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HIGH HOLY DAY INSERT

TIKKUN

PAT SCHROEDER...
A JACK NEWFIELD INTERVIEW

BEYOND SELFISHNESS
BY MICHAEL BADER

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1998 $5.95



SPIRITUALITY IN AMERICA

Beyond Narcissism

Ken Wilber
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Tirzah Firestone • Tom Beaudoin
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Nan Fink • Rachel Sabath
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Danny Goldberg

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ATONEMENT AS TIKKUN
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MEMORY'S LANDSCAPES
Deborah Tall

RETHINKING REFERENDA: A DEBATE
Nelson Tebbe vs. Julia Bloch

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Sin

Rosh Hashanah, sun licked and stuck
to the sky's blue envelope. Late September slant
of light across the lake. We're feeding the ducks—

stale baguette, the old year's terrible crumbs.
Think of your sins, you say. Where to start? Envy
of course. Sloth—the muse upstairs, mouthing her gun.

And since I was five, caught in the dress-shop
looking up the mannequin's skirts—this love
for the bodies of women (armpit, downed nape,

crease between pubis and thigh). Innocent
of everything, the ducks know only their hunger,
gabbling after every morsel, green necks outstretched.

Feel better? you ask. The wind picks up. Leaves float
bright in the lake's blue universe. *Like a new man*
I say, and it's almost true—for a moment I'm flayed,

salted clean. Walking back, the curve of your ankle,
the small sway of your hips. Lucky we're out of bread.
The lake would boil. The trees would run from its banks.

—Jon Loomis

TIKKUN

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY VOLUME 13 NUMBER 5



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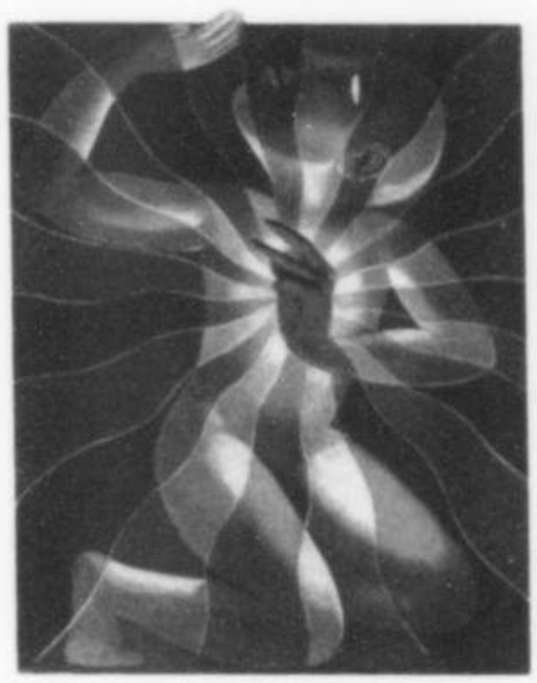
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In the September/October and November/December issues of TIKKUN we have assembled a wide range of thinkers to introduce us to the new awakening of spirituality in contemporary America and in the Jewish world, and to consider whether that awakening is merely a new frontier of consumer narcissism or might embody deeper and profound socially transformative possibilities.

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Letters to the Editor

Demolition of Palestinian Homes

To the Editor:

I recently witnessed the destruction of a Palestinian home by the Israel army in Anata, just on the border of Jerusalem. The town is composed almost entirely of Palestinian refugees who had lived in the Old City of Jerusalem and fled in 1967. A group of peace activists heard about the demolition as it was taking place, and we were able to get to a hill overlooking the house.



The scene was horrific. We surged down the hill in our small group until the soldiers blocked our progress with their guns and bodies. M.K. Naomi Chazan, who was with us, demanded to see the order proclaiming this a closed military zone, and after several long minutes the officer complied. Who knows if the order was genuine or invented at the last minute. But the guns were real.

So there we stood on the side of the hill and watched with an unbearable sense of helplessness as the civil administration's bulldozer took the house apart wall by wall. He drove through the garden's profusion of flowers and slammed the front door until the entire front wall was shattered and dangling from metal rods. He came from every side; finally, he lifted off the roof, barely suspended, and sent it crashing below. When that was done, he went around the back of the house, crashed through all the fruit trees, including a small olive stand, and knocked over a water tank on a platform. Its cascade of water drenched the trees now uprooted and broken. I have never seen anyone in the Middle East deliberately waste so much water.

Then, suddenly, gunshots rang out. Some of the young Palestinian men had begun throwing stones—from a very great

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distance—and Israeli soldiers retaliated by opening fire and running up the hill after them. The soldiers were shooting as they ran, setting off their guns like the Wild West. I saw the commander and told him that this was illegal, a clear violation of the open fire regulations of the Israeli army, which stipulate that a soldier's life be in danger before he opens fire. I demanded repeatedly that he tell the soldiers to stop. The commander shrugged and didn't bother answering.

Amazingly, no stray bullets had hit any of our group, although the Palestinians, as usual, were not as lucky. The son of one of the neighbors had been hit by a bullet. Already in the hospital was Arabiyeh, the mother of the family, who had been violently struck by soldiers when she tried to prevent them from destroying her home.

This long, sad story must not end here. Our group, the same people and more I hope, will be going back next Friday to begin rebuilding this home. This is a new tradition of non-violent resistance. The Palestinians rebuild, the Israeli army demolishes, and they rebuild again. As one of the neighbors said, we'll see who lasts longer.

If you cannot come to our rebuilding effort and even if you can, please use your power to get this to stop. The messages you have sent are incredibly effective; foreign political leaders have begun to raise the issue of home demolitions with Israeli leaders. Write to your congressional representatives, the president, and others in power. Tell them that the Israeli demolition of Palestinian homes must be stopped. Say it in the subject line, so they get the point quickly. And circulate this letter to more people.

Thank you for listening.

GILA SVIRSKY
Anata, Israel

Wall Fetishism

To the Editor:

I have a problem with the way the Wall has become a central fetish in parts of Jewish life. Don't get me wrong. Last year, I was part of a group of male and female rabbis that made history by gathering together to pray in the courtyard outside the immediate Wall area. It was the first time men and women prayed in traditional garb at the Wall. In the shadow of the spot which so many call the holiest place on earth, we needed a military guard with drawn machine guns to protect us while praying. While we met only verbal abuse, subsequent groups who have attempted to pray unfettered in this same way for daily or holiday worship have been met with violent responses.

What is the basis for this violence? It is perpetrated not by Arabs protecting the Temple Mount area from aggression, but by fundamentalist Jews who have decided that there should not be freedom of religion even for Jews in Israel. I am not advocating doing away with the sanctity of worship for the Orthodoxy. I am, however, demanding space for liberal Jews to worship in accordance with our understanding of the rules and obligations of Torah. A third section without a *mechitzah* should be established for those for whom the atmosphere of the Wall provides heightened spirituality, but who do not accept the ways of narrow and minority groups of Jews. For so many people, it is a symbol of the place where God dwells, has dwelt, and will dwell. It is a symbol of hope for the end of Diaspora and for the eventual coming of an age of Messiah. To deny any Jew a right to pray at that spot in a matter authentic to his or her Judaism is a blasphemy for all.

Nevertheless, more problematic for me than who gets to pray at the Wall is the notion of what happens at the Wall to begin with. We God wrestle not through kissing monuments, but by building covenants. I could argue that the Wall is nothing more than an artifact of history. We are not a people who worship places. We do not know where on Sinai Moses' footprints might be found. We did not mark the path of the entry of the ark into Jerusalem and declare it holy. The whole issue of Wall worship or Wall holiness is a problem for our tradition. The fanaticism and Wall fetish is not holy and only deepens the pain of this issue. Our sages teach us that we do not know where Moses was buried lest there be a cult which would worship him at his grave. In the same way that we have rejected establishing shrines elsewhere, we dare not turn the Wall into one. If it is a symbol, it is one of hope, not an object of worship. As I walked through the throngs who filled the immediate Wall area this last trip, I observed those praying to a human being, calling him "God." I saw people masquerading as poor but pious Jews begging for money with cell phones ringing in their pockets. I was struck, as if by lightning, with the understanding that this was not an atmosphere of prayer; rather, I was walking amidst a den of idolatry.

RABBI MARC AARON KLINE, J.D.
Florence, SC

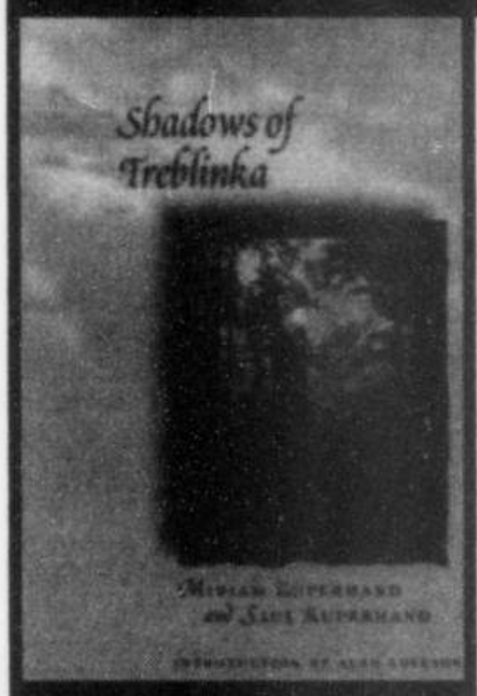
Palestinian Rights

To the Editor:

I am fed up with sniveling over the rights of Palestinians while your publication seems to conveniently ignore the way they have caused more deaths per year due to terrorism *since* the so-called "peace process" started than ever before. And Arafat has done nothing to quell this but continues to honor, embrace, and foster the culturally embedded murderous attitude most Palestinians have come to sympathize with, if not deeply believe. Maybe you missed the Palestinian TV program where beautiful little children in costumes are singing about how they will spill their blood on the Holy Mount to make Jerusalem theirs and route out Jews. This sentiment is embraced by more than just the small and marginal fringe. You also ignore the way any previous peace settlements have failed because when Israel still wanted to have a real peace with their Palestinian neighbors, the Palestinians were unable to get it through their heads that they needed to share. Instead they continually demanded all of Israel back and hurled even more bombs to prove their point. Is this Israel's fault? The Torah does say to boot out these people from our land, which was occupied and won militarily, fair and square. The Palestinians have no biblical claim to it.

I do believe in and will continue to make the Politics of Meaning a way of life and something I'll struggle to further incorporate into my everyday, business, and spiritual life. Reading your magazine and the condensed manifesto of the Politics of Meaning has led me to believe it's a real plan for change in the world. It's even affected my own speech as I have adopted that "language" as my own. Ever

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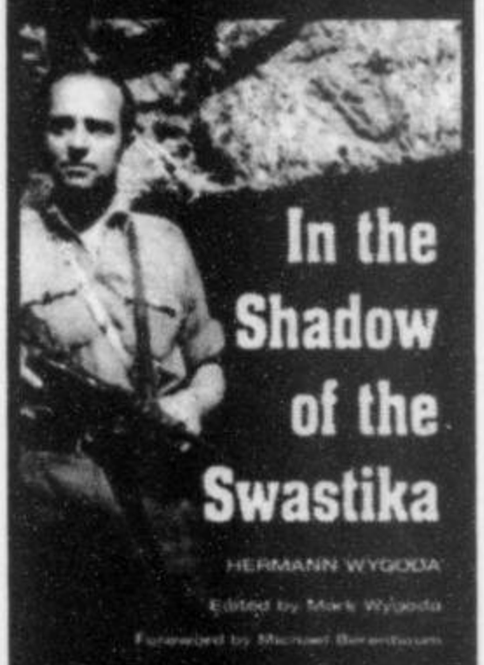
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LETTERS

since I came out of the closet not only as someone who is openly proud to be Jewish but also spiritual in nature, I've found that many people have a sadly deficient grip on words like "compassion," "meaning" and "the other." Yet I talk about them as those ideas should be applied: in everyday life. I have you to thank for that. In this respect you have been my mentor.

JEFF SAMEC
Austin, TX

Editor responds:

The Politics of Meaning call for love and caring applies not just to Jews, but to everyone on the planet. Jews refused to settle for less than a state of our own in 1948, and Jewish terrorists like Menachem Begin and Yitzhah Shamir supported violent acts against British and Palestinian civilians. We reject all *violence, but as long as Jewish chauvinists think that they can use a distorted reading of Torah to justify the denial of the right to national self-determination of close to 2 million Palestinians, it will be violence, not meaning or ethics, that triumphs.*

To the Editor:

I share Bassem Eid's concern about the Palestinian Authority ("Must Palestinians Choose Between Human Rights and Nation Building?" in TIKKUN, May/June 1998). However if—as he writes—Palestinians are "stuck between the Israeli hammer and the Palestinian Authority rock," then steering an appropriate path between these two requires both an informed denunciation of PA abuses and a recognition of the accountability of Israel.

Placing the PA and Israel on a par in a human rights analysis risks absolving Israel of its human rights violations. After all, Israel is still primarily responsible for the human rights situation in Palestine; it is futile to ask Palestinians to learn democracy from Israel, which they experience as an occupier. Instead, Palestinians need only look within to find civil institutions that are the foundation of a democratic society.

NUHAD JAMAL
Middle East and Africa Program
Coordinator, Grassroots International
Boston, MA

Is Pop Culture Poisonous?

Danny Goldberg

Cornel West is a great friend of TIKKUN, an inspired American progressive, and one of my heroes. His new book, written with Sylvia Ann Hewlett, *The War Against Parents*, was excerpted earlier this year by TIKKUN, and contains some very important arguments about the need to change U.S. laws and culture to support parents and parenting.

However, the chapter in the book titled "A Poisonous Popular Culture" echoes a long parade of attacks on modern entertainment from thinkers and political figures on the Left including Amitai Etzioni, Maya Angelou, and Maryann Medzian, as well as Democratic politicians Senator Joseph Lieberman, ex-Senator Paul Simon, and Congressman Ed Markey. With the exception of a few caveats attacking racism, homophobia, and patriarchy, leftist attacks on entertainment are in perfect sync with similar attacks from cultural conservatives such as Allen Bloom, William Bennett, Robert Bork, and former Vice President Dan Quayle.

Although Quayle coined the phrase "cultural elite" to condemn a supposed cabal of entertainment executives that would make TV character Murphy Brown a single mother, the truly unified elite is a bi-partisan sociological elite consisting of politicos, academics, religious leaders, and journalists who unanimously condemn popular entertainment culture despite the obvious enthusiasm tens of millions of Americans have for various forms of show business. College-educated, upper-middle class or above, and mostly middle-aged, this elite is convinced that their collective taste is not merely aesthetically more enlightened than that of the masses, but morally superior as well.

I do not propose to defend every compact disc, movie, or television show. Like any other community of thousands, there are plenty of evil, stupid, and amoral people in the entertainment business, and among a hundred million or so regular U.S. consumers of popular culture there is plenty of bad behavior. There is nothing wrong with moral criticism of entertainment—indeed, that is precisely what the best critics bring to their work. The fans, executives, and artists alike who care most passionately about art and entertainment invariably include moral criteria in their discussions and arguments about show business.

As a parent of two myself, I don't doubt that interviews with parents turn up criticism of entertainment. Plenty of kid-focused entertainment irritates me (especially those toy commercials!). I'm all for serious discussions of how to regulate what children are exposed to at various ages, and I'd be happy to pay more taxes for more educational TV programs like "Bill Nye the Science Guy."

The problem with elitist attacks on entertainment like Hewlett and West's "A Poisonous Popular Culture" is that they are based on sweeping generalizations that disregard both the artistic context of entertainment's creation and the cultural context of its consumption.

The epitome of this know-nothing approach to entertainment-bashing was Senator Bob Dole's attack on popular music and movies as part of his 1996 presidential campaign. In response to questions after a speech in which the senator attacked by name several films and albums, an aide to Dole immediately and sheepishly admitted that the senator had never seen or heard any of the stigmatized works himself but had relied on researchers. Dole's attack was quickly triangulated by Clinton and Gore, who, also having neither seen nor heard any of the supposedly offensive works, nonetheless agreed with him. (Disclosure: I was Chairman of Warner Bros. Records at the time of Dole's speech, which also attacked parent company Time-Warner.)

Besides calling popular culture "poisonous," the otherwise genteel Hewlett and West, and the people they choose to quote, refer to "rudeness and crudeness," and "a parent-hurting entertainment media." They state flatly, "The entertainment media has moved from celebrating to denigrating parental role and function," and that "Hollywood feeds off psychobabble, narcissistic individualism, and market-driven hedonism." Politicians are attacked for failing to act more vigorously in regulating "television … or the internet for that matter … yielding to pressure from the entertainment industry."

Apparently, it is not enough to attack certain entertainment products; the people who produce them must also be demonized. Isn't it possible that some artists and entertainment executives share the morals of Hewlett and West but simply have different opinions about entertainment? For example, Hewlett and West devote several hundred words to an attack on the film, *The Santa Clause*, because the movie passingly mentions a 900 sex-phone number and one parent blamed the film for the fact that his daughter spent

---

Danny Goldberg is Chairman and CEO of the Mercury Records Group. Since 1997 he and his father, Victor Goldberg, have been publishers of TIKKUN.

several hundred dollars calling it. Hewlett and West describe the father of the ten-year-old as being "in agony over his daughter's victimization" and "outraged and bitter" at Disney for making the movie. My wife and I have watched the film with our kids several times. To me, it is one of the most positive Christmas films of the last several years. We never even noticed the reference to the sex-phone number and have never met a parent who did.

At the core of sociological attacks on entertainment is the fallacy that art is meant to be taken literally in a manner similar to religious or political doctrine. Entertainment is described as being a conduit for a "message." Thus, Hewlett and West write: "The media message around parenting is at its most dismissive in contemporary movies where parents are portrayed ... as bumbling fools." Also from Hewlett and West: "The overwhelming message from progressive liberal folks in Hollywood is—who needs a husband to have a child?" Comparing the supposedly pro-parent Fifties television to today's, Hewlett and West write: "Forty years later, messages ... are radically different." Describing Oliver Stone's film, *Natural Born Killers*, they write: "The message of this movie does not seem to be cluttered up with uncomfortable consequences." Later on: "Given the messages coming out of the media, it is increasingly difficult for men to derive much self-esteem ... from the role of husband and father."

With rare exceptions, the "message" theory of entertainment is totally false. Greek and Shakespearean tragedies are not "messages" that life is depressing. Martin Scorsese has directed films with lots of killing and depressed, morally ambiguous protagonists that are nonetheless regularly listed as among the greatest works of cinematic art. Are the film critics less moral than the sociological elite, or are they tuned in to a poetic truth about the dark side of life that great art can sometimes illuminate to the betterment of its audience? B.B. King, the most acclaimed blues guitarist and singer of the last half-century, is notable, among other things, for conveying tremendous joy despite the "down" linear content of the blues lyrics he sings. Moral people all condemn murder, but moral people of good will may disagree about the morality of a particular murder mystery. I always found the horror classics *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* to be kind of creepy, but I do not consider people who love them my moral inferiors.

It's one thing not to think that a joke is funny. It's another to demonize the jokester and to marginalize people who laugh at the joke.

I am not suggesting that art and entertainment have no impact on culture. The best critics wrestle with the moral subtext of art, as do most passionate fans and the best artists and executives. Hewlett and West's idea of analyzing how the image of parents is expressed in the media is intriguing, but they go about it in a simplistic and absolutist way that states, in essence, that any unflattering depiction of a parent inherently attacks parenthood—and that anyone who disagrees is morally obtuse.

Hewlett and West single out for attack the kid-film comedies *Honey, I Shrunk the Kids* and *Home Alone*, both of which our family also has found to be harmless and enjoyable entertainment. Does this mean we love our children less—or does it simply mean that we happen to have different taste in movies? Comedies are not supposed to be taken literally. Except for political satire, the "message" of a comedy is laughter. It's one thing not to think that a joke is funny. It's another to demonize the jokester and to marginalize people who laugh at the joke.

In extending their critique of what teenagers are attracted to, Hewlett and West walk the well-trod ground of entertainment bashers through the ages. Oliver Stone's *Natural Born Killers*, a favorite target of elitists, is admittedly an edgy movie, and many close friends of mine found it offensive or unwatchable. I respect the sensibility of the film's critics, but, as I see it, to the extent it "comments" on anything, it is an indictment of the news media's exploitation of tragedy, embodied in Robert Downey Jr.'s portrayal of a pompous newscaster. It is hard to see how many truly objective critics of *Natural Born Killers* could ignore the fact that it is a black comedy. An impressionistic montage of different film techniques, the film actually includes a sit-com style laugh track for several scenes featuring comedian Rodney Dangerfield. It couldn't be more clear that the film is not meant to be taken literally, but as a poetic cartoon impression of violence, the media, and the U.S.A. circa the 1990s.

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A healthy disagreement about a film like *Natural Born Killers* is appropriate, if somewhat out of date. However Hewlett and West direct their energy not to an analysis of the film, but toward the fact that, tragically, several young murderers have been fans of the film. It is a dangerous and unfair argument to blame the movie for the acts of a tiny percentage of its most unstable fans. Charles Manson "credited" the Beatles. More than one serial killer has quoted the Bible. Many depraved murderers, including John Lennon's assassin, Mark David Chapman, have been obsessed with J.D. Salinger's novel *Catcher in the Rye*.

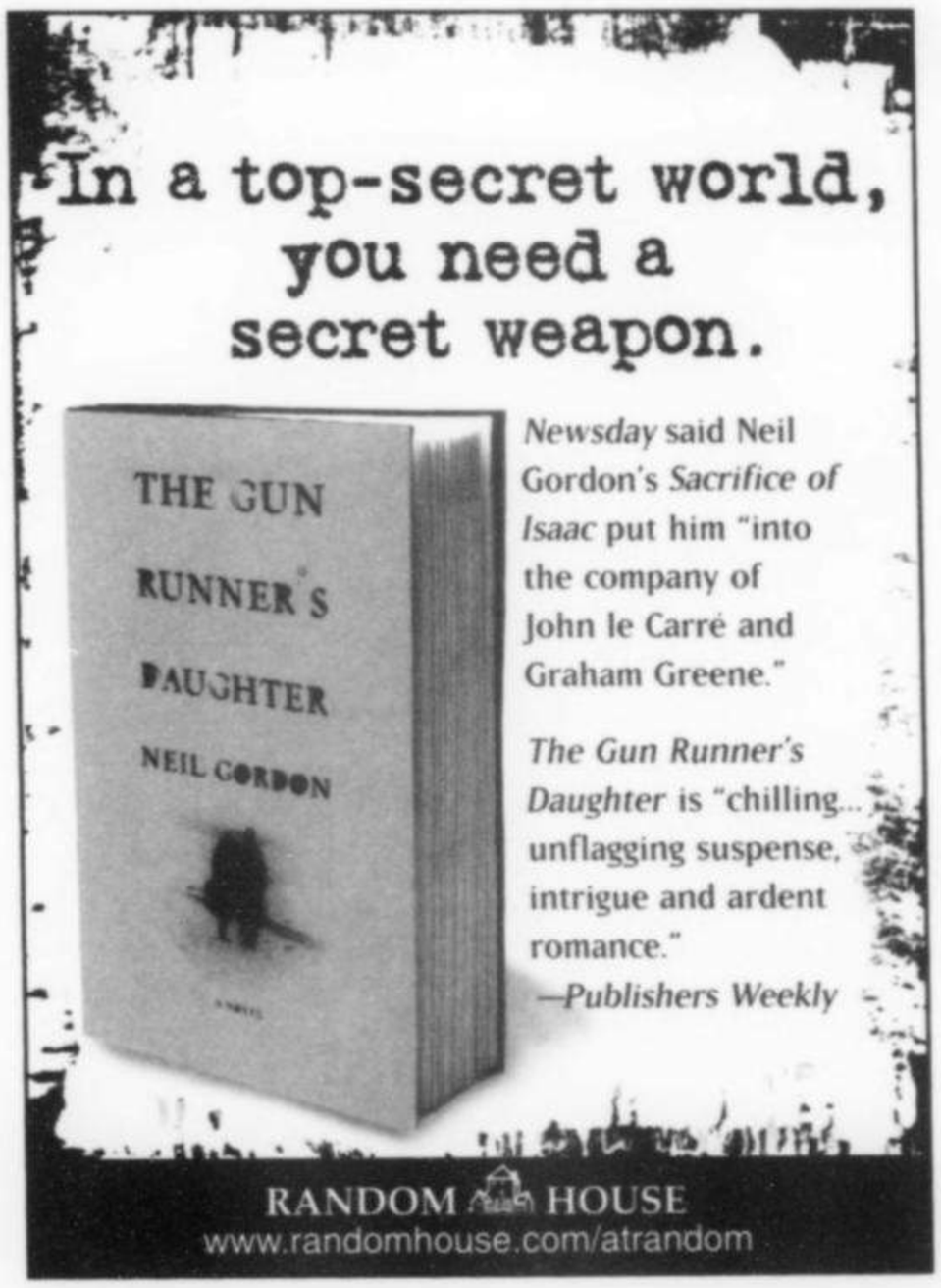
Art is not subordinate to politics or sociology. Abbie Hoffman, A.J. Weberman, and other yippies were wrong when they picketed Bob Dylan's house on the occasion of Dylan's thirtieth birthday, complaining that Dylan had "sold out" by writing more personal songs instead of overtly political ones. There's nothing wrong with encouraging artists to have a social conscience, but pressure from left, right, or center to adhere to a party line is at best pedestrian and at worst philistine.

With generational myopia, Hewlett and West write as if the most popular television shows of the Fifties were about happy families. They acknowledge that the Fifties TV culture mirrored the bigotry of the time, but lament that the culture revolutions that addressed racism and patriarchy "threw out the baby with the bathwater at the expense of pro-family images." *Leave it to Beaver* notwithstanding, however, the dominant genre of Fifties TV was the western. In series such as *Gunsmoke, The Lone Ranger, Hoppalong Cassidy, The Rifleman, Have Gun Will Travel, Gene Autry,* and *Roy Rodgers*, problems were usually solved with violence. Today's rappers refer to their "posse" in direct homage to western dramas. *Ozzie and Harriet* was less a "message" of parental respect than a trojan horse for Ricky Nelson, the TV culture's watered down homage to Elvis Presley. Lucille Ball was famous for her slapstick comedy, not for parenting. As for consumerism, the Fifties were the decade of Davy Crockett coonskin caps and the explosion of quiz shows like *The Price is Right* and *Queen for a Day*.

Yes, TV was different in the Fifties; there were only three networks, each of which had far more power to affect popular culture than does any entity in today's multi-channel cable-TV universe. Although there were certain cultural benefits to a hierarchal popular culture (Leonard Bernstein's classical *Concerts for Young People* comes to mind), there also was an artificial homogeneity of culture that was partially responsible for the Fifties alienation that produced *Mad Magazine*, rock and roll, counter-culture movie stars such as James Dean, Marlon Brando, and Marilyn Monroe, and the literary explosion of the beatniks.

Literalist critics of sex and violence in kids' entertainment mysteriously forget the darkness and complexity of children's art in ages past. One need only to peruse the *Tales of the Arabian Nights* or the fairy tales of Hans Christian Anderson or the Brothers Grimm to be reminded of how entertainment fantasy has always differed from idealized family life. Hansel and Gretel, for example, found themselves in the clutches of a witch because of an indifferent father and a cruel, selfish stepmother, and this primal childhood image long pre-dated the scapegoat decade of the Sixties! I think it may be worthwhile to re-think these dark myths—but such a process can only be useful if we recognize how deeply they tap into human consciousness, not if we glibly attack the latest messenger to bring us this ancient psychological news.

Every generation of kids is fascinated by sex and violence and the need to separate themselves from earlier generations. Long before electronic media existed, Mark Twain joked that "My father is so dumb, when I was eighteen I didn't speak to him until I was twenty-one. I was amazed at how much he had learned in those three years." One can deeply respect parents and parenting and still recognize the validity of a complex range of entertainments. One can also recognize the strange transition that parents go through from having recently been children and teenagers themselves to suddenly feeling the burdens of responsibility and the ticking clock of middle age. One can be horrified by teen-age violence, materialism, and other forms of immorality and yet still acknowledges that adult self-righteous



resentment of youthful exuberance, rebellion, and folly is not always based on moral concerns.

Similarly there is a dangerous snobbishness that pervades elite culture bashing. It is not morally sufficient to simply describe popular entertainment as "poison," based on themes that are as prevalent in opera as they are in daytime soaps. If the murderous protagonists of Richard Wright's *Native Son* and Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment* are more morally framed than those of Master P. and Wu-Tang Clan, elite adult critics should be expected to explain why, not to simply deride modern popular music as garbage. After all, even if one assumes that Hewlett and West are right about every single work they attack, even if the motives of all creators and businesspeople involved with entertainment are totally selfish—there are tens of millions of fans who actually like what they see and hear. If they are to be educated, they first must be understood.

As for the proliferation of four-letter words, there is no doubt that Supreme Court decisions of the Sixties and Seventies decriminalized words that previously were the property of sports coaches and military commanders. Clearly different generations and social groups have their own taste and sensibilities about four-letter words, but mores and morals are not the same. Personally, I think that Eddie Cantor singing about "making whoopee," Jerry Lee Lewis shouting about "great balls of fire," the Beatles harmonizing "I wanna hold your hand," and Nine Inch Nails screaming "I want to fuck you like an animal" are all talking about the same thing.

I believe that the tragic deterioration of U.S. families in recent years has almost nothing to do with entertainment. Canadian citizens receive virtually all of the same entertainment as we in the United States but, absent the devastating legacy of slavery and racism, and with different public policy—including public health care, better funded public schools, and far greater gun control—Canada has dramatically better statistics in terms of crime, child abuse, etc. Moreover, most art and entertainment have positive effects: creating a shared language, a sense of community, relieving stress, and making people feel less alone in the world.

This is not to say that entertainment is a purely passive reflection of society. Obviously artists and the business people who give them access to electronic media make aesthetic and moral choices. But it is silly not to recognize that the majority of the content of public entertainment is driven by public taste and experience, and that the very evils that Hewlett and West document so eloquently elsewhere in *The War Against Parents* create the raw material for both the creation and consumption of depressing entertainment. Is it a coincidence that virtually all of the anti-police and "cop killer" rap lyrics of the 1980s came from young African American citizens of Los Angeles who grew up in a community dominated by a Daryl Gates-led LAPD?

Violent entertainment is not, contrary to the hysterical ravings of anti-entertainment social scientists, anything like tobacco. Tobacco contains uniform chemical substances, the effects of which have been demonstrated in tests over decades on thousands of people. No two pieces of entertainment are the same. Reasonable people do not always agree on what violence is. Many pseudo-scientists who study media, counting "acts of violence," include cartoon and comic violence in their tallies. Hewlett and West make the outrageous claim that MTV music videos average twenty acts of violence per hour, and that sixty percent of programming on MTV links violence to degrading sexual portrayals. As someone who watches a lot of MTV and who submits music videos to them on a regular basis, I can say unequivocally that these statistics are grossly inaccurate. Because of the scrutiny they are under, MTV has more stringent standards limiting sex and violence than virtually any other entertainment medium. There is virtually nothing on the channel that depicts violence as explicitly as movies, network television, or literature. Sex on MTV is overwhelmingly, conventionally, (and non-violently) heterosexual and much less graphic than in other media. Aimed at teenagers and people in their early twenties, MTV videos can seem puerile to adults or to intellectual or iconoclastic kids. But it is wrong to confuse subjective aesthetic taste with objective morals.

The millions of people who like rap or Oliver Stone movies are not robots programmed at will by demonic entertainment business geniuses.

Can there be a new progressive politics without the participation of young people and non-intellectuals? Do we want to force these constituencies to leave their enthusiasm for their culture at the door of politics? Will this help attract them?

The millions of people who like rap or Oliver Stone movies are not robots programmed at will by demonic entertainment business geniuses. Yes, the market mentality affects entertainment as it does every business (including academia), and greed far too often replaces morality. But the psychological and spiritual levers of change are as likely to be found in the imagination of artists and the inarticulate emotional response to them by various publics as they would in polemics.

A healthy respect for the nuances and context of entertainment culture can give rise to a moral influence from visionaries such as Hewlett and West—but to have credibility, they must be willing to look at culture with compassion and respect and not with ivory tower condescension. ❑

Editorials

by Michael Lerner



PHOTOGRAPH BY SIDNEY BALDWIN / TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX

Bulworth and Senator Paul Wellstone

It would be wonderful to imagine life imitating art. Senator Paul Wellstone has been a frequent commentator on the pages of TIKKUN, and his decision to come to Israel in 1991 to attend the TIKKUN conference supporting the Israeli peace movement was a moment of rare courage in a world filled with politicians who will privately tell you why they dare not buck the powers that be and stand up for their convictions. And so it has been for him ever since, amassing a record of courage, most notably around issues concerning health care and opposition to the cruel dismantling of welfare. And now Wellstone is preparing to enter the Democratic party presidential primaries.

Imagine if his scenario could follow that of the imaginary Senator Bulworth who is the hero of a brilliant and compelling film by a courageous and creative artistic force, Warren Beatty. Beatty's *Bulworth* is one of the most important pieces of political communication in the past two decades, combining a largely accurate portrayal of the pressures on a political candidate with a powerful indictment of American racism. And the more radical Bulworth gets, the more popular—defying the media magnates who do their best to keep him off the air (in real life the powerful are far more successful in keeping anyone with less than the stature of a U.S. Senator from ever having their views seriously considered). Beatty has Bulworth "tell it like it is" and challenges the dominant discourse on race far more effectively than anything coming out of President Clinton's alleged national dialogue on the subject. Is the same thing possible for a Wellstone candidacy?

Certainly Wellstone will be an extremely effective articulator of the progressive politics of the past thirty years. His candidacy is certain to create the kind of political dialogue that this country hasn't heard for many years—and to raise the general level of intelligence and relevance of politics above the intellectual and technocratic mush we may hear from Al Gore and Richard Gephardt. Wellstone's candidacy will be a powerful contribution to America's democratic process.

If those politics could, once heard, inspire a majority, Wellstone could end up in the White House.

But that is unlikely, and not only because of the conspiratorial attacks by the powerful and their many media allies.

The real problem is that the progressive message is inadequate and remains one-dimensional. What makes *Bulworth* ultimately so much less powerful a movie than it might have been is that it repeats the old pattern of what the Left has been about: telling the vast majority of Americans that they really need to worry about someone else, namely the most economically oppressed (in the case of *Bulworth*, African Americans).

Wellstone is likely to move beyond this weakness; he is almost certain to use the issue of economic globalization and the insecurity it causes many Americans, as well as issues like health care and education, to speak to middle-class Americans (including some who were roused by the right-wing populism of Pat Buchanan around similar issues in 1996). Yet Wellstone is unlikely to take the next step that would be essential to winning: to move beyond a narrow appeal to economic and material benefits and to frame his campaign in terms of the deeper spiritual and ethical crisis in American society. Though he is willing to challenge the selfishness of corporations, his advisers will almost certainly keep him from addressing the ethos of selfishness and materialism that is at the core of the problems facing so many American families. Progressives have been tone-deaf to the deeper spiritual crisis, and hence never reach deeply enough into the psyches of the American people.

We believe that Wellstone would actually have a much better chance of winning were he to put forward a more visionary and utopian politics than the Left has managed in the past two decades. Imagine if he were to fight for "a new bottom line" in America to go beyond the bottom line of money and power, to insist that institutions and social practices be judged productive and efficient to the extent that they maximize our capacity to be loving and caring and ethically, spiritually, and ecologically sensitive. Imagine a campaign that supported the Social Responsibility Initiative and that helped organize people in workplaces and professions to re-vision their workplace as it might be were there this new bottom line. Imagine a campaign that openly critiqued media cynicism, openly called for a challenge to the values of consumption *uber alles*, and encouraged people to use part of their time to celebrate the glory and wonder of the universe. Such a campaign would position Wellstone to win in 2004 if not in 2000. But given the political realists who are likely to have his ear, Wellstone may only be the best articulator of a progressive politics that will never quite make it in America. Nevertheless, we wish him well and believe that his campaign will certainly open up new possibilities and have a chance to recredit politics in a world that has almost given up hope.

Netanyahu's 13%

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu has been allowed to undermine the Oslo peace accords—and to do it in a way that provides him with some political cover that he doesn't deserve. The Israelis who negotiated those accords have publicly confirmed what Palestinians said privately for years: that the accords were based on the private assurances given the Palestinians that "final status negotiations," to be concluded by May of 1999, would result in a Palestinian state that included most of the land of the West Bank and Gaza, where close to 2 million Palestinians live with some 140,000 Israeli settlers (most of the latter having moved to the West Bank through the encouragement of Likud governments who made clear that settlers were there explicitly to prevent Palestinian national self-determination).

Part of the process was to be a staged withdrawal of Israeli forces from the West Bank and Gaza. Israeli negotiators at Oslo assured the Palestinians that at the completion of the second stage, over 50 percent of the West Bank would be handed over to the Palestinians so that they could begin to show the Israeli population that they were capable of running a state and simultaneously protecting the security of the Israelis. The whole idea was to "build confidence" so that a Palestinian state would not seem too threatening to the Israeli population.

Instead, Netanyahu is taking credit for a "major concession," yet giving very little. Both he and Arafat know that the "final settlement" talks will yield nothing as long as Netanyahu remains in power, expanding the borders of Jerusalem while denying the 180,000 Palestinian Jerusalemites any right to be part of a Palestinian state, expanding settlements and destroying Palestinian homes while talking peace. So, de facto, the 13 percent Netanyahu is willing to concede is all the land that Palestinians will get in the foreseeable future. And the Occupation, now in its 31st year, will continue long after the congratulations for Netanyahu's supposed concession have faded. Many believe the actual conditions on the ground will only worsen, because although Palestinians will be given some more land, they will also face even more Israeli searches and harassment as they go from one island of Palestinian territory to another.

Nothing is going to change this until the Palestinians are able to create a state of their own. That state is an inevitability. But instead of following a path that might allow it to emerge in a climate of good will, compassion, and reconciliation, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's "clever" policies will only ensure that the Palestinian state emerges in a climate of anger and a hunger for "vengeance."

So let's acknowledge during High Holy Days 5759 (September 20–30, 1998) that we Jews have a lot to atone for in Israel. For thirty-one years Israel has occupied close to 2 million people, denying them the right either to participate in Israeli elections or to create their own independent state. That occupation has been maintained through force and brutality, through documented human rights abuses (including continuing use of torture), and through the constant harassment and humiliation of the Palestinian people. Though polls indicate that most American Jews support the peace process, most of us have been unconscionably complicit with the continuing Occupation and denial of rights to the Palestinian people. We have allowed the media to convey to American politicians the notion that it is politically dangerous to support Palestinian rights, even to the extent of silencing Hillary Clinton when she recently let it be known that she supported the rights of Palestinians to a state of their own. We have given monies to the UJA/ Federation which, in turn, funds local Jewish newspapers which consistently portray the Palestinians in distorted and ugly ways, fail to report Israeli torture and violations of human rights, and underrepresent the voices of Jewish peace activists. We have given only the smallest amounts to the institutions in the United States and to political movements in Israel that are explicitly for a Palestinian state (e.g. Peace Now, Meretz, TIKKUN).

Not all the Holocaust museums and not all the citations of our past suffering will be enough to explain away why so many Jews were willing to sit silently through this period, pretending that they had no responsibility for what is happening in Israel, pretending not to notice that it was fear of "the Jewish vote" that kept many politicians from pushing Israel toward a more moral policy of accommodation, celebrating Netanyahu's concessions rather than recognizing them for what they are: part of the process of continuing Israeli occupation. Future generations of Jews will ask how our generation could have gone along with so much depravity.

Yet it's not so hard to understand. We live at a historical moment in which the whole notion of political life has been discredited. The collapse of the movements of the 1960s, followed by the years of Reagan/Bush and then by the even more hurtful betrayals of the Clinton presidency, have left most Americans with a deep distaste for political life. We do not imagine ourselves as able to have very much impact on anything larger than our personal lives, so we retreat into a small space in which we can improve our income, create a certain amount of personal fulfillment through family and friends, and perhaps occasionally give a little money to some good cause.

Powerlessness corrupts. When people feel fundamentally powerless to change anything, they begin to make accommodations to all kinds of distortions that they would not, under other circumstances, be willing to tolerate. When we all act on these kinds of assumptions, we make ourselves far more powerless than we have to be (we create a "surplus" of powerlessness).

In the final analysis, powerlessness is not an excuse, even though it may be an explanation. It is even less of an excuse when American Jews are willing to fight for the



rights of Reform and Conservative Jews in Israel and even to refuse donations to Israel because of outrage on that issue, but are all too willing to remain silent about the Occupation. While we unequivocally support the Reform and Conservative movements' rights on these issues, we are troubled by a Jewish community that seems able to act on self-interest but not on the principle of caring for others.

So in this High Holy Day season we commit ourselves anew to struggling for a very different kind of world, a world in which we can see God in each other, treat each other with kindness and gentleness, and rejoice in the beauty and wonder of the universe.

Herbert Marcuse at 100

Since his death in 1979, Herbert Marcuse, once thought to be one of the most influential social theorists of our time, has been little read or understood in most fashionable progressive academic circles. Marcuse was committed to a vision of emancipatory rationality based on a universal standard. That sort of standard, however, has been increasingly in disrepute among those who believe that every attempt at a universal is merely a hidden claim for power of a white male elite. Instead, the academic left has submerged itself in various deconstructionist fantasies, developing an increasingly arcane set of concepts and providing itself the safest of all possible worlds: radicalism without activism. Ruling elites troubled by the challenges of the social change movements of the 1960s were let off the hook: after all, if there is no universal standard for rationality, then social justice demands are themselves just some group's private interests with no particular claim on those who do not stand to benefit. No wonder the academic left seemed to fit so well into the selfishness of the Reagan/Bush/Clinton years. No wonder it has been so ill-prepared to fight assaults on affirmative action and, if University of California Regent Connerly has his way (as he did when he engineered the ballot measure dismantling affirmative action in California) attempts to eliminate ethnic studies in the university.

Given this, it is refreshing to read Herbert Marcuse on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of his birth and the issuing of a series of previously unpublished writings and letters by the progressive publisher Routledge under the guidance of University of Texas philosophy professor Douglas Kellner. In the recently released first volume of the series, a compilation of writings from the 1940s, we get reminded of Marcuse's incredible intellectual power. Marcuse's critique of technology as a system of domination, while rejecting the knee-jerk anti-scientism that would later characterize some forms of New Agey flakiness (and which were popular in some pro-fascist circles in the 1930s), remains a healthy antidote to the ideology that "technological progress will provide the answers and we will provide the technicians and skilled workers to run the system," an ideology that will be a central motif of the coming celebration of the Year 2000. Marcuse rejected the self-deluded celebration of the world capitalist economy, but he did not believe that a working class movement would provide the alternative. "In a world dominated by totalitarianism," Kellner tells us of Marcuse, " aesthetic opposition and love are the most radical oppositional forces since they produce an alternative reality completely at odds with an oppressive social reality."

Marcuse remained an inspiration to many of us because he unashamedly embraced the need for utopian vision and a revolutionary metaphysics that could recognize human needs that transcend economic security, individual rights, or the struggle for inclusion and non-discrimination within an oppressive social reality.

Marcuse never stopped raging against oppression and injustice. His vision of liberation, while too often constrained by his hostility to religion and spirituality, reached toward the dimensions of meaning that this journal supports. ❑

PHOTOGRAPH BY RINA CASTELNUOVO / NYT PICTURES

HEART OF THE MATTER

Clinton and the Superego

Peter Gabel

Last night as I was going to bed, I flipped on the TV to see if the Giants had somehow come back in the ninth to defeat the Rockies or had continued their midsummer swoon. To my surprise, on came Barry Melton of the Sixties rock band Country Joe and the Fish, talking about how we in the Sixties generation had been emerging millions-strong to create an alternative culture—a whole new way of looking at the world based on joy, love, and peace—that existed alongside the alienated mainstream culture that had produced the Vietnam war. His point was that we were not interested in political reform in the traditional sense, but in a consciousness-transformation, an emulsification of an alien and artificial world by a more real one.

I forgot about the Giants.

