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WILL BILL BRADLEY RUN?
A JACK NEWFIELD INTERVIEW

MOSES: THE PRINCE OF EGYPT

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1999 $5.95

TECHNO-ECONOMIC COLLAPSE?
David Ehrenfeld

OR

REFORM?
Current Debate: Jeff Gates vs. Charles Derber



PALESTINIAN DESPAIR AFTER WYE
Rashid Khalidi

BENJAMIN'S VISION
Raymond Barglow

GRAND JURY: THE MODERN INQUISITION
Margaret Ratner and Michael Ratner

A.J. HESCHEL
Arthur Green

Spiritual Paths
Riane Eisler • Amitai Etzioni • Svi Shapiro
Meredith Maran • Sharon Salzberg

PLUS: Holocaust Controversy with Browning, Goldhagen, Rosenbaum and Fogelman

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Notebook

Jade darkness
beneath the bridges
of a mountain road.

Haze of wood smoke
over the valleys
in the burning season.

The tires kick up leaves
in a village square,
and in courtyards and gardens
and behind walls
dingy with the perpetual stain
of cars and trucks
the candelabrum and menorah
of the pollarded plane trees
stand unlit in the sabbath dusk...

Where we visit, what we see
and remember and write down,
carries light from that place
to the next, until at last,
at home, on a cluttered nightstand,
the festive edge of page
torn from a spiral notebook
flutters in the sleeper's breath,
and confetti blows through a dream.

—Keith Althaus

TIKKUN

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Letters to the Editor

Berrigan and Inner Peace



To the Editor:

Is "inner peace" always false comfort? Daniel Berrigan rightly critiques the pitfall of pursuing inner peace as an end in itself ("Spirituality in America," September/October 1998). Yet he takes his argument too far, furthering a dichotomy between inner work and social action where none truly pertains.

He underplays, if not neglects, the following points:

1. The reservoir of inner peace found in contemplation often overflows into action, if unimpeded by barriers of self-involvement. This is an old truth, oft-repeated, and indeed implied by the first half of Berrigan's piece. As Mother Teresa succinctly put it, "The more we receive in silent prayer, the more we can give in our active life."

2. In an ideal world, everyone would live fully integrated lives. But in the real world, some people are drawn more to a life of contemplation, at least for certain periods, others more to a life of active political engagement and fighting societal evil. This is perhaps as it should be "until the messiah comes." In any case, our radical respect and honor are due to both types of committed souls.

3. The biblical vision holds both poles Berrigan describes in high regard, not one against the other: both the impossible rollercoaster of life, with its nitty-gritty hardship and struggle, and the serene transcendence of peace. The tormented faithfulness of a Jeremiah is closely allied to the still small voice disclosed to Elijah. That voice is found in the struggle of faith, and it is filled with peace. In the Christian Bible, statements like "I have come not to bring peace, but a sword" coexist with many others like "Peace be

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with you" which point to "the peace that passeth understanding." When Jesus stilled the storm on the Sea of Galilee, this flowed naturally from a peaceful stillness within him.

Let's not dismiss the search for inner peace too hastily.

TONY STERN, M.D.
Hastings-on-Hudson, NY

Is Pop Culture Poisonous?

To the Editor:

In his *Publisher's Notes* (September/October 1998), Danny Goldberg lists Maryann Medzian as one of the thinkers and political figures on the Left who have been highly critical of the entertainment industry. In fact my name is Myriam Miedzian and I would appreciate your correcting this erratum.

As a longtime proponent of a Children's Public Broadcasting System dedicated to high quality TV devoid of commercials, as well as regulations to protect children from violence in films and videos, I am glad to read that Mr. Goldberg favors serious discussion of how to regulate what children are exposed to and would be happy to pay more taxes for educational TV programming.

I am not happy with his lumping me together with Senator Bob Dole and others who have criticized the entertainment industry without any personal familiarity with its content. In preparation for my book, *Boys Will Be Boys: Breaking the Link Between Masculinity and Violence*, I immersed myself over a period of several years in every form of entertainment popular with young boys and teenagers—heavy metal, rap, wrestling, films, TV, videogames. In lecturing on the subject of violence in entertainment, I always show a film with excerpts from these areas which I have put together and updated periodically. My recommendations all grow out of this first hand knowledge of the entertainment that surrounds American children.

MYRIAM MIEDZIAN, PH.D.
New York, NY

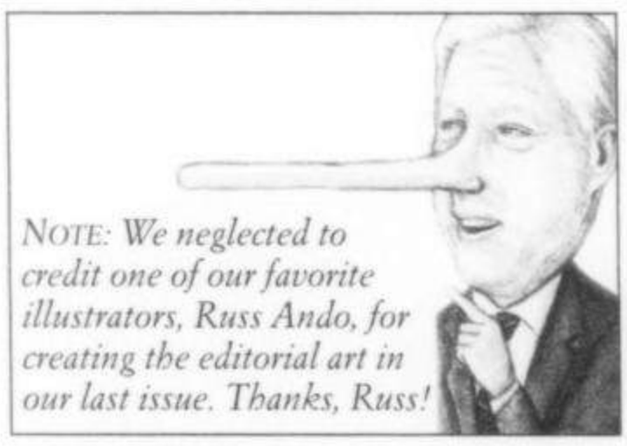
Goldberg responds:

I am mortified that we misspelled Dr. Miedzian's name and apologize for the error.

Dr. Miedzian also makes a fair point when she says she has done a lot more homework on popular entertainment than many other critics. For the record, I did not "lump" her with Dole, but with left-of-center entertainment critics such as Cornel West and Sylvia Ann Hewlett.

Although her book, Boys Will Be Boys, *displays more research on popular culture, it still comes down on the side of severely criticizing much populist teen entertainment in a literalistic way that is out of sync, in my view, with the impressionistic way that people actually process art and entertainment. I think this ill serves the rest of her progressive agenda.*

I totally agree with Dr. Miedzian's proposal for a government-funded Children's Public Broadcasting System. However, I am not sure what she means by "regulation" of what kids are exposed to. I certainly encourage and participate in moral criticism of entertainment, especially by people who have actually paid attention to it, but "regulation" scares me, in part because the regulators are never people like Dr. Miedzian.



NOTE: We neglected to credit one of our favorite illustrators, Russ Ando, for creating the editorial art in our last issue. Thanks, Russ!

Sexual McCarthyism

To the Editor:

About Mr. Lerner's editorial on the Lewinsky scandal (November/December 1998), one need only consider what's missing from it—the word "perjury."

Which is no surprise. It's Clinton's defenders, not his critics, who keep talking about sex. Those who think he is unfit for office instead focus on the fact that our president has committed multiple acts of perjury, a federal felony crime. Not to mention subornation of perjury and obstruction of justice.

The good rabbi can't be bothered to discuss this weighty matter, and it's pretty obvious why. He'd have to stop whipping the corpse of Joe McCarthy long enough to explain exactly why Bill Clinton should be allowed to get away with committing crimes. Too bad Mr. Lerner didn't discuss this; I'd have loved to read it.

HIAWATHA BRAY
Boston, MA

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More Sexual McCarthyism ...

To the Editor:

In your editorial (November/December 1998), you worry about the danger of a "new repressive political climate" in the wake of the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal. What about *the role of Clinton* and his slimy, degrading conduct in creating a morally polluted White House? You rant on about Clinton being a "traitor," and his "abandoning everything he told us he stood for, placing his self-interest above any set of principles." But instead of *calling on him to resign for violating his Oath of Office* (to uphold the law) you dream on about his "*talking honestly* about the entire history of his presidency...." *Get real!* Clinton doesn't know what honesty *is*. In fact he's *still* lying! But nowhere do you mention "perjury" and "obstruction of justice" (both felonies).

This is the danger I worry about, that we turn our eyes away from the terrible truth that we have a felon in the White House. As Justice Louis Brandeis wrote: "If the Government becomes a lawbreaker, it breeds contempt for law; it invites every man to become a law unto itself...."

WILLIAM STEYERT
Chicago, IL

Why Wye?

To the Editor:

October 24, 1998

1. We, the Palestinian National Municipality, agree to arrest, torture and imprison our own people if they disagree with any aspects of our capitulation to the Israeli side. We will do this in exchange for a further 1 percent of land to be passed over to our control. The remaining 12 percent will be added to the areas that we are denied access to on a regular basis every time Israel decides to close the roads between our towns in the territories. Of this total 13 percent, we have agreed that 3 percent of it will be nature reserve land that we cannot build on, which will do nothing to solve the problem of overcrowding in Palestinian cities.

We will also be allowed finally to open an airport, as previously agreed upon, and naturally under sovereign Israeli control. Israel has also kindly allowed us to open an industrial park on our own land in Gaza. We acknowledge that the opening of a sea port, which would open the doors to real trade revenue for the Palestinians, is subject to further negotiations during the next two months, which will never be concluded as riots/acts of terrorism that break out in response to this agreement will give the Israelis an excuse to delay this step yet again.

2. We, the American Rulers of the World, out of our desire to see peace, justice, and human rights prevail in Palestine, and out of our electoral obligations to the pro-Israel lobby in Washington, have agreed to lend the Palestinians the expert monitoring services of the Central Intelligence Agency, known and respected worldwide for its commitment to peace, justice, and human rights.

We are particularly grateful to the Palestinian Authority for generously compromising once again, in order to afford us the opportunity to claim a media victory that will get the attention away from the president and his intern problems.

3. We, the World Community, pretty much dependent on the Americans for pretty much everything these days, once again clap and praise the leaders of all three countries for reaching an agreement that means no change in the status quo for the still unresolved Palestinian Question.

NIGEL PARRY
Minneapolis, MN

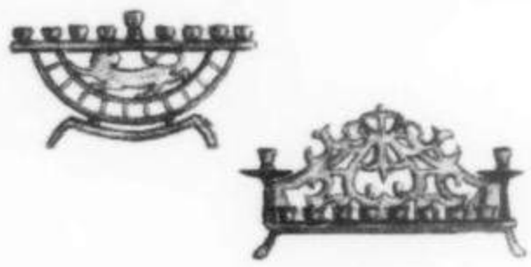
TIKKUN's Chanukah Supplement

To the Editor:

The TIKKUN guide to Chanukah, (November/December 1998) though admirable in many respects, presents a "non-mythologized" version of the story that in fact reflects Jewish myths about Hellenism. You picture the appeal of Greek civilization as a matter either of wealth and power or of "the allure of a society that worshipped the body and saw reality in terms of what could be tasted, touched, and directly experienced by the senses." Current scholarship in Classics is increasingly attentive to structures of power and class in the ancient world, to the ancient construction of sexuality and gender, and to ways in which Greek literature reflects Greek society; but your description of this society and its concerns is an extraordinary caricature that sheds little light on the appeal of Platonism and other philosophical traditions or of Greek literature and art.

Jews then as now were presumably attracted not only by wealth, power, and the life of the senses but by the intellectual, artistic, and humanistic appeal of the larger cosmopolitan society. Some have seen and continue to see that appeal as a threat to Judaism and a Jewish life; many of us who remain committed Jews believe—as many Jews in antiquity must have—that participation in the larger society need pose no such threat. But in no case is it helpful to fortify the value of our own tradition by giving a reductive portrayal of another. TIKKUN would surely urge us to a greater understanding of contemporary cultures other than our own; why not do the same for cultures of the past?

DEBORAH H. ROBERTS
Haverford, PA



Editor responds:

We live in a world in which over 30 million children die of malnutrition each year, in which hunger and poverty are widespread, and in which the wealthiest country in the world manages to avert its attention from the suffering that its economic system

(continued on page 79)

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PUBLISHER'S NOTES

The ADL vs. Superman

Danny Goldberg

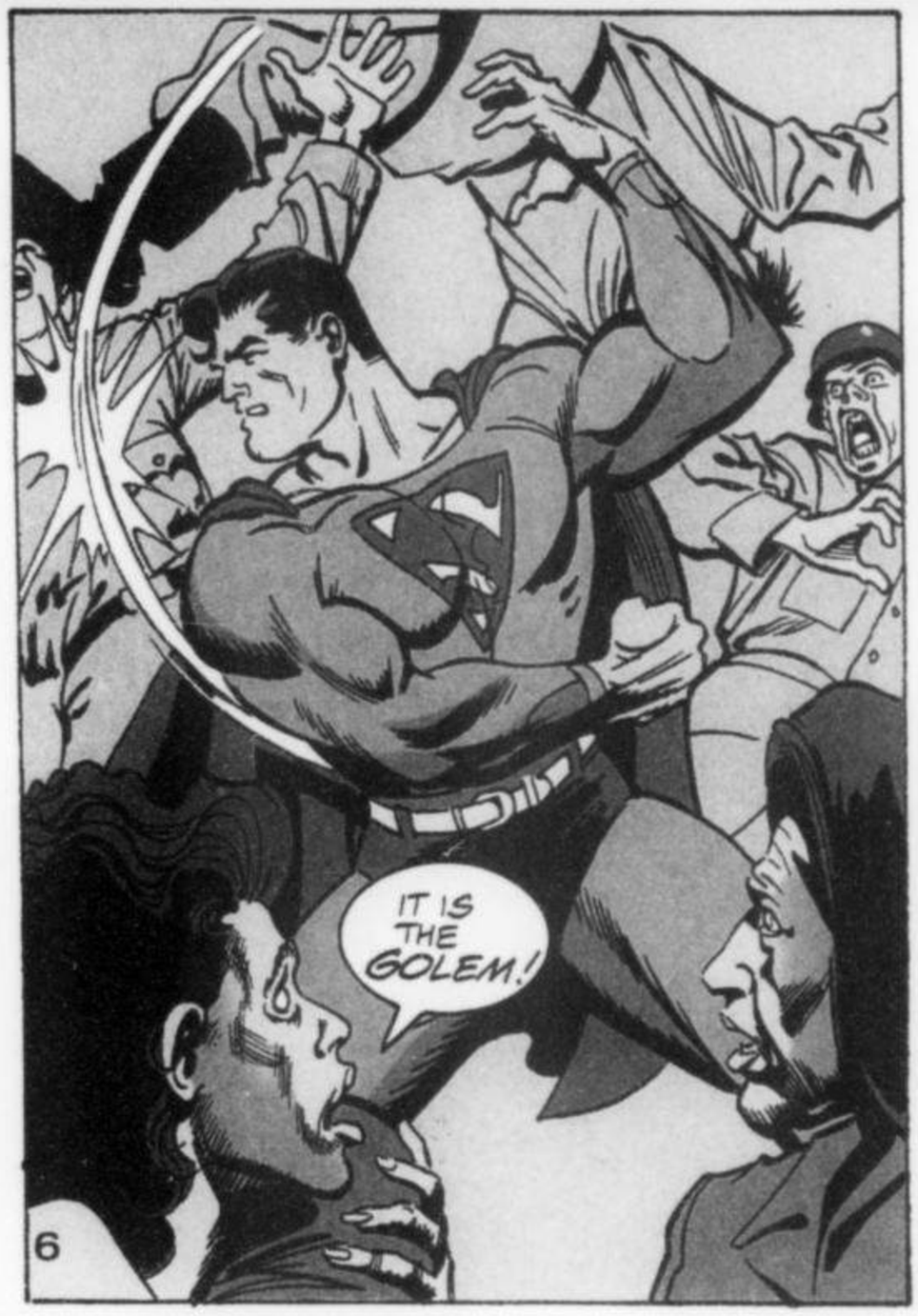


ILLUSTRATION COURTESY OF DC COMICS

In a most amusing and absurd manifestation of the disconnect between much of the political, academic, and journalistic elite and their constituency, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), supported by *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*, has attacked *Superman* and *Rugrats*.

Abraham Foxman, national director of the ADL, pillar of the "organized" Jewish world, wrote an op-ed piece in *The New York Times* of October 31, 1998, which lamented the "trivialization of Holocaust imagery." Amidst requisite praise for *Schindler's List* and *Life is Beautiful*, Foxman criticized three recent issues of *Superman* comic books in which Superman goes back in time to fight the Nazis. According to Foxman, "he never names the victims. The intent was to send a universal message. The result proved offensive to Holocaust victims." (Note the hubris of the last sentence—Foxman purports to speak not only for his organization but for the entire universe of Holocaust survivors!)

To clarify the *Superman* "issue": although the publishers did not use the word "Jew" in the comics in question, the victims were shown wearing yarmulkes and prayer shawls, had Jewish names like Mordechai and Baruch, and referred to each other using Yiddish terms such as "bubeh" and "zayde."

Jenette Kahn, CEO of DC Comics, the publisher of *Superman*, explains, "There was no attempt at all to disguise the fact that the primary victims were Jewish." Kahn, who is Jewish, prominently printed critical letters from Foxman and the Simon Weisenthal Institute in subsequent issues of *Superman*, and apologized for not using the word "Jew" in the story, while pointing out that the creators felt the characters' Jewishness was, in fact, conveyed. Also taking issue with the ADL was Eli Rosenbaum, director of the U.S. Department of Justice office responsible for prosecuting Nazi war criminals, who wrote: "No one could possibly peruse the words and accompanying artwork of the three issues [of *Superman*] without realizing that their creators had devoted truly enormous amounts of time, passion and artistic talent to an admirable effort to educate readers about the horrors of the Holocaust."

Rugrats, for readers who do not have pre-teen kids, is the most popular show on the Nickelodeon cable channel, and humorously depicts the lives of one- and two-year-olds through their own eyes. One main character, Tommy Pickles, has grandparents, Boris and Minka, who have Yiddish accents. Not only is the Pickles family Jewish, but the producers of Rugrats have featured them in both Passover and Chanukah specials unique, to my knowledge, among kids' mass entertainment. The cartoon has spawned a comic strip which runs, among other places, in *The Washington Post*. One installment showed Tommy sitting on his loving grandfather's knee in temple as *kaddish*, the mourner's prayer, was being chanted. On October 11, 1998, a *Washington Post* editor's note apologized for running the strip, writing that "the depiction of Jewish worshippers and use of the Kaddish were inappropriate." Two weeks later, Foxman's Op-Ed appeared in *The New York Times*, clearing up the mystery of who convinced *Post* editors that Jews were offended by the reverent and sweet depiction of the kaddish in *Rugrats*. Foxman wrote, "A Jewish character in a comic strip version of the acclaimed children's television cartoon *Rugrats* is reminiscent of Nazi-era depictions of Jews.... The result was an offensive stereotype. Had the illustrators ever seen Jews portrayed in the Nazi newspaper *Der Sturmer?*" Attention editors of *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*: Abe Foxman does not speak for this Jewish parent, or for most Jewish parents. I am grateful to *Rugrats* for the dignity that they give to Jewish traditions. Comparing *Rugrats* to *Der Sturmer* has approximately the same intellectual honesty as accusing anyone with a mustache of glorifying Hitler.

Mind you, this p.r. assault on comics by the ADL came within weeks of the brutal killing of a gay man in Wyoming for no other reason than his sexual orientation, and the murder of a Jewish doctor in his own home for no other reason

(continued on page 7)

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

EDITORIAL

1999 and American Pathologies of Power

As a result of a recent direct mail campaign, many new readers are looking at TIKKUN for the first time. So we thought we might share some of our thinking about American politics, starting with why an overwhelming majority of Americans decided not to vote in the recent November elections. The low turnout did not happen because Americans are so happy with the way things are, but because they feel powerless to change anything. Their reasons:

- Public opinion doesn't seem to matter. Despite overwhelming popular opposition to the continuation of the impeachment proceedings, it was a sure bet that the Republicans and the media would return to the whole Lewinsky mess the second the elections were over—and they did.
- Both parties refuse to enact real campaign finance reform, preferring to remain subservient to corporations and the super-wealthy. That politicians could have chosen otherwise was demonstrated by Senator Russ Feingold, who rejected strings-attached soft money and showed that the electorate is willing to reward such principled behavior.
- The two-party system looks like a one-party system. Democrats and Republicans have both agreed to fundamentally shrink government. The result is that we have a government that turns away from dealing with the problems of the needy, does not confront corporate environmental pollution, and does not seriously seek a restructuring of health care that would make it more responsive to human beings than to corporate profits. The only real differences being fought out in the political arena are between those who wish to protect small business, and so are most rooted in domestic spending and production, and those who advocate the globalization of American capital. There is no way within the two-party choices the electorate is usually offered to express yet a third position: that economic well-being in a market economy would be better enhanced by increasing the purchasing power of the lower 60 percent of income receivers (through redistributive efforts) and by supporting the creation of cooperative businesses that would retain profits inside communities and strengthen regional economies. Nor is there any way to express the desire to spend less money on defense, law enforcement, and prisons and more on education, health care, and support for the homeless and hungry.

  Many "progressives" have made similar points. But we at TIKKUN have a spiritual/ethical critique of American politics that is rarely articulated by the various alternative parties.
- Neither party expresses spiritual and ethical concerns about a society which treats human beings as replaceable parts of a machine whose highest goal is "progress." If the best that progressives, either within the Democratic party or within the Greens, the New Party, the Labor Party, and other supposed "alternatives," can offer is the demand that the techno-economic benefits this system produces be more fairly shared with the rest of the population and that people with less be given more, where can people hear a voice that questions the whole system, challenges the value system that underlies it, and puts forward a fundamentally different notion of what is to be valued?

So, while we also support the extension of social programs to provide universal single-payer health care, better paid teachers and child care workers, full employment, a full set of workers' rights, environmental sanity, and the elimination of poverty around the world, we have come to believe that none of this is likely to be won until there is a whole new consciousness of what is important—and that new consciousness is unlikely to emerge from liberal or progressive politics as currently constituted.

That's one of many reasons we at TIKKUN call for a more fundamental transformation of American society, a transformation we call "a politics of meaning." That politics calls for "a new bottom line" by which institutions or social practices are judged efficient, productive, or rational not only to the extent that they maximize someone's wealth or power (the current "bottom line") but also to the extent that they maximize people's capacities to be loving; caring; ethically, spiritually, and ecologically sensitive in their daily lives; and to the extent to which they encourage people to respond to the universe with awe and wonder, recognizing the sanctity of every other human being and acting from an awareness of our interdependence with each other and with our planet.

Political movements that fight for less than this are fundamentally flawed because they (sometimes unintentionally) end up reinforcing the materialism and selfishness of our current society. While we support progressive movements in their advocacy for more rights in society as it is currently constituted (let everyone have an equal chance to get their snouts in the trough), we actually believe that these demands are likely to reinforce the dominant consensus that the only real public good worth fighting for is material well-being; and hence unlikely to be achieved. Why? Because to the extent that people believe that the highest good is material well-being, and to the extent that they believe that material well-being is a zero sum game (not enough to go around), they will fight for their own material well-being, even, if nec-

essary, at the expense of others. Progressive politics is bound to lose, and mainstream political parties converge in their policies and world views, until a force emerges that fights for the new bottom line that we propose.

Far from challenging the ethos of materialism and selfishness that has become the "common sense" of American society, liberal, progressive, and left politics says, "we represent the interests of some other group, those previously disadvantaged, and we want to put their interests above your interests." That kind of thinking, however, differs from the mainstream ethos only on the question of whose particular material well-being should be given precedence, and tends to reinforce people's worst fears that material well-being is a zero sum game. Progressive forces rarely present a broadened vision of self-interest in which people could see how their own self-fulfillment would come through the fullest realization of the intellectual, emotional, spiritual, ethical, and loving capacities of every other being on the planet.

It wasn't always this way. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s vision mobilized the support of an American majority precisely because he not only fought for the rights of the most oppressed but spoke as well to the highest ethical and spiritual aspirations of the entire American public. Similarly, the willingness of millions of young people to risk their economic futures and their physical safety to demonstrate against the war in Vietnam inspired a generation to momentarily transcend self-interest (the biggest and most militant demonstrations took place *after* the draft had effectively been eliminated for middle class kids in 1969). But this Left was lost when these movements with a universal vision of justice and mutual caring were turned into a collection of self-interest politics for particular groups (frequently accompanied by a rhetoric that seemed to cast everyone outside the oppressed group as evil oppressors).

At this point, the momentary ascendancy of a politics of meaning was replaced with the contemporary politics of inclusion—an identity-based politics which has drawn people further apart. The irony is: if you want to win inclusion for those outside a society, you must validate the aspirations of the majority. You need to envision a society that is about more than inclusion, more than winning material well-being, more than extending the ethos of selfishness and materialism to those who have not yet equally benefited!

Sadly, 1999 will see an America which celebrates itself as the embodiment of rationality and goodness while it accelerates its economic, political, and cultural domination over the world; refuses to use its vast wealth to significantly reduce hunger, homelessness, or inadequate health care and education; advances technological rationality while undermining people's collective confidence in each other and in their capacity to respond to the world or each other with awe and wonder, and disappoints those who hope for fundamental transformation.

Yet we remain optimistic. Unlike many liberals and progressives who secretly share the conservatives' view that most people are fundamentally selfish, we know that most people are conflicted (including most progressive people). Most of us have two voices inside us: one that tells us that we must be "realistic" and fight for our narrow material well-being and not risk anything for others since doing so would be self-destructive; and another that really yearns for a world based on love, caring, solidarity, and higher ethical and spiritual purpose. We know that tens of millions of people really want a very different kind of world. Because they believe that they would be ignored or mocked if they went public with their highest aspirations, they keep these aspirations neatly contained in private, or in spiritual practices that do not lead them to challenge the way we organize our economic and political worlds. We believe that all this can and will change, because the deep hunger for meaning and for a more ethically and spiritually coherent world, a world filled with love, caring, awe and wonder, cannot be contained by the one dimensional benefits provided by the dominant social order. We remain committed to the possibility of possibility—and to the community of people who retain hope and a belief in the continuing redemptive possibilities of the human race.

If you share this hope, we invite you to make copies and circulate this editorial to others, encourage them to subscribe, and invite people to your home to read and discuss articles in TIKKUN (for advice on how to get this kind of "TIKKUN salon" started, check our web site: http://www.tikkun.org), or write letters to newspapers and journalists encouraging them to discuss our perspective. ❑

THE ADL VS. SUPERMAN *(continued from page 5)*

than that he performed abortions. Most likely the ADL sent out press releases condemning those murders, but their relevance and credibility is diluted by unfairly attacking (Jewish) comic creators for insensitivity to the Holocaust.

To like or dislike a piece of entertainment is a matter of personal taste. Every once in a while there are entertainments whose theme justifies a moral critique. These cartoons in no way fall into that category. In fact, many deeply moral and religious people celebrate them. It is an abuse of political and religious authority to wrap one's parochial aesthetic into a moral condemnation.

Why does this matter? Obviously *Superman* and *Rugrats* are not being censored or economically damaged. The extraordinary inappropriateness of Foxman's targets and the mindless validation given his attacks by the *Times* and the *Post* illuminate the gap between the political, academic, and journalistic elite and most of the public. Through dyspeptic disdain for the feelings of younger people, many leaders emotionally sever themselves from their natural constituencies, only to then bitterly lament the moral apathy of the younger generations and the masses. ❑

Prince of Egypt – Three Perspectives

A Prince of a Film

Rabbi Dan Goldblatt

When I first heard that there was a new major motion picture coming out about Moses and the story of the Exodus from Egypt my response was, "Oy vey!"

The world still hasn't recovered from Cecile B. De Mille's film, *The Ten Commandments*. As great epic films go, *The Ten Commandments* was a stinker, all of its Academy Awards notwithstanding. It was a wooden, saccharine romance that bore a faint, pathetic resemblance to one of the most powerful stories of Western civilization. That's sad and disturbing, given my guess that more people have seen *The Ten Commandments* than have read through the Book of Exodus.

Against this background, along come Messrs. Steven Spielberg, David Geffen, and Jeffrey Katzenberg with their DreamWorks animated feature production, *Prince of Egypt*. To my great surprise and delight, this film warmly and sensitively communicates many of the powerful spiritual teachings of the Torah and even contributes some of its own insightful *midrashim* as well.

The film humanizes and brings its characters to life through contemporary language, behavior, and psychology. It stunningly tackles the challenge of every Passover Seder in fulfilling the directive to tell the story of liberation from Egypt as if we were there, as the Haggadah states, "In every generation, each person should feel as though she or he were redeemed from Egypt." Powerfully—and wonderfully—*Prince of Egypt* invites us into the story by convincingly placing belief in God at its center, as the source of social justice and transformation. In a medium heavily dependent upon visual images, the imageless God and the transcendent human spirit emerge as this film's real stars. That's quite a remarkable accomplishment for a mass-market animated feature film.

In the Jewish world, religious school teachers and rabbis should be jumping for joy. We should no longer have to struggle to interest children (and adults) in engaging and inhabiting this defining moment in sacred Jewish history. I only hope that our educators won't allow this film to be seen as a definitive interpretation of Torah and will encourage students to open up rather than limit their imaginative engagement with the story. The film should free us to move even deeper into the layers of meaning and spiritual teachings of Exodus.

Though framed as a universal and paradigmatic story of liberation, the *Prince of Egypt* reminds us of the particularity of the "Hebrews." After the thunderous big choral sound of the opening slavery montage, we are offered the lovely sounds of Ofra Haza, the voice of Moses' mother Yocheved, singing her baby a lullaby in Hebrew. It is startling and delightful to hear Hebrew sung here and again later in the rousing "Mi Chamocha" sequence (the traditional song of liberation and crossing)—a reminder that this is also our story, the one we read each week in Torah, sing on Shabbat, and retell at Passover Seders.

Yet what we have here is not only the core story but also creative midrashic elements. Perhaps most powerful is the midrash on the relationship between Moses and Ramses, portraying them as brothers and close friends, thus bringing a poignant and powerful dimension to their later conflict. The film's evocation of the grandeur of Egypt and the tradition and perceived responsibility of being a Pharaoh in this great dynasty helps us understand why Pharaoh's hard-hearted response to the Hebrew slaves is not merely a personal flaw but an understandable outgrowth of an institutionalized history of oppression. Indeed, one of the great strengths of the film is in the portrayal of the pain and desperation of the Egyptians (through the eyes of Pharaoh)—the extraordinary cost of being an oppressor. For example, there is an excellent scene in which Moses visits Pharaoh while he holds and mourns the death of his son. Moses' empathy and grief is a profound spiritual and psychological addition to the story.

That this story is told to children without the requisite triumphalism which sometimes accompanies its retelling in the Jewish world is one of the great triumphs of this film. That the viewer is invited into the pain of the oppressor as well as the oppressed is a lesson our own Jewish educators often pay lip service to but aren't always able to teach convincingly. The greatly expanded role of women in this animated midrash—especially Moses' wife, Tzipporah, and to a lesser extent his sister Miriam—is more than just politically correct and brings a wholeness and healing to the story that is needed for our children and ourselves.

Having sung its praises loudly, I would be remiss not to point out some of the film's limitations (within the context that it is, after all, an animated film produced for the mass market). The filmmakers grab every opportunity to inject lightness and levity to counterbalance the seriousness of the content. Moses and Ramses engage in a playfully competitive chariot race that is an animated hybrid of the chariot race in Ben Hur and a scene out of an old Mr. Magoo cartoon. The Egyptian priests (voices of Steve Martin and Martin Short) are sort of goofy characters that unsuccessfully force comedic attempts at slapstick buffoonery. These are relatively innocuous craters on the landscape of this sprawling animated panorama.

