.

Now, curiously, Bernard Glassman seems to be fully in his element, teaching a motley but earnest assembly of middle-aged Americans how to bow and play the gong, to invoke the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and to appropriate and internalize the tenets and precepts of engaged Buddhism for the twenty-first century of the Common Era and the twenty-sixth century of the Shakyamuni Buddha Era.

Attention! Attention!

Raising the Bodhi Mind, the supreme meal is offered to all the hungry spirits in the ten directions throughout space and time, filling the smallest particle to the largest space.

All you hungry spirits in the ten directions, please gather here.

Sharing your distress, I offer you this food, hoping it will resolve your thirsts and hungers. ❑

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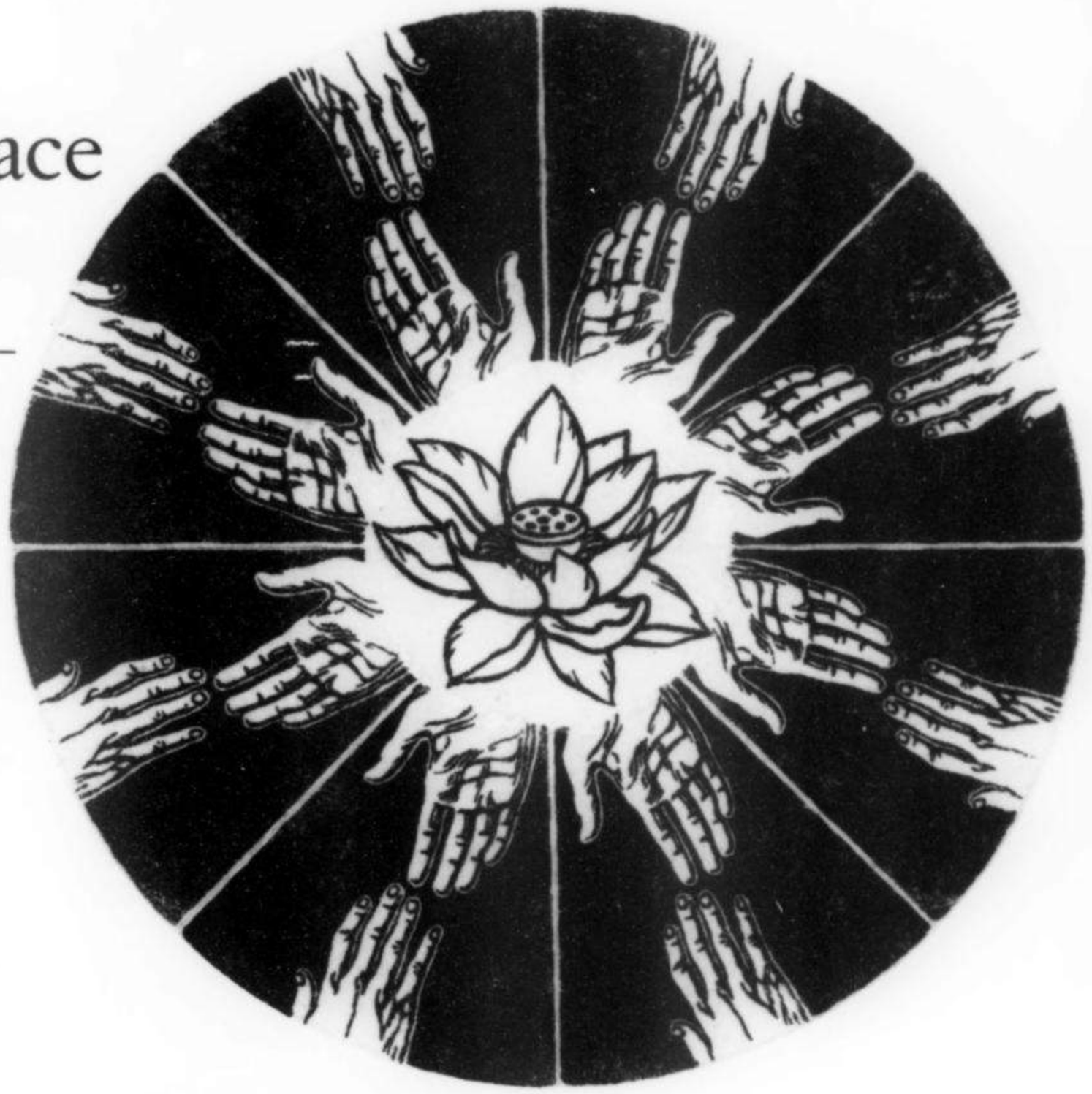
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READING SPIRIT

The Social Face of Buddhism

Roger S. Gottlieb



- *Engaged Buddhist Reader*, edited by Arnold Kotler. Parallax Press, 1997.
- *Altars in the Street: A Neighborhood Fights to Survive*, by Melody Ermachild Chaviz. Bell Tower Books, 1997.

Buddhism, Nietzsche suggested, is a religion for a certain type of person: someone who can't stand emotional intensity, interpersonal conflict, a boisterous social life or spicy foods.

Despite Nietzsche's typical penchant for overstatement, there is some truth in what he says. Buddhism does begin with the claim that life as it is ordinarily lived is full of pain (discomfort, boredom, frustration, etc.) and that the only way out of this pain is to renounce attachment to any material thing, relationship, fixed personal identity or state of the world. The task of spiritual life is to reach a "nirvana" in which there is no longer any sense that "this is mine, I am this, this is myself." Ethical concern for others is essentially a matter of self-discipline; one is not to be attached to social justice or collective well-being any more than to any other transient, illusory phenomenon.

Yet there is another dimension to Buddhism. The Bodhisattva ideal of Mahayana Buddhism arose partly because the initial (Therevada) formulation seemed attached to a purely individual escape from suffering. "I will refrain from ultimate enlightenment," vows a Bodhisattva, "until all beings are enlightened." If the hero of Therevada Buddhism is a man whose service to others simply consists in demonstrating that freedom from attachment is indeed possible, the Bodhisattva is someone whose pursuit of enlightenment can only take place with—and for—others.

The Engaged Buddhist Reader and *Altars in the Street* are part of a small but growing list of attempts to articulate this Bodhisattva perspective for the ethical and political context of contemporary life.

The *Engaged Buddhist Reader* is a wonderful collection of essays, many of whose authors have been inspired by the Vietnamese Zen Buddhist expatriate Thich Nhat Hanh. Nhat Hanh is perhaps the most important voice in fashioning a Buddhism for people who are both socially aware and politically involved. Such an "engaged" Buddhism has strong affinities to Christian and Jewish versions of liberation theology, peace and justice movements, and *tikkun olam*.

The book contains forty-two short, clearly written, and often wonderfully illuminating essays. The authors are Buddhist religious leaders, well-known American lay Buddhists, and Asian political activists. The topics include general Buddhist ideals, how to be peaceful while opposing injustice, descriptions of engaged Buddhists' political activities, and Buddhist responses to the environmental crisis.