I had stumbled onto *Berkeley in the Sixties*, a documentary I had seen eight years ago. What struck me this time was how much even I had forgotten of the extraordinary liberatory energy of that time, the upsurge of connection and sudden insight that spread across the world like wildfire and caught me up in a way that decisively and positively shaped my whole existence.

How could I have lost touch with this? And why during the Nineties rather than the more reactionary Eighties?

The answer is: Bill Clinton. While Ronald Reagan and George Bush had represented the assault of my parents' generation against the liberatory energy of the Sixties, they left the continuity of my generation's experience intact. But Bill Clinton "crossed over." He was one of us who decided to become one of them, albeit a liberal version of them. And because Reagan had succeeded (with a lot of help from us) in blunting our generation's movement-energy, there has remained no force capable during the Clinton years of maintaining the visibility of our alternative spiritual reality in public space.

Once Clinton decided to fuse the embodied warmth and informal realness and longing for social justice that he got from being one of us with the globalization of capitalist values, he dissociated our generation's present from our past and left us, the real us who saw the promised land, invisible to each other and even to ourselves.

He was one of us who decided to become one of them

The irony is that Bill Clinton was elected because the We who elected him hoped he would carry forward the transformative idealism of the Sixties in a more mature and compassionate form. Right after that first election in 1992, we at TIKKUN devoted an issue to that hope under the heading "The Sixties Generation Returns." I wrote an optimistic piece for that issue entitled "Clinton and the Id," which tried to show how Ronald Reagan had, with the help of identity politics, contained the communal life-force released by the Sixties, and how Clinton might be able to combine eros and universalism in a way that could "get us moving" again.

I underestimated the power of the superego, the inherited voice of authority that, as Freud said, "knows more of the wishes of the id than does the ego," and that is so very skillful at co-opting those wishes of the id to defend the ego against the vulnerability required for its own liberation.

Misunderstanding the radical hopes and longings that first got him elected, Mr. Clinton has, no doubt unwittingly, used the idealism of the Sixties to legitimize a self-centered, anti-communal, competitive marketplace that contradicts that idealism. Faced with a traumatic and confusing first year in office and lacking the confidence in any case to distinguish the integrity of his Sixties-inspired soul from his childlike image-identifications with "presidents" from Jefferson to JFK, he chose deference to authority over the intimations of transcendence that had propelled him and us into public space during our younger years. So this week Hillary Clinton sent her plain wedding dress, bought off the rack at an Arkansas department store the day before her 1975 wedding, to be on show alongside the fancier gowns of Nancy Reagan, Pat Nixon, and Mamie Eisenhower at a Stanford University "First Lady" fashion exhibit, while Mr. Clinton led C-Span through a long tour of the Oval Office that was an idolatrous celebration of the "Founding Fathers" and their presidential children whose busts adorn the White House.

But: Let it be. Because of Mr. Clinton's cross-over, the Sixties are over. Because of that cross-over, Mr. Clinton now "is" the Sixties, the publicly visible embodiment of our generation. But the death of the Sixties may at last be creating the possibility for a new social movement based on a new link between spirituality and politics that can enable the Sixties ideal of a loving community to become less frightening and more sustainable. ❑

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Looking a Gift Horse in the Mouth

The Psychological and Social Problem of Altruism

Michael Bader

When I was in training to become a psychoanalyst, I was taught to look always for the unconscious meaning of a patient's wish to give me a gift. A patient's wish to take care of or to help me was to be understood as really something else, for example, an attempt to conceal the patient's hostility, or placate mine. All possibilities were considered, except one. No one suggested that the patient might simply and primarily have wanted to give something to me, that the patient's core desire might have been irreducibly altruistic. Psychoanalysis always looks behind altruism for something more primary, powerful, or primitive, or bigger, deeper, broader, sexier, angrier, or scarier than a simple need to give. In other words, psychoanalysis is always looking a gift horse in the mouth.

That's the psychoanalytic method. We question the obvious, look for what's not being said, deconstruct manifest content into latent meaning. However, when we look under one feeling and discover another, we eventually arrive at a set of foundational needs and desires that defines what we think it means to be human. We must inevitably confront our basic assumptions about human nature. And for psychoanalysts, altruism is rarely one of those assumptions. Traditional analysts always found sex and aggression at the bedrock of human motivation. Contemporary analysts have added needs for attachment, personal efficacy, individuation, recognition, and mutuality to our psychological foundations. But even as it has acknowledged these "higher" motivations, psychoanalysis has been reluctant to consider a wish to improve the welfare of the other as a primary human striving. In a sense, the reason for this is obvious. Psychoanalysis mirrors society, and altruistic love isn't exactly our dominant ethos.

As the Politics of Meaning has argued, our culture reflects the values of an alienated, market-based economy in which selfishness is rewarded and pleasure repressed, a society in which it's adaptive to be cynical and foolish to be altruistic. When Freud argued for the centrality of sex and aggression in the human psyche, he was ontologizing the symptoms of the aggressive competitiveness and self-denial that characterized the attitudes of his day. In such a system, altruism could only be seen as an attempt to paper-over and civilize the fundamentally destructive passions that seemed to animate human behavior. Later analysts rejected Freud's grim view of human nature and emphasized the primarily

ILLUSTRATION BY JIM FLYNN

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relational and social nature of human beings. Aggression, for instance, was no longer seen as a primary instinct; instead, human destructiveness was viewed as a symptom of the failure and breakdown of healthy relatedness. Sex was seen as a form of connectedness, not an irreducible and mechanistic drive. Such progressive developments in psychoanalytic theories of motivation are no less reflective of the broader zeitgeist than were Freud's. These modern notions of human nature in psychoanalysis mirror various humanist traditions that arose as responses to the damaging effects of our market-based individualism, responses that found expression in liberalism, feminism, environmentalism, and other communitarian movements.

Yet, even progressive psychoanalytic theorists have tended to view altruistic love as theoretically subordinate to other wishes. This subordination is often subtle. For instance, altruistic love might be described as an essential ingredient of normal human reciprocity. Reciprocity, then, and not altruism per se, is viewed as the primary characteristic. Or a child's wish to care for the mother and attend to her needs will be understood as a form of attunement, mirroring the mother's attunement to the child; the main story is attunement, not the wish to give. Analysts might agree that the child sometimes acts altruistically in pursuit of a safe attachment, but safety and attachment are seen as the primary goals with altruism as merely a means to this end. It's not that safety, attachment, attunement, and reciprocity aren't primary strivings. It's just that the wish to help others is, by putting it in some other context, subtly discredited as a foundational motivation. It's never left alone, so to speak, to be understood as a fundamental affect, a primary need in and of itself.

A similar bias can be seen in the place assigned to altruism in the versions of evolutionary theory currently in vogue in the behavioral sciences. In these theories, we are supposed to appreciate the adaptive function of altruism, the fact that one's long-term survival and the replicability of one's DNA is enhanced by tending to the welfare of others. So far, so good: we see here the beginnings of an explanation of how the desire and capacity to help others is hardwired into our brains and psyches. But the hook turns out to be that the real plan of evolution is selfish. We help others because it is in our selfish interest to do so. Natural selection favors altruism because its real purpose—survival—is served by it. The Darwinian need to reproduce the gene pool is the ultimate logic behind the wish to give. So something bigger is at work here, too. There's always something bigger than altruism.

In some sense, all of these theorists are correct. Human motivation can be understood as deriving from multiple primary sources; it depends on your vantage point. It depends on which meaning one is interested in highlighting, which language one is using, and which line of research and inquiry one wishes to pursue. The choice, though, is a meaningful one and often contains hidden biases that are both social and psychological in nature. Socially, the bias against seeing altruism as a primary human need derives from the prevailing cynicism about whether people are motivated by anything other than selfish interests. On a psychological level, I think there is an embarrassment about publicly acknowledging the do-gooder in all of us. The wish to help others, like feelings of love and concern in general, is something we tend to hide from public view. We relegate it to our most intimate relationships—if, that is, we disclose it at all. We fear being vulnerable to the scorn and exploitation of others should we reveal too much generosity. We also vicariously feel this sense of embarrassing self-disclosure in others should they show similar feelings. If we can describe altruistic feelings as really something else, we protect ourselves. If altruism is a means to some other, more fundamental end, then we don't have to seem naive in our view of human nature. The psychoanalytic approach to altruism is a theoretical expression of this kind of defense.

On the other hand, if one were to proceed from the perspective that we all have an innate wish to enhance the welfare of others, various phenomena could be explained. First of all, we would better understand what psychologists call pro-social behavior, in which the subject appears to want to help others without immediate gain for him/herself. This behavior is clearly seen in very young children, who solicitously comfort their caretakers when they are distressed. Rather than understand this simply as a wish for a secure attachment, one might see the child expressing a primary longing to comfort his or her love object. The child wishes to touch the parent's experience and enhance it. This behavior is frequently observed in the child's expressions of concern, generosity, and empathy toward other family members and, later, toward other children. All parents can tell you of moments in which their child offered them help, comfort, or care and seemed to be motivated by a genuine wish to help. Why can't experts on human behavior see the same thing?

Furthermore, a belief in primary altruism can help account for the pain frequently seen in children who can't give to their parents. In the families of many of my patients, for instance, the parents couldn't allow their children to contribute, to give something of value to them. The child grew up with a sense of uselessness, of having nothing important to give, and of feeling that there was something wrong with him or her because of this. True, the opposite is also seen in many families with parents who narcissistically exploit their children's need to take care of them. But the problem of frustrated altruism is an important—and neglected—one. In many modern families, for instance, parents are so motivated to take care of their child's every need that they neglect the child's need to give something to them. Sometimes the parents seem so perfect and self-contained, so much above the child, that the child can't imagine that his or her own offering would matter. The result is a sense

of deflation, resignation, and personal inadequacy. Just as surely as needs for love and protection might be neglected in other families, here, too, the child's needs are being frustrated; in these cases, the deprivation involves being cheated of the opportunity to give.

But psychoanalysts can't easily see these meanings, not only because we're imbued with the cynicism about helping that pervades our society, but also because many, if not most, therapists see themselves as, first and foremost, helpers. We want to help our patients and don't often feel comfortable being helped by them. Being given to not only feels too selfish, but it also makes us vulnerable. If we accept our patient's wish to care for us, it puts us in a potentially dependent, grateful, embarrassing position. If we're the helpers all the time, we're safe. We're not only the altruists, we're also in control.

On a clinical level, I've repeatedly found that a patient can benefit if I can gracefully accept his or her wish to give to or take care of me. People need to feel that they can influence others and, in this case, influence them in a positive way. This includes helping their therapist. The problem is that there is also so much exploitation that takes place in the therapy relationship, exploitation in which the patient's dependency and transference is manipulated to benefit the sexual, financial, and ego needs of the therapist, that the helping professions and society at large increasingly frown on therapists taking too much of anything from their patients. But these prohibitions can have the untoward effect of sanctioning our blindness to the altruistic needs of patients. The roles are made rigidly clear—we give, the patient takes, and we collect a fee. Unfortunately, the patient can suffer in the process.

These needs are not only frustrated in therapy and in families, but in society at large. We have few opportunities in our public lives to give to others in ways that feel nourishing and are appreciated. Often, we feel ripped off, that we're helping others at our own expense. We admire humanitarians, but can't justify the time and energy such activity requires. We see it as selfless because we see altruistic giving as the depletion, rather than the fulfillment of a self. So the problem is also a social one. When we felt part of a vibrant community based on altruistic ideals such as the New Deal or liberatory movements such as feminism or the civil rights movement which opposed cynicism in various forms, our normal and healthy wish to give to and take care of others was sanctioned, reinforced, and could safely flower. In the context of an enervated Left and a cynical political climate dominated by greed and pessimism, our altruistic longings are repressed and come to feel dangerously foolish and self-defeating.

In addition, much as therapists often fail to appreciate patients' frustrated desires to help and comfort others, tending instead to focus on patients' frustrated needs to get emotional supplies, a similar bias can be seen in liberal and

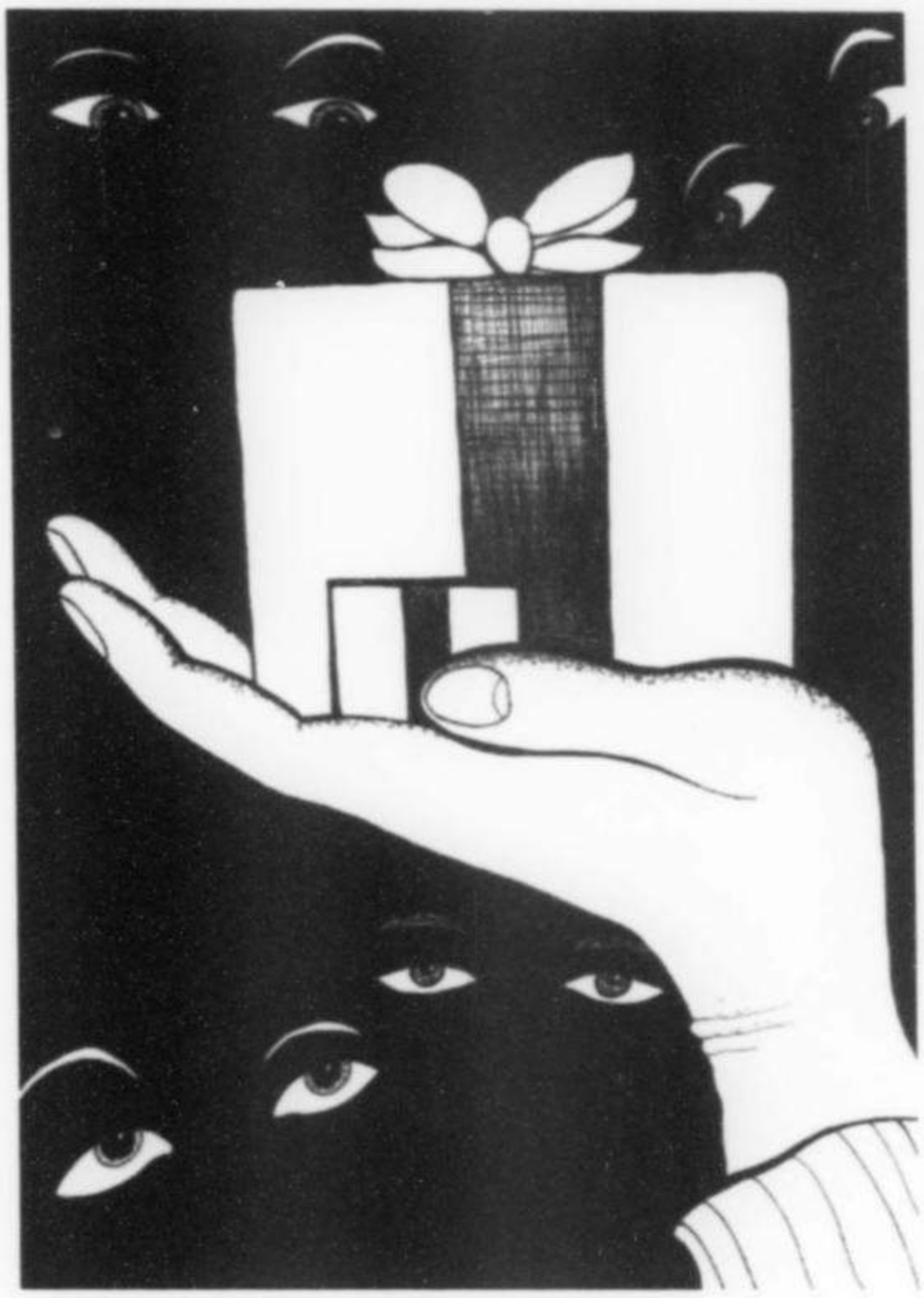


ILLUSTRATION BY SARAH SOLIE

progressive approaches to social forms of suffering. We often understand the pain of oppressed groups in terms of the deprivation of economic help and opportunity. We think in terms of what we can do for them because they need a wide range of supportive services and protection from psychological, cultural, and economic assaults of various kinds. We all tend to have a one-dimensional view of the psychological damage done by social oppression because we don't appreciate the centrality of altruism in all of our psychological lives. This can lead to an inordinate emphasis on entitlement as our primary political virtue. We need to expand our notions of what we're entitled to have in full and healthy lives, and include the opportunity to contribute to the welfare of others.

In simple but important ways, conflicts over healthy altruism can, on an individual level, be directly addressed in therapy, provided the therapist is sensitive to their importance. On a broader societal level, however, the problem is greater. Here we need a politics of meaning which posits altruism as a central human need that our current system distorts and crushes. We need to critique the ways that our social order hurts us by denying us opportunities to give to others. A central aspect of our program for social change must sanction acts of kindness as acts of strength, not weakness. We need to validate our higher selves in whatever ways we can, including in political discourse and initiatives. We need to welcome the exchange of gifts of care and kindness, and stop looking them in the mouth. ❑

ESSAY

The Light Sometimes Shines

Jean Bethke Elshtain

It is mid-June in Chicago; the Bulls have just won a sixth World Championship; and the unbelievable Michael Jordan is Most Valuable Player for the sixth time. Racial, religious, ethnic, class, gender lines—all melt away for a few hours or days as Chicago exults in the triumph. Three hundred thousand people turned up in Grant Park for the celebration. What was going on? Political theorists and commentators don't do very well with what my father called worryingly "hero worship." It seems a strange episode in mass psychology at best. My dad, a gentle soul, had other fears. He fretted that I was rather too much drawn to hero worship. I would argue with him that I wasn't worshipping mere mortals, however accomplished. I just admired them and dreamt about them and decorated my walls with pictures of them. That's all.

Even as my dad reminded me that we were all equal in God's eyes, my siblings and I were being reared on the New Testament parables of Jesus of Nazareth. We were taught in Sunday School that we were not to hide our lights under a bushel; that much would be expected from those to whom much was given; that one should not bury one's talents but see to their increase. To my young mind, the "talents" of the King James version of the parable translated as "abilities." I certainly wasn't thinking of the literal meaning of "talent" as actual coin of realm, whether that of ancient Palestine or any other era. And this reading is probably what the parable intended in any case. We were to put our gifts, our talents, to use; we were not to be lazy and take our abilities for granted.

This is where Michael Jordan comes in. The adulation of Jordan taps something deep in us. We want to say, and many do say, "Here is a man of extraordinary gifts who hasn't squandered them. To the contrary, he has made the most and some, with what he was given." There is no one in the NBA who works harder. There is no one who gives more. There is no one who loves the craft of basketball more than he. When so many either rest on their laurels; squander their talents by falling into bad habits (like my childhood sports hero, Mickey Mantel, Number 7); whimper and turn into cry-babies when they don't get their way; complain bitterly about the media even as they assiduously court it—when so many fail to live up to our hopes for them, this image of Jordan will stick with us: his thirty-five-year-old legs not being quite what they once were, doubling his effort, and then redoubling it, in order to excel at the sport to create something of real beauty.

We were to put our gifts, our talents, to use; we were not to be lazy and take our abilities for granted.

There are moments of grace in sports. The closing two minutes of Game Six of the playoffs were such moments. Mr. Ward, the driver I use for my hundred-plus roundtrips to O'Hare airport each year, a black gentleman (his preferred designation), is in ecstasy over Jordan and the Bulls. He is filled with pride and he shares it enthusiastically. For Jordan is a black hero, an American hero, we can all be proud of. Mr. Ward has described to me in harrowing detail the disintegration of Chicago's South Side, where he was born and grew up; the coming of the "gangbangers" and crack, the burnt out districts where flourishing shops and businesses and homes once stood. He has detailed his incessant worries about his own children and the temptations they face and the images they feed on.

What Michael Jordan says to him and to his family has almost nothing to do with millions of dollars in endorsements but everything to do with not squandering talents. Jordan is about determination, sportsmanship, leadership, loyalty, and grace and, above all, hard, hard work. We've nearly lost that in professional sports. We've nearly lost that as a society. But it lives on in stories of great talents given increase in ways that bring us together rather than ripping us apart. Who can doubt Jordan's joy on the court? Much of that joy, surely is Jordan's keen awareness of just how many moments of breath-taking beauty in action he has given to us all. Amidst the commercialism and tawdriness, the light sometimes shines. ❑

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PERSONAL ESSAY

Memory's Landscapes

Deborah Tall

Deborah Tall reflects in this essay on her travels to Eastern Europe in the fall of 1996.

Every hour on the hour, every day of the year, the "Trumpeter of Krakow" appears in a high tower window of the Mariacki Church in Krakow's central square to blow a mournful call-to-arms known as the *heynal*. He plays the tune four times, once in each direction of the compass, beckoning the entire city.

Were this ritual just a live performance to mark the hour, it would be merely charming. But, in fact, the playing of the *heynal* is a rare instance of living history; for at the same moment in every rendition, the *heynal* is abruptly broken off mid-bar with a wobbly gulp. This melodic amputation has poignant meaning for natives of Krakow: it represents the moment in the year 1241 when, during a Tartar invasion, a trumpeter calling the sleeping city to alarums was shot through the throat with an enemy arrow, his song cut off mid-note. To memorialize his sacrifice and the trauma of that invasion over 700 years ago (and by extension the numerous invasions since), the *heynal* has been reproduced daily in its truncated form for centuries. It is even now played nationwide on Polish radio every noon—a national mnemonic of vulnerability.

It is commonplace to say that we Americans have a short memory, a shallow sense of history. But it is in contrast to other cultures that this feels truest. Living in Krakow for four months this autumn, traveling a portion of Eastern Europe, I've felt the ground's memories repeatedly erupting beneath my feet. History cannot be ignored here, here at the epicenter of World War II, in a country repeatedly carved up, wiped off the map, reconstituted, tyrannized. Poland's generalized sorrow and anxiety hold even the tourist in its grip.

But these are feelings, I admit, I fall prey to readily. As a child of the Fifties, granddaughter of Jewish immigrants from Poland and Ukraine, the traumas of this territory were inscribed in me. It was as if, to use Carolyn Forché's apt phrase, I was "haunted by memories which [I] did not have"—pogroms, poverty, round-ups, gas chambers. In my family, as in many, these matters—once bequeathed—were not to be spoken of; it was vital we get on with the American dream. However, I knew that at heart I was a citizen of my Eastern European past even as I was groomed for my American future. When I chose to study Russian in college, I was already quietly preparing for this journey, my need to return to the "site of the crime," to decipher the genealogy of my character.

Now that I've finally come, I know I am carrying the baggage of my longing and expectations, my myths, my fears. But even had I come with no preconceptions, I've arrived in a place in thrall to its history, where the past insists on being met at every turn.

The landscape is spackled with plaques and monuments, turning city streets into the open-air corridors of a museum. In downtown Warsaw, virtually every corner has its story, its hero, its death count—sculpted fighters rising out of sculpted sewer holes, lists of murdered children. The city's very architecture reveals its story: Warsaw, utterly destroyed during World War II, meticulously recreated its historic center in pre-War form from drawings and photographs—a tender gesture of loyalty to the past. Thanks to five decades of city grime, "Old Town" once again looks "old," but visitors are constantly reminded that what they're seeing is not historically original but a defiant reproduction. Postcards at every souvenir stand juxtapose 1945 photos of bombed-out buildings and squares with their elegant reincarnations. We are not allowed to let touristic pleasures distract us from the hour of devastation.



ILLUSTRATIONS BY MAC McGILL

Deborah Tall's most recent book is From Where We Stand: Recovering a Sense of Place. *She teaches at Hobart and William Smith Colleges where she edits the poetry journal,* Seneca Review.

Elsewhere, we are invited to reconstruct the invisible ourselves. In cities like Bialystok, where one is hard-pressed to find a pre-War building, we are offered instead a shadow cityscape scripted by plaques: site of the Great Synagogue where 3,000 Jews were locked up and burned alive; birthplace of the creator of Esperanto whose aspiration was world peace; site of the first ghetto uprising of the War—each site cited, a *basso continuo* droning beneath the cacophony of the now.

Outside of the cities, there are fewer clues to guide us. For American Jews like me, seeking the towns their families fled, the strongest sensation of return may be the hollow of absence, the recognition that one culture has supplanted another. Signs of shtetl life, such a vibrant cultural fact only sixty years ago, are almost entirely missing in Eastern Europe. An echoing synagogue here and there, a desecrated cemetery, and everything else new. How can one find roots when the stalk has been severed?

In Krakow, on the other hand, one meets a city beautifully intact. The survival of its medieval streets, of course, carries its own history lesson: Krakow, unlike Warsaw and Bialystok, chose to surrender itself to the Nazis without resistance in order to spare the city destruction. Luck saved it later when the Nazis, fleeing the quickly advancing Soviet army, had no time to dynamite it. Consequently, Krakow contains a haunting relic: an extensive, undamaged Jewish quarter—Kazimierz—dating from the fifteenth century.

Once home to over 60,000, Kazimierz is one of the few places in Eastern Europe where one can visualize a pre-War Jewish community. The Nazis stabled horses and stored weapons in its synagogues and halls, but left them standing, as did the Communists. Though dilapidated, there are still beautiful squares and narrow winding streets here, portals of prayer houses engraved with Hebrew, doorposts still shadowed by the outlines of *mezuzahs*, two surviving cemeteries, schools, homes. An entire landscape of elegy.

But a landscape coming back to life in an eerie way. With the loosening of the communist stranglehold and a curious revival of interest in things Jewish (a biennial festival of Jewish culture was established in 1988), cafes and nightly klezmer concerts have cropped up in Kazimierz, giving it stage lights and soundtrack. Deferential politicians and the hip, along with foreign tourists, crowd its restaurants. Kosher vodka, beer, and even kosher water are consumed in huge quantities, as if somehow "purer." When Spielberg chose to film *Schindler's List* here, the marketing of Jewish history intensified—one can now tour the sites of the film along with the synagogues and the mikvah.

Much of Kazimierz's boom can be ascribed to the post-communist influx of American and European tourists. Yet with mementos of Polish Jewish culture having become chic in Krakow, there is a larger nod to history going on. Some see the current simulation of Jewish culture in Polish cities as evidence of guilt, or a genuine sadness at the loss of a culture which was, for centuries, deeply entwined with Polish culture. But it isn't just Jewish culture that's being staged—Ukrainian and gypsy music are trendy, too. Anything "ethnic," I'm told, is welcomed by many Poles as a relief from the long decades of communist blandness and the post-War fact of the country's ethnic and religious homogeneity.

But what are Poles remembering in their dinner theatre gatherings? (The film version of "Fiddler on the Roof" seems to be their major source of information about Jewish life.) And what are Jewish tourists remembering when they come here? In Kazimierz, the search for history is beset with contradictions.

There are fewer than 200 Jews left in Krakow, most of them elderly. The klezmer musicians in the cafes are young Catholics. When I go to Yom Kippur services at the only synagogue functioning in Krakow, the congregation is almost entirely composed of foreign visitors—a fascinating international hodgepodge—and services are led not by a Polish rabbi, but by the Jewish scholar Jonathan Webber, come from England for the occasion.

I allowed myself my tears. But when the musicians stopped to smoke and chat, I noticed their boredom. They are hired actors.

From the first, Kazimierz caused me profound ambivalence. Wandering its streets initially, seeing Hebrew words carved onto buildings now empty or secular, I felt a palpable ache. To steady myself, I stopped at the popular Ariel Cafe with its menu in Yiddish, Polish, and English. Sitting outside, looking at the old market square, I felt genuinely pleased that this place still existed, that I could pay my respects here. A couple of musicians wearing dark suits and yarmulkes began playing appropriately mournful Yiddish tunes. I allowed myself my tears. But when the musicians stopped to smoke and chat, I noticed their boredom. They are hired actors, I had to remind myself, part of an engineered ambiance that I had been more than susceptible to. To prove my point, a bus pulled up with thirty American Jewish tourists on board, and the musicians on cue broke out into "Hava Nagila." The tourists gleefully danced their way into the restaurant, teary-eyed. I bristled.

What does history require of us here? What if the musicians aren't Jewish—should they be allowed to wear yarmulkes, present themselves as the authentic article in this ghostly, authentic place? And what of the forty German tourists come to hear klezmer music another night at the Ariel? As I sing along, I feel as if I'm on display, a living remnant in the museum Hitler planned to build when it was all over, artifacts of an extinct, exotic people. Where does remembrance draw its battle line here?

Eva Hoffman's warning in an essay on Jewish-Polish relations illuminates the challenge: "At this point, the task is not only to remember, but to remember strenuously—explore, decode, and deepen the terrain of memory. Moreover, what is at stake is not only the past, but the present.... In memories, too, begin responsibilities."



The commercialization of memory is most painful when the memories are one's "own" and feel inviolable. Someone else's souvenir kitsch—such as the carvings of Chasidim and klezmer musicians sold in shops—feels like an offensive rip-off when it's your own culture being commodified. As well, the memory that's selected for touristic consumption out of the mass of available memories is inevitably a sentimental one. It spotlights only the surface representations of a complicated history. For instance, that Kazimierz was home mostly to poor Chasidim, whose orthodoxy would be at odds with the majority of visitors' values, is not something we're invited to think about. There is a distilled version of Jewish history for sale here, refined as kosher vodka. This is a place where one can easily cling to a vision rather than explore an historical reality. And it is hard, in season, to even find the silence to absorb this place.

My most resonant moments in Eastern Europe have been my loneliest ones. When I travel to my ancestral territory in Ukraine, I confront a place, unlike Kazimierz, utterly ungeared to tourism, where it is impossible to buy a catalogue at a museum, hard even to buy a postcard, where my footsteps echo in the long, dim hallways of hotels emptied of business. Arriving in Kiev from Poland, where Communist symbols, names, and memorials have been wiped off the landscape, it's a shock, first of all, to see hammers and sickles still adorning buildings. It's even more of a shock to see a statue of Lenin still standing, fresh red flowers at its base. Maybe the country can't afford to topple and rebuild its public spaces, or maybe such symbols reveal its political ambivalence and explain the ubiquitous police.

What's indisputable, though, is that Ukraine is still deeply entangled in its past. Even the casual tourist can see it in the countless memorials. The country is struggling to survive economically, yet hothouse flowers adorn its monuments, even tiny roadside shrines to heroes and past atrocities. Outside the cities, in small towns devoid of commerce or distraction, it's as if the monuments are all people have to tend to, to occupy their communal attention.

My people's memories have been excised, of course. When I journey to my grandfather's village, now a town with a rotting concrete center of high rises, it seems it will be impossible to visualize his life there. But eventually, directed to the old Jewish section, I recognize the terrain, ravaged—the graveyard largely destroyed, goats grazing its grasses, synagogues gone, records gone, a dirt lane leading to nowhere. Along this lane stand small houses built with Jewish tombstones after the War. I glare at them as my footsteps raise ancient dust. It is even harder than in Poland to reconstruct the shape of Jewish life from what's left here. I apply the bits and pieces of reminiscence I've carried with me, images from photos, my imagination. The river still flows beneath the hillside as it has for centuries. Water is raised from the well. I touch the ground my family touched, but no stories come away in my hand.

That Jews are so little remembered here intensifies my sense of loss. Yet other losses resonate and shadow the landscape with mourning, a permanent elegiac fearfulness that, disoriented as I am, I recognize as my own, the place's legacy to a distant grandchild.

In this season of frantic harvest, I visit a number of memorials to the seventeen million Ukrainians who died during the Soviet collectivization of farms between 1932 and 1933 (a colossal catastrophe not much remembered in the West)—memorials festooned with flowers, nuts and berries, bouquets of autumn leaves. In Kiev's historical museum, an agonizing sculpture of hacked branches entwined with barbed wire, propped up by a fence splashed with red paint, commemorates that famine and World War II. A sign has been added to include the victims of Chernobyl.

There is no shortage of agonies to recall. The very landscape of huge borderless fields bespeaks history's scavenging hand. The land itself has been rendered communist, even the cities with their communal systems of heat and hot water (everyone shall have heat or no one shall, and given the fuel shortages during the eight cold October days I spend in Ukraine, it is no one). The land tells its story on its body—the past won't soon be forgotten or physically transformed.

Formal gestures of memory can be less honest, though. By chance, I am in Kiev on the 55th anniversary of the massacre at Babi Yar. During two days in the fall of 1941, the Nazis marched an estimated 150,000 residents of Kiev, three-quarters of them Jews, to a ravine on the edge of the city, site of an old Jewish cemetery. Stripped naked, lined up at the ravine's rim, they were machine-gunned to death and tumbled over the edge—one of the War's first mass murders of civilians. Two years later, with the Soviet army approaching, Jewish prisoners were forced to exhume and burn the thousands of bodies to hide the atrocity. But the memory held.

It was the Russian poet Yevgenyi Yevtushenko who brought the grim name of Babi Yar to my generation's consciousness with his 1961 poem which lamented and accused: "No monument stands over Babi Yar." Today there are two monuments to the victims of the Babi Yar massacre, and they offer an interesting contrast. The Soviet monument,

finally built in 1976, is located in a park over a mile from the actual site of the murders. It is a grandiose, oversized affair, with eleven bronze figures stacked up on a stepped pedestal. Its plaque makes no mention of Jews; rather it proclaims itself a tribute to Soviet citizens who were victims of fascism. The actual site of the murders had already by then been encroached on by a highway and the huge headquarters of Ukrainian national television. There is only a thin strip of land left open at the edge of the ravine and the desecrated remains of the old cemetery. There, in 1991, the Israeli government was permitted to erect a memorial, a simple ten-foot-high menorah with a small plaque.

The anniversary of the massacre on the Jewish calendar had fallen a week before my visit, and a small religious ceremony had taken place at the Jewish monument. This week was the government's official commemoration, and it took place at the Soviet monument, out of sight of the killing grounds. A few hundred people and a few television cameras watched a platform of ambassadors and officials make their polite, redundant speeches, the flammable past at a safe distance. A Russian Jewish rock star—long censored, now idolized—who was to perform for free in Kiev's central square that evening, appeared with his entourage, briskly climbed the monument to deliver a bouquet of flowers, and then swept off, all caught on film, while the speeches ground on.

I left for the ravine. Here, handfuls of people silently drifted in and out, some laying flowers, some lighting memorial candles at the edge of the abyss. I walked to the rim, looked into its alarming depths, saw some broken, tumbled tombstones, a creek quietly pushing its way through. The landscape swayed in vertigo.

Why hadn't the Soviets built their monument here where the murders happened, here where the landscape so dramatically sets the stage for an imaginative recreation of the terror? My guide, a Jew who lost friends and family here, tells me the real reason behind the official excuses was that the ravine was being used as a garbage dump and the authorities were embarrassed. What's more, he says, it was later discovered that the garbage was polluting the city's water supply; 1,000 residents of Kiev died as a result of toxic drinking water. There is no monument here to them. The ravine's been cleaned up, all evidence removed. A breeze exhales and gutters the candles.

Ceremonial commemorations like the ones for Babi Yar pose special challenges to history as they so often feel canned, an occasion for platitudes. Solitude at the ravine is much more conducive to reflection, but—here's the rub—such places are only evocative given prior knowledge, historical background. You have to have done your homework, or come with someone who knows the territory. Otherwise, you'll just see trees.

I happen to be writing this on All Souls Day. The streets of downtown Krakow are deserted; the population has gone off *en masse* to the cemeteries with huge sprays of flowers and bagfuls of memorial candles in an extravagant annual ritual of commemoration. By dusk, the cities of the dead will be ablaze with thousands of flames. We will walk in the smoky heat of it, sorting the graves of Solidarity heroes from socialists, recalling painters, actors, grandmothers, and infants. We will follow the crowd to a new memorial in honor of communism's local victims—a cross clung to by a dozen severed hands, tonight flooded with candlelight.

Every day this autumn, memory has encroached, tugged me down. For weeks I sat at the dining room table I'd transformed into a desk in our small apartment, unable to find words adequate for Auschwitz or the vanished landscapes of my family's past. I'd come here to connect myself to this landscape and its horrors, but instead I felt more hopelessly separated, silenced by its denials and reinventions, by its magnitude of pain.

As it happened, half-way through our stay in Krakow, we decided to move to another apartment, more central. The day before we left, while drinking a farewell cup of coffee with our landlady, I asked about the history of the apartment house where I'd felt so increasingly disquieted. She told me then the memories of its walls: it was built in 1933 by her uncle, an architect, and he had chosen for himself the second floor apartment where we'd been living. But when the Nazis occupied Krakow, they had seized this neighborhood, one of the then-most elegant in the city, to quarter officers. The entire house had been commandeered and her uncle consigned to the basement as housekeeper. When the Nazis invaded Russia, he finally got his apartment back (impeccably cleaned the night before their abrupt departure) and eventually, after decades of loss of ownership under communism, our landlady had legally reacquired her long-time home.

The dining room is still graced by the ornate table, sideboard, and twelve carved chairs that her uncle had had made for the place in 1933. It was at that same table, where Nazis had dined, that I'd been trying fruitlessly to write. I am not a superstitious type in general, but there's no denying this country is haunted.

The next day, in a strange piece of symmetry, I find a plaque on our new apartment building marking it as the secret headquarters of a wartime resistance group. I decide to take this as a kind of benediction to make my peace with the past I've unearthed, to carry home its thin cry. Here at my makeshift desk, two blocks from Krakow's central square, I can hear the *heynal* played every hour. Some days, the trumpeter on duty plays it heart-wrenchingly slowly, a hopeless lament. Other days it's played with brisk verve, a robust optimism. Memory can pull us in either direction, dizzy us, set us straight again. With an ear cocked to the past, the city bustles in its busy present. The cobblestones in the sturdy streets resound. ❑

PROFILE

Al Jolson

The Soul Beneath the Mask

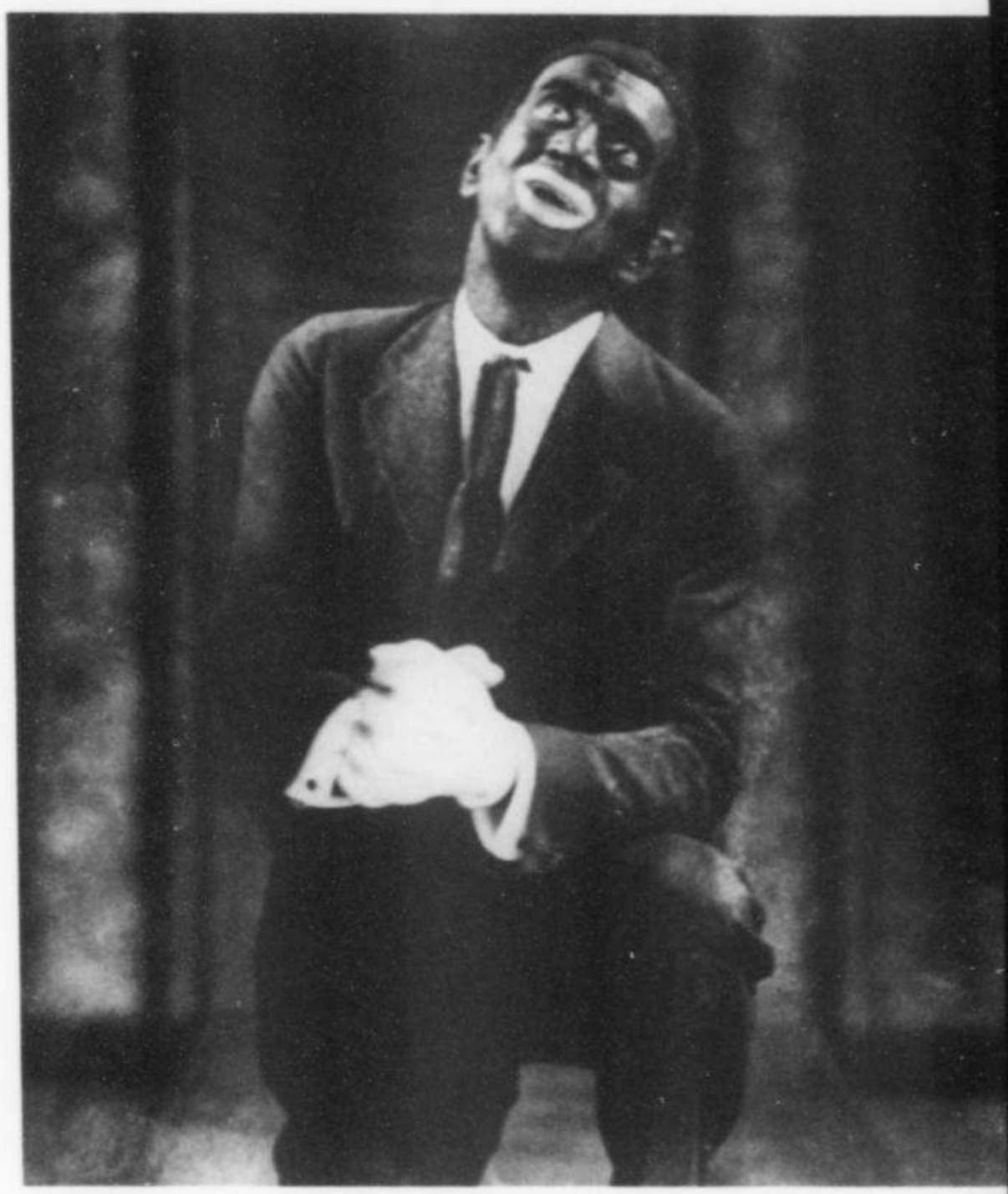
Stephen Mo Hanan

In Al Jolson's hands, and on his countenance, blackface was not so much a travesty as a loan. He borrowed from the African American culture he encountered at the turn of the century a mixture of daring and poignancy that went on to make him the foremost live entertainer of his era, the first superstar of the twentieth century. No other white man, certainly no Jew, had ever used blackface makeup as more than a theatrical convention which today seems blatantly offensive. For Jolson, the makeup was a mask with which he created a unique multi-ethnic persona, a hybrid of shtetl and plantation which permanently altered the popular culture of white Christian America.

The opportunity to consider Jolson in depth came to me recently as a consequence of playing him in a one-person show. The play obliges the actor to don blackface at the end of the first act (removing it during intermission); but before giving an account of that remarkable experience I would like to ponder some of the insights rising from my study of Jolson's career.

The man whom critic Gilbert Seldes in 1923 called "the concentration of our national health and gaiety" was born Asa Yoelson in 1886 in a small Lithuanian village, and came to America eight years later. He was the youngest of four children; his father had emigrated when Asa was only four and eventually sent for the family with money earned as cantor of a Washington, D.C. congregation. Within a year of their arrival, little Asa's doting mother died, a trauma that scarred him for life while giving birth to the most profound expressions of his art. A stranger to his father, and thousands of miles from home, Jolson retreated into a private world where ultimately he discovered kinship with the African American, emancipated but still not free.

Although completely irreligious as an adult, Jolson made no secret of his origins, and was in fact the first open Jew to be celebrated by the American masses. But he aspired to something more, and his youthful rebellion against his father's Orthodoxy led him to the teeming, mongrel street life of his Washington neighborhood. In the final years of the nineteenth century, popular music was a key catalyst in



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

Jolson was the first open Jew to be celebrated by the American masses.

the American melting pot. Jolson's native musical intelligence, already honed in the cantorial tradition, began to soak up indiscriminately the styles and tunes of other immigrant cultures and the dances of the Negro boys he watched, yearning to assimilate them into something new and authentically American. Like most immigrant children, American was what he wanted to be.

In the knockabout culture of turn-of-the-century vaudeville, ethnic stereotyping played two contradictory roles. While on the one hand making fun of every ethnically recognizable outsider in terms of their "characteristic" behavioral traits or linguistic errors, it also established those ethnicities—Italian, Irish, Jewish, Polish, Scandinavian or Greek—in the emerging American mosaic. The exception to this vaudevillian melting pot was, of course, the African, who in the segregated theaters of the time, was depicted at one remove. White performers blacked up, but never the reverse. The first African American star, Jolson's celebrated contemporary Bert Williams, was light-skinned and performed in blackface. The bizarre conventions of skin prejudice that have so blighted American culture allowed authentic Asians to perform on mainstream stages (even after their immigration was banned), but not authentic blacks.