The burning bush scene is undeniably a most delicate challenge and, on balance, decidedly less than successful. There is no getting around the obvious pitfalls of trying to represent God. Beyond this, the filmwriters make a strange decision to interpolate in this scene some lines from the Book of Job, as God feels the need to scare Moses with an "Who made the desert and the sea?" verbal muscle flexing. It appears that the producers didn't trust the simple "bush that wouldn't be consumed" image and needed to reach for more firepower. As weak as I felt this scene to be, I really enjoyed the subsequent scene in which Moses animatedly shares his "God experience" with his wife Tzipporah, a scene which we see from a distance without being privy to any of the dialogue.

Perhaps the greatest weakness of the film is its inability to come to terms with the limitations of Moses. It is true that he is



made human in scenes such as his youthful abuse of the slave girl and subsequent shame, his conflicted identity crisis, and his humility when confronting his people upon his return from Midian. However, the producers were obviously uncomfortable with his biblical character flaws (Val Kilmer, the voice of Moses, is at no point "heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue"), most obviously Moses' propensity to rage and lose control. For example, his killing of the Egyptian taskmaster is portrayed in the film as an accident, not a murder. However, the Torah clearly states, "He turned this way and that, and seeing that there was no man present, he struck down the Egyptian and buried him in the sand" (Ex. 2:12). This erasure of weakness is understandable but regrettable. It sanitizes Moses' shadow side and robs him of power and deeper humanity.

Then there are the inevitable instances of artistic license. Some people will gleefully keep score of these digressions and count them as transgressions, but they don't bother me. So what if Pharaoh's wife draws Moses from the Nile instead of Pharaoh's daughter? So what if they had to drastically reduce Aaron's role so as not to compromise Moses' brotherly relationship to Ramses? So what if Moses leaves the palace of his own accord rather than fleeing from Pharaoh, as the Torah says, "Pharaoh heard of this matter [Moses' killing of the Egyptian] and sought to kill Moses" (Ex. 2:15).

The essential spirit, sensitivities, and considerable illuminations of this animated feature film midrash should be considered an enormous achievement and will bring its viewers renewed delight and engagement with one of the most vital and profound sacred stories of Torah and Western civilization. *Prince of Egypt* should be a blockbuster release for the holiday season; for the Jewish community, the three "wise men" of DreamWorks deliver a new and extraordinary Passover story as a Chanukah present on Christmas. What a country! ❑

A Film Reclaiming Torah

Rabbi Michael Lerner, Editor

This is a brilliant film, and an outstanding contribution to the task of reintroducing Torah to the world. If DreamWorks does nothing more, its existence will be a blessing through the creation of this wonderful, insightful, sophisticated, and beautiful film.

Rabbi Goldblatt captures most of what is outstanding in the film. I would particularly emphasize the universality and contemporary relevance of its portrayal of ruling elites, reminding us at once that those who run society's most powerful institutions are vulnerably human and capable of the most complicated loving and sensitivity towards those whom they know personally while at the same time capable of unbelievable insensitivity in supporting oppressive regimes, denying the humanity of those whom they oppress, and being self-destructively willing to fight to the end to hold onto the power of their enterprise.

Precisely because this film will shape the understanding of Torah for generations to come, it's important to join to the well-earned adulation of this film a set of considerations about what biblical values have been left out that make Torah not just an entertaining work but a book of sanctity and a revelation of the Force of Healing and Transformation in the universe (God). So these reflections are offered not as a critique of the movie but as an educational agenda for where progressive religious and spiritual consciousness needs to focus post-*Prince of Egypt*.

In some ways I was relieved that God had been left out of the film. Every depiction of God is so culture-bound and so limiting that the injunction of Torah to "make no images" still seems particularly relevant. And yet, God as the Force that makes for the possibility of breaking the repetition compulsion, God as the Force of Transcendence and Healing, *that* God is an essential part of the story precisely because that God makes the story of Moses in Egypt not just a nice legend or historical reminiscence, but an ever-present reality.

The story of the Exodus continues to address us in part because the God that makes possible the overcoming of every form of oppression—including the complex ways in which our own society is bound to its materialism and self-ishness, its cynicism and ultra-individualism, its worship of

STILL COURTESY OF DREAMWORKS PICTURES

power and demeaning of idealism, its sense of its own inevitability and right to shape the entire world in its image—is not some big powerful old man sitting in heaven. The God of Exodus is the YHVH force, the transformative and healing power of the universe, the force whose existence and continuing relevance it is the task of the Jewish people to proclaim and embody and partner. It is just this insistence of Torah that the very Force that made it possible for us to get out of slavery is the *same* Force that shaped the universe in the first place, made human beings in its image, and makes possible the creation of a society that is a reflection of that Liberatory and Transformative Power, which makes Torah the most revolutionary and continually relevant document in the history of humanity.

Rabbi Goldblatt rightly notes the prettifying of Moses by the movie. The danger here is even deeper than he suggests, because the movie follows Hollywood's conventions by portraying virtually all the Jewish people in this romantically appealing way. Yet our midrash teaches us that every single person who went through the Exodus was deformed somehow. Indeed, the Torah message of which we must continually remind ourselves is that the struggle for liberation is made by radically imperfect human beings whose deformed psyches will lead, as Torah teaches, to self-destructive behavior (not the least of which will be endless rebellions against Moses and yearning to return to Egypt and the security of oppression and slavery). The very people who confront an oppressive regime are themselves "wounded healers," and our wounds will often lead us to treat each other poorly, refuse to recognize the humanity of our enemies while simultaneously exaggerating their power and our powerlessness, undermine our own resolve, and make it extremely difficult for us to hear the voice of God within. Yet the optimistic voice of Torah is its proclamation that these wounds can gradually be overcome through creating a particular kind of justice-oriented and love-oriented society that is embedded in and permeated by a deep spiritual practice as outlined in the mitzvot, the religious path of Torah.

Perhaps the most troublesome aspect of *Prince of Egypt* is that its very power and richness may constrain our imaginations in ways that the sparsity and spaces between the words of Torah do not. This is no criticism of the filmmakers—it's hard to imagine a movie doing a better job than this one, and its animation allows us to retain far more of the imaginative dimension than any more literalistic portrayal could possibly do. And yet, it is important to remind ourselves that Torah itself is far richer, deeper, more complex, and more open-ended than any movie can be. The greatness of this movie, ultimately, will be reflected in the degree to which it becomes a stimulus to deeper engagement in Torah study on the one hand, and engagement in revolutionary, transformative, and healing social movements on the other. ❑

A Film as Animated Midrash

Rabbi Laura Geller

I share the view of Rabbis Goldblatt and Lerner that *Prince of Egypt* is a powerful midrash on the story of the Exodus. While the movie takes liberties with the biblical story, it is a faithful retelling, faithful to the transformative power of God to work with and through human beings to change the world. Although I agree with Rabbi Goldblatt that some of the flaws of the biblical Moses are missing in this depiction, the DreamWorks Moses is still a very human Moses, a privileged, even bratty, young man who learns to see the world through the pain of other people and the distant memory of other values that compel him to find a new way of living. Along the way his teachers are often women—his mother singing a lullaby as she cradles him in his tiny basket, the wife of Pharaoh who rescues him from the raging Nile, the slave girl whose fierce determination to be free challenges his complacency, and the chance encounter with his sister that unlocks the secret of his identity.

Some biblical women are (sadly) absent from the story, particularly Shifra and Puah, the courageous midwives to the Hebrews. But other women's stories are more fully told in the best tradition of midrash, filling in the spaces of the biblical text. Tzipporah and Miriam emerge as full partners in the liberation, empowering Moses to become a leader. *Prince of Egypt* may well challenge the readers of Torah to go back to all our biblical stories and ask questions about the missing women, and how our sacred stories might change if their voices could be imagined.



STILL COURTESY OF DREAMWORKS PICTURES

My one regret about the movie is the sound of God's voice. I know that the filmmakers struggled to give voice to a God who transcends gender, but apparently they found it impossible. Ultimately, they decided to have God speak in Moses' voice. While this decision is itself a powerful midrash, hearing God speak in only a male voice reinforces the anthropomorphic view that God is male. I wish there had been some way to portray the feminine dimensions of God, the Shechinah (God's hovering presence), God's *rachamim* (womb-like compassion), as well as the more familiar patriarchal image of God.

In his book *Exodus and Revolution*, Michael Walzer describes the Exodus story as the paradigm for revolution and liberation struggles throughout western culture. One of the unfinished revolutions of our time involves not only reclaiming the voices of women, which *Prince of Egypt* does so well, but also imagining and listening to the feminine voice of God. ❑



Why This "Peace Process" Will Not Lead to Peace

Rashid I. Khalidi

Many pro-peace Israelis and Jews seem to be surprised when they hear that most Palestinians see the Wye Accord not as a significant breakthrough, but as the consolidation of Israeli rule and Palestinian capitulation to overwhelming power. But no one should have been shocked at the steps taken by Benjamin Netanyahu immediately following the Accord: the expansion of the most militant right-wing settlement at Kiryat Arba and the building of new, exclusively Jewish, housing in Arab East Jerusalem. For many Palestinians, these steps were only more of the same, and more of what the entire Oslo process has degenerated into: symbolic agreements that mask a consolidation of Israeli rule with the assistance of Palestinian junior partners.

Wye is not an interim step—it is almost certainly the last significant withdrawal to which Israel will agree as long as Netanyahu remains in power. What Palestinians are getting through Wye is far less than what the Palestinians who began negotiating in the early 1990s understood interim self-government and Israeli redeployment to mean. The message given to Palestinians by Rabin's negotiators at Oslo, as Netanyahu himself admitted, was that the Palestinians would receive somewhere between 80–90 percent of the West Bank. Instead, they are getting less than one-quarter of that, 18 percent (and it is important to keep in mind that the West Bank in its entirety is only about 20 percent of what was once Palestine). An additional 22 percent of the West Bank will nominally be under "shared control," but Israel will control security there, which means that this will remain occupied territory. Meanwhile, a million people are crammed into 62 percent of the 5-by-28 mile square Gaza Strip, while 6000 Israeli settlers enjoy exclusive control over the remaining 38 percent.

In return for these meager—and in all likelihood, final—concessions by Netanyahu, Palestinians have agreed to a crippling institutionalization of Israeli control of the Palestinian security apparatus. The Wye Accord calls for the Palestinian Authority (PA) to issue a "decree prohibiting all forms of incitement to violence and terror." That this new decree will be used to intensify the repression not only of acts of violence or the planning of such acts, but of freedom of speech and association, is indicated by the way the Israeli military occupation has used such "laws" to detain thousands of Palestinians, many without trial, for what they've said and who they've associated with. Since the PA already deals with incitement to violence, it is clear that this new agreement is intended to be directed against nonviolent oppositional speech and political organization, either toward the PA or toward the continued occupation by Israel of most of the West Bank. With Wye, the PA becomes a wholly owned subsidiary of the Israeli security services and their "legal" system.

Meanwhile, the Wye Accords may lead to the restructuring of Israeli politics so that Netanyahu can become, in effect, King of Israel for the indefinite future by allowing him to present himself as the "centrist" candidate who is a "realistic" peace-maker. This at the very moment that he is in fact perpetuating Israel's hold over most of the West Bank and retaining most of the Israeli settlements there, while leaving the Palestinians with a string of disconnected or semi-connected bantustans. The PA, meanwhile, has effectively been turned into an arm of the occupation (as one of its cabinet members acknowledged in *The New York Times* on November 4th, bemoaning that Netanyahu was insisting that they openly acknowledge the subordinate relationship to which they had privately agreed).

It's true that if Wye is implemented, it may ease some of the extraordinary hardships that have been imposed on the Palestinian people since the signing of Oslo. It will still be difficult to travel from almost any place in the Palestinian West Bank to any other place without going through Israeli military checkpoints and searches (a situation worse than at any time since 1967), but these islands may be bigger, and there should finally be safe passage from the West Bank to the Gaza Strip. The implementation of Wye in these respects, however, is not at all certain. And restrictions on movement into

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ILLUSTRATION BY RUSS ANDO



and out of Palestine, into Israel, and into Jerusalem will continue, making life intolerable for many Palestinians.

Even if the Wye Plantation accords do more than provide President Clinton with a boost in his approval ratings, even if they make daily life a little easier for Palestinians in the West Bank, even if they achieve all they set out to do (and that is doubtful indeed) for the Palestinians, it is a case of far too little, far too late. The proclaimed objectives of the Netanyahu government are to settle and annex as much Palestinian territory in the West Bank and Gaza Strip as possible, and to give the Palestinians as few as possible of the attributes of statehood, self-determination, and sovereignty in their own country. By dragging out for thirty months the negotiations on the stages of Israeli troop withdrawals, safe passage between the West Bank and Gaza Strip, prisoner releases, and a Gaza airport and port, all of which were part of the Oslo accords, Netanyahu has succeeded in these objectives. During these delays, this government has seized thousands of acres of Arab land, bulldozed Palestinian homes, built hundreds of miles of by-pass roads and thousands more housing units, and settled thousands of Israelis in subsidized colonies in the West Bank as fast as possible. These facts on the ground have left nothing for the Palestinian-Israeli negotiators to negotiate when talks on settlements, land, water, and sovereignty actually begin.

Sadly, the Israeli government has been aided and abetted in these actions by the passivity of the U.S. government, and has been financed in doing so by the generosity of the U.S. taxpayer, courtesy of our Congress. A perfect example is the crucial matter of settlements. These are violations of international law, specifically of the Fourth Geneva Convention which forbids an occupying power from transferring its population into territory it occupies. From 1967 until the Reagan administration, the United States voted repeatedly in the Security Council to condemn settlements, and consistently described them as illegal. Under Reagan and Bush they were called "obstacles to peace" by the United States, which refused to allow American loan guarantees or other aid to be used in the occupied territories. Under Clinton, Israel's feverish settlement activity is merely described as "unhelpful," and restrictions on the use of U.S. funds in the occupied territories have evaporated. Settlements are in fact the greatest immediate obstacle to a resolution of the conflict, and our government has done nothing to stop their spread, before, during or after the Wye accords.

Unfortunately, the issue of settlements only points to other fundamental flaws in Palestinian-Israeli negotiations. Perhaps the most obvious flaw has been both parties' failure to address the hard issues between them such as Jerusalem, refugees, sovereignty, borders, and settlements, which were deferred for several years until so-called "permanent status talks." At the outset, the Israeli-Palestinian negotiation process was structured by James Baker to deal only with interim arrangements for Palestinian autonomy. The logic to these arrangements, which were imposed on the Palestinians at the insistence of the United States and Israel, was that autonomy would free the Palestinians of direct Israeli control over their daily lives, and would at the same time enhance Israeli security, thereby enabling the two sides to build the confidence and trust necessary for tackling the hard "permanent status" issues.

Seven years later, it is clear that the actual outcome has been the opposite of the stated intention. Because Israel was not prevented from continuing to build settlements, or from changing the situation in Jerusalem in its favor, or from maintaining absolute control over water resources in the occupied territories, the status quo in the occupied territories has continued to change massively in its favor. Moreover, there was no guarantee that the interim arrangements would ever be finalized, or that agreements reached with one Israeli government would be implemented by another.

By comparison with the situation seven years ago, Palestinians find themselves worse off in economic terms (there has been a 40 percent drop in GDP per capita over the past four years), with many more people unemployed (37 percent). Palestinians live under far more onerous Israeli controls on their movements in every respect and every direction than before the Madrid talks—they are now considerably less able to travel to or through Jerusalem, to Israel, from the West Bank to the Gaza Strip, or even within the West Bank. All the while, Israelis are probably no more secure, and indeed are probably less so than before Madrid. Perhaps the cruelest irony of all is that by putting the PLO in charge of the Palestinian population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the Oslo formula created a group with a powerful vested interest in the continuation of a process from which they benefited, even if their fellow Palestinians did not. Today a large proportion of PA revenues does not flow to schools, hospitals, roads or infrastructure, but to massive security forces and a bureaucracy which exists mainly to give sinecures to regime loyalists (not to speak of the funds that

PHOTOGRAPH BY JOAN ROTH

find their way into the pockets of some of these loyalists). By satisfying the leadership and cadres of the PLO before meeting most of the basic needs of the Palestinian people, Oslo helped consolidate a class which in many ways serves its own interests and those of Israel more than it does those of its own people. Palestinians must assess their own responsibility for allowing this leadership to go down this path.

Beyond these cruel realities, perhaps the most important flaw of the existing "peace process" is that during these seven years, a golden opportunity has been lost to begin to build real peace between the Arabs and Israel. Such a peace must be based on reconciliation, and this in turn requires that Palestinians and Israelis start to attempt to reconcile their different historical narratives. The gap between them is vast, in particular regarding the Palestinian refugees who constitute the majority of the 6 million plus Palestinian people and whose vital concerns have been completely ignored in all the negotiations thus far; and regarding Jerusalem, a touchstone of religious and nationalist sentiment for both sides. Both Palestinians and Israelis see these issues as central to their national narratives: for Palestinians the expulsion of half of their number in 1948 is a central event in their history; for Israelis, the creation of a state with a Jewish majority in the same year is equally central. Similarly, both sides see Jerusalem as absolutely central to their national aspirations, and to their religious beliefs.

Dealing effectively with these and other permanent status issues will require not deferring them yet again, but facing the history which is so important to their resolution. It's beneficial, in this regard, to compare the state of the Arab-Israeli peace process with that of other formerly intractable world conflicts, such as South Africa and Ireland. There, history has not been ignored, and justice has not been deferred. The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission has exhumed all the old skeletons (figuratively and sometimes literally) and then helped to lay them to rest as part of a healing process which is still not complete, but so far has helped to facilitate a bloodless transition from minority to majority rule. In Ireland, we have witnessed the quite unexpected sight of a British Prime Minister apologizing for his country's role in the Irish famine a century and a half ago. Certainly, these and other gestures which involve a profound rethinking of the terrible history of relations between Britain and Ireland and whites and blacks in South Africa have facilitated the fragile settlements which seem to be emerging in both places. Compare these with Japanese-Korean or Japanese-Chinese relations, where history has not yet been faced, where the national narratives are still far apart, and where, consequently, reconciliation between these countries has still not been achieved.

The cruel results of the last seven years prove conclusively that if one day there is to be a peace process between Palestinians and Israelis which deserves the name, it will have to build not on the barren precedents of the Oslo and

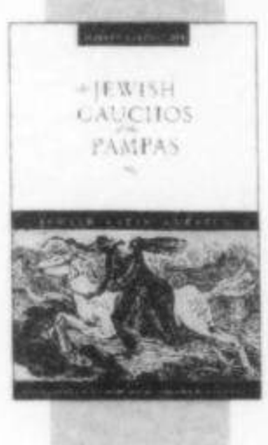
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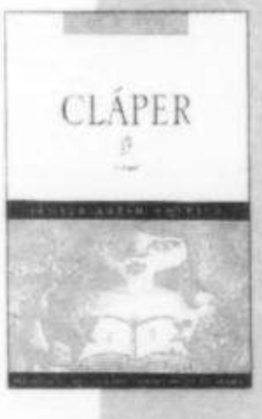


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Wye Plantation accords, but rather draw on the rich experience of those who have taken what may appear to be the harder path of confronting history and seeking justice, at least attainable justice.

I would go farther than this: if Netanyahu stays in power, and the approach he represents triumphs, the two-state solution is an absolute impossibility. There will not be two states, but one state ruling over a dependent, subjugated, tortured people (though they may have a phony sovereignty on tiny pieces of land, with flags flying and a national anthem playing). A Palestinian state under these circumstances will not be a state in any real sense of the word; it will be a travesty. In the long run Palestinians will probably not allow those few who have benefited from the changes in the status quo since Oslo to fool them into thinking that the "freedom" offered by Oslo/Wye, which they can have only while on their knees, would be acceptable.

If what we are offered is an institutionalization of occupation and oppression and injustice, let us acknowledge that rather than pretend otherwise. The PLO/PA currently does not speak effectively for the Palestinian people or represent adequately their human and national aspirations. Though all Palestinians certainly bear responsibility for tolerating the PLO/PA's autocratic leadership, the way that this leadership has been institutionalized and the power it has developed to violate basic human rights cannot be separated from the military and economic support it receives from Israel and the United States. As a first step, American aid money should be directed toward the needs of the Palestinian people, for example to NGOs or to infrastructural development, rather than to the PA's repressive military apparatus (the European Union is doing this, ensuring that more of their aid actually gets to the people who need the help).

At the same time, since a genuine two-state solution is simply not on offer now, Palestinians should stop pretending that they are getting anything and the focus of the struggle should shift to a demand for basic human rights instead of for a phony state. I'm a pragmatist, but the touchstone at every stage must be a vision of what is right. I have relatives who are unable to move in Palestine, and will not be able to do so even if Wye is implemented, yet an Israeli is allowed to go wherever s/he wants—I cannot accept this. I cannot accept that Palestinians not only have their land seized, but are being asked to police and enforce these seizures.

Such massive, continuing injustice among Palestinians helps to produce something else which is not right: the suffering of Israeli victims of violence. It is only within this context that violence against Israeli civilians by Palestinians, politically wrong and morally indefensible though it may be, can be understood. It should be understood as well that most Palestinians do not share the fantasy that they could ever eliminate Israel, although some do, just as some Israelis want to expel the Palestinians. The difference is that one group has great power and a massive state, the other little power.

The fact that this peace process is not going in the right direction needs to be faced honestly. We must be prepared to talk about fundamental underlying issues, like restitution for the injustices done to the Palestinian people, who have a claim on the moral conscience of Israelis and of the whole world. I don't pretend that considering these issues is easy. But what most upsets me about the Wye/Oslo process is that it has avoided them. It is time to face them, to de-terrify each other about them, so that we can talk honestly about how to resolve them. We must ask: Is it right that every last Ukrainian or Latvian Jew has a right to go to Israel, while Palestinians suffering grievous oppression just over the border in Lebanon, who can see the land where their grandparents are buried, have no right to live in their homeland? Is it right that over 2 million Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (not to speak of the 3 million in exile) are effectively denied the right to pray, study, or live in their national and spiritual capital, Jerusalem?

These are matters that touch the wellspring of national sentiment: you have to address them if you claim to be settling the conflict, and yet they have been unaddressed so far, and will be ignored as long as the current approach continues. It is time for a change, and time for an approach which takes morality and justice as its touchstone. The alternative, sooner or later, will be grim indeed. ❑

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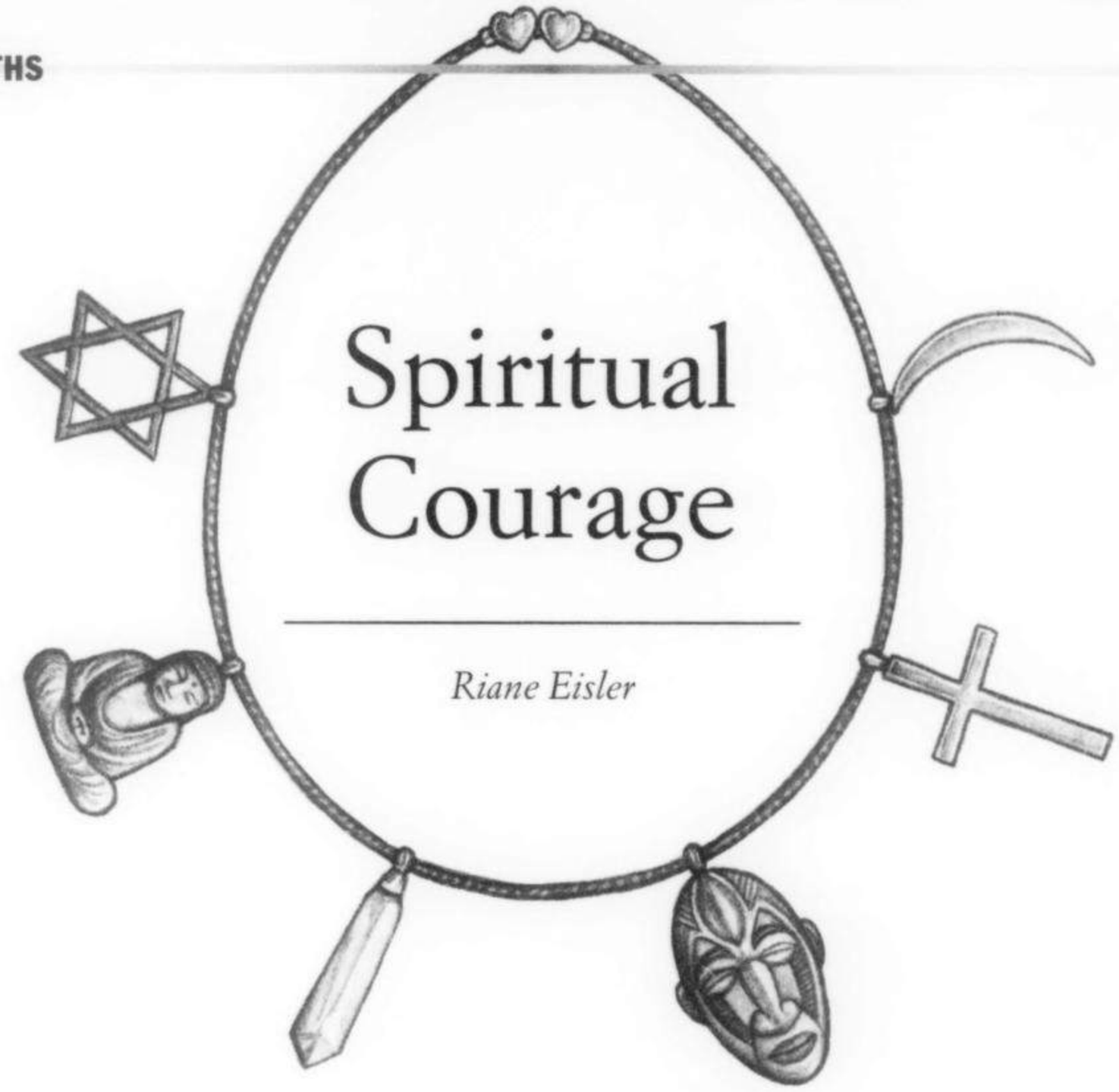
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Spiritual Courage

Riane Eisler



ILLUSTRATIONS BY RUSS ANDO

Spirituality has become the word of the hour. But what is spirituality? What does being spiritual mean?

For me, as for many others, spirituality means feeling at one with that which we call the divine. But when I think of the divine I do not think of it as separate from our lives, as otherworldly, as "out there" rather than here. I think of our own most evolved qualities: our profound human capacity for empathy, for love, our striving for justice, our hunger for beauty, our yearning to create. I think being spiritual means being ethical and, in the true sense of the word, moral.

I did not always understand spirituality this way. But now when I think of spirituality I think of love, not in some abstract way but in action. I think of what I have called spiritual courage: trusting our impulse to reach out to others, to help others, to challenge injustice—not out of hate, but out of love.

My mother had this spiritual courage, and it saved our lives. When a party of Austrian Nazis, among them a man my parents had been kind to, came to drag my father away on Crystal Night, my mother had the courage to stand up to them. She could have been killed for angrily demanding that my father be released. I do not know if it was that my mother (who was Jewish) looked Aryan with her blue eyes and blond hair, or whether it was the character of the particular Gestapo officer who headed the pack, or a combination of factors. But by some miracle my father was released and we escaped from the Nazis with our lives.

There were others who had this kind of courage, people who helped Jews hide, even though it meant risking their lives and the lives of their families. Often when they were asked afterwards why they did it, they simply answered that they had to. That to me is true spirituality, listening to that inner voice we all have to be caring rather than cruel.

I believe all of us are born with that voice, that it is part of the essence of what makes us human. Babies, newborns, cry when they hear another baby's cry. They are born with empathy, with the capacity to feel with another.

But unfortunately, much in our culture stifles, and all too often silences, that empathic and caring inner voice. So when I speak of being spiritual, I do not think of it as just a personal matter. It is a cultural and social matter. And all too often it is a matter of standing up against what is presented to us as traditional wisdom.

My Spiritual Journey

I grew up taking God for granted. After my parents and I fled to Cuba, every night, before going to bed, I repeated after my father the Hebrew evening prayer, the *Shema*. I did not understand the words, and I do not think

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my father did. All I knew was that this was a special ritual of bonding between us, this reaching out to a greater spiritual power in which we placed our trust.

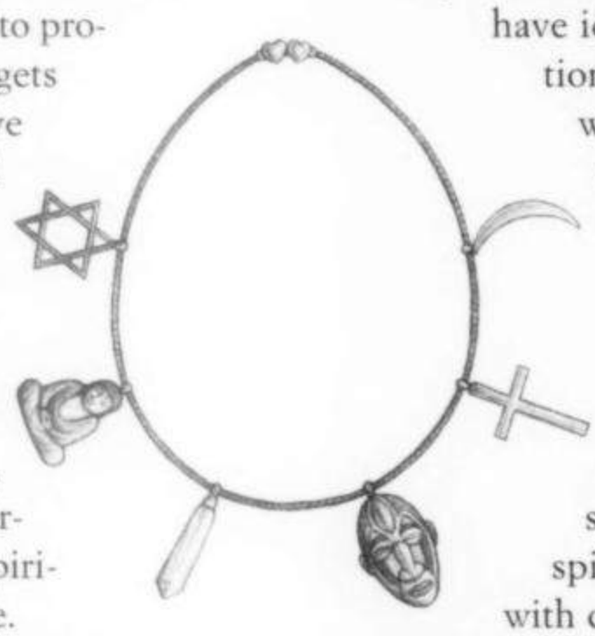
After that, I always said my own prayer. Always, as children will, I made very sure that I did not forget anyone, that I did not omit a single name of those who had been left behind in Europe: my grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins.

Then World War II ended and I saw the newsreels of the concentration camps: the carelessly thrown piles of dead bodies, the skeletal bodies of the survivors and their hollow, staring, haunted eyes. I found out what happened to those I had so faithfully prayed for, what had been done to them, the cruel horror of their lives and deaths.

I still cry when I think of it. There are no words to describe what I felt as I grieved not only for the dead of my family and my people, but for the faith I lost. Was God evil? Was God mad? Powerless? Or simply nonexistent?

It was a long time before I ever thought of spirituality again. I went through the motions, to please my parents, of going to synagogue on the high holidays. I never rejected my Jewish identity. I was, and am, a Jew.

But slowly I also began to open my eyes to all that in the Bible is cruel and inhuman, the laws about stoning women to death, the commands to raze cities and kill every living being in them lest God be angry that some were spared, the double standard for men and women not only in sexual morality but in the treatment of girl children and women as mere male chattel—"thy neighbor's wife, … ox, … ass…." And for the first time I woke up to what was really communicated about human relations in stories such as that of Lot, who offered his little daughters to a mob of men to rape to protect two male guests in his house—and gets rewarded rather than punished when, so we are told, the guests turn out to be vengeful angels sent by God.



At the same time, I recognized and found value in those parts of the Bible that teach empathy and caring. This, and the Jewish tradition of helping those who are less fortunate (modeled by my parents), was, and continues to be, extremely important to me. But I did not think of that as spiritual—I thought of it as simply the way to be.

Only many years later, after decades of research in many fields, including the history of religion, did I begin to again use the word spirituality. Only now it had a very different meaning for me. It was not associated with a particular deity, either God or Goddess. Nor was it associated with sitting on a mountain top meditating, or joining a monastery or convent to withdraw from the pains and pleasures of life. I realized that I used to think that way because so much of what has been written about spirituality is esoteric. But now I began to see that idealizing this way of looking at spirituality actually perpetuates injustice and suffering, just as only praying to an otherworldly deity does not change the conditions that cause injustice and suffering.