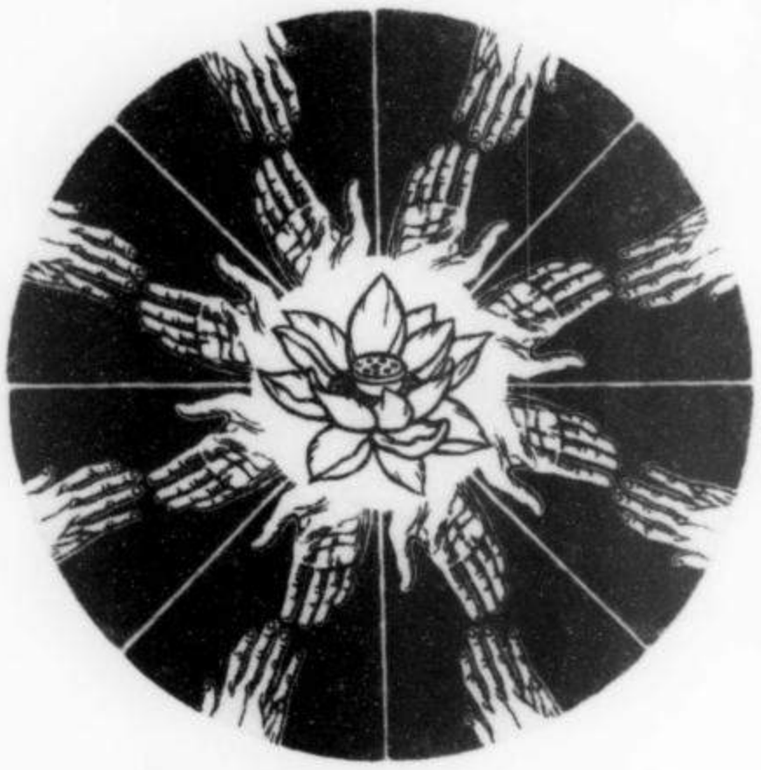
This book is too rich and varied to summarize here, but certain themes are central. On the one hand, there is constant emphasis on political activists' mental state. Anger or hatred, these writers believe, can only make the individual miserable and obstruct effective political work. For the Dalai Lama, "The basic sources of happiness are a

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ERIC FIELD

Roger S. Gottlieb is professor of Philosophy at Worcester Polytechnic Institute. His most recent books are This Sacred Earth *and* The Ecological Community.

good heart, compassion, and love. If we have these, even if we are surrounded by hostility, we will feel little disturbance." However, unlike traditional forms of Buddhist teaching, the stress here is not on feeling calm, but on using a calm mind (and compassionate heart) to change the world. Thus Nhat Hanh celebrates Buddhist peace efforts during the Vietnam war including "students confronting military police, young women running through clouds of tear gas with babies in their arms, hunger strikes...monks and nuns burning themselves to death to try to be heard above the raging noise of war...." Other writers describe their resistance to capitalist economic "development," their defense of the environment and their responses to social problems like poverty and crime.

Picking up another of the collection's themes, Joanna Macy remains true to Buddhism's paradoxical teachings concerning the absence of an enduring self by counseling that such political activities are not really the



action of an individual or even a collection of individuals. Since our "selves" are the outgrowth of countless disparate and transient causes, all our acts can be experienced as a "flow-through of matter, energy, and information"—as connected to our surroundings as a pond is connected to the rain and streams which feed it. This awareness of "interbeing" can help counter the egoism, sectarianism, and burnout that too often mark political activism. Further, as Stephen Batchelor emphasizes, it reveals that an enlightened mind is not defined by experiences of selflessness during meditation. Compassionate awareness needs to be manifest in the most vexing and conflicted arenas of life. What happens on a meditation cushion is, at best, a warm-up for the real event.

Engaged Buddhism raises a host of fascinating questions. For one thing, does Buddhism need to rely on the same accounts of social institutions as non-spiritual political movements? A.T. Ariyaratne of Sri Lanka, for instance, uses what is essentially a Marxist-style analysis of international capitalism. Does a specifically Buddhist analysis stop with individual psychology and ethics, and necessarily leave social theory (as it would leave physics) to other traditions of knowledge?

Second, has the environmental crisis now made certain familiar Buddhist images of peace and gratitude outmoded, or at least questionable? When the air is polluted, what is the spiritual meaning of constant meditative awareness of breath? How reassuring are reminders of the healing beauty of sky and sun when holes in the ozone layer make ordinary sunlight dangerous to our health?

Being a collection of short pieces, the *Engaged Buddhist Reader* does not provide a drawn-out sense of the day-to-day, long-term struggles of an engaged Buddhist. This drawback is brilliantly overcome in Melody Chaviz's remarkable memoir. Chaviz, unlike the vast majority of American Buddhist writers, is street-wise, with a white working class background that includes unmarried teenage pregnancy and a year in a home for troubled youth. Her books centers on a sixteen-year struggle in her predominantly black, poor area of Berkeley, during which she and her neighbors tried to defend themselves from an intrusive and violent drug trade. Chaviz is a devoted and courageous activist: she organizes an organic gardening project for local youth, tutors at the local school, organizes demonstrations against the Gulf War and tries like hell to get the city government to help with the drug problem. Along the way she begins to meditate to reduce her anxiety and anger—and ends up becoming a serious student of Buddhism. Her book reveals how a committed Buddhist struggles against evils that are on her own doorstep: where two people are murdered and where drug dealers control the streets at night.

This marvelous book illustrates two themes fundamental to Engaged Buddhism. First, the attempt to deal

Chaviz's book reveals how a committed Buddhist struggles against evils that are on her own doorstep.

with fear, frustration, and anger, those emotions so abhorred by traditional Buddhism, is a never-concluded process. Like the Jewish encounter with moral errors which must be acknowledged and repented each Yom Kippur, Chaviz is constantly struggling—with varying success—to meet the challenges of her situation with compassion and clarity. This is no spiritually perfected being, just one of us (at our best) doing what she can. Second, her ability to do her best is made possible not only by meditation and detachment but by comradeship and solidarity. She gets and gives help to many and, as in Macy's words, the energy of genuine concern for others moves through her, augmented by, but ultimately in no way reducible to, her own spirit. This interconnection of concern and action is perhaps the greatest message of Engaged Buddhism, and of any spiritual approach to the problems that humans—and indeed all of earth's creatures—now face. ❑

REVIEW

The State of Slate

Russ Baker



When Microsoft launched its online magazine, *Slate* (www.slate.com), on June 23, 1996, hopes were high. Bill Gates had persuaded Beltway insider Michael Kinsley, a widely-admired, super-smart wordsmith and editor, to drop his comfortable existence at the hub of power for the gray days and long, cappuccino-filled nights in that other Washington.

Upon his arrival on the Microsoft "campus" in suburban Redmond, he plunged with vigor into the task of creating a pre-eminent online magazine of politics and culture. His job was to help Microsoft in its declared goal of moving beyond being a software company and web-based host of others' words to whipping up its own original content. He hired some of the nation's best-read scribes, did the obligatory round of interviews with other media, and set about tinkering to create a product that would transform the Web forever. The *Slate* crew hoped to show that high-quality journalism and commentary could be adapted to the quick-read, click-oriented style of the World Wide Web, on which it could be distributed more efficiently than in the soon-to-be passé paper mode. With Web offerings of a higher quality, the literate set would be wooed to crank up their computers instead of heading to the newsstand.

But eighteen months later, *Slate* is looking like a disappointment. The publication seems a long way from a must-read, despite a series of innovations designed to hook intelligent, busy, demanding people. It is a very good but not extraordinary magazine in the wrong venue, one that misses some of the life of the nation—not to mention the Web—that lies beyond the Outlook section of the *Washington Post* and the editorial boardroom at *The New Republic.* Further, it highlights the disadvantages of transferring the usual suspects from the world of conventional thinking and insiderish spin to the far more anarchic, spontaneous and experimental Web. And *Slate* has demonstrated the perils of journalists associating too closely with a man like Bill Gates, who, despite vehement protestations from the editors, seems to have a handy PR vehicle for his controversial efforts to consolidate and expand his company's reach, a swelling near-monopoly so threatening that foes like IBM, Oracle, and Netscape have banded together to fight back.

All of this raises some questions: does, as critics believe, Microsoft's expansion into "content" threaten the free flow of information by starving competition while failing to offer its own hard-hitting original journalism? Has Gates' desire for respectability amongst the insiders prevented him from putting out the kind of original magazine that the Web makes possible? And has a talented guy like Kinsley wandered a bit far from where he does his best work?

Today, *Slate* says that 45,000 people check in regularly to its website, an action which may involve no more than looking for a few moments before moving onto the weather or sports on another site, or shutting down the

ILLUSTRATIONS BY CHRIS PAPA

New York-based Russ Baker writes about media, politics and technology for the Columbia Journalism Review *and other publications.* *Copyright 1997 by Russ Baker.*

computer altogether to get on with experiential—not virtual—life. Even that number, not bad for a startup, is not very impressive, given the potential audience of millions upon millions with Internet access. And clearly neither the online nor paper version (introduced for non-cybernauts) has become the priority read for the several hundred thousand steady consumers of thoughtful political pieces, serious book reviews, and cultural commentary with which Kinsley has been identified.