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Minstrel shows featuring whites in blackface had been popular in America since the 1840s. By the time Jolson joined one in 1908, they were purveying predictable music of heavily nostalgic Civil War lineage. Jolson had heard jazz, blues and ragtime in 1905 in New Orleans, but the minstrel show wouldn't let him sing any. He quit, and began to perform solo the kind of music he liked. Hiding behind a mask which conceals all but the eyes and mouth (as performers in Commedia dell' Arte had done for centuries before the American slave trade), Jolson was able to access emotions never before seen on any vaudeville stage. He expressed depths of longing and lamentation that drew equally upon his orphaned childhood, the melismatic sighs of the synagogue, and the soulfulness of a black music few whites had yet encountered. He electrified audiences with a raffish, flagrant sexuality that at the time would have been threatening in a black performer and scandalous in a white one. His funky rhythm and below-the-waist gyrations (not seen again from any white male till the advent of Elvis) were harbingers of the sexual liberation of the new urban era. Jolson was a rock star before the dawn of rock music, challenging the squeamishness on which racism so heavily depends.

Jolson was not a man to waste a single moment in reflection that he could otherwise spend at the racetrack. His artistry was intuitive and spontaneous, and the alchemy by which the "Litvak" bonded with the "schvartze" in his psyche was unlikely to have cost him thought. But its depth drew laughter, tears, and ovations from audiences in every corner of the country, and revolutionized America's musical taste. Instrumental in the careers of George Gershwin and Irving Berlin, Jolson was not the only Jew to mediate early jazz and ragtime for white audiences, but he was the first. For generations, slaves in the American South had turned the biblical story of Israel's bondage and exodus into a rich and compelling musical literature, unique in world history. Music that pulsated with suffering and hope mirrored the black community's experience but stirred few white souls, until, like energy building in a thundercloud, it galvanized Jolson. This immigrant Jew felt the analogy, sparked the metaphor, and drew a lightning bolt onto the very stage he sang on. Today we may see his mediation as ironic, but in its time it truly shook the earth.

Nor was it only the color line Jolson crossed. He sang several songs in a female persona, re-recording "I'm Just Wild About Harry" as late as the Forties, singing "The heavenly blisses of his kisses fill me with ecstasy" without a hint of embarrassment or camp. Dissolving racial categories seems to have given his performing self a fluidity that blurred gender boundaries as well. Jolson had several close gay associates, and didn't shrink from effeminate moves if they helped him convey insouciance. But he also took his female persona seriously. The earnest sincerity he brings to the baby girl voicing "Hello Central, Give Me No Man's Land" is so tender, so compelling that this transparently mawkish song becomes a sublime and pathetic depiction of a child innocent of both war and technology. It is hard to imagine any male pop singer other than Jolson even attempting it.

It is easy (and not completely unfounded) to condemn Jolson for appropriating elements of a minority culture that he exploited for personal gain. But it is also true that he rendered those elements palatable to a majority that was historically unprepared to incorporate them first-hand. Jolson may have profited from American racial attitudes, but he didn't invent them, and in fact helped to transform them. Within a decade of Jolson's eminence, African American artists like Armstrong, Ellington, Fats Waller, and Ethel Waters gained mainstream acceptance as never before. Noble Sissle, a lifelong friend, attended Jolson's funeral as official rep of the Negro Actors' Guild. He was the bridge, however unlikely, over which they entered popular culture.

In spite of how often I'd watched Jolson blacking up on film, I was unprepared for how it affected me the first time I tried it myself. The director and I had contemplated using a dark purple instead of black, as if that would be less offensive. But once I bit the bullet, the nature of the transformation was astonishing. By altering the hue of my skin to a jet black which, in Seldes' words, "is so little negroid that it goes well with diversions in Yiddish accents," I became a different person. It was tempting to play out every tasteless Stepin Fetchit mannerism imaginable, as if to drive those demons out of my psyche. But then deeper psychic contents began to emerge: more power in my eyes, gestures more direct and eloquent, a physical grace and ease located in an altered body awareness.

Every actor knows that masks always facilitate this sort of thing. But under these circumstances, I began to feel that what we call race is also just a kind of mask, of no more ultimate consequence, despite the mountain of evil built on its frame, than accent or hair color. If economic oppression could disappear tomorrow, it would be obvious that nothing perpetuates racism so much as the concept of race itself. By reproducing essential qualities of African American soul, not stereotypically but with a depth that linked them to his own personal roots, Jolson demonstrated publically that skin color need be no barrier to shared human feeling. Like the body itself, it is a temporary attribute of spirit. ❑

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CURRENT DEBATE

Rethinking Referenda

Nelson Tebbe

American voters are increasingly deciding key issues of the day by referendum. The intuitive appeal of the referendum is supercharged democracy: instead of entrusting important decisions to beholden politicians, the people can make their will known directly. But direct appeals to the people threaten democracy in two unrecognized ways. Allowed in nearly half the states, the referendum generates apparent legitimacy without any guarantee of the underlying public participation that has traditionally powered American democracy. And even more troubling, ballot initiatives provide society's most powerful members with new opportunities to assert their agendas over groups who lack the power or money to fight back.

Among the most famous—but certainly not anomalous—examples are California's Proposition 209, which eliminated affirmative action among state employers and educators, and Colorado's Amendment 2, which prohibited state laws designed to protect gays and lesbians from discrimination. This November, voters in Washington State will consider Proposition I 200, an anti-affirmative action measure similar to 209.

The referendum gives those who oppose affirmative action false legitimacy.

In a time of deep public cynicism over politics, ballot initiatives like these allow ordinary people to make law directly and seem thereby to enhance democracy. But American political traditions have never trusted direct appeals to the people, particularly where constitutions, federal or state, are at stake. The founders of our country had a healthy fear of populism and hard-wired our political system against demagoguery. More than anything else, James Madison feared "faction," which he understood to be a majority or minority that, driven by a populist passion, tramples on the rights of others. Pure democracy would be powerless against faction, he thought. Early American state constitutions solved this problem with republicanism: "The public voice," Madison wrote in the Federalist Papers, "pronounced by the representatives of the people, will be more consonant to the public good than if pronounced by the people themselves." Because referenda run directly counter to this founding vision, they are still prohibited on the federal level.

Yale constitutional law scholar Bruce Ackerman calls the American political system "dualism." By this he means that politics operates in one of two modes. Most of the time, Americans are private citizens; they read the newspapers and vote periodically, but mostly they attend to private affairs and leave political decisions to their elected representatives. Ackerman calls this mode "normal politics," of which the 1980s and 1990s have been paradigmatic examples. But now and again the life of the nation is disrupted by social upheaval, during which private citizens turn their attention to national affairs in earnest. Examples of such times include Reconstruction, the New Deal, and the civil rights movement (but not the Contract With America). Ackerman calls flash points like these "higher lawmaking." When the people make their will known during constitutional moments, they step outside their private concerns, enter the public sphere, and speak as We the People. The law they make is constitutional in the strongest sense—it defines the nation until the next episode of higher lawmaking.

Referenda are dangerous because they simulate higher lawmaking during periods of normal politics. The result is a simulated democracy. Just because the voters have spoken directly does not guarantee they have given an issue like affirmative action the kind of attention it deserves. In a recent *New York Times*/CBS poll, only 26 percent of Americans said they would favor programs giving "preferential treatment" to racial minorities. This was the type of language that won over California voters to Proposition 209. But 55 percent of Americans said they would favor "special efforts to help minorities get ahead." American voters are not stupid—but neither are they giving this issue their full attention. The referendum gives those who oppose affirmative action false legitimacy. We should not allow the hard-won gains of the civil rights movement to be undone in a few short years without greater confidence that we do so not merely on the unreflective impulses of private citizens, but on the considered convictions of We the People.

Consider how much is at stake in California. On November 5, 1996 voters there approved 209, the anti-affirmative action measure. Only eighteen months later, almost exactly thirty years after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., university classes have now been virtually resegregated. At Boalt Hall, the University of California's elite law school on the Berkeley campus, the number of African Americans admitted dropped from seventy-five in 1996 to fifteen in 1997, none of whom chose to enroll. The only entering African American student was a deferral from the previous year. Campuses across the statewide system tell a similar tale. At the UCLA School of Law the number of African

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Americans accepted fell 80 percent to twenty-one, only eight of whom enrolled. And on the undergraduate level, the combined number of African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans admitted to Berkeley this year dropped 57 percent, to only 10.4 percent of the entering class. If the law school numbers are any indication, only a few of those admitted will choose to attend a college in which they represent such a tiny fraction of the student body.

Even longtime opponents of affirmative action balk at these figures. (Writing recently in *The New Republic*, Nathan Glazier conceded that Proposition 209 may have been a mistake.) But constitutional amendments are difficult to rescind. One way is through the courts, and so far federal judges have kept a close watch on referenda. California's xenophobic Proposition 187, which denied free education and most other state benefits to illegal immigrants, has been tied up in the courts ever since it was passed in 1994. And Colorado's Amendment 2 was eventually denounced by the Supreme Court as nothing but unconstitutional "animus" toward gays and lesbians. But this April the U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill designed to limit the power of federal judges to stand in the way; it requires a three-judge panel whenever the constitutionality of a referendum is challenged in federal court.

Referenda can be undone by referendum, but this can be expensive. It takes 693,230 signatures to put a constitutional initiative on the ballot in California (a number the political consulting firm Progressive Campaigns says it can confidently deliver for between $1.2 and $1.7 million). Advocates for the scapegoated rarely have that kind of cash. A dedicated group of Berkeley law students is trying to bring diversity back to their school by overturning 209. But their chances are slim since they have raised only $20,000 through credit card debt and student loan checks. The unacceptable result is that with the referendum system, "democracy" works only for those with deep pockets.

Of course not all ballot initiatives are bad. Many of those passed in recent years will probably have little or no negative effect. Others have proved to be crucial catalysts toward democracy, particularly overseas. For example, South Africa's F. W. De Klerk relied on a referendum to elicit the mandate he needed from white voters to free Nelson Mandela and proceed toward constitutional democracy. More recently, citizens in Ireland and Northern Ireland gave their governments a similar go-ahead to negotiate lasting peace. We need a way of thinking about the U.S. referendum that can denounce Propositions 187, 209, and 227 while preserving mandates for reconciliation.

Obviously the distinction cannot depend on content. Proposition 209 cannot be illegitimate simply because we think its content is unjust, while the referendum on Northern Ireland passes muster because we agree with its substance. Rather, California's ballot initiatives are troubling as a matter of form because they look superficially similar to those in South Africa and Northern Ireland without the deeper and wider public participation necessary for true democratic legitimacy. The fact that the referenda in South Africa and Northern Ireland also happen to be ones with which we agree is pure coincidence.

Or is it? The disturbing thing about California's recent ballot initiatives is not simply that they clothe laws in fake legitimacy, but that the referenda there are so blatantly manipulated by elites. The normal representative process is of course also infamously vulnerable to undemocratic influence, but those who have turned to the referendum apparently think it promotes their interests more effectively than state politicians do. That resulting laws further disadvantage California's least advantaged citizens is no coincidence. On the contrary, the referendum threatens democracy not merely by simulating public participation that may not exist, but by eschewing a representative system constructed in no small part to protect those with the least influence—immigrants, gays and lesbians, racial minorities, and the poor—from factions with money and undue power. ❑

A Response to Nelson Tebbe

Reclaim Referenda

Julia Bloch

Nelson Tebbe is right to point out that recent uses of ballot initiatives threaten the very U.S. democratic ideals they were designed to protect. But his argument confuses the way ballot initiatives have been appropriated by the Right with the ballot initiative process itself. He winds up blaming the people instead of the real enemies of democracy.

Tebbe argues that "just because the voters have spoken directly does not guarantee they have given an issue … the kind of attention it deserves." This is certainly true, especially in a case like California's Proposition 209, where complex legislation was reduced in information campaigns to something called "preferential treatment." But it does not follow, as Tebbe concludes, that the referendum process itself "threat-

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ens democracy." In making that claim, Tebbe expresses the sort of deep distrust of the American people that has endangered a serious progressive approach to democratic politics.

Liberals like Tebbe who call for a "rethinking" of the referendum process seem to believe that most people are so easily duped by right-wing ideas that they are best kept at a distance from politics. Yet this cynical and elitist way of thinking protects progressives from ever asking themselves, "What have we done wrong to fail to mobilize people to a progressive vision?" They assume instead that the people are fundamentally inclined to racist, sexist, homophobic, or xenophobic ideas, and that they need to be guided by enlightened liberals.

What's particularly ironic about this way of thinking is that it's so far removed from what used to energize progressive politics. In the 1960s, the radical demand was for "power to the people"; today, a generation that failed in politics blames its failures on the people—and that very elitism ensures its continued failure.

Referenda are really our tools, not the tools of the Right.

I had a very different experience with public opinion when I canvassed door-to-door for social and economic justice and worked on Get Out the Vote campaigns. I found that people are generally decent and have legitimate concerns and interests. Their concerns sometimes found expression in ways that I didn't find congenial, especially when I worked on the campaign to expand Minnesota's human rights act to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation. But I didn't find most people to be mean-spirited, and I certainly didn't feel that we need to be protected from them (or could be protected from them!) by the corporate-media-selected candidates who normally make it to elected office. Quite the contrary: elected representatives were our biggest obstacles to expanding statewide human rights legislation in Minnesota, and we found that ordinary voters were the ones to pressure the legislation through.

I've also discovered a truth that those from the Politics of Meaning perspective discuss in this magazine and elsewhere: people often feel a real crisis of meaning as they try to build lives in a world dominated by materialism and selfishness, and they are open to right-wing solutions that speak to this crisis of meaning. The anger that they often feel at their own powerlessness, their sense that economic insecurity is a certain outcome of the growing globalization of capital, and their fear of being unable to compete effectively in the heavily technological employment markets of the future often find expression in attacks on groups who might, they are told by the media and the Right, take their jobs. A psychologically and spiritually-oriented, ethics-based progressive movement might speak to the anger and fear in these people's lives.

Unfortunately, existing liberal and progressive forces have been quick to dismiss a politics of meaning. They speak instead in much more narrow terms that fail to reach the anxiety that most of these people are experiencing. These forces argue, as Tebbe does, that recent ballot initiatives pass thanks to the "unreflective impulses of private citizens" and that we would do better to restrict referenda than to learn from our experiences—and from the opinions that the public is expressing. In fact, if we progressives ever did get it together, we might make very substantive and important use of referenda. Referenda are really our tools, not the tools of the Right, and we would be greatly weakened were the use of referenda significantly restricted.

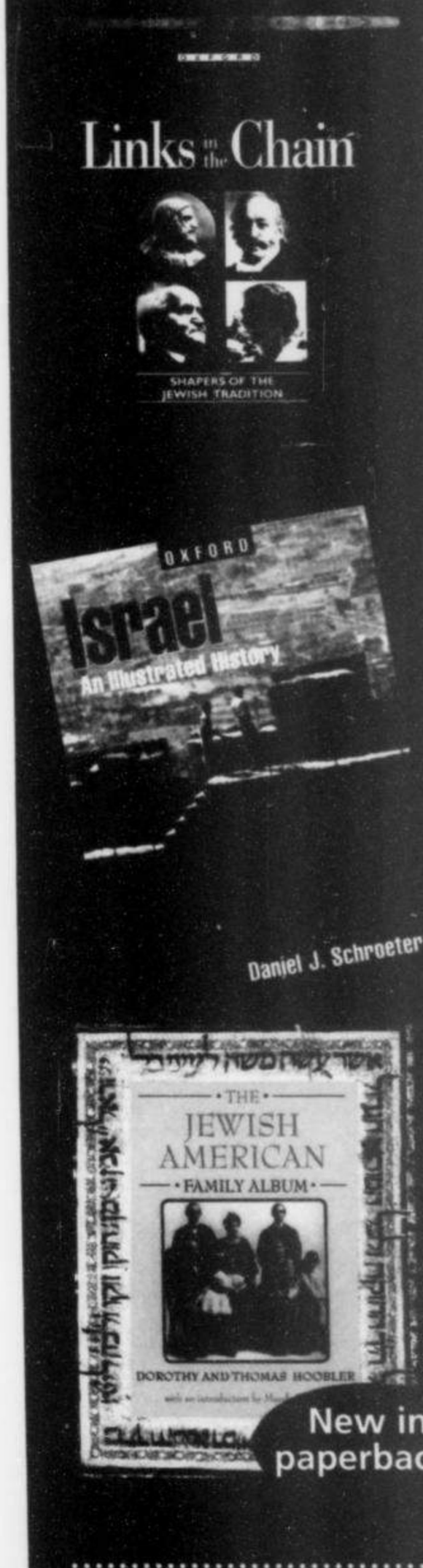
Our challenge is not to place more restrictions on avenues to representation and expression of public opinion. Our challenge is to democratize access to media so that alternative views, including progressive and Politics of Meaning perspectives, can be heard by the public. Our challenge is also to fundamentally change campaign finance so that big money doesn't get the loudest voice.

Tebbe does mention at the end of his article that the same corporate power that manipulates the mass media in the election of public officials operates as predictably in the realm of ballot initiatives. But that just proves that the problem isn't referenda at all but corporate ownership and control over the media. If we restrict our use of the direct ballot to decide issues that affect, as Tebbe points out, groups in our society that are already disenfranchised, we simply give corporations more control over public life.

Unfortunately, Tebbe's argument confuses the mechanism of the ballot measure itself with its use, much as it confuses a public that feels powerless with an apathetic voting public. Tebbe goes so far as to call the referendum process "illegitimate" when it is used in periods when, supposedly, ordinary citizens have no business (and, he believes, no real interest in) stepping out of their private affairs into the realm of lawmaking. He assumes that, were they not given a choice to vote on issues like affirmative action and gay rights, American voters would not feel strongly enough about such legislation to lobby their elected representatives.

In reality, however, the increasing use of referenda signifies that people really are concerned. The problem isn't with the people, but with the corruption of ballot measure campaigns by elite interests. The answer to recent ballot victories like California's is not to take that tool away from voters, but to empower people to take control back from corporations and entrenched political interests. The answer is campaign and referenda finance reform, on the one hand, and on the other hand, a real attempt by progressive activists to acknowledge and respond to the crisis of meaning people feel in their everyday lives.

The most dangerous thing we could do now is restrict use of referenda. Let's strategize more effective ways to speak to the same needs that are being manipulated by the Right, and not preclude Americans from voting for what they believe. ❑



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INTERVIEW

AN INTERVIEW WITH Pat Schroeder

Jack Newfield

Pat Schroeder was a Democratic member of Congress for twelve terms, representing a suburban Denver district. She is now the president of the American Booksellers Association, and the author of a new book, 24 Years of Housework ... and the Place is Still a Mess *(Andrews McMeel, 1998).*

In Congress, Schroeder was known for her populist brand of feminism and her wicked wit. She coined the phrase "Teflon president" for Ronald Reagan. Of Bush and Quayle, she said in 1988, "What they have in common is their trust funds—they belong to the lucky sperm club."

NEWFIELD: Let start's with how far you think we are from the time when a woman will be nominated for president and elected president?

SCHROEDER: I think we're quite a way still. European countries and other countries have queens in their backgrounds, or empresses or tsarinas or something. But when you think about it, we don't have anybody that's "a leader that looks like me." It's that simple. It scares a lot of people when they think of a woman in the role of "Commander-in-Chief." Even though we've had a lot of men who haven't served in the military, somehow there's a presumption that that's OK. But if it's a woman who hasn't served, everyone asks "Hey, how can they do this?" Plus, as you know, in politics visuals are so key. People always say to me, "You don't look presidential." No woman looks presidential.

You get a male candidate and you know right away what to do to make him look busy: Undo the collar, undo the tie, take off their coats. What does a woman do? We either look like an unmade bed or we look like a *Vogue* model.

NEWFIELD: You're thinking maybe forty years? Fifty years?

SCHROEDER: Well, I hope I live long enough to see it. I think in the year 2000 we're apt to see vice-presidential candidates. But again, that's more the supporting role that we're more comfortable with. It will be interesting to see if they nominate strong vice-presidential candidates who would then go on and run for President, which is traditional.



PHOTOGRAPH BY JIM RICHARDSON / DENVER POST

NEWFIELD: Who do you see being considered in 2000?

SCHROEDER: Libby Dole's clearly a strong candidate. If Bush of Texas doesn't get the nomination, then I think Kay Bailey Hutchison from Texas might be a good Republican candidate—large state, senator. On the Democratic side, obviously California has women senators that are very good. New York might have one by then. I think they'll look at big states in the traditional secondary role.

NEWFIELD: And you think a woman would have to come out of some kind of quasi-militaristic or space background?

SCHROEDER: Well, I think that Madeline Albright's done a lot to help by showing that type of leadership as Secretary of State. But we still don't see (many women) in the military leadership. I think we need some women breaking through to the top in that arena so people feel more comfortable seeing a woman leading before you break into the ultimate tree house, the White House. I think it's part of the problem. Internationally, we have been under the military umbrella, we've been the "leader of the free world"—think of NATO, or our alliances.

Secondly, we have always required of our Presidents a kind of testosterone image. You know, the Kennedys playing touch football. Bush running around in a cigarette boat. Or poor Dukakis getting talked into a tank, which didn't quite work for him. Think about that—what does a woman do so that she doesn't end up looking really silly? We just don't have images yet that people are really comfortable with.

Jack Newfield is the author of six books and a columnist for the New York Post. *He has completed a three-hour documentary film on Robert Kennedy that aired on the Discovery Network.*

INTERVIEW

NEWFIELD: One of the great lines in your wonderful book dates from when you first came to Congress: you said that you have both a brain and a uterus and they both work. You were a pioneer by being in Congress and having young children. Now, this year, it seems to have become a big deal in the media that young women candidates either are pregnant or have young children. Why do you think it's suddenly becoming a big deal in Arkansas and Massachusetts and other places?

SCHROEDER: This nation, our culture, is so conflicted about women. We saw it in the welfare debate. We say to them: "If you're home taking care of your kids, you ought to be working. Don't you ask me to take care of you." And if you're working, we say, "You really ought to be home."

NEWFIELD: You first came to the House in the early Seventies. From the description in your book, it was like a frat house; the Chairman of the Armed Services Committee, Ed Herbert, making you and Ron Dellums share one chair. How ugly was it for you the first couple of years? And was your sense of humor the thing that broke through for you?

SCHROEDER: My sense of humor was strange the first few years. I mean, you think you won. You say, "Oh, wow, this is great. Look what I'm doing." And you get to the House and they say, "Who are you? We don't want you here." They made it very clear that they didn't want to hear from me and they didn't want to see me. It was like they thought they had made such a concession that I could be on the Floor, how could I ask to come into the Caucus room? So, you go from the night that you won when everybody's cheering, to coming to Washington and everybody's giving you the raspberry—including the chairman of your own committee. Of course, the culture of Congress then was that the chairmen were all powerful; they were the College of Cardinals. You literally were supposed to check in and try to outlive everybody else so eventually you would be chairman. Luckily, a lot of that has changed because of aggressive attacks we made on that whole system.

NEWFIELD: Did you find that Congress was more male supremacy-oriented than society at large when you first got there?

SCHROEDER: I had spent my entire life never really feeling much discrimination. I'd always gone to public schools and so forth. It wasn't until I got to Harvard Law School that I came screaming up against the wall and discovered how much of our society in the early Sixties was still "sexagrated." I had all these people in my class that had never gone to school with a quote-unquote girl before—and they were in graduate school. They changed their seats, they wouldn't sit next to you. It was a very good training ground for what I found in Congress. Across America, I don't think Harvard Law School, or Congress, was the norm. But it was an elitist norm that was very strong, and it was my first real experience of being where it was "No Girls Allowed."

NEWFIELD: What is elitist sexism? How is it different from mainstream sexism? Where do you find it now?

SCHROEDER: That's a good question. Sometimes you're so in it you don't see it. But elitist sexism.... For example, at Harvard I remember the Dean of the Law School saying, "I didn't want any of you here. I don't think you'll ever use this treasured degree that we're going to let you have." And, "You all got in here on an equal basis. But I counted how many of 'you' there were. We let in that many more men." You say, "Well, thank you very much for that vote of confidence. How sweet of you." It was that kind of elitism that I saw in the Congress, too: "We really don't want you here. Is your district nuts? Surely they'll wake up next time and won't send you back."

NEWFIELD: What about the women now in their late twenties and early thirties who are writing books or coming into politics who consider themselves post-feminists, do they take the doors your generation kicked in for granted?

SCHROEDER: Sure.

NEWFIELD: What is that process of not understanding the struggles that preceded your generation? What are the cutting edge issues now for women?

SCHROEDER: You and I both know that if you get into politics or into movements to be thanked you're wasting your time. Nobody's ever going to say, "Thank you for civil rights." Or, "Thank you for women's rights." Because the minute you get it, people bank it.

A classic example of that: I worked so hard to get women into the military academies. I went to the very first graduating class of women at one of the academies and the women said to me, "I don't know what you feminists are talking about. I've never been discriminated against." I kept thinking, "Did she look at all the prior classes up until now? Are you in the first group of women qualified for the military that America ever produced? Would you think about what you just said? How it sounds?" Nobody had really challenged them on that. They just had banked it. So I'm not waiting for the new generation to thank me. But I also hope they know that this may not be totally bankable forever, that it can roll back. The cover of *Time* recently said, "Is Feminism Dead?" There's a whole lot of people who would still like to kill it. Twenty-six-year-olds used to come running into my office saying, "I'm not a feminist, but let me tell you what happened to me in the work place." And I'd think, "You know what? I think you are a feminist."

NEWFIELD: Well, what is it that makes Ally McBeal so appealing? What is that show's message? Why do young women identify with her?

SCHROEDER: I hate to tell you, I haven't seen it so I really don't know.

I think in general we still send very mixed messages. There's still that great legend in women's culture of waiting for the Prince on the horse to come over the hill with a gazillion dollars and say, "Here." I think that's what Princess Diana was about: a beautiful young woman, beau-

tiful clothes, saved by a prince. And her life turned to crap.

From what I've read about Ally McBeal, it sounds like she's just a very conflicted young woman. "Am I a lawyer? Or is my biological clock telling me to get out of this?" Rather than, "How do I merge the two?" Or, "Is it possible to merge the two?"

That's part of why I wrote the book, to say, "Hey, I merged the two and it worked." This is not an either/or.

NEWFIELD: What is the price of merging the two?

SCHROEDER: Well, you don't get any more hours in the day. We as a society need to do much more to help and support working families. Working families ought to organize and go after that. Every other Western country has done it.

NEWFIELD: In Congress, you always kept your focus on economic issues. I think a lot of people felt the feminist movement of the late Sixties and Seventies became too elitist. But you kept that focus on liberal family values and child care. Do you think one of the mistakes the women's movement made was not having enough of a working class economic focus?

Newt came and it was like a food fight every day. It kind of takes you back to Junior High.

SCHROEDER: I wouldn't attack them for that because at least they had child-care and family leave in their platform when no one else did. How many major focuses can you have? You can only have so many, and they had a lot … getting women into medical schools and law schools, the ERA. But at least it was on their agenda. It certainly wasn't on the Chamber of Commerce's agenda, or the Association of Manufacturers' agenda.

NEWFIELD: What is it about the culture that made your shedding a tear when you withdrew from the Presidential race such a big issue? Bill Clinton seems to cry on cue, and people love it.

SCHROEDER: That's right. And Ronald Reagan did, too.

NEWFIELD: But when Muskee cried, it was negative. What is it about masculinity and crying that elicits such an uneven reaction?

SCHROEDER: I don't know. I think during the Cold War it was devastating for a man or a woman to cry. That's why Muskee got caught. Post Cold War, we now seem to be more into quality of life issues, and the new Nineties sensitive caring male is supposed to cry.

NEWFIELD: Get in touch with your feminine side, be more vulnerable.

SCHROEDER: Yes. But we don't have an equivalent of that for women. So women are still hanging out there. I've kept a crying file that could fill this room—it's got everybody from Margaret Thatcher to John Sununu who couldn't even leave the New Hampshire Senate and finish his speech, he was blubbering so bad. It's great now for men: the new sensitive Nineties male. Almost every politician has had to cry, every sports person has done it. And that's been fine. Nobody's made a fuss about it. But for women, we still have not accepted it. Maybe it's because women still feel so vulnerable that they don't think it's OK yet. I'm not sure. But the sharpest criticism was from women.

NEWFIELD: At you.

SCHROEDER: Yes, and it probably still would be today. I was fascinated by that criticism, Jack, because if you flipped it and applied it to men, people would laugh. I mean, there was a young columnist on the editorial page of the Washington Post who wrote something like, "That's it. No woman will ever be able to run for President in my lifetime. This woman has ruined it for all of us because she shed some tears. That's the end." Now had you written that column about Muskee, "No man can ever run for President because Muskee shed some tears," people would say, "You've fallen on the ice and hit your head." There is such a tenseness in the women's community as people break through into new things. They're so afraid they're all going to be judged by what the person now on the playing field is going to do that I think they overreact.

NEWFIELD: How much of a factor was Newt Gingrich in your decision to leave the House?

SCHROEDER: Not much, really. It was more that at the end of the day you couldn't put anything in the out-box, well, which was a factor related to Newt Gingrich.

NEWFIELD: That is, the Democrats are no longer the majority.

SCHROEDER: That's right. And, at the time I left, the Republicans were running much higher ideology testing. If your name was even on a bill, it went in the dumpster. Of course we found they only had one page to their contract; there's no page two and they haven't known what to do since. But, those first two years, Republicans couldn't even talk to Democrats. People would come over and say, "What are you doing? Why are you talking to them? What's going on?"

NEWFIELD: So that atmosphere contributed to your …

SCHROEDER: That atmosphere. The other thing is, when I first came to Congress, there was brutal debate on the Vietnam war and impeachment and everything else. But we were doing it factually. Now, they attack you personally.

NEWFIELD: Has Gingrich brought a new level of personal rancor to Congress?

SCHROEDER: He's brought a level of personal rancor, yes, and ideology. It got very personal: "You're with us or you're against us; You're this or you're that." On the one hand, I had a lot of fun. Newt came and it was like a food fight every day. It kind of takes you back to Junior High. You go in, and it's Animal House. But, at the end of the day, you knew you weren't going to get anything done.

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ISRAEL

A Scene from Silwan

Jamey Bouwmeester

The bullhorn crackled, "You have one minute to leave, or we will have no choice but to use force." The announcement was greeted with several responses. Several people chuckled, "That's what you said five minutes ago." Others tried ethical arguments, saying, "What do you mean, you'll have no choice? You always have a choice." I didn't say anything because I heard something in the officer's voice that frightened me. I was also watching the soldiers put on their helmets. I knew they were serious this time. So one minute later, when the shove came, I thought I would be ready. But when the Israeli soldier lunged forward with all of his weight, when I felt the blow to my chest, as I fell backwards onto the stones and dirt, I realized that this was something for which I could never be prepared. By the time I got my bearings again and looked up from the ground, the entire scene had become a tableau of chaos and violence.

We had come here, to the neighborhood of Silwan in Jerusalem, to join a non-violent demonstration. About one hundred activists from Israel, Palestine, and around the world had come together to protest the June 8th take-over of four Palestinian homes by Israeli settlers. Most of the group sat in the middle of a driveway that led to the homes. We sat in protest of the settler presence in these homes, and we sat to illustrate the non-violent nature of our protest.

When the order was given to remove the demonstrators by force, I was standing to the side of the group, taking pictures. I and the few other demonstrators who were standing were shoved backwards when the soldiers advanced. Those who were sitting were dragged, one by one, along the ground towards the street. I was one of the first to be taken out, through the gravel, feet first, with one soldier on each limb. They didn't seem to care that they were hurting me. When we reached the sidewalk, they released me and went back up the driveway to get someone else. I followed.

As I was running back up the driveway to where most of the protesters had been sitting, and where the last of the demonstrators were being kicked, beaten, and dragged, I saw one group of about five or six soldiers standing over someone. It was Bob (not his real name). I had met him a few days earlier at a Palestinian solidarity conference. He had been speaking to the police before they came at us, and they must have picked him out as a leader. They held him face down on the ground. One soldier crouched over his back, pulling his arms behind him in a pain/compliance hold. Another soldier kicked him in the ribs as he lay there, helpless. While this was happening, Bob yelled over and over, "This is a non-violent protest! This is a non-violent protest!" I tried to move past the soldiers standing above him, but was only pushed back again. I focused my camera to record what was happening. Because of tunnel vision through the viewfinder, I didn't see the soldier approach



I was one of the first to be taken out, through the gravel, feet first, with one soldier on each limb.

from the side. He lunged forward, forcing the butt of his hand into the front of the camera, which in turn knocked me in the forehead. I couldn't believe the pain. I found myself on the ground again being dragged towards the sidewalk. Luckily the camera was still intact.

After being dumped at the curb a second time, I went back again. By this time, Bob was on his back and they had handcuffed one of his wrists. At least one of the soldiers was still kicking him with impunity. I managed to get to him and laid myself over him as a barrier to the beating. Almost immediately, I felt a forearm around my neck, pulling me backwards. On the ground again, I scrambled to get back to Bob. As before, I was able to be there for only a few seconds before being pulled away by my camera strap.

Now they had both handcuffs on Bob and were carrying him out. He had a soldier on each leg, and a police officer was holding him by the chain of the handcuffs. Bob appeared to be in intense pain, as his weight caused the

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PHOTOGRAPH BY JAMEY BOUWMEESTER

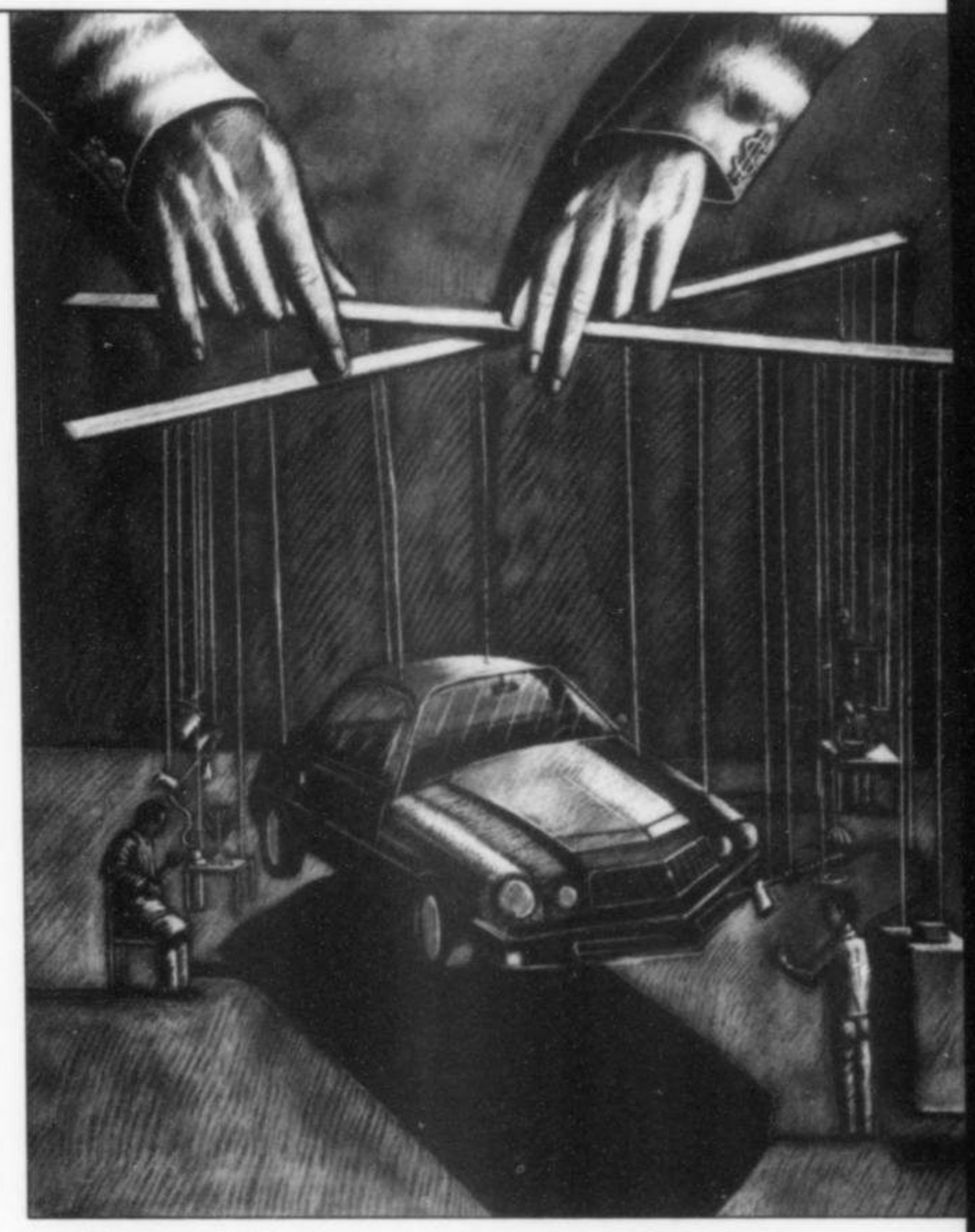
Jamey Bouwmeester is twenty-four years old and a full-time volunteer with Christian Peacemaker Teams. He has been working in Hebron, West Bank since April.

GLOBAL ECONOMICS

Unemployment

When the Globalization of Capital Becomes a Jewish Problem

Rabbi Danny Goldman



Unemployment goes against God's plan. Yet unemployment is increasingly the legacy of the globalization of capital, a force that is reshaping the world in the wake of the collapse of planned economies. It's true that there are some people in underdeveloped countries who will get work at factories being located outside of the industrialized world so that the capitalists who own them can make higher profits by paying lower wages. These new projects do have a ripple effect, bringing jobs to those who service the newly employed third worlders.

But don't overestimate the degree to which the globalization of capital will sustain job expansion. One need only look at the picture in Indonesia and other Asian economies to recognize the following dynamic: A third world country borrows funds from international bankers to help provide the infrastructure for first world corporations to open shop. It then has difficulty repaying the loans and gets new loans from the International Monetary Fund to repay the international bankers, but only on condition that the country adopts stringent restrictions on their own monetary practices. The result usually is increased prices and reduced employment for many of their citizens.

Jewish law and tradition demand of us that we give support and assistance to the unemployed

Meanwhile, as first world firms move to third world locations, first worlders get rising unemployment. In the United States this growth may still be relatively invisible, because lower-paid service jobs have been able to replace many lost manufacturing jobs—the statistics of high employment cover over the actual pain in the lives of many working-class people who are forced to work two or three jobs to maintain the level of income previously brought home by one worker. But here in Argentina, where I serve as rabbi to one of the largest synagogues, unemployment is a central reality. Here unemployment is not just something hitting some other sector—it hits the heart of the Jewish population as well, as it almost certainly will in the United States within the next few decades.

I recently heard how personal the impact of this high unemployment could be a few weeks ago, when a parishioner stopped me after services to tell me that he had lost his job. "I feel my creativity is gone," he told me, "and so it is really hard for me to observe Shabbat, because frankly the weekdays and Shabbat feel exactly the same. Judaism tells me to rest on Shabbat, but without employment the experience of rest feels like oppression and not delight. How can I still be obliged to obey the laws of Shabbat rest?"

The man had an important point. The Torah describes

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ILLUSTRATION BY RICHARD ROSS

Rabbi Danny Goldman is the spiritual leader of Beyt El Community, Buenos Aires, Argentina, and the editor of the Spanish magazine Nefesh.

Atonement as *Tikkun*

Diane Perlman

The Wisdom of Ritual

In almost every New Age publication, you can find books, tapes, and workshops on forgiving others, but I've never seen a workshop on asking for forgiveness for oneself. An apology exercise designed to promote enlightenment, transformation, and healing does exist; but it's not a New Age exercise—it's an Age Old ritual. It is not facilitated by an experiential workshop leader, but is practiced in real life with the most significant people in one's life.

Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, during the Ten Days of Repentance or Days of Awe, we are asked to approach people in our lives and ask for forgiveness. Even if we are unsure whether we have done anything offensive, we still ask—in case we committed any slights we are unaware of. If we ask forgiveness three times and are refused, we are cleared and the burden is on the other. Such is the exquisite care embedded in the rituals to clear the slate between ourselves and others.

There is great wisdom and psychological soundness in this practice—called *kapara*, or atonement. By reconciling with each person individually, we prepare ourselves for Yom Kippur, when we ask for forgiveness collectively. Atonement is the individual starting point for *tikkun olam,* healing the world.

I am more of a practicing psychologist than a practicing Jew, but *kapara* is my favorite ritual in Judaism. By making a provision for a salutary practice we might not undertake on our own, even with psychotherapy, Judaism has found a way to simultaneously promote conscious spiritual evolution and psychological growth.

Atonement inscribes us in the Book of Life symbolically by liberating life energy, promoting vitality and healing in relationships that may be deadlocked by anger, resentment, and misunderstanding. Interpersonal cleansing actually enhances physical health, well-being, and resilience.

Although I practice *kapara* every year, I feel awkward asking for forgiveness. Maybe that's why so few people do. Every encounter is a stretch and a humbling experience, because atonement can be excruciatingly difficult. For all of us, it is harder to ask for forgiveness than to forgive. For some people, the act of making apology is seen as a sign of weakness and a violation at the core of one's being.

One reason forgiveness is embraced more than apology has to do with our preoccupation with victimology (many innocents are victimized; victimology refers to the misuse of this to avoid growth). In forgiving, we get to be the good guys, identified with the victim position and holding the moral high ground. In asking for forgiveness, we are identified with the perpetrator position, with realizing we hurt others, which can be intolerable for some. The humility that comes with reclaiming the dark aspects of our personality is confused with humiliation.

It is much easier to fast and to sit in synagogue and beat our breasts while listing every imaginable and unimaginable sin we have committed wittingly and unwittingly. It is easier to say "we" have sinned than it is to say "I" hurt you. It is easier to ask "Our Father Our King" to forgive us than it is to ask our actual fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers, spouses and ex-spouses, children, friends, and others to forgive us for the specific sins we have committed against them.

Atonement vs. Forgiveness

Although popular culture promotes forgiveness as the royal road to enlightenment, transformation, and healing, the act of atoning is on a much higher psychological and moral plane.

There is value in true forgiveness, but it is often trivialized, misunderstood, and misapplied in ways that can be harmful. Authentic forgiveness is a profound organic process that may include anger, understanding, empathy, and a natural release when the arduous psychological work is complete. It cannot be forced or achieved by a deliberate act of will without some form of protest from the depths of one's soul.

In my practice I have seen clients with cancer, adults who have been abused as children, and others who torment themselves for their inability to forgive. When the perpetrator is not apologizing, forced forgiveness can hurt the victim. Some therapists pressure their clients to forgive perpetrators as a requirement for healing. This adds insult to injury and can be a re-traumatization: those who have been hurt now feel that their inability to forgive will deny

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Diane Perlman, Ph.D., is a licensed clinical psychologist in private practice in the Philadelphia area.

DETACH AND SAVE

בְּרֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה יִכָּתֵבוּן. וּבְיוֹם צוֹם כִּפּוּר יֵחָתֵמוּן.

Taking Spiritual Transformation Seriously

High Holiday Supplement 5759

Despite your childhood memories to the contrary, Jewish High Holy Days need not be about guilt or shame. At TIKKUN, we believe God is the force of transformation and healing in the universe, and on the High Holy Days we joyfully celebrate one of the central consequences of God's existence—namely that we are NOT stuck in our negative patterns, but can fundamentally change ourselves and our world.

That's the message. The method is this: we can use the ten day period that begins with Rosh HaShanah and ends with Yom Kippur (this year: from dark on Sunday night, September 20 till dark on Wednesday night, September 30th) as a profound psycho-spiritual transformative process—a time for each of us and all of our community institutions to be involved in introspection and transformation.

Rabbi Lerner has developed this workbook as an aid in the process of *Teshuvah* (repentance or return to our highest selves). In many synagogues, High Holiday services are not particularly conducive to this inner spiritual work. In some synagogues, energy is primarily social ("look at who is here, let's catch up on what is happening in each other's lives," etc.). In other synagogues, an obsessive focus on saying every prayer (often by speeding through) can cause spiritual indigestion by becoming a substitute for actually engaging in the process of inner introspection and transformation. Particularly if the rest of your holiday is filled with family and friends, and the intervening days between Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur are filled with normal work activities, the holiday season becomes a frenetic experience that has little to do with spiritual transformation.