Gradually I became aware that my most illuminating spiritual experiences have come when I feel myself at one with nature or with others of our kind, when I look into my little granddaughter's sparkling eyes, when I hear the beloved voice of one of my children, when I touch my husband's hand. I also became aware that I was now, so to speak, spiritually educating myself.

Unraveling and Reweaving

Many of us are today troubled by the over-materialism of our culture. We find much in institutionalized religions that we can no longer accept. Yet we want to infuse our lives, and our work, with deeper meaning. We want to be of service, to feel connected to one another and to our Mother Earth. We want deeper relationships and a sense of greater purpose. This, I believe, is one of the major motivations behind the various strands of what is sometimes called the new spirituality.

While some of these strands promote healthier psyches and encourage action to promote social justice and environmental sustainability, others unfortunately are not so different from much that they reject in the old religious traditions. Like just going to synagogue on Friday or church on Sunday, they tend to be abstracted from daily life. Like many earlier mystical traditions, they promote retreating from what is happening around us, away from the suffering of others. This kind of spirituality may help individuals cope with the chronic injustices and miseries of what I have identified as a "dominator" model of relations—the force-backed ranking of man over woman, man over man, race over race, and nation over nation that can only be maintained by inflicting or threatening pain. But it does little to change what is happening here on Earth.

By contrast, the kind of spirituality appropriate for what I have called a "partnership" model of relations is not only transcendent but also immanent. It is a spirituality that informs our day-to-day lives with caring and empathy. It provides basic standards of human rights and responsibilities. It also provides basic teachings about empathy and nonviolence as alternatives to both a lack of standards and the use of morality to incite hate, scapegoating, and violence.

This is very important today. On the one side, as in earlier times when the dominator model—with its "holy wars," witch burnings, and other barbarities—was more firmly in place, we still have those who incite hate-mongering, scapegoating, and violence under the guise of traditional values. On the other, we have those who contend that there are no real standards of conduct, that all standards are merely cul-

tural constructs that vary from time to time and place to place—a view sometimes called postmodernism, deconstructionism, or cultural relativism.

This second view reflects a rebellion against "moral" rules that have frequently been unfair, and all too often inhuman—rules developed in earlier times that were more oriented towards a dominator model of society. It also reflects the fact that there are indeed cultural variations in what is considered moral and right. But we humans need standards. Even arguing that all standards are relative is articulating a kind of standard, negative though it may be.

Distinguishing between the kind of standards—and spirituality—appropriate for partnership or dominator relations can help us integrate spirituality into our day-to-day lives. It can help us live more fully, while at the same time helping others to do the same. And it can inspire us to work passionately for a world where our most evolved capacities will be socially and economically supported.

In my life, I have found that spiritual work is not only "inner work," but the spiritual courage to persevere in the face of those who either tell us that only what they consider "traditional" is moral or, alternately, that we must not be too judgmental, that we must not polarize, that even the most horrible things in our world somehow are manifestations of the divine. And I have found that this spiritual courage can be the source of enormous satisfaction, indeed, of joy.

Toward Partnership Spirituality

A partnership spirituality, as I emphasize in my book *Sacred Pleasure*, entails a very different view of pain and pleasure than the one most of us have been taught—one that sacralizes pleasure rather than pain. But here it is important to note, as I emphasize in *Sacred Pleasure*, that this is not pleasure in a purely hedonistic or self-centered form, or as the frantic "fun" or escape from pain that is characteristic of much that is called pleasure in dominator societies. Rather it is a pleasure connected with awe at the miracle of life and of nature, the ecstatic pleasure of altered states of consciousness, and the deep pleasure of caring connections, of caretaking, of creativity, of love.

This leads to still another important core element of partnership spirituality: it does not place man and spirituality over woman and nature. We can find remnants of an earlier, more partnership-oriented spirituality in archeological finds and myths from very ancient times when people do not seem to have imaged the powers that govern the universe—as we have been taught—as an armed male deity: Jehovah with his thunderbolt, Zeus with his sword (actually Zeus has both a thunderbolt and a sword, to emphasize the point that the highest power is the power to dominate and destroy.) These earlier people appear to have imaged the powers that govern the universe more in terms of the power to give and nurture life, as a Great Mother from whose womb all of life ensues and to whose womb all of life returns at death, like the cycles of vegetation, once again to be reborn. But—and I want to emphasize this important point—it is clear from Neolithic imagery that the male principle was also highly valued. Indeed, one of the central stories in this earlier, more nature-based religion that saw all of nature as interconnected and as imbued with what we call the divine, was the sacred marriage of the Goddess with her divine lover.

It is a spirituality in which sex and the human body are part of the sacred.

This is obviously a nature-based spirituality. It is a spirituality in which sex and the human body, matters we have been taught to associate with the obscene, are part of the sacred. It is also a view of the sacred in which images of sex, of the human body, of man's body, of woman's body, and of how two bodies should relate are primarily life-affirming, pleasure-affirming images.

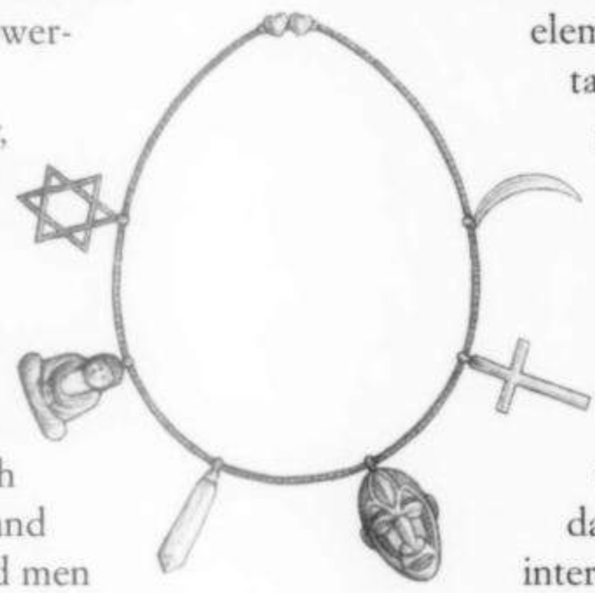
Today a growing number of theologians such as Carter Heyward, Carol Christ, Elizabeth Dodson Gray, Matthew Fox, and Judith Plaskow, are writing about this "new" (but actually very old) spirituality as an embodied spirituality. As Susan G. Carter writes, the term "embodied spirituality" has yet to be defined in our dictionaries, where body (or embodiment) and spirit (or spirituality) are as separate as they still are in much of our society. But if we are to integrate spirituality into our lives, as Carter also notes, using this term can concretize thoughts and ideas, and thus help bring about changes in both our thinking and our society.

In one way it is easy to imagine an embodied spirituality. After all, many of our images of deity are embodied. Except that, in Western tradition, they have been embodied only in male form. One of the key elements of the "new spirituality" is the embodiment of the divine in both female and male form.

As the theologian Sallie McFague writes, the image of God as Mother expands our conception of God. The Father God has been pictured more as redeemer from sins than as giver of life, and his love has been understood as "disinterested," involving no need, no desire, no feeling, for the objects of his love. By contrast, God as Mother is associated also with feeling and nurturing, (adding a dimension of caring), as well as with joy for her creation and with the desire to see it come to fulfillment, with wanting us to flourish. "A theology that sees God as the parent who feeds the young and, by extension, the weak and vulnerable, understands God as caring about the most basic needs of life in its struggle to continue," McFague writes.

Although ancient female representations of divinity symbolized many different stages of life, from young maiden to

ancient crone, many of the oldest female representations emphasized the life-giving and nurturing aspects of woman's body—that is, the aspect we today would call the Mother Goddess. Even in historic times we find records telling of female deities giving their people not only the gift of life but the capacity to feed themselves through the invention of agriculture—for example, in Egyptian hieroglyphics, the Goddess Isis is repeatedly referred to as the inventor of agriculture and in Sumerian cuneiform tablets the Goddess Ninlil is revered for teaching her people to farm. Love is also associated with female deities—for example, the Greek Goddess Aphrodite still in historic times represented sexual love, and the Goddess Demeter powerfully symbolized maternal love.



The Catholic Virgin Mary is, to this day, the symbol of maternal love, even though she is now presented as the only mortal in a family in which only the father and the son are divine. Like the Chinese Goddess Kuan Yin, today still the most popular of Chinese deities, Mary is revered primarily as the symbol of love and compassion associated with the ideal of motherhood. Of course, love and compassion can reside in both women and men and can flourish in both if it is socially supported and rewarded, which it is not in dominator societies. This is a caring wisdom, a so-called feminine wisdom, which is still symbolized by the Hebrew "Hochma" and the Greek "Sophia."

It is not coincidental that during our time of strong partnership resurgence the image of the divine in female form should again come to the fore. Nor is it coincidental that this conception of the divine or spiritual as female again adds to love an erotic or bodily element—that is, that in this "new" spirituality love is no longer abstract. And it is not judgmental love, but a love that is accepting and inclusive of all.

By sacralizing the erotic—that is, bodily pleasure, rather than pain to the body—this new, but actually very old, spirituality also stands in stark contrast to the emphasis in dominator spirituality on the infliction and/or suffering of pain.

Partnership Morality and Spirituality

In my thought, work, and life, I do not distinguish between spirituality and morality. I should emphasize, however, that by morality I do not mean what I have come to think of as the false morality of so-called fundamentalist religious teachings. I believe that at the core of all the major religious traditions—be they Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, Hebrew, Christian, or Taoist—are the partnership values of sensitivity, empathy, caring, and nonviolence. But overlaying this partnership core is what we may call the dominator encrustment: teachings appropriate for the kinds of societies that already prevailed during the time when what are today considered our holy books or scriptures were committed to writing.

We are still generally taught religious morality as a collection of many different kinds of rules, such as the biblical commandments that "thou shalt not steal" (Exodus 21: 15). Sometimes these rules have been presented to us as the infallible word of God, or the equally infallible teachings of a religious prophet or guru, to be unquestioningly obeyed. Sometimes there are in these rules strong partnership elements: for example, the teachings of Isaiah in the Old Testament and of Jesus in the New Testament preaching stereotypically "feminine" values such as compassion, empathy, and nonviolence. However, we also need to recognize the dominator elements in religious teachings: elements that have served to justify and maintain domination and oppression—for example, the biblical justification of holy wars and the control of men over women.

A morality appropriate for partnership relations can have standards such as the moral imperative of moving through our lives with awareness, with the sensitivity to ourselves and to others that is the prerequisite for empathy and caring. These standards can help us become more aware of our interconnection with others of our kind and with our Mother Earth, fostering that feeling of oneness that is at the core of partnership spirituality.

When we are sensitive, we can feel empathy. When we are insensitive, we can not. Sensitivity is therefore a prerequisite for the basic partnership moral standard of doing unto others as we would have them do unto us.

Obviously this standard cannot be the guide for relations in societies that orient primarily to the dominator model. So dominator morality has to justify the suppression of moral sensitivity—not only toward "out-groups" but also toward those below one in the rankings of domination, backed up by the fear and force that characterize this kind of social structure.

The maintenance of any kind of social cohesion, however, requires some attention to nonviolent and mutually responsible relations. Hence this dominator kind of morality has a myriad of rules and regulations, some governing relations between those who dominate, others governing relations between those who dominate and those who are dominated—and these rules are very different.

This difference is why the kind of morality we have inherited from more rigid dominator times is a mass of contradictory rules and regulations. For example, one of the ten commandments Moses is said to have brought down from Mount Sinai in the Old Testament of the Bible is "thou shalt not kill." But the Bible is full of instances where this commandment is violated--from rules prescribing that a young bride be stoned to death by the men of her city if she is found not to be a virgin (Deut. 22:13–21) to

(continued on page 20)

A God that is More than Loving



Amitai Etzioni

Everybody seems to love a spirit that fills us with joy, raises us to a higher level of consciousness, and inspires us. But such a spirit has a touch of self-centeredness. We need a spirit that will make us nobler than we would be otherwise—whether or not this fills us with cheer.

Recently, I have been re-reading the most often quoted work of my first sociology teacher, Martin Buber. In *I and Thou*, Buber depicts God as a super I and Thou, a source of great light and enjoyment, a sea into which all the rivers of smaller, diadic human I and Thou flow. It is a God of "metaphysical love," but not one who makes claims on us.

Buber's God is not the angry deity of the Old Testament, whose true prophets keep admonishing the people to refrain from doing that which offends the Lord. Neither is it the God of the New Testament, who sacrificed His son to bring His love to the people, to redeem humanity from its sins. According to Buber, one's relation to God is, first and foremost, an expression of the I and Thou relationship. Indeed, Buber describes the I-God relationship as a sort of super I-Thou, the ultimate I-Thou relationship, though all other I-Thous have a touch of Godliness. As he writes: "Extended, the lines of relationships intersect in the eternal Thou. Every single Thou is a glimpse of that." More poetically, Buber writes that the relation between man and God "is not one relation among others; it is the universal relation into which all rivers pour without drying up for that reason."

Part of the originality of Buber's I-Thou is his assertion that God relates to us as we relate to Him (or Her). Not only does each "I" need God to form this essential relationship, but, in Buber's words, "don't you also know that God needs you?" Yet the very nature of this bond raises my communitarian concerns, because Buber's super-Thou makes no claims on us, demands no charity for the poor, nor beseeches us to love our enemies.

True, at one point Buber refers to our relationship with God (and to one another) as one of metaphysical love which entails responsibility for the other, and of the other—for the I. Some have read into this a closeness of Buber to Christian ideals of love or "agape." It is important to note, though, that Buber stresses that one cannot endeavor or labor to achieve an I-Thou relationship. He writes, "The Thou encounters me by grace—it cannot be found by seeking." Discussing God, he notes that "One does not find God if one remains in the world; one does not find God if one leaves the world. Whoever goes forth to his You with his whole being and carries to it all the beings of the world, finds him whom one cannot seek." Malcolm Diamond, in his book *Martin Buber: Jewish Existentialist*, writes, "One cannot plan to experience an I-Thou encounter any more than one can plan to fall in love."

This issue is a familiar one to students and followers of other religions, in which there is often a tension between the passive notion that we may rely on God's grace to shine upon us, and the active notion that we will only be ready to

ILLUSTRATION BY SARAH SOLIE

Amitai Etzioni is a University Professor at George Washington University and the author of The New Golden Rule *(Perseus Basic Books, 1998). His book* The Limits of Privacy *will be published by Basic Books in 1999.*

be embraced by God once we have worked to become more virtuous. Many religions combine both concepts, although they differ sharply with regard to which element they emphasize. In terms of this continuum from the passive to the active, Buber's treatment of God clearly falls somewhere near the rather passive pole. Buber uses very few "should" statements—no "love others the way you wish others to love you" or other powerful prescriptions. In this sense Buber is closer to the Protestant than to the Catholic interpretation of virtue: we can find out if we are the chosen ones but we cannot become so by working to be good.

When Buber does briefly mention responsibility for the other in *I and Thou* (he dedicates a particularly opaque passage to it in *Between Man and Man*), it provides rather little moral guidance. On the whole, he lines up with the old communitarians in that he has no concept of individual rights to balance the call of social responsibilities, a litmus test for new or responsive communitarians. Here, Buber seems to be influenced by the Jewish tradition, which, like Islam, stresses responsibility for others (like the poor among us) but basically has no concept of the rights of others which may make claims on us. At one point Buber does refer, uncharacteristically, to "sacrifice." But it is found in the instrumental realm of economics and politics, in the realm of the It, and not the elevated, cherished realm of the Thou.

In the world of persons, the It-world has a legitimate, indeed essential role. But just as the human I-Thou is pulled toward the I-It and must constantly be nourished, so we must recognize our tendency to "... reduce the eternal Thou ever again to an It, to something, turning God into a thing, in accordance with our nature." For Buber, God is a pure Thou. So, for example, Buber adds that relations to God, around which we may form a true We, must not be institutionalized. Institutionalized religion can become a barrier, while "true" prayer is personal. When we are successful in making this super-connection to God, what we have is a mysterious hyper-experience of an indescribable joy, but one that provides no external guidance or affirmation of our own values. Values, let alone the stronger term "virtues," are not part of Buber's basic vocabulary as laid out in *I and Thou*.

This is not merely a limitation I find in Buber. It reflects the reluctance of an age we are leaving behind to pass judgment and to lay claims.

I wish we could merely accentuate and celebrate achievements without passing judgment. I wish a social world could be composed that would function that way. Maybe one day it will. But in this day and age, and in the foreseeable future, such a benign spirit will not heal the wounded, feed the poor, establish a just social order or ensure peace.

Our weakness invites a spirit that is not merely joyous and enlightening, but also one that calls on us to be better than we would be otherwise. ❑

SPIRITUAL COURAGE *(continued from page 18)*

numerous "divinely inspired" commands to kill men, women, and children.

Similarly, in the New Testament we often read of God commanding peace and love. But in Chapters 12 to 19 of the book of Revelations we read how the angels are commanded to pour out "the wrath of God upon the earth" and terrible horrors are released upon all—except the "hundred and forty and four thousand," which, according to Chapter 14:3, will be "redeemed from the earth."

I want to emphasize that this problem is by no means unique to Judeo-Christian scriptures. As in Judeo-Christian tradition, teachings in Hindu and Buddhist scriptures about honesty and nonviolence are partnership teachings. But there are in all these traditions also many dominator teachings. For instance, in the Hindu Mahabarata, violence and cruelty are attributed to divine commands, and even presented as divine attributes. According to the Koran, if a wife is disobedient, her husband should beat her and banish her from his bed. And in one of the most celebrated Hindu stories, the message that women's lives are worth less than men's, and even that girls and women can be killed with impunity, is reinforced. We are told that the great god Vishnu was almost killed by his own father, who, as in the Greek Oedipus story, feared his son would kill and depose him—but that fortunately his life was saved when a girl baby was put in his place to be killed instead.

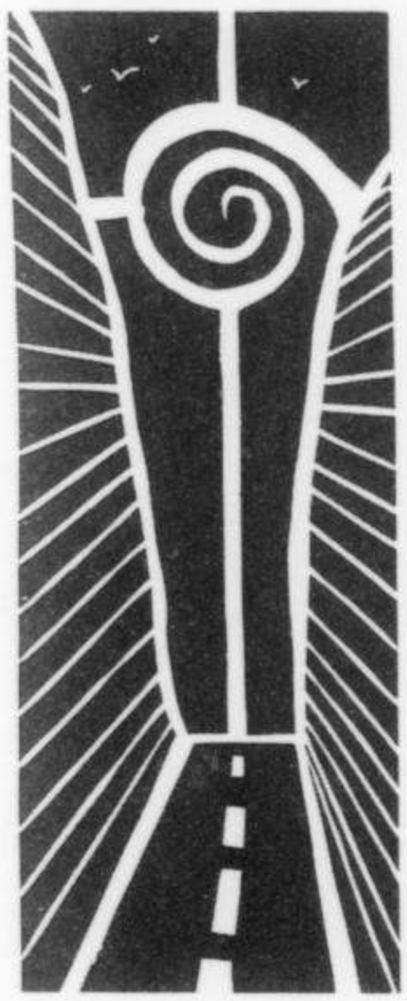
Stories provide for us models for our own behavior. When these are religious stories, they carry enormous moral authority. This is why we need to cultivate, in ourselves and others, the spiritual courage to challenge these kinds of stories, be it in our own religious traditions or in those of others. It is also why we need to develop a moral, ethical, and spiritual education that helps us explore the difference between partnership moral sensitivity and dominator moral insensitivity.

In the Bible, this difference is reflected by what Michael Lerner calls two voices of God: the voice of the God of love and the voice projecting onto God the accumulated cruelty, violence, and pain inherent in a dominator model of relations. Once we become more aware of this difference, we can more effectively counter those who, be it in the name of tradition or even liberation, have used and unwittingly continue to use the language of the second voice to perpetuate cruelty, violence, and pain, as well as those who would indiscriminately discard all religious teachings or accept anything and everything as the manifestation of a divine will.

In sum, we urgently need to identify and support the partnership core of our world's religious traditions at the same time that we identify and reject their dominator overlays. Then we can more effectively work for a future guided by spirituality in the sense of love, caring, and oneness with all that we and our world can be. ❑

Meditation and Social Change

Sharon Salzberg



Often when people use the term "social change" they think of joining a movement, seeking to affect legislation, or other ways of making realistic and systematic change in a direction they consider positive. When someone gets engaged on a system-wide level of social action, it's usually a function of having been educated about something: they visit a cousin in prison and get involved in prison reform; a friend is diagnosed with AIDS and they take a look at anti-discrimination laws; their rent skyrockets and they begin to look at homeless people with a new eye and decide to challenge the city to provide low-cost housing.

There is another level of social action, however, that is simply the expression of good-heartedness in a day to day, concrete way. On this level, I've seen huge transformations in many or most of the people who practice meditation. Their impulse to reach out, to help, dramatically increases because of the shift in how they're perceiving the world.

The Buddha said, "Just as the dawn is the forerunner and the first indication of the rising sun, so is right view the forerunner and the first indication of wholesome states." "Right view" is a quality of perception that understands the world as interconnected, and understands that what we do is consequential, that actions ripple out through this web of interconnection. "Right view" is what is realized in meditation.

Our view of things molds our intentions, which in turn mold our actions. How we look at our lives becomes the basis for how we act and how we live. According to Buddhist teachings, when we understand the interconnection of all of life, then we can act with the ease of uncontrived altruism. We act with simple goodness. Whether they are personal and direct or take place in the larger arena of social change, our actions arise out of a wholesome state of mind rather than out of fear and anxiety.

With clear vision, we see that we are all a part of each other's life and journey toward liberation. This knowledge forms the spirit with which we do meditation practice, and the way in which we bring that practice into our daily lives. With greater awareness, often formed and refined in meditation, we begin to see that we are essentially no different from each other, no matter who we are. We all share the urge toward happiness, and not one of us leaves this earth never having suffered.

This view of interconnectedness may not give us the ability, the means, or even the inclination to do a political analysis of a situation or to engage in systematic social change, but it does give us an unfeigned good-heartedness. It gives us an urge to include rather than to exclude, to care rather than to reject someone else's problem as having nothing to do with us. This is the consciousness of social transformation.

Just at the time I was contemplating these questions, two instances occurred that illustrate this point. I had dinner with a friend who described a trip he had taken to Thailand, where he had seen an announcement in the lobby of his hotel that some Americans were in Thai jails on drug charges (some with sentences as long as thirty years), and that they would appreciate visitors. He told me that after reading this announcement he went out and bought a whole bunch of hamburgers and took them to the prison. I kept telling him how kind I thought he was, and he kept saying it was a perfectly natural thing to do.

Just a few days later I did a benefit talk that a friend arranged for a small remote retreat center run by some other friends. After having done it, I suddenly realized that the friend who had arranged the talk had put a lot of effort into making it all happen and had a wonderful project of his own that badly needed some support. I mentioned this to him, and he said he had had that passing thought, but it just seemed so right to help out these other people … again, no big deal.

Whether one becomes more effective in large scale social movements or whether one extends kindness to the mail carrier or the checkout person in the supermarket, going inward in meditation does significantly affect the way we go outward into the world. Wanting to ease the suffering of others because we all share in the fabric of life makes seeking change a matter of the heart, direct, here and now, actualized and unforced. ❑

ILLUSTRATION BY BENNY ALBA

Sharon Salzberg is a founder of the Insight Meditation Society in Barre, Massachusetts and the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies. She is the author of Lovingkindness *(Shambhala), and* A Heart As Wide As The World *(Shambhala).*

The Spirit Tax

Meredith Maran

The other night my French fiancée Katrine and I had dinner with our Swiss friend Jeannette, who was just back from a month in Mexico—not the sandy beaches and discos of Acapulco, but the dense jungles and livestock-bearing buses of San Cristóbal De Las Cases in Chiapas. "The most amazing thing to me," Jeannette said softly in her halting, German-accented English, "were the altars I saw everywhere. Even in the poorest villages, where the children run barefoot in the cold while their parents sit trying to sell a dozen oranges, there was always an altar overflowing with flowers, candles, incense, food. The food they need to eat—they give it all to the gods." Jeannette swallowed a bite of grilled salmon. "In Switzerland we wouldn't do that. And in Switzerland, the people don't look as happy as they did in these little Mexican villages."

"Not in France either," Katrine agreed. She talked about the temple offerings she'd seen during her month in India. "People brought food, cloth, candles, whatever bits of things they could find. Their peaceful faces showed me they were made content by these offerings and by their frequent visits to the temple. Their material poverty didn't seem to affect their souls. On the contrary, their souls seemed full. They had something I really wanted."

As Westerners (of many nations, apparently) are wont to do, the three of us rhapsodized enviously about the spiritual wealth of materially impoverished indigenous peoples. And then it occurred to me that it's not just Mayans and Indian peasants who take food off their tables to feed their souls. It happens everywhere in the world, every day of the week. In Switzerland. In France. Even in the otherwise extremely dis-United States. Even in my neighborhood.

There's a Baptist church across the street from my house. Every Sunday morning I watch dozens of African American grandmothers, grandfathers, aunts, uncles, children, and grandchildren filing through its doors dressed in their Sunday best: clothes and hair neatly pressed, shoes shining, faces scrubbed and solemn. I've spent a few Sunday mornings in a church like that, so I know that those folks—many of them living on fixed, subsistence incomes—will empty their purses and pockets as the collection plates are passed through the pews. I know that if a church family's house should burn, or if the church choir's gowns need replacing, or the church softball team needs bus fare to an out-of-state tournament, the church members will dig into their pockets deeper still. And even if the insurance money comes through, the choir sings out of tune, or the team loses horribly, those generous parishioners will still feel their money was well spent.

Everywhere in the world, people who have very little else in common share this one experience, at least: we put a price on our own spiritual sustenance.

Twenty years ago, my then-husband and I were members of a Marxist-Leninist cell group pledged to overthrow the government. The organization's overhead was paid by the tithing of twenty percent of each member's income. My husband and I were making good money, working mandatory overtime in unionized factories, and we had neither the time nor the inclination to blow our checks on nights out on the town or big-screen TVs. So it didn't really cramp our style to hand over what eventually added up to half the price of a house in the working class neighborhood where we were paying $210 a month rent. There were many things we questioned about our organization during those years, but handing over every fifth paycheck to keep it running wasn't one of them. We wanted to raise our children in a socialist society, and we were willing to pay for the chance—however farfetched it might have seemed, even then.

More recently I've been working for "socially responsible" companies, where many employees believe they're underpaid relative to their mainstream counterparts. "It's a trade-off," I've heard executives and assemblers say. "I earn less, but I don't have to leave my values at the door. That's worth money to me."

Every day of the week, everywhere in the world, people who have very little else in common share this one experience, at least: we put a price on our own spiritual sustenance. We pay it. And—if we've made a good match between what sustains us and what we are sustaining—we get what we pay for. ❑

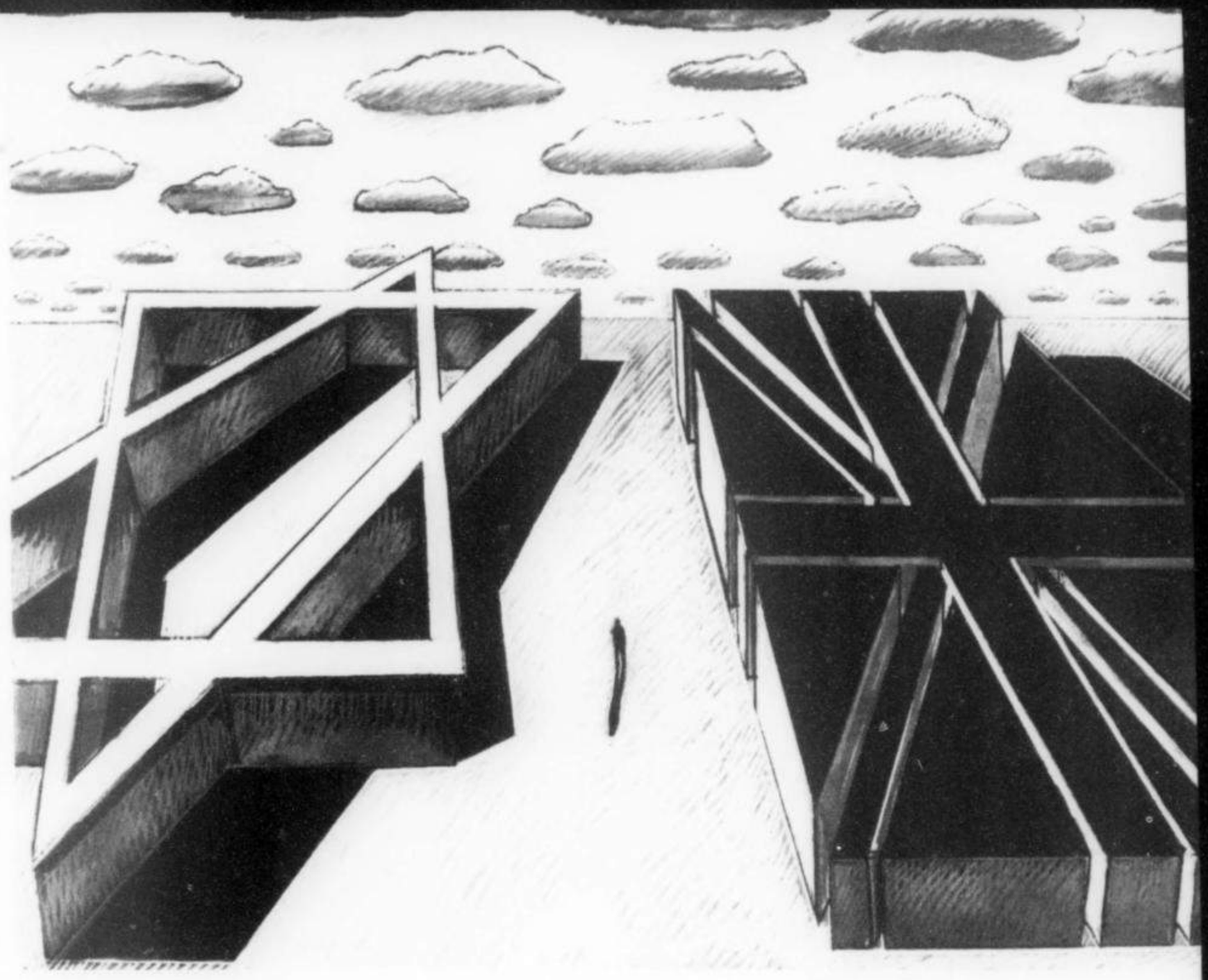
Meredith Maran is the author of Notes From An Incomplete Revolution: Real Life Since Feminism *(Bantam, 1997) and* What It's Like To Live Now *(Bantam, 1995).*

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A Life *on the* Fringes

My Road to Critical Pedagogy

Svi Shapiro



In the most recent period of my life I have begun to give serious thought to the relationship between my own Jewish identity and the radical educational project that I have been committed to over many years. Whether this is because of aging (as Erica Jong says, "the older we get, the more Jewish we become"), the feminist invitation to be forthcoming about our biographies, or the postmodern moment that gives so much attention to marginality, I am not too sure. Probably all of these reasons are at work and others besides. It is hard to deny the impulse that seems to grow as one gets older to find some integrative threads to our lives so as to bind together the disparate pieces of our precarious subjectivities.