Based on my highly unscientific survey, a relatively high percentage of those checking in to the online *Slate* are young, educated, bored technoworkers (in itself perhaps a desirable audience) and expatriates and Amerophiles living abroad. Tim Keck, whose weekly newspaper, *The Stranger*, is one of Seattle's more cutting-edge publications, told me that the only person he knows of who reads *Slate* regularly is the AP bureau chief in Rio. I asked around among people I know; the only regular was a late-twenties, well-educated editor on a teen magazine who reads half a dozen different webzines in her idle moments. Since the beginning, *Slate* has had intentions to charge—and so lead a change from free to paid website access that would mimic access in the print world—but has thus far backed down twice, presumably an acknowledgment of the light demand for it as a free service.

The problem may not be easily resolved, since there is nothing wrong with the writing, which by and large is deft and witty. It is more likely that Michael Kinsley's burden has to do with how well his literary form works with the Web, as well as how the voices that give *Slate* its flavor carry in that medium.

Most seem to be part of a Kinsley-centric bunch of old friends and colleagues transferred to the Web, recreating their heady days as pundits and columnists engaged with the lifestyle of power and politics, bringing their sensibilities to the youthful frontiers of Cyberdom. It feels a little like George Bush, campaigning away his privileged wimp image by chomping on pork rinds for all the voters to see. Typical is a fanciful memo *Slate* ran on Microsoft's need to wear less polar fleece and more black if it is to be a player on the NY/LA media axis. But in the world of the Web, *Slate* itself is an easy target for parody, as seen in the hilarious send-up *Stale* (www.stale.com).

The staff and contributors are a veritable alumni invitation list from the circuit in which *New Republic* interns become low-paid *Washington Monthly* editors before moving back as *New Republic* writers or ending up at *Newsweek* or another of several favored mainstream journals. They include former *Washington Post* Outlook editor Jodie Allen, *New Republic* alumnus Jacob Weisberg, *New Republic enfant terrible* Michael Lewis (a terrific storyteller whose reporting methods and accuracy have been criticized as subsumed to stylism), former *New Republic* editor Andrew Sullivan (whose tenure was marked by a diminution of rigorous policy debate and a taste for flip trend stories), Margaret Talbot of the *New Republic,* and so on. Kinsley's #2, Jack Shafer, stayed out of the establishment press while editor of Washington's *City Paper* and the *San Francisco Weekly*, but was close to the Kinsleyites.

Cumulatively, they give off an air of intellectual self-satisfaction and with-it-ness, of being terribly clever and knowing without really adding much new, or offering many real solutions. It's a quality that, combined with snappy writing, is endearing to a point, but ultimately tiresome. When I called Kinsley, Shafer called me back, saying that his boss is unable to handle all the media calls. Why so many calls, I asked. "People would be pretty curious about whatever Mike Kinsley did," Shafer said. "If he wrote a Broadway musical or got a Ph.D. in particle physics, the chattering classes would be interested in what he was doing, and rightly so."

Perhaps, but Kinsley has devoted his recent years to participating in CNN's Crossfire screaming matches that, by his own admission, reduced complex issues to zingers and jabs. Hence, it is not surprising to note *Slate*'s newest feature, the so-called "hackathlon," in which a few selected scribes from the *New York Times* and the *New Yorker*, the *New Republic* and so on, get to imitate the style of several publications, their own of course being on the list. Apparently, this is irony for its own sake: no serious criticism of the ruling publications seems intended.

Seeking a greater role in what the Web does best—provide timely information to busy people—*Slate* has launched several services that digest information from elsewhere. "Today's Papers" has apparently become *Slate*'s most popular feature. Indeed, according to the few people I know who look at *Slate*, it is the only one that really hooks them. It's available on the website but seems most popular in its email form, delivered in the wee hours to subscribers. The feature offers a Cliff Notes-like digest of the top stories in each of the nation's most prominent papers. It also offers a smidgen of analysis on the strengths and weaknesses of each paper's coverage. "In Other Magazines" provides another such synopsis. During a recent, typical week, the offerings were the *New York Times* magazine, the *New Yorker*, the three Newsweeklies, Rupert Murdoch's *Weekly Standard*, the *Nation*, the *Economist*, and—of course—the *New Republic*. Nothing very earth-shattering here.

Recently, *Slate* has introduced two more such features, one that covers the supermarket tabloids and a fourth that summarizes what is said on the Sunday morning yakfests. All together, they contribute to the overall sense that the people behind *Slate* view everything in life as a horse race, an urgent accounting of who's up and who isn't. "It's like you don't have to read anything else," says Mike Romano, who covers media for the alternative newspapers *Seattle*

Week and *East Side Week*. "They'll give you 200 words on the *New Yorker*, so you can chat about it at a cocktail party, but I feel talked down to, taken advantage of."

The "new" in *Slate* is the interactivity, meaning that you can click on links to find out more about a subject, to follow online discussions, and to pipe up yourself. But the featured talkers are largely that same old crowd again. Kinsley is known to dislike the pandemonium of voices—some of them admittedly deranged—from the great cyber out there. He presents his usual circle in circumstances that mimic the Web's new idea of democratic discussion without actually embracing its fundamental power shift.

Also missing is good, hard, original reporting. This is not for lack of resources. Political correspondent Jacob Weisberg filed daily dispatches from the Senate campaign finance hearings. Good writing, but he essentially comments on the parade. Scoops tend toward "inside baseball," such as the revelation that former Labor Secretary Robert Reich took great liberties with the facts in his memoirs of life in the Clinton administration.

Where some see *Slate* coming up shortest is in its coverage of one of the biggest stories of our time: the massive accumulation of power and capital by its owner, Bill Gates. Not that there hasn't been any. Back in June, 1996, in the earliest issues of *Slate*, commentators weighed in on the question, "Does Microsoft Play Fair?" And, this past October, *Slate* published Ralph Nader's hard-hitting "The Microsoft Menace: Why I'm leading a crusade to stop its drive for cyberspace hegemony."

"I think two pieces in a year and a half that are critical is nothing to sneeze at," Shafer told me. "I doubt if, for some people's tastes, *Slate* could run enough that's critical of Microsoft. Our critical self-awareness certainly eclipses NBC's with General Electric or ABC's with Disney."

But the first of those two "critical" pieces was less than overwhelming.



The "moderator" was Herbert Stein, chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers under Presidents Nixon and Ford and a senior fellow at the conservative American Enterprise Institute. He offered a short, rather sterile recitation of known arguments regarding Microsoft's behavior. The five "panelists" included Steve Ballmer, Microsoft's number-two man (with a blustery "If anybody thinks that Microsoft ought to slow down they're going to be sorely disappointed") and Peter Huber, a senior fellow at the conservative Manhattan Institute for Policy Research. Even the "critics" were fairly tame, considering the ferocious and effective anti-Microsoft arguments circulating elsewhere on the Web. "Why have I lain down before the steamroller from Redmond?" asked *New York Times Magazine* cyberwriter James Gleick. "Because life is short." And nobody thought to invite the heads of Sun Microsystems and Netscape, perhaps the most articulate and vocal critics of Microsoft based on direct, head-to-head combat.

This year, Kinsley did take a bigger risk. The timing couldn't have been better. He called Nader's office and expressed interest in a Microsoft critique weeks before Janet Reno announced her lawsuit against the company. (The piece ran on October 28; the Department of Justice filed suit on October 20.) "He said we could put whatever we wanted," said James Love, director of Nader's Consumer Project on Technology. "We thought it was a classy gesture."

Yet Love notes that Kinsley, who once worked for Nader, wrote several "pithy" defenses of his current employer, criticized a Nader conference on Microsoft, and attacked the Justice Department. He goes on, "Michael Kinsley is using his great intelligence and wit to essentially ridicule the critics of Microsoft.... If that's what he wants to do with his life, that's his choice."