So, if you don't belong to a synagogue influenced by Jewish Renewal and Hasidic consciousness (Jewish Renewal isn't a denomination, it's an approach that is growing in all the different branches of Judaism), and if your synagogue doesn't give time during the services to do this Teshuvah process, we recommend you bring this workbook with you, begin to think about it during the services, and in the days after Rosh HaShanah go through it systematically—and bring it with you to review on Yom Kippur.

You may also benefit from reading parts of Arthur Waskow's *Seasons of Our Joy*, Michael Lerner's *Jewish Renewal: A Path to Healing and Transformation,* Rami Shapiro's *Minyan: Ten Principles for Living a Life of Integrity*, and David Cooper's *God is a Verb*. Watch out that instructive spiritual reading doesn't become a substitute for actually doing the inner transformation work outlined below.

Spiritual Transformation: The Teshuvah Process

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

In each case, write down what part of a problem might have been generated by you, and what about the way you are in each relationship might have been a part (not the entirety) of the problem. How might you begin to work on that part during this Teshuvah period?

PROBLEM	WHAT YOU CONTRIBUTE TO IT
Parents	
1.	
2.	
Spouse, Lover, or Potentials	
1.	
2.	
Friends	
1.	
2.	
Children	
1.	
2.	

DETACH AND SAVE

World of Work

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

PROBLEM	WHAT YOU CONTRIBUTE TO IT
Relationship to Co-Workers?	
Relationship to Supervisors or Supervisees?	
How healthy were your coping mechanisms with stress at work?	
Did you inappropriately blame yourself, or dump anger inappropriately on others?	
What kind of political action did you take in relationship to work?	

Respect for Your Body

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

Eating

Exercise

Vacations

Clothing and Appearance

Self-Presentation

Quiet Time or Meditation

Respect for Your Soul

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

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

In what ways did you neglect your soul?

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

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

DETACH AND SAVE

Spiritual Nourishment

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

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

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

Tikkun Olam: Healing and Repairing the World

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

Consider, for example, Bosnia, China, Ireland, Mexico, Israel, Palestine, domestic poverty, homelessness.

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

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

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

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

Judaism and the Jewish World

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

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

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

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

Did you involve yourself in activity, or help financially support, TIKKUN, *New Israel Fund, Peace Now, or some other Jewish group in which you believed? What held you back?*

In light of Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's commitment to subverting the Oslo Peace Accords and refusing to allow Palestinians national self-determination, and in light of Israel's refusal to give equal religious rights to non-Orthodox Jews, did you take some public actions to distance yourself from this government?

Did you give public political support (e.g., by writing letters, demonstrating, urging others to get involved) to those in the Jewish world who come closest to articulating what YOU PERSONALLY BELIEVE IN, *or did you let the conservative, conformist, and spiritually dead continue to speak as though they represented you?*

DETACH AND SAVE

Personal Traits

Do you find yourself sometimes exhibiting behaviors or traits that you wish were not there? Check which of these apply to you, and when, during the past year, it played a hurtful role in your life:

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

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

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

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

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

C. *Now, decide which part of this area you can work on in this coming year.*

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

E. *What specific plan will you follow this coming year, and what specific steps will you take to change your behavior? (Use a blank piece of paper to write a detailed plan.)*

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

DETACH AND SAVE

וְעַל כֻּלָּם אֱלוֹהַ סְלִיחוֹת, סְלַח לָנוּ, מְחַל לָנוּ, כַּפֶּר לָנוּ.

Teshuvah "Partner" or Support Group

We encourage you to get a Teshuvah partner—someone who can support you to be serious about the process and someone who doesn't have a personal stake in the decisions you make about how you will live your life this coming year.

The partner's task is not to make concrete suggestions, but to encourage you to explore all the possibilities that you might face as you consider how you might wish to transform your life. After you've done this exploring, switch roles so that you become the facilitator, and you encourage your Teshuvah partner to face the possibilities of change.

There is a thin line here, because sometimes asking questions can be a subtle way of trying to show what you think is best for the other. Try to avoid that! You are not a therapist and this is not a therapy process, and no one is commissioning you to solve someone else's problems. This is a spiritual process, and what you can do is to be a witness to the attempts of your Teshuvah partner to try to make significant changes in his or her life. So be sure to not convey the impression that you know that a particular road to go on is the right one for this person. Instead, keep asking about a wide variety of options, and help the person consider these options through asking, whenever a roadblock appears, whether that person can think of any ways to get around it. After Yom Kippur, check in with each other once a month to see how you are doing on keeping to your current intentions.

Partner's name or names of people in the support group:
(Use a separate piece of paper if necessary)

Home Phone: _____

Work Phone: _____

CHECKING IN WITH EACH OTHER

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

CONFIDENTIALITY

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

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

Teshuvah partner or group members sign here:

_____

For Our Sins

A Supplement to the High Holiday Prayerbook

We invite you to use the following along with the traditional confessional prayer, "**Al Cheyt**," recited on Yom Kippur. Members of your community might spend time together before or during the services to discuss this supplement and add to it your own ideas and concerns. The "sins" need not be those of you or your friends. The idea of a collective confessional is that we are inextricably linked and hence must take responsibility for the entire community involved. Please discuss this version of the **Al Cheyt,** or write your own.

FOR OUR SINS

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

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

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

Ve-al kulam, Eloha selichot, selach lanu, mechal lanu, kaper lanu.
For all our sins, may the Force that makes forgiveness possible forgive us, pardon us, and make atonement possible.

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

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

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

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

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

And for the sins of dulling our outrage at the continuation of poverty, oppression, and violence in this world;

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

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

DETACH AND SAVE

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

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

And for the sins of not doing enough to alleviate homelessness, poverty, and world hunger.

For the sins of allowing media indoctrination to convince us that others are motivated solely by money, power, or narrow self-interest;

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

For the sin of accepting a world in which the "bottom line" is money and power, and not fighting for a new bottom line of love and caring;

And for the sin of being cynical about the possibility of building a world based on love;

And for the sin of spreading negative stories about people we know;

And for the sin of listening and allowing others to spread negative stories;

For the sin of not publicly defending our leaders when they are unfairly attacked, and for the sin of not giving our leaders, rabbis, educators, artists, and child care people, the emotional and material support they need to continue to do the work that we depend on them to do;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

For the sins of withholding love and support;

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

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

For the sins of not recognizing the beauty within ourselves;

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

For the sins of not allowing ourselves to play;

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

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

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

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

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

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

For the sins of allowing conservative or insensitive leaders to speak on behalf of all American Jews; and allowing our institutions to be governed by those with the most money rather than those with the most spiritual and ethical sensitivity;

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

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

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

For the sins of giving up on Judaism because it didn't satisfy our highest spiritual and ethical values, rather than engaging in the process of spiritually renewing our tradition;

And for the sins of allowing the spiritual renewers to divorce spirituality from the struggle for social justice and ecological sanity;

For the sins of acting as though Jewish pain is worse than everyone else's pain;

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

For the sin of not recognizing and treating with respect the diversity of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, including Sephardic, Mizrachi, Ethiopian, Ashkenazic and Black Jews, the diversity of class backgrounds, the diversity of sexual orientation, and the diversity of ways that we address the spiritual truths of the universe;

For the sins of not having compassion for one another;

And for not taking care of one another;

For the sins of not sharing responsibility for childrearing;

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

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

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

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

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

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

Composed by Michael Lerner, editor, TIKKUN *magazine, for Yom Kippur, 5759; September 1998. Make copies of these prayers and workbook—send them to friends and family. And urge them to help* TIKKUN *by subscribing (send a check for $29 to* TIKKUN, *26 Fell Street, San Francisco, CA 94102).*

Spirituality in America

Michael Lerner

The contemporary resurgence of interest in spirituality is an encouraging indication that tens of millions of people remain dissatisfied with America's dominant ethos of materialism and selfishness. We live at the end of a century in which the competitive economic market has demonstrated its powerful ability to shape the dominant consciousness of the planet. That market consciousness has convinced many that the highest goal of life is to consume, that the proof of one's own self-worth is how much power and money one has at one's disposal, that the "natural" inclination of each person is toward selfishness and egotism, that every other person is a potential rival for scarce economic or emotional resources, that societies should be constructed primarily to protect the individual so that s/he may pursue her own self-interest without external constraints, that progress means the increasing scientific conquest of nature and its transformation into forms that can be used or sold to others, that the goal of knowledge is to increase control and domination of the world, and that the rational way to look at others is in terms of what they can do for you to advance your own agenda.

Spirituality is, first and foremost, a way of orienting to the world, a way of being and knowing, that emphasizes awe, wonder, and radical amazement at the glory of creation and the splendor of the universe. Without rejecting the important place for science and for control of some aspects of our physical environment, spirituality emphasizes the limits of our control, the need to learn to live in harmony with the rhythms of our planet and of the universe, and the need to recognize the sanctity of other human beings and to treat them as essentially valuable not for what they can do for us but for who they are as beings who reflect the ultimate spiritual or divine energy in the universe. The spiritual orientation does not deny the reality of competition, selfishness, and interest in material acquisition and power, but sees these as temporary distortions of the past few thousand years in human history, a distortion that can be overcome as societies return to a more cooperative mode of living that seeks balance and harmony with nature and mutual support and caring among human beings. Without negating the importance and value of individual difference and individual freedom, the spiritual orientation simultaneously stresses the unity of all human beings and the unity of all being.

One of the tragedies of the American progressive social change movements has been their hostility to spiritual and religious movements. In ceding the whole issue of spirituality to the Right, in ignoring Americans' hunger for meaning and purpose that transcends the ethos of the marketplace, the entire progressive world has made itself increasingly irrelevant to the lives and concerns of the majority of Americans. Unable to recognize the potential critical thrust of spiritual understanding, focused exclusively on its correct criticism of the way that religious traditions have been associated with patriarchy and authoritarian forms of oppression, rightly concerned about religious groups who seek to use state power to impose their religious agenda, the liberal/left forces in America have positioned themselves as critics rather than exponents of a progressive Politics of Meaning.

At the same time, we are also critics of some forms of spirituality which focus inward without simultaneously challenging the inherent materialism and selfishness of our economic and political institutions. For a significant section of the growing spiritual movement, political concerns are seen as antithetical to "inner work." Equanimity or peace of mind becomes the highest goal, and spiritual passion for *tikkun*, for building a world of love and caring in which every person on the planet is treated as equally precious and equally a manifestation of God-energy, is dismissed as something that will come later, after we've gotten our inner lives together (but that "after" never comes, because work on inner lives is necessarily and appropriately a lifelong venture).

We at TIKKUN are committed to avoiding both dangers. We seek to build a spiritual life that is deeply nourishing on the personal level, and that encourages an attitude of awe and wonder. Yet we simultaneously seek to link that spiritual nourishment to social movements that will heal the distortions in our economic, political, and social institutions. Our Politics of Meaning is an attempt to create "a new bottom line" in which ethical, spiritual, and ecological values will replace the materialism, selfishness, and cynicism of contemporary American life.

In this and the next issue of TIKKUN we will provide our readers with a rich sense of the panoply of contemporary spiritual search and practice. ❑

ILLUSTRATION BY RUSS ANDO

Meditations On Our Deep Roots

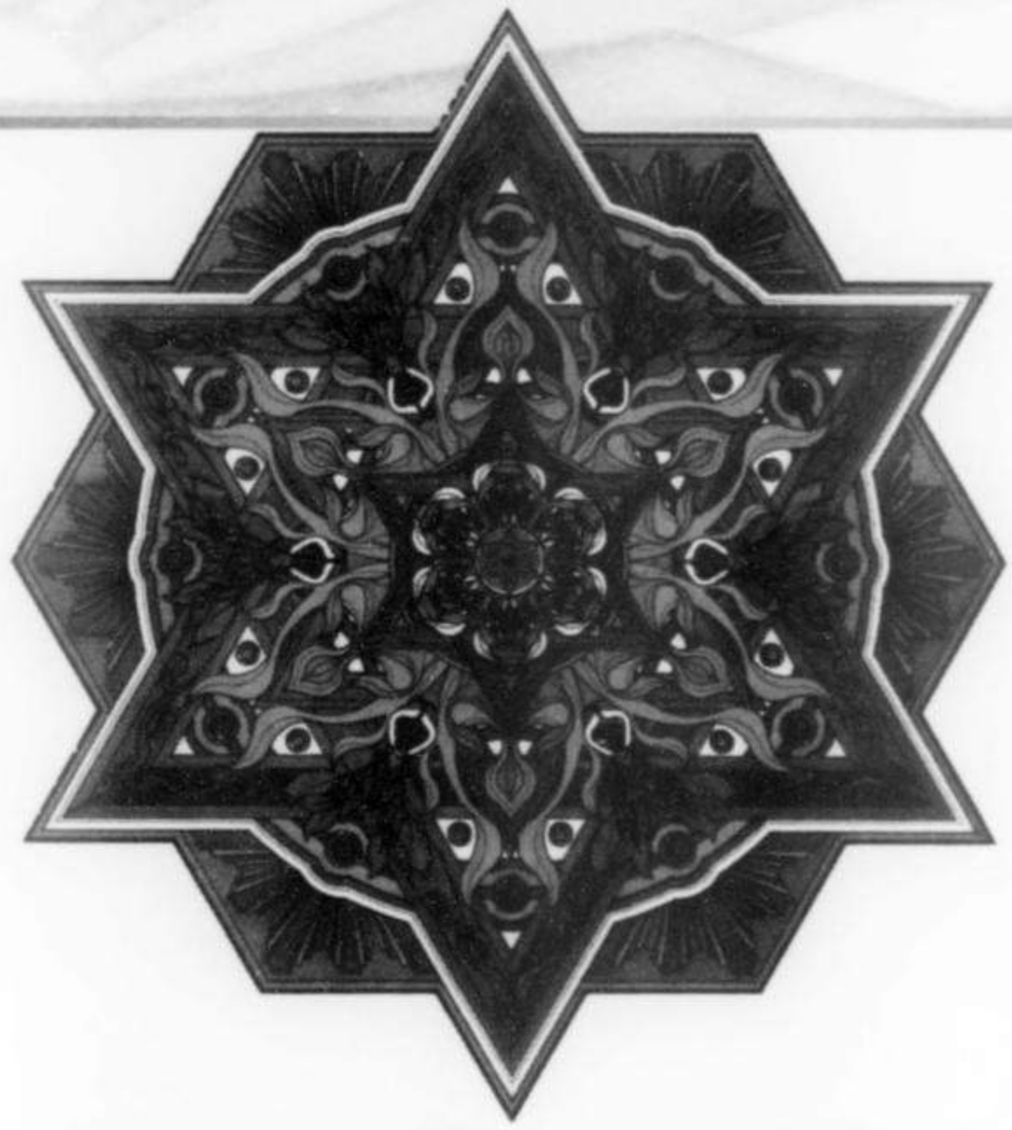
Morty Breier

The meditations that follow are distilled from my lifetime's experience and the worldview resulting therefrom. They are made of the spirit of humanity as it has come to me from reading and listening to all I came in contact with. They are inspirationally dictated by truths rising up from within me or called down from on high or as simply seeing into the heart of things.

Each meditation stands alone while being part of an integrated worldview, and can be read both ways. They are not meant as a linear argument, but rather as a joyous ode to reality. They point out the many powerful reasons for our being joyful. They aim to impart meaning and context to the diverse facets of our living and our being, facets that have been torn apart by the cold sciences and the hot superstitions of our times.

I Am the Goal of the Cosmos

Each of us is the latest endproduct of the unfolding story-line of this universe. Remember the sequence. You were there at the very beginning, the proverbial Big Bang, when all was raw chaotic energy, too fast, too energetic, too changing, too short-lived, to have meaning. Each of us connect back to that moment. We are built of the stuff and propelled by the energy that was created at that moment. We are ruled by the laws set in motion at that moment. Our destiny was founded by the imbalance between chaos/chance and order/consciousness. The complete rule by chaos and chance, the complete absence of order and consciousness, started our existence at that moment. It was this initial imbalance that created the universe's need to return order and consciousness to its pre-creation eminence (when, it could be assumed, only God's serenity existed). And then, over the cosmic time frame in which our story line unfolds, we reach the present where each of us is the result of this movement from chaos to order, our own bodies and minds, the most beautifully organized embodiments of order and consciousness yet extant in our wide but not universal grasp. Remember how the sequence went: Quantum Soup Time providing the stage for Galaxy Time; Galaxy Time providing the stage for Solar Time; Solar Time providing the stage for Planetary Time; Planetary Time providing the stage for Geological Time; Geological Time providing the stage for Biological Time; Biological Time providing the stage for Historic Time; Historic Time providing the stage for each of us. All these stages are still supporting our present drama—we stand on the stage of Historical Time which stands on the stage of Biological Time … which ultimately stands on the stage of the Quantum Soup.



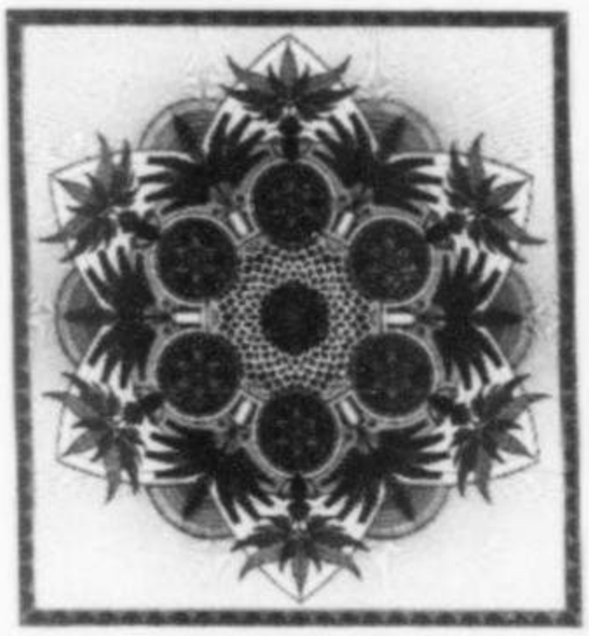
Birthed By the Universe

And here we are, all of the stages under us, all of us the flowering tops of the cosmic tree that started its growth toward order/consciousness at the very moment this universe was set in motion. The present is its latest creation, and we its uppermost reach. How joyful to reflect on our great good fortune to be in such an eminent position. We are indeed the endproduct of this cosmic plan, notwithstanding the unavoidable fact that each of us, and all of our creations, are to be superseded in times yet to come by even later versions of this cosmic unfolding. They will be standing on our shoulders just as we stand on the shoulders of everyone and everything that preceded us. What a magnificent chain to be part of. Made of the stuff of probability waves, starlight, planetary cycling, the mighty mountains, continents, and oceans of our silver blue sphere, genetic journeys, language, learning, and loving, we each were birthed by this glorious universe that continues to show us its awesome magic with each year cycling, each day dawning, each breadth repeated, and each moment unfolding. We can only be joyous with the realization that so much of this awesome magic is reflected in human consciousness as in no other consciousness that we know of (excepting God's which indeed we know very little of). It is precisely this fact that enables us to call ourselves *Sparks of God.* Your consciousness, the stage on which the

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MORTY BREIER

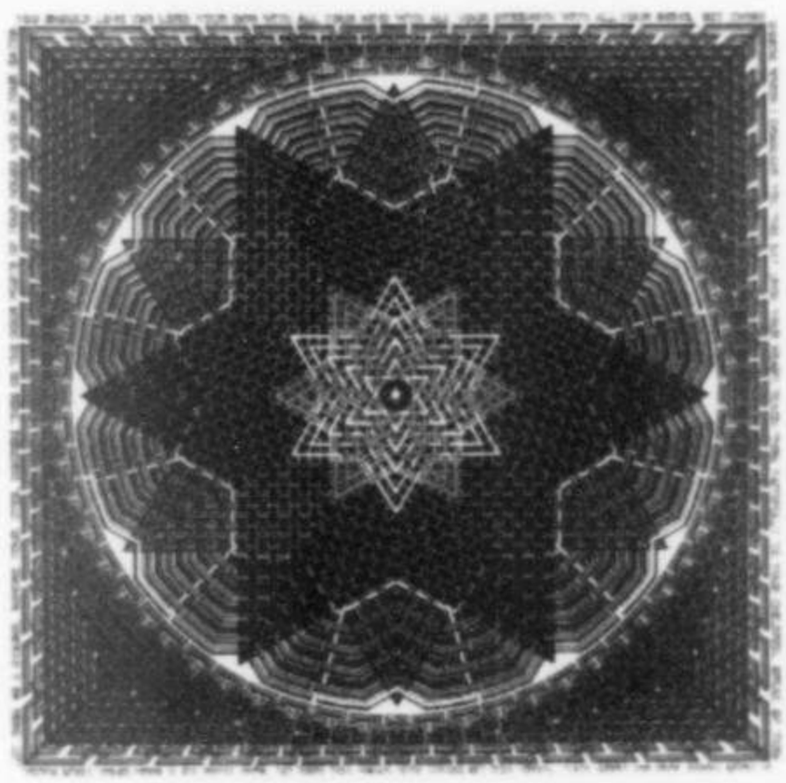
This article is excerpted from Masks, Mandalas & Meditations *(for a copy write Morty Breier at 73-4548 Mahi St., Kailua-Kona, HI 96740 or email him at morty@aloha.net).* *©1996 Morty Breier. All Rights Reserved.*

universe as you know it takes place, is the closest thing yet to God's consciousness, the stage on which our universe does indeed take place. Remind yourself that the arena in which you see yourself and in which your thoughts and actions take place is larger, more detailed, closer to the way things really work, more considerate, more connected and ordered, less capricious, chaotic, and chancy than in the consciousness of any other class of being in our purview, whether animate or not. Since most of our activity is seen only as comparable to other humans', we need reminding that each of us, as a human being, is better equipped, more conscious with more choices, indeed more miraculous, than any other aspect of this universe's creations.



Creation's Continuously Unfolding Product

Let these thoughts spark our joy in creation itself, that cosmic unfolding of which we are the results. We were created by the universe and we create the universe. Again what cosmic good fortune. We need reminding that what we call natural was an unnatural creation to the preceding stage of things. In other words stars are unnatural creations to and of the quantum soup, planets to and of stars, geology to and of planets, biology to and of geology, and history to and of biology. We tend to see the previous stage as natural or given and our stage as unnatural or man-made. But if humanity, in its historic unfolding makes cities, roads and air corridors, if our history makes nations, languages and customs, if humanity continually refines and enlarges trade, discovery and science, it is no less true that biology makes viruses, walruses and lions, that in its unfolding it populates every niche in the ecological landscape, and that its latest editions, culminating with humanity, are more conscious, with superior sense data, and of greater, more refined, complexity than editions that preceded them. We are part of a story line that has been in continual creation, each new aspect being formed from material that couldn't possibly perceive the new reality created from it. The quantum soup does not have the organizational syntax for forming stars until it does, and then starlight becomes the prevailing currency. And the furnace of stars cannot possibly conceive of the quiet colder solidity of planets, until planetary stability was needed to form chemistry and geology which then became the major players on the new stage. And what does geology know of living cells, reproduction, the manufacture of proteins and DNA? And can a living cell comprehend the language of animal and plant life, hear the call of a wolf, project its reproductive strategies to a bee, feel the mother-love of a lioness? And next, can any of these plants and animals, as purely biological creatures, understand us humans, who are creating the new stage of unfolding, creators of historic time? Can they read Egyptian heiroglyphs, form civilizations, or measure minutes of latitude? You see how creation works. It unfolds slowly using all it can on its narrower stage until a meta-jump is made putting the storyline on a larger, more embracing, stage on which development proceeds more rapidly, with greater power and fewer constraints. And we embedded in our historic unfolding are creations latest offer.



What Creatures We Are!

What does it mean to be the end product of our universe's cosmic storyline? Let's take stock of ourselves. As biological creatures we first appeared some 200,000 years ago, equipped even at that time with abilities that the historic process would reveal. That same creature that stood on the savannahs of ancient continents today, strangely enough, drives cars effortlessly, designs and builds 747's, and forms interactive relationships with neighbors, towns, nations and planet-wide communication systems. How could we reason otherwise than by understanding that biology had reached an end product, humanity as we know it, that could move the storyline to its next stage of development? How could one possibly explain evolution's tight-fisted economy, producing a creature whose attributes far exceed what was needed at the time, except by concluding that a meta-leap was required, a leap to another stage on which consciousness would unfold? Can you see that? The leap was made to a creature that could accumulate consciousness, accumulate order, accumulate knowledge. The world we live in, you see, is not one we discover by ourselves during the twenty to thirty years of our growing up, like a wolf cub might in the year or so allotted to it before it must perform in the life and death world of the wild. What we, you and I, really do is spend twenty to sixty years or more learning about what we have, as a species, discovered up to now, and then hopefully adding a little to this cumulative effort, by putting our knowledge into one sort of practice or another. ❑

Redemption *and* Ontological Mystery

Robert Inchausti



It is almost as easy to overestimate the significance of the current boom in spirituality as it is to make fun of it. And yet, there can be no doubt that we are experiencing a cultural sea change of considerable magnitude away from materialistic thinking to something quite different: to a growing respect for the insights born of introspection.

We now have a "spirituality" of warfare, a Zen of tennis, even a "psychology" of futures trading. At their best, these new "spiritual" disciplines, if we can call them that, represent a kind of instinctive flinch by humanity at large away from the commodification of the world and the obsolescence of their own inner lives. At their worst, they represent a new form of philistinism that masks itself as anti-philistine—making it even harder for us to exchange the isolation of private devotion for a truly prophetic, transformative spiritual life.

The problem with these new "spiritual" practices is that they don't fully question the ends they serve. In their emphasis upon process over product and upon the quality of the internal experience itself, they tend to elevate the practitioner's own spiritual aspirations to a near absolute. But those desires—however seemingly "spiritual" they seem to the person holding them—may simply reflect the narcissism of the culture at large—and so instead of liberating the individual from the idols of the marketplace, bind us even more profoundly to them.

For example, rethinking corporate management practices from the point of view of a Samurai warrior may, on the surface, seem an innocent enough exercise in psychological "reframing." But to actually adopt the Samurai's code of Bushido as a self-conscious strategy for making more money does a gross injustice not only to the integrity of Japanese thought but also to the sincere corporate manager looking for greater spiritual fulfillment.

In fact, the corporate manager is at greater risk from such practices than is the tradition of Bushido. He may "think" he needs a "spiritual" perspective on his daily financial activities when what he may really need is a whole new moral vision capable of disclosing the misguided values at the heart of his own miserly personal ambitions.

Orthodox biblical religions do a better job questioning the ends our actions serve. For one thing, they link the individual's search for meaning to the welfare of the community, and by so doing offer an explicit critique of the culture at large. The danger, of course, is that religious communities often become insular, and rather than working to transform the world in the light of their faith, they spend most of their time defending their own image of themselves as holy, set apart, and redeemed.

What these insular communities and their New Age counterparts share is a failure to recognize that our spiritual selves are not independent individual essences but that point of nothingness at the center of our being that belongs entirely to God. Transcendence can never be an object of possession or of comprehension. Our spiritual lives are never entirely at our disposal. We cannot improve them or perfect them. We can only acknowledge their fundamental truth to us: We are not our own light! God dwells within us as an absolute freedom and unknown possibility.

When the "I" of our solitude experiences the solitude of

(continued on page 68)

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ANDI ZEISLER

Robert Inchausti, professor of English at California State Polytechnic University in San Luis Obispo, is the author of Thomas Merton's American Prophesy *(SUNY, 1998), and* Ignorant Perfection of Ordinary People *(SUNY, 1991).*

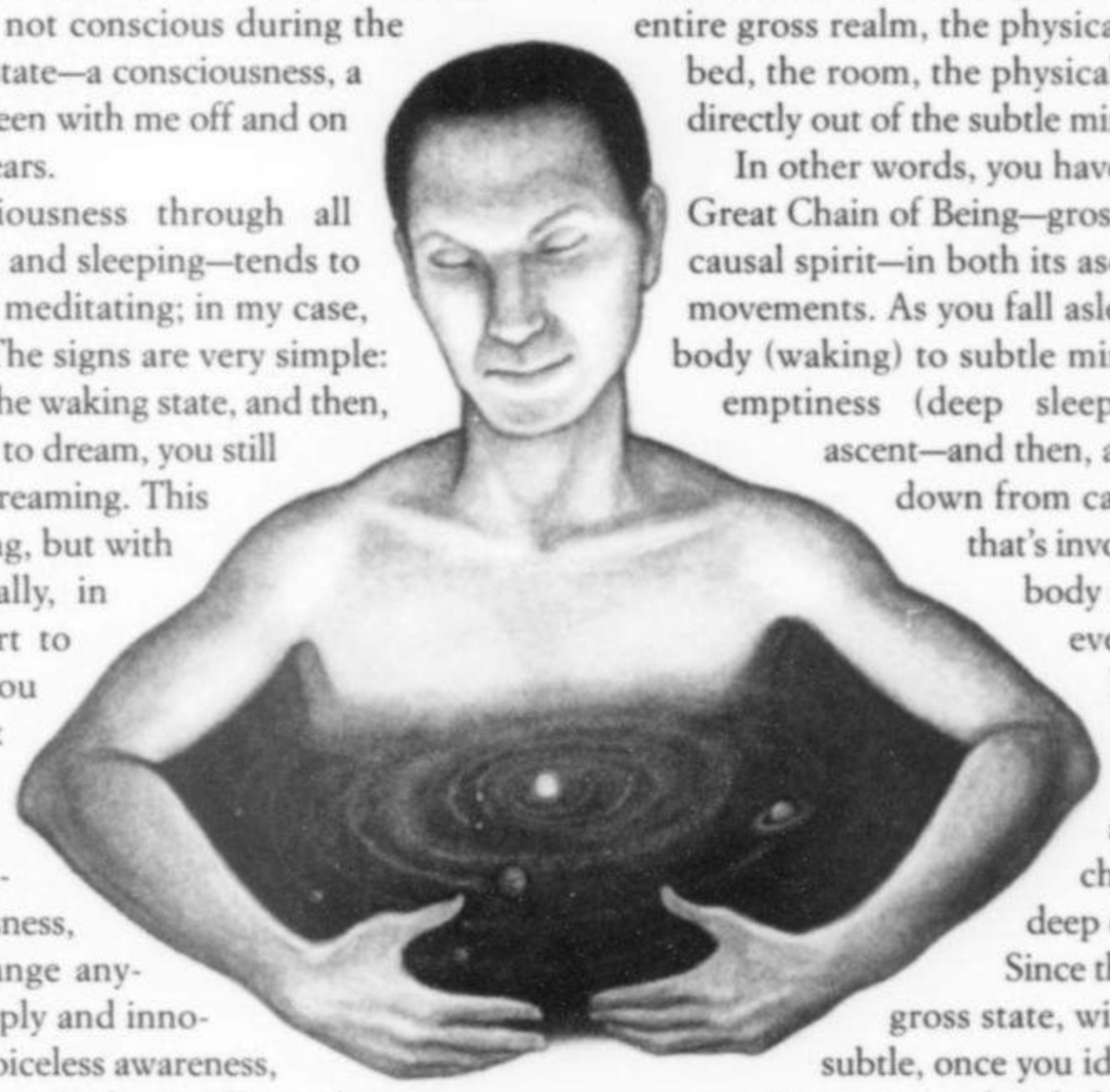
Spiritual Diary

Ken Wilber

Ken Wilber is one of America's most creative spiritual thinkers. Though framed in the form of a diary, his reflections give us an insight into the kinds of issues that are now central to the growing spiritual discourse in America.

Sunday, March 9

It's taken almost a week for any sort of meditative awareness to return, including lucid dreaming. The entire time I was in New York I lost all access to pure witnessing, and I had no subject permanence during the dream and deep sleep state. That is, I was not conscious during the dreaming and deep sleep state—a consciousness, a kind of current, that has been with me off and on for the last three or four years.



This constant consciousness through all states—waking, dreaming, and sleeping—tends to occur after many years of meditating; in my case, about twenty-five years. The signs are very simple: you are conscious during the waking state, and then, as you fall asleep and start to dream, you still remain conscious of the dreaming. This is similar to lucid dreaming, but with a slight difference: usually, in lucid dreaming, you start to manipulate the dream—you choose to dream of sex orgies or great food or flying over mountains or whatnot. But with constant witnessing consciousness, there is no desire to change anything that arises: you simply and innocently Witness it. It's a choiceless awareness, a mirror-like awareness, which equally and impartially reflects whatever arises. So you remain conscious during the dream state, witnessing it, not changing it (although you can if you want; usually you don't want). Then, as you pass into deep, dreamless sleep, you still remain conscious, but now you are aware of nothing but vast pure emptiness, with no content whatsoever. But "aware of" is not quite right, since there is no duality here. It's more like, there is simply pure consciousness itself, without qualities or contents or subjects or objects, a vast pure emptiness that is not "nothing" but is still unqualifiable.

Then, as you come out of the deep sleep state, you see the mind and the dream state arise and take form. That is, out of causal emptiness there arises the subtle mind (dreams, images, symbols, concepts, visions, forms), and you witness this emergence. The dream state continues for a while, and then, as you begin to wake up, you can see the entire gross realm, the physical realm—your body, the bed, the room, the physical universe, nature—arise directly out of the subtle mind state.

In other words, you have just taken a tour of the Great Chain of Being—gross body to subtle mind to causal spirit—in both its ascending and descending movements. As you fall asleep, you pass from gross body (waking) to subtle mind (dreaming) to causal emptiness (deep sleep)—that's evolution or ascent—and then, as you awaken, you move down from causal to subtle to gross—that's involution or descent. Everybody moves through this cycle every twenty-four hours. But with constant consciousness or unbroken witnessing, you remain aware during all these changes of state, even into deep dreamless sleep.

Since the ego exists mostly in the gross state, with a few remnants in the subtle, once you identify with constant consciousness you break the hold of the ego, since it barely exists in the subtle mind state and does not exist at all in causal emptiness (or in the deep sleep state, which is one type of emptiness). You cease identifying with ego, and you identify with pure formless consciousness as such, which is colorless, spaceless, timeless, formless—pure clear emptiness. You identify with nothing in particular, and therefore you can embrace absolutely everything that arises. Gone to the ego, you are one with the All.

You still have complete access to the waking state ego,

ILLUSTRATIONS BY RUSS ANDO

Excerpted from One Taste: The Journals of Ken Wilber *by Ken Wilber. © 1998, forthcoming from Shambhala Publications, Inc. Printed by arrangement with the publisher.*

but you are no longer only that. Rather, the very deepest part of you is one with the entire Kosmos in all its radiant glory. You simply are everything that is arising moment to moment. You do not see the sky, you are the sky. You do not touch the earth, you are the earth. You do not hear the rain, you are the rain. You and the universe are what the mystics call "One Taste."

This is not poetry. This is a direct realization, as direct as a glass of cold water in the face. As a great Zen Master said upon his enlightenment: "When I heard the sound of the bell ringing, there was no bell and no I, just the ringing." And in that nondual ringing is the entire Kosmos, where subject and object become One Taste and infinity happily surrenders its secrets. As researchers from Aldous Huxley to Huston Smith have reminded us, One Taste or "cosmic consciousness"—the sense of oneness with the Ground of all creation—is the deepest core of the nearly universal consensus of the world's great wisdom traditions. One Taste is not a hallucination, fantasy, or product of a disturbed psyche, but the direct realization and testament of countless yogis, saints, and sages the world over.



It is very simple, very obvious, very clear—concrete, palpable, unmistakable, unshakable.

Tuesday, March 11

Well, unshakable with further practice. I'm always curious what will interrupt this nondual current, what will obscure or disrupt constant consciousness, what will throw you out of the All and into the clutches of your separate self, where suffering awaits. Interestingly, in my case, one glass of wine will prevent it (that is, if I have one glass of wine, then that night I am not conscious during the dream and deep sleep state. I'm sure great yogis can drink and still remain conscious through all three states, but not me). Stress usually does not disrupt this constant current. But in New York I drank several glasses of wine most of the days there, so that alone would account for the disruption of witnessing. On the other hand, I was there to do blatant self-promotion, something that I am not good at doing gracefully—I either underdo or overdo it, mostly because it's awkward for me. So it could have been the simple fact that I was in the clutches of egoic self-contraction for the better part of a week that virtually obliterated stable access to the Witness.

Last night it all seemed to rearrange itself. I was not lucid dreaming at first, I was just dreaming: a woman and I are sitting in front of Sri Ramana Maharshi. There is a large audience, but I don't really notice it. The woman is explaining how you practice self-inquiry, which is a practice of inquiring "Who am I?" and attempting to feel into the very source of consciousness; it is an attempt to find the pure and ever-present Witness. For some reason the woman was explaining it all wrong; she was presenting it as the result of making an effort to be aware. I looked at Ramana and said, No, there's no effort, you simply notice that you are already aware, and that awareness—just as it is—is it. No effort at all. Ramana smiled, and my mind and his mind were instantly one. I started lucid dreaming at that point, but more a witnessing. That current of witnessing or constant consciousness has stayed with me now for several days and nights, which is usually the way it has been, off and on, for several years now.

It's a fascinating process. It is pure Emptiness, altogether unbounded, radiant, pure, free, limitless, beyond light and beyond bliss, radically unqualifiable. Sri Ramana Maharshi called this deep witnessing (or constant consciousness) the I-I, because it is aware of the little I or separate self. Ken Wilber is just a gross-level manifestation of what I-I really am, which is not Ken at all, but simply the All. Ken was born and will die, but I-I never enters the stream of time. I-I am the great Unborn, I-I am the mysterious Undying; the entire Kosmos exists as the simple feeling of my own Being. And every sentient being in the entire universe can make that claim, as long as they stand as the great I-I, which is no I whatsoever.

When meditators first start developing (or rather, noticing) this constant consciousness, they tend to go through a type of split-mind awareness. On the one hand, you are developing a capacity for strong meditative equanimity, a capacity to Witness both pain and pleasure without flinching, without either grasping or avoiding. "The perfect person," said Chuang Tzu, "employs the mind like a mirror: it accepts but does not grasp, it receives but does not keep." As this mirror-mind awareness (or constant consciousness) grows stronger, the gross waking state becomes more and more "dreamlike," in the sense that it loses its power to overwhelm you, to shake you, to make you believe that passing sensations are the only reality. Life starts to look like one great big movie, and you are the unmoved Witness watching the show. Happiness arises, you witness it; joy arises, you witness it; pain arises, you witness it; sorrow arises, you witness it. In all cases, you are the Witness, and not some passing surface wave of silly sound and fury. At the center of the cyclone, you are safe. A deep and inward peace begins to haunt you; you can no longer manufacture turmoil with quite the same conviction.

But that doesn't mean that you can't feel desire, hurt, pain, joy, happiness, suffering, or sorrow. You can still feel all of those; they just don't convince you. Again, it's like being at the movies. Sometimes you get so caught up in what is happening on screen that you forget it's just a movie. At a thriller, you might actually become frightened; at a romance, you might start crying. Then your friend leans over and says, Hey, lighten up, it's just a movie, it's not real!

And you snap out of it.

Enlightenment is … to snap out of the movie of life. To wake up, to shake it off. You are, and always have been, at the movies, as the Witness. But when you take life seriously—when you think the movie is real—you forget you are the pure and free Witness and you identify with a little self—the ego—as if you were part of the movie you are actually watching. You identify with somebody on screen. And therefore you get frightened, and therefore you cry, and therefore you suffer altogether.

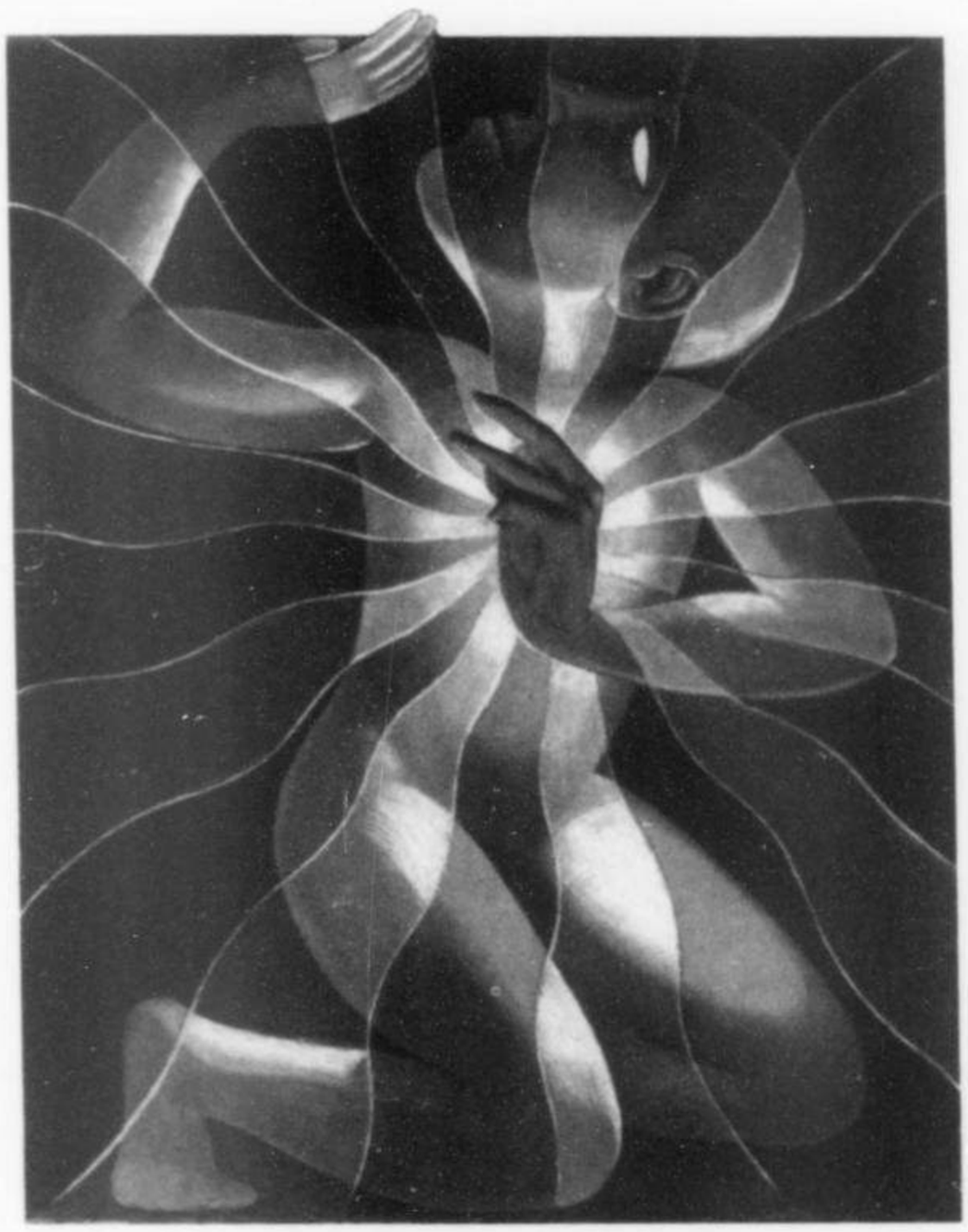
With meditation, you begin to relax in your seat and just watch the movie of life, without judging it, avoiding it, grasping it, pushing it or pulling it. You merely Witness it: you employ the mirror-mind, you rest in simple, clear, spontaneous, effortless, ever-present consciousness.

Sunday, March 23

According to the great sages, there is something in us that is always conscious—that is literally conscious or aware at all times and through all states, waking, dreaming, sleeping. And that ever-present awareness is Spirit in us. That underlying current of constant consciousness (or nondual awareness) is a direct and unbroken ray of pure Spirit itself. It is our connection with the Goddess, our pipeline straight to God.

Thus, if we want to realize our supreme identity with Spirit, we will have to plug ourselves into this current of constant consciousness, and follow it through all changes of state—waking, dreaming, sleeping—which will (1) strip us of an exclusive identification with any of those states (such as the body, the mind, the ego, or the soul); and (2) allow us to recognize and identify with that which is constant—or timeless—through all of those states, namely, Consciousness as Such, by any other name, timeless Spirit.