It is also a curious, if little commented on fact, that while the "postmodern moment" has meant an unparalleled acknowledgment of the salience of "difference" and the "other" in the constitution of our social world, within critical educational studies at least, this has not included much about Jews as either an oppressed or marginalized group. Whatever the reasons Jews have for identifying themselves with a radical or critical project in education they have, for the most part, been silent about their own Jewish identities and the effect of these identities on their lives and beliefs. This is no small matter. After all, what is at stake here is whether we honor the legacy and experience of Jewish life and its potentially rich contributions to the renewal of a progressive culture in America (to say nothing of achieving a degree of personal integrity in our own lives). Sadly, even where Jewish experience with its distinct structures of feeling and intellect has powerfully helped to shape the political and ethical outlook of educators, it has remained, at most, a shadowy influence. Such teachers have typically not sought to ground their moral outrage or political commitments towards social justice and change in their own historical or existential experience.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY RICHARD ROSS

Excerpted from Strangers in the Land: Pedagogy, Modernity and Jewish Experience *(New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1999).* *Copyright © Peter Lang Publishing, 1999. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.*

My Own Road to A Critical Pedagogy: Life on the Fringes

It is perhaps of interest that for a long time my own road to critical pedagogy seemed to be related only very marginally to something Jewish in my experience. More recently, however, through a fairly intense process of study, reflection, and conversation, I have begun to encounter the dense and undoubtedly powerful effects of this experience in the shaping of my own language of critique and possibility in the field of education. There is, for example, the effect of living in what Isaac Deutcher referred to as "the interstices of a society" in the making of a Jewish radical consciousness.

While my parents were born and grew up in London, the children of recently arrived immigrants from Eastern Europe, for them the English were always the *goyim*—people quite different from themselves. They consciously marked themselves as living at the cultural periphery of a society. Notwithstanding the considerable common ground they shared with other working class Londoners in language, attitudes, and outlook, the latter seemed to exist on the other side of a powerful, if invisible, social and cultural

divide. My parents, for example, shared the same peculiar political outlook as many of their non-Jewish neighbors—consistent in their support for Labour Party candidates *and* in their sense of reverence for Royalty (my own early and more radical socialism that argued for the end of monarchy was little tolerated at home). Despite our constant and thorough involvement in British life—in work, school, neighborhood; attention to the news, radio, and television entertainment; interest in sporting events; the sharing and celebration of the calendar (one, of course, organized around Christian holidays)—nothing fully eliminated the invisible but powerful marker of difference that one crossed on entering our home. It was, as Zygmunt Bauman has remarked, as if we lived in, but not of, the society.

Daily I moved back and forth between my school with its Christian prayers and proud motto "Loyaute M'Oblige" ("Loyalty Obliges Me" to School, Queen, and State), and my home—a piece of *shtetl* life in the midst of familiar but foreign territory. Of course, as a child one is apt to magnify the ways our parents and families are peculiarly different from some imagined norm. In retrospect I now can understand my life as a complex interweaving of multiple strands of influences and experiences that marked me as at once quite similar to those who shared my family's economic and national circumstances in post-war London, and as different from those who did not know the particular insecurities, ancient traditions, and haunting memories of Jews wherever they reside. For more than a few of us growing up in these circumstances, the twin refrains of social inequality and cultural marginality not surprisingly engendered a radical worldview.

Of course this sense of difference was fomented by things seemingly trivial as well as the more profound and significant: the "yinglish" (the English inflected and enriched by Yiddish words and phrases) spoken by parents and relatives; the *tzitzit*, the fringed garment worn under my clothes that would cause so much embarrassment at PE classes; or the inverted snobbery of my parents regarding what they saw as the inferior aesthetic or culinary taste of non-Jews. Beyond these things, made so much more apparent now through generations of American Jewish comics and writers, there was at work a deeper form of consciousness-shaping. There were the anti-Semitic threats and taunts of kids at school. There was participation in that other world of Hebrew and Judaic instruction that seemed to take so much of our time—a world that seemed so remote and stultifying in terms of our adolescent concerns and interests. And there was the world of Jewish holidays. At their most mundane the holidays were a break from school, a time to eat tasty food and be with family and friends and enjoy a ritualized playfulness. At another level they represented a serious separation from the overwhelming cultural hegemony of Christian culture. Here was not just a distinction of significant dates in the yearly round and a reminder of our differences from the non-Jewish majority, but the seeds, as I now see it, of a quite different view of history and celebration.

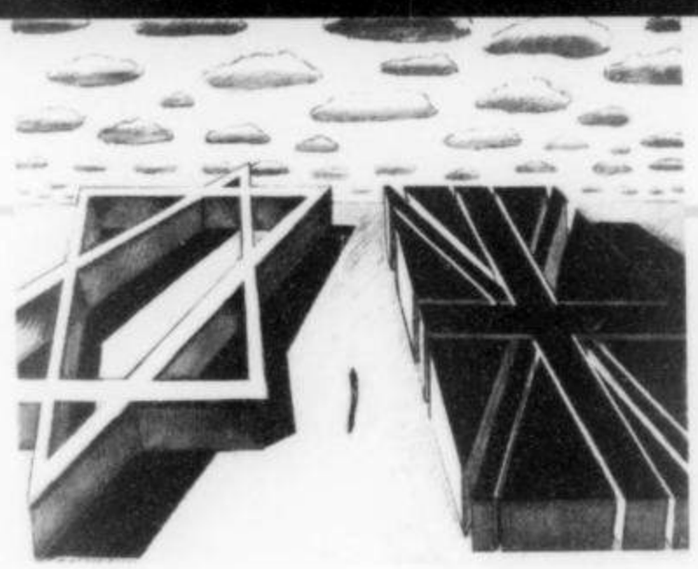
From the earliest, the holiday calendar reminded me again and again that (to paraphrase Walter Benjamin) a relentless barbarism has been the underside of history. History, at least for some, was the constant struggle against oppression and persecution. My history was nothing, I learned, if not a document of savage human brutality and a people's resistance to spiritual and physical annihilation. This is the repeated saga of Passover, Chanukah, Purim, and on into the modern 'holidays' of Yom Hashoah and Israel Independence Day. In all of them injustice and exile are the twinned and repeated refrains that echo through the cyclical telling of our Jewish history. And vindication, redemption, dignity, and security are ultimately the achievements, not of individuals, but of a collectivity. Judaism deals with the fate of a people, a community, not of a person. How different this is (as I am reminded so often in my classes) from the Protestant view. In Jewish history justice is always *social* justice; exile is always that of a nation or people, not just a personal or existential separation.

In Jewish history justice is always social justice; exile is always that of a nation or people, not just a personal or existential separation.

Passover: Memory and Exile

It is the Passover celebration that stands at the center of my childhood and adolescent experiences, a time of joyful remembrance. At the center of this holiday stood the Seder, the ritual meal celebrating the ancient Israelites' liberation from Egyptian bondage. It was an annual event lit up with the festive pleasures of family conviviality, song, food, wine, stories, and humor. But beyond the immediacy of this celebration were, as I have come to see, messages of extraordinary power and significance. Here was conveyed not simply history but *memory*. The contemporary commentator Lawrence Kushner has delineated this distinction well. Memory, he says, is a set of connections. The further back in time the connections go, the greater the meaning. And remembering, he says, may be more in the ways things are stored than in what is stored:

> It is not accidental that the great feast of remembering our redemption is called simply: The order. The arrangement and interconnectedness of each of the parts preserves the message, the meaning. The story ends with redemption, not with slavery; first come the questions, then the answers, because I was once a slave, I must know how it feels....



We take a memory of four hundred years of slavery and set it into a larger context of liberation and redemption. We then celebrate that slavery with a banquet. We further find in those four hundred years of servitude a continuing admonition to be ever mindful of the affliction of others. We find purpose and mission in our slavery. If slaveries can become freedoms and miseries can become meaningful, then the game is never over.... Through the dynamic search for meaning the past remains eternally fluid before our eyes. (*The Book of Words*, 88)

Kushner notes that over the entrance to Yad Vashem, Israel's memorial to those who perished in the Holocaust, is inscribed an aphorism ascribed to the great Jewish teacher, the Ba'al Shem Tov: "Exile comes from forgetting. Memory is the source of redemption." This extraordinary view of history is reiterated time and again in the Jewish calendar, which becomes nothing less than a pedagogy of critique and possibility. We learn to make the past speak to our present lives for the sake of that which is possible in a transformed future. Injustice and oppression in our past are not simply our past; they are an injunction to the present: "And you shall tell your child on that day, saying 'It is because of that which the Lord did for me when I came forth from Egypt'" (Exodus 13:8).

The Seder becomes much more than a retelling of long-ago historical events. Its purpose is clearly to interrogate our present world to find in it current forms of enslavement and suffering, and to do that from the vantage point of hope and possibility about a world in which exile and injustice have ended. This was the notion of history so imaginatively construed by the German-Jewish scholar Walter Benjamin. Unlike the Greek myth of a golden age whose crucial moment was edenic, the Jewish tradition is of a revelation that makes relentless demands on all subsequent generations. Each generation is compelled to relive the Exodus and to "stand at Sinai" as if they themselves had been present, and to absorb and construct their meaning through a process of continuous interpretation:

> Everything originates in the incandescence of revelation, which is then sustained through time in the myriad mirrorings and refractions of exegesis. The whole system is imaginatively focused on the great moment of its origination.... Even the landscape of redemption that is a vital element of the tradition is a projection into the future of the Edenic past reported in revelation. (Robert Alter, *Necessary Angels*, 100)

The injunction to remember in this Jewish sense is a clearly ethical one: "You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Exodus 22:20). The extraordinary pedagogy of the Seder (one especially aimed at children) manages to fuse a celebration of survival, the demand to see the oppressions of our present "Egypts," and the imaginary re-envisioning of a world of wholeness and justice. And in all of this there is the insistence on our own personal and collective responsibility for transformation. Such a pedagogy is a far cry from the tepid and fragmented curriculum of contemporary schooling with its modernist separations of the epistemological, the imaginative, and the moral.

Purim: Humor in a Bitter World

In thinking about Passover or some of those other holidays of remembrance, it is the laughter that comes to my mind in spite of the weightiness of their concerns. Such laughter, I have come to believe, was not an escape from the seriousness of the issues commemorated, but an integral dimension of a culture intent on resisting the spiritual and emotional suffocation that can be the lot of a people afflicted with so much pain. If we see our acts of remembrance as pedagogies of hope and possibility, then, as Kushner also notes, laughter at sad times more than relieves tension; it initiates healing. It reminds us of another dimension of our psyche. There is much in Jewish humor that works in that Bakhtinian way to turn the (oppressive) world upside down; the victim becomes a winner, the fool the smart one, the most pathetic the one with wisdom. In all of this, laughter provides an emotional transcendence of the world; what appeared fixed and immutable suddenly seems arbitrary and changeable. Such humor deconstructs a world which moments before appeared so unalterable. We do not simply see the world in a new and fluid light, but perhaps more importantly, we feel it in our bellies. Humor dissolves the overwhelming facticity and solidity of a threatening world.

Purim, in particular, is a holiday that commemorates the foiling of our people's enemies, and does so through carnivalesque celebration. We joyously upend the conventions of our world and remind ourselves of the socially imposed categories and differences that order it. This is well described by Edward Greenstein:

> A heightened sense of imagination and fantasy is what the Scroll of Esther and its festival of Purim are essentially about. The lighthearted tone of the story ... bespeaks the carnival atmosphere in which the scroll emerged as the first Purim Torah. Unlike some Christians and even some Jews who find the book offensive, most Jews have always heard the Scroll of Esther in a Mardi Gras context and have therefore taken it as fun and fantasy.... Jews, who have suffered the cruel caprice of and persecution by gentiles time after time, permit themselves the fantasy of imagining themselves in the gentile role and the gentiles in the Jewish role. (*The Jewish Holidays*, ed. Michael Strassfeld, 192)

As the saintly Jew Mordechai replaces the anti-Semitic tyrant Haman in the Persian administration, we, in our imaginations, replace non-Jews in the scheme of the world.

This injunction to see the potential fluidity of our social order, the possibilities for overturning unjust social relationships, requires also a recognition of our own authoritarian tendencies. Michael Strassfeld notes that Purim's call for the state of *adloyada*—a blissful ignorance of reality—enables us to see how easy it is to change from Mordechai into Haman,

> from a crusader for justice into simply a crusader. That is why the Talmud says that we fully accept the Torah only on Purim, for only when we can mock the tradition can we fully accept it. Only then are we safe to do so; otherwise we make the tradition into an idolatry rather than a smasher of idols, into frozen-in-stone dogma of what once was rather a living faith. (*The Jewish Holidays*, 198)

The Hebrew Prophets: Jews and the Radical Spirit

Paradoxically it is this "God of History" that impels Jews, whether they act like Haman or Mordechai. For each there is the powerful need to be the subjects, not the objects, of history; to be the active agents (or partners) in the making of our world—of course, as we see so clearly in Israel, with very different consequences. For as long as I can remember I have felt an extraordinary solidarity with all those who struggle against the fate dictated by the power of others; an identification with movements of resistance against those who deny the individual and collective capacity to give shape and meaning to one's own world. I have always been deeply moved by those human struggles that seek to increase democracy and freedom. At its core I have understood Zionism in this light. I also see the Palestinian struggle in the same way, as another people struggling for some collective determination over their destiny. It is clear to me that Jews have always been disproportionately concerned with and committed to the process of human empowerment. From my youth I have been inspired by Jewish involvement in struggles against unjust authority—as socialists and communists (where the latter has been a liberational force), in trade unions, in movements that are against racism and apartheid, in the struggle for women's equality, and so on. I have also been struck by how often such activists were quite removed from any overt identification with Jewish tradition or religious faith. Somehow, nonetheless, those strong ethical and social injunctions asserted themselves among Jews even (as in my case) where religion itself seemed arcane and ossified. Yet even as I understood liberational struggles to be very much the antiphonal rhythm of modernity, I have come to see their roots dug in the ancient moral and spiritual ground of Judaism. In my more recent reflections on this I have been astonished by the resonance of the critical spirit with that of ancient Hebrew prophets, a phenomenon so extraordinarily described by Abraham Joshua Heschel. He notes:

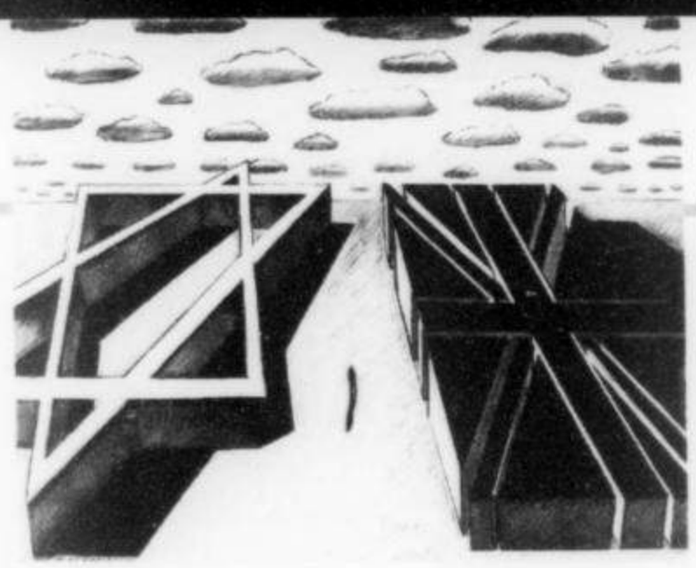
> The prophet is an iconoclast, challenging the apparently holy, revered, and awesome. Beliefs cherished as certainties, institutions endowed with supreme sanctity, he exposes as scandalous pretentions.... The prophet faces a coalition of callousness and established authority, and undertakes to stop a mighty stream with mere words. Had the purpose been to express great ideas, prophecy would have had to be acclaimed as a triumph. Yet the purpose of prophecy is to conquer callousness, to change the inner man as well as to revolutionize history. (*The Prophets*, 10,16)

Michael Lerner, too, whose liberational theology has been a powerful influence on my thinking, sees Jews' disposition toward radically challenging the established order as rooted deeply in our people's historical and spiritual beginnings. Throughout much of recorded history, he suggests, the oppressed have been socialized to believe that cruelty and oppression are inevitable, an ontological necessity, part of the structure of reality. The spiritual realm was an alternative or an escape from the reality of the material world—it embodied a purity that could not be imagined on earth. What the Jews heard, he says, was a very different message,

> [t]hat this world could be fundamentally transformed. Spirituality and morality were not features of some other reality apart from this world, but were inherently ingredients in this world.... Judaism becomes the metaphysics of social transformation: the system of belief about reality that makes possible revolutionary change.
>
> Judaism places transcendence on the agenda of the human race. Human beings need not be stuck in a world of pain or oppression.... Transcendence then is a psychological, political, ethical, and spiritual continuum involving a transformative and healing praxis of *tikkun*, rather than a spiritual escape from a fundamentally flawed world. (*Jewish Renewal*, 28–29)

As I read Lerner's and Heschel's words I am confronted by a strange contradiction. On the one hand I have recollections of growing up in a religious environment that seems to have been miles away from the revolutionary traditions described by these writers—filled by rituals and prayers that, to a great extent, seemed very far from this kind of radical moral and spiritual commitment. Yet I am still left to question whether the passion for change is only to be understood as the product of difference and marginality, the legacy of anti-Semitism in both its brutal and subtle forms. I confess to finding it a compelling notion that there is, deeply insinuated in our being as Jews, some continuing, if residual, impulse toward social transformation whose progenitors are indeed those ancient Hebrew prophetic voices and ethical scriptures. In ways more mysterious than understood these have provided us with a continuing legacy of resistance to the taken-for-granted reality, and the imperative for a world that takes as its central moral purpose the search for social justice.

One key to this ethos of resistance seems to lie in the



Jewish penchant for argument and a deep-seated attitude of suspicion to what is merely given. Certainly, in whatever Jewish circles I have moved, the love of argument has seemed always to be present. From my early years at home I learned the pleasures of contradiction—there was parental pride in disputatious children! Somehow this approach to the truth was, I believe, *talmudic* (even when the Talmud was not at all the subject of concern). I have come to understand by this experience that, while the truth might have been revealed at Sinai, its meaning is multivalent and requires an ongoing re-articulation. Each generation must, as it were, stand again at Sinai to find new layers of significance and understanding in the text. Whatever is the ultimate Truth, the truth for each generation has to be won through the hard work of intellectual interrogation and critical reason. The text provides no comforting certainty of established understanding—much more, it challenges human beings to elicit meaning from situation to situation, and from generation to generation. The only certainty is the knowledge that is produced in the well-known give-and-take of rabbinic argument. Jacob Neusner has described it this way:

> The Talmud taught the Jews not to be terrified by the necessity to face, and to choose among, a plurality of uncertain alternatives in an insecure world. The Talmud testified that people must choose, if tentatively and for a time only, among competing interpretations, so that the law might in fact be applied, and the ordinary folk might know what to do. So the Talmud forced choices, in a tentative and austere spirit, among the many truths available to reasonable folk. It insisted one cannot be paralyzed before contrary claims and equally persuasive reasons. (*Invitation to the Talmud*, 291–292)

While most of us now associate talmudic discourse with the arcane and esoteric, this is, I believe, to miss its essence. Neusner notes that, far from a sterile intellectualism, the Talmud was, in fact, a monumental attempt to apply a practical rationality to society—an effort to figure out how a community that was dependent on the force of the better argument might live:

> In a word, the Talmud is a document created by the intellect devoted to morality and seeking sanctity. It takes for granted that humanity's primary capacity is to think; it therefore is to be taken with utmost seriousness. (286)

Here in the face of continuing political and social insecurity and epistemological uncertainty was the historical commitment to a critical reason through which a community could create and recreate its own cultural and moral practices. At the core of this process of reason and challenge was, of course, the word. Even when the word ceases to be derived from the religious text, who can deny the extraordinary relationship of Jews to intellectual discourse? In the last two centuries of modernity Jews have played an extraordinary role in the construction of our understanding of the world, one that has far outstripped Jews' numerical presence. Long before poststructural analysis, Jews had understood the connections between the word and the world. Lawrence Kushner writes:

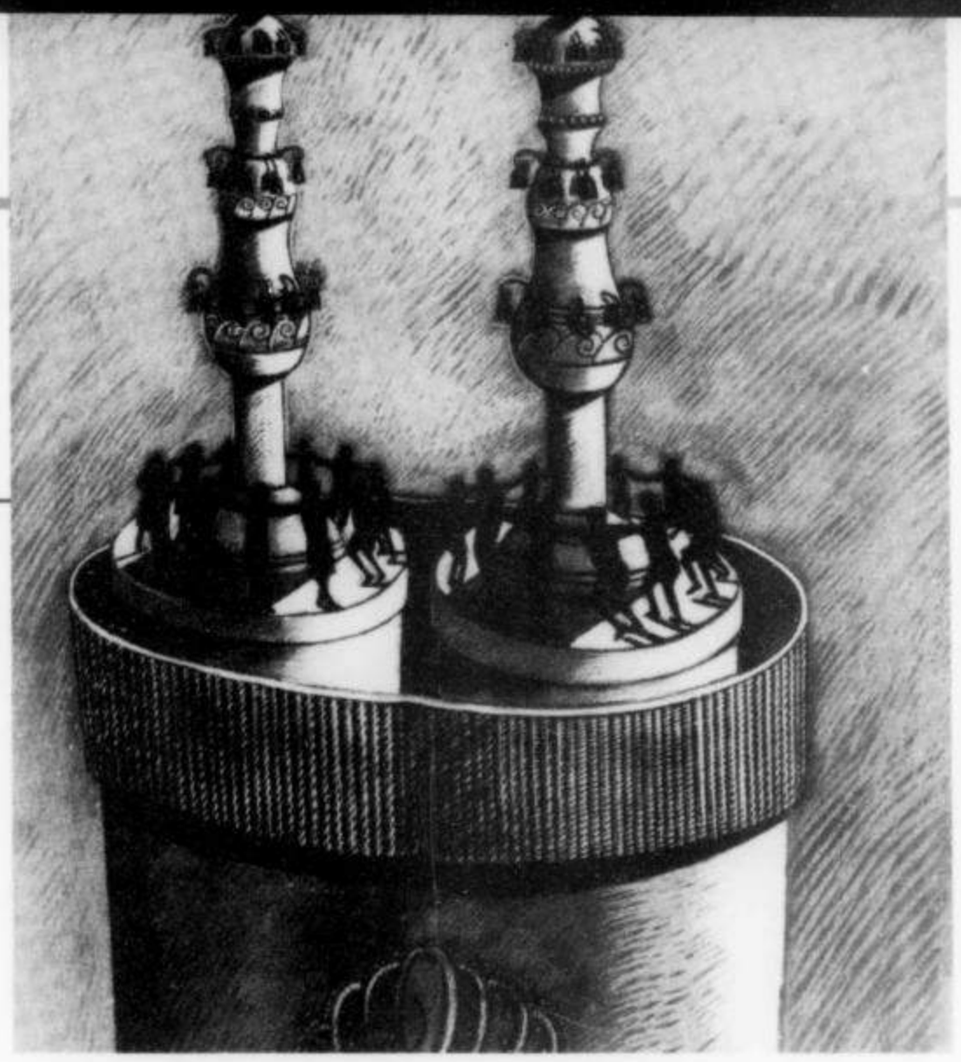
> According to the Hebrew Bible, God made the world with words. God just spoke and the world became reality.... Not only are words the instruments of creation, in Judaism they are primary reality itself. We ordinarily think of words as signifiers—a few syllables which denote something really real. But in Hebrew the word for *word*, *davar*, also means "thing." The word does not need to be made real, it already is. It needs only to be read, spoken, and interpreted. To know the word therefore is to know reality itself. (*The Book of Words*, 11)

In my home, as in so many Jewish homes, books and book-knowledge were imbued with an aura of high prestige. Of course, mixed into this sense of value was the understanding that they were also the medium of academic achievement and social success—an especially important fact given the economic anxiety that accompanied my parents' lives. Academic success for their children was the vindication of their constant struggle against economic insecurity and lack of social status. Yet beyond this was a respect for learning and for those who were seen as "learned," as well as a value attached to reading a newspaper and knowing what was happening in the world. Perhaps this kind of knowing and reading were a surrogate form of controlling one's world—a puppet theater of politics where grasping things intellectually stands in place of actually changing the world. In this sense Jews' obsession with knowing makes sense in a world where our real power over events and conditions has been limited, to say the least. Yet I think it must also be said that in our post-Foucault world, attachment to the word seems to represent a profound recognition of what Heschel refers to as the human capacity to be co-creators of the world. It indicates that in the process of signification human beings do much more than describe some pre-existing world—they are actually *producing* the world. Here is the extraordinary power of human beings to both represent and to make a world. Of course in this recognition we have returned to the peculiarly Jewish dialectic of interpretation and action, thought and deed. The responsibility of "standing again at Sinai" is an injunction to critically struggle to make sense of our lives and our circumstances, and to feel that sense of possibility and responsibility about re-envisioning and transforming our world. It is surely this that the great secular "rabbi" Karl Marx had in mind when he talked of "praxis"—of the process of understanding and taking action to change society. ❑

TORAT CHESED

The Art of Silence

Bradley Shavit Artson



A useful summary of the Jewish ethics of speech is: speak *to* someone, not *about* someone. But the mitzvah of *sh'mirat ha-lashon* involves more than just knowing how to speak and what not to say. It also involves learning how to communicate using silence: "silence is Your praise" (Psalm 65:2).

Silence is praise because often words are mere clutter, conspiring to mask our true feelings or to evade the significance of the moment. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel noted that "to become aware of the ineffable is to part company with words. The essence, the tangent curve of human experience, lies beyond the limits of language." I recall one *shiva minyan* (mourner's prayer group) in which the mourner confided to me that she just wanted to escape her visitors' well-intended chatter. All of their attempts to comfort or to distract prevented her from focusing on her feelings, as she desired. I sat with her in silence for several minutes. As the time passed, there was a palpable sense of connection between us; others would see us sitting silently on the couch and keep their distance. When I did finally get up to leave, she thanked me for being there for her, and for not speaking. There are times when only silence can convey the strength and intimacy the moment requires. Often, our silent presence is more helpful to mourners than anything we might fumble to express in words—"The best medicine of all is silence" (Megillah 18a).

Sometimes, silence is a gift of connection. At other times, silence is the preferred response because speech would only be critical without being constructive. "Just as it is meritorious to say something which will be heeded, so it is meritorious to refrain from saying anything which will not be heeded" (Yevamot 65b). At my former congregation, the families maintain the practice of printing an explanatory booklet at bat and bar mitzvah celebrations. One individual scrutinizes the printed, final product after it has been distributed at services, never failing to let the poor family know which typos and errors mar their keepsake. There is nothing the family can do at that point except feel badly that their booklet isn't perfect. At such moments it is doubly true that "if a word is worth one coin, silence is worth two" (Megillah 18a).

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In a competitive environment, offering praise for one colleague to another often unleashes a barrage of insult and slander. As the Talmud notes, "It is the way with gossips to begin with compliments but wind up with insults" (Tanhuma Shalah). Even among friends there is often unspoken competition. How often do we leave a friend's home after an evening of lavish hospitality, only to find ourselves in a conversation about the flaws and vulgarities of our recent hosts? Even our praise, then, can provide an opportunity for *l'shon ha-ra*. Perhaps that is why the rabbis counsel, "one should never speak in praise of a friend, because praise brings mention of the friend's blame as well" (Bava Batra 164b).

There are times and occasions when speech inflames. Hate speech is a ready example of such corrosive language. Comments that link degraded values or practices to specific groups constitute an abuse of the gift of speech. Offices, with their political jockeying, are often breeding grounds for remarks that attempt to cement a tenuous connection by insulting or mocking an absent supervisor, fellow worker, or client. As Rabbi Eleazar notes, "Just as with fire, where there is no wood, there is no fire, so where there is no *l'shon ha-ra*, contention ceases" (Midrash Mishlei, Chapter 26). At such moments, silence is truly a fence, shielding an emptiness in which healing and caring may flower.

One of the greatest things a human tongue can do is to lie still. An attentive rebbe listens not only with ears but also with heart. Does my *talmid* (disciple/student) need to speak further? Is she able to hear what I might need to say? Does he need my presence more than any words I might muster? Listening requires more than vibrating ear drums, it involves something deeper too. And in a similar way, the Jewish art of speech involves more than vocalization. We can say a great deal with our silences. Seeking to guide and to nurture, to educate and to inspire, our silence can reach places in our *talmidim*'s souls that our words can, at best, only evoke. Our charge then, is to know how and when to speak, sometimes using words, and sometimes using presence, but always as a gift. ❑

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INTERVIEW

AN INTERVIEW WITH Bill Bradley

Jack Newfield



Bill Bradley was a basketball star at Princeton, a Rhodes Scholar, and played on two championship teams for the New York Knicks. He served in the U.S. Senate from 1979 to 1986. Bradley is the author of four books, most recently, Values of the Game. *He is now considering a campaign for the presidency in the year 2000.*

NEWFIELD: When you were in high school, you gave a famous interview in which you were asked who were your heroes at age seventeen and a half. You said Bob Pettit, who played for the St. Louis Hawks; Mark Hannah, probably the founder of soft money; and the Reverend Billy Graham. Now that you're in your mid-fifties, do you have any heroes? or role models? Who are they now?

BRADLEY: Not really. You have people you admire, role models for emulation, when you're younger, but not so much when you're older. You've lived life enough to know that everybody is human, nobody's a hero per se. In terms of those who influenced my politics, I did a senior thesis about Harry Truman's first re-election to the Senate in 1940. That was influential. And probably Robert Kennedy had a bigger impact on me than anybody else.

NEWFIELD: What about Bobby?

BRADLEY: His candid, rough-edged quality, as a kind of obvious work-in-progress; his willingness to take risks for what he thought was the public good; his clear identification with people who were less fortunate and his willingness to throw that [identification] back in the faces of people who didn't expect to hear what they were going to hear. And Truman—Truman was plain spoken, knew what he believed, was able to make a decision....

NEWFIELD: Truman rising above his [party] machine, clubhouse roots?

BRADLEY: Yes. When he ran in 1940, they didn't give him a chance. There were two other people in the primary—one was the prosecutor who sent Pendergrast to jail; the other was the governor of the state—both of them were thought to be these incredible, white-shoe candidates. Truman had no money and ran a race simply by driving around the state and talking to people: to farmers, laborers, and African Americans. He put together the winning combination in the end.

NEWFIELD: Which do you think has been more corrupted by big money: politics or basketball? What do we do about it?

BRADLEY: There's no doubt that it's corrupted politics more, because politics is more important than basketball. In basketball, I don't see money destroying the fundamental value of the game, which is to learn lessons and have joy playing.

NEWFIELD: Is money destroying the fundamental value of democracy?

BRADLEY: I think we're perilously close to having it endangered. Money distorts democracy in America today. We're supposedly a country of one person, one vote. But we know that the people who have a lot of money have a lot more clout than one vote. That creates the situation where if you are an honest person—and there are a lot of great people in politics—you are trapped in a bad system. We've had democracy endangered before in this country; there are ways to respond to it, either constitutionally or through popular initiatives. But in the meantime I think that it is corrosive. It takes politicians' time. You spend all your time raising money on the phone and not meeting people, hearing their stories, or thinking about the issues.