Seattle Week's Romano says that Kinsley and Shafer have told him they are not privy to information from inside Microsoft. But, he argues, "if they're not privy to sensitive information, and are two of the best reporters in the world, they should be reporting on one of the most important business stories of the decade, and they haven't."

This worries critics, who see *Slate* as part of Microsoft's effort to steal revenue from news organizations while doing little to replace the important but non-lucrative services they provide. Microsoft has targeted traditional media's resources, from classified advertising and city-specific entertainment listings to car ads and travel bookings, as ripe for the picking and Gates has essentially said that the days of the newspaper are numbered. But he has expressed no interest in covering local affairs, politics or other basics offered by the old-fashioned print press.

I asked Shafer whether working to preserve local newspapers was a commendable goal for a journalist. "The daily newspaper has been in a long Spenglerian decline since the days of radio," he replied. "I would be unembarrassed to say some newspapers deserve to die a gruesome, bloody death."

Controversy over Microsoft's trade practices are not high on *Slate*'s list of subjects to cover. "People usually talk from a position of naiveté about how aggressive the business world is," Shafer said. "I don't think journalists are aware of how aggressive printing salesmen or ball-bearing salesmen are in winning contracts."

(continued on page 77)

REVIEW

The Bearable Lightness of Ally McBeal



David Aram Kaiser and Jo Ellen Green Kaiser

You don't have to watch *Touched by an Angel* to find a television character searching for meaning. Instead, you can tune into this season's best new drama, *Ally McBeal*, created by David E. Kelley (a lawyer whose previous shows include *LA Law* and *Chicago Hope*). Calista Flockhart plays Ally McBeal, a young lawyer at a start-up law firm who is trying hard to figure out what would give purpose to her life. At times, she seems like a cast member in a show that should be called "twentysomething," as she confronts the gap between law school idealism and the practicalities of actual lawyering.

What is endearing about Ally is this struggle itself, an internal drama that Kelley makes visible by using the TV medium to his advantage. A bit of salad dressing on a date's face transforms itself in Ally's mind and on our screen into a sci-fi-ish blob of immense proportions. When her jaw drops in surprise, her tongue lolls out like a salamander's after it has snagged its prey. Like the best shows now on TV—I'm thinking of *The Simpsons, King of the Hill* and *Seinfeld*—*Ally McBeal* uses the artificiality of the medium to remind us of the often surreal nature of everyday life.

Further to its credit, the show sometimes questions the corporate interest mentality that dominates our society. Richard Fish (Greg Germann), the firm's founding partner, tries his hardest to be a cutthroat lawyer, like Arnie Becker of *LA Law*. He peppers the show with "Fishisms," expressions of his get-ahead philosophy, like "the point is not just to win, but to win ugly." But what makes Fish more than just another retread of the greed ideology of the 1980s is that, beneath all his attempts to deny it, he secretly struggles with matters of principle. As Ally slyly remarks to him at one point, she (and we) enjoy watching him develop into an ethical lawyer.

Recent episodes have also focused on class and gender issues, largely expressed through Ally's secretary, Elaine (Jane Krakowski). Elaine, tellingly given the last name Vassal, is a smart woman who chafes at her subservient position to the lawyers in the firm. In one episode, she manifests her dissatisfaction by organizing a walkout of the other administrative assistants, ostensibly in protest of the disruption caused by male lawyers ogling a buxom delivery girl. But is there really a repressive work environment as Elaine claims, or is this just a way for her to assert power in the office? In any case, the partners are forced to take the threat seriously, reminding themselves and us that, whatever else they are, these mostly female workers are under compensated and overworked. Unfortunately, however, the show backs down right when the politics get interesting. When their bluff is called, the workers refuse to strike and the class conflict is reduced to a diagnosis that Elaine has a psychological problem. "I feel sorry for you," Ally tells her.

In general, the show's ethical issues tend to be turned into issues of personality. As often happens in Kelley's oeuvre, for example, Ally's own search for meaning is frequently turned into a search for sex, as though a successful personal relationship could compensate for a materialistic work world. In an ironic twist, Ally determines to find out her real potential by seeing a rabbi—not for his spiritual advice, but for a date. And, as long as we are listing the show's faults, why is it that Ally's African American roommate, Renée (Lisa Nicole Carson), in a manner reminiscent of too many badly executed Whoopi Goldberg movies, becomes the show's oracle, telling the white protagonist the truth about herself. Why can't she have her everyday problems too?

Considered in the light of a progressive politics, the show's focus on personality is both its strength and its weakness. On the one hand, this focus is what gives the show its immediacy; it is what makes us care about these people and their problems. On the other hand, it limits how far the show can go as a systematic critique. Too often, meaning in *Ally McBeal* is reduced to the pursuit of individual happiness. While that's a necessary element in the search for meaning, it's not the only one—a point that's been largely lost on the American psyche. One hopes it won't be lost on Ally. ❑

PHOTOGRAPH BY VIVAN ZINK / FOX

David A. Kaiser has a forthcoming book on culture and politics. Jo Ellen Green Kaiser is an editor at TIKKUN.

MUSIC REVIEW

Sounds of Renewal

Ya'acov Gabriel

I was recently asked, at a conference where I was teaching, if there is a uniquely Jewish musical idiom. To my questioner's dismay I said, "Probably not, unless you include the songs the Levites sang at the Temple…and we don't have that music anymore, just the lyrics." As a people, we've been very good at assimilating the local melodic modes, and using them in our own love songs and liturgy. We've done this in Eastern Europe, Morocco, India, Turkey, and Ethiopia and we have artists doing it today in America. To those who say, "But this new stuff doesn't sound Jewish," I say, "wait fifty years, it will sound Jewish to your grandchildren."

Miraj is one such group of artists, carving out a nice niche in the Jewish American musical landscape. It's a trio of women songwriters, Rabbis Rayzel Raphael, Juliet Spitzer and Margot Stein, who studied to become Reconstructionist rabbis together in Philadelphia, and who explore all kinds of American folk and popular music styles. They spin their tight harmonies around tunes with feminist, spiritual and Torah midrashic (interpretational) content, a little bit like the way Sweet Honey in the Rock does songs which are imbedded in African American history.

Their first release, "A Moon Note" (Red Thread Records, 608 W. Upsal St., Philadelphia, PA 19119; 215-843-8036) has a delicate and earnest flavor to it, and some unusual themes. "Minyan of Woman" is a hopeful anthem of women bonding in spite of their diversity and different situations in life. "Neshama Yetayra" is about the second soul a person receives on the Sabbath to help him or her feel peaceful and whole. "Gather In" is a lovely Sabbath song, done with the simplicity of a Shaker round. There's even a song about weaning, and what it means to both child and mother.

Wait fifty years, it will sound Jewish to your grandchildren.

The group balances out nicely. Juliet's songs are very melodic. Margot's are novel and adventurous. Rayzel Raphael, a native of Knoxville, Tennessee, adds a bluesy, Gospel-ish quality to the mix. She sings about letting yourself "rock to the Rock in joy" and listening to the waves "as they rock n' roll" in a way that feels authentic and unforced.

She has also just released a solo effort, "Bible Babes a-Beltin" (Sounds Write, 6685 Norman Lane, San Diego, CA 92120; 800-9SOUNDS9). It's her tribute to key biblical women, using lots of cool aural technology to augment her folk sound, and lots of percussion to keep the songs lively. It sounds like the Indigo Girls co-writing with Melissa Etheridge after studying at Rabbinical school.

"Miriam" is a loping, reggae jam that honors the prophetess for getting all the women to dance at the Red Sea. "Judith" is a kind of Broadway musical/blues tune about a women who cuddles up to, and then cuts the head off of, a general sent to destroy her people. What connects these and all her other songs is a vision of women as heroic and pro-active. None of the ladies portrayed here are shrinking violets, waiting for rescue. They feel, they suffer, they fight the odds, and they usually win. Rayzel, in her lyrics and in the title of the cassette, has a playful way of expressing her vision, but she still makes serious points. Women may have been ignored or misrepresented in past biblical scholarship, but that time is over. These songs show women in a much more dynamic and healthy light.