The moment this constant nondual consciousness is obvious in your case, a new destiny will awaken in the midst of the manifest world. You will have discovered your own Buddha Mind, your own Godhead, your own formless, spaceless, timeless, infinite Emptiness, your own Atman that is Brahman, your Keter, Christ consciousness, radiant Shechinah—in so many words, One Taste. It is unmistakably so. And just that is your true identity—pure Emptiness or pure unqualifiable Consciousness as Such—and thus you are released from the terror and the torment that necessarily arise when you identify with a little subject in a world of little objects.



ILLUSTRATIONS BY DAVID BALL

Life starts to look like one great big movie, and you are the unmoved Witness watching the show.

Monday, November 17

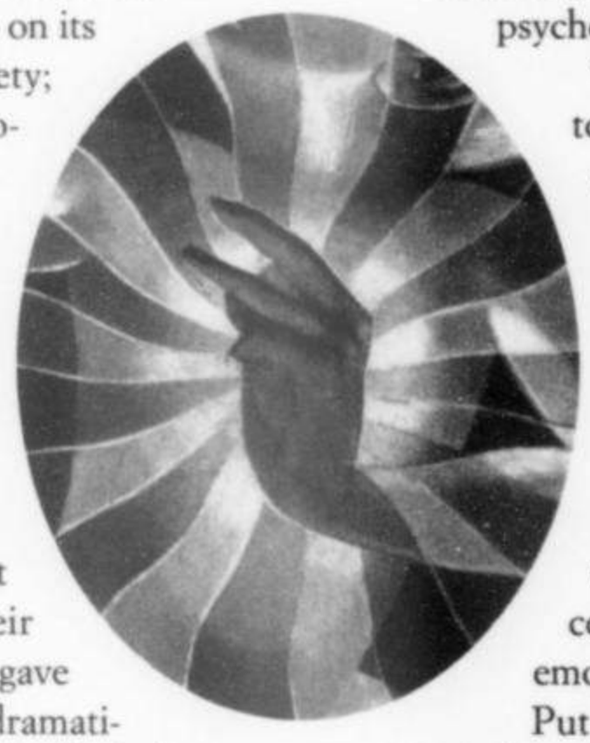
Precisely because the ego, the soul, and the Self can all be present simultaneously, we can better understand the real meaning of "egolessness," a notion that has caused an inordinate amount of confusion. But egolessness does not mean the absence of a functional self (that's a psychotic, not a sage); it means that one is no longer exclusively identified with that self.

One of the many reasons we have trouble with the notion of "egoless" is that people want their "egoless sages" to fulfill all their fantasies of "saintly" or "spiritual," which usually means dead from the neck down, without fleshy wants or desires, gently smiling all the time. All of the things that people typically have trouble with—money, food, sex, relationships, desire—they want their saints to be without. "Egoless sages" are "above all that," is what people want. Talking heads, is what they want. Religion, they believe, will simply get rid of all baser instincts, drives, and relationships, and hence they look to religion, not for advice on how to live life with enthusiasm, but on how to avoid it, repress it, deny it, escape it.

In other words, the typical person wants the spiritual sage to be "less than a person," somehow devoid of all the messy, juicy, complex, pulsating, desiring, urging forces that drive most human beings. We expect our sages to be an absence of all that drives us! All the things that frighten

us, confuse us, torment us, confound us: we want our sages to be untouched by them altogether. And that absence, that vacancy, that "less than personal," is what we often mean by "egoless."

But "egoless" does not mean "less than personal," it means "more than personal." Not personal minus, but personal plus—all the normal personal qualities, plus some transpersonal ones. Think of the great yogis, saints, and sages—from Moses to Christ to Padmasambhava. They were not feeble-mannered milquetoasts, but fierce movers and shakers—from bullwhips in the Temple to subduing entire countries. They rattled the world on its own terms, not in some pie-in-the-sky piety; many of them instigated massive social revolutions that have continued for thousands of years. And they did so, not because they avoided the physical, emotional, and mental dimensions of humanness, and the ego that is their vehicle, but because they engaged them with a drive and intensity that shook the world to its very foundations. No doubt, they were also plugged into the soul (deeper psychic) and spirit (formless Self)—the ultimate source of their power—but they expressed that power, and gave it concrete results, precisely because they dramatically engaged the lower dimensions through which that power could speak in terms that could be heard by all.



These great movers and shakers were not small egos; they were, in the very best sense of the term, big egos, precisely because the ego (the functional vehicle of the gross realm) can and does exist alongside the soul (the vehicle of the subtle) and the Self (vehicle of the causal). To the extent these great teachers moved the gross realm, they did so with their egos, because the ego is the functional vehicle of that realm. They were not, however, identified merely with their egos (that's a narcissist), they simply found their egos plugged into a radiant Kosmic source. The great yogis, saints, and sages accomplished so much precisely because they were not timid little toadies but great big egos, plugged into the dynamic Ground and Goal of the Kosmos itself, plugged into their own higher Self, alive to the pure Atman (the pure I-I) that is one with Brahman; they opened their mouths and the world trembled, fell to its knees, and confronted its radiant God.

St. Teresa was a great contemplative? Yes, and St. Teresa is the only woman ever to have reformed an entire Catholic monastic tradition (think about it). Gautama Buddha shook India to its foundations. Rumi, Plotinus, Bodhidharma, Lady Tsogyal, Lao Tzu, Plato, the Baal Shem Tov—these men and women started revolutions in the gross realm that lasted hundreds, sometimes thousands, of years, something neither Marx nor Lenin nor Locke nor Jefferson can yet claim. And they did not do so because they were dead from the neck down. No, they were monumentally, gloriously, divinely big egos, plugged into a deeper psychic, which was plugged straight into God.

There is certainly a type of truth to the notion of transcending ego: it doesn't mean destroy the ego, it means plug it into something bigger. (As Nagarjuna put it, in the relative world, *atman* is real; in the absolute, neither *atman* nor *anatman* is real. Thus, in neither case is *anatman* a correct description of reality.) The small ego does not evaporate; it remains as the functional center of activity in the conventional realm. As I said, to lose that ego is to become a psychotic, not a sage.

"Transcending the ego" thus actually means to transcend but include the ego in a deeper and higher embrace, first in the soul or deeper psychic, then with the Witness or primordial Self, then with each previous stage taken up, enfolded, included, and embraced in the radiance of One Taste. And that means we do not "get rid" of the small ego, but rather, we inhabit it fully, live it with verve, use it as the necessary vehicle through which higher truths are communicated. Soul and Spirit include body, emotions, and mind, they do not erase them.

Put bluntly, the ego is not an obstruction to Spirit, but a radiant manifestation of Spirit. All Forms are not other than Emptiness, including the form of the ego. It is not necessary to get rid of the ego, but simply to live it with a certain exuberance. When identification spills out of the ego and into the Kosmos at large, the ego discovers that the individual Atman is in fact all of a piece with Brahman. The big Self is indeed no small ego, and thus, to the extent you are stuck in your small ego, a death and transcendence is required. Narcissists are simply people whose egos are not yet big enough to embrace the entire Kosmos, and so they try to be central to the Kosmos instead.

But we do not want our sages to have big egos; we do not even want them to display a manifest dimension at all. Anytime a sage displays humanness—in regard to money, food, sex, relationships—we are shocked, shocked, because we are planning to escape life altogether, not live it, and the sage who lives life offends us. We want out, we want to ascend, we want to escape, and the sage who engages life with gusto, lives it to the hilt, grabs each wave of life and surfs it to the end—this deeply, profoundly disturbs us, frightens us, because it means that we, too, might have to engage life, with gusto, on all levels, and not merely escape it in a cloud of luminous ether. We do not want our sages to have bodies, egos, drives, vitality, sex, money, relationships, or life, because those are what habitually torture us, and we want out. We do not want to surf the waves of life, we want the waves to go away. We want vaporware spirituality.

The integral sage, the nondual sage, is here to show us

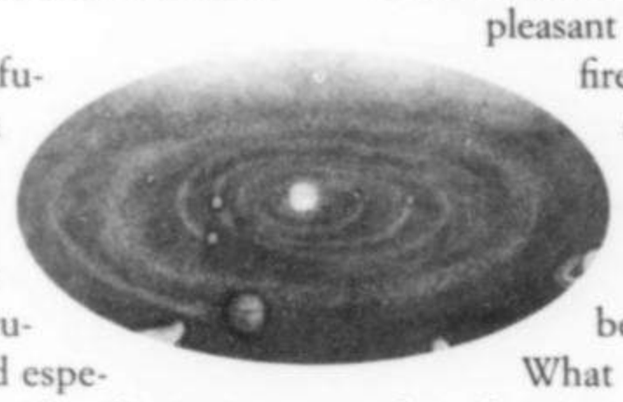
otherwise. Known generally as "Tantric," these sages insist on transcending life by living it. They insist on finding release by engagement, finding nirvana in the midst of *samsara,* finding total liberation by complete immersion. They enter with awareness the nine rings of hell, for nowhere else are the nine heavens found. Nothing is alien to them, for there is nothing that is not One Taste.

Indeed, the whole point is to be fully at home in the body and its desires, the mind and its ideas, the spirit and its light. To embrace them fully, evenly, simultaneously, since all are equally gestures of the One and Only Taste. To inhabit lust and watch it play; to enter ideas and follow their brilliance; to be swallowed by Spirit and awaken to a glory that time forgot to name. Body and mind and spirit, all contained, equally contained, in the ever-present awareness that grounds the entire display.

Sunday, May 25—Boulder

Another Naropa seminar. An excerpt:

Student: Some students say that because I was making judgments during a conversation about the "integral" approach, I was showing a real lack of compassion. I didn't think I was.



KW: Yes, there is probably more confusion about this issue than any other in spiritual circles. Basically, most of the trouble comes from confusing compassion with idiot compassion, which are the terms Trungpa Rinpoche used for this crucial distinction. We in this country—and especially in New Age circles—have a type of tepid egalitarianism and political correctness that says no view is really any better than another, and therefore all views are to be cherished equally, as a sign of rich diversity. If we don't make any judgments about better or worse, then we are showing real compassion. So we have judgmental versus compassionate, and that is the common understanding.

But, you see, that stance is a massive self-contradiction. On the one hand, it says that all views are equally part of a rich diversity, and thus no view is better than another. On the other hand, it strongly claims that this view itself is better than the alternatives. So this "compassion" states that no view is better than another, except its own view, which is superior in a world where nothing is supposed to be superior at all. It is a ranking that denies ranking and a judgment that all judgments are bad. So, although it is often truly well-intentioned, it's nonetheless a type of hypocrisy, because it is strongly doing that which it condemns in everybody else.

That hypocrisy has nothing to do with real compassion; in fact, that is idiot compassion. Idiot compassion thinks it is being kind, but it's really being very cruel. If you have an alcoholic friend and you know that one more drink might kill him, and yet he begs you for a drink, does real compassion say that you should give it to him? After all, to be kind you should give him what he wants, right? Who are you to impose your views on him, right? Giving him the drink would therefore show compassion, yes? No. Absolutely not.

Real compassion includes wisdom and so it makes judgments of care and concern: it says some things are good, and some things are bad, and I will choose to act only on those things that are informed by wisdom and care. Giving a severe alcoholic a case of whiskey because he wants it and you want to be "kind" is not being kind at all. It is showing idiot compassion, not real compassion.

Zen calls this the difference between "grandmother Zen" and "real Zen." In order to awaken from the dream of *samsara,* the ego itself must be really kicked around, often severely. Otherwise you will simply continue to play your favorite games. Grandmother Zen doesn't challenge you. In order to be "kind," grandmother Zen will let you sleep a little late if you want, and stop meditating early if you don't like how it's going, and allow you to wallow in you. But real Zen uses a very big stick, and lots of loud yelling, and there are occasionally broken bones and certainly shattered egos. Real compassion kicks butt and takes names, and it is not pleasant on certain days. If you are not ready for this fire, then find a New Age, sweetness-and-light, soft-speaking, perpetually smiling teacher, and learn to relabel your ego with spiritual-sounding terms. But stay away from those who practice real compassion, because they will fry your ass, my friend.

What most people mean by "compassion" is: please be nice to my ego. Well, your ego is your own worst enemy, and anybody being nice to it is not being compassionate to you.

Now maybe you and I aren't accomplished masters, and so maybe we don't always know what is real compassion and what is not. But we must start to try to learn to exercise real compassion instead of idiot compassion. We need to learn to make qualitative distinctions. These are hierarchical judgments that involve the ranking of values. If you don't like hierarchy, well fine, that is your hierarchy: you hierarchically value nonhierarchies more than you value hierarchies. That's fine with me, just be honest enough to correctly label what you are really doing. If you don't like value rankings and want to avoid them, then fine, that is your value ranking—you rank non-ranking as better than ranking—and that itself is a ranking, your ranking. At least be honest about this. The fact is, ranking is unavoidable in values, so at least do it consciously, honestly, and above board, and stop this hypocritical stance that you are being "nonjudgmental," which itself is a colossal judgment.

Student: But isn't choiceless awareness without judgements?

KW: Choiceless awareness accepts absolutely everything that arises, including both judging and not judging. You

see, nonjudgmental is itself a choice between two opposites—judging versus not judging—which is why "nonjudgmental" is not at all the same as choiceless awareness. Choiceless awareness is the absolute mirror that effortlessly reflects whatever arises—it does not try to chose not-judging versus judging. When you hear somebody saying they are being "non-ranking" and "nonjudgmental," run! We need to learn to consciously make qualitative distinctions. We need to make judgments, based on degrees of depth. Idiot compassion has nearly destroyed this field, and made genuine spiritual progress difficult indeed.



When you hear somebody saying they are being "non-ranking" and "nonjudgmental," run!

Student: These people jumped all over me for making qualitative judgments, and they were really sanctimonious....

KW: Well, you know, there is a big difference between making qualitative judgments and being obnoxious. So my advice, when you run into this, is to first check your own attitude and check your own motivation. It does no good for us to also get sanctimonious. You know, "WE have the REAL compassion and those schmucks have the idiot compassion." We can all get caught in this; I know I do. It's judgment bereft of skillful means, and that's just obnoxious. So watch out for that. But you said you were attacked because you were talking about the importance of a more integral view?

Student: Yes.

KW: That's a special problem. A good rule of thumb is that people are not going to expand their present views or outlooks by much more than 5 percent at any given time. So if you are trying to push a very big picture at them, they are probably going to shut down, and maybe get angry, and then start calling you names—you lack compassion, you're arrogant, etc. If you keep pushing, then at that point it really is your problem. Maybe your ego is enjoying shoving this down their throats. I know I've done that on occasion, and it helps nothing. Anyway, if you are really trying to help—real compassion—then don't put more in the spoon than can be swallowed, yes?

Also, remember that belief systems are not merely beliefs—they are the home of the ego, the home of the self-contraction. Even a holistic belief, like the web-of-life, always houses the ego, because beliefs are merely mental forms, and if the supramental has not been discovered, then any and all mental constructions house a tenacious ego. When you challenge any belief system, the separate-self experiences that as a death threat and a death seizure, and this will engage all its survival instincts. You are not just discussing the truth or falsity of a theory—you are engaged in a life and death struggle. Whenever we do this, we're dealing with a cornered rat—in others and in ourselves, so watch out.

Student: Why is idiot compassion so popular?

KW: Oh, because it does not threaten anything. It's rampant in so many spiritual circles because the ego does not fundamentally want to be challenged. It wants grandmother Zen. So the ego will pay big money for a weekend workshop that will "empower" the ego, tell it that it is really God or Goddess, give it a new concept to think about and call "spirit," plug it into the "web-of-life" and promise ultimate unity from that merely mental idea. In fact, the huge market in spiritual books in this country is basically motivated by one intense drive: the boomers want to be told that their ego is God, their self-contraction is Spirit. The self-contraction is simply relabeled "sacred" and grandmother Zen smiles on all.

But I don't think any of those approaches are bad or mean-spirited or anything like that at all. I just think they are a little bit confused.

Of course, let me add, some people might react negatively to an integral view because it's wrong! I mean, it's possible that those of us who believe in a more integral view might simply be mistaken, and so of course sane and rational people will react negatively to it. So we always have to keep that possibility in mind. It's not automatic that they are threatened because we're right and they're wrong—it could be the other way around.

Tuesday, August 12

Naropa seminar.

This time the dominant theme, raised by several students, was the rampant anti-intellectualism that you usually find at many spiritual and countercultural institutions. "Experiential" is contrasted to "intellectual"; the former is valued, the latter, denigrated. If you start to give an intellectual explanation of anything, you are, as one student put it, "nearly crucified on the spot." This is because you are supposed to be experiential, not intellectual, abstract, or conceptual. You are supposed to come from the heart, not

from the head; you are supposed to center in the body, not in the mind. Experiential is spiritual, which is good; intellectual is the ego, which is analytic and divisive and "like way totally bad."

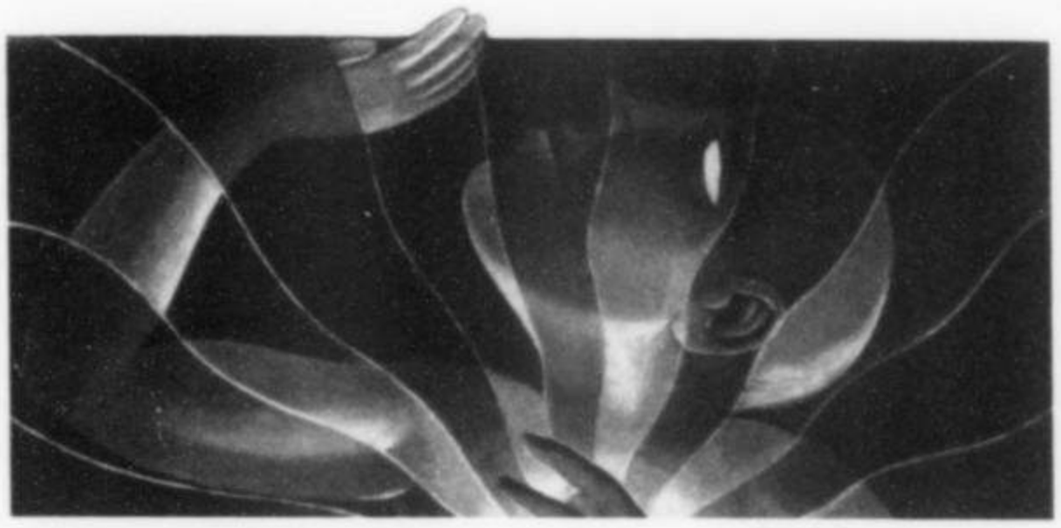
All of which, I responded, is a complete misunderstanding of both experiential and spiritual. An excerpt:

KW: We were talking about experiential. Experience is basically just another word for awareness. If I experience my body, it means I am aware of my body. You can indeed be aware of your body, but you can also be aware of your mind—you can right now notice all the thoughts and ideas and images floating in front of the mind's inward eye. You can, in other words, experience your mind, be aware of your mind. And it's very important to be able to experience your mind directly, cleanly, intensely, because only by bringing awareness to the mind can you begin to transcend the mind and be free of its limitations. When that begins to happen, usually in meditation or contemplation, you can have even higher experiences, spiritual experiences, mystical experiences—*satori*, *kensho*, *samadhi*, *unio mystica*, and so on. You can, we might say, be aware of spirit, experience spirit, although in a more nondual manner.

So you can experience body, mind, and spirit. All of those are experiential. So perhaps you can begin to understand why it is a grave error to reduce experiential to just the body, to just bodily sensations, feelings, emotions, impulses, and so on. This is a very unfortunate reductionism. It denies the higher experiential realities of the mind and spirit: it denies intellect and buddhi, higher mental vision and imagery and dreams, higher rational discrimination and perspectivism and moral depth, higher formless awareness and deeply contemplative states—all are denied or reduced.

The body, you see, is basically narcissistic and egocentric. Bodily feelings are just about your body, period. The body's sensations cannot take the role of other—that's a mental capacity—and therefore the body's sensory awareness cannot enter into care and compassion and ethical discourse and I-thou spirituality—all of those demand a cognitive, mental, intellectual awareness. To the extent you "stay in your body" and are "anti-intellectual," then you stay in the orbit of your own narcissism.

So that's the first mistake in this "experiential versus intellectual" prejudice—all of the experiential modes are reduced to bodily experiences only, which is the essence of egocentrism. The second mistake is to then reduce spiritual experiences to bodily experiences. The idea is that if you stay focused in your body, focused in your feelings, that these are the direct door to spirituality, because they transcend the mind. But staying only in the body, you are not beyond the mind, you are beneath it. You are not transcending, you are regressing—becoming more and more narcissistic and egocentric, focusing on your own feelings. And this, if anything, prevents actual spiritual experiences,



because genuine spirituality is "bodymind dropped"—that is, you cease identifying exclusively with both the feelings of the body and the thoughts of the mind, and this you cannot do if you merely "stay in the body."

So anytime you hear somebody tell you to be "experiential" instead of "intellectual," you can almost be certain they are making these two simple but crucial mistakes. They are taking the experiences of body, mind, and spirit and claiming that only the body experiences are real—the lowest of the experiential domains!—and then they are reducing spiritual experiences to bodily experiences. Both are extremely unfortunate.

But the thing is, it's even worse than that. Although we can accurately speak of bodily, mental, and spiritual experiences, the fact is, the very highest spiritual states are not even experiences. Experiences, by their very nature, are temporary; they come, stay a bit, and pass. But the Witness is not an experience. It is aware of experiences, but is not itself experiential in the least. The Witness is the vast openness and freedom in which experiences arise, and through which experiences pass. But the Witness itself never enters the stream of time—it is aware of time—and thus it never enters the stream of experiences.

Monday, June 2

Early morning, the orange sun is slowly rising, shining forth in empty luminous clarity. The mind and the sky are one, the sun is rising in the vast space of primordial awareness, and there is just this. Yasutani Roshi once said, speaking of satori, that it was the most precious realization in the world, because all the great philosophers had tried to understand ultimate reality but had failed to do so, yet with satori or awakening all of your deepest questions are finally answered: it's just this.

Sunday, April 27

The Witness is fully available in any state, including your own present state of awareness right now. So I'm going to talk you into this state, or try to, using what are known as "pointing out instructions." I am not going to try to get you into a different state of consciousness, or an altered state of consciousness, or a nonordinary state. I am going to simply point out something that is already occurring in your own present, ordinary, natural state.

So let's start by just being aware of the world around us. Look out there at the sky, and just relax your mind, let your mind and the sky mingle. Notice the clouds floating by in the sky. Notice that this takes no effort on your part. Your present awareness, in which these clouds are floating, is very simple, very easy, effortless, spontaneous. You simply notice that there is an effortless awareness of the clouds. The same is true of those trees, and those birds, and those rocks. You simply and effortlessly witness them.

Look now at the sensations in your own body. You can be aware of whatever bodily feelings are present—perhaps pressure where you are sitting, perhaps warmth in your tummy, maybe tightness in your neck. But even if these feelings are tight and tense, you can easily be aware of them. These feelings arise in your present awareness, and that awareness is very simple, easy, effortless, spontaneous. You simply and effortlessly witness them.

Look at the thoughts arising in your mind. You might notice various images, symbols, concepts, desires, hopes and fears, all spontaneously arising in your awareness. They arise, stay a bit, and pass. These thoughts and feelings arise in your present awareness, and that awareness is very simple, effortless, spontaneous. You simply and effortlessly witness them.

So notice: you can see the clouds float by, because you are not those clouds—you are the witness of those clouds. You can feel bodily feelings, because you are not those feelings—you are the witness of those feelings. You can see thoughts float by, because you are not those thoughts, you are the witness of those thoughts. Spontaneously and naturally, these things all arise, on their own, in your present effortless awareness.

So who are you? You are not objects out there, you are not feelings, you are not thoughts—you are effortlessly aware of all those, so you are not those. Who or what are you?

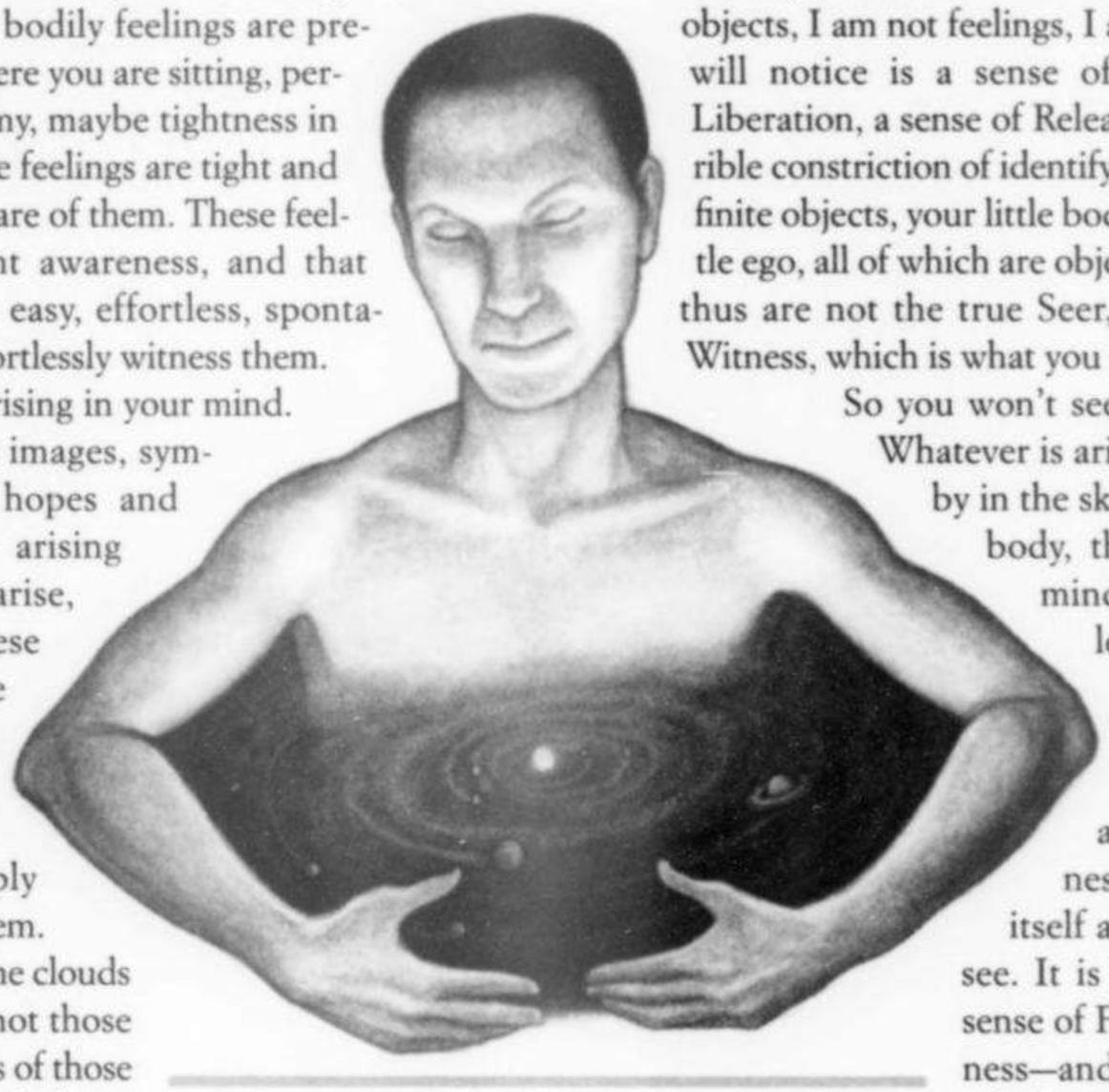
Say it this way to yourself: I have feelings, but I am not those feelings. Who am I? I have thoughts, but I am not those thoughts. Who am I? I have desires, but I am not those desires. Who am I?

So you push back into the source of your own awareness. You push back into the Witness, and you rest in the Witness. I am not objects, not feelings, not desires, not thoughts.

But then people usually make a big mistake. They think that if they rest in the Witness, they are going to see something, or feel something, something really neat and special. But you won't see anything. If you see something, that is just another object—another feeling, another thought, another sensation, another image. But those are all objects; those are what you are not.

No, as you rest in the Witness—realizing, I am not objects, I am not feelings, I am not thoughts—all you will notice is a sense of Freedom, a sense of Liberation, a sense of Release—release from the terrible constriction of identifying with these puny little finite objects, your little body and little mind and little ego, all of which are objects that can be seen, and thus are not the true Seer, the real Self, the pure Witness, which is what you really are.

So you won't see anything in particular. Whatever is arising is fine. Clouds float by in the sky, feelings float by in the body, thoughts float by in the mind—and you can effortlessly witness all of them. They all spontaneously arise in your own present, easy, effortless awareness. And this witnessing awareness is not itself anything specific you can see. It is just a vast, background sense of Freedom—or pure Emptiness—and in that pure Emptiness, which you are, the entire manifest world arises. You are that Freedom, Openness, Emptiness—and not any itty-bitty thing that arises in it.



These thoughts and feelings arise in your present awareness, and that awareness is very simple, effortless, spontaneous. You simply and effortlessly witness them.

Resting in that empty, free, easy, effortless witnessing, notice that the clouds are arising in the vast space of your awareness. The clouds are arising within you—so much so, you can taste the clouds, you are one with the clouds, it is as if they are on this side of your skin, they are so close. The sky and your awareness have become one, and all things in the sky are floating effortlessly through your own awareness. You can kiss the sun, swallow the mountain, they are that close. Zen says "Swallow the Pacific Ocean in a single gulp," and that's the easiest thing in the world, when inside and outside are no longer two, when subject and object are nondual, when the looker and looked at are One Taste. You see? ❑

GenX Spirituality

Tom Beaudoin



What could a young, irreverent but faithful Catholic possibly have to say about spiritual practices to a largely non-Catholic audience in a magazine such as TIKKUN? Easy: my spirituality is of the GenX variety, and I am convinced that GenX spirituality is a pan-religious phenomenon, practiced by young Jews and Catholics, Methodists and Buddhists, Pagans and Presbyterians.

This GenX spirituality includes four common characteristics—suspicion of institutions, primacy of personal experience, attention to suffering, and exploration of ambiguity—but can be understood most immediately by taking the spiritual pulse of popular culture. Pop culture is my generation's *lingua franca*, and has become our surrogate "minister." Just listen to any conversation between young adults that lasts longer than thirty seconds. We explain ourselves and understand ourselves with reference to scenes in movies or sitcoms, to moments in a particular song or to a frame from a comic book. It's only natural, then, that popular culture is not only our common language, but the common site of our spiritual practice as well.

I had written almost two hundred pages on this GenX spirituality—pop-cultured, irreverent, oddly traditional, ironic and eclectic—for my book *Virtual Faith* when I came to a humbling realization that almost derailed my project. Social justice—a concern for the poor, excluded, and disenfranchised—was nearly absent from my book. I saw that I had not even made a very strong case for it (irrespective of common GenX practice) as an important part of an emerging GenX spirituality.

It was not as if I wasn't attempting to be spiritually aware, even a little pious, in writing this book. On the contrary, I had continually prayed that "God's will be done"; but I realized I had been actually praying and writing as if it was impossible to know anything in particular about God's will! As if certain commitments did not already demand my attention and obedience, such as a concern for the poor and the excluded. In this way, I slowly realized that my own "your-will-be-done" piety, when repeated like a mantra, served to shut my ears to the will of God that in fact cries out now to be done! Why pray for what I don't know if I ignore what has already been revealed to me, particularly in my own Catholic Christian tradition which stresses helping the poor and other forms of social justice?

My experiences writing this book and my own ministry to GenXers cause me to fear that many in my generation find themselves in a similar situation: not dismissing social justice outright (we do, after all, recall grainy footage of the civil rights marches), but seeing it as an "option"—an important option to be sure, but an option nonetheless. Many GenXers, regardless of socio-economic class, have a bourgeois attitude toward the world. Even if we're living off student loans and overloaded credit cards, most of us have the luxury of deciding whether we want to be engaged in social justice when we wake up each day, a luxury not shared by millions of people in the world. I am convinced that this "optioning" of social justice is not only a function of our economic situation but is also intimately related to the particular character of our emerging GenX spirituality.

Having grown up amidst largely pluralistic religious and secular spiritualities, and now awash in the billions of bits of information in cyberspace, we GenXers commonly feel free to pick and choose the "best" from various religious or spiritual traditions. Even the GenX Catholics to whom I minister are curious about Islamic Sufism and Jewish mystical Kabbalah. Many seem to be practicing pure religious syncretism. As one member of the Generation told me via e-mail, "I don't really acknowledge any religious affiliation or bias. I believe Jesus walked the earth, and was the Son of God—in fact, I believe he 'was' God, the creator. I believe in Buddha, Christ, Muhammed, the writings of Lao Tzu, Confucius, and many other wise people proclaiming truth."

There is a real danger that this rich GenX eclecticism can become—or is already becoming—merely an expression of the late capitalist veneration of individual "choice." After all, a GenX spirituality that takes tolerance as its fundamental commitment cannot justify the limits to such tolerance, such as child abuse, mistreatment of the poor, or

(continued on page 67)

ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID REGAN

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SPIRITUALITY

Where's the Politics?

Rabbi Rebecca Alpert



I must admit to being a skeptic when it comes to the "new spirituality." Even as, in my own life, my Jewishness gets expressed more and more in the realm of politics, I become less and less convinced that the craving for spirituality I see around me has led to any political consciousness at all. I know that there are many in the Jewish community who, while focused on spiritual issues, have not lost their political commitments. They would probably claim that their spiritual concerns provide fuel for their political action, and I would be inclined to believe them. But I worry about emphasis and focus. We turn too much inward. We obsess overmuch about our own individual spiritual growth, which is often couched in the idea of building community through prayer. And we have never come to terms with the fact that the class interests of comfortable and affluent American Jews are at odds with our moral obligations to join forces with others who are not so privileged in this society.

Perhaps we express political concerns in the midst of our prayer; perhaps our prayer leads us to action. But when I look at what is happening in the Jewish community, I see a lot of energy expended on spirituality, and very little energy expended on working towards a world of justice and peace. I would like to suggest that it might do us some good to change the way we are doing things. Rather than searching for the political dimensions of spirituality, we ought to be turning our attention to the spiritual dimensions of politics. Abraham Joshua Heschel called his involvement in civil rights marches praying with his feet. I think it's time we started thinking of ways to pray using our bodies as our liturgy.

Feet are a good place to start. Mine used to get powerfully cold standing out in front of abortion clinics as I escorted women who were coming for abortions; we were harassed and intimidated by anti-abortion contingents who saw God's image in the fetuses whose lives they were saving; I found God's image in the faces of the women who were carrying those fetuses and could not or did not want to bring them into life. It is not easy to talk about the spiritual dimension of the fight for abortion rights. We have tried to do so by capitulating to those who oppose abortion, by acknowledging it as a necessary evil. We have abandoned the religious position that defines abortion as an option for women who find spiritual delight in heterosexual sex and sometimes make mistakes or have accidents for which they ought not be punished. We need to bring a spiritual passion back to the pro-choice movement.

We also need to bring a broader perspective to that movement. Reproductive rights are also about the right to have children if women want to. What is happening under the guise of welfare reform is a misguided effort to prevent poor women from having children by denying them resources—either adequate work and child care or the safety net of governmental support when those things are unavailable. Where is Jewish spirituality when letters need to be written and petitions need to be signed to make it clear that we care about the poor? Our hands are also organs of the spirit when we join them in this fight.

In the summer of 1997, my congregation sent a delegation to the South to rebuild one of the many churches burned that year. Each and every participant returned spiritually fulfilled in ways none had dreamed possible. They used their hands and the sweat of their brows and were engaged in a truly spiritual experience. Why isn't there more of that going on in the Jewish community? Why aren't we praying with our hands, grasping hammers as we build homes with groups like Habitat for Humanity? Why don't we have such spiritual groups of our own?

We can also use our voices for political causes and feel the pull of the spirit. Whether speaking out against the death penalty or on behalf of domestic partnership rights in the city of Philadelphia, I have felt a connection to something greater than myself that is powerfully spiritual. Groups fighting for justice in our cities are often looking for Jews to become part of the battle. Why do we remain silent?

These issues and many others make me feel passionately and want to express that passion in ways that require me to act. It is clear to me I do this as a Jew, based out of a Jewish commitment to the rabbinical ideal for which this magazine is named: *tikkun olam*, repair of the world. I believe that this is the best route to the repair of our Jewish souls, for it is these prayers in the form of action that really bring us closer to what we are meant to be: beings created to work towards a world of justice and peace. ❑

ILLUSTRATOIN BY CHRIS PAPA

Rebecca Alpert is a Reconstructionist rabbi and assistant professor of Religion and Women's Studies at Temple University in Philadelphia.

Daniel Berrigan on Contemporary Developments in American Spirituality



ILLUSTRATION BY NORI HELLER

Father Daniel Berrigan, a member of the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits) and one of the people who went "underground" after being convicted of interfering with the operations of an army draft board during the Vietnam war, describes himself as being an unredeemed criminal and very proud of it.

There may be some people who think that spirituality is intrinsically antithetical to political action, but I've been privileged to meet many thousands of people of faith whose lives have been dedicated to testifying to the word of God through social protest and acts of intervention against illegitimate authority.

Most recently, some of us have been arrested repeatedly at a notorious war museum, the (Navy vessel) SS *Intrepid,* a pest house anchored in the New York Harbor. We are appalled that busloads of children from both public and parochial schools are brought to this obscenity to view the latest indiscriminate weapons—we believe that the place should be declared "pornographic" and off limits for children. We've been involved in protesting the American war machine in all its manifestations—my brother Phillip has been in prison for many years for his courageous actions against the weapons of war. We've been involved both here and in other places around the world where human rights are violated and where the obscenity of war is being waged. What sustains us in all this is our reading and study of the Bible, and our faith. We in the Catholic world see ourselves as deeply aligned with the social healing and transformation project that you at TIKKUN magazine have been pursuing so courageously and beautifully in the Jewish world.

Religious faith has been particularly important because it seems to sustain itself in moments when society is experiencing a recession of hope. Religious faith joins us to a much longer and tested human phenomenon than American culture can offer. The enticements to get in lockstep with the dominant culture are enormous and the pressures to fit in are enhanced by icons of greed and violence. We need saints and prophets to withstand the dominant culture—and those are rarely supplied by the "alternative" streams in American culture.

A lot of people find it hard to sustain their commitment to their own highest ideals because America has so successfully imbued its citizens with the notion that the highest goal is success. "Success" is such a weasel word. The goal of success is so very different from the dominant thrust of the Bible—there are few success stories in the Bible. The story of Jesus, in particular, is one of loss, failure, and capital punishment. The biblical message is one of sustaining faith in possibility even when the power of the forces of the current establishment seem to be overwhelming. So my brother can spend nine of the last thirty years of his life in prison, and yet still keep up his spirits, write, have a worldwide correspondence, and keep at it without being crushed by the system because he is connected to this biblical faith. I think that many of the secular social-change movements which avoid spiritual connection sometimes lack this kind of basis for sustaining the individual through difficult periods where there is no American-style "success" to be had.

There's a dimension to political work that I think is particularly common among spiritually-oriented folk that is not as common in the rest of the progressive social-change movements: namely, some connection with the victims of this society, whether they be the homeless, the poor, the sick, people with AIDS, or others who have experienced social oppression. I think that this kind of connection is very important for people who do social-change work, and yet I

Daniel Berrigan is author, most recently, of Daniel: Under the Siege of the Divine *(The Plough Publishing House, 1998).*

find it very unpopular among many social-change activists.

I often find our secular friends acting on the principle that unless a particular action has a big impact, they don't want to sustain it; they are looking for a quick avenue to success, and feeding the hungry or housing the homeless doesn't really have that kind of impact. Nobody can sustain him or herself in the struggle for a nonviolent world on the basis of the criterion of immediate success. The Bible gives us a long view rather than the expectation of a quick fix. All of us are in grave danger of being infected by this American ethos that good work brings quick change, rather than the older spiritual notion that good work is its own justification and that the outcome is in other hands besides ours.

Of course I'm aware that there is a kind of spiritual movement growing in America today that is divorced from a *tikkun* perspective, with people uninterested in anything outside of their own inner feelings. I've watched some of this new American spirituality fill itself with prideful psychobabble as it provides a self-obsessed inner focus for people who have "made it" but who don't care much about

Life is a roller coaster and one had better buckle one's belt and take the trip.

those who have not. Some of this spirituality is aimed at claiming one's own turf and immunizing oneself against the misery of the streets. It was very upsetting to me to be in some spiritual retreat centers and experience this attitude, the radiating affluence, self-satisfaction, and isolation from the suffering of others. It's a form of spirituality that I find degrading and divorced from any tradition of the human that I can understand. Yet I feel great compassion for the people who buy into this form of living. The price that one pays for this kind of spirituality is being out of one's own time and place in the universe, out of the sphere of the ethical, and being part of a shrinking minority of people on this planet who can afford to be selfish and buy immunity from the lot of humanity. One of the disturbing aspects of these kinds of spiritual communities—very different from, for example, the community of spiritually-oriented social-change activists with whom I work—is that people seek out their own kind and so they look very much alike, the same color, the same kind of clothing, the same implicit American understanding about being "number one" in the world and "anything goes" in order to retain it. I've even seen people coming from this place willing to cooperate with or even support some of the most ravenous policies of the American economy without any feeling of unease. Needless to say, those who are in the command positions of the American corporations and the military have no objection to this kind of spirituality—from their standpoint it's fine.

I rarely find New Age people involved with us when we are demonstrating against militarism or when we are feeding the hungry or creating shelters for the homeless or in the hospital work we do with AIDS people, whereas I find many spiritual people who are connected to religious communities. Too often some of the New Age people are seeking a soft world, which their affluence allows them to purchase, while turning their attention from the harsh realities of a world that needs healing and repair.

Some people today argue that equanimity achieved through inner spiritual work is a necessary condition for sustaining one's ethical and political commitments. But to the prophets of the Bible, this would have been an absolutely foreign language and a foreign view of the human. The notion that one has to achieve peace of mind before stretching out one's hand to one's neighbor is a distortion of our human experience, and ultimately a dodge of our responsibility. Life is a roller coaster and one had better buckle one's belt and take the trip. This focus on equanimity is actually a narrow-minded, selfish approach to reality dressed up within the language of spirituality.