NEWFIELD: What is the solution?

BRADLEY: To me the solution is fundamental campaign finance reform.

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

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NEWFIELD: Well you had a majority in the Senate and it still didn't prevail.

BRADLEY: That was not for the fundamental reform, that was for the McCain-Feingold bill eliminating soft money and putting some limitations on independent expenditures.

NEWFIELD: You think a more radical—in the sense of a more basic—reform would have had more votes?

BRADLEY: No, it would not have had more votes. We have to recognize what we're accepting here as reform [the McCain-Feingold bill] is an improvement, but it doesn't get at the role that special interests can play. The only way you can get at that is by limiting the total amount of money spent and/or by having public financing of elections.

NEWFIELD: I've heard you speak eloquently against looking for a savior, a white knight, a false hero, in politics. Talk a little about your notion of leadership in a democracy. You've said that your idea of leadership is a team or a band, and not a soloist. Is this a factor as you weigh whether to run or not to run, your skepticism of the hero as leader?

BRADLEY: I think there's a good leader, and there's a person who's called the heroic leader who always risks overreaching, and that leads to downfall. That's the myth, that's what happens. The good leader is somebody who understands the role of a leader, makes the decisions, charts the vision, but reflects light onto other people, not onto himself.

I think that that kind of leadership is what's important in this country precisely because the problems we have are not going to be solved by one person. They've got to be solved by all of us in our communities, in our lives. To reflect light back on what's good about people also reflects back upon them what their responsibilities are to themselves and to each other. I think that is a more difficult kind of leadership because the media and many people's expectations are that it be one person saying, "Elect me, I'll solve all these problems." We all know that won't happen. But everybody's receptive, all their receptors are programmed to understand someone saying, "these are our problems but we'll all have to solve them together."



May 9, 1978—Bill Bradley (center), Democratic candidate for the U.S. Senate from New Jersey, chats with Paul Simon (left) and Dustin Hoffman (right).

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF BILL BRADLEY

NEWFIELD: Don't you think the country might be ripe for a more modest, collaborative kind of leader?

BRADLEY: It might be, yes. I think that it hasn't been tried. I find it appealing.

NEWFIELD: Are you ambivalent about leadership itself, is that part of what makes deciding whether to run or not difficult?

BRADLEY: There are different kinds of leadership. For example, in the Senate there's a totally different kind of leadership than in the Executive Branch. I reflected once in the Senate that there are four kinds of leaders, generally. This is an old Chinese proverb. There's the leader who's laughed at, the leader who's feared, the leader who's loved, and the leader who the people didn't even know was a leader. The last leader defines the ultimate legislative leadership. It's leadership that truly makes things happen without taking credit.

NEWFIELD: Who would fit that in your time in the Senate?

BRADLEY: I think George Mitchell (D-Maine) would fit that. I think that Bob Dole fit it, quite frankly, which illustrates the problem that a legislative leader has in going to a broader leadership role. A broader leader has to communicate with sharp edges, not rounded edges. I think that's why Bobby Kennedy chafed in the Senate versus in national leadership.

NEWFIELD: He was an executive personality.

BRADLEY: Right, an executive personality, that kind of leadership is different. It requires communication skills, a clear idea of what you believe, and a relatively simple agenda. It requires a willingness to assert in the direst circumstances, to convince people of the value of your broader thoughts, and to stick to it right to the end—where, if you're talking about legislation, you might have to give up a certain percent in order to get a deal.

NEWFIELD: Where does your passion about racial justice come from? Does it come from basketball and having so many African American friends and teammates? Does it come from something more cerebral?

BRADLEY: I think it comes first of all from my life experiences from before I got into basketball. I grew up in a multi-racial town; it integrated the Little League before it integrated the schools. When we traveled in Little League, as well as in American Legion ball, we were refused service in southern parts of Missouri because our catcher was black. My Little League team played a regional championship in Joplin, Missouri, and we stayed in this terrible motel. Nobody could figure it out, why were we staying in

this terrible motel? In retrospect it must have been because we had two black players on our team that we were all in the same boat.

So there are these early experiences. Then there was my experience later with the Knicks, which involved traveling around and seeing the country through the eyes of some of my African American teammates. And there was my own reading of American history in terms of how this issue evolved. It was all those things and my own personal value system, too. "You're your brother's keeper." Why it is so intense, I don't know. My mother always asks me that, why is it so intense.

NEWFIELD: I'll never forget your speech after the Rodney King beating. That was an existential moment, I thought, when you got up on the Senate floor.

BRADLEY: I got the strongest reaction out of that speech that I've gotten from any speech I've ever made in public life. A lot of it hate, but a lot of it beautiful. One guy in Philadelphia wrote a symphony that he called "The 56 Blows" after the speech, and he sent me a copy. It was very much a moment in a time when I was moving towards a different kind of leadership. Where I was not simply thinking leadership was laws and amendments, but that leadership was a bigger voice that requires you to lead from your heart as much as from your mind. And so I let myself go in that moment, and led from my heart, and it was a tremendous reinforcement of the importance of doing that.

NEWFIELD: Was it a liberation for you?

BRADLEY: I had made a whole series of speeches about race before then. I wouldn't say that was a moment of liberation, but it was a moment of deeper insight.

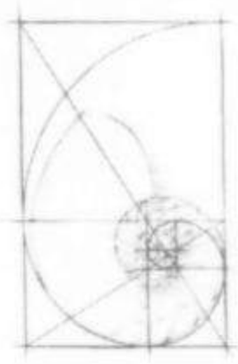
NEWFIELD: Crime is down, welfare is down, illegitimacy is down. What is the country doing right in this period? Why are certain things getting better?

BRADLEY: I think a good economy helps all those areas. That's my own personal view. On the issue of welfare, for example, I think that since nobody has reached the two year limit and been kicked off welfare, it's pretty hard to say the reduction of welfare rolls is due to the welfare reform bill, which all politicians claim.

NEWFIELD: You voted against that bill.

BRADLEY: Yes. The drop in the rolls is due to the good economy. Marginally it could be due to the efforts to get businesses to hire welfare recipients. But it didn't seem to me that in a world where we want to have parents spend more time with their children, not less, that the objective of a national piece of legislation should be to split the mother from the child.

I think some of the things that have been initiated at the local levels, community policing is an example, are also important. I think being willing to make a public case that we've got to have a minimum level of order or we can't function as a society—that means taking bad guys off the street and giving alternatives to people—is another aspect of



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why things are a little better now. And I think there's been a realization in certain communities, African American communities, for example, that the crack epidemic was killing African Americans more than anybody else. The community rose up and did something about that. I think there's almost a scientific explanation to the drop in teen pregnancy with the development of this new shot that you take as opposed to pills.

I also think the realization that churches, synagogues, and mosques have to be more involved in solving social problems than the government thought in the past has helped. I think all of those things have come together to give these hopeful statistics. The real question is where will these statistics be if we hit an economic downturn. How do we solidify the cultural gains that we've made in recognizing evil as evil and trying to stop it.

It seems to me that we need a greater degree of civility in politics, and a greater focus on what's really important.

NEWFIELD: Can you decide to run for president in a totally rational way—draw up a list of the pluses and the minuses and how much money you can raise? Or, in the end, is it just instinct and a leap of faith?

BRADLEY: It is, in the end, a deeply personal decision that cannot be tactical. I think it has to be based on two things. One is, do you think you can add appreciably to the public welfare, given whatever experience and talents you have, at this particular moment in history. In other words, does ability match moment. The second thing is, do you and your family want to jump off a fifty story building, with no idea if there's a net apart from what circumstances give—who's in the race, how difficult it is, how much money you have to raise. Those are all secondary questions to the basic decision.

NEWFIELD: How much of a factor is the loss of privacy in the current era of "sexual McCarthyism" and media excess?

BRADLEY: I think that anybody who says that the invasion of privacy is not a consideration for anybody who thinks about running, not just for President of the United States, but for Governor of New York, Senator of New Jersey, Governor of California, is not being candid. You've got to consider those things.

The politician's objective is to manipulate the press, the press' objective is to destroy the politician, and, of course, then there are the opponents. I would not say all the press wants to destroy politicians, but the opponents are people who bear ill will and use means that are not always legal to try to destroy somebody.

It seems to me that we need a greater degree of civility in politics, and a greater focus on what's really important. The current level of invasiveness is truly shocking. Just go down the list of things. If you've ever had a speeding ticket, they'll find that out at the Motor Vehicles Department. If you've ever been a couple of days late in paying your property taxes, well, they'll find out about that at the city clerk's office, and accuse you of being a tax cheat. If you were ever director of a company, if you file with the Secretary of State or the SEC, they'll get all of it. If you ever had a divorce and put your tax returns or your brokerage accounts on the record, they're available. Then, of course, we know what happens. People who bear ill will towards you, or maybe your opponents' camps filtered through three or four different layers of cover, start investigations. They break the law, but they get access to your credit card reports, your medical reports, your telephone reports. Maybe even your military records, maybe even your tax record. Then, put that in an atmosphere where there are tabloid entrepreneurs who make big payoffs of 400 grand or more for a picture or tapes, snippets, slightly doctored, it doesn't matter, and you are living in a world that at some levels is Kafkaesque.

NEWFIELD: Don't you think that Clinton's enduring approval ratings might be a backlash in favor of freedom and privacy?

BRADLEY: I don't know. Sometimes I think I'm living in a time when what I admire in character is devalued; what I think is most important, humanity, is ignored; what I'm most sensitive about, privacy, is denied. That's not a long complaint, that's just an answer to your question.

NEWFIELD: Isn't character the reason most people want you to run? They have a perception that you represent character and integrity.

BRADLEY: Yes.

NEWFIELD: That's your real platform, your character, isn't it?

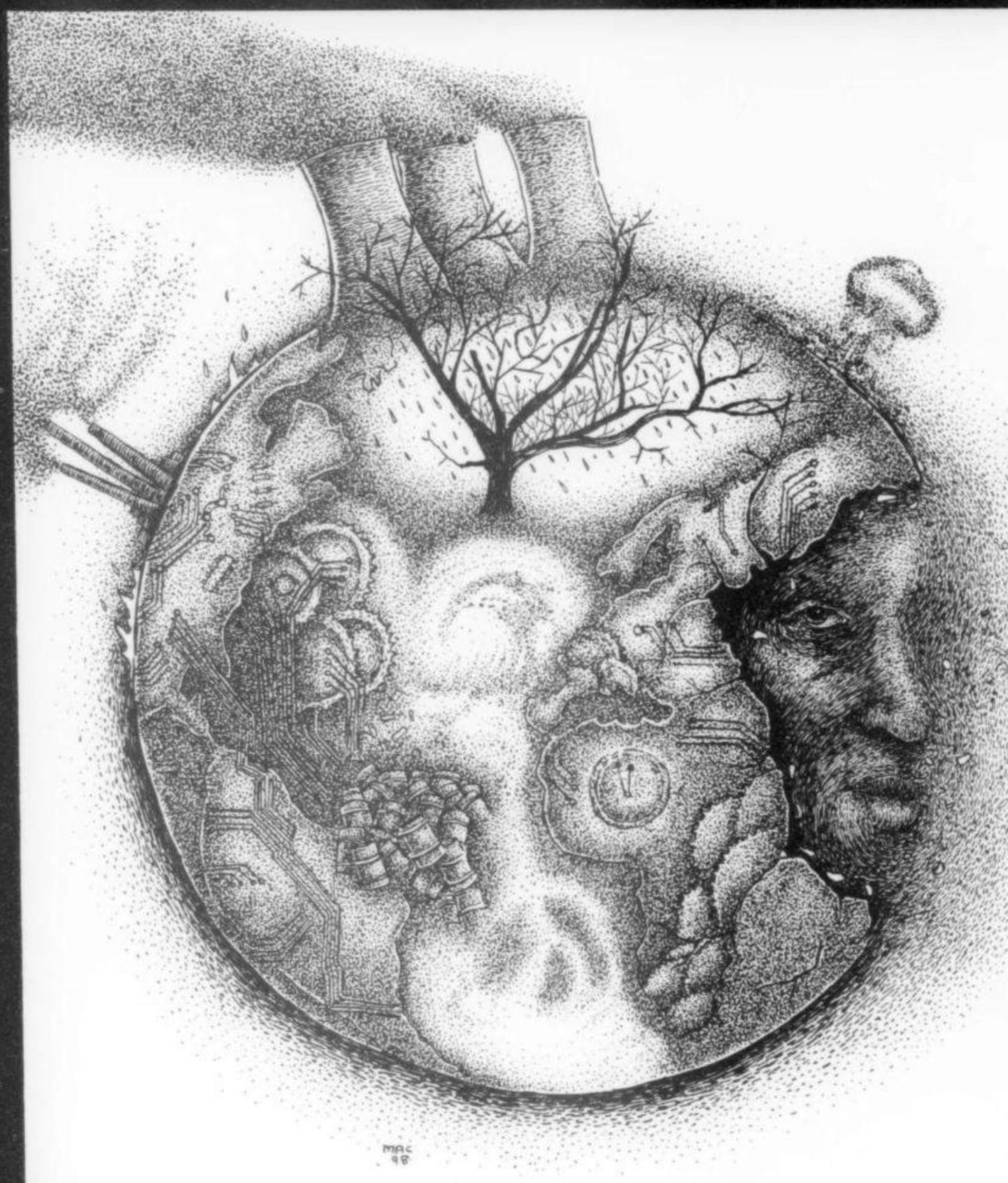
BRADLEY: Yes, well, people see you for what you are. I have a good friend, a former Republican Senator, who I've been talking to recently, and who's urging me to run. He said, "After all, why don't you do it, not me but you. The only thing you have to lose is your reputation, your bankroll, and your life."

NEWFIELD: Sounds like John Danforth, of Missouri.

BRADLEY: That's true. That's obviously an excessive comment by Danforth. But, I don't say this as a complaint. I just say that somehow or another, we have to get beyond this period, because we could be in a race to the bottom. I understand that there are many people in the media and journalism who are offended by this. But the competitive pressures are such that CNN's third quarter profits, I hear, are Lewinsky profits.

I read in the newspaper today about this fever that's taking over in Indonesia. People are going out, randomly identifying some stranger as a sorcerer, and killing them. So, I hope this whole invasiveness is like a fever that's passing through our body politic and after the fever breaks, then maybe we'll get back to some greater sanity.

NEWFIELD: Thank you. ❑



The Coming Collapse of the Age of Technology

David Ehrenfeld

A little-noticed event of exceptional importance occurred on the 8th of May, 1998. The conservative, power-oriented champion of science, progress, and reason, *Science* magazine, published an article by the distinguished British scientist James Lovelock which said:

> We have confidence in our science-based civilization and think it has tenure. In so doing, I think we fail to distinguish between the life-span of civilizations and that of our species. In fact, civilizations are ephemeral compared with species.

Lovelock, originator of the Gaia Hypothesis—about the central role of life in the earth's self-regulating system that includes atmosphere, climate, land, and oceans—went on to recommend that we "encapsulate the essential information that is the basis of our civilization to preserve it through a dark age." The book would be written not on ephemeral, digital magnetic, or optical media but on "durable paper with long-lasting print." It would record in simple terms our present knowledge of science and technology, including the fundamentals of medicine, chemistry, engineering, thermodynamics, and natural selection. As the monasteries did in the Dark Ages, the book would help to keep our culture from vanishing during a prolonged period of chaos and upheaval.

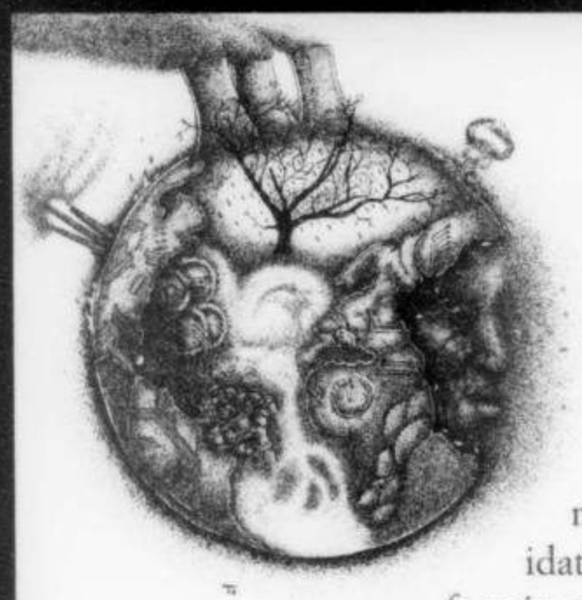
Set aside the question of whether such a task could be done, or whether science ought to be described for future generations in a neutral way. What commands our attention first is that *Science* magazine was willing to print two precious pages based on the premise that our scientific-technological civilization is in real danger of collapse.

Can the Machine Stop?

Nearly everyone in our society, experts and lay people alike, assumes that the events and trends of the immediate future—the next five to twenty-five years—are going to be much like those of the present. We can do our business as usual. In the world at large, there will be a continued increase in global economic, social, and environmental management; a continued decrease in the importance of national and local governments compared with transnational corporations and trade organizations; more sophisti-

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David Ehrenfeld, professor of Biology at Rutgers University, is the author of The Arrogance of Humanism *(Oxford, 1978) and* Beginning Again *(Oxford, 1993). He is the founding editor of the international scientific journal* Conservation Biology.



cated processing, transfer, and storage of information; more computerized management systems along with generally decreased employment in most fields; increased corporate consolidation; and a resulting increase in the uniformity of products, lifestyles, and cultures. The future will be manifestly similar to today.

Power carries with it an air of assured permanence that no warnings of history or ecology can dispel. As John Ralston Saul has written, "Nothing seems more permanent than a long-established government about to lose power, nothing more invincible than a grand army on the morning of its annihilation." The present economic-technical-organizational structure of the industrial and most of the non-industrial world is the most powerful in history. Regardless of one's political orientation, it's very difficult to imagine any other system, centralized or decentralized, ever replacing it. Reinforcing this feeling is the fact that our technology-driven economic system has all the trappings of royalty and empire, without the emperor. It rolls on inexorably, a giant impersonal machine, devouring and processing the world, unstoppable.

Futurists of all political varieties, those who fear and loathe the growing power as well as those who welcome it, share faith in its permanence. Even those who are aware of the earth's growing social and environmental disasters have this faith. Robert D. Kaplan originally writing in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1994, is an example. "We are entering a bifurcated world," said Kaplan, in "The Coming Anarchy." Part of it, in West Africa, the Indian subcontinent, Central America, and elsewhere in the underdeveloped world, will be subject to ethnic conflict, food scarcity, massive overcrowding, militant fundamentalism, the breakdown of national governments and conventional armies, and the resurgence of epidemic disease, all against a backdrop of global climatic change. But the other part of the world will be "healthy, well-fed, and pampered by technology." We'll be all right, those of us with the money and the technology. The system will not fail *us*.

Despite the grip of the idea of irreversible progress on the modern mind, there are still some people who believe in the cyclical view of history. Have they generated a different scenario of the future? Not necessarily. The archaeologist Joseph Tainter notes in his book, *The Collapse of Complex Societies*, that collapse and disintegration have been the rule for complex civilizations in the past. There comes a time when every complex social and political system requires so much investment of time, effort, and resources just to keep itself together that it can no longer be afforded by its citizens. Collapse comes when, first, a society "invests ever more heavily in a strategy that yields proportionately less" and, second, when "parts of a society perceive increasing advantage to a policy of separation or disintegration."

Forget the Mayan and Roman Empires: what about our own? Certainly the problem of spending more and getting less describes our present condition. Are we receiving full value from an international banking and finance system that shores up global speculators with billions of dollars of public money, no matter how recklessly they gamble and whether they win or lose? Our NAFTA strategy has cost this country tens of thousands of jobs, reduced our food security, and thrown our neighbor, Mexico, into social, economic, and environmental turmoil; is this an adequate repayment for the dollars and time we have spent on free trade? More than 70 percent of government-supported research and development is spent on weapons that yield no social, and a highly questionable military, benefit; the Pentagon loses—misplaces—a billion dollars worth of arms and equipment each year. Is this a profitable investment of public funds? We may ask whether the decline in returns on investment in this system has reached the critical point. Tainter quotes from a popular sign: "Every time history repeats itself the price goes up." The price is now astronomical.

If we follow Tainter, however, we need not worry about *our* future. In the curiously evasive final chapter of his book, he states that "Collapse today is neither an option nor an immediate threat." Why not? Because the entire world is part of the same complex system. Collapse will be prevented, in effect, by everyone leaning on everyone else. It reminds me of that remote island, described by the great British humorist P.G. Wodehouse, where the entire population earned a modest but comfortable living by taking in each other's washing.

I don't have this kind of blind faith. I don't believe in the permanence of our power. I doubt whether the completely globalized, totally managed, centralized world is going to happen. Techno-economic globalization is nearing its apogee; the system is self-destructing. There is only a short but very damaging period of expansion left.

Now if I were playing it comparatively safe, I would stick to the more obvious kinds of support for my argument, the things I know about as an ecologist. I would write about our growing environmental problems, especially certain kinds of pollution and ecosystem destabilization: global soil erosion; global deforestation; pollution and salinization of freshwater aquifers; desertification; saline seeps, like those that have ruined so much prime agricultural land in Australia; growing worldwide resistance of insects to insecticides; acid rain and snow; on-farm transfer of genes for herbicide resistance from crops to weeds; the loss of crop varieties; the collapse of world fisheries; the decline, especially in Europe, of mycorrhizal fungi needed for tree growth; the effects of increasing CO_2 and introduced chemicals in the atmosphere, including but not limited to global warming; the hole in the ozone layer; the extinction and impending extinction of keystone species such as the polli-

nators needed for the propagation of so many of our crops and wild plants; the accelerated spread of deleterious exotic species such as the Asian tiger mosquito; the emergence of new, ecologically influenced diseases, and the resurgence of old diseases, including, for example, the recent discovery of locally transmitted malaria in New Jersey, New York City, Michigan, Toronto, California, and Texas; the spread of antibiotic resistance among pathogenic bacteria; and finally the catastrophic growth of the human population, far exceeding the earth's carrying capacity—all of these things associated with the techno-economic system now in place.

Some of the problems I mentioned are conjectural, some are not; some are controversial, some are not; but even if only half or a fifth of them materialize as intractable problems, that will be quite enough to bring down this technological power structure.

The Forces of Internal Breakdown

But I am not going to dwell on the ecological side effects of our technology, important as they are; most of them have already received at least some attention. I am leaving this comparatively safe turf to discuss the forces of *internal* breakdown that are inherent in the very structure of the machine. Part of the system's power comes from our faith in its internal strength and cohesiveness, our bland and infuriating confidence that somebody is at the wheel, and that the steering and brakes are working well.

The causes of the problems affecting our global system are numerous, overlapping, and often obscure—I will not try to identify them. The problems themselves, however, are clear enough. I have grouped them in six broad categories.

1. The Misuse of Information

One of the most serious challenges to our prevailing system is our catastrophic loss of ability to use self-criticism and feedback to correct our actions when they place us in danger or give bad results. We seem unable to look objectively at our own failures and to adjust the behavior that caused them. I'll start with three examples. First observation: in 1997, NASA launched the Cassini space probe to Saturn. After orbiting the earth, it is programmed to swing around Venus to gain velocity, then head back toward earth at tremendous speed, grazing us, if all control thrusters function exactly as planned, at a distance of only 312 miles, using our gravity to accelerate the probe still more and turn it into a Saturn-bound trajectory. The space probe cost $3.5 billion and carries in its nuclear energy cell seventy-two pounds of plutonium-238, the most deadly substance in existence. Alan Kohn, former emergency-preparedness operations officer at the Kennedy Space Center, described Cassini as "criminally insane." Yet this dramatic criticism from a NASA insider, plus similar concerns expressed by many outside scientists, did not stop the project.

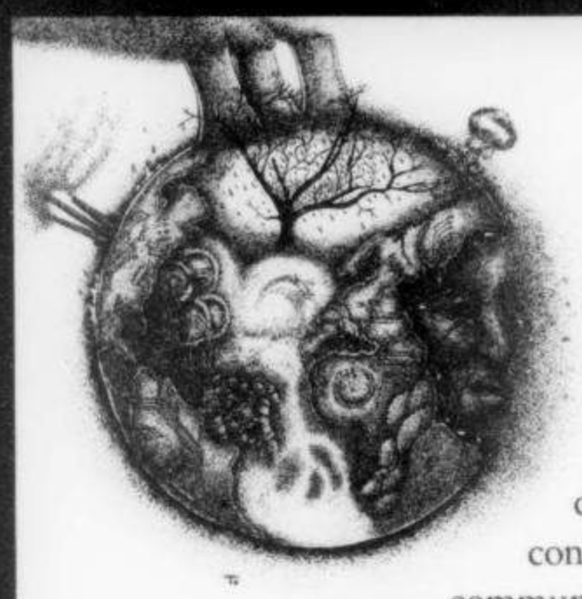


ILLUSTRATIONS BY TIM FOLEY / PEN TIP

The second example: on February 15, 1996, President Clinton launched his Technology Literacy Challenge, a $2 billion program which he hoped would put multimedia computers with fiber optic links in every classroom. "More Americans in all walks of life will have more chances to live up to their dreams than in any other time in our nation's history," said the president. He singled out a sixth-grade classroom in Concord, New Hampshire, where students were using Macintosh computers to produce a very attractive school newspaper. Selecting two editorials for special notice, he praised the teacher for "the remarkable work he has done." An article in New Jersey's *Star Ledger* of February 26, 1996 gave samples of the writing in those editorials. The editorial on rainforest destruction began: "Why people cut them down?" The editorial about the president's fights with Congress said, "Conflicts can be very frustrating. Though, you should try to stay away from conflicts.... In the past there has been fights."

The third example: around the world, funds are being diverted away from enormously succesful, inexpensive methods of pest control, such as the use of beneficial insects to attack pests, to the costly, risky, and unproven technologies favored by multinational, biotechnology corporations. Hans Herren, whose research in the biological control of the insect pests of cassava helped avert a famine threatening 200 million Africans, said: "When I visit [African] agricultural research institutes, I find the biological control lab half empty, with broken windows ... but the biotechnology lab will be brand new with all the latest equipment and teeming with staff."

These examples, superficially quite different, show that we are not using the information at hand about the results of our past actions to guide and direct what we plan to do



next. This inability to correct ourselves when we go astray is exacerbated by the dangerously high speed of our decision-making (Jeremy Rifkin calls it the "nanosecond culture"), a consequence of modern, computer-assisted communications. This speed short-circuits the evolutionary process of reasoned decision-making, eliminating time for empirical feedbacks and measured judgment. Messages arriving by express mail, fax, and email all cry out for an immediate response. Often it is better to get a night's sleep before answering.

A final example of the misuse of information is information glut. We assume these days that information is like money: you can't have too much of it. But, in fact, too much information is at least as bad as too little: it masks ignorance, buries important facts, and incapacitates minds by overwhelming the critical capacity for brilliant selectivity that characterizes the human brain. That quantity and quality are so often inversely related in today's information flow compounds this problem. If our feedback alarm bells were sounding properly, we would curtail the flow of junk—instead, we worship it.

If our feedback alarm bells were sounding properly, we would curtail the flow of junk—instead, we worship it.

2. The Loss of Information

The acceleration of obsolescence is a plague afflicting all users of contemporary technology. Although obsolescence is an inherent part of any technology that isn't moribund, several factors have combined in the last few decades to exaggerate it out of manageable proportions. One factor is the sheer number of people involved in technology, especially information technology—each has to change something or make something new to justify a salary. Another factor is the market's insistence on steadily increasing sales, which in turn mandates an accelerated regimen of planned obsolescence.

The social disruption caused by accelerated obsolescence is well known. A less familiar, yet equally important, result is the loss of valuable knowledge. The technical side of this was described by Jeff Rothenberg in an article in the January 1995 issue of *Scientific American*, entitled "Ensuring the Longevity of Digital Documents." It turns out that neither the hardware nor the software that underlie the information revolution has much staying power. "It is only slightly facetious," says Rothenberg, "to say that digital information lasts forever—or five years, whichever comes first." The most durable digital storage medium, the optical disk, has a physical lifetime of only thirty years and an estimated time to obsolescence of ten years. Digital documents are evolving rapidly, and shifts in their basic form are frequent. Translation backwards or forwards in time becomes difficult, tedious, and expensive—or impossible. The result is the loss of much of each previous generation's work, a generation being defined as five to twenty years. There is always something "better" coming; as soon as it arrives, we forget all about it.

One striking example of the obsolescence nightmare, documented by Nicholson Baker in *The New Yorker* and by Clifford Stoll in his book *Silicon Snake Oil*, concerns the widespread conversion of paper library card catalogs to electronic ones. Having spent a fortune to convert their catalogs, libraries now find themselves in an electronic-economic Catch-22. The new catalogs don't work very well for many purposes, and the paper catalogs have been frozen or destroyed. Better electronic systems are always on the horizon. Consequently, libraries spend a third or more of their budgets on expensive upgrades of software and hardware, leaving little money for books and journals.

A second example of the effects of obsolescence is the wholesale forgetting of useful skills and knowledge—everything from how to operate a lathe to how to identify different species of earthworms. Whole branches of learning are disappearing from the universities. The machine is jettisoning both knowledge and diversity (a special kind of information) simultaneously. To illustrate the loss of biodiversity, biologists Stephen Hall and John Ruane have shown that the higher the GNP in the different countries of Europe—the more integrated into "the system" they are—the higher the percentage of extinct breeds of livestock. I'm sure that the same relationship could be shown for agricultural crop varieties or endangered languages. The system is erasing our inheritance.

Another problem involving the loss of information is incessant reorganization, made easier by information technology and causing frequent disruption of established social relationships among people who work and live together. Changes occur too rapidly and too often to permit social evolution to work properly in business, in government, in education, or in anything touched by them.

An article by Dirk Johnson in the "Money and Business" section of *The New York Times* of March 22, 1998 described some recent problems of the Leo Burnett advertising agency, which gave the world the Jolly Green Giant and the Marlboro Man. Johnson described one especially serious trouble for a company that prides itself on its long-term relationships with clients: "No one at Burnett can do much about a corporate world that shuttles chief executives in and out like managers on a George Steinbrenner team and that has an attention span that focuses on nothing older than the last earnings report. It is not easy to build client loyalty in such a culture, as many other shops can attest."

3. Increasing Complexity and Centralized Control

A third intrinsic problem with the techno-economic system is its increasing complexity and centralized control, features of much of what we create—from financial networks to nuclear power plants. Nature, with its tropical rainforests, temperate prairies, and marine ecosystems, is also complex. But nature's slowly evolved complexity usually involves great redundancy, with duplication of functions, alternative pathways, and countless, self-regulating, fail-safe features. Our artificial complexity is very different: it is marked by a high degree of interlinkage among many components with little redundancy, by fail-safe mechanisms that are themselves complex and failure-prone, and by centralized controllers who can never fully comprehend the innumerable events and interactions they are supposed to be managing. Thus, our artificial systems are especially vulnerable to serious disturbances. System-wide failures—what the Yale sociologist Charles Perrow calls "normal accidents"—occur when one component malfunctions, bringing down many others that are linked in ways that are poorly observed and understood. The fruits of this complexity and linkage are everywhere, from catastrophic accidents at chemical and nuclear plants to the myriad effects of accelerated climatic change.