Both these recordings push the Jewish music envelope a little bit further out. It's the dawning of a new year, and American-based Renewal music is a good vehicle for supporting the next cycle we live through. It's what Jews have always done. ❑

Ya'acov Gabriel is rabbi of the Jewish Renewal Congregation Har Shalom in Fort Collins, Colorado. He was a music producer and reviewer for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation for fifteen years and his sixth recording is Eagle Wings.

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The Kabbalah of Pluralism

Bradley Shavit Artson



The rift between different groups of Jews has turned ugly. Prominent rabbis of one denomination have publicly accused rabbis of another of making a mockery of the faith. Other leaders have accused their ideological opponents of lacking "a scintilla of moral worth," of presiding over houses of worship that are spiritually dead, or of catering only to the rich and powerful. Across the spectrum, triumphalism is rampant—and it is metastasizing.

Denigrating other forms of Judaism isn't simply an expression of malice: often it emerges from a commendable love of one's own Jewish way. It is a small step from feeling passionately about one's own path within Judaism to the conviction that it is optimal for every Jew. It is an all too human temptation to project our own filter of temperament and preferences onto the world at large.

But the triumphalism emerging from every wing of Jewish expression—left, center, and right—is killing us. It is already hard to be a passionate Jew of any kind. Materialism, secularism, despotism, indifference, and the seductions of wealth and power all threaten the survival of our ancient sacred covenant. We hardly lack for antagonists to Judaism; what we need are allies. *Kol Yisrael areivim zeh ba-zeh,* all Jews depend on each other.

Every form of Judaism that meets the spiritual needs of its adherents, that elevates moral discourse, enhancing the divine image found in all people and the wonder of all creation, is necessary for our well being. Recognizing, in the words of the Tanya of Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, that "not all intellects and minds are alike, and the intellect of one person is not affected and excited by what affects the intellect of another," we need to remind ourselves that the Judaism that works best for one Jew may not be the right fit for another, that we will need many ways to be Jewish if we hope to retain the loyalty of many Jews. What we need is a theology of difference: let a hundred Judaisms blossom! Such a vigorous pluralism would assert that it is the Holy Blessing One who properly ought to occupy the center as we and our communities take our distinctive places around that common core.

In the pursuit of a theology of difference which would allow for multiple Judaisms for multiple personalities, Lurianic Kabbalah offers a wonderful image. Posing the question of how a God that is beyond all comprehension, beyond all description, and hence beyond all relationship, could have fashioned a finite world, the Kabbalists articulate the image of the Sefirot, ten emanations of God that each reflect a different aspect of God's involvement in the world. *Ein Sof* (God beyond all description) withdraws into a single, dense point, exploding out into material reality, into the Sefirot. These Sefirot are, therefore, a map both of God's involvement and of creation itself. Indeed, since humanity is made in God's image, the Sefirot are also found in each and every human being.

According to Kabbalah, each *neshamah*, each human soul, originates in one or another of the Sefirot. This accounts for the staggering array of human temperaments and personalities, since each Sefirah has its own emphasis and dominant emotion: asking why the Torah refers to God in the plural in Hebrew, as "*Elohim Hayim,* the living God," the Alte Rebbe responds that the plural form reminds us that God is "the Source of Life for the souls of Israel." Each soul comes from a different Sefirah, and reflects the attributes of its unique source. For example, "the souls whose root originates in the category of *chesed*, are inclined towards kindness in the leniency of their decisions, and so forth." Some Jews are more driven by a spirituality of compassion. Some are drawn to social justice (*gevurah*—might); others to cultivating an inner stillness.

Rather than saying which is better, or that some other Jewish community ought to adopt our own community's agenda and perspective, might we not all do better to recognize that each comes from its own Sefirah; each temperament reveals a different aspect of godliness in the world. All originate in the Holy One, and each can illumine the other. At the same time, they might not always be able to live together: *chesed* Jews should fashion communities true to their Sefirah, and *gevurah* Jews ought to do likewise.

Temperament, no less than intellect, may drive denominational differences. But if each are understood as emerging from different Sefirot, then we can all affirm that other Jewish communities and denominations are rooted in God no less than our own. ❑

ILLUSTRATION BY LAWRENCE BUSH

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Multicultural Judaism?

Stephen Joel Trachtenberg

When Allen Ginsberg died, the obituary reflections tended to contain two surprises. One was the extent to which his passing became a definitive farewell to the time, four decades ago, when the rhetoric of revolution was a form of everyday parlance, and when the complete overthrow of antecedent reality was a common rhetorical starting-point for even the most innocuous proposal.

A second surprise was made up of all the comments, very placid in tone, that took note of Ginsberg's synoptic religious views. As the poem on his mother's death, titled *Kaddish*, implies, he never let go of his Jewish identity, which remained somewhere near the core of his being. That fact was reinforced by his continuing to live on Manhattan's Lower East Side. Meanwhile, his long excursion into Buddhism seemed to coincide with his origins in what the obituaries seemed to regard, at least implicitly, as an unforced symbiosis.

Critics may feel tempted to observe that Ginsberg's Buddhism belongs in the same category as what the Chinese restaurant came to represent, half a century ago, for New York Jews who didn't insist on eating kosher food when they weren't at home. Chinese cooking simply became "de facto kosher."

For a Jew who had abandoned the vast bulk of the *Shulchan Aruch*, why should Buddhism pose any problems? It certainly didn't matter that the poem that made him famous—*Howl*—seemed to approve a string of human practices regarded with extreme disfavor by the Torah. And Buddhism's breadth and tolerance, and the still unresolved question of whether it is a "religion" at all, can easily accommodate a few last whiffs of "Jewish identity," with Ginsberg serving as a case in point.

Since the obituaries took Ginsberg's religious mélange so casually for granted, they were relieved from the task of facing a serious question, namely, to what extent was Ginsberg typical of his Jewish generational cohort, and to what extent might he even have represented the Judaism of the future? A discussion of this polemical hornet's nest, had it occurred, would soon have formed a prelude to yet another controversy, initiated after Ginsberg's passing by events in both Israel and the United States. Once again the media launched into the quest for a definition of who is and who is not officially a Jew, a subject that pops up consistently in our newspapers and on our television screens.

The possibility raised by figures like Ginsberg is that we are moving toward a time when the varieties of Judaism will take an infinite number of forms. Whether they start from a clearly Jewish background or not, those who have moved through the varieties of belief now so widely available in the United States and other countries may decide, finally, that Judaism is "for them." Together with congregants who have been on similar pilgrimages, they will form groups running into the dozens or the hundreds or the thousands, until at last they will reach their defining moment: particular rabbis in Israel or Europe or the United States will denounce them as renegades and apostates who threaten the very essence of Judaism as well as its historical survival.

The practitioners of this or that form of "multicultural Judaism" will reply that it is their critics who threaten Judaism rather than themselves. Haven't those critics read the Book of Ruth, which praises a woman of Moab, no less, as an ancestor of no less a figure than King David? And the media will have yet another field day, ranging from the front pages and the six o'clock news to a horde of columnists and commentators.

The really significant thing that Allen Ginsberg never did was to incorporate into his vision a solid dose of Christianity. In one sense this was an obvious omission; in another, less so. A Jew with roots as visible as Ginsberg's, when he or she crosses the line into admiration for or worship of Jesus, seems to most of us to be engaged in an act that is as much anti-Jewish as it is pro-Christian. Like it or not, these two modes of faith are regarded as polar opposites by most Jews as well as most non-Jews—a fact that plays itself out, tortuously or directly, in so many mixed marriages.

But Ginsberg, as early as *Howl*, was regarding the fates of so many people he knew as a kind of crucifixion. Loathed and oppressed by their society, persistently humiliated by its armed police, they allegedly ended their lives in despair and disgrace, with Ginsberg as chief mourner at their gravesides. But to draw directly on the Gospels in

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making this point was still, for Ginsberg, to cross a forbidden line. What would his father have said? And wasn't the cross a symbol of persecution rather than transcendence, whose hooked form, in 1933-45, carried one strand of historical Christian logic to its final destination?