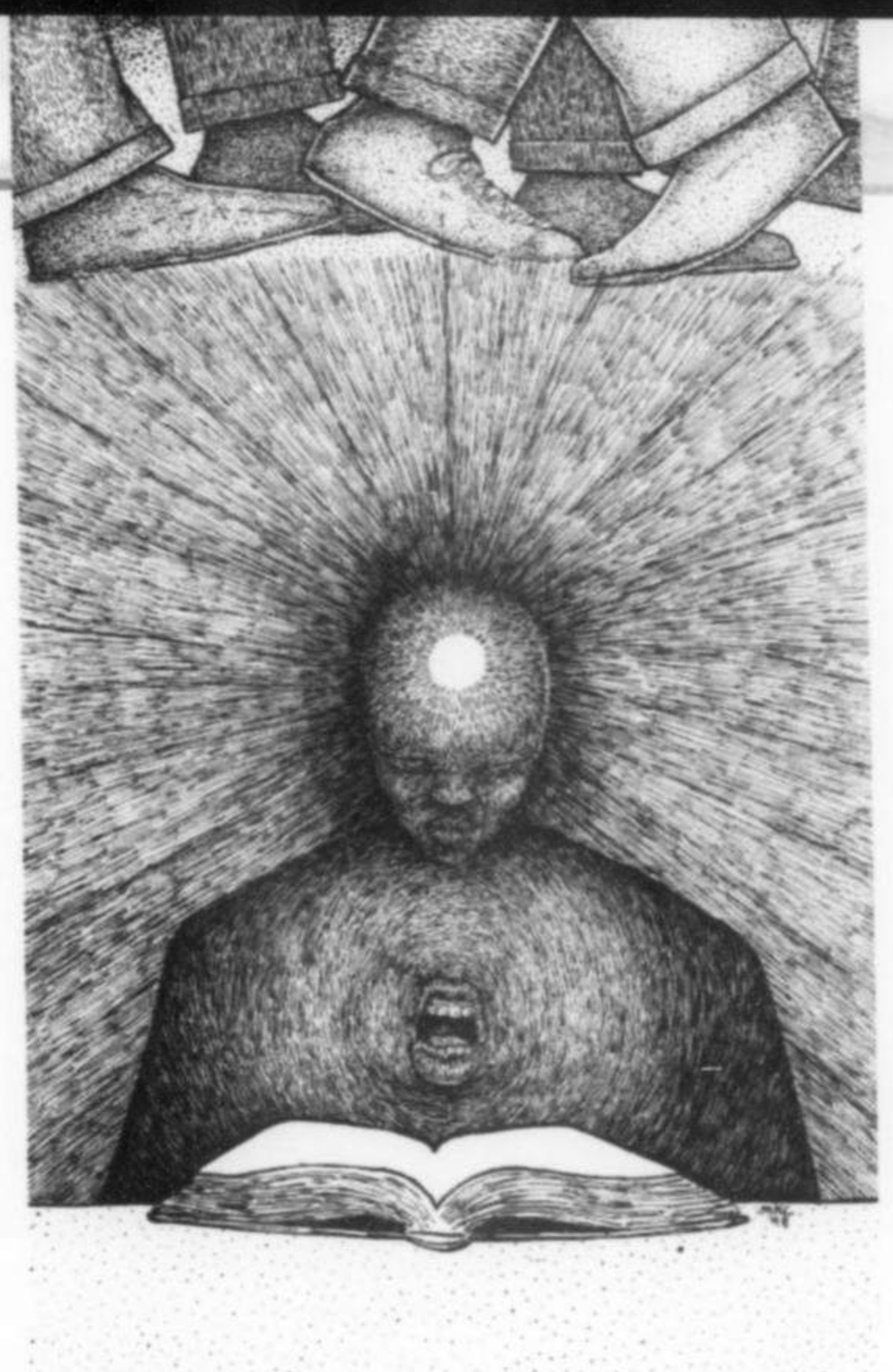
Open up the book of Jeremiah and you do not find a person looking for inner peace. What the prophet (and those inspired by the prophetic tradition) seeks is to be faithful to God in the midst of a maelstrom of suffering and setback. Jeremiah is crying out, and at wit's end, and then is filled with ecstasy and sees the promise—he goes through mountains and valleys. That kind of richness I find very appealing, whereas the kind of spirituality that looks for a flat emotional landscape brought on by the endless search for inner peace and equanimity I find disturbing, a quest that goes nowhere. I once scolded Thich Nhat Hanh after I heard him speak at a church in Manhattan. I told him that from my observation his audience was composed of people seeking cheap peace of mind, and that he had not helped people understand that his own life, though having elements of inner peace, had been an enormous struggle. He didn't tell his own story and gave people the impression that life could simply be about little acts of kindness without any connection to the larger struggles for social justice. It's those struggles that lead us beyond the confines of personal life to connect with the realities of others, including others who are suffering and who do not live in our neighborhoods and with whom we would not have contact (and hence, not have an opportunity to share acts of kindness) unless we consciously chose to seek them out.

I know that the prophetic vision is not popular today in some of these spiritual circles. But our task is not to be popular or to be seen as having an impact, but to speak the deepest truths that we know. We need to live our lives in accord with the deepest truths we know even if doing so does not produce immediate results in the world. ❑

SPIRITUALITY

When Politics *is* Prayer

Rabbi Arthur Waskow



ILLUSTRATIONS BY MAC McGILL

Some ask: Is it more important to "serve God" and heal the self through religious devotion and individual psychotherapy, or to "do God's will" and heal the world through public action to achieve social change?

Some ask: Is it possible in honesty to separate the two?

To me it seems that there is not a conflict but rather a crucial confluence between meditative mysticism and a religious commitment to heal the outer world. Just a generation ago:

- The neo-Hasidic new-form Rebbe Abraham Joshua Heschel said "My legs were praying!" as he brought his body into the streets to oppose racism and the Vietnam war.
- The monk Thomas Merton kept a Trappist silence through which his voice against that war echoed continents away.
- The engaged Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh led Vietnamese into a way of life that affirmed life, against both the tyrannies of Washington/Saigon and those of Hanoi.
- The "Catholic Worker" Dorothy Day prayed with deep devotion, with her own hands fed the poor in soup kitchens, and was often arrested as she protested war and militarism.

Yet in many religious traditions—even in Judaism, which is often said to be a religion of action—there is an ongoing debate, often carried on in whispers, over these questions. This debate becomes even sharper when there is a strong resurgence of mystical meditation as an avenue toward God-Within, as there now is in the movement for Jewish renewal.

There are some activists who say that prayer and the impassioned learning of religious texts and tales are a waste of time, and there are some meditators who say that only inner quiet can bring peace into the world.

These two groups tend to confirm each other's argument. A politics carried on in the name of "Ego," curdled by rage, bereft of love, may invent almost as much injustice as it abolishes. So the meditators point their fingers (with more than a hint of their own ego) and say: "I told you so!"

And a meditation carried on solely in the Name of "God Within" may often leave others, "outsiders" who also are bearers of the Holy Name, vulnerable to starvation, torture, mass murder. So the activists can also say: "I told you so!"

How do we bring our legs to pray, our hearts to act?

I want to suggest a theory of "social meditation" or "soulful action."

My basic premise is that what is true in macro, is true in micro, and vice versa. A whole social system is in its way a MacroPerson, just as a single human being is a Micro-Society. A single person enslaved to ego is analogous to a whole society held prisoner by those in power.

And the paths to healing are similar too, but they must take part in their different system-scales and therefore each healing may look quite different on the surface.

The fact that a large number of human beings become bearers of personal equanimity does not in itself create a society of justice and equality, so long as the institutions of that society are structured for domination. And making a just society does not automatically create *mentschlich* human beings, though Marxist theory ardently hoped for the emergence of a "New Man" from social transformation.

Neither change follows automatically from the other, but each can help bring the other closer. A society more just, more peaceful, makes it easier for individuals to do the prayer and meditation that makes them whole. People who have faced their shadow sides and cleaned out much of the rage they have inherited from past mistreatment are more

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Rabbi Waskow is director of The Shalom Center, a Pathfinder of ALEPH: Alliance for Jewish Renewal, and author of God-wrestling: Round 2 *and* Down-to-Earth Judaism.

Our Legs Are Praying



When Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel returned from Selma, Alabama, from marching alongside Dr. Martin Luther King for voting rights, he said: "My legs were praying."

Today some Jews walk, and don't pray. Some Jews pray and don't walk. Some work hard for social justice and ecological sanity—but divorce themselves from Judaism and spirituality. Other Jews remember prayer and Torah, but forget to heal the world.

*The next generation needs to know this teaching. Not only to "know" it, but to be effective when they walk it: **Jewish renewal and the healing of the world are intertwined.***

Our task is to teach this practical wisdom to our next generation.
Only you can help us do it.

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likely to heal society. But the two kinds of work, while analogous, are distinct and different.

When we call a person "spiritual," what do we mean? That s/he sees her/his self as part of a larger Whole; that s/he is not driven by work, but is able to rest and reflect in a holy rhythm; that s/he elevates no partial truth into an all-consuming Idol; that s/he knows when and how to relinquish control over others and over her/ his own future; that s/he listens with the heart to the pain and joy of others; that s/he can meet others deeply in I-Thou relationships, as well as make things happen in the I-It world.

And what is the spirituality of an entire body politic? Being able to rest, to "make Shabbos" in time, in space, and in socio-political relationships.

In the realm of time, this means pausing from Doing, Making, Controlling, in order to Be: celebrating festivals as times of joy and reexamination, rather than turning them into commercial exploitation, and setting aside even longer periods to pause from production and consumption while we reevaluate what technology will heal the earth.

In the realm of space, "making Shabbos" means relinquishing total control over our physical surroundings, including the whole of earth and (for the Jewish people) that version of the Land of Israel that we may have the naked military power to control. Instead, we should make collective *tzitzit* fringes on the corners of our culture and

If God is immanent, in every breath, as mystics teach, then God is also in the details.

How do we create a form of political change in which our legs and hands are praying not simply manipulating?

1 The Jewish calendar offers us many grassroots opportunities to unify the spiritual and the political. For example:

- Holding a Tu B'Shvat Seder in an endangered redwood forest or at the edge of the endangered Everglades, or planting trees in a poverty-stricken neighborhood
- Celebrating a Pesach (or pre-Pesach) Seder at the site of nuclear weapons tests or sweatshop garment factories
- Beating the Hoshana Rabbah willow branches on the earth and chanting Hoshana at a poisoned river
- Building a sukkah in a public park to offer temporary shelter to the homeless and to publicize demands for more permanent homes
- Collecting food and clothing as people gather for Kol Nidre to honor the Isaiah Haftarah for Yom Kippur morning that says, "The fast I require of you is to feed the hungry, clothe the naked." Each year, when reading the Torah portion that proclaims, "Justice, justice shall you pursue!" adding to a congregational loan to assist minority-owned economic enterprises through The Shefa Fund's efforts in this work

2 Communal celebrations of life-cycle events might also become moments to affirm *tikkun olam*:

- Sending left-over food from a bar or bat mitzvah banquet to a soup kitchen
- Giving 3 percent of the wedding dinner cost to Mazon to support hunger projects
- Adding to the wedding ceremony for gay or hetero couples a public statement of intention to win full rights of marriage for gay people (and maybe having a petition available for signing)

3 We can create ways of doing *tzedakah* together. Reb Zalman Schachter-Shalomi has reminded us that every prayer for *refuah* (healing) should be accompanied by *tzedakah* (charity). (It gives the prayer more "zip" with God, he said.)

- As the community gathers at the Sefer Torah to pray for refuah, someone should remind everyone who joins in this prayer that after Shabbat they should remember tzedakah
- On Purim, a traditional date for giving tzedakah, the hat should be passed before and perhaps again after the reading of the Megillah, maybe to support a women's shelter in memory of Vashti
- At the Pesach Seder, the children who hunt for the afikomen could be asked to consult together and name a *tikkun olam* group that, in addition to any individual gifts the kids receive, will receive tzedakah from all the Seder participants as ransom for the afikomen. (The hosts of the Seder could take responsibility to remind people, afterward)

Tzedakah could also come in forms other than money:

Some congregations that have grassy yards have planted organic vegetable gardens and, in accordance with the biblical mitzvah of *peah* ("corners" of the field, where what grows is left for the poor), have harvested the vegetables for soup kitchens, or, even more advanced, invited poor people to join the work, learning the skills and sharing the pleasures of growing.

Some congregations have joined in the Habitat for Humanity projects of working with poor people to build solid, inexpensive houses or to rebuild burned-out Black churches. Congregations could commit themselves to eco-kosher practice by focusing their prayers on healing the earth; by reshaping their Jewish education to unify Torah, eco-science, and eco-policy; by building political alliances to protect forests and reduce gasoline use; and by reshaping their own use of oil, paper, etc.

our territory, like the fringes on the corners of our clothes, saying, "At my edges, I relinquish my control, instead of stretching further to win dominion over others." That means withdrawing our military power to leave demilitarized zones at the corners of our territory and putting limits on how much carbon dioxide we dump into the planet's breathing-space.

In the realm of socio-political relations, "making Shabbos" means limiting our own wealth and making sure that everyone has a decent job at a decent income. And it means pausing long enough to hear "Sh'ma!" the collective wailing of the Palestinian people or of the homeless. All these are just as important spiritual practices as making sure that every individual has time to rest and Be. In other words, movements for ecological respect and for peace with other peoples are efforts toward a spiritual practice, a meditation, at the level of a whole society or all the human race.

In the biblical tradition, the most profound statement of this "isomorphic" relationship between personal equanimity and social justice is put forth in the teaching of the sabbatical and Jubilee years (Lev. 25 and Deut. 15). The call for a year each seventh year in which all the society and the entire land can make a Shabbat is utterly unified with a call for annulling debt and, ultimately, in the fiftieth year, freeing all servants from their terms of service and redistributing all land so that all share equally in holding the means of production. Not "owning" in this passage means that only God, YHWH, the Breath of Life, owns the earth.

What we might see as two different but intertwined provisions, socio-economic and spiritual, the Torah sees as one: *dror*. Release. Detachment. It does not use the language of *tzedek*, justice, but the language of meditation, restful self-reflection. For the whole society to rest means not only that physical labor pauses. The structuring of institutions in which some are bosses, some are serfs; some are rich, some are poor—that is what must pause. It pauses by dissolving. Hierarchy dissolves. And that is isomorphic, at the social level, with individual equanimity.

From this perspective, it is a betrayal of the God Who is Within, Between, and Beyond to make a private Shabbos but let the society turn Labor Day into a time of commercial greed.

And it is a betrayal of the Unity of Life to work—even for peace and justice—so unrestfully so as to drive yourself into an early grave.

Just as it shatters the body and the Spirit to clog our lungs with individual addictions to nicotine or crack, so it shatters the body politic and the body of the planet, as well as the sacred Breath of Life, for an entire society to clog the lungs of earth through our addiction to gasoline and oil.



Neither the serious activist nor the serious meditator can avoid struggle. We might as well choose both its forms: each will strengthen the other.



So, from a spiritual perspective, not all political positions are equal, just as from the perspective of seeking justice and peace, not all forms of prayer are equal.

I do not believe that Jewish renewal can be invoked by those who cast contempt on gay men or lesbians as well as by those who honor the loving covenants of all adults.

I do not believe that Jewish renewal can be invoked by those who wish to expel Palestinians from their homeland or who justify torture of Palestinian prisoners as well as by those who seek to make a free and mutual peace between the two families of Abraham.

I do not believe that Jewish renewal can be invoked by those who would jail or deport the homeless as well as by those who seek to create jobs and health care for everyone.

And this is where the meditators are correct. I do not believe Jewish renewal can be invoked by anyone who seeks justice in the world while lying about political opponents, cheating on a spouse, abusing a child, demeaning women, or being addicted to alcohol. To activists, we must say: Look inward, also. Choose ways of healing the world that help to heal yourself; and consciously set aside time to heal yourself as well.

For some meditators, the problem with action to heal the outer world is that it requires struggle. Sometimes, decent efforts for decent change are met with nasty hostility and must be pursued anyway. But any meditator who goes beyond dilettantism discovers that meditation also requires struggle. Growing in spiritual depth and practice, freeing the repressed sense of love and peacefulness, brings on lots of resistance, rebelliousness, rage even, from some part of your own self that has long been in power. From the Boss inside. The Ego.

And that's what a political backlash against a new effort toward peace, freedom, love of earth, is. The old Bosses, who are insiders, are reasserting their power against the new empowerment of outsiders. Neither the serious activist

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Roundtable on Feminist Spirituality

Tamara Cohen, Rabbi Laura Geller, Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb, Blu Greenberg, and Rabbi Rachel Sabath

This roundtable began with two observations: first, that the burgeoning interest in spirituality today has been felt strongly in the Jewish world; and second, that this interest in the spiritual is gendered. Editors tell us that women buy more books on spirituality than men; rabbis tell us that women have taken the main role in pushing for spiritual practices such as meditation and yoga in their congregations; bookstores signal the unique path women take with special sections on "women's spirituality." So we asked our roundtable participants to consider how we should understand gender difference in contemporary manifestations of Jewish spirituality. —*Jo Ellen Green Kaiser*

TIKKUN: I'd like to start by asking what spirituality means to each of you personally, and why it matters to you?

BLU GREENBERG: Growing up female in an Orthodox family and community, prayer for me was not the most significant experience—I understood that because I was a woman I was at one remove from where the liturgical spiritual community was. But in its place, a sense of community became the definition of spirituality for me, and still is.

Most of my spiritual experiences have come through learning more than through prayer, through family and community, through Israel, through nature, and through ritual.

This year, though, I had a new experience in terms of my relationship to prayer—saying kaddish for my father who died eleven months ago. I am one of three sisters, and we had never discussed saying kaddish or going to the morning minyan—that was something I had never done in my life, and it's something I would never have considered doing five or ten years ago, but the model of women from other denominations doing this and some of the articles written by women who have experienced it and the halachic materials coming out now about women and kaddish, brought me to this recitation of kaddish. Now I'm sorry I never discussed it with my father, with whom I was very close. Just being in shul every morning and davening Shacharit [the morning prayers] and seeing my life and my father's life and our relationship through the prayers that were so important to him has been an altogether new spiritual experience for me.

RABBI LYNN GOTTLIEB: Spirituality to me is the miracle of having the consciousness to experience the interconnectedness of and the aliveness of everything. Spirituality is our nature, stemming from our ability to be awake in the world. The spiritual traditions of the world, to me, are pools of wisdom through which we can more deeply connect to life through our community, through the vessels of ceremony and ritual. In particular, they help us to navigate the inevitable experience of death and loss, which I felt profoundly when I was twenty-one and lost my mother.

RABBI LAURA GELLER: I'm struck, listening to Blu and Lynn, by how we can't really separate personal story from spirituality. So I'll also tell a story. When I was a second year rabbinical student I remember our professor saying to us, "Divinity is present in every moment of Jewish life and the way we acknowledge that presence is by saying blessings. There is no important moment in the lifetime of a Jew for which there is no blessing."

I felt incredibly excited by that acknowledgment, and simultaneously I realized that it wasn't true, that there had been important moments in my life where there was no blessing. It brought me back to the moment when I was a thirteen-year-old girl and had just gotten my period. I remembered running to my mother and telling her and my mother said, "When I got my period my mother slapped me." I was confused and asked why and my mother said, "I don't know, go ask her." And I got on my bike and I went and asked her, "Why did you slap mom when she got her period?" and her response was, "She was losing blood, she was a little pale, she needed color in her cheeks."

I didn't think about that story again until I was sitting in that classroom and then I realized that what my professor said *needs* to be true, there should be no important moment in the lifetime of a Jew for which there is no blessing. What if my mother and I had said a prayer as simple as the

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"Shehechiyanu," thanking God for keeping us in life and bringing us to this moment—what an incredible impact that might have had on my sense of myself as a woman and my connection to the Jewish tradition. We need to create a Judaism that acknowledges that divinity is present in all of our experiences, and explore what kinds of blessings and ceremonies can help us do that.

Tamara Cohen: I also feel that spirituality is about different ways of interacting with the divine presence in the world. I am interested in using and helping others to use both traditional and non-traditional tools for doing that. It's important to remember that for women in particular, some of the traditional tools for spirituality have not increased interaction with the divine presence but actually blocked it. Thus the need for new tools, new paths.

My personal connection with the divine can come from being alone; it can come from intense personal interaction with a beloved, or in a teaching situation around a text or around a question about our lives; or it can come from being involved in social justice work.

Rabbi Rachel Sabath: Spirituality is indeed a combination of numerous mutually reinforcing elements. Ideally, our prayer, our study, our ethical actions, our work, our relationships serve to center and challenge us. Thus our spiritual lives are always in flux, deepening with every experience. My own spirituality is eclectic; it is decidedly liberal and traditional and pluralistic and post-feminist all at the same time.

One central component of my spiritual life is serious engagement with texts. This is how I not only attempt to meet the minds and souls and struggles of our ancestors but it is also often the source of inspiration and a sense of closeness with the divine.

I also try to learn from other spiritual traditions aspects which call to my attention aspects of Jewish spirituality that I was unaware of, or that make me realize ways in which Judaism has always been in a productive conversation with the world.

Tikkun: Your comments about what other traditions can offer Judaism lead me to ask what Jewish spirituality, and Jewish women's spirituality in particular, can add to the growing discussion of spirituality in America?

Geller: Jewish spirituality is grounded deeply in both a historical tradition and in the experience of the lives of contemporary people. Sometimes it feels to me that certain other expressions of popular spirituality flow from modern experiences but are not so grounded. We Jews reckon not only with the Torah of our own lives but also with the Torah of tradition. The tension between those two Torahs is the ground out of which Jewish spirituality grows.

Gottlieb: Living in New Mexico has given me a really interesting perspective about that, because we are neighbors and friends with indigenous American and Chicana women who have that same profound historical memory and cultural grounding. They also have something which perhaps Jewish culture lacks in America, which is a relationship to place (though maybe that's not true of New York City Jews!)

A conversation that you have with anyone from another tradition is going to be enlightening. As Laura says, we can offer our historical memory, and I would add our language, Hebrew, and our imagination and our traditions of creativity and story, and our dancing and our music and our food and our way of studying Torah and our relationship to family and community: all of these distinguish us as a people.

Greenberg: I agree that historical memory is essential to what we are all about, but I would add two other features. As Lynn suggests, one of these is the centrality of family, the celebration that takes place in the home. I think it is unique to Judaism, and Jewish women have been undervalued in the central part we have played in that arena—just Shabbat alone, which I would say is the organizing principle of Jewish life, is due to a great extent to Jewish women's participation throughout the millennia in making it holy. The celebration of Shabbat allows us to connect, not only horizontally to our family and Jews all over the world, but vertically, through the generations.

The second feature is the way that ritual brings you to spirituality. Certainly, in Judaism, there is an extraordinary emphasis on ritual, and the theology that ritual carries along the spirit is a theology that works. This is not to say that it doesn't also work the other way around, and most likely it's supposed to be that the spirit takes you to the ritual, but I think in fact that, as I speak out of my own experience, it's usually that ritual brings the spirit along. Jewish women have had a great deal to do with the creation of the structure in which ritual is performed.

Cohen: I think we can each take something from each other's traditions. In Judaism ideally there is a kind of balance: Jewish spirituality is not a separate topic in Judaism, as if there is the rest of your life and then there is spirituality. It's a very engaged spirituality and it's very attached to actions. There's room for meditation and silence, but there's also a core sense that spirituality emerges out of engagement in the work of the world as opposed to detachment from it.

In Judaism, holiness is something to be constantly acquired instead of something that we just naturally are. Judaism demands that we make holiness manifest in the world through our everyday lives.

Sabath: Speaking of the wholeness of our lives, we have not yet spoken of the possibility that men and women have—until quite recently—played quite different roles in Jewish life. With the turn toward modernity, Judaism has been able to respond to different historical contexts and yet to retain a very, very powerful identity from the ancient period to the rabbinic and through the different phases of the modern era. Now, it's unclear how that wrestling is

going to turn out—it's clear that today we are in an experimental phase, a phase of transition and transformation.

TIKKUN: I would like to pursue the connection you raise between gender and spirituality. An exciting aspect of contemporary Judaism has been the explosion of new ritual, prayer, and midrash by, and sometimes for, women. At the same time, as Blu reminded us earlier when she discussed saying kaddish for her father, we are still learning how women and men in Judaism can participate in prayer and ritual together. Is the goal of Jewish feminist spirituality to get to a place where men's and women's spirituality is integrated, or will we always need to acknowledge and respond to fundamental differences between the genders?

COHEN: This is a conversation that Ma'yan has every year. We host woman's seders, large ones, and every year there's a conversation about whether it is time yet to more actively include men. Is the ultimate goal that we won't have to have feminist seders, because every seder in every house will be feminist? I think that our goal is to integrate men and women but I don't look forward to a time when we will have to stop, also, having women's space. What that space is and how we will use it will change, as the integrated space changes, but I don't see that there won't be any need for also having women's space on our own. There are things that happen differently when women are together as women.

GREENBERG: Orthodoxy has stayed on the course from where it was three to four thousand years ago, at a time when the differences between men and women were global. Men's spirituality was expressed in the house of study and the house of prayer, and women were either not present in those places or at the periphery. And that's undergoing revolutionary change in our time.

On the other hand, the idea of distinctive but equal in ritual and spiritual life is going to be a mainstay of Orthodoxy, and I'm actually quite comfortable with that. I think that men and women are different. Some of it is conditioning, but I believe that there are differences beyond biology not due to conditioning. I think obliterating all differences other than biological might not be so great for society.

GOTTLIEB: In my congregation there are gay families with kids, lesbian families with kids, and I've been experimenting with rituals that include everyone and don't distinguish between genders, ages, or anything else. Instead, we celebrate our multiplicity.

GREENBERG: I don't think that blurring all the lines and making no distinctions is a necessary part of equality and spirituality. The issue is not to say there is no gender but to make everyone feel they are part of the whole. There are differences and they should be celebrated, not obliterated.

COHEN: I don't think we will ever really know whether there are essential differences or not (at least while society remains intact). In my experience working with Jewish women, some are happy doing what's grown out of male experience and don't feel essentially different, and some women do. I'm less concerned with why than with learning what women feel they want and with helping them find it.

GELLER: I agree with Tamara that perhaps we don't know enough. We don't know what a transformed Judaism would look like that really had a place for women's voices and experiences. I don't think we can even imagine that yet and so we can't formulate what our goal will be. But I think there is some danger in a distinctive but equal position, as we've seen in other social movements.

GREENBERG: You mean the argument that you can't be separate but equal.

GELLER: Right. I do think that one of the dangers in talking about gender and spirituality is a kind of essentialism which argues that men and women are fundamentally different beyond biological differences, and that certain expectations flow from that fundamental difference. My view is that women's spirituality comes out of an experience of marginality which isn't biological but societal. It comes from their recognition that some of the structures of Jewish tradition have ignored much of women's life. And out of that marginality has come an attention to our own experience and the creation of rituals to relate to the holiness that is present in our experience.

In my view, the focus that Judaism has now on spirituality and on theology is really a gift of Jewish feminism. What has happened is that these innovations turn out to not just be about women at all but about modern Jews taking seriously the Torah of their own life and asking where are the moments when divinity is present and where we need to acknowledge that presence. Once the questions of equality have been answered, we are free to ask questions of spirituality. For example, once it became clear that women could be counted in a minyan, it freed us to ask the question: what is the nature of prayer, how can we speak about God, what metaphors, images, languages can help us speak toward the God that we are praying to? And those questions blew open the issues of theology and spirituality.

SABATH: That these differences between men and women can marginalize us, as Laura just said, or prevent us from assuming certain roles, is the problem, not the difference itself. We are all created in the image of God, and each of us, however we define ourselves, represent some aspect of God. Our covenental responsibility is to live out our unique aspects of Godliness and our unique identities as fully as possible.

COHEN: There is a big difference, though, in acknowledging the holiness that comes out of the fact that every individual is different and in trying to suggest that certain categories of difference are holy. Blu cautioned us about blurring the lines between genders; I think we are learning that the lines are more blurry than most of us are comfortable living with on a daily basis. We have given the categories of "men" and "women" meaning, but those categories may not be the most important or holiest or

meaningful ways of understanding difference for us.

GOTTLIEB: What we are recognizing in Judaism is that we need to find a way for women to manifest our assertiveness, so that women's power can find a role in the public world. We need to become clan mothers, like Deborah on the hill. Whereas men's spirituality, which is also Jewish men's spirituality, has had a lot to do with overcoming ego, becoming nothing.

SABATH: Both men and women need to fulfill our greater potentials, to live out the masculine and the feminine in each of us.

GOTTLIEB: Yes, so given where we are, for everyone to attain their own fullness without imposing on them some constructed notion of gender, it's interesting to look at the thousands of years of men's spirituality and then to get a glimmer of women's spirituality in cultures where women were trained for leadership positions. I don't think we've really begun to learn how to shape a community which is not divided in its tasks along gender roles.



GREENBERG: I want to come back to the issue of conditioning. Over the last twenty-five years, with a measure of ambivalence and confusion, I have come gradually to the conclusion that gender difference is much more a matter of conditioning than I had thought. But I have also come full circle and realized that this very conditioning is what society deemed best to serve human beings, and I see this in terms of halachic issues in Orthodoxy too.

I don't want to throw away what the rabbis created. They were geniuses in human psychology, and they had, over the course of thousands of years of observing society and human nature, learned something about what serves us well. One of the problems is that only they made decisions, no women sat in on the deliberations. Another is that they were operating under a model of hierarchy. And one of the revolutionary gifts of feminism is doing away with hierarchy. Yet, I think you could cut away the hierarchy but keep an understanding of differentiation.

One way Orthodox feminists have addressed this is through women's *tefillah* [prayer groups]. Since women aren't counted in the minyan and don't have public liturgical roles to fulfill, women's tefillah groups are being formed in which women lead the entire service, read from the Torah, etc. It's a powerful spiritual experience. Yet I must also confess to a bit of ambivalence about them, because they address the needs of women who want to do more but abandon the majority of women in the mainstream.

Here's an interesting story. Three weeks ago, the rabbi in my shul announced that women would be permitted to carry the Torah through the women's section when it is being returned to the ark. Well, the earth could have opened up and swallowed him. There was so much opposition that three weeks later, he had to change the decision. When I spoke to him, he said the most opposition came from the women themselves.

I could not understand the men's opposition, because they know how sweet it is to carry the Torah and they all heard the rabbi explain how it was halachically permissible. But the women were conditioned to a different reality …

GELLER: to be marginal …

GREENBERG: and they felt uncomfortable.

TIKKUN: What do we make of these situations where it appears that women are choosing not to empower themselves in the spiritual world, where women are finding it comfortable to choose not to have a certain type of authority?

GELLER: I deal with this all the time, the tension between people's desire for comfort and the fact that one of the goals of Jewish tradition is to challenge--that the way things are is not necessarily the way God wants things to be. I feel this in the attempt to create meaningful prayer experience. Abraham Joshua Heschel said, "Prayer is nothing if it is not subversive." But the majority of the people who come to my shul come for comfort.

GREENBERG: I think you have to get them in there with comfort and then challenge them.

GOTTLIEB: The majority of Jews in America are unaffiliated, and I think we have to be aware that there are an equal number of people who don't step into shul because they don't find it comfortable.

COHEN: Also, Blu, what happened in your synagogue didn't surprise me because there was no engagement with the women in a conversation, no attempt at creating a safe space for those women to explore what holding the Torah would mean to them. For them, for their whole lives, carrying a Torah wasn't ok, and now suddenly it is—they might need a safe place to first hold a Torah or to touch it outside the context of regular services.

SABATH: Liberal Jewish women can be particularly helpful in these areas of changing roles because of our experiences of being peripheral. Often encountering other women in important spiritual roles is what enables more traditional women to feel more comfortable not only with proximity to the inner sanctums of sacred Jewish life, but also with the roles they might assume as leaders in our respective communities.

GREENBERG: That's very true, but it's also kind of sad that many young women growing up today don't give credit to feminism for any of the things that they are experiencing, and for the vast arrays of models before them in society.

GELLER: That's true, but then these women often have an experience later in their lives which makes them realize that there is still a lot of work to do.

GOTTLIEB: This weekend, we had a bat mitzvah for a young girl and her aunt. The aunt had become a Sikh because she had been excluded from Judaism. It was so moving to see the niece bringing along the forty-year-old aunt, to be the role model for her. To me this is the essence of Jewish feminism. ❑

Sharing Our Suffering

Rabbi Tirzah Firestone

"Mom, it feels like you are throwing away an opportunity," I said, trying to hold myself together. "Please don't close the door on our relationship." "No," my mother stopped to correct me, her voice stiff with formality. "You and I have no relationship. Nor is there any possibility of having one. It is you who made your decision to marry a non-Jew years ago. *That's* what closed the door."

There was nothing left for me to say and I hung up shortly, shaking with rage and grief. Even though it had been years since my mother had spoken to me, even though I had grown reconciled to being disowned, treated as if I did not exist, my mother's lack of humanity still shocked me.

I had come to her home, Israel, with the hope of reconciliation, bringing my eight-year-old daughter with me. Emily had never met her Jewish grandmother and I'd hoped that my mother's desire to lay eyes on her beautiful granddaughter would temper her disdain for me. But it had not worked out that way; and for now, there was no point in creating further strife and humiliation with a visit that would only be traumatic. Emily and I picked ourselves up and carried on with our tour of Israel, but inside I felt my wound open and gaping. I led my daughter by the hand as I introduced her to her Jewish culture. But I felt humiliated and broken down, half a person.

Passover arrived and we found ourselves in Jerusalem with our friends Roger and Sharon. On Seder night the windows and balconies stood open to the full moon, the spring night air wafting through the apartment bringing with it the holiday sounds of singing voices, laughter, and interacting families from the surrounding homes of the neighborhood. As we sat around our table performing the Passover rituals, the pain of my motherlessness clutched at my heart until it was tight as a fist. I felt physically weak and joyless, my enthusiasm for life gone.

The next morning, the city was quiet. Roger and I woke up early, leaving Emily and Sharon asleep, and took to the Jerusalem streets for a walk. Because it was a holiday, there was little traffic and the air was fresh. As we walked from neighborhood to neighborhood toward the Old City, the birds sang and hopped about us cheerfully and the new grass and leaves sparkled in the sun after many days of chilly rain. My love for Jerusalem was enormous. I imagined I could feel the very soul of the city that morning, ancient and wise and beleaguered. How much blood she had seen shed over the centuries, and how much human arrogance! She had witnessed all of her children at various times trespassing the laws of the heart for the sake of their own religious dogma, and there was still no end in sight.

As Roger guided me toward the ancient city walls and through the Damascus Gate, the atmosphere began to change. We were taking a chance walking in the Old City; there was trouble brewing here. The sun shone less brightly in these narrow streets. Arabs were everywhere—for them it was not a holiday. Men sat out in sweater vests and *kaffiyah* headdresses nervously fingering their rosaries or playing games of backgammon while dark-haired children scurried about. The women were well-shrouded, hauling loads on their heads, their long, brightly embroidered dresses and scarves whipping in the morning breeze.

The Moslem quarter was a world apart; its rich odors, colors, and costumes sent me back to another time. As Roger and I walked single-file down the narrow streets, the smells of Turkish coffee, donkeys, goats, and freshly tanned leather mingled in my nose. All sorts of wares—brightly painted ceramics, rugs, and candies—were strung or piled plentifully on display, grabbing for my attention. Yet the Arabic voices were halting and hushed, and the uneven cobblestones under my feet made me feel off-balance. Something about the sweet heaviness in the air felt disturbingly familiar. I grew increasingly uncomfortable and a dark feeling hovered over me.

As we continued to walk through the Arab marketplace and streets, I began to notice the faces and bodies of the Palestinian people we passed: despondent faces with troubled, shifting eyes and furtive body movements. They carried themselves as if they were small in stature, with the hopeless, lackluster look of one who had not been deigned to be acknowledged in the eyes of another. Suddenly I felt ashamed. What was I doing here walking through their streets, watching them as if they were different from me?

Although our situations were vastly different, and in so many ways, I was far more fortunate than they, I began to feel I had something in common with these people whose streets I now walked. The helpless ineptitude I saw in their bodies was familiar to me. My own mother's refusal to relate to me, to ask

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Excerpted from With Roots in Heaven: One Woman's Passionate Journey Into the Heart of Her Faith *(Dutton, September 1998). Rabbi Tirzah Firestone is the spiritual leader of the Jewish Renewal Community of Boulder, Colorado and a psychotherapist.*

In the Presence of the Shechinah

Silja J.A. Talvi

The sun on the treetops no longer is seen;
Come, gather to welcome the Sabbath, our queen!
Behold her descending, the holy, the blessed,
And with her the angels, of peace and of rest.
Draw near, O queen, and here abide;
Draw near, draw near, O Sabbath bride
Peace be unto you, O angels of peace.

—Hayim N. Bialik (trans. A. Irma Cohon), from the *Kol Haneshamah* Reconstructionist Prayerbook.

The Jewish Sabbath did not make its way into my life until I was a teenage girl, struggling with failing grades, unhealthy relationships, and an attempt to find my place in a seemingly hostile and cruel world. The first recollections I have of my recently divorced Jewish mother trying to introduce the Shabbat ritual to her two daughters are laced with painful, conflicting emotions. I, her eldest daughter, had immersed myself in the dynamic chaos of the Los Angeles punk rock scene and had no space or energy for what I perceived as an attempt to try to force religion into my life. I remember observing my mother's first attempts to bring this ancient ritual to our home through an angry haze, coldly rejecting her desire to have me participate in the unfamiliar Shabbat rituals—the candle lighting, blessings over wine, ritual washing of the hands, and breaking of the bread.

My mother's once rather secular life had been changed by a chance encounter with an Orthodox woman in a market on Fairfax, a historic Jewish street in Los Angeles. In heavily Yiddish-accented English, Gitta had asked my mother for advice on cooking a vegetable. My mother answered, and soon a lively conversation was struck up between the two women. In those few ensuing minutes a friendship was born which was to last the remainder of Gitta's life. Gitta, an elderly woman remarkably well-versed in all matters pertaining to Jewish texts, happened to be the mother of Reb Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, one of the foremost figures in renewal Judaism and modern Jewish mysticism.

My own encounters with Gitta in the years to follow are permanently etched into my memory. A woman with the gift of seeing into people's souls, Gitta looked deep into my eyes and never even so much as flinched at my unorthodox appearance. I can fondly recall her approval of the combat boots I wore on one of our visits to her modest home: "Zey are very senzible shoes, no?" Gitta's heart was pure and giving, and she did not hesitate to welcome us into her extended family.

My mother's own spiritual journey, guided by Gitta's insights, had the eventual result of bringing a new sense of hope and perspective to our family. As the relationship between the two of us improved, I became more open to learning about Jewish customs, ritual practices, and history. My involvement in L.A.'s subcultures had brought me in contact with reggae music and with the faith of Rastafari, which strongly appealed to my sense of outrage toward racial and class disparities as well as to my desire to learn more about a spiritual path which rejected mainstream cultural norms. In great part, Rastafari is based upon interpretations of Hebrew texts, and as a result, I felt compelled to understand more completely the terms and concepts espoused by the Rastas with whom I would speak.

With some initial skepticism, I began to observe the Friday evening customs with my family. Having recited the prayers and consumed the evening meal, I would often head out the door for a hardcore show with my friends. In the circles in which I existed, my burgeoning identity as a Jew was met with varied reactions, most neutral or positive. As personal expression was encouraged, my desire to affirm my heritage was generally respected.

It was not until the latter half of my teen years that the Sabbath and holidays truly became an integral part of my life. It was then that I began to immerse myself in the study of Jewish history and radical activism, seeking my own, unique place in a largely patriarchal religious tradition and an alienating, seemingly materially-oriented Los Angeles Jewish culture. In my senior year of high school, I came across the collection edited by Susannah Heschel, *On Being a Jewish Feminist,* that verified my own perspectives on the unbalanced nature of patriarchal Judaism and broadened my understanding of how other Jewish women had learned to celebrate and reclaim many of the matrifocal and/or egalitarian traditions that had existed in our faith.

As I delved further into my studies, I began to view Shabbat as an observance engendered with strong and holy female elements. On Shabbat, as I learned, many Jews wel-

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come in the Shechinah, the female manifestation of the divine presence, as described in this passage from the Zohar:

> *The Secret of Sabbath:*
> *She is Sabbath!*
> *United in the secret of One*
> *to draw down upon Her the Secret of One*
> ...
> *There is no power in all the worlds aside from Her.*
> *Her face shines with a light from beyond;*
> *She is crowned from below by the holy people,*
> *and all of them are crowned with new souls. ...*
> *[They] bless her with joy and beaming faces.*
>
> —Translated by Daniel C. Matt
> in *The Way of the Jewish Mystics*

In virtually all observant Jewish families, it is the women who light the candles, cover their eyes in meditative reflection, and say many of the blessings that welcome in Shabbat. In a manner that has arisen out of my own life's circumstances, I now honor the weekly celebration of Shabbat in my own home in this way. In the few hours prior to the moment of prayer which welcomes in the Shechinah, I attempt to clean the house and prepare a homemade challah and a vegetarian meal. Far from viewing these tasks as "chores" or repressive, female household duties, I relish the entire spiritual process of cleansing, preparing, and winding down for the day of rest. When the smell of challah fills my home, I feel powerfully connected to the thousands of years of history that constitute my heritage—and to the women who made my existence possible through their determination and commitment.

My husband, a Japanese American non-Jew, sets the table with the Shabbat candles, the challah and its covering, the *kiddush* cup, and the dish for the laving of the hands. My recitations of the traditional prayers are supplemented by readings of Psalms and egalitarian prayers and poetry. Zen Buddhist readings, which we find to complement our weekly observance, are often added by my husband. The brief service varies somewhat from week to week, and yet its calming effect is always the same: eating by the illumination of the candles, we are able to enjoy each other's company in a manner unlike the earlier, more hurried portion of the week. From that moment until sundown the following evening, our lives take on a different pace. Although all of the injunctions observed by the Orthodox are admittedly too restrictive for my life, I spend Shabbat mindfully—free from work, bills, and other matters ill-suited to personal and spiritual growth.

Admittedly, my observance of Shabbat has also presented me with numerous challenges. In interviews with potential employers, my queries about their willingness to grant me leave on the Sabbath (and Jewish holidays) have often been met with skepticism, confusion, or disgruntlement. My efforts to finish undergraduate and then graduate school



ILLUSTRATION BY LYNNE FELDMAN

while holding down one or more jobs—and observing Shabbat—were a true test, in a sense, of my commitment to this aspect of the faith. And my attempts to find kinship with other Jews observing the holy day of rest has been a largely futile one. Outside my family (and with some notable exceptions), I have found most Jews in my age group and of my lifestyle uninterested in or unwilling to observe the weekly ritual. Most of my attempts to exchange Shabbat pleasantries with more traditionally observant Jewish families as they walk to or from services have been met with curious stares and staggering silences. And if I could only see it from their perspective! A young woman with a mountain of dreadlocks smiles and says "*Gut Shabbes*!" The stories they must tell! Such experiences make even more meaningful the existence of people like Gitta, who graced the planet with her non-judgmental vision and warmth.

Truly, one of the most powerful things that Shabbat has brought to my life has been a profound sense of balance. Over the years, through a sometimes abundantly chaotic life, this ancient weekly ritual has given me the gift of feeling a part of something larger and more unified. As isolating as it might be, at times, to live as a Jew and embody so many non-traditional qualities, I have nonetheless developed a strong sense of belonging—to the Jewish people, to Jewish culture, and to a Jewish way of being. Beyond the individual experiences which have shaped my appearance, my personality and my life, there exists a collective spiritual presence which Shabbat has brought me to recognize and call my own.

Shabbat Shalom. ❑

Jewish Meditation

An Emerging Spiritual Practice

Nan Fink



At a recent talk on Jewish meditation, a young woman came up to me, face radiant. I never knew this practice existed, she said, pressing my hands. Judaism always seemed spiritually dead to me.

Her remark was no surprise. Many people are unaware of the centuries-old tradition of meditation within Judaism, and they've never learned about its richness or its possibilities for transformation.

But the word is getting out, in both the Jewish and non-Jewish worlds. The mainstream press has discovered Jewish meditation, as witnessed by recent articles in *The New York Times* and *Newsweek*. Several centers of meditation now exist, classes are hastily being put together, and an increasing number of synagogues and temples are integrating Jewish meditation into their programming.

The recent emergence of Jewish meditation comes at a time when people are searching for spiritual meaning. The pressures of daily living threaten to overwhelm us, and we yearn to connect to something beyond ourselves. Those of us who have sought spiritual meaning in other traditions are excited to find it within our own.

More traditional Jews are drawn to Jewish meditation once they realize that it can be used, alone or with prayer, to deepen their spiritual experience. Since it is constructed around familiar Jewish images and is historically based, it bears the reassuring stamp of Jewish legitimacy.

For secular Jews and non-Jews, Jewish meditation is appealing because it does not require a belief in the traditional God nor membership in a synagogue or temple. They can enter it with a feeling of integrity, and their experience with other meditative traditions can add to their ability to meditate in a Jewish setting. For secular Jews, Jewish meditation also offers the possibility of connecting in this way with the tradition of their birth.

Nan Fink, the founding publisher of TIKKUN, *is co-director of Chochmat HaLev, a center of Jewish meditation in the San Francisco Bay Area. She is the author of* Stranger in the Midst: A Memoir of Spiritual Discovery.

The practice of Jewish meditation shares some of the attributes of other forms of meditation, but it differs in significant ways. Jewish meditation traditionally is meant to be part of a more comprehensive Jewish spiritual practice. In the past, it would have been unthinkable for a Jew to meditate but not observe Shabbat, *mitzvot* (rightful acts), Torah study, prayer, and *tikkun olam* (healing and repairing the world). In our times, however, many students do not take on the full practice, at least not in the traditional sense.

Historically, Jewish meditation has emphasized the deepening of our connection with the Divine. Rabbis in past centuries instructed their students to meditate so that their internal barriers would crumble and they would experience the presence of God. Contemporary teachers emphasize the same goal, although our God-language is broader and we teach in a way that allows those who do not believe in God to find meaning in the practice.