Accidents and catastrophes are the most noticeable results of running a system that is beyond our full understanding, but the more routine consequences, those that don't necessarily make the front-page headlines, may be more important. Many of these consequences stem from a phenomenon first described by John von Neumann and Oskar Morgenstern in 1947, and applied to social systems by the biologist Garrett Hardin in 1968. Von Neumann and Morgenstern pointed out that it is mathematically impossible to maximize more than one variable in an interlinked, managed system at any particular time. If one variable is adjusted to its maximum, it limits the freedom to maximize other variables—in other words, in a complex system we cannot make everything "best" simultaneously. As we watch economists desperately juggling stock prices, wages, commodity prices, productivity, currency values, national debts, employment, interest rates, and technological investments on a global scale, trying to maximize them all, we might think about von Neumann's and Morgenstern's theory and its implications for the fate of our complex but poorly redundant techno-economic machine.

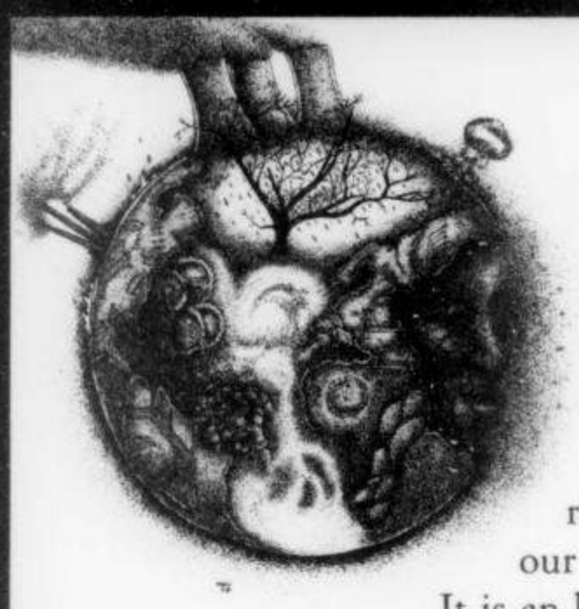
4. Confusing Simulation with Reality

The fourth group of problems is the blurring of the distinction between simulation and reality. With globalization, the ease of making large changes in a simulation on the computer screen is accompanied by a corresponding ease of ordering these large changes in the real world—with disastrous results in activities as different as the planning of massive public works projects, the setting of monetary policy, and the conduct of war. Beginning with the Vietnam war, all contemporary American military adventures have had this through-the-looking-glass quality, in which the strategies and simulations conform poorly to actual events on the ground. As Martin van Creveld shows in his book, *The Transformation of War*, the simulated war of the military strategists is increasingly different from the realities of shifting, regional battlefields with their "low-intensity conflicts" against which high-tech weapons and classic military strategies are often worse than useless.

As we attempt to exert more complicated controls over our world, more modeling, with its assumptions and simplifications, is needed. This in turn causes all kinds of errors, some serious, most hidden. According to James Lovelock, years before the ozone hole was discovered by a lone pair of British observers using an old-fashioned and inexpensive instrument, it was observed, measured, and ignored by very expensive satellite-borne instruments which had been programmed to reject data that were substantially different from values predicted by an atmospheric model. Simulation had triumphed over reality.

What I call the "pseudocommunity problem" is another illustration of the fuzzy line that exists between simulation and reality. It began with television, which surrounded viewers with friends they did not have and immersed them in events in which they did not participate. The philosopher Bruce Wilshire, an articulate and charismatic lecturer, has observed that students who are otherwise polite and attentive talk openly and unself-consciously during his lectures, much as if he were a figure on a television screen who could not be affected by their conversation.

Email and the Internet have made this situation much worse. Email has opened up a world of global communications that has attracted many of our brightest and most creative citizens, especially young people. Considerable good has come of this—for the handicapped, for those who have urgent need of communicating with people in distant places, for those living in politically repressed countries, and others. But the ease and speed of email are traps that few evade. Real human interaction requires time, attention to detail, and work. There is a wealth of subtlety in direct conversation, from body language to nuances of voice to choice of words. In email this subtlety is lost, reduced to the level of the smiley face used to indicate a joke. The result is a superficial, slipshod substitute for effective communica-



tion, often marked by careless use of language and hasty thought. Every hour spent online in the "global village" is an hour not spent in the real environment of our own communities. It is an hour of not experiencing the love and support of good neighbors; an hour of not learning how to cope with bad neighbors, who cannot be erased by a keystroke; an hour of not becoming familiar with the physical and living environment in which we actually live. Perhaps this is why a recent study of the social involvement and psychological well-being of Internet users, published in *American Psychologist*, found a significant decrease in the size of their social circle and a significant increase in their depression and loneliness after one to two years online. There are no good substitutes for reality.

Every hour spent online is an hour not spent in the real environment of our own community.

5. The Unnecessary Exhaustion of Resources

Our techno-economic system is distinguished by its exceptionally high consumption of renewable and non-renewable resources. When this is pointed out, advocates of the system answer that substitutes for depleted resources will be found or new technologies will eliminate the need for them. To date, neither of these claims has been demonstrated to be true in any significant case. Meanwhile, resources—from food to forests, from fresh water to soil—are disappearing quickly. Blindness to warnings of impending shortage limits our options: by not responding while there are still the time and resources left to take corrective action, we are forced to work under crisis conditions, when there is little that can be done. The problem is too familiar to require much elaboration, but the most conspicuous example deserves brief mention. The global production of oil will probably peak—and thereafter decline—sometime between 2000 and 2010, regardless of new oil field development. Almost every part of our technology, including nuclear technology, depends on oil. Oil is not going to disappear any time soon. But we have already used more than half of the world's supply, with most of this consumption in the last few decades. As the recent report of Petroconsultants S. A. and the book, *The Coming Oil Crisis*, by the distinguished petroleum geologist C. J. Campbell make plain, we have only a very few years left of *cheap* oil.

The loss of cheap oil will strike far more deeply than can be predicted by economists' price-supply curves; it will fatally damage the stability of the transnational corporations that run our global techno-economic system. Transnational corporations are, ultimately, economic losers. Too often they rely on the sale of products that don't work well and don't last, that are made in unnecessarily expensive ways (usually as a result of making them very quickly), that are expensively transported, carry high environmental and human costs, and are purchased on credit made available by the seller. At present, these products are subsidized by subservient, lobbyist-corrupted governments through tax revenues and favorable regulation; their flaws are concealed by expensive advertising promotions which have coopted language and human behavioral responses in the service of sales; and they are imposed on consumers by the expensive expedient of suppressing alternative choices, especially local alternatives. All of this depends on the manipulation of a huge amount of surplus wealth by the transnationals, wealth that has been generated by cheap oil. When the oil becomes expensive, with no comparably inexpensive energy substitutes likely, when jobs disappear and the tax base shrinks, when consumers become an endangered species, and when corporate profits dwindle and the market values of their stocks decline, the fundamental diseconomies of global corporations will finally take their toll and we will begin to see the transnationals disintegrate.

6. The Loss of Higher Inspiration

There is one final, internal problem of the system, maybe the most important: namely, a totally reductionist, managed world is a world without its highest inspiration. With no recognized higher power other than the human-made system that the people in charge now worship, there can be no imitation of God, no vision of something greater to strive for. Human invention becomes narrow, pedestrian, and shoddy; we lose our best models for making lasting, worthy societies. One such model is the noble dream of people and their communities functioning non-destructively, justly, and democratically within a moral order. The other—long a reality—is nature itself, whose magnificent durability we will never totally comprehend, but which has much to teach us if we want to learn. When people and communities become mere management units and nature is only something to exploit, what is left worth striving after? We become no better than our machines, and just as disposable.

The End of Global Management

The reductionist idea of a fully explainable and manageable world is a very poor model of reality by any objective standard. The real world comprises a few islands of limited understanding in an endless sea of mystery. Any human system that works and survives must recognize this.

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CURRENT DEBATE

An Ownership Solution to the Demise of the Middle Class

Jeff Gates



The naïveté of the Left has long been reflected in its attempts to construct a system that will change human nature in order to achieve social justice instead of nurturing an economic and financial context that evokes social justice while accommodating human nature. The everyday reality of human interaction suggests that any meaning-based prescription must recognize that market exchange will continue to be made on the basis of self interest. The issue is how to reconcile that market reality with the need for ethically based and environmentally sound practices that also contribute to social cohesion.

These issues are pressing today, when the demise of the middle class is no longer a forecast, but a fact. The only way to restore it, I suggest, is to convert the middle class into property-empowered capitalists. In *The Ownership Solution* (1998), I argue that property is a fundamental "property" of free enterprise (much like wet is a property of water). Both Right and Left would do well to consider how capitalism's "core competence" (i.e., personal capital ownership) could be rewired to support a meaning-based, community-strengthening agenda. That would offer a real political choice.

The story of the decline of the middle class can be told in numbers. For example, New York University professor Ed Wolff has shown that in the course of expanding the national net worth by $5 trillion from 1983 to 1989, we allowed 54 percent of that new wealth to be claimed by the half-million families who make up the top one-half of 1 percent of the population. Federal Reserve and IRS data confirm that the net worth of the top 1 percent of Americans now dwarfs that of the bottom 90 percent—the most extreme wealth concentration since the 1920s.

Income distribution reflects a similar pattern, albeit less so because of an array of redistributive policies. According to the Congressional Budget Office, the top 1 percent of U.S. households claimed 70 percent of the $250 billion increase in household income during the 1977-1989 period. Meanwhile, the average inflation-adjusted earnings for non-supervisory American workers was the same in 1993 as in 1959, when Eisenhower was president. Despite the promise of labor-saving advances, the average American's paid work year increased by 163 hours between 1970 and 1990, equivalent to adding an extra month of toil for no additional income. Three-quarters of Americans have suffered two full decades of stagnant or declining living standards.

What about that oft-heralded wealth accumulated through the meteoric growth in pension plans, 401(k) plans, and mutual funds? According to 1995 research by M.I.T. professor James Poterba and Dartmouth economist Andrew A. Samwick, 71 percent of U.S. households own no stock at all, or less than $2,000. Similarly, in a 1995 survey, the Federal Reserve found that the typical American family has a net worth of $56,400, including home equity. That's down from $56,500 six years earlier. The very modest wealth of white households is eight times that of Hispanics and ten times that of Blacks.

What led to this decline of the middle class? To start, the results of two centuries of labor-saving innovation combined with a recent revolution in information technology that is ripping through the ranks of traditional job-based middle-class security. A 1994 survey by the American Management Association found that middle managers, who make up 8 percent of the U.S. workforce, accounted for 19 percent of downsizing.

From 1983 to 1993, automated teller machines (ATMs) enabled banks to eliminate 179,000 human tellers, 37 percent of their total workforce. This "de-jobbing" is real and far from over. *Inc.* magazine's 1996 listing of the 100 fastest growing firms revealed that, although their sales increased eighteen-fold from 1988 to 1993, employment increased only six-fold. Owens-Corning hired eighty people when it

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JON STRAUS

Author of The Ownership Solution *(Addison Wesley Longman, 1998), Jeff Gates played a key role in shaping federal legislation encouraging employee stock ownership plans. He is president of the Shared Capitalism Institute in Atlanta.*

reopened a plant in 1993 that had been closed six years earlier when it employed five hundred. Eastman Kodak recently pared its management ranks from thirteen layers to just four.

In addition to what the *Wall Street Journal* calls the "four horsemen of the workplace" (downsizing, increased automation, moving operations to low-wage countries, and the use of temporary workers), the middle class was also hammered by the growth in demand for high-skilled labor, the spread of networked computers, the shift from a manufacturing to a service economy, flatter tax rates, immigration, an increase in single-parent families, a decline in unionization, an erosion in the value of the minimum wage and a steady rise in securities markets (and speculation) in which the already-wealthy are disproportionately represented.

A Tiffany/Kmart Society

Free enterprise—where meaning is grounded in what the market values—is busily adjusting to this newly polarized reality, wholly indifferent to the fact that the middle class is now an endangered species. Saatchi & Saatchi advertising warns its clients of "a continuing erosion of our traditional mass market—the middle class," while Paine Webber cautions investors to "avoid companies that cater to the 'middle' of the consumer market."

America's two-tiered society means separate and decidedly unequal markets are becoming the norm. Shifting to a "Tiffany/Kmart" marketing strategy, retailers now fashion their products and pitches to two very different Americas. Private banking is increasing for the well-to-do, while record levels of check-cashing outlets have sprung up for those on the economy's bottom rung (5,500 nationwide versus less than half that in 1988). The Gap remodeled and expanded its upscale Banana Republic clothing stores, adding 68 new outlets since 1992. Meanwhile, it created a lower-end chain called Old Navy, opening 200 outlets since 1993 (compared with just 21 new middle-income Gap outlets).

This phenomenon cuts across industries. The top-earning 20 percent of Americans now account for 54 percent of new car sales, up from 40 percent in 1980. Since 1994, growth in the "secondhand" industry has tripled the pace of more traditional retail sales. Used car sales are at record levels. Pawnshop activity is booming. Prepaid phone cards have become a must for those who cannot afford their own telephone.

Separate and decidedly unequal markets are becoming the norm.

And that shift to two markets, one for the well-to-do, another for the rest of us, is poised to accelerate: the Atlanta-based Affluent Market Institute predicts that by 2005 the nation's millionaires will control 60 percent of the nation's purchasing dollars. Sales of high-end luxury yachts are already at record levels. Proving Paine Webber's sound investment advice, the stock of Tiffany and Kmart grew in 1997 while that of middle-class retailer J.C. Penney declined.

The Search for Economic and Societal Connectedness

Either the changes in our economy can be converted into security and leisure for the many (through broad-based ownership) or they can continue to lavish outlandish wealth on the few. The choices are just that stark.

With so much financial capital now in the hands of money managers ($12-plus trillion in the United States alone), today's "disconnected capitalism" is largely "on automatic"—engaged in a pell-mell search for financial returns while forfeiting the feedback, foresight, concern, and common sense that reside uniquely with individuals and their communities. This detached, divisive, feedback-deprived, community-erosive, "dumbed-down" system is now spreading worldwide, led by the rapid growth of institutionalized capital operating through global capital markets.

To do nothing is to vote in favor of this exclusive form of capitalism. The only way out, I submit, is a sensible capital ownership policy. That requires confronting the practical reality that free enterprise finances itself within a "closed system of finance" that is not yet wired for inclusion. Only a more open and inclusive capitalism can advance broad-based economic self sufficiency.

Consider for a moment the financial forces at work in this "closed system" and just why it is that, without action, today's rich-get-richer phenomenon is destined to continue.

Sources of Funds

Internal
- Undistributed Earnings & Profits—Reinvested for current owners
- Depreciation reserves—Reinvested for current owners

External
- Debt—Repaid on behalf of current owners
- Equity—Most affordable by current owners

What's needed is leadership, in both the private and the public sector, to guide us toward a more diffused capitalism better able to give voice to and balance the many competing interests within capitalism itself. Such a capitalism would include a component of localized and human-sized ownership and personal input as a means for advancing both conservation (of what works) and progressive change (of what could be improved).

In developing this "up-close" capitalism we face three key challenges: (1) how to make "capitalists" of those with few funds to invest; (2) how to foster a broader distribution of wealth without undermining the security of already-owned capital; and (3) how to evoke an ownership pattern that includes a palpable stake in the economy both by those most affected by commercial activity (stakeholders) and by those in the best position to affect it, such as those employed by a firm or by its suppliers, distributors, and other closely related firms. This more personal form of widely distributed, community-rooted "connectedness" is a

key missing link in capitalism's viability as a sustainable, meaning-enlivened system.

What's required to do this is an array of legislative and private-sector initiatives that evoke a steady broadening of participation in ownership. Only these sorts of initiatives will, in time, turn the wheel of finance away from its built-in bias toward exclusion and concentration. While jobs can remain a key component of economic policy, job policies must be complemented by an ownership strategy if we are to rebuild America's middle class. That, in turn, could empower more households by affording individuals the time they need to make a meaningful contribution in other key domains: families, schools, communities, and so on.



This strategy could fill the policy void in either the Republican or the Democratic Party. That's because an ownership solution offers a unique political hybrid. While it lends itself to a populist rhetoric that taps a well-justified frustration at today's rich-get-richer phenomenon, its practical prescriptions are typically rock-ribbed conservative.

Beyond Marie Antoinette Capitalism

One solution that will not work: expecting wage earners to buy their way into significant ownership from their already stretched paychecks. This long-popular approach smacks of "Marie Antoinette Capitalism," only instead of urging "Let them eat cake," the modern refrain is "Let them buy shares."

After all, it's a free market.

Instead, when designing ownership-broadening initiatives, it's helpful to remember a simple refrain: where the cash flows, ownership grows. The well-to-do have long known that income-producing assets can pay for themselves out of the revenue they generate. The key is to find ways to make cash flow into investment incentives for the middle class. Government contracts offer one clear opportunity to do so, because ownership-pattern conditions can be added to these contracts. Federal legislation could be accompanied by an "ownership impact assessment." Even Reagan-era "supply-side" investment incentives may make sense, provided this time around we pay attention to just who gets supplied. Had the voting public been alerted to the (quite predictable) rich-get-richer impact of supply-side economics in the 1980s, it's doubtful Congress would have approved that deficit-financed stimulus.

Conservative, laissez-faire, and libertarian advocates may find it preposterous that anyone would propose to change an economic system in need of less rather than more intervention. Yet the right sort of intervention is required if ever we hope to reduce the size and intrusiveness of government. Between 1967 and 1992 the United States spent more than $3.2 trillion on solutions that ignored ownership patterns. As George Mason University Professor Walter Williams points out: "The money spent on poverty programs since the 1960s could have bought the entire assets of the Fortune 500 companies and virtually all U.S. farmlands, and what did it do? The problems still remain and they are even worse."

Opening today's closed system of finance is not only feasible but desirable and, I submit, essential—particularly for those who consider themselves fiscal conservatives. As wealth disparities have steadily widened worldwide, the ratio of public to private spending has grown, according to the *Economist,* on average, from 30 percent of GDP in 1960 to 46 percent in 1997, belying the notion that the global spread of free enterprise will necessarily reduce the size of government.

For example, Social Security entitlements are the only old-age pension for a majority of those in the private sector. Today's hugely regressive Social Security tax (levied on a flat percentage of payroll) is now the largest single tax paid by most taxpayers (Social Security and Medicare taxes accounted for 34 percent of this year's $1.7 trillion in federal revenues) and the present value of those anticipated payments represents the most significant "wealth" for a majority of U.S. households. Thus, in the world's avowedly most capitalist economy, the most important asset for a majority of its citizens is an assurance that someone else will be taxed on their behalf. Adding insult to injury, that tax is levied on jobs, the nation's sole economic opportunity policy.

Second, the staggering cost of leaving so many Americans asset-less is eroding the very foundation of mutual support on which the middle class has long relied. In 1996, Washington paid out $839 billion in income-support programs, including Social Security, Medicare and federal pensions (civil service, military, etc.). And that's before the baby boomer burden begins to kick in. The bulk of those funds were paid to people without sufficient assets to support themselves. If we had chosen instead to cultivate a capitalism broadly populated with capitalists, much of the nation's fiscal capacity would instead now be available to invest in infrastructure, education, health care, environmental restoration, and other essential outlays that underlie a sustainable civil society.

Tapping Capitalism's Core Competence

Today's capitalism is remarkably adept at maximizing financial returns worldwide. However, Adam Smith's goal for private enterprise was not to maximize money-denominated returns but to enhance societal well-being. He famously conceded that markets make great servants but lousy masters. Like democracies, which, as Thomas Jefferson cautioned, could be undone by a disconnected, disengaged citizenry, capitalism requires a social covenant committed to connecting people to their economy. If today's combination of free enterprise and democracy is not generating the results

(other than financial returns) that its citizens intend, the remedy lies in re-engineering it to reinforce personal involvement. The goal is for each person to be able to participate as a co-creator of the commercial component of human association that Smith rightly saw as an indispensable force for shaping a better society.

Both markets and democracies trace their moral roots to individual choice. Without a means for incorporating community-sensitive personal input, financial markets are destined to evoke a pageant of unsustainable practices through a decision-making process based on abstract financial criteria that often fail to take into account legitimate human, environmental, and societal concerns. That's why both are obliged to respond to the preferences of the customers and the constituents who participate in them. Adam Smith envisioned that the "self design" of free enterprise would be wrought by a self with a soul embodying the complexity of purpose and motivation that makes humans so uniquely human.

Financial calculation is part of who we are, but only a part. Moral man, not Dow-Jones or Moody's, is who Smith envisioned as the market's animating force. I submit that the politics of meaning should look to a component of broad-based, up-close, personal ownership as an indispensable means both for reconnecting personal conscience to market capitalism and for rebuilding America's middle class. ❑

A Response to Jeff Gates

Employee Ownership as a Social Movement

Charles Derber



When Bill Gates is worth 60 billion dollars—more than the combined net worth of 100 million Americans—it is worth listening to Jeff Gates (no connection). The latter Gates, a leader in the ownership debate for a quarter of a century, makes an elegant argument for employee ownership. Attractive to both liberals and conservatives, employee ownership can be a powerful tool—to redistribute wealth, empower workers, preserve democracy, and create a new corporate responsibility.

Private ownership is at the heart of the capitalist order, and thus transforming ownership is hardly just reformist tinkering. It carries the hint of eliminating the alienation of labor and our horribly stratified class hierarchy. If all corporations were owned completely by their employees and if such ownership meant real control for workers, it would mark a genuine step toward a meaningful democracy and a new public morality—although only if combined with other fundamental changes.

Unfortunately neither Gates' design as proposed here, nor the present trajectory of employee ownership in the United States, is reassuring. Gates makes clear that he is out not to eliminate or transform private property but to diffuse it broadly. This has an attractive Jeffersonian ring, and it could reduce our grotesque inequality. But it sends alarm signals to those interested in fundamental shifts in capitalism. Gates seeks to turn everyone into a capitalist, and even if this were plausible (which it hardly is) it is not the change we need.

We live in a new world in which sovereignty is being transferred to unelected global corporations whose size and power dwarf that of most governments. Wal-Mart, for example, has annual revenues larger than the GDP of 162 nations. The corporate system has become our unelected government, dictating how we work (insecurely) and live (for

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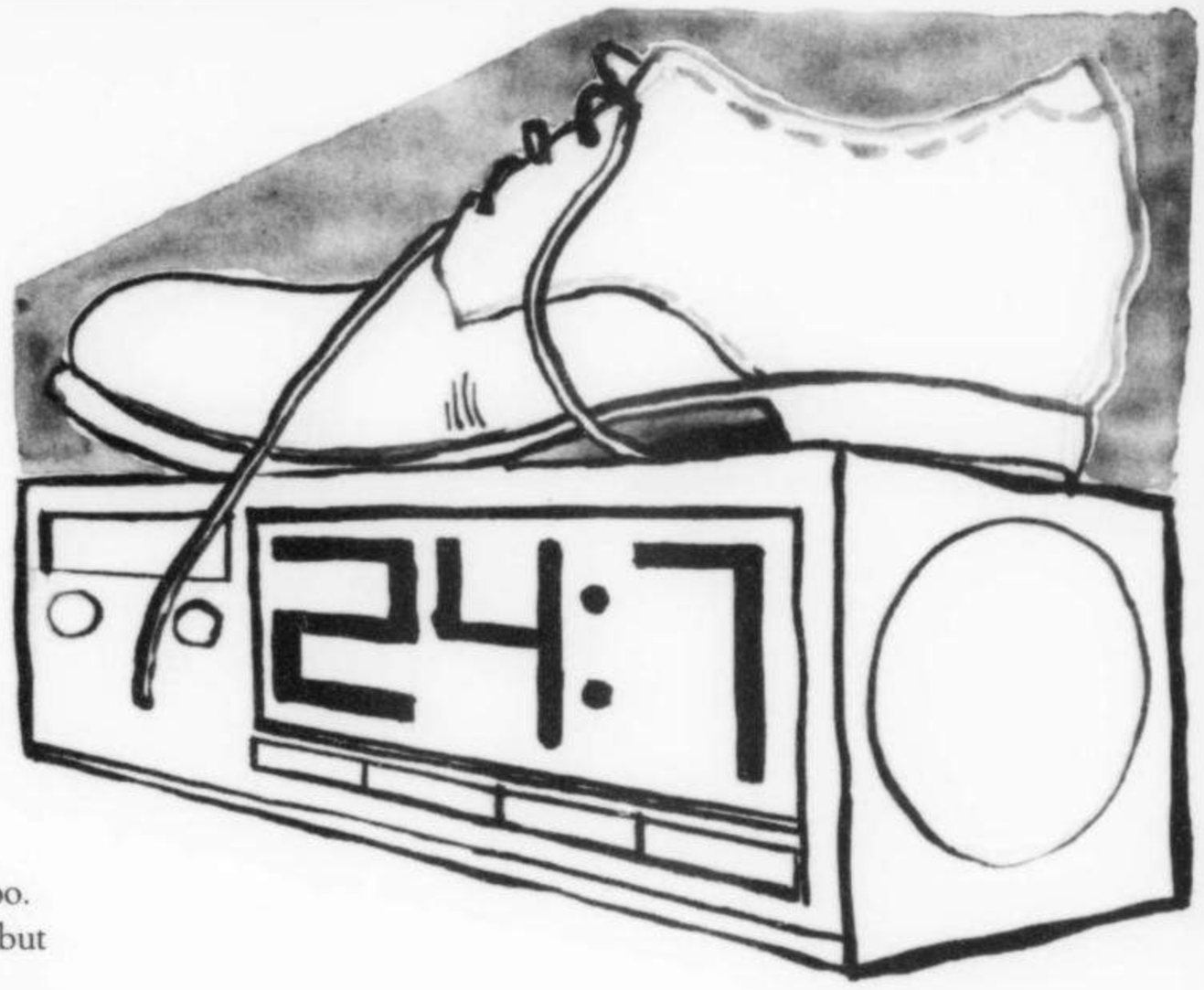
ILLUSTRATIONS BY CYN MAURICE

Charles Derber is professor of sociology at Boston College and author of The Wilding of America. *His new book, just released, is* Corporation Nation: How Corporations Are Taking Over Our Lives and What We Can Do About It *(St. Martin's Press).*

NEW VOICES

36-24-36

Aaron Cometbus



My roommates were on the sixteen/eight. Traditionalists. Pawns of society.

"Hey, it's natural," they said.

Yeah, natural like daylight savings and bar time. Let them set the agenda and the clock too. It's bad enough, society telling you who to sleep with, but you even let society tell you when to sleep. Suckers.

It was easy to be smug, because I was on the twenty-four/twelve. I got the best of both worlds. Got to watch the sunrise and the kids play in the park, got to work in the peaceful late night solitude and roam the streets in the dark. Daytime and nighttime, the world of sun and society and the world of lovers and scrunched-up grouchy, cynical writers. I didn't have to pick just one. My roommates saw that, and got jealous. They decided I was right. To get the most out of each day, you've got to arrange your schedule to conform to your needs and desires, not vice-versa.

Magdeline claimed to have gone on the eight/four so she could wake up and drink coffee twice in every normal day, but we knew the real reason. On the eight/four she could do her morning crossword puzzles twice a day without feeling ridiculous. Angie followed my example with the twenty-four/twelve, while I switched to the expanded thirty-two/sixteen format. Two full society days in every one of mine. Ha ha ha.

Everything was great. By coordinating our schedules, our household was finally a happy one. Every twelve hours, I'd make breakfast for Magdeline. Every other one of her days, or twice a day for me, she made a big salad, and Angie, just waking up or just about to sleep, would cook a huge dinner.

We had a nice togetherness, and a lot of time alone too, not bothering each other. Angie and I knew it was safe to go into the kitchen every eight hours, because Magdeline would be asleep, and not lurking there doing crosswords. They knew it was okay to bring over boys and creeps every thirty-two hours, because I would be asleep instead of angry and jealous. All times of day took on the freshness of morning and the conspiratorial bond of late night, separate worlds which intersected nowhere but in our house.

The trouble started when I switched to the thirty-six/twenty-four. It seemed like a good idea at first. I could go out of town, come back, walk around, see a few friends, get all my work done and mail answered, and I could do it all every single day. Amazing.

But Magdeline got mad at me. It wasn't fair. How come she got fourteen bad days in a week, while I had less than three? Then Angie got mad too, saying she never saw me any more, except when I was asleep, and all the food she cooked was old and rotting by the time I was ready to eat.

What a mess. They both went back on the sixteen/eight.

May as well get out the suits and ties, I said. I guess some people just can't handle freedom. ❑

ILLUSTRATION BY KEVIN HARRIS

Aaron Cometbus realizes that a fondness for strict, ridiculous rules of self-discipline may be his most prominent Jewish feature. He has published Cometbus, *one of the longest running and most influential fanzines, since 1981.*

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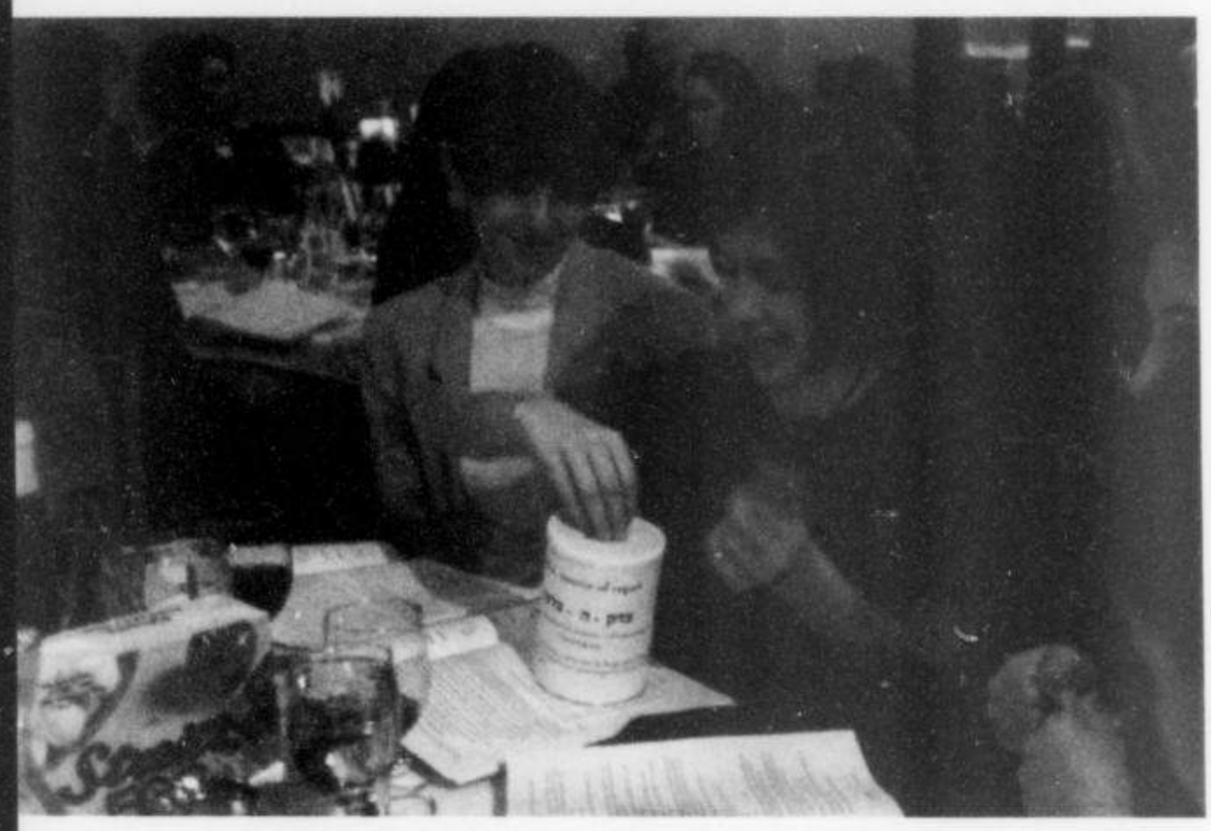
Funding Jewish Feminism

Lawrence Bush and Jeffrey Dekro

By her own estimate, Barbara Dobkin gave more *tzedakah*—charity—for Jewish women's causes in the Jewish year 5758 (1996-97) than did the entire New York UJA-Federation! Writing in the Fall 1997 edition of *Journey*, journal of Ma'yan: The Jewish Women's Project, Dobkin explains:

> We can't remain silent about the exclusion, the abuse and the marginalization of Jewish women, here and in Israel. And if we are going to raise these issues, we have to be willing to back up our words with our money.... To me this is a sacred mission.