In many ways, the future of Judaism lies somewhere on the spectrum that runs from a Christ-based, so-called "messianic" version all the way over to traditional Orthodoxy. "Messianic Judaism" incorporates references to Jesus (or Yeshua) as Messiah into the services of the Jewish calendar. A familiar Sabbath prayer concludes, and the "rabbi" improvises a brief homage to or acknowledgment of the Messiah, alias Jesus. Those joining in the service may include people from both Jewish and Christian backgrounds. They faithfully observe the Jewish holidays while giving each of them a "messianic" cast.

The rage often provoked in Jewish hearts by this "messianic" movement, which extends beyond the well-known Jews for Jesus group, may be a good indication of what lies ahead for us in the 21st century. For those who do not share in their beliefs, "messianic" Jews seem like little more than spiritual kidnappers. They "hook" their Jewish parishioners with familiar prayers, conducted with enthusiasm in a domestic or more-or-less synagogual setting. Then they "hit" those parishioners with their sense of Jesus as the greatest Jew who ever lived and, incidentally, the Son of God. Far from representing the anti-Christian essence that Grandma or Grandpa may have perceived, the prayers of Shabbat and Rosh Hashannah and Purim are used to build bridges over to the Baptists or the Lutherans. Not uncommonly, Christian clergy persons are "guest speakers" at services of this kind. And "messianic" Jews can therefore be seen as helping to fulfill an ancient Christian vision: when all the world's Jews finally accept Jesus, the latter will return to earth and put all of human history in order.

Seen from this particular vantage point, Allen Ginsberg was, if anything, an unreconstructed doyen of traditional Jewish belief. He held Christianity at bay, however much he may have felt tempted by its focus on suffering. Closer to the present Zeitgeist, perhaps, is Norman Mailer, whose autobiography of Jesus stirred up such widespread discussion. (When Frank Kermode is the reviewer chosen by *The New York Review of Books*, and grants the book a respectful hearing, the more dismissive reviews in the other media are automatically discounted.) Mailer's is in many ways a "Jewish" Jesus and his presentation of the Gospel stories would once have been denounced as a "Jewish slander."

As the two thousandth anniversary of Jesus' birth approaches, give or take a few years, our major news magazines have taken on an increasingly theological appearance. When they aren't asking how Americans feel about Hell, Heaven, Satan and sin, they feature a messianic pretender like Bo of the Heaven's Gate cult—who, together with Peep, concluded that the two of them were directly prophesied by the New Testament Book of Revelation. Meanwhile, a Jewish novelist who has always sought to incarnate the future of his society presents us with a brand-new Gospel, in which the Messiah joins all the other authors now practicing self-revelation through memoir.

It is the appropriate moment, obviously, for new versions of Judaism to be born. And much as we may feel inclined to lament these acts of revisionism, aren't they superior to the Jewish destiny so often predicted in recent years: the complete disappearance of Judaism as a result of intermarriage?

But one circuit has failed to close: an impassioned analogy between the Holocaust as a collective crucifixion and the Crucifixion as its prophetic symbol. A man of Jewish origin is now a Cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church. There have been individual Holocaust survivors who have converted to Christianity. But there is a level of "marriage" between the two themes that has never been proposed, much less consummated. Even as we continue to struggle with the murder of so much innocence and so many innocents, crossing that particular line remains as difficult for us as it was for Allen Ginsberg. As the present crisis in Judaism struggles toward a resolution, we can expect an ongoing dispute between those who define "renewal" Judaism as explicitly non-Christian, and those who seek to relax this ancient taboo.

Archaeology and text criticism enable us to glimpse an earlier age in which comparable stresses and prohibitions were active. Even as Christianity was beginning its slow growth from a version of Judaism to a rejection of Judaism, Philo and other Jews of Alexandria were creating a harmony between the Hebrew Bible and their version of Neo-Platonism—with the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, as their text. Neo-Platonism seemed no more dangerous to them than Buddhism did to Ginsberg.

Meanwhile, Jewish mortuary inscriptions of the Hellenistic period confirm that many Jews gave their children what we now regard as gentile names—some containing the names of Pagan divinities. Sects like the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes argued out their versions of what was theoretically a single religion. At the same time, versions of the Hebrew name of God were appearing in religious modes like Gnosticism. Religious syncretism seemed to be the order of the day, as it so often appears to be the order of our own day.

How many observers of that scene could have predicted, with any degree of confidence, that the future of Judaism was Pharisaic, while its "messianic" variant would end up becoming a bitterly anti-Pharisaic Christianity? And how many could have foreseen an age when Christian "fundamentalists," far from engaging in the persecution of Jews, would be among the staunchest supporters of the State of Israel? Meanwhile, Jewish pessimists will be quick to remind us that for all of its brilliant accomplishments, the

tradition of Philo represented a historical dead end, of little or no significance to the development of Judaism.

If, as the third millennium approaches, Judaism is in obvious crisis, its eventual shape and form is not easy to determine. That form is likely to be defined by the power of both poetry and history, by the stirrings of the human heart, and perhaps by a charismatic individual or group. Not to be omitted, of course, is an actual schism that produces two or three differing and mutually exclusive Judaisms, each of which will lament the blindness of its competitors. Hopefully, they won't come to actual blows, as Chasidim and Mitnagdim did in the 18th century.

If a successful act of revisionism does occur, one that sets a single pattern for the Jewish future, then the conflicts taking up so much space in the media today will look like the muddles and compromises so typical of an upcoming revelation. In a context like that, Allen Ginsberg, with his visions of "angel hipsters" and his glorifications of homosexuality, may well end up looking like a minor prophet. ❑

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WE NEED YOU TO TIKKUN TIKKUN

THE STATE OF SLATE *(continued from page 71)*

Slate certainly is useful to Microsoft. Several observers have cited the frequent editorial contributions of Nathan Myhrvold, Microsoft's #3-ranked executive, and the company's designated "visionary." Asked whether this confirmed *Slate*'s role as a sort of company newsletter enhanced by its association with top journalists, Shafer noted that Myhrvold doesn't write about Microsoft itself, and that he is "a brilliant guy and provocative thinker.... He doesn't write *enough*. He's been extraordinarily busy." I asked him about dissenting voices. "If [Netscape CEO and Microsoft archenemy] Jim Barksdale or [Apple's] Steve Jobs had a brilliant piece, we'd love to run it." So far, there have been no pieces from either; only, in fact, a reproachful article titled "Steve Jobs' Totalitarian Vision."

Microsoft watchers say the *Slate* staff's seduction by Gates is no surprise. They note the atmosphere at Microsoft's Redmond "campus," a mix of hubris, paternalism, and a heady sense of victory in an ongoing great battle. Romano, who covers media right in Microsoft's backyard and is friendly with the folks at *Slate*, notes the telling markers of a powerful insular culture: the parent company's excessive secrecy, the rallies, the discounted food and free sodas, the hacky-sacks in the aisles, the nondisclosure agreements.

"It's impossible to spend that amount of time in Redmond and not be entranced by the whole Microsoft thing—their invincibility, their success, and that plays out in the pages of *Slate*," says Romano. "They have been extraordinarily sympathetic to Microsoft. Almost all of their articles are favorable."

From the get-go, Kinsley has demonstrated both his ample sense of humor and the delicacy of his position. For example, this item, positioned as a response to a book review by James J. Cramer that was moderately critical of Microsoft:

"When we showed Cramer's review to Bill Gates (not because it concerns Microsoft, of course, but because he insists on reading every word of *Slate* before publication, in an admirable effort to improve his vocabulary), his reaction was swift. "Have it killed," he observed reflectively. We said, "You mean, 'Have him killed.'" Gates shrieked, "No, you fools. What kind of person do you take me for? Kill the piece. Kill the piece!"