Because Jewish meditation is seen by many enthusiasts as the hottest new thing in the Jewish world, I sometimes fear that it will become just another product to market to the spiritually hungry. Fortunately, however, several factors mitigate against this.

Jewish meditation is a complicated practice to learn. In past centuries only a small, select number of educated Jewish men were taught how to do it, and they were carefully supervised by their rabbi teachers. Everyone else remained ignorant. These men spent years, decades, developing their meditative capabilities and studying the esoteric knowledge of Jewish mysticism.

Now, thankfully, the practice of Jewish meditation is open to all who are interested. But meditation takes time and commitment. Rather than providing a constant spiritual high, as some might wish, the process has its ups and downs. Americans tend to seek quick fixes and positive results, and they often are not prepared to continue with a meditative practice when it seems to be going nowhere.

Likewise, new meditators sometimes feel intimidated by

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the Jewish context of Jewish meditation because they don't know much about Judaism. This shouldn't stop them: they can learn to focus meditatively, for example, on the words of the Sh'ma without being aware of the layers of history and meaning associated with it. But over time, they find that their meditative practice will be much richer if it is grounded in a fuller understanding. Many become motivated to learn more about Judaism and Jewish mysticism, especially if they have a good teacher.

Even when students are familiar with the Jewish context, the variety of techniques of Jewish meditation can be bewildering. Teachers do not agree on the content of Jewish meditation, much less on how it should be led or taught. That's because Jewish meditation is composed of techniques from a range of times and cultures; some date to past centuries, others have been created more recently, and still others have been borrowed from various meditative traditions, most specifically Buddhism.

Imagine, for example, sitting silently and focusing on receiving the light of the divine with each breath. This is one of many focusing meditations. Or observing each thought or feeling that comes to mind, then letting it go with the blessing: This too is holy. This is an observing meditation. Or emptying your mind and moving into a state of nothingness by visualizing the space behind your back, an emptying meditation. Some teachers would also include chanting, movement, and other expressive forms in Jewish meditation, while others would insist on a more limited definition.

What's clear is that the practice of Jewish meditation is evolving, and we can help shape its form. Meditation today holds the possibility of integrating Jewish mystical wisdom from the past into late twentieth-century consciousness. As a teacher, for example, I am careful to choose meditations that use language and images that are aligned with my feminist understanding. I also bring my experience as a psychotherapist and the lessons I've learned from my Buddhist colleagues into my teaching.

The ongoing practice of meditation is deeply transformative for many of us. Increasingly, my daily life is organized around it. Through personal experimentation, I've learned which meditations work best for me and when to do them. I've learned to stop even for a few minutes in the midst of chaos. And when I forget to meditate, as I sometimes do, I am reminded by my discomfort that the practice has become a necessary part of my life.

This doesn't mean that I, or other Jewish meditators, drift through life in a zoned-out state. Jewish meditation helps us become clearer and more aware of the pain of others, so that we can be more effective. Meditation, paradoxically, most often leads to a greater commitment to the work of repairing the world. By raising ourselves up through meditation, healing our own brokenness, and experiencing the presence of the Holy, we are better able to participate in tikkun olam. ❑

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Spirituality as a Powerful Force of Change

Rabbi Shoni Labowitz

As the new dawn is rising on a Friday morning at a resort off the Florida coast, a group of people wearing headphones are power-walking to the drumbeat and chants of the Jewish morning liturgy, *Elohai, neshamah shenatata bi tehorah hi* ... (my God, the soul you have given me is pure ...). Then as the sun sets after a day of integrating spirituality and body-work, meditation and conscious living, this group of men and women of varying ages and religious backgrounds from around the continent reassemble in a hallway adjacent to a meditation chapel. They are preparing for the Sabbath by experiencing a ritual in which they will symbolically unite with God. Music plays, candles flicker, and one by one they proceed into the chapel and stand under a wedding canopy where they marry the many images of God within themselves.

To these retreatants and millions alike, spirituality is not a fad. Spirituality, like health food, may have appeared to start as a temporary trend. Yet, just as eating non-toxic, unprocessed, whole foods has changed the attitude of the health industry and its providers, so too is spirituality changing the attitude of religion and its ministry. And like the desire for real food, people are seeking a real connection to a real God—a God that is as natural and close to them as their own bodies and as far-reaching and all-encompassing as an unexplored universe. They want to feel God within themselves and to be able to see themselves in the many images of God. They want to be able to sit at a corporate or political board meeting and see the presence of God reflected in every member. They want to take a vacation of silence and be able to hear God amidst the noise and chatter of their daily lives. They want to enter their homes with the same reverence they would enter a sanctuary where God dwells. They want to feel more healthy, wholesome, and holy with the knowledge that God is their friend and guide breathing, loving, and walking with them.

When we feel a sense of God in our bodies, we can more easily walk with God in our lives. The problem is that when we only know spirituality through things we have heard or read and have not experienced it in our bodies, we forget. We jump out of our beds at the sound of an alarm and forget to acknowledge the miracles that abound in the awakening cells, tissues, and membranes of our own bodies. We rush through the morning rituals of getting dressed and forget that we are anointing and adorning a vehicle that was born to carry the light of God into the world. We gobble down breakfast and forget to acknowledge the sun, rain, soil, and the numerous other participants that God enabled to bring the food to our table. And the stress with which we begin our day travels with us through the rush hour traffic, into the sales meetings, political lunches, and staff briefings. We forget to breathe, love, and walk with God and then we wonder why we get a headache, feel frustrated in our relationships, and take a whole evening to unwind before we jump up at the sound of the next morning's alarm.

When we feel a sense of God in our bodies, we can more easily walk with God in our lives.

The Baal Shem Tov, founder of Hasidism, said that everyone—even those who are in religious occupations—should pause throughout the day and consciously connect with God. All we have to do is take a moment to pause, go within, and meet God there.

The Tikkunai Zohar (69:100b, 130b) states that "For every part in your body and in your life there is a parallel part in the many faces of God." If we are open to it, every interchange in our bodies and lives can lead us to touching the face of God. Just imagine. When we connect with our bodies, we connect with the body of God; when we play, we play with God; when we shed blood, we shed the blood of God; when we are in union with another, we are in union with God; when we birth new life, we birth new forms of God; and as our bodies and lives change, our images of God change.

Dr. Jean Houston has often said, "When you know something in your body, you know it in your life." When we feel the passion of God in our bodies and in our lives, we can't help but bring this spiritual fervor into everything we do.

Rabbi Shoni Labowitz is author of God, Sex and Women of the Bible *(Simon & Schuster); creator of LivingWaters, a spiritual health spa program; and co-rabbi of Temple Adath Or in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida.*

As an example, prayers that were once confined to recitation while sitting in pews and holding a prayer book become, with spiritual fervor, expressions of God's love that flows through our bodies. This sense of spirituality is changing—not the prayers—but the ways in which we pray in temples and churches throughout the country. At B'nai Jeshurun in New York City and Temple Adath Or in Ft. Lauderdale, people are dancing in the aisles as they pray. At Temple Adath Or services begin with yoga postures, and the musical worship and dancing builds to a crescendo with a hands-on healing circle. And on any given day at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco, you can touch the spirit of God by prayerfully walking the circular maze of the labyrinth.

Spirituality is a way of life that not only affects the way we perceive ourselves individually, but profoundly affects our communal perceptions. Just as we can no longer confine prayer to a pew, we can no longer limit spirituality to a solitary journey within. Psalm 104:20 states: "You bring on darkness and it is night." The Talmud (Baba Metzia 83b) explains this verse by comparing the world in which we live to the darkness of the night. Rabbi Moses Chaim Luzzatto expounds on this by teaching that if this world is like the darkness of the night, there are two problems we could encounter and both have to do with our ability to see. One, we may not be able to see at all in the dark, thereby missing what is in front of us. And two, we may not see clearly and think that a pillar or cement post is a human being, or vice versa. In other words, without God's light to clarify our vision, we will begin seeing each other as inanimate objects, void of feelings and spirit. However, once we touch the face of God within ourselves, we begin seeing God everywhere, in the light and dark, in the animate and inanimate, and in the varied faces of those with whom we work, love, play, and are yet to meet. We begin seeing each other as kindred sparks—all children of the many images of who God is here on earth. As our spirituality grows, it moves outside of our own neighborhoods into the streets of our cities and the ivory towers of our institutions. No longer are we isolated architecture of the night, but we become communities that are part of a larger landscape, pulsating with the vibrancy of life, love, and godliness.

A spirituality that empowers one, needs to empower all. To feel secure in the peace, joy, and freedom we have found in spirituality, we must make it available to everyone. We do this not by proselytizing a particular set of beliefs or religion but by guiding people to the God of their choice in order to seek their own inner truths. I recall one of the first encounters I had when volunteering in a woman's detention center. I was escorted into the "community room." Motionless, bored bodies of multi-racial teenagers were draped over, under, and around the tattered chairs and broken desks. I introduced myself. There were a few stirs as quiet as a kitten's purr. They aimlessly introduced themselves. Still not too exciting. The conversation started getting a bit more animated when we spoke of God. What caused a real stir was when I asked everyone to rise and pray with me. Some stood, others still feigned sleep, while yet others threw objects of distraction around the room. Instead of reading or chanting a particular prayer, I began to speak about the importance of our names and how they identify who we are as unparalleled imprints of God. We created a circle around the room and one girl at a time entered the center of the circle. We repeatedly chanted her name aloud while she silently prayed to the God of her choice. As the girls in the circle became increasingly engrossed in the sanctity of the moment and in the process of being recognized for their divinity, those that were sleeping or attempting to distract the others slowly arose and joined the prayer circle. Whether we are with a professor, a doctor, a president, a thief, or a murderer, each person is another imprint of who God is, revealed or hidden, in this world. Everyone wants to feel that they have an identity and something worthwhile to contribute to life.

Spirituality neither demands respect nor demands that we ascribe to more rules and stringent structure; rather, spirituality teaches us to give respect and inspires more faith, confidence, and courage. It is time to take all we have learned through spirituality into the darkness of this world, to see each other through godded eyes, and to awaken to the dawn of a new day. ❑

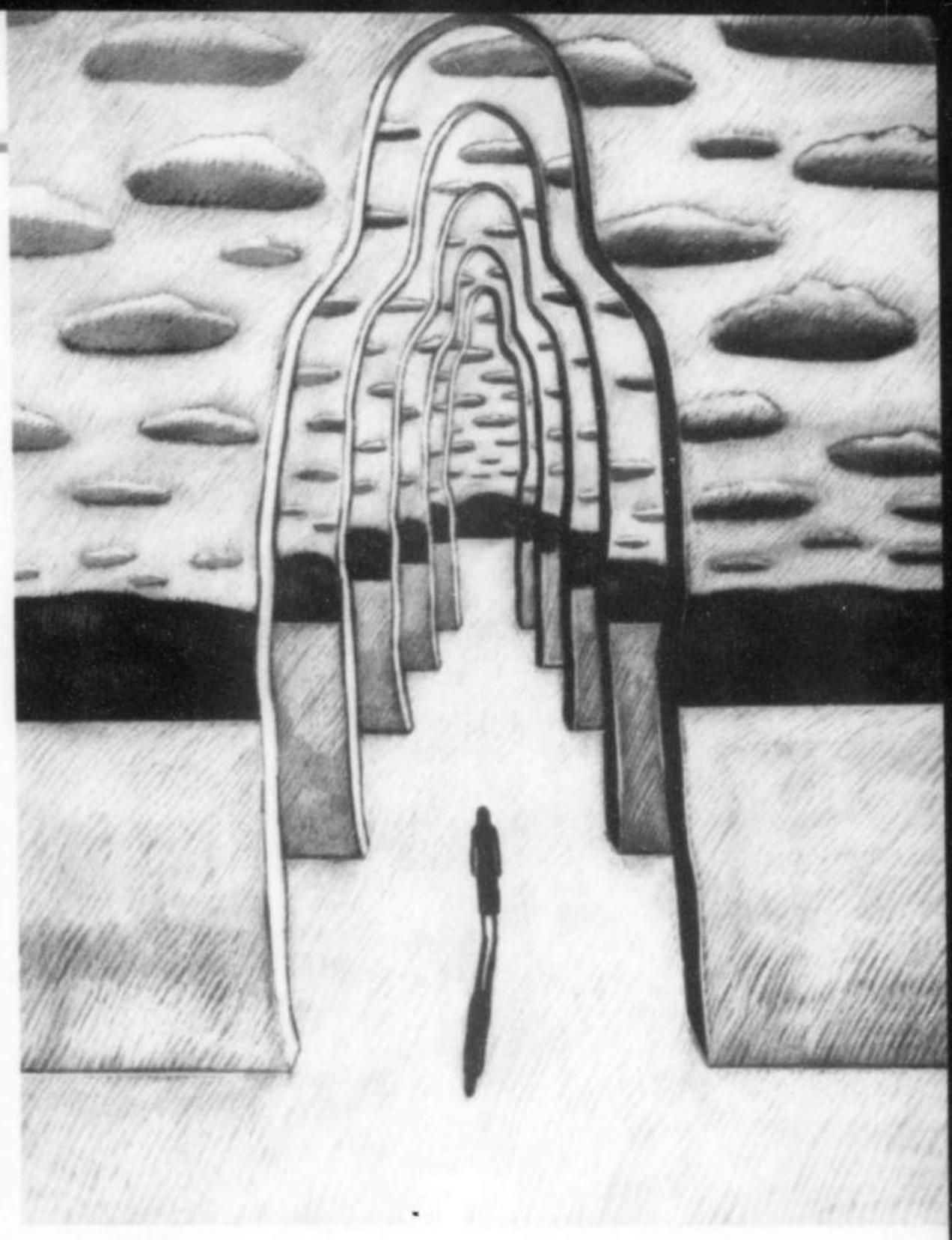


ILLUSTRATION BY RICHARD ROSS

Ban the Word "Spiritual"

Rami Shapiro

Let's ban the word "spiritual." It isn't a traditional Jewish category and confuses things right from the start. "Spiritual" has meaning only in juxtaposition to "material," and when we use these words we mistakenly split the world into two opposing camps, each with its own ideology, saints, and sinners.

Having abolished the "s" word, we can turn our attention to reality. Here is my take on things:

1. The universe is bipolar, embracing both *yesh*/form and *ayin*/emptiness. Things *are* and *are not* depending on how you look at them. From the perspective of *yesh*/form the universe is a collection of discrete things, each with its own sense of self and destiny. From the perspective of *ayin*/emptiness the universe is a flowing whole temporarily manifesting as this and that, just as an ocean manifests waves.

2. God is the One in which and from which universe arises. God includes both *yesh* and *ayin* and can be reduced to neither. God is the One Who gives rise to the two-ness of things.

3. You and I are made in the image and likeness of God. Like God, each of us is a unity that expresses itself through polarity. One pole is our *yetzer tov*, our capacity to see *ayin* (emptiness/interdependence/unity) and thus to act from and with compassion and justice. The other pole is our *yetzer rah*, our capacity to see *yesh* (fullness/separateness/ boundaries) and hence to act with and from fear, anger, violence, and destruction.

4. Our task is to honor both capacities and to link them in service of God by seeing all things as a manifestation of God and thus treating them with reverence and respect.

Having abolished the "s" word, we can turn our attention to reality.

How do we cultivate our dual capacities in the service of God? By mastering two types of tools, *tikkun nefesh* and *tikkun olam*, corresponding to the two aspects of our nature: *yetzer tov* and *yetzer rah*. The first honors *ayin*/emptiness; the second honors *yesh*/form. *Tikkun nefesh* empties us of us; *tikkun olam* fills us with the world.

A regular columnist, Rami Shapiro is rabbi of Beth Or in Miami, Florida; founder of the Virtual Yeshiva; and president of Simply Jewish, a consulting firm for Jewish leaders. His most recent books are Minyan *and* Wisdom of the Jewish Sages.

Where are you when your mind is blank? Imagine you could empty your mind of all cognitive activity. No thoughts; no feelings; no judgments; nothing. Where are you then? You are gone, for all you are is the content of your mind. There is no sense of self without cognition. You maintain your sense of separate self by sustaining an incessant mental chatter. Stop the chatter and the illusion of a separate chatterer stops as well. There is no "you" outside the noise. In quiet there is nothing: form gives way to emptiness, boundaries (I, me, mine) melt into seamless unity (God), there is no knower and nothing is known. But there is knowing. And that knowing is this: All is God.

I can't tell you why this is. I can only attest that it is. The purpose of the tools of *tikkun nefesh* is to get you to that primal silence. I work with three tools: *avodah b'bittul, lech lecha*, and *gerushin*.

Avodah b'bittul (literally the "discipline of extinction" of all separate existence) is sitting meditation. I sit comfortably, back erect but not ramrod straight. I rest my hands on my lap, close my eyes, breathe naturally, and repeat a sacred phrase: *Ribbono shel Olam* (Source of all worlds). In time the inner chatter fades along with any conscious focusing on the repetition. At this point I don't know what happens because "I" am no longer present to observe it happening. All I know is that when it stops happening, and "I" return, I feel lighter, more loving, more connected to the world, and almost always on the verge of deep laughter.

Lech lecha is walking meditation. The term comes from God's command to Avram to leave behind everything he knows and go to an unknown place that God will show him. The Hebrew for this is *lech lecha*, literally "walk to yourself." I walk in our synagogue's meditation garden (built specifically for *lech lecha* practice). There is no set pace for *lech lecha*; sometimes I walk slowly, sometimes I walk briskly. As I walk I shift my attention from what I know (the inner chatter of my mind) to the world around me. I simply walk, look, and listen. In time there is no "I," only walking, looking and listening. There is no "me," there is just God happening here as butterfly, there as angel's trumpet. When "I" returns, the garden always looks brighter, more vibrant, more alive then when I started. I can almost hear the earth singing.

Gerushin, from the Hebrew *l'garaish*, to dispel, is the practice of repeating a sacred phrase. I do this as part of both *avodah b'bittul* and *lech lecha*. I also do it whenever I have a free moment: standing in line, sitting in traffic, waiting for anger (my own or another's) to subside. The repetition of a sacred phrase dispels other thoughts from the mind. It clears a space in the chatter. It makes room to listen and know that all is God.

The tools of *tikkun olam* are better known: *tzedakah*, *gemilut chesed*, eco-kashrut. *Tzedakah* obligates me to universal justice. *Gemilut chesed* obligates me to universal compassion. Eco-kashrut obligates me to life. My consuming and my creating have to be *l'chayyim*, in the service of life as a manifestation of God; meaning that all that I do and say should (and often doesn't) cultivate the best that is in myself and the world.

A simple word count of the previous paragraphs would argue that *tikkun nefesh* is of greater import than *tikkun olam*. Not so. It is just that the former is less well known and needs more instruction than the latter. The fact is each goes with the other. My experience of *ayin*/emptiness always leads to a deepening connection with and responsibility for *yesh*/form. The more you empty the self the more you are filled with the world. Just as I question people whose meditation practice does not include *tikkun olam,* so I question people whose *tikkun olam* leaves them no time for meditation. Too often *tikkun olam* without *tikkun nefesh* is self-righteous rather than righteous, just as *tikkun nefesh* without *tikkun olam* can be self-ish rather than self-less.

Working with these tools has a profound impact on our daily living. Put most simply: We want less and love more. Is this anti-capitalism or anti-materialism? I hope not. Capitalism can be a creative, liberating force; and materialism is as crucial to life's fullness as its necessary opposite spir … the "s" word. There is nothing inherently wrong with capitalism or materialism. Problems arise only when we cut form off from emptiness and emptiness from form. When we no longer see God manifest as all things, we begin to horde both God and things in a paranoid and ultimately suicidal grab at personal immortality.

Working with these tools has a powerful impact on our understanding of things like death, love, suffering, and sin. When we ask why there is death, suffering, sin, we could just as well ask why there is birth, happiness, and joy? "Why is there anything?" is a better question than "Why is there something?"

There is evil because there is good. There is death because there is birth. There is suffering because there is happiness. There is sin because there is repentance. These words make no sense without their opposites. And the universe is a unity of opposites because God manifests the whole and the whole contains everything and its opposite.

When we practice *tikkun nefesh* and *tikkun olam* we stop all the chatter about why. We no longer ask, "Why is there suffering?" but rather, "What can I do to alleviate suffering?" We no longer obsess about "Why did that SOB toss garbage on the sidewalk?" but rather: "Where is the nearest trash bin so I can properly dispose of the garbage that SOB tossed on the sidewalk?" (Yes, we should get beyond the SOB thing, but for now just pick up the trash.)

Intellectualizing about the cause of suffering does nothing to end suffering. Practicing *tikkun nefesh* and *tikkun olam* awakens us to the interdependence of all things in and with God. The desire to exploit others, the fearful need to defend ourselves, the illusory notion of a world comprised of competing bits of stuff all fade away. The cause of suffering is rooted out not by intellectual knowing, but by a calm and persistent looking into the true nature of reality.

Intellectualizing about the cause of suffering does nothing to end suffering.

We love to talk about the "s" word. We love to explore the ideas generated by such talk. We love to indulge our "s" fantasies by asking "Who am I?" and "Why am I here?" In good Jewish Zen fashion the sages of the Talmud demolish such talk: Who are you? A smelly blend of egg and sperm. Why are you here? You are God's way of picking up the trash. Nothing sexy about this, so the chatter stops, and maybe we mature a bit in the silence.

Spirituality (sorry) is a game no more real than its complement materiality. There is nothing inherently wrong in playing the "s" game, as there is nothing inherently wrong in playing the "m" game. Just remember it is a game. That way when we tire of playing we might take a look at what is real and get right with that. ❑

Paul Celan

He writes toward your mouth
with his fingers.

In the lamplight, he sees mud, wind-bitten trees,
he sees grass still surviving this hour, page
stern as a burnt field.

He whispers. The words leave the taste of soil
on his lips:

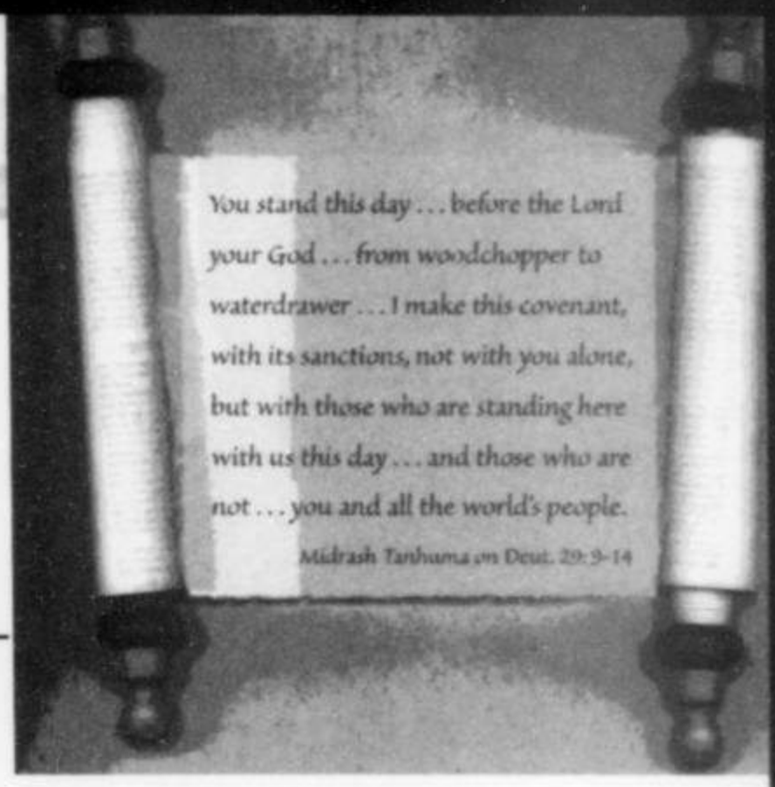
Light was. Salvation.

The night. The words. The cold stones in his throat.

—Ilya Kaminsky

Shareholder Activism *and the* "Torah of Money"

Lawrence Bush and Jeffrey Dekro



It is a rare moment when a corporate leader makes *teshuvah* (repentance) publicly for his company's sins. Nike's chief executive officer, Philip Knight, did just that in early May when he admitted that "the Nike product has become synonymous with slave wages, forced overtime and arbitrary abuse" and pledged that his company would reform its grim health-and-safety practices.

Nike's decision was the result of years of activism by human rights advocates, one of whom, Global Exchange (415-255-7296, www.globalexchange.org), responded by reiterating demands for a Nike wage increase to $3 a day for Asian workers. "We are at a crossroads in this struggle," the organization said. "Nike is finally talking the talk." But "a sweatshop is a sweatshop … unless you start paying a living wage."

For American Jews, this kind of campaign to improve corporate citizenship has important historical precedents. In 1927, a widespread consumer boycott forced Henry Ford to apologize to the American Jewish Committee for a seven-year campaign of intense anti-Semitism by Ford's newsweekly, *The Dearborn Independent*. Six years later, the Jewish War Veterans initiated a boycott of German goods that gained trade union backing and became a massive anti-Nazi consumer movement. Each of these exemplifies Jewish involvement in the "social responsibility" (SR) movement from its earliest days.

When it comes time today to use economic tools to coax corporate change, however, most of the Jewish community seems fainthearted. Since 1974, the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR, 212-870-2295) has pioneered the use of progressive shareholder resolutions and socially-screened investing—most notably in the 1980s—to end economic collusion with South African apartheid. More recently, the ICCR mobilized an outpouring of opposition to proposed changes in Security and Exchange Commission rules that would have gutted the shareholder resolution process itself. The SEC backed down, a major victory for the SR movement in a time of overwhelming corporate power.

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Unfortunately, of the 275 participating institutions in the ICCR (with combined portfolios of $50 billion), only two are Jewish: the Rabbinical Pension Board of the Reform Movement, and The Shefa Fund, a national Jewish foundation.

To the credit of some groups in the Jewish community, notably the Reform movement and the American Jewish Congress, anti-apartheid screens were applied during the 1980s to some Jewish institutional investments, and SR strategies have been used by groups such as the Jewish Energy Project in Philadelphia, which focused in the early 1980s on divestment of nuclear utility stocks to halt the spread of nuclear power. In general, however, the modern SR movement has been viewed as church-based and beyond the pale of Jewish social concerns.

If only our communal agenda were more seriously influenced by Judaism's economic teachings—what we call the "Torah of Money"—activism to influence corporate ethics might become a higher priority.

In his 1995 book, *The Challenge of Wealth*, Rabbi Meir Tamari, director of the Centre for Business Ethics in Jerusalem (and former chief economist in the office of the Governor of the Bank of Israel), describes how, "by introducing varying degrees of separation of ownership from control and management, the corporation enables shareholders and directors alike to evade responsibility for the ethical issues facing its operations. The directors maintain that they have no way of ascertaining the moral preferences of their shareholders," while "shareholders argue that they have no control over the daily operation." The "sole yardstick" by which these players measure their responsibilities is "the earning of maximum profits within the limits imposed by the law."

Tamari argues that Judaism does not accept this separation between the corporation and the individual. He notes, for example, that the Halachah (Jewish law) concerning *ribit midei'oraita* (biblically-forbidden interest) has been applied by "most rabbinic authorities" to Jewish-owned corporations as well as to individuals. Moreover, Judaism considers people "always to be liable for damage caused directly by [their] own efforts," even when they operate through an agent. Therefore, Tamari concludes, it is "conceivable" under Jewish law that "the private assets of shareholders could be subject to claims in lieu of damages

ILLUSTRATION BY LAWRENCE BUSH

suffered through pollution or neglect, where the corporate equity is insufficient."

Ultimately, the aim of the SR movement is to make damage claims unnecessary by demanding true accountability and building links of moral influence between shareholders and corporate decision-makers. By projecting a "covenantal" economic philosophy that extends corporate responsibility beyond profitmaking, the SR movement is very much in step with the Torah of Money.

Likely Jewish players in this movement are Jewish family foundations, which number more than 5,000, control over $6 billion in assets, and have the autonomy to take decisive action concerning their investments. The trendsetter among family foundations in general is the $80 million Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation, which describes itself as "reducing the dissonance" between the grants it makes to further environmental protection and the assets it manages by pursuing SR strategies of shareholder resolutions, screened investing, and direct investment of approximately 10 percent of its assets in environmentally-innovative companies. Noyes has played a dynamic role in organizing other non-profits to heed the call of social responsibility. You can learn about them through their web page at www.noyes.org or by phone at 212-684-6577. ❑

GenX Spirituality *(continued from page 45)*

exploitation of the earth. When eclecticism for its own sake is the GenXer's spiritual starting point, when a simple ethic of uncritical tolerance becomes a basic GenX "religious" commitment (whether one thinks such an ethic is religious or not, if it is a fundamental commitment, it is rightly called religious), GenXers not only have traded God's Spirit for the market, they also have almost certainly created God in their own image.

However, GenX eclecticism can often be warranted and perhaps demanded by the particular traditions, such as my own Catholic tradition, in which we are immersed. From the point of view of these traditions, such eclecticism is justified insofar as the tradition demands critical openness to the world, to revelation wherever it may be found. In the Catholic tradition we call this the possibility of the revelation of "God in all things." Truth can and does emerge from outside our own "camp" and we must be willing to name that truth as God's presence in others, and in the unlikeliest of places. Martin Buber called it the ever-new possibility of the "I-Thou" relationship. If a GenX spirituality is eclectic because it is rooted in a living faith tradition (and one that has erected some guardrails against the distorting influences of consumerism), then eclecticism may not only be appropriate, but it may even be seen as a postmodern blessing from God.

Life-giving religious traditions grasp us as much as we choose them. They make a claim on us as something other than what we could construct on our own, as other than what we can control or channel, surf or browse. Either the ground of eclectic GenX spirituality will be shown to be paper-thin, and dissolve into GenX relativism, or it will be shown to harbor secret presuppositions that are not really eclectic at all, but instead committed to justice issues—to limits of tolerance and self-interested spirituality—after all.

My experience in ministry to GenXers and my reading of pop culture suggests that most GenXers are interested in, if not already actively working for, justice in the world as well as committed to nurturing their own spiritual individual wholeness. The challenge for GenX spirituality, engaged and informed as it is by popular culture, is to locate itself in a tradition, to risk finding itself challenged by religious claims not of its making. It can then continue its eclectic and ironic appropriation of pop culture and other religions, all the while knowing and working for the end result of loving and serving God and neighbor. If love does not seek justice as an internal dynamism of GenX's eclectic, ironic, pop-culturated spirituality, my generation is indeed deserving of the title "slacker," for there would be no more fitting description of a spirituality that has foregone the risks of justice for the pleasures of consumer choice.

GenX spirituality is in a position both promising and dangerous: because our spirituality comes from and returns to popular culture, we have a whole new palette in front of us. Of course, while our elders may complain that their own spiritual lives and the great spiritual leaders of Judaism and Christianity did not need the media, they are overlooking the extent to which they themselves were subject to media and engaged in popular-cultural spiritual practices—albeit a little less flashy than ours. However, GenX's media engagement is certainly more omnipresent and perhaps even more controlling. Because GenX spiritualities dare to posit that God can work through music videos and cyberspace as much as through transistor radios and the printed page, we need to be even more sure to remember that when spiritualizing goes on under the noses of corporate pop culture leaders, there are limits to what gets included.

Because my generation has the luxury of seeing justice as a choice, we must challenge ourselves and let ourselves be challenged to give justice the pride of place in our unique GenX spiritualities. My generation must see justice as the choice—even the demand, to use the language of Emmanuel Levinas—which renders all other GenX spiritual practices more or less authentic. I hear frequently from GenXers the complaint that the radical baby-boomers of the 1960s became the sell-out yuppies of the 1980s. We must not let it be said of our generation that the irreverent, ironic GenXers who did not let themselves be mastered by institutions gave themselves over to the seductive pseudospiritual mastery of the marketplace. ❑

Redemption and Ontological Mystery *(from page 36)*
every other person, this experience of shared "aloneness" activates a wellspring of compassion that inspires us to sacrifice and service. In turn, this compassion feeds empathy and charity back into the world at large, and when this happens, all the bogus substitutes for authentic human solidarity are exposed as frauds, and all the so-called "spiritual" practices that fail to give hope to the oppressed and pause to the proud stand revealed as half-measures.

Theodore Adorno once unwittingly described the task of contemporary spirituality quite well when he said that the only philosophy that can be responsibly practiced in our time is the contemplation of all things as they would present themselves from the standpoint of redemption. "Perspectives must be fashioned," he wrote in *Minima Moralia*, "that displace and estrange the world, reveal it to be, with its rifts and crevices, as indigent and distorted as it will appear one day in the messianic light."

We may be living in a time when the Enlightenment view of the world is falling apart, and many hitherto dismissed aspects of reality are re-emerging into human consciousness. But simply renaming these aspects "spiritual" realities is not the same thing as posing a prophetic standard or assessing their worth as it will one day appear in the messianic light. To do that, as Dietrich Bonhoeffer once so eloquently pointed out in his *Letters from Prison,* we shall not need geniuses or cynics or misanthropes or clever tacticians, but plain, honest, straightforward men. "Will our inward power or resistance be strong enough," he asked, "for us to win our way back to simplicity and straightforwardness?"

Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Thomas Merton, and Abraham Joshua Heschel model a complex, tragic response to contemporary history built upon the premise of a deeper ontological mystery. In their flawed experimental lives, they demonstrate how we too might cease identifying with the prevailing social order, including its shiny new "spiritualities," so we might reidentify with the persons lost within it, and by so doing, serve God's own longing for healing and reconciliation.

Before we can live in faith, we must have a faith to live—which is something quite different than having "spiritual" thoughts. It means humbly acknowledging the reality of a Self deeper than our own conscious ideals and personal identities—a Self that becomes more apparent the greater our self-effacement. Faith is really more a capacity for having spiritual second thoughts, a capacity for laying down occupations and preoccupations in order to listen to the voice of a God who speaks from within our own solitude and suffering to unite us with others who also thirst for justice and mercy.

"Though our iniquities testify against us," cried Jeremiah, "Act, O Lord, for Thy name's sake." I can think of no finer prayer in this age of hype and spiritual oversell to protect us from ourselves. ❑

Sharing Our Suffering *(continued from page 57)*
me into her home and hold me in her gaze, had the same shriveling effect upon me that I thought I saw in these people. The Palestinians were clearly a demoralized people. The lack of recognition and the dishonor paid them as an occupied people by their Israeli hosts was a heavy mantle to wear.

Whether this perception was the truth about the people I passed in their narrow streets or merely my imagination, I do not know. But that day, I felt that I knew all about their heavy silence, and their kind yet sheepish demeanor, a facade for the wild frustration and rage that knows no recourse. I imagined that all of these people had spent years, no, decades in a relationship with their Jewish neighbors that mirrored mine and my mother's, a relationship where there was wounding upon wounding, and walls that no longer allowed for human recognition, neither eyes to meet nor hands to touch in common experience.

The instant I realized that my own small suffering was all around me, mirrored and magnified in the dark faces of hundreds of people, something broke loose from the prison of my tight chest and bled like a river. Bigger than life, far bigger than me, was this feeling which flowed out into the rank-smelling streets: my streets, my odor, my family. My eyes filled with tears and everything around me ran together in a blur. I took a moment to pause and wipe my eyes. When I picked my head up, I saw a grey-mustached man in a *kaffiyah* across the way watching me. For a split second, our eyes met and the gentleman bowed slightly in my direction. For that moment, held in his gentle gaze, I was comforted.

A Hasidic teaching popped into my mind just then, having to do with why we break the middle matzah at the Passover Seder: *There is no whole heart but a broken heart. If your own suffering does not serve to unite you with the suffering of others, if your own imprisonment does not join you with others in prison, if you in your smallness remain alone, then your pain will have been for naught.*

I continued to walk as I thought about this teaching, which I had known for years but had only now sprung to life for me. I imagined the small "s" of my personal suffering floating up and away. It was no longer my small suffering, but *Suffering* that I encountered, the suffering that is born when people are not met with human dignity, the feeling that we all experience at least once in our lives when we are not recognized or listened to but shut out. The personal pain I felt at not meeting my mother was what we humans inflict upon each other by not meeting one another with openness, by not acknowledging the existence and experience of the other.

I came back from my walk with my heart in upheaval. I had gone out to see Jerusalem, but I had touched and been touched by another, more hidden stratum of the city, one born of grief, helplessness, and the daily reality of being treated as one who does not exist. I knew that this pain would in time build and change, fomenting into rage, and I vowed to circumvent my own. ❑

Atonement as *Tikkun* *(continued from page 32)*
them the promise of healing. It is a New Age guilt trip and places many people in a "spiritual double-bind"—damned if you do, damned if you don't.

Many are relieved to discover that Judaism does not require us to forgive unless the perpetrator (1) confesses, (2) promises not to repeat the offense, and (3) does not repeat the offense. If one apologizes, however, forgiveness is expected. If the offended one refuses to forgive and the offender apologizes three times, the offender is absolved. A strong intention to liberate one another from past mistakes, and to allow for redemption, is inherent in the design of these rituals.

Atonement and the Anatomy of Healing

Atonement is an essential element in healing. Acknowledging the truth and recognizing the pain we have caused can heal us interpersonally and politically. In her treatment of families with incest, for example, family therapist Cloe Madanes includes a ritual in which the sex abuser, in the presence of family members, gets down on his knees and apologizes to the one whom he abused, and asks for forgiveness. This powerful ritual successfully allows for reintegration and healing of family members who would otherwise be relegated to legal and penal systems that do not allow for healing.

Atonement and Tikkun Olam

On a collective level, apology is a powerful political tool. It has been proven effective in transmuting long-standing intractable situations. President Clinton's apology for slavery and the Tusgeegee experiment, though flawed, was a release and profound healing experience for many. Public acknowledgment of the truth can have powerful healing effects, as is the case with the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa.

If our culture valued atonement more than forgiveness, it would shift the energy in the collective psyche. The burden of the responsibility, disproportionately born by the wounded, would be transferred to those responsible, to atone.

Forgiving	**Atoning**
Burden on the suffering one	Burden on the responsible one
Releases self	Releases self and other
Doesn't require change in offender	Requires profound change in offender
Promotes inner healing	Promotes interpersonal healing
Allows one to get on in life	Promotes *Tikkun Olam*

As the Yom Kippur prayer, U'nataneh Tohef, says, "*Tefilah* (prayer), *teshuvah* (repentance), and *tzedakah* (righteousness) avert the severity of the judgment." In forgiving, we release ourselves. In apologizing, we release another. Though our primary concern is healing the other, the healing we receive is profound. ❑

When Politics is Prayer *(continued from page 52)*
nor the serious meditator can avoid struggle. We might as well choose both its forms: each will strengthen the other.

In thirty years of Jewish renewal, we have learned a great deal about how to study Torah in new ways, how to create new Torah through many forms of midrash, how to sing and chant and meditate and daven, how to heal the heart. We have done much less to enrich our vocabulary of "societal/political spirituality."



How then could we actually create a prayerful politics?

It was the kabbalists around Isaac Luria of Safed who gave us the phrase *tikkun olam*, repair of the world. For Luria and his followers, *tikkun*, repair, was made necessary because the holy vessel of the universe had been shattered by the intensity of the God-energy poured into it, and we need to repair the universe and God's Own Self by making *tikkunim*, repairs.

For many of the kabbalists, words of *kavanah* before prayers, and meditations to unify the Names of God, made up the necessary tikkunim.

For many neo-Hasidim, such as Buber, Heschel, and Schachter-Shalomi, the more fully we see God as mystics do—not chiefly Up There but In Here, within and amongst us—the more the tikkunim need to be not only words and visualizations but also loving actions.

For each of us is a Letter in God's Name, and therefore each of us, "for the sake of the Unification of the Holy One and the Shechinah," needs to be connected harmoniously *b'shalom* with the other Letters. And this unfolding of the Kabbalah emerges from and gives rise to the unfolding of the history of our people and the peoples of the earth, and to the new epoch of Judaism, the new paradigm, that we are shaping now.

There was a time—the biblical era—when the Jewish people thought that by military conquest it, standing alone, could heal and transform at least a small piece of the world. The Roman empire put an end to that vision.

Then there was a time—the rabbinic era—when the Jewish people thought that by passive withdrawal into ghettos and by prayer and Torah-study it could at least, standing alone, protect itself as a small enclave of holiness, though probably not heal and transform the world. The Nazi Holocaust put an end to that vision.

Now we are beginning to see that we must join prayer to activism, must create non-military means that draw on our own deepest wisdom, like carrying our festivals into public space and restoring their ancient political bite. In doing this we will stand with, work with other peoples to heal and transform the world, for our own sake as well as the sake of the world and for God's sake. ❑

INTERVIEW WITH PAT SCHROEDER *(continued from page 29)*

NEWFIELD: But is this new level of rancor just going to make politics dirtier and meaner because people like you won't put up with the bullshit?

SCHROEDER: What I think is happening is you have polls showing how turned off people are by negative advertising. I think those polls are accurate. But because you poll everybody across the board you also can show that negative advertising is working. We now see that only about 30 percent of the people are voting. The way to change this is for the good guys to get back in the process. What the negative advertising does is chase the moderates and the reasonable people out.

NEWFIELD: One of the most interesting things in your book to me was your description of how, in 1990, Speaker Foley and Dick Gephardt apparently made some kind of a deal to let Gingrich get re-elected in Georgia before his district was re-apportioned. And he won by less than 500 votes. In exchange for the …

SCHROEDER: Pay raise.

NEWFIELD: That's not a well-understood watershed in compromise politics, is it? You must have put it in the book for a good reason.

SCHROEDER: I put it in there because I was just sick. You know, I will pat any dog on the head. I like dogs, right? But when the dog bites me, I don't pat it again. The next time it's stupid. I used to watch these guys all the time. They would see Newt in his great terrorist role, and they lived in mortal fear of him. How to tame the terrorist? They were just constantly figuring out how to go back and pat him on the head and not get bit the next time.

NEWFIELD: Explain the deal in 1990.

SCHROEDER: Well, Congress had not voted a pay raise for a very long time, and they wanted a pay raise. All the members wanted Foley and Gephardt to get it, but they wanted to be able to be against it. So they were terrified of Newt Gingrich, because if he'd gone out and organized against it, clearly, they were going to stampede. At the door it used to be: "Vote no, but take the dough." They passed this, right? They knew that's what people were going to do. Apparently, they got Newt to agree not to go out and make a lot of noise about it . But the quid pro quo was they would not have the Democratic Party go out there and actively back up Dennis Worley [the Democratic candidate].

NEWFIELD: And you did go campaign.

SCHROEDER: I did, I did. I was not very popular. I broke the rules. And four years later he took over.

NEWFIELD: You think Gingrich could have been defeated in his old Georgia District in 1990 if Foley and Gephardt had tried harder?

SCHROEDER: Sure. Five hundred votes? Please. I mean that was a resource-starved campaign. And just the slightest little bit of help, I think, could have made a huge difference. Worley didn't get it. And look what it got: Gingrich.

NEWFIELD: Thank you. ❑

UNEMPLOYMENT *(continued from page 31)*

Shabbat's rest as starting the same moment God stops creating and begins to contemplate what S/He has created. If there were no creation, there could be no Shabbat. Similarly for human beings: Shabbat's peace is only meaningful if, during the days previous to Shabbat, we have been able to develop our potential for creative effort, have had a real opportunity to contribute to society, have been able to actualize our capacities as beings created in the image of God.

So, when the command says, "Six days shalt thou work and do all thy labor, and the seventh day shall be a Shabbat to your God," it really means the first part as well as the second: working (participating in the process of contributing to the human enterprise) must be part of our lives. Unemployment goes against God's plan. So we have a direct injunction to build a society in which there are adequate jobs and creative opportunities for everyone.