That mission has been institutionalized since 1994 through Ma'yan, a project of the Jewish Community Center of the Upper West Side of Manhattan (212-580-0099) that Dobkin



founded with a $1 million gift payable over five years. Ma'yan works to broadcast the insights of Jewish feminists and nurture the growth of Jewish women's communities and resources. Dobkin explains her funding strategy: "If Ma'yan is going to help Jewish women's organizations, we can't be competing with them for funding. Our success should be measured by the extent that we make Ma'yan unnecessary."

By that standard, however, Ma'yan's executive director Eve Landau will not soon be unemployed. "There is more awareness in Jewish life about tapping into women's experience," Landau observes, "but it's not yet happening in terms of *funding*." She cites the tzedakah appeals on behalf of Jewish women's projects that are woven into Ma'yan's wildly popular feminist seders. Fifteen hundred people attended three seders in 1997—and yet contributed less than $1500.

Dobkin is similarly disappointed by the lack of financial support for Jewish feminism. "I don't expect people to commit on the level that I give to Ma'yan," she says, "but I have labored under the misconception that there were many other women who would put their money where their vision is." Landau adds, "Ma'yan does an enormous amount of handholding for women who are afraid to take responsibility for their wealth and use it for social change."

What inhibits Jewish feminist tzedakah? In a *New York Times* piece reprinted in our 1993 book, *Jews, Money and Social Responsibility*, Letty Cottin Pogrebin explains that working women "are in no hurry to part with their hard-won wages, which average only 69¢ to a man's dollar" (today, pennies more), while "[h]igh rates of divorce and widowhood remind [them] that wives who seem financially secure may be only one man away from welfare." That analysis, however, doesn't explain why women's philanthropy in general has produced a proliferation of women's funds during the past decade while funding for *Jewish* feminist projects has remained quite limited.

Barbara Dobkin analyzes the situation neatly: "The fact is that a lot of progressive women don't give Jewishly, while traditional Jews don't give progressively." Susan Weidman Schneider, editor-in-chief of *Lilith* magazine (250 W. 57 St., New York, NY 10107-0172, 212-757-0818), confirms this in two extensive articles (Winter 1992 and Autumn 1993) based on interviews with some 100 Jewish women funders. She observes that while "Jewish women today control more wealth than ever before," they are "giving a smaller percentage of their tzedakah to Jewish organizations." While Federations have established women's foundations to tap into feminist energy, it is the "alternative philanthropies" developed during the past fifteen years that have most successfully mobilized Jewish feminist tzedakah, based on the clarity of their progressive ideals and the intimacy of their organizational cultures. For some funders, these small philanthropies become entry points into Jewish life; for others, says Schneider, the lack of a feminist culture in mainstream Jewish institutions bars entry.

(continued on page 72)

PHOTOGRAPH BY BETH SHEPHERD PETERS

Jeffrey Dekro and Lawrence Bush are co-authors of Jews, Money and Social Responsibility *(The Shefa Fund, 1993). They can be e-mailed at shefafnd@libertynet.org.*

LEGAL POLICY

The Grand Jury

The Modern Inquisition

Margaret Ratner and Michael Ratner

"[W]e have witnessed the birth of a new breed of political animal—the kangaroo grand jury—spawned in a dark corner of the Department of Justice, nourished by an administration bent on twisting law enforcement to serve its own political ends, a dangerous modern form of Star Chamber secret inquisition that is trampling the rights of American citizens from coast to coast."

—Senator Edward Kennedy, 1972

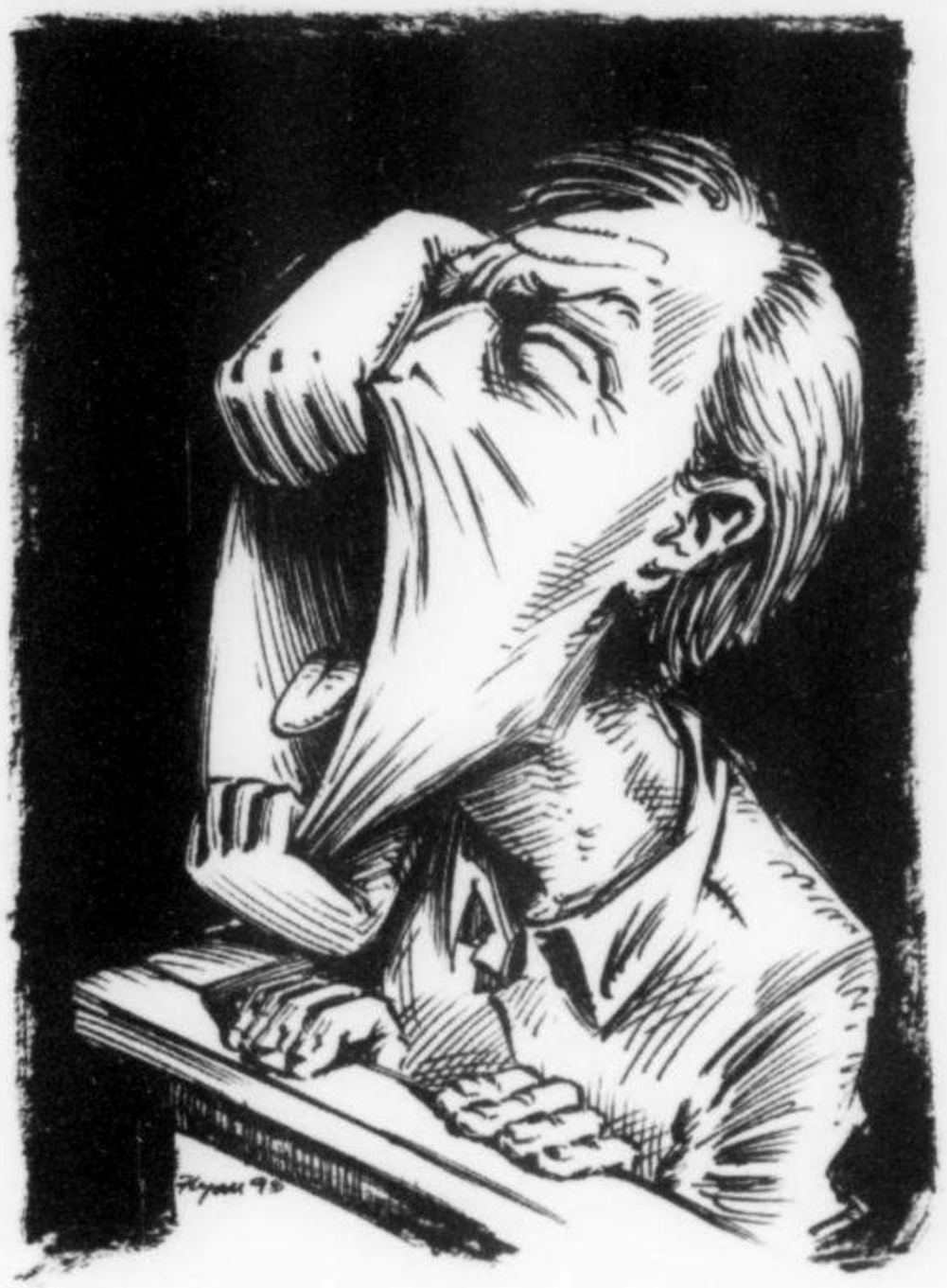


ILLUSTRATION BY JIM FLYNN

Imagine a country where a prosecutor can subpoena you to a grand jury and ask you anything about your life and thoughts. There are no limits to the scope or breadth of the inquiry—the prosecutor can ask about your friends or your political affiliations, and what you or your friends think about any number of subjects that might have made you passionate enough to march, write a letter, or join a group.

Imagine also that the entire proceeding is secret; only the prosecutors, the grand jurors, a stenographer, and you are present. Not even your attorney is permitted to accompany you. Imagine that after you are subpoenaed, the prosecutor can also subpoena your children, your mother and father, all of your friends, and ask them about you.

Now you might think that you had a right not to answer any of these harassing and abusive questions. You might think that you had a Fifth Amendment right not to incriminate yourself; after all, the Constitution does provide you with such a right. But no. You must answer all of the questions. The prosecutor need only promise not to use what he learns against you. What is learned can be used against others, including your friends. And, you can still be indicted for the crime about which you testified. To indict, the prosecutor must use independent evidence, incriminating evidence that supposedly comes from an alternative source. After being granted immunity, if you refuse to answer the questions, if you refuse to name names, if you refuse to discuss yours or another's political ideology, you go to jail. You go to jail until you talk. It makes no difference whether you have children or a job or are ill. You go to jail until you talk. You can go to jail for a very long time. Sometimes for years.

You might think, "Well, I have nothing to worry about. I am not a criminal and I am not friends with criminals. This cannot happen to me." But you would be wrong. All kinds of people can get caught up in grand jury dragnets. In fact, grand juries are often used by the executive branch as weapons to repress political movements that organize for social change. They were used against the labor movement in the early 1900s; the Communists in the 1950s; anti-war activists, Irish nationalists, and Black Panthers in the 1960s and 1970s; and Puerto Rican Independentistas for the last seventy years. Thousands of activists have been subpoenaed, their lives ruined and movements weakened.

We seem to have slept through a whittling away of the Fifth Amendment right to remain silent and our right not to be forced to give evidence against ourselves and our friends. The values we have lost are significant, as outlined by Supreme Court Justice Goldberg in *Murphy v. Waterfront Commission* (1964):

> The privilege against self-incrimination registers an important advance in the development of our liberty—one of the great landmarks in man's struggle to make himself civilized.... It reflects many of our fundamental values and most noble aspirations; our unwillingness to subject those suspected of crime to the cruel trilemma of self-accusation, perjury or contempt; our preference for an accusatorial rather than an inquisitorial system of criminal justice; our fear that self-incrimination statements will be elicited by inhumane treatment and abuses...; our respect for the inviolability of the human

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Margaret Ratner, president of the William Kunstler Fund for Racial Justice, is an attorney and co-author of Representing Witnesses Before Federal Grand Juries. *Michael Ratner is a human rights attorney who works with the Center for Constitutional Rights.*

personality and the right of each individual "to a private enclave where he may lead a private life...."

As the embarrassing spectacle of the Whitewater grand jury played itself out this past year in the glare of public scrutiny, the federal prosecutor in New York secretly imprisoned a Palestinian physician for more than four months for his failure to cooperate with another grand jury by refusing to answer any questions about the Palestine liberation movement. Dr. Abdelhaleem Ashquar, a diabetic, went on a hunger strike during his imprisonment and was then force-fed by prison officials. Under current law, a subpoenaed witness to a grand jury who refuses to testify, like Dr. Ashquar, is jailed until he or she agrees to cooperate. However, as the jailing is theoretically a form of coercion and not meant as punishment, Dr. Ashquar could and should be ordered released by the courts if it appears that continued incarceration will not cajole him into testifying. Dr. Ashquar explained to the grand jury and the court that he was refusing to testify on the basis of his "long-held and unshakable religious, political, and personal beliefs." He said he "would rather die than betray [his] beliefs and commitments to freedom and democracy for Palestine." A clearer case for release is hard to imagine.

A grand jury as we know it today has two basic functions: to determine if there is enough evidence to hold a person for trial on criminal charges; and, through its subpoena power, to serve as an investigative tool of the prosecutor. The former function is all but non-existent; today the grand jury is seen as a rubber stamp on the indictments that a prosecutor places before it. It makes no independent evaluation of whether there is sufficient evidence to support an indictment. On the other hand, the grand jury's role as an investigatory body controlled by the prosecutor is much more recent and continues to expand dangerously, confounding the separation of powers doctrine.

Under the separation of powers doctrine, the three parts of government—legislative, judicial, and executive—divide the tasks of governing and prevent each other from usurping too much power. The grand jury is impaneled by the judicial branch in order to insulate it from pressures from the executive and legislative branches, thereby bolstering its ability to foster independent inquiry. As the prosecutor is a representative of the executive branch, however, the grand jury in its new, investigatory role becomes a mechanism for the executive branch to encroach on the powers of the judiciary.

Historically, the concept of the grand jury progressed from its twelfth century role as a punitive and primitive form of inquisition under Henry II to the ideal of a shield against unjust prosecution—a panel of citizens to review serious charges and determine whether there is sufficient evidence to hold a person for trial. Incorporated into the Bill of Rights to the United States Constitution, it was a notable advance in Western jurisprudence.

Despite all good intentions, however, the grand jury has often served partisan purposes. So it was that sedition indictments against Federalists occurred in Republican strongholds, and against Republicans by Federalist grand juries. Jefferson used the grand juries to bring sedition charges against his political enemies. The executive branch actively used the grand jury for decades to repress the development of the labor movement—famously, for example, the leaders of the Pullman strike including Eugene V. Debs, president of the American Railway Union, were indicted for interfering with the U.S. mail. The International Workers of the World (IWW) was a particular target, especially during World War I, when hundreds of IWW activists were indicted, including their leader, Big Bill Haywood. In addition to labor union members indicted by rubber-stamp grand juries, anarchists Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkaman, black nationalist leader Marcus Garvey, and Black Muslim leader Elijah Muhammad were all victims of the process.

After the Second World War there was a marked increase in the use of the grand juries' subpoena power, the power to require the presence of every person to testify or else assert his/her Fifth Amendment right to silence. Indeed, the grand jury subpoena was seen as an armament in the war conducted by the House UnAmerican Activities Committee to ferret out the communist enemy. In 1954, a new law, which only applied to national security cases, permitted the grand jury to compel the testimony of witnesses with the guidance of the prosecutor. This was a first in American jurisprudence, and President Dwight D. Eisenhower promulgated it as a "means of breaking the secrecy which is characteristic of traitors." The law apparently avoided offending the Fifth Amendment by granting the witness total immunity from subsequent charges in exchange for waiving the right to remain silent. This requirement of granting full immunity did limit prosecutorial zeal, for a witness who testified could rarely, if ever, be prosecuted, and the government used the law only three times.

Yet the new law significantly weakened the right against self-incrimination. It meant that the protection of individual privacy embodied in the Constitution's Fifth Amendment right to keep one's thoughts inviolable could give way to a prosecutor or to government's purported need for information. Through a grant of immunity, the prosecutor could force the witness to snitch on pain of imprisonment; it opened the door on the contemporary use of the grand jury by the executive branch as a repressive investigatory instrument.

The perfection of the grand jury as an investigatory tool occurred early in the Nixon administration. Under the guise of needing new and more powerful methods to reach into the secret recesses of organized crime, the administration pushed the Organized Crime Control Act through Congress. The law not only allowed the prosecutor to exchange immunity for testimony, but limited the type of immunity offered so

that the person compelled to testify could still be indicted for a related crime, albeit not on the basis of his or her compelled words or, for that matter, on the basis of any direct fruits of the testimony.

It was under Nixon that the virtually unlimited power of the prosecutor to subpoena witnesses and compel testimony was developed into a powerful and efficient intelligence-gathering tool against the anti-war movement. Prosecutors, knowing that many of the witnesses they sought would not talk, used their subpoenas as a simplified way of jailing protest leaders. Rally organizers were hauled off to grand juries on the eve of mass demonstrations. For example, twenty-three leaders of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War were subpoenaed to appear before a grand jury on the day they were to hold a protest at the Democratic convention in Miami.

Such abuses were not limited to one or two cases, but were endemic. For example, Arthur Kinoy, an outspoken civil rights lawyer, was subpoenaed by a grand jury to testify about his daughter and to answer questions about his political associations. Prosecutors claimed that Kinoy's daughter, an anti-war activist, knew the whereabouts of another individual they were investigating. Kinoy charged that the subpoena was intended to intrude on his relationship with his daughter and to interfere with Kinoy's representation of her and other anti-war activists. He avoided jail only because of a ruling by a courageous federal judge, Constance Baker Motley, who upheld Kinoy's challenge to the new "limited use" immunity statute. She found that it was an unconstitutional infringement upon his Fifth Amendment rights. The government, afraid at that time of a somewhat liberal Supreme Court, did not appeal and for a moment was pushed back. But over the next two years the make-up of the Supreme Court changed. In 1972, the Court, in *Kastigar v. United States,* sanctioned the grant of limited immunity. And just like that, another major legal devaluation of the Fifth Amendment occurred.

Subsequent decisions added more tools to the prosecutor's arsenal: no right to bail pending appeal of a contempt citation; a requirement to give the grand jury physical exemplars like handwriting and fingerprints, without granting any form of immunity; the ability to incarcerate people for at least two years as a form of compulsion to testify once immunity has been granted; and the limitation of defenses a witness could raise.

The Nixon grand juries were wide-ranging. Journalists, Black Panthers, nuns, feminists, teenagers, academics, and pacifists were hauled before grand juries on the flimsiest of excuses and jailed if they refused to talk. Few indictments were ever obtained, and almost no convictions. Rather than a shield to protect the accused, grand juries had become a sword for Nixon to wield against his perceived "enemies," a rubber stamp for prosecutors, and a blatantly political tool that had little to do with justice and everything to do with revenge.

Grand jury abuse and harassment of activists did not end with Nixon's resignation from office. In the 1970s and 1980s Puerto Rican Independentistas and Black nationalists were the government's primary targets. Unable to obtain evidence of criminal activity, the government has used grand juries both to gather intelligence about these movements and to jail their supporters. Dozens of activists who have insisted upon their constitutional right to remain silent have been jailed without any charges or trials.

Now, in the late 1990s, grand jury witch hunts against political activists have receded, primarily because activist movements have weakened. When Kenneth Starr came along, the public regarded his grand jury as just more business-as-usual. It is ironic, however, that Starr's grand jury, which has dramatically challenged our basic liberty, was directed against the president. Starr's clear abuse of the grand jury—his disrespect for the Bill of Rights in general and the Fifth Amendment in particular—is but the most recent chapter in a history of grand jury abuse, an abuse usually committed *by* the executive branch against those on the Left. Starr's use of the grand jury against the Chief Executive himself only highlights the classic pattern of grand jury abuse which regularly undermines Americans' constitutional rights.

Starr's assault on the Constitution should be frightening to all Americans.

Parent-child relationships should be sacred in our society; familial privacy is protected by the Ninth Amendment. That relationship is weakened by forcing a mother to testify about her daughter, as Monica Lewinsky's mother was forced to do. First Amendment protections for journalists were seriously compromised when Starr subpoenaed Sidney Blumenthal to testify regarding his relationships to the press; an unfettered press, not one chilled by the threat of "tell all" or jail, is a requirement in a free society. The attorney-client privilege, which requires that a client's conversations with his or her attorney shall not be disclosed, was grossly violated; White House attorneys were forced to testify regarding conversations with the president. Even the president's personal secret service guards were forced to testify, not only over his objection, but over that of all living presidents. And what are we to make of subpoenas to bookstores supposedly to determine which books, if any, Monica Lewinsky gave the president? The First Amendment should protect our right to read what we wish free from government intrusion. Starr's assault on the Constitution should be frightening to all Americans.

The grand jury will remain an altogether too potent form of police in a modern democracy until the Fifth Amendment right to silence, the right to not incriminate oneself, is read back into the Constitution. And until then, any one of us may be its victim. ❑

The Media and the Cycle of Humanitarian Crisis

Joelle Tanguy

In southern Sudan this past summer, a dozen children a day were dying before they could reach feeding centers, and no one seemed to know about it.

As word of the worsening crisis reached us, my colleagues and I in the New York office of Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières called an emergency meeting to discuss why the famine devastating southern Sudan was receiving so little coverage in the U.S. media. Everyone tossed out ideas on how to stimulate American interest in this growing tragedy. But every idea seemed insignificant in relation to the magnitude of the humanitarian disaster we were facing.

Just as our meeting was breaking up, someone in the office shouted, "The U.S. has just bombed Sudan!" In disbelief, we scrambled to turn on radios and call up Web pages. Suddenly Sudan was everywhere. Maps of the nation appeared on the evening news and discussions of Khartoum politics filled the airwaves. A U.S. bombing raid had put Sudan on American television screens. Unfortunately, the only images we saw that evening, and for the next few days, were of smoldering buildings, not starving children.

Mortality rates associated with the famine in pockets of southern Sudan have equaled levels recorded in Ethiopia during the 1980s. Doctors Without Borders and dozens of other international aid agencies have mounted a huge relief operation (to donate call 888-392-0392). But there has been no public attention paid to this crisis in the United States … why?

Some in the international aid community blame a phenomenon we refer to as "compassion fatigue." They say that the public has grown numb to the endless stream of needy victims paraded before them on the evening news. Their mailboxes are so over-stuffed with glossy brochures asking for donations to worthy causes that they can no longer empathize with any single instance of human suffering. Emaciated African children too weak to swat away the flies swarming over them have become commonplace; elderly Balkan refugees clothed in rags and huddling under plastic sheeting have become mundane.

The American obsession with scandal is another reason put forth for the current indifference to the famine in Sudan and other humanitarian disasters. Lately, a guaranteed formula for dying in oblivion is to be the victim of a famine, war, or natural disaster that takes place during an American media feeding frenzy. Coverage of the O.J. Simpson murder investigation pre-empted news of the Rwandan genocide in 1994, and the Monica Lewinsky affair distracted attention away from the famine in Sudan and the refugees in Kosovo. In July, a nurse who had just returned from working in a feeding center in Sudan was sitting in a national television news studio and being fitted with a microphone for an interview when a new twist in the Starr investigation caused the producer to abruptly cancel the segment.

Who decides what the American public wants to see? Are audience preferences driving editorial decisions, or are editorial assumptions about what the public wants to know dictating audience choices?

The primary obstacle standing between the American public and the tragic famine facing the Sudanese people is a lack of information. If people knew that children were walking for days to reach a feeding center, who would not be moved? How can Americans be accused of not caring about those who face starvation when they know nothing about them? In the past—during the famine in Somalia and the refugee crisis in Zaire, for example—Americans have shown their compassion in remarkable ways.

At the heart of this problem is an alarming decrease in the amount of international news coverage in the United States. According to the Tyndall Report, an independent media monitoring organization, nightly news coverage of overseas stories on the major television networks has declined by nearly 50 percent in the last decade. In August of 1998, CNN halved its daily international news broadcast to thirty minutes.

While global connectivity through satellite newsfeeds and the Internet has rapidly increased, the American media have grown more and more narrow in their approach to the rest of the world. In an article published in the March/April 1997 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, Garrick Utley points out that the passing of the Cold War left American network television in a quandary over how to report international news. "Without stories from abroad that could be presented as part of an overall threat to American security, newscasts suf-

Joelle Tanguy is executive director of Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières. In addition to providing medical aid, the organization advocates for long-term solutions to civil and political problems that exacerbate humanitarian emergencies.



fered a severe loss in an increasingly competitive medium that thrives—perhaps depends—on drama and conflict to attract and hold an audience's attention." The coverage of the recent embassy bombings is a classic example. The bombings of the U.S. embassies in Nairobi and Dar Es Salaam remained front-page news only until the last American victim was recovered, even though Kenyans and Tanzanians suffered much greater losses.

Still, there remain scores of dedicated journalists willing to risk their lives to hike over perilous roads and past rebel checkpoints to visit medical volunteers working in emergency projects around the globe. They continue to file stories that analyze difficult international issues in subtle and complex ways. Yet only a fraction of the material a journalist sees or hears actually makes it onto the evening news broadcasts or front pages back home. Journalists often complain that if they can't tell a story in a short, simplistic way, it will not get published or aired at all. Either way, stories of aid workers battling disease in Malawi or performing war surgery in Sri Lanka can never compete with O.J. or Monica, leaving the reporters and our project volunteers frustrated and the public uninformed.

While the frustration of aid workers and journalists is only temporary, there are more serious and lasting effects. The decrease in American coverage of international news feeds a lack of U.S. political will that is tolerable only because the public is ignorant of growing international problems that may eventually affect them. By insulating the American public from troubles beyond American borders, the U.S. media are also isolating us from potential environmental, economic, and political crises. Unable to hear foreign voices, Americans develop a dangerously warped perspective of world events and the position of the United States in relation to them. When Americans are not aware of a famine in Africa, we are also not aware of the political tensions that contributed to it, and the solutions that the world looks to the United States, as the last global superpower, to provide.

In our experience, it is primarily public opinion and awareness of a crisis that bring political solutions. We have learned that the only way to raise public awareness of a potential or ongoing humanitarian crisis is to convince the media to cover a story in a sustained and subtle manner. The famine in Sudan, and, up until recently, the atrocities against ethnic Albanians in Kosovo, did not receive the amount of ongoing media coverage necessary to galvanize popular opinion into pressing for political solutions that could ultimately end these tragedies.

As a fiercely independent non-governmental organization, Doctors Without Borders has worked hard to build a large base of individual supporters so that donor pressure will not impose politically on our operational deployment. But we often ask: can we lose what we have gained in financial independence through our dependency on the media to bring a given crisis to public attention? When the U.S. media's editors ignore Rwanda, the Sudan, or Kosovo in favor of the extensive coverage they give to scandals like those around O.J. Simpson or Monica Lewinsky, what recourse is left to invite private philanthropy, stir indignation, and stimulate action?

We must demand more of our news media. Editors must allocate more time and space for in-depth reporting of international news. Readers and listeners must ask to hear the stories that are not being told. Through its exhaustive coverage of the Clinton scandal, the U.S. media have, if nothing else, demonstrated how capable they are of reporting on a complex and continually changing story. Why not turn the same attention to the causes and solutions for the famine in Sudan or the conflict in Kosovo? If we can successfully aim a Tomahawk missile at a factory in downtown Khartoum, then we can certainly focus camera lenses on the faces of the thousands of starving children in southern Sudan. ❑

PHOTOGRAPH BY REMCO BOHLE / DOCTORS WITHOUT BORDERS

BENJAMIN'S VISION

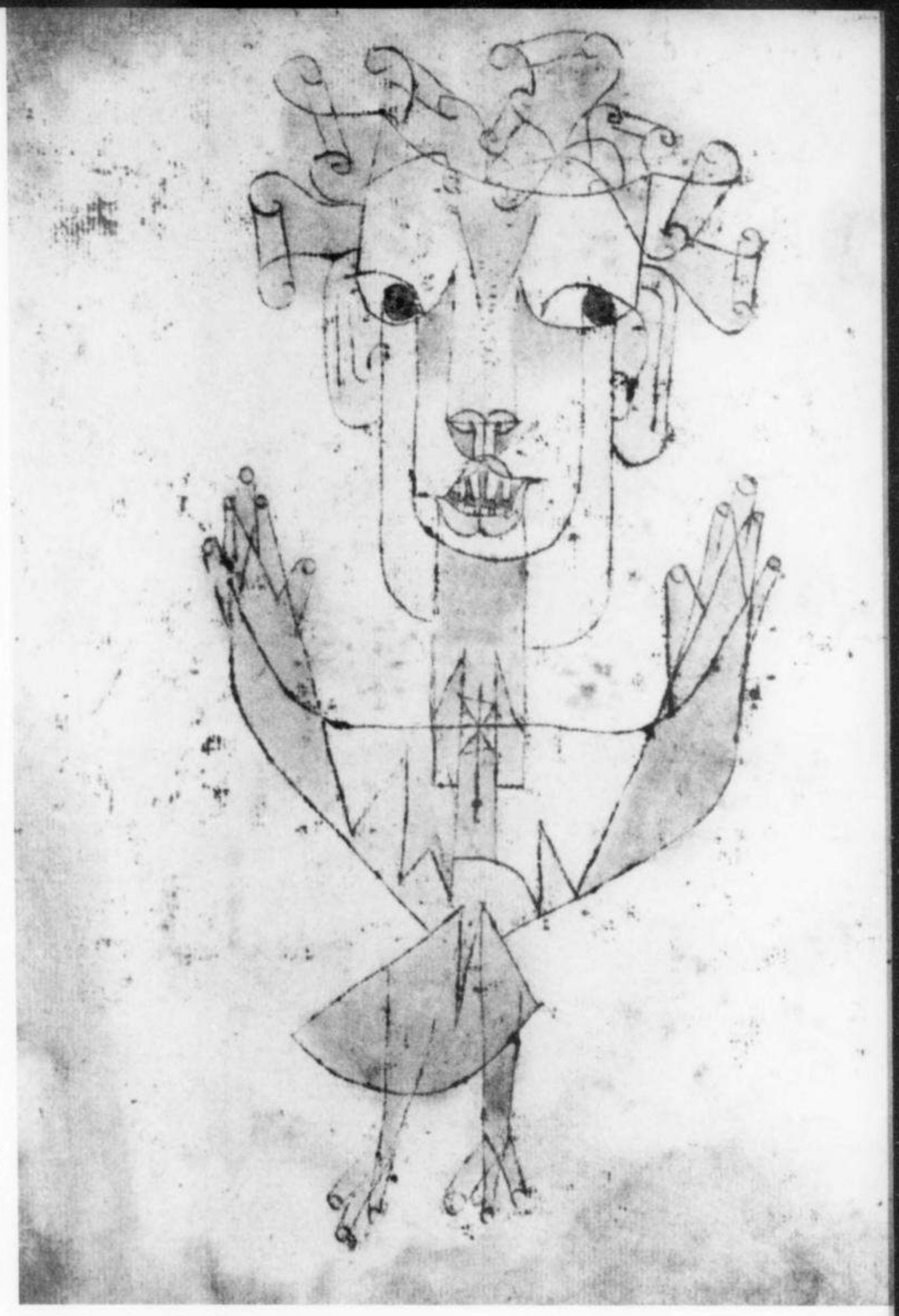
The Angel of History

Walter Benjamin's Vision of Hope and Despair

Raymond Barglow

A Klee drawing named "Angelus Novus" shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe that keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.

—Walter Benjamin,
Ninth Thesis on the Philosophy of History



Paul Klee, Angelus Novus, 1920.