To some, this ironic treatment disarms Gates's critics by providing self-effacement which the titan himself cannot muster. Such material bridges in style but not in substance the gap between the way traditional readers like their diet and the far more edgy material found in thousands of spots on the Web, more of which are springing up every day to challenge the hegemony of the old order. If no one entity—including Microsoft—is able to get a lock on the Web, then we can truly look forward to a future rich in the sorts of perspectives that people who've spent their entire adult lives in D.C. can scarcely imagine. ❑

PURIM: FROM DUALITY TO UNITY *(continued from page 50)*
explained by Reb Yehudah Leib of Ger (1847–1906), author of the Sefas Emes. He suggests that intoxication to the point of "not knowing the difference…" hints that on Purim we must transcend "thinking" and enter into an altered state of consciousness (intoxication) in which we perceive the divine unity of all things. On Purim, says the Sefas Emes, we symbolically return to the Garden of Eden, but this time eat from "the tree of life" rather than "the tree of knowledge of good and evil." Becoming intoxicated to the point of "not knowing" (*lo yada)* is a means by which we can get beyond the limits of dualistic thinking. This, I believe, is where Purim and Yom Kippur intersect. Though celebrated in diametrically opposed fashion, one through holy hedonism and the other through asceticism, they both aim to free us from the limitations of dualistic thinking and open us to the mystery of God's unity.



The contrast between the literal telling of the Purim plot, which embodies the archetypal battle between the forces of good and evil, and this mystical interpretation of the Purim celebration is extremely important. Whereas so much of traditional Judaism seems to focus on dualities—separating out good from evil, kosher from nonkosher, sacred from profane, Jew from gentile—mystical Judaism sees the ultimate aim of religious practice as the integration and transcendence of all forms of otherness. Perhaps the Rabbis felt compelled to add the Yom Kippur theme of unification to Purim's celebration rites because they foresaw the danger of an overly simplistic reading of the Megillah. As we unfortunately learned from Baruch Goldstein's massacre of Palestinian worshipers on Purim, a literal reading of the Megillah can reinforce the pathological use of primitive, all-or-nothing defense mechanisms.

I find it interesting that the heroine of this holiday on which we celebrate the divine unity within the seemingly dualistic world of good and evil is a woman. Like the ancient Near Eastern goddess of love and war, Ishtar, Esther brings us back to our roots in the wisdom of the Goddess—the wisdom that teaches us that the body and all of the natural world are sacred and connected to a divine unity which transcends all duality. We celebrate Purim within the world of the body and the senses by feasting, frolicking and feeding one another. Unlike the ascetic, self-afflicting quality of Yom Kippur, Purim takes us to a level of holiness where we can eat, drink, laugh, and enjoy all the sensual aspects of life while affirming God's unity. In this sense Purim is the ultimate prototype for the messianic age when "God will be One and God's name One." Purim heralds that time when we will be able to find God's oneness in and through all things. ❑

REFLECTIONS ON RACE *(continued from page 59)*
My answer is: both. I believe that things are getting better and worse at the same time.

Optimism is too close to complacency; pessimism, to resignation. I'm concerned about both self-congratulation and despair. Neither is healthy in a society that can meet the test of being self-correcting. I'm bothered that so many white Americans seem not to notice the hardships blacks experience in their daily lives, and I'm troubled that more emotion seems to be directed at the remedies—such as affirmative action—than at the problems—such as economic and political powerlessness. Since we have already made enormous progress, we have proved that further change is possible. We need to focus on the areas where we still have progress to make, not to complain but to develop strategies to improve. To do this, we have to understand that racism can be subtle and need not always wear a white hood and burn a cross or exclude blacks from a motel to be harmful.

Some argue that we should focus on class instead of race. Why should this be an "either-or" choice? Some elite colleges properly do both in considering admissions. And blacks who move into the middle class do not shed their black skin, which still exposes them to random police stops and prejudicial assumptions. There is more to life than one's socio-economic standing. Moreover, in judging class status, it's important not to focus exclusively on income. Blacks and whites who earn between $25,000 and $50,00 a year are considered similarly situated in the middle class. But a look at their net worth reveals a large gap. The median net worth of white families in that income bracket is about $44,000, but only $15,000 for black families with the same income. Net worth, accumulated over generations, manifests itself in equity in a home, for example, and a lower percentage of blacks own homes. With only one third the economic cushion as their white counterparts who earn the same amount, blacks have far less protection from an economic downturn. This creates a more acute sense of vulnerability among middle class blacks.

Orlando Patterson has suggested that race will become less important if we stop giving it such emphasis in public discourse. I disagree. Race was never discussed as sensitively through most of American history, when the oppression of blacks was much worse, as it is now. We have gained ground against discrimination in part because we have talked about it, and there is no reason in an open society to stop trying to find constructive ways to do more.

Nor have we arrived at the stage, if we ever will, when we can ignore the groups through which many individuals in our society identify themselves and each other. Those who are impatient with the focus on race, who discount analyses of group interactions, do so at the peril of ignoring the powerful ethnic and racial tensions that tear through America. Our country cannot afford false "optimism." We have advanced, and therefore we can advance. ❑



PHOTOGRAPH BY CORI WELLS BRAUN / COURTESY OF BANTAM BOOKS

OUT HERE

Buy Racial

Meredith Maran

A few months ago I got a call from Brenda Jackson, an editor at a magazine I'll call (trust me, it's fair) *Yuppie Life*. Brenda told me that after four years of agitating for more coverage of African Americans, she'd finally been authorized to put together a special issue on the subject.

Brenda had already assigned feature stories to several prominent African American writers. From me she wanted an introductory essay, targeted to the magazine's 90 percent white readership, explaining why white people should care about what happens to black people.

I was thrilled, and not just because the magazine—one of Time-Warner's many profit centers—would pay me two dollars a word more than I'll be paid for the words you're reading now. I accepted, then asked Brenda why she'd chosen me.

"The bio on your book jacket described you as a mother who lives in Oakland," she said. "I figured any white woman who's chosen to raise her kids in a predominantly black city must have something to say about race."

Indeed I did. I wrote about the challenges and joys of raising my sons in a mostly African American neighborhood, and ended by calling on other white parents to go out of their way (which is usually what it takes) to give their children daily proximity to people of color.

Brenda loved the piece. For the layout she hired an African American photographer who spent a day at my house, taking pictures of my white teenage sons playing basketball with their black friends. Every week for months after that, one or another of the boys asked me when the issue would hit the newsstands. They couldn't wait to see their pictures in a well-known national magazine; couldn't wait to read an article about the often mis-reported facts of their lives.

Then Brenda called, sounding grim. "Bad news," she said. "They've killed the issue."

"What?"

"When the advertisers heard we were putting an African American man on the cover, they refused to buy pages. Last time we had a black person on the cover, sales fell by more than half. They say race doesn't sell."

The news was hard for me to swallow. But telling the boys was harder. The last thing I wanted was to be yet another messenger bringing yet another message of devaluation to a bunch of young men who'd already heard that message far too often.

I started with my son Jesse. I expected him to explode with anger. His calm resignation was far more chilling.

"It's not the magazine's fault," Jesse said. "They have to sell ads or they can't publish the magazine. It's not the advertisers' fault, either. If no one's gonna buy the magazine and see their ads, why should they pay for them?"

Right, Jesse. But whose fault is it that half of the magazine-buying public won't buy a magazine they normally buy if there's an African American on the cover?

More to the point: what's the solution?

There's an evil cycle at work here. For the most part, white folks don't buy books and magazines by black writers. So, for the most part, publishers don't publish those writers. This gives white (and black) people less access to their work. And less awareness of what there is to gain by reading it. So white folks don't buy books and magazines by black writers....

How we can break this cycle? Like it or not, what we're dealing with here is capitalism. What governs capitalism is supply and demand. We need to create demand. We need to create a market. We need to make race sell.

If white folks start buying magazines and going to movies and watching TV shows by and about people of color—*and* demanding that those magazines and movies and TV shows are made abundantly and consistently available—there will be more of those magazines and movies and TV shows available to us to learn from and enjoy.