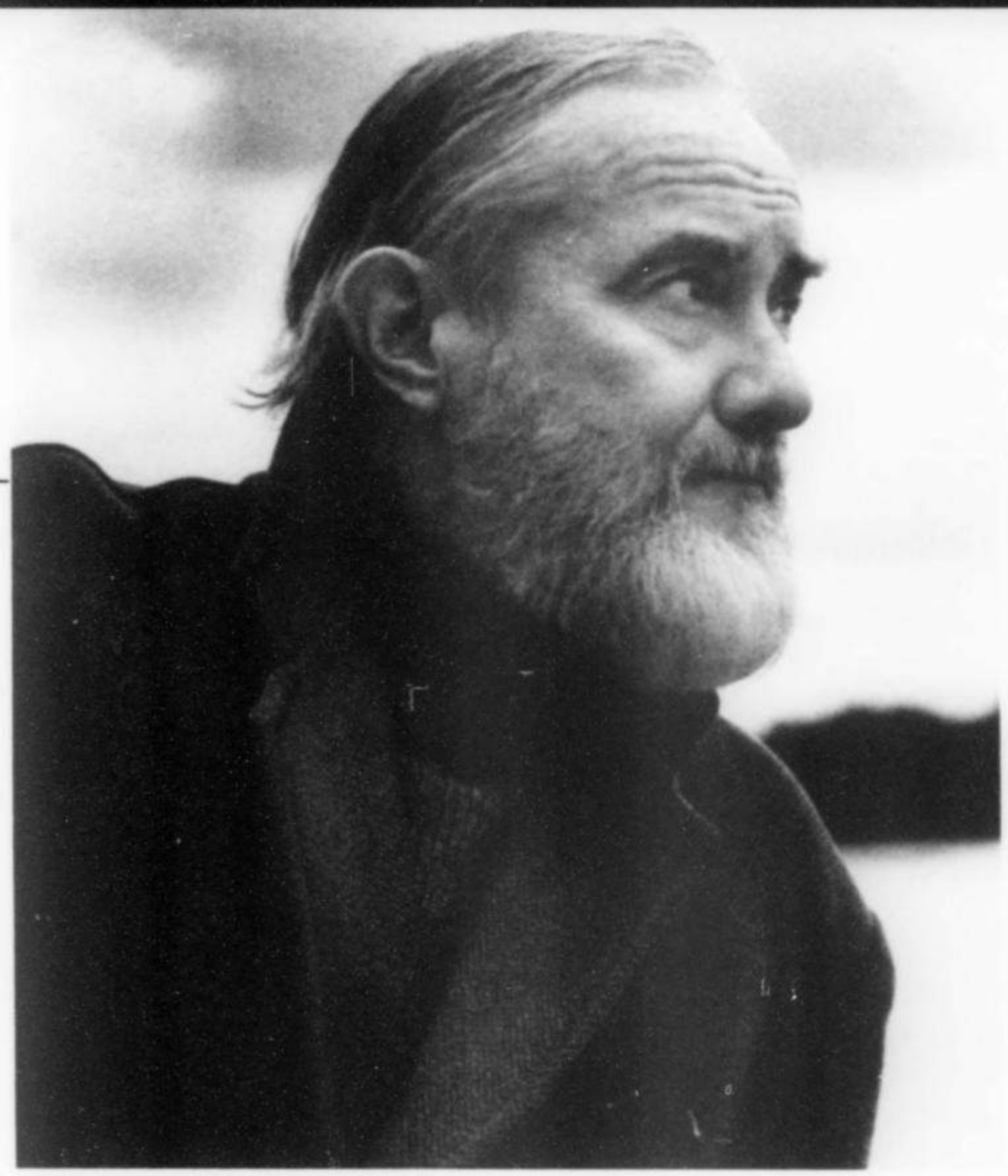
One of the Hebrew words for work is *avodah,* the same word that was used to refer to Temple sacrifice, and later, for prayer. We may see here a hint that work is one of the ways to establish a bond with God. Closing a workplace, then, should be thought of as likely to cause spiritual atrophy in human beings, blocking a channel to be in contact with God. To talk about work is to talk about God, and to talk about a lack of work is to talk about the absence of one major path between humans and God.

Of course, there are other reasons within Jewish tradition why we should be struggling against economic policies that engender high levels of unemployment. Many of the mitzvot are based on the notion of treating human beings as created in the image of God, yet unemployment often results in people no longer being able to see themselves or each other as created in that image. Jewish law and tradition demand of us that we give support and assistance to the unemployed—at a much higher level than is typically available through unemployment assistance, and for as long as it is necessary (as long as there is no reasonable employment available to each particular person).

With unemployment at 20 percent in Argentina, it's hard not to notice the destructive impact of this contemporary plague. It is particularly disturbing, then, to note the way that the U.S. stock market jumps with investor enthusiasm whenever layoffs are announced, and the way the market falls when investors fear "too high a level of employment." Their concern about high employment—that workers will feel that they have the right to higher wages and feel empowered to struggle for them—seems particularly sickening when put in the context of knowing how hurtful unemployment really can be for the spiritual and ethical as well as material well-being of the unemployed. The Jewish community should give strong religious attention to combatting or placing significant restrictions on the globalization of capital and the functioning of the International Monetary Fund so that the plague of unemployment does not spread even further. ❑

REVIEW

Blame it on Jerusalem



Robert Stone, author of *Damascus Gate*.

John Leonard

- *Damascus Gate*, by Robert Stone. Houghton Mifflin, 1998.

Readers of this magazine will be happy to know that early on in Robert Stone's new novel a junkie and a lunatic discuss at length "the meaning of *tikkun*." Of course, in the same greedy conversation, they also discuss Tantric Buddhism and the Book of the Dead; kundalini yoga and Meister Eckhart; St. Teresa of Avila and Pico della Mirandola; Philo, Kali, Adam Kadmon, and Abulafia; Zen, Theravada, and the Holy Ghost; bodhisattvas, *sefirot,* and the Trinity; the Zohar, the Shechinah, the sentience of diamonds, and Matronit under the dread designation of the moon.

This is a lot to cover in one night, even in a Jerusalem "of impossibly delicate balances" and gaudy hallucinations, where time is the space in which we flow, where western walls, fairy tale mosques, and bloody sepulchers, prophetic stones and hermetic cults and siege mentalities, cemeteries, catacombs, citadels, donkeys, and desert, all dream, in salt and chalk, of Second Comings and Third Temples and "letters of fire." Nevertheless, as the half-Jewish, half-Catholic American journalist Lucas remembers from his studies at Columbia in religion:

> *tikkun* referred to a primal accident at the beginning of time. According to the doctrines of the mystic Isaac Luria, the Almighty had absented himself in the first and greatest of mysteries, bequeathing to his exiled, orphaned creations emanations of himself. The force of these emanations was beyond the capacity of existence to contain them. Since the beginning, the goal of the universe had been to restore the divine balance, to restore the *tikkun*, a cosmic harmony and justice and the task had somehow fallen to mankind to set right. And each person, some Kabbalists believed, labored under his own *tikkun*, a microcosm, a succession of souls, through a process of reincarnation called *partsufim*.

Restoring *tikkun*, in the middle of the intafada, is the secret business of most of the characters in the lurid cast of *Damascus Gate*; Lucas, who has written one book on what really happened during the invasion of Grenada and thinks he is writing another on "religious mania"; Sonia, the half-black child of American communists (and a Sufi jazz singer); Raziel, the clarinet-playing, heroin-addicted son of a U.S. congressman (and former yeshiva student, Zen monk, and Jew for Jesus); Nusia, the radical Irish "hard-case" refugee worker who has done time in Beirut, Somalia, and the Sudan (and who runs guns to Palestinian guerrillas); De Kuff, the well-born New Orleans Jewish art historian who converted to Catholicism (and who will be led to believe he is the Messiah); Linda, the American missionary's wife who volunteers at the Israeli Human Rights Coalition (and who will sleep her way into the heart of a conspiracy); Zimmer, the Polish "bird of ill omen" who has informants and connections everywhere (and who intends to do something drastic about "the mediocrity" of Israel); and Dr. Pinchas Obermann, a psychiatrist who specializes in "the Jerusalem Syndrome" that seems to afflict everybody else ("Which is com-

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARION ETTLINGER

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ing here and God gives you a mission").

Somehow, as we have come to expect both from thrillers and the nightly Middle East news, the characters' feverish activity will coalesce in yet another plot to blow up the Muslim shrines on the Temple Mount. And the conspirators themselves will prove to be unwitting puppets, attached to strings jerked around by clandestine organs of the state. We might have hoped, like Amos Oz, for something less thrilling: "Not 'the land of the heart' and not 'the divine city reunited,' as the clichés would have it, but simply the State of Israel. Not the 'Maccabeans reborn' that Herzl talked of, but a warm-hearted, hot-tempered Mediterranean people that is gradually learning, through great suffering and in a tumult of sound and fury, to find release both from the blood-curdling nightmares of the past and from delusions of grandeur, both ancient and modern." But we may as well be reading David Grossman, who confesses in *The Yellow Wind* (1983): "The impresarios of history are beyond my comprehension. They amuse themselves with overly large toys, and the game may come down on all our heads. For instance the game called 'Blow Up the Dome of the Rock and Wait One Turn for the Arab World's Reaction'.... These are historical people, and historical people become—at certain moments—hollow and allow history to stuff them, and then they are dangerous and deadly."

Except that in *Damascus Gate*, almost none of the principals is Arab or Israeli, just as in Andre Malraux's novels of the Chinese revolution, almost nobody is actually Chinese.

The universe is such that is bears witness everywhere to a lost God, in man and outside him, and to a fallen nature. (Pascal)

That Stone finally landed in Jerusalem should come as no surprise. The amazement is that it took so long. If you're a novelist of pilgrimages who believes like Pascal that God has been lost or abducted—or has absconded—why not start at the site where He was last seen, igniting three combustible religions? Why not go crazy in the original sun-stunned desert? After New Orleans, Hollywood, Mexico, Central America, Vietnam, and Antarctica, after radical politics, liberation theology, race riots, blacklists, Mickey Mouse, and the CIA, he's long past overdue in the capital city of transcendence. On the occasion of Israel's fiftieth birthday and his own sixtieth, wearing Original Sin like a safari jacket—with Melville and Conrad in one flap pocket, Marx and Freud in another, zippered compartments for Simon Magus and Hermes Trismegistos and lysergic acid, he carries a knapsack containing the whole Nag Hammadi "library in a jar," a gold-knobbed Toltec walking stick, and maybe a glow-in-the-dark campaign button for Sophia, the whore of Gnostic wisdom.

Stone looks and behaves exactly like a tourist, descriptive in lavish ways that would never occur to Aron in Grossman or Fima in Oz. He escorts us in vivid and shameless detail to every four-star attraction of the Old City and the New and afield, from Ottoman towers to Crusader revetments to the Eurotrash at Fink's, from the Stone of Unction and the Hill of Evil Counsel and the Valley of Hinnom unto Yad Vashem, Masada, the Golan Heights, the Gaza camps—except that his guidebooks, besides Fodor's, include the Dead Sea Scrolls and the

"Would he trade his sanity for faith? Only in Jerusalem."

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Kabbalah. "He could imagine the letters of the Torah as fire in the night sky. It was what the music was about. Some kind of inspired nightmare fallen from another world." However: "Would he trade his sanity for faith? Only in Jerusalem. Elsewhere, faith wouldn't get you on the metro, the vaporetto, the IRT."

He could even be the journalist he pretends—to be Lucas, who can be counted on to identify more with Peace Now than with Gush Emunim, the lonely American for whom "sometimes the entire field of folk seemed alien and hostile, driven by rages he could not comprehend, drunk on hopes he could not imagine. So he could make his way only through questioning, forever inquiring of wild-eyed obsessives the nature of their dreams ... listening agreeably while they poured scorn on his ignorance and explained the all too obvious." This is surely the Stone who pretended to be Holliwell, the anthropologist in *A Flag for Sunrise* "forever inquiring of helpful strangers the nature of their bonds with one another." He is always dressing up as a journalist, or an anthropologist, or a government intelligence agent, or a documentary filmmaker who knows how "to work the silences, the white noise and dark frames."

Such a journalist would like to believe what Raziel tells him: "You're one of those people who hear the sun come up." ("How flattering," he thinks: "And in spite of himself, what fun! To be special. To be part of a process that was beautiful and mysterious. To be chosen.") And such a journalist would fall in love with Sonia, the dupe of Raziel, Zimmer, and Nuala; Sonia, who cries in "God's most ancient wilderness" because Fats Waller loved Bach, who requires "the proximity of faith." But everything and everyone will disappoint Lucas, this "apostate wayward Christian, wandering Jew," for whom the city is "lousy with prayers, in the mosques, in the reconstructed Temple to come, in the flickering crackhouse light of the church—all of them, behind their talk of mercy, nursing bloody vindicating covenants. Dominion of the blood and the sepulcher. The first shall be the last, the crooked straight, universal revenge." Locked up overnight in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, he emerges on a blasted heath:

> How could anyone believe that there was a covenant and a redemption to come, that this parched crescent of fundamental desire and loss, this most uneasy bargain of a place, could be called The Holy? Its monster of a God had effortlessly, fondly formed the fleet carnivorous lizard, the eyelids of morning, the submersible, red-eyed rage of Behemoth. His symbol was the crocodile. He was the crocodile.

But Stone isn't world-weary Lucas. Nor is he gentle Sonia. (To perfidious Zimmer, Sonia says: "My country's here, sure, but my country's in the heart too. I don't believe in a perfect world, but I believe in a better one." To which Zimmer replies: "My poor baby. You've become a liberal.") Stone gave up playing the role of "Christian humanist witness in a vicious world" years ago. He is hounding God in person, blaming him for history. He's brought the Syndrome with him to Jerusalem (as we all do, this great greediness for politics and religion and absolutes, a kind of drug lust; we go *expecting* to be changed) and there's no reason to think he won't take it away with him again. It's part and parcel of the buried sparks and "seeds of light" he has found everywhere he's gone: in the almond trees, voodoo dolls and Dante's Inferno of A Hall of Mirrors of Eden. So it goes in Stone's long argument with his Lost Father. And we may safely resume seeking in our Bronze Age digs, from fallen columns, charred beams, headless statues, smashed pottery, shattered frescoes, incense shovels, catapult stones, battering rams, and some Aramaic scribbled on papyrus, such evidence as is required to prove that Joshua was our kind of guy. ❑

ISRAEL

SILWAN *(continued from page 30)*
cuffs to dig into his wrists. He was yelling at the soldiers, "Please let me walk! I'll walk if you put me down!" I tried to hold him up to relieve some of the pull on his wrists, but the soldiers shoved me away once again. I had to content myself with pleading in the police officer's ear, "Please let him walk. You're hurting him. He doesn't mean you any harm. He's in pain. Why are you hurting him? Please stop."

Finally, when we reached the sidewalk, another soldier intervened and allowed Bob to stand. He assured me that no more harm would come to him. From the look on the soldier's face and the tone in his voice, I knew he was sincere. Bob was being arrested, but the worst was over.

Now most demonstrators had been removed, and the last few were dragged and carried out with little trouble. I stayed close, taking pictures and watching to see if anyone else was being beaten. When everyone was out on the street, I slumped down and put my head in my hands. I was exhausted.

At the time of this writing, I have difficulty describing in detail what happened. When I watched the news and saw the footage, even though I was there, I couldn't believe what I was seeing. My focus was on one corner of an immense melee of pain and confusion, and I can remember only brief moments, and feelings of pain, anger, and frustration. My mind was racing, but the memory of my thoughts is sketchy.

The other demonstrators and I were there because we saw something wrong. Israeli settlers had confiscated homes and evicted their rightful owners. We came in a spirit of peace and non-violence. We were met with anger and brutality. Here, as always in Israel/Palestine, the power and might of the military occupation protected its own interests at the expense of justice. My bruises and scrapes have healed but as long as peaceful demonstrations are met with violence, the wounds in this land will only deepen. ❑

Find out why



Rabbi Neil Comess-Daniels conducts a mini-Seder April 8 at the entrance of the Beverly Hills Summit Hotel with Father Pedro Villarroya (left) and Stephanie Sacker, who was fired for union organizing after 10 years' employment at the hotel.
(Pat Twair photo)

a rabbi held a Seder outside a five-star Beverly Hills hotel

in the September-October edition of
Sojourners magazine,
a special issue on the history and future of
church-labor relations.

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READING SPIRIT

Ethics in a Time of Plague

Roger S. Gottlieb

- *Some Choose to Stay: Faith and Ethics in a Time of Plague*, by Alan C. Mermann. Humanities Press, 1997.
- *And the Waters Turned to Blood*, by Rodney Barker. Simon and Schuster, 1997.



ILLUSTRATION BY OENONE TERRILL

How are we to be moral in a difficult time, when old forms of injustice and new afflictions threaten not only our bodies but also our ethical integrity? Alan Mermann's use of the ancient image of plague to illuminate several modern sources of collective suffering can help us focus on this question. In measured, honest, and insightful chapters he focuses on diseases such as AIDS and Alzheimer's, social forms of oppression such as racism, the world-shattering events of Holocaust and ecocide, and the psychological afflictions of despair and meaninglessness. The central question he raises is: What is the "source of faith" that will help us overcome our spontaneous tendencies to avoidance, denial, and escape? What empowers us to join in the difficult, at times seemingly hopeless, task of stemming the tide of death, suffering, or injustice?

The image of plague captures one of the central features of moral life in our time: the way a "normal," stable, reasonable ethical existence seems increasingly hard to come by. By a "normal" ethical existence I mean one in which we can with reasonable certainty identify what good behavior is, can without undue effort perform it, and can know that for the most part "doing the right thing" will lead to some appropriate combination of justice and collective happiness. A normal ethical existence is one in which good—rather than chaos or corruption—is the norm. In times of plague, by contrast, as Mermann tells us, "We are not in control of our lives, evil abounds in the world, and God either does not exist or is viciously vengeful." How we respond to the realities we face and the emotions they arouse in us "will determine our integrity and our worth and truly define who we are."

People respond to plagues in a number of troubled and troubling ways. If we think of the environmental crisis or the Holocaust, we can see denial and avoidance becoming the norm for many. During the Holocaust and for several years afterward, and in the face of today's ecological perils, individuals, institutions, and governments have too often refused to believe a truth right in front of their eyes, focused their attention elsewhere, and tried to continue with business as usual. The first moral task a plague demands, then, is the moral and emotional courage to take in what is going on around us, no matter how overwhelming or threatening it may be.

Roger S. Gottlieb teaches philosophy at Worcester Polytechnic Institute. His next book, Spirituality and Resistance: Finding a Peaceful Heart and Protecting the Earth, *will be published by Crossroad in the spring of 1999.*

Once the denial and avoidance recede, a tide of hopeless gloom often starts to inch forward. Yet the temptation to respond to plagues with despair can and should be resisted. The attraction of despair is that, once we despair, we no longer have to make the effort of

Plague puts all our convictions to the test, weakening and complicating our pet theories.

hope, an effort that could give rise to further pain and disappointment. In despair everything has been settled. However, whatever the ravages of our modern plagues, we still have much to treasure and protect. Grief can legitimately become despair only when there is no hope left: nothing, that is, which is still worth saving.

Alternatively, we may respond to plague by fighting back in ways that are as out of control as what we want to stop. I have in mind the kind of over frantic political lifestyle that often leads to doctrinaire sectarianism and burnout; or, in a still more extreme fashion, to violent terrorism. Like denial and despair, desperation expresses our inability to maintain a clear moral sense in the face of plague. Terrorists give up their willingness to consider the rights or suffering of the people they hurt. Burned-out activists lose their own peace of mind and psychological health.

What enables us to respond to plague humanely and appropriately? Is it a worked-out ethical system? Confidence in explicit and reasoned beliefs about God? It strikes me, and Merman's book exemplifies the thought, that our individual character and emotional connections sustain us as much or more than articulated beliefs about rights and goodness. Plague puts all our convictions to the test, weakening



and complicating our pet theories. When we have to split our attention between parents ill with Alzheimer's and our young children, when we seek to live a reasonable life and not contribute to the environmental crisis, when we try to trust in God after the Holocaust, our ordinary moral ideas about parenthood, political action, and theology get strained and broken. In the end what supports us, despite our fears and confusions, is a simple truth Mermann captures beautifully: "It is the self-centered self, separated from the social network we live in and denying the presence of a spirit that animates and upholds, who must face the horrors of inescapable plague alone." The wisdom of this message is clear and its spiritual precision decisive: because ethics even in a time of plague enables us to reach beyond our isolated egos, it is lonelier and more frightening to live without morality than with it.

And the Waters Turned to Blood provides a fascinating, chilling, and inspiring account of one heroic individual's struggle with the beginnings of a contemporary plague, and with the selfishness and denial of those who would have kept her from discovering and spreading the truth about the dangers she had uncovered.

The book simultaneously concerns the environment, the politics of scientific research, the biology of one-celled organisms and—most importantly in this context—the character and personality of one particular scientist. Joanne Burkholder discovered a frightening one-celled organism capable of changing into more than a dozen radically different forms (much more versatile than the anti-hero of the Alien movies). The "cell from hell" activates when rivers are flooded with wastes from local factory farms or fertilizers. Related to the organism responsible for Red Tide, it killed millions of fish in North Carolina's estuarial rivers and emitted a toxic gas that causes serious nerve damage to humans. Burkholder fought to get the state government to take action to protect fishing and the public's health along North Carolina's rivers. Her efforts were frequently obstructed by governmental bureaucracies corrupted by the financial powers of industry or commercial hog farming, and by personal animosity and professional jealousy. At times she even faced personal threats.

And the Waters Turned to Blood provides some chilling images of plague: tens of thousands of fish floating belly-up, covered with sores; wooden posts coated with crabs frantically trying to escape infected water; Burkholder's research assistant so affected by toxic emissions from the organism that for months he is unable to think clearly or even talk. Yet what is inspiring about this story, and what makes a book with no explicit spiritual content relevant here, is Burkholder's dogged, determined, and unselfconscious commitment to doing the right thing. Like the doctor in Ibsen's classic *Enemy of the People* or the beleaguered policeman in *Jaws*—who both sought to tell a dangerous truth rather than allow a lucrative lie—Burkholder did her best to protect others. Confronted by the dishonesty, denial, and avoidance of those in power, risking her career and funding, not sure that she would get the message through or how to do what was needed, she acted out of a simple faith in doing the right thing. In the face of plague, that might be the best we can offer. ❑

Short Takes

A Look at What's in Other Magazines

Here TIKKUN continues our conversation with American intellectual, political, and cultural monthly and bimonthly magazines

Harper's

In the July issue of *Harper's*, playwright Arthur Miller turns to poetry in honor of Israel's fiftieth anniversary by offering, "Waiting for the Teacher." In a poem that balances the moral imperatives of a homeland after centuries of Jewish persecution with the darker consequences that have come from fifty years of existence, Miller is both sentimental and unsparing in his look at the romance, power, and soul of the Jewish State. Now, he writes, that "the applause has died away,"

> A mist arises, the confusion of
> unhappy power,
> ...
> The well-known loss of high
> expectation.
> For Israel was moral first and
> dreamed much,
> And now ... she has merely joined
> the world,
> A nation no different than all
> the rest.

As always, there is much music in Miller's work, as when he writes "The unspoken is always the truth" and "The untaught heart knows its own blood best." And there is insight as well in lines like "When it becomes too easy to become a Jew it is/time to ask what has gone wrong."

Miller's "Waiting for the Teacher" very much reflects TIKKUN's ongoing conversation about the soul of Israeli society and the dreams of Zionism, and how the more recent years of Israeli politics have lowered the moral high ground on which Israel's existence and survival were first founded.

Double Take

Novelist-Nobelist Toni Morrison is interviewed in the summer issue of *DoubleTake*. In discussing her latest novel, *Paradise*, she laments the lack of respect that the young confer on older people: "The novel says, 'You say "sir" when you speak to men.' You do what the parent says—that's an important thing. And it holds communities and families together. In my life, there was no one who couldn't stop me, no adult who couldn't stop me and tell me what to do. And my parents relied on that. Now, you have to buy that—in babysitters or in housekeepers or you test your friendships with that. People today are very busy not getting involved in other people's affairs—certainly not their children's—and the children miss it. They want to know, 'How far can I go, and will you catch me if I fall? And who's going to pull me aside and tell me?' Today you have to create that sense of responsibility with a big movement.... You have to have a spectacle in order to remind people that these are good things to do: take care of your family; take care of your children; be responsible for your life; love one another. These are all very basic Sunday school lessons." These words and ideas also resonate deeply with TIKKUN readers who long for a transformed world, one that embraces spiritual and ethical values, all within communities that are mutually loving and sustaining.

The American Prospect

Writing in the July/August issue of *The American Prospect*, Mona Harrington addresses the national crisis of childcare in a society that now honors the professional career aspirations of working women. In "The Care Equation," Harrington sees that "most families cannot do all their care work themselves, nor do they have enough money to buy the care they cannot provide. So we are a society without enough care—at all income levels—and we are obviously suffering because of it." Conservatives continue to lament the deterioration of family values and to argue that families would be better served if women would simply stay at home and exploit their natural skills of emotional nurturing and caretaking. For Harrington, "Liberals, as protectors of individual rights, which sometimes conflict with family claims, have had difficulty staking out a clear pro-family ground." Harrington argues that our national caretaking can no longer rely on the unpaid labor of women at home, nor can the private market fill the gap. Instead, she calls for "a new capital base for care," a public-private collaboration which would include tax subsidies, employer-supported on-site daycare and new work structures that would allow people to take time off to be with their families. If such changes don't take place, then the promise of individual rights and equality for women will mean nothing, and families will indeed continue to suffer from the cumulative consequences of insufficient caretaking in a society that is increasingly ambivalent, and yet also judgmental,

about whose job it is to take care of the children.

Utne Reader

In the August *Utne Reader*, Jeremiah Creedon explores the phenomenon of Americans tailoring their own, personalized religions in "God with a Million Faces." "What observers call '*pastiche* spirituality' or 'religion a la carte' involves combining various beliefs and practices from different sources, or even being a member of two or more distinct religions at the same time ... private belief systems, each tailored to fit the believer's individual needs." This trend reflects America's historical flirtations with "privatized" spiritual practices. Some of this is related to cultural changes that took place in the 1960s: feminism, which has been suspicious of religions that come fully-loaded with male biases; LSD and the psychedelic subculture, which weakened traditional religious ties while creating alternative ways to reach a mystical transcendence; and the exposure to the spiritual belief systems of Asia. In exploring the many reasons behind what Huston Smith last year observed as the New Age "cafeteria approach to spirituality," Creedon finds himself ultimately sympathetic to the trend, concluding that "an individual's homely, imperfect search for meaning says more about the origins of faith than the polished beauty of a great religious tradition can. An established religion may be a finished work of art, but the personal quest is a creative act, and thus just as authentic in what it says about innate human yearnings and desires."

The Atlantic Monthly

Senator Joseph Lieberman, writing in the July issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*, takes aim at American campaign financing laws in "A Republic—If We Can Keep It." The senator writes, "The fundraising scandal of 1996 was a very real tragedy, with very real consequences for our democracy." But Lieberman sees the problem as having deeper implications than mere politics. "The breakdown in our political values is akin to a broader problem in our society—the sense that popular culture has disoriented our moral compass." Everything comes down to competitive pressures: television ratings, record sales, bombarding our children with violence, promiscuity and vulgarity—all for the sake of money and all defended under the First Amendment. In Hollywood the thinking goes, "If I can say it or portray it and people will pay, then I must indeed say it and portray it, because then I will succeed." In Washington the analogue is, "If the law does not clearly prohibit me from doing it, then I must do it or I will lose." Senator Lieberman's remedy is "to suppress the temptation to stray from core values" and to address "the mistrust and alienation that many Americans feel toward their government."

Mother Jones

In the August *Mother Jones*, Lori Leibovich takes "a look inside fundamentalism's answer to MTV: the postmodern church, in Generation †." Fundamentalist, postmodern ministries have been growing nationwide since 1992. "By preaching that God is relevant and church is cool, postmodern leaders walk effortlessly between the secular and religious worlds." This postmodern movement, despite exploiting the vocabulary of Generation X—the celebrated ennui, skepticism, and cynicism—is not in any way related to academic postmodern philosophy (Nietzsche's "God is dead"). These religious postmodernists "preach the sanctity of community and argue that the Enlightenment's focus on the individual led to tragedies specific to the baby boom generation—namely, high divorce and abortion rates." What this movement signals is a wave of nondenominational, market-driven, anti-establishment megachurches. Parishioners wear baseball caps, there's usually a rock band, and lyrics appear on a video screen. Leibovich writes that "What makes a postmodern ministry so easy to embrace is that it doesn't demonize youth culture." And all of this yet again reinforces the spiritual hunger and quest for a deeper meaning that in this instance has a youth movement feel but is really part of a much larger American tragedy—the yearning for spiritual and ethical remedies to a world overrun with cynicism and disconnection.

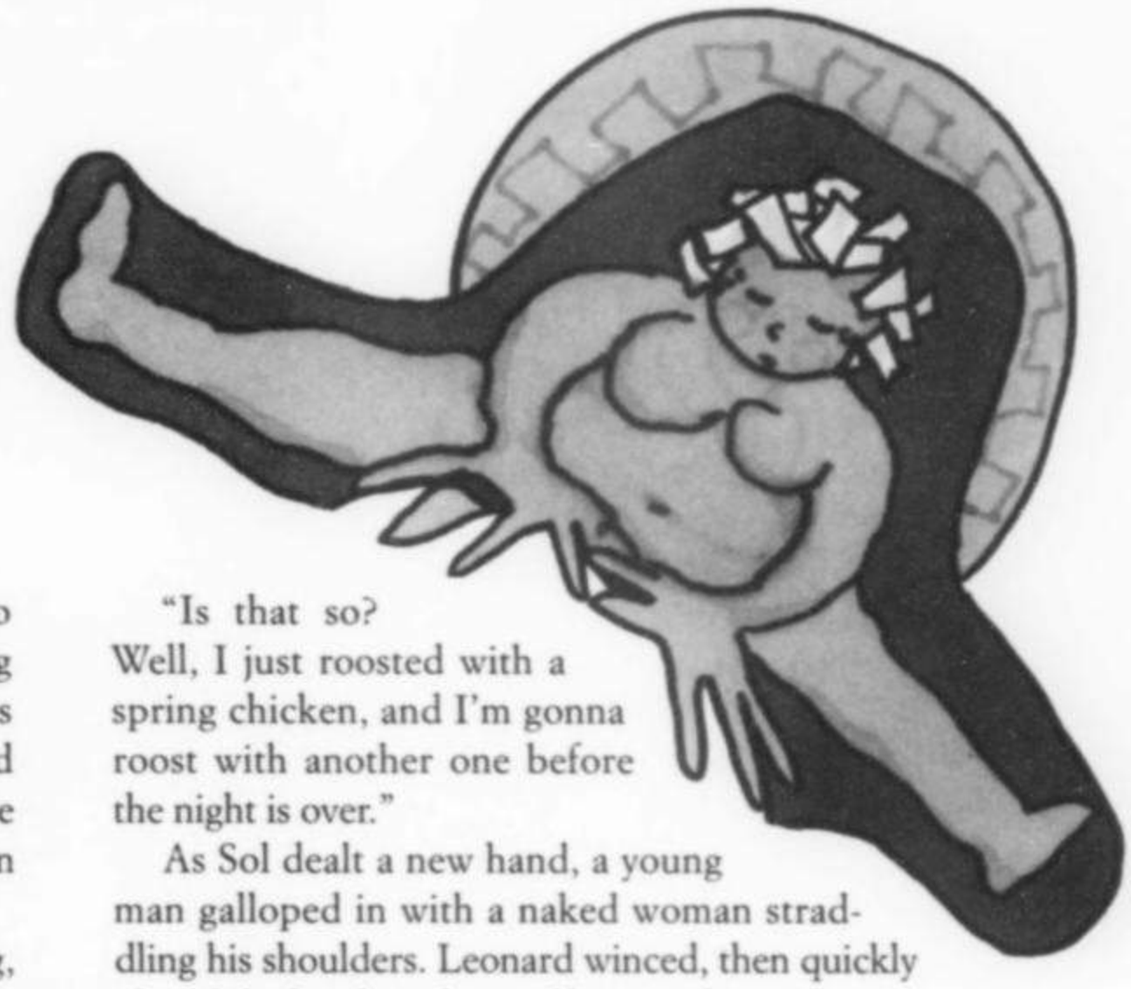
Lingua Franca

Writing in the July/August *Lingua Franca*, Hal Cohen, in "God Only Knows," looks at the team of Israeli mathematicians who say they have proof that God wrote the Hebrew Bible. It all started with Michael Drosnin's bestselling book, *The Bible Code*, which argued that the Old Testament is filled with God's cryptic, prophetic messages about the future. The scholarly weight behind such a theory came from Israeli mathematicians, which "raised awkward questions about how a decidedly abstract field of study like math intersects with the realms of both empirical evidence and religious faith." *The Bible Code* located encoded messages in the Bible that spoke of an "economic collapse" intersecting with "1929," and "Oswald" and "Ruby" near "he will kill the assassin." Based on his research in combing for messages in the Bible, Drosnin, back in 1994, apparently warned the Israeli government that he had discovered a code that read "Yitzhak Rabin" near "assassin will assassinate." But despite the book's popular success, the critics, which have included the academic math community, have been more than skeptical. Quoting one mathematician, Cohen writes, "For this to become such a source of fascination suggests that, for many people, neither science nor religion is working. It's tragic that people should find a source of existential solace in something so content-less." ❑

FICTION

The Hat

Dalia Rosenfeld



Leonard had left his hat at the orgy but was afraid to go back and get it. He feared that Stella was waiting for him, not at home in bed with her hair in curlers and teeth in a cup, but at the party, legs spread open as wide as the door, her bosom laid bare to break the news of her expectation: Leonard had not touched his wife in three months, and now he had to pay up.

He had managed to avoid her for most of the evening, when the lights were dim enough to conceal friends from foes, teachers from students, blondes from brunettes, and, most importantly for Leonard, husbands from wives. As the room swelled, first from ten to twenty, then from twenty to thirty, Leonard swelled with it and soon reached out to lock his arms around the nearest leg. It was a woman's; he was grateful for that. At his invitation, she slid towards him and took his earlobe between her teeth.

"Over fifty?" she asked, milking his flesh.

"Yes," said Leonard. His heart skipped a beat as he unbuttoned his shirt. "Does that excite you?"

The woman backed away and curled into a ball. "How much over fifty?"

Leonard raised his knees to his chin. He could still do that, barely. If Stella caught him now, she would make him wash his hands and empty his ears. Then she would put a plate of gingered beets in front of him and say, "For your breath. Eat."

"Too much, too much," he waved the woman away. "Go have fun."

Leonard pulled himself up and followed a trail of paper cups to the kitchen.

Squashed olives and cigarette butts passed under his shoes as he walked in. Seated at a table next to the bar were Sol, Bernie, and three other fellows Leonard recognized from the JCC locker room, playing cards.

"Poker?" Leonard inquired, pouring himself a drink.

"Strip," replied Sol.

Leonard held out a bottle of bourbon like a free weight. "Strip poker? I don't see no ladies on your laps."

"What's your advice?" one of the men shrugged. "They're laying their eggs in younger nests."

"Is that so?
Well, I just roosted with a
spring chicken, and I'm gonna
roost with another one before
the night is over."

As Sol dealt a new hand, a young man galloped in with a naked woman straddling his shoulders. Leonard winced, then quickly placed the bottle in front of his crotch.

"Go have fun," said Bernie, his back turned.

In the living room, Leonard crawled over stacks of bodies in search of an easy lay. Reaching out blindly in front of him, his hand landed on a bare breast, and he squeezed. A few feet later an arm floated above his head, then a buttock. When he squeezed again, five years fell from his chest. Another five when a mound of pubic hair passed over his lips. If Stella caught him now, she would ask what kind of a Jew would do such a thing, and with such people, and in such a place—squashed olives all over the floor—dreck, schmutz—squashed olives and we won't talk about squashed what else, Leonard. Squashed sexes, Leonard.

Squashed sexes! Leonard stifled a squeal and stuck himself into the nearest opening. *Gottenyu,* the pleasure! The pleasure of a woman that was not his wife (and it was again, thank God, a woman)—of a woman that was not his wife, for his wife, he feared, was in a back room waiting for her own sex to be squashed, so it was not a bad thing that Leonard was doing, not a bad thing at all. It was neither a breach of trust nor a betrayal—not that, and not adultery, either. Never adultery! Adultery was sex in secret, and Leonard had no secrets. Stella was in the same house, after all, at the same party; if he lifted his head—and soon he would have to lift his head, lift his head and let it all out—he might even see the hem of her dress through a crack in the door, or the heel of her shoe....

A hand crept up over Leonard's head and carried away his hat. Underneath, he was as bald as an egg. Screaming, Leonard's lay bit him on the ear and curled into a ball. Five years, ten years, they piled back onto his chest like the plagues in Egypt. Blood, frogs, lice, boils! What had he done to deserve such a beating! Lived longer than the others? Been dealt a better hand in life? Never charged interest on a debt?

Ululu! Ululu! Leonard groped in the dark for his spring chicken; if he found her, he would bite her right back.

Dalia Rosenfeld received her B.A. in Jewish Studies at Oberlin College and her M.F.A. in fiction writing at the Writer's Workshop at the University of Iowa. The author of numerous short stories, she is working on her first novel, which is set in Israel.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JENNIFER SERON

FICTION



At home, he remembered his hat; then Stella. He had left them both at the party. The last time that had happened, Stella returned holding out her husband's hat like a plate of hot soup and dropped it onto his lap. She had kept her clothes on then. Now he imagined her chancing upon the lost fedora on the way to the bathroom, a hat with no head in it, her husband decapitated, murdered by thieves, his body bludgeoned and hanging from a tree outside Mr. Plotinsky's butcher shop. If it wasn't already draped over the chair, Stella would tear her dress from her body in mourning....

The orgy was still going strong when Leonard opened the door. New bodies had replaced the old; a disco globe was spinning on its axis, spreading light across the room. The sound of gnashing teeth collided with the crack of a whip from the corner. Leonard tried to cover his head by scratching it and immediately caught the curiosity of a woman with two pulley chords hanging from her nipples.

"I want you," she moaned, pushing him against the wall. "Pull me."

Leonard pulled, and the woman fell to the floor. "I'm dead, now fuck me."

Necrophilia. Leonard had read about it once on an airplane. It had made him sick. Now, looking down on his drooping belly and liverish legs, he felt sick again. Death and sex. He was too close to the source for his own satisfaction.

"I'll send someone else over, sweetheart," he apologized. "I've gotta get my hat."

Leonard stumbled into the kitchen. His bottle of bourbon lay on its side, empty, in the center of the table. The boys were gone. No hat.

Back on the dance floor, no hat.

Wedged between the revolving doors of intimacy—Leonard excused himself for reaching—no hat.

Where was his wife? She would know the whereabouts of his hat. Your hat is on my head, she would say. Can't you see? And Leonard would come closer. Your hat is in my pocket, she would point. Can't you feel? And Leonard would feel.

What kind of a Jew wears a hat to an orgy?

Not now, Stella....

What kind of a Jew covers his head in a house of sin?

I'm feeling, feeling....

What kind of a Jew bares his baldness in the presence of the dead?

"The hat, Stella! Where's my hat?" Leonard burst into one room, then another. There was his wife, sitting in a rocking chair in the corner, reading a book.

"I've lost my hat," he explained.

Stella turned a page. "So you'll buy another."

Leonard slumped into a chair next to his wife. "Are you ready to go now?"

"I've got one more chapter."

"I want to go now."

"You'll have to wait."

Leonard leaned into his palms and waited. Following the rhythm of Stella's rocking chair made him sleepy, and soon he closed his eyes. When he opened them, he noticed a rim of wool sticking out from under the seat of his wife's skirt.

"Stella, you're sitting on my hat."

"I didn't want you to lose it."

"But I did lose it, and now you're sitting on it." Leonard reached for the fedora and gave it a tug.

Stella continued rocking. "A few more pages."

"Give me my hat!" Leonard held onto the rim with both hands.

"Be patient, Leonard."

Leonard was not going to wait another three months. With all his strength he pulled, pulled and pawed and scratched and bit, until the hat came loose and flung him to the floor. "I've got it, Stella!" His eyes bulged and fingers bled. "I've got the hat! We can go home now!"

Leonard looked around the room. Stella was gone. He could not show his head to anybody else. ❑

Sikkum: TIKKUN RECOMMENDS ...

The Book of Miriam

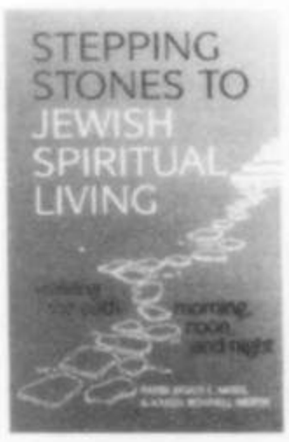
Leonard Angel (Mosaic Press, 1997)



Under the cover of a novel recounting the supposed rediscovery of an ancient book of wisdom, philosopher Leonard Angel has written what is certainly one of the most innovative and compelling reinterpretaions of the Torah in many years. He presents a totally alternative Torah text written by Miriam, a text reflecting a spiritual and ecological sensitivity which would make us proud of the boundary crossers (Hebrews or "Ivrim") who may have been our ancestors. Angel presents a Torah that many readers may wish had been ours, and every page of his work deepens our sense of the possibilities of Jewish renewal. If your local bookstore doesn't have it, get them to fax Mosaic Press at 1-800-387-8992 or email at cp507@freenet.toronto.on.ca

Stepping Stones to Jewish Spiritual Living

Rabbi James L. Mirel & Karen Bonnell Werth (Jewish Lights Publishing, 1998)



A guide to Jewish spirituality that gives very concrete advice on ways to enhance our closeness to God in every aspect of our daily lives—from our commute to work to the way we lead our relationships. For those who never learned that Judaism could provide a spiritual practice that would connect us to the sacred, Mirel and Werth's book is required reading.

Waiting for Godot in Sarajevo

David Toole (Westview Press, 1998)



A brilliant set of theological reflections on politics in an age in which "never again" has turned into a rather hollow postscript to the horrors of the Holocaust. Politics, Toole argues, may be the art of choosing a meaningful death in the face of overwhelming oppression and evil. Though his beautifully rendered thology is too pessimistic for those of us who still believe in God's power of healing and transformation, it is impossible not to recognize this kind of Christian as a powerful ally in challenging the power of existing systems of oppression—and in exposing the superficiality of the cultural trivializers (Toole does a particularly powerful job with Spielberg's *Schindler's List*).

Going Local

Creating Self-Reliant Communities in a Global Age

Michael H. Shuman (Free Press, 1998)



Even in an age of globalized capital it may still be possible to build strong local communities that are able to protect themselves. Shuman offers strategies for those who believe that preserving local communities is a more important social goal than creating cheap goods, on the assumption that there is more to life than the next sale at the mall.

Inner Revolution

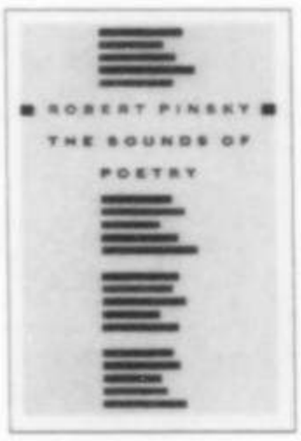
Robert Thurman (Riverhead Books, 1998)



A primer for Buddhism that helps us understand exactly what is at stake when attempting to bring Buddhist insights into Jewish practice. The allure of inner revolution is that it is within our grasp; its limitation is that it seems too easily an accommodation to an oppressive world. That is clearly not what Thurman has in mind. The call to gentleness and to increasing our awareness of our inextricable interconnectedness with all others could be a powerful adjunct to any political movement—and a useful corrective to the dynamics within some sectors of the Jewish community.

The Sounds of Poetry

Robert Pinsky (Farrar Straus Giroux, 1998)



Not an instruction book, but a guide to the vocal and various art of poetry by the current U.S. Poet Laureate who has served as a poetry consultant to TIKKUN through the years. Those who wish to increase their pleasure in writing, listening to, and reading poetry will find Pinsky an accessible yet masterful commentator on the essential elements of the art, from questions such as "What is a line of poetry?" to the nature of rhythm and the relationship between sounds in language. For the seasoned poet as well as the novice with budding ambitions, Pinsky's primer is like no other—clear, thorough, provocative, and alive with the wit and passionate engagement of a great teacher. *The Sounds of Poetry* is sure to remain the most inspiring and most serviceable book of its kind for a long time to come.

תיקון

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

Spiritual renewal requires personal transformation, social justice, ecological sanity, awe and wonder.



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