If white folks start raising our kids in ethnically diverse neighborhoods and lobbying for affirmative action in our schools and workplaces, we and our children will acquire an appreciation for, and eventually, a familiarity with, the literature and the culture of African Americans and other people of color.

Once that happens it will be natural for us to buy magazines and go to movies about people whose lives aren't exactly like ours. Once that happens magazines won't lose their advertisers when they publish articles about race.

By adjusting our buying habits we can eliminate the economic basis for the Balkanization of our culture.

By this simple act of consumer rebellion, we can make race sell—until the glorious day when it doesn't have to. ❑

Meredith Maran is the author of Notes From An Incomplete Revolution: Real Life Since Feminism *(Bantam, 1997) and* What It's Like To Live Now *(Bantam, 1995).*

PERSONAL ESSAY

On Fifth Avenue

Dorien Ross



ILLUSTRATION BY ERIC FIELD

After her son died, my mother would no longer pass by the butcher's shop. You think that strange, don't you? That's O.K. I, too, thought she was half cracked. Now, I myself have done things equally as strange. Lots of them. Just wait. Past forty, life becomes a ritual dance of avoidance.

My mother would walk five long New York City hard cold blocks out of her way to not pass the butcher's. Nothing *before* the death was to be done *after* the death. Logical. Half-cracked logic.

There she goes! Out the Madison Avenue door. Nods to the doormen. A cold brisk nod. They are used to those kind of nods. The doormen. Immune. Before the death, Emma was more than generous. "Good morning, Eduardo," she would announce cheerfully. Now there is nothing extra to give to the large circle of service people that surround any wealthy New Yorker. Maids. Doormen. Errand boys. Taxi drivers. The list goes on. Tailors. Manicurists. Laundrists. Garage men. Elevator men. Facialists. Seamstresses. Chauffeurs. It is an urban plantation. Even an average middle-class individual runs a small serfdom.

Emma has no witness to this half-cracked manner she has developed. Her family avoids her avoidances. She is terribly lonely. A kind of loneliness that is not bearable. If there were a group of people (even three: herself, her husband and her daughter), if there were a group walking the long way around the butcher's, not going to movies, not speaking to young men between thirty and thirty-five with receding foreheads—if there were a group, even a small one, she would not be lonely, and this avoidance would move into reality.

Whole cultures move into collective avoidance for this reason.

High school cliques. McCarthyism. Woodstock. Jonestown.

O Mother! In your Bergdorf's raincoat, with a mink collar and belted waist. Collar stylishly turned up against the bitter wind. Bitter, bitter, cold. Put on those boots with the fur lining. They will protect your thin feet. ❑

Dorien Ross, Ph.D. is a writer and psychologist who lives in New York City. She is the author of the novel Returning To A *(City Light Books, 1995).*

The Mother

Wearing a green sweater, the mother paces, paces
along the street.
In Elul the wind comes and goes.
In Tebet it snows.
At Pesach the sun trickles over the windowpanes.
The green sweater paces, paces along the street.
Summers go by.
Winters go by.
Years go by.
The streets float before her, endless and twisting.
The sky swings like a hammock,
and all the streets,
all, lead to Paviak prison.

In that place a cell throbs like a sore,
a cell rocks day and night;
behind the gray walls her daughter sits, closed up,
locked in,
silenced,
with folded hands;
listening intently,
she saws the bars open with her gaze
and counts the stars.
The silence rings,
the white fangs of emptiness glisten.

The green sweater paces, paces along the street.
Elul is not wet,
and Tebet is not cold,
and Pesach is barely a holiday.

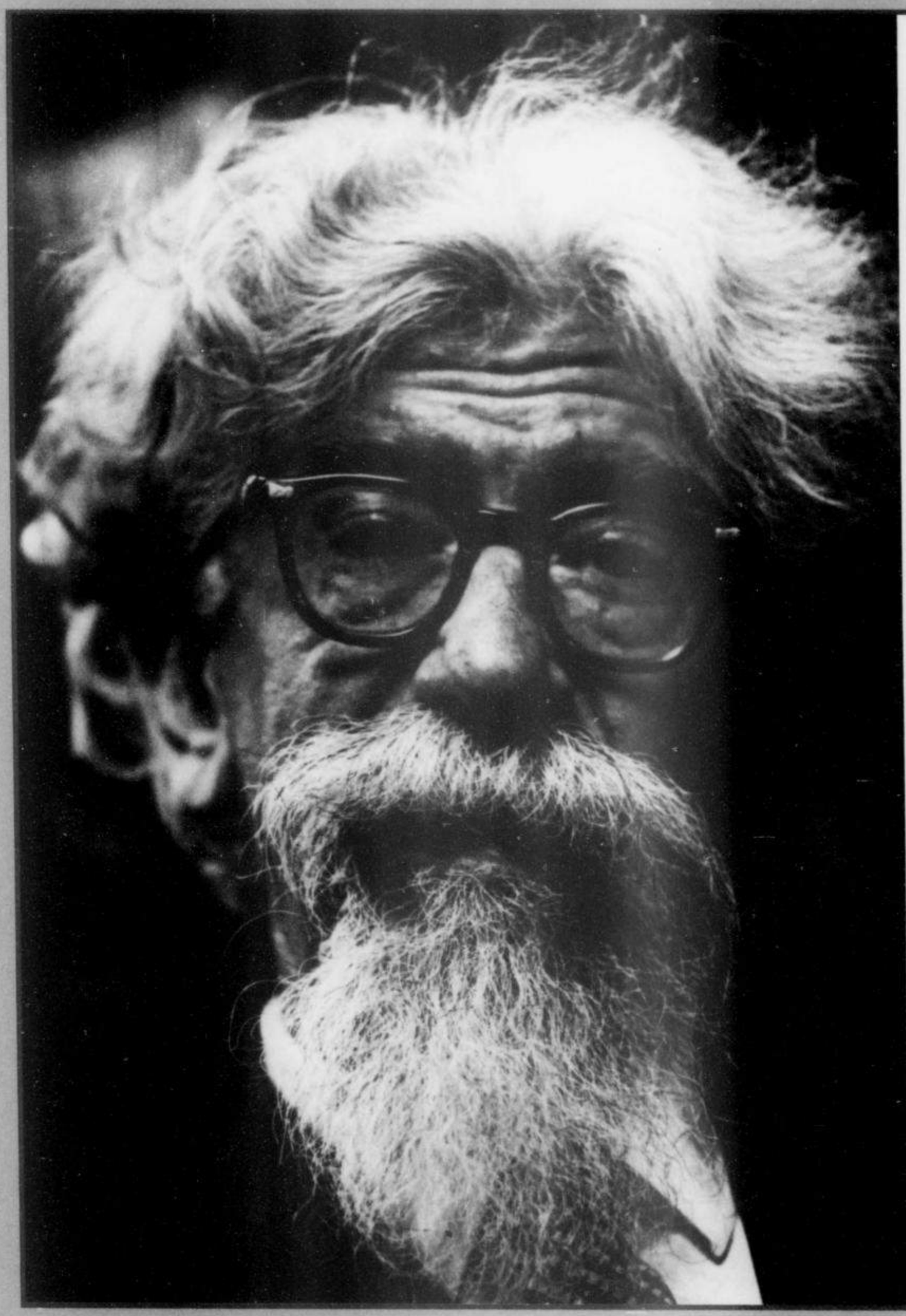
The sky swings like a hammock,
and all the streets,
all of them, lead to Paviak prison.

—Kadya Molodowsky
translated from the Yiddish by Ruth Whitman

תיקון

Tikkun (te-kün) ...to heal, repair and transform the world. All the rest is commentary

A Magazine of Jewish Renewal



Modern thinking has often lost its way by separating the problem of truth from the problem of living, cognition from the total human situation.... Reflection alone will not procure self-understanding. The human situation is disclosed in the thick of living.

By whatever we do, by every act we carry out, we either advance or obstruct the drama of redemption; we either reduce or enhance the power of evil.

—Abraham Joshua Heschel