COURTESY OF ISRAEL MUSEUM / DAVID HARRIS

For Walter Benjamin, a German Jewish literary critic and philosopher writing in 1940, the very notion of "historical progress" was a cruel illusion. Benjamin, age forty-eight at the time, had already lived through World War I and its aftermath. Now, in the second year of yet another war, the course of history had been commandeered by Fascism, a "catastrophe that keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage." Benjamin was himself destined, several months after he wrote these words, to become one more lifeless body tossed upon the heap. In 1940, seized by authorities in Spain during his effort to escape across the Pyrenees from France, he committed suicide. Benjamin probably did not take his own life simply because he feared being turned over to the Nazis: he had described himself as melancholic by nature, and had considered suicide earlier in his life.

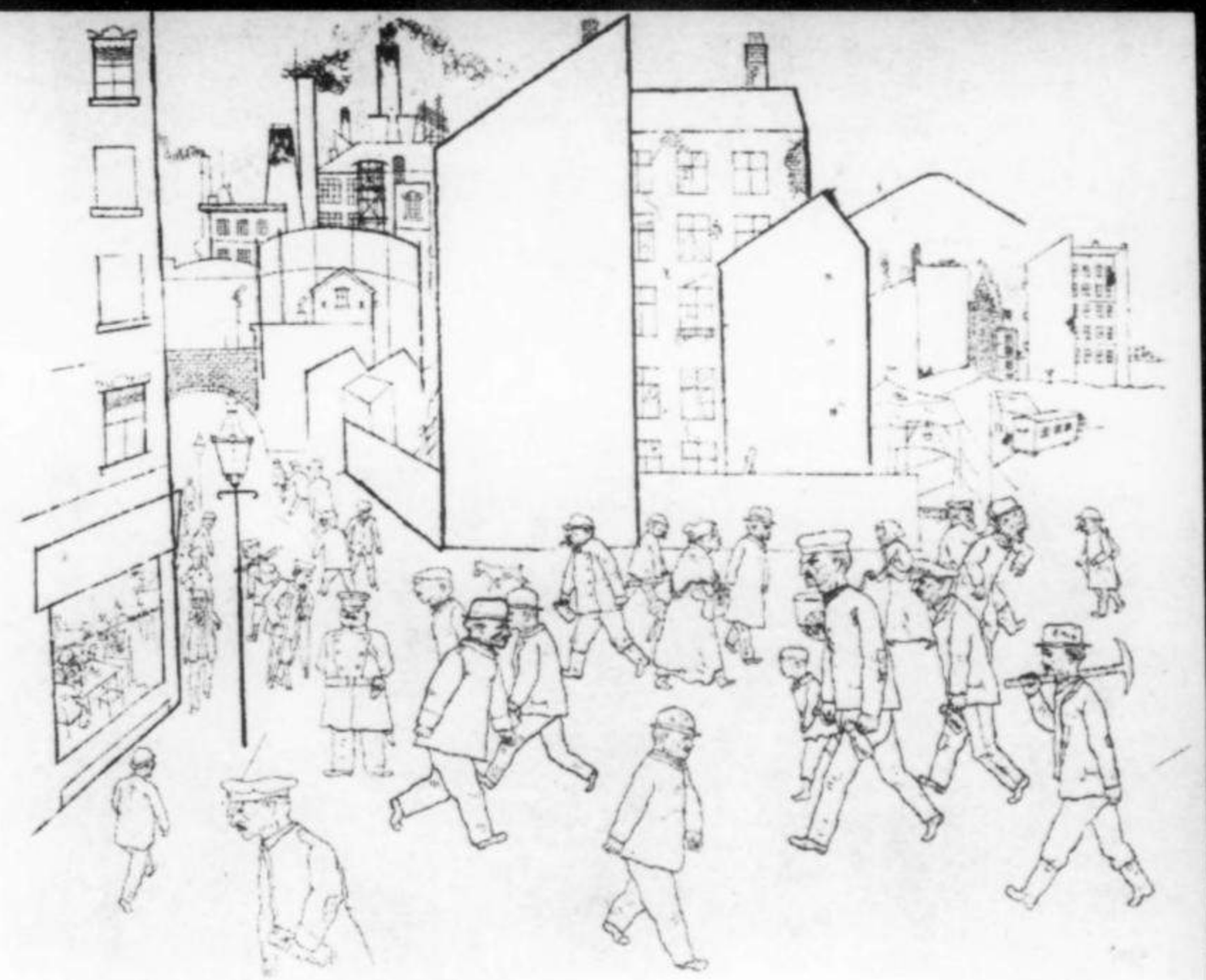
In Germany in the years between the two World Wars, despair affected many of Benjamin's contemporaries too. Among them were my mother and her brother Ralph Zucker, a Jewish student of medicine in Leipzig in the 1920s. My mother and uncle were born in the first decade of this century into an upper-middle-class, assimilated Jewish family in Dresden. My grandfather was a successful chemist who fought in the army for the Kaiser and returned home decorated with medals. The family was affluent, and the children well provided for materially. Yet my Uncle Ralph became desperately unhappy and killed himself in 1927.

"Melancholy" is no longer the most common way of referring to the condition of those who view life as no longer worth living. The favored term today is "depression," con-

Raymond Barglow is a psychologist and computer programmer.

sidered to be a physiological condition for which a standard remedy has become a pill designed to elevate neurotransmitter activity within the confines of the brain. To be sure, biological factors may be implicated in chronic unhappiness. Depression may beset not only individuals, but sometimes entire families, thanks perhaps to a shared genetic inheritance.

But DNA is not the only way in which our lives are interwoven, for despondency and despair correlate with what goes on in the social world. When the rate of unemployment rises even a fraction of a point, the suicide rate is apt to turn upward as well. Historical circumstances can shape our lives as powerfully as the material bodies through which we live. I am thinking now of my own parents and of my Uncle Ralph, whose desperate act took place long ago in a city far removed from California, my home. In subtle ways, and along pathways that we might not have suspected, sorrow may be conveyed from one generation to the next.



George Grosz, People in the Street, 1923.
In Germany following the War, there occurred a kind of social disintegration. Artists like Grosz and Dix satirized an urban existence that seemed to consist of a jumble of separate paths pursued by isolated, self-interested individuals.

In 1940, a month before Benjamin took his own life in the Old World, I was born into the New one. My father and mother were of the same generation as Benjamin but had emigrated to the United States in 1938. Like so many European Jews who narrowly escaped the Holocaust, they deliberately wanted to put their past behind them. What had happened in Europe was never mentioned in our household. For my father especially, the past was a closed book. When I was born, my mother wanted to name me "Ralph," in memory of her lost brother. My father objected, and "Ray" was chosen as a compromise. As a child, I can remember my mother Hilda sitting in the kitchen, crying as she prepared dinner. I could make no sense of this sadness at the time. Now, half a century later, I have a clearer idea. In addition to the other causes of her unhappiness, she was most likely recalling her brother and others left behind in Europe.

My parents were hoping that, securely deposited in the New World, I would be spared their grief. Only partly has it worked out as they expected. Memories of what happened within my parents' generation but also to others whom I have lost have a way of overflowing the walls built to contain them. Of course, such memories and the emotions they evoke can be responded to in any number of ways. Melancholy may strangle one's interest in the world and one's willingness even to get out of bed in the morning. On the other hand, it can also incite rebellion against an intolerable social order and unravel the self in ways that are creative and liberating. Benjamin exemplifies this paradox: the heightened receptivity to experience that enabled him to write with such originality and brilliance about the world also made it difficult for him to live in it.

Like so many of his generation, Benjamin experienced the First World War, the bloodiest conflagration in human history up to that time, as pointless and horrible carnage. But the revolutionary upheaval that occurred in its wake, in Germany, Russia, and elsewhere in Eastern Europe, seemed to represent a turning toward social emancipation as powerful and promising as any that had ever been experienced in the past. Europe's revolutionary movements at this time represented perhaps the best chance human beings had during this century of forestalling the conquest of the world by capitalism. If the workers' and soldiers' councils that briefly held power not only in Russia but in Germany as well had been able to survive the repression unleashed against them, they might have inaugurated a new, liberating path in human history.

In Germany what occurred instead—thanks to the vindictive Versailles Treaty and corrupt political deals, an economic crisis, and ruthless attacks against the working class by the FreiKorps and other reactionary forces—was the decisive defeat of the Left by the end of 1923. (Contributing to this defeat, according to the psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich, was also the Left's ignorance of the "mass psychology" of political movements.) During these years, Benjamin saw the ideals of socialism violently displaced by a militaristic, eventually fascist regime. From the threshold of liberation, the Left fell into a quagmire of impotence and despair.

This was the situation of the "Lost Generation" in Germany in the 1920s, disillusioned not only with the traditional creeds of nationalism and religion, but also with col-

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lective affiliations of every kind. Several of Benjamin's close friends had taken their own lives, as had his Aunt Friederike, who was like a second mother to Benjamin, intervening in his disputes with his father and introducing him to the mysteries of art, literature, and science. Benjamin was deeply shaken by these deaths.

For many young people, Germany in the 1920s signified everything that had gone wrong with their lives, and they wanted, if possible, to leave the country that had dashed their hopes and ideals. Emigration was less drastic than suicide. Some German Jews, drawn to the only remaining liberation movement that seemed to have any hope of succeeding—Zionism—went to Palestine. Benjamin's friend Gershom Scholem made this choice in 1922. Others among his contemporaries crossed the ocean to America. Benjamin himself was not willing to abandon Europe, although in 1933 he fled to France, where he lived to the end of his life.



Benjamin's favorite aunt, Friederike Josephy.

The Homeland's Happiness and Sadness

Benjamin purchased Paul Klee's drawing of the Angel of History in 1921 for the equivalent of about thirty dollars. It remained his most prized possession until he fled to Spain in 1940. Benjamin's interpretation of the drawing is only weakly supported by its explicit content: we do not directly perceive in it any sign of a "pile of debris" that "grows skyward" or of a storm "blowing from Paradise." Nor is there any visible evidence of the redemptive impulse described by Benjamin: "The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed." We may notice, however, a certain tension that animates the image: the eyes of the angel point toward the right, while the rest of the body is oriented slightly leftward, suggesting arrested movement, possibly a conflict between past and future. The staring, astonished quality of the face, with the mouth open, is also in keeping with Benjamin's representation. He describes the angel's view of the historical past as compressed: "Where we [humans] perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe that keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet." To the angel there is available no gradual distancing from suffering that would allow its enormity to diminish. The horror is such that neither words nor images can ever represent it adequately.

The intensity of Benjamin's description here suggests that he experienced the condition from which the Angel of History cannot escape as a personal as well as a political impasse. Although he did not go to prison or suffer any other severe repression on account of his beliefs or activities, his outlook on life is inseparable from the defeat of progressive forces in Germany in the 1920s, a decade prior to the seizure of power by the Fascists. I suspect that one of the reasons why Benjamin was so affected by his political surroundings is that he was either unable or unwilling to arrange the conventional compromises that shelter middle class individuals from the fate of a proletariat more directly exposed to the cruelties of the class system. Even Benjamin's theoretical investigations are radically subjective, as if the boundaries between private and public, between individual experience and the social world, exist only in order to be transgressed.

In autobiographical remarks dedicated to his son Stefan, Benjamin reminisces about a childhood in which the boundaries of the self easily form and vanish, as the child joyfully merges with surrounding objects: a moist cloud in a watercolor painting, a soap bubble, the silver foil around a piece of chocolate. Children's games express a dialectic of individuation and disappearance, poetically described by Benjamin in *One Way Street*:

> Standing behind the doorway curtain, the child [who is hiding] becomes himself something floating and white, a ghost. The dining table under which he is crouching turns him into a wooden idol in a temple whose four pillars are the carved legs.... Anyone who discovers him can petrify him as an idol under the table, weave him forever as a ghost into the curtain.... And so, at the seeker's touch, with a loud cry he drives out the demon who has so transformed him—indeed without waiting for the moment of discovery, he grabs the hunter with a shout of self-deliverance.

A child's fascinated exploration of its surroundings, playing with life and death, escaping from the hold of the curtain but then returning to abandon oneself behind it, again, models Benjamin's approach to a literary text, an architectural monument, or a metropolis like Berlin or Paris. For Benjamin, intellectual investigation is not a distancing activity; it retains much of the intimacy of a child's engagement with the world. Foretelling his adult love of literature, Benjamin describes what happens when a child picks up a storybook:

> The hero's adventures can still be read in the swirling letters like figures and messages in drifting snowflakes. [The child's] breath is part of the air of the events narrated, and all the participants breathe it. He mingles with the characters far more closely than grown-ups. He is unspeakably touched by the deeds, by the words that are exchanged, and when he gets up, he is covered over and over by the snow of his reading.

PHOTO BY EVA MICHAELIS / FROM "SPINNE IM EIGENEN NETZ WALTER BENJAMIN LEBEN UND WERK" PUBLISHED BY ELSTER VERLAG GMBH & CO.

The mimetic imagination that Benjamin portrays here is happy. What is it that causes a child's initial love affair with the world to shut down? Does this occur because the formation of defensive barriers between self and other is the inevitable culmination of "normal" child development? One alternative explanation is this: as children become acquainted with suffering and injustice, in their families and in the wider world, they learn to respond by narrowing their awareness, shutting out others' misery in order not to be made miserable themselves. Benjamin's comment in *One Way Street* about the nature of love describes an escape from unhappiness that he himself was unable to accomplish: "In a love affair most seek an eternal homeland. Others, but very few, eternal voyaging. These latter are melancholics, for whom contact with mother earth is to be shunned. They seek the person who will keep from them the homeland's sadness."

"Homeland's sadness" refers here to Germany's situation between the wars. But the words carry a more personal meaning also. "Homeland" names a private domain that already as a child one may come to know very well, a domain that melancholy seeks to leave behind but to which it inevitably returns. This is the dilemma that Benjamin sees in Klee's *Angelus Novus.* Note that the angel seems to be neither feminine nor masculine. There is a childlike, frightened quality about the image. What is the source of this fear? On Benjamin's reading of the image, a storm blows away from Paradise. A child is inevitably compelled to move away from the origin, from the mothering parent, a movement associated with anguish and loss. Being close to the mother, kissed and held in her loving arms, was Paradise, but becoming a person in one's own right requires some separation from the first, perhaps most intense love of our lives. Hence a child is both drawn to and driven away from the original object of desire (in keeping with the angel's ambivalent posture: eyes looking to the right, torso twisted slightly to the left).

This dynamic of closeness and separation was not discovered by psychoanalysis. The Kabbalah tells us that in the beginning, the Creator, alone in the universe, decided to contract and make room within herself for a birth, for the existence of a created world, which would thereafter take a course not entirely foreseen and not entirely controlled by the Creator. The mother has to let the child go, and this separation is accompanied by sadness, partly because of its permanence, but also because of miscommunication and disappointment on both sides of the divide. Is it not this estrangement bridged by covenants, by efforts on the part of both the Creator and the Created to get through to one another, that the Torah is all about?



Albrecht Dürer, Melancholia I, 1514.

ALBRECHT DÜRER / COURTESY OF GIRAUDON / ART RESOURCE, NEW YORK

Melancholy and Creativity

In the life of a child, separation from the Other gives rise to what psychoanalyst Melanie Klein called "the depressive position," which appears to have entrapped Benjamin. Like Klee's Angel, Benjamin felt caught in history's tangle—propelled forward, yet incapable of disengaging from the past. Keeping in mind the self-destructive endpoint of his journey, we might reach the conclusion that our task is to put the past behind us and to resist melancholy's regressive attraction to dissolution and death. Indeed, because of the terrible ways in which death typically occurs in the world as presently constituted, we have learned to associate it with everything bad: cruelty, violence, and defeat.

Benjamin's work, however, looks forward to a time when this association can be suspended, and melancholy and death recognized as creative as well as destructive forces. In Albrecht Dürer's sixteenth-century engraving *Melancholia I*, for instance, Benjamin perceives "The deadening of the emotions … an intense degree of sadness." The instruments

of mathematics and science are of no use to the disconsolate angel who stares at surroundings deprived of meaning. Yet, through the window of her study, the heavens illuminate a transcendent seascape. Benjamin believes that an "enigmatic wisdom" is made accessible by the very sorrow that contemplates a disenchanted world.

True, melancholy often leads to passivity and resignation. But its rejection of the status quo also harbors a utopian impulse that can motivate activism and change. Many of Benjamin's contemporaries responded to their historical circumstances with courageous resistance and commitment to one another, along with their sorrow. In Benjamin's case, melancholy issued from a selflessness that, in the absence of the "normal" defensive structures that shore up the ego, was acutely sensitive to everything going on around him. Hence his writing manifests a spontaneity and immediacy of perception that, in combination with his analytical skills, give rise to the "illuminations" that still dazzle readers today.

Whether he is exploring Baroque allegory, the pathways of memory in Proust's labyrinthine text, or the streets and arcades of nineteenth-century Paris, Benjamin dissolves the boundaries that separate author and subject matter. Elimination of these boundaries amounts to a kind of self-annihilation, but may lead to insight and renewal. Love itself is a creative loss of existence: "When we love, our existence runs through nature's fingers like golden coins that she cannot hold and lets fall to purchase new birth."

Benjamin aims always to fracture the everyday forms that define the world, thereby making it subject to radical re-interpretation and reconstruction. Even the destiny of prior generations becomes, for Benjamin, open-ended and in need of completion. In keeping with the teachings of the Kabbalah, Benjamin regards redemption not only as the coming of the Messiah but also as a human *tikkun* that rescues even the past. In a letter to Benjamin, the Frankfurt School philosopher Max Horkheimer objected that Benjamin's view about the "incompleteness of the past" falsifies history: "Past injustice has occurred and is done with. The murdered are really murdered." Benjamin would not have disagreed with this. To be sure, death is irreversible. Yet he submits that

> The past carries with it a temporal index by which it is referred to redemption. There is a secret agreement between past generations and the present one. Our coming was expected on earth. Like every generation that preceded us, we have been endowed with a weak Messianic power, a power to which the past has a claim. That claim cannot be settled cheaply … even the dead will not be safe from the enemy if he triumphs. And this enemy has not ceased triumphing.

Our "secret agreement" with past generations is not just to remember what they went through, but to take what Benjamin calls "a revolutionary chance in the fight for the oppressed past."

This insight notwithstanding, Benjamin did not ally himself with any social movement. Neither Zionism, the Communist Party, nor any of the fragmented socialist parties could capture his allegiance. Ironically, the political passivity and disabling melancholy to which Benjamin himself was vulnerable became the target of his sharpest criticism when he recognized these attitudes in others. Among those whom Benjamin criticized was Erich Kästner, author of *Fabian* (1931), a novel that was based on the suicide of my uncle, Ralph Zucker. The novel expresses the sense of despair and futility that seized Weimar's "Lost Generation." In this book, there is much that reminds me of contemporary America: the sense of a foreclosed future that rules out significant social change, the pervasive cynicism that, while recognizing the world's cruelty and injustice, regards these conditions as inalterable. The novel's idealistic character, modeled after my Uncle Ralph, is portrayed as naïve and destined to fail. Cynicism, on the other hand, thrives, as voiced by a newspaper editor in the novel: "I know that I'm lying. I know the system is wrong. A blind man could see that if he were in my job. But I serve the wrong system with devotion. For, within the frame of the wrong system, at whose disposal I have placed my modest talents, the wrong measures are right by the very nature of things, and the right are obviously wrong."

Benjamin aims always to fracture the everyday forms that define the world, thereby making it subject to radical re-interpretation and reconstruction. Even the destiny of prior generations becomes, for Benjamin, open-ended and in need of completion.

Weimar capitalism, like capitalism today, scarcely concealed the fact that it organized the world to benefit the wealthy. This arrangement was made acceptable to the public by giving them the opportunity to buy into a small part of the rulers' abundance. (Benjamin notes that "The poor person, even if he possesses only one Thaler, can participate in the holding of public stock which is divided into very small portions, and can thus speak of *our* palaces, *our* factories, *our* treasures.") Stock ownership, though, offered little actual economic control, as a character in Kästner's novel elaborates: "The manufacturers reduce wages; the state accelerates the decline in the purchasing power of the masses by imposing taxes which it dare not impose on the rich; capital still flees by the billions across the frontiers.

Isn't that consistency? Can you say that madness has no method?" The "masses," previously the Marxist agency of hope and collective action, are represented here only as consumers, having fallen far from the ideals of self-determination that, a decade earlier, had motivated the workers' and soldiers' councils.

Benjamin's discussion of the novel focuses not on the inaccuracy of its description of the world but on its resignation. The sense of hopelessness in Kästner's writing can lead, according to Benjamin, only to political stasis and defeat. Looking back on Benjamin's life, we may perceive in his criticism of Kästner a reflection of his own internal battle to overcome despair.

In the historical project of liberation, Benjamin represents the Angel of History as being on our side—the angel wants to intervene but does not have the power to do so. Do we? Benjamin criticizes the pessimism that regards fundamental change as impossible and that tells us that historically, utopian dreams have been losing propositions. As an antidote to resignation, Benjamin proposes "the gift of fanning the spark of hope [that was] in the past," as if memory could ignite a kind of prairie fire across the generations. Such memory is identified by Benjamin as "the quintessence of Judaism's theological concept of history." Embedded within Jewish tradition is extraordinary hope; Biblical accounts of Exodus and of the Maccabees, for instance, remind us that liberation movements can succeed against seemingly invincible power structures.



Grosz, Man with Lantern, 1936.

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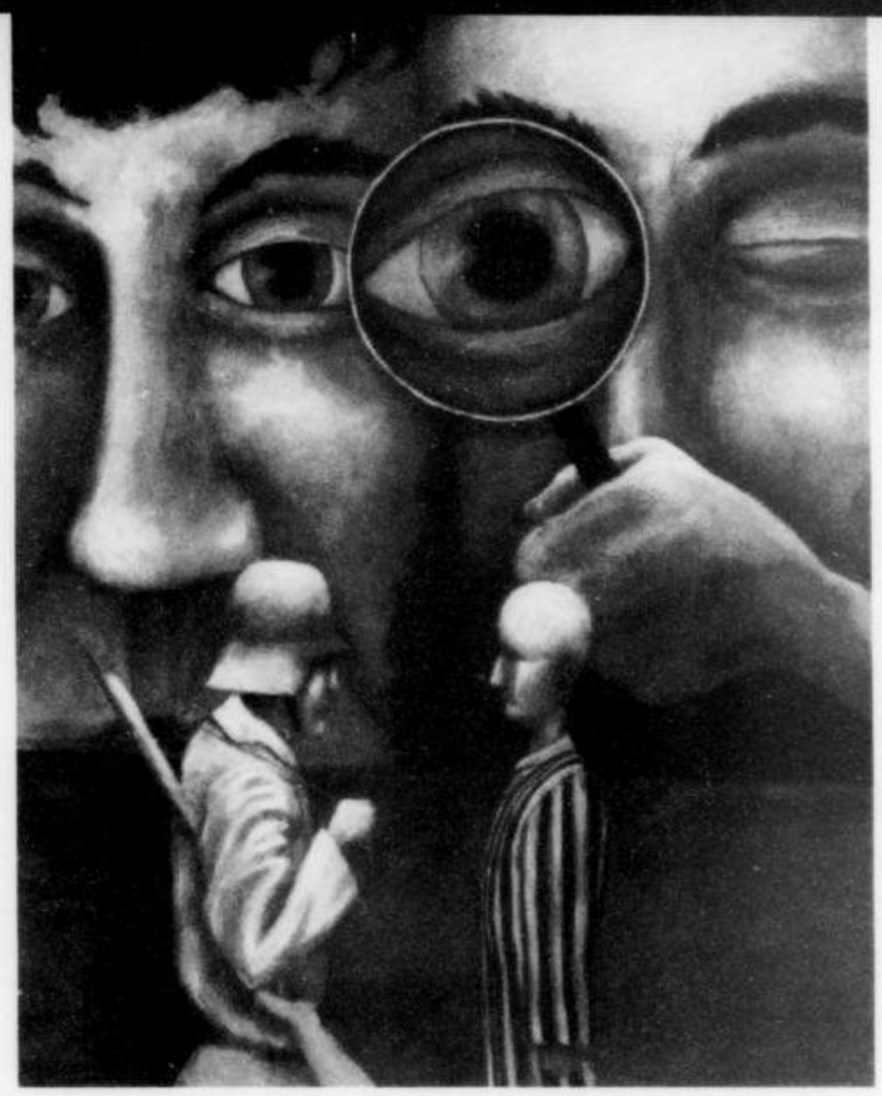
Yet Benjamin could not figure out how to join with others to put such a memory-based politics into practice. Although he enjoyed the company of his friends, he conducted his life quite privately, independent of any political association. Benjamin's Zionist contemporaries, on the other hand, followed a different path, creating a collective movement that gave their lives meaning in ways that the traditional Left did not and perhaps could not duplicate. (In fairness, we should recall that because Zionism's political aims were directed abroad, it escaped the annihilating repression that in Germany was brought to bear on the Left.) Scholem writes that "Judaism, in all its forms and manifestations has always maintained a concept of redemption as an event that takes place publicly, on the stage of history and within the community."

True, no community can restore what has been lost. In Argentina, for example, the *Madres de la Plaza de Mayo* movement was organized by women who realized that, except in very rare cases, their efforts would not return to them those who had been "disappeared." By sharing their stories and working together, however, they did contribute to ending the military dictatorship. In associating with others to form a freer, more livable world, we may discover that life can be restored to the dead parts within ourselves. At the end of this century, Benjamin's Angel of History is still waiting for us to create the relationships across the generations, across boundaries of every kind that will enable him at last to take wing. ❑

HOLOCAUST RESPONSES

Victim Testimony...

Christopher R. Browning



In his recent TIKKUN article ("The Paradigm Challenged," July/August 1998), Daniel Goldhagen directly attacks my work as well as that of the larger community of Holocaust scholars. In doing so, he misrepresents and distorts what he attacks in order to achieve a hollow victory over his own easily demolished strawmen.

Goldhagen states that I "dismiss" survivor testimony "explicitly or tacitly, as unreliable and inessential" and that I have allegedly written that "from survivors 'we learn nothing [sic] about' Police Battalion 101 or, for that matter, about itinerant units in general." What in fact I wrote in the preface of *Ordinary Men* is the following: "... unlike survivor testimony about prominent perpetrators in the ghettos and camps, where prolonged contact was possible, survivor testimony can tell us *little* about an itinerant unit like Reserve Police Battalion 101" (xvii–xviii, emphasis added). In a subsequent panel exchange with Goldhagen, I expanded as follows:

> Jewish testimony was indispensable to my study in establishing the chronology of the fall of 1942. What became a blur of events for the perpetrators remained quite distinct days of horror for the victims. Also, while survivor testimony may be extremely valuable in many regards, it does not illuminate the internal dynamics of an itinerant killing unit. It would be difficult for the victim of such a unit to provide testimony concerning the various levels of participation of different perpetrators and any change in their character over time. Where long-term contact between victims and perpetrators did occur, survivors are able to and in fact do differentiate on such issues.

Thus Goldhagen misquotes from the preface of *Ordinary Men*, changing "little" to "nothing," and furthermore takes my remarks from our subsequent exchange entirely out of context. I do not "dismiss" survivor testimony either "explicitly or tacitly" as "unreliable and inessential." I do insist that survivor testimony, like any other evidence, be used cautiously and with due regard for what any particular witness was in a position to know. Quite simply, Goldhagen's summary of my position is a gross distortion; his misquotation violates accepted academic standards.

Moreover, I have noted that in rare cases where survivors had worked as translators or menial laborers in German police stations they were indeed in a position to give invaluable testimony precisely on the question of the attitudes and mindset of middle-aged reserve policement like those in Reserve Police Battalion 101. Such a rare witness was Oswald Rufeisen, whose story was told by Nechama Tec in her book *In the Lion's Den*. According to Rufeisen, among the thirteen policement at Mir, one stood out a a "beast in the form of a man," three did not participate in Jewish actions at all, and most of the remainder considered the killing of Jews as something "unclean" about which they did not wish to talk. This is a far cry from Goldhagen's portrayal of middle-aged German reserve policement, according to which they were uniformly possessed of a "lethal, hallucinatory view of the Jews" and viewed their killing of Jews as a "a redemptive act" to be celebrated and enjoyed.

Tec's book was published in 1992, the same year as *Ordinary Men*, and thus Rufeisen's unique testimony was not available to me and could not be cited in my book. It was available to Goldhagen before he published *Hitler's Willing Executioners* four years later, but he did not cite it. It appears that this self-styled champion of survivor testimony can be quite selective himself when survivor testimony fails to support the hypothesis he is trying to prove.

In my opinion, Goldhagen's accusatory approach to the issue of survivor testimony disserves scholarship because it diverts attention from the real issue, namely what the historian can learn from a systematic use of concentrated survivor testimony. I am currently engaged in researching the Starachowice ghetto and labor camps in the Radom district in central Poland; my work is based primarily on more than one hundred written and videotaped survivor testimonies given over a period of more than four decades. Several conclusions relevant to this discussion have already emerged.

The first concerns the itinerant unit involved in the ghetto roundup and deportation action on October 27, 1942. This was the notorious *Vernichtungsbatallion* or "destruction battalion" of Erich Kapke that travelled from ghetto to ghetto throughout the Radom district. When asked by German investigators desperate for witnesses and evidence, not one survivor could recognize either the name or picture of Kapke, much less anyone

(continued on page 58)

ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID REGAN

Christopher R. Browning teaches at Pacific Lutheran University. He is the author of Ordinary Men.

... A Debate

Daniel Goldhagen Responds to Browning

Christopher Browning diverts attention from the general issues of my article—about method, explanation, and future research—with rampant misrepresentations and spurious charges to put forward the Panglossian position that the study of the Holocaust has been the best of all possible worlds.

Despite the insistent self-focus of his long letter (when my article barely mentions him) Browning is silent on my article's single empirical challenge to him: why he relied on only the perpetrators' testimony in constructing his analysis of Police Battalion 101's killing operations in Miedzyrzec, ignoring published survivor testimony which belies his account of the Germans' cruelty. Anyone familiar with the victims' testimony knows that the perpetrators were cruel not, as Browning imagines, mainly for pragmatic reasons. Their testimony (Browning's selective use of it here notwithstanding), as well as much other evidence, disproves his bizarre contention in *Ordinary Men* that the German perpetrators were overwhelmingly reluctant, disapproving killers, which, comparatively, would make them the only such perpetrators of genocide of our century! Despite responding obsessively to me, Browning refuses to address the critical issue of the perpetrators' gleeful torturing in Miedzyrzec or the comparative issue.



Instead, Browning is rewriting his untenable, long-standing positions, including on victims' testimony and on anti-Semitism, which is at best marginal in his book's analysis. The lengths to which Browning is now going to conceal that work's true nature can be seen in his 1992 methodological treatise "German Memory, Judicial Interrogation, and Historical Reconstruction: Writing Perpetrator History from Postwar Testimony":

> But Reserve Police Battalion 101 was itinerant. Its units moved from town to town, killing Jews or driving them out of the ghettos and onto the death trains headed for Treblinka. From Jozefow, we do not know of a single survivor. From survivors of other towns that lay in the battalion's destructive wake, *we learn nothing about the unit*. Unknown men arrived, carried out their murderous task, and left. Seldom, in fact, can the survivors even remember the peculiar green uniforms of Order Police to identify what kind of unit was involved. Thus there can be no history of Reserve Police Battalion 101 from survivor testimony. (28, emphasis mine)

When I wrote, "Browning claims that from survivors 'we learn nothing about' Police Battalion 101 or, for that matter, about itinerant units in general," I quoted him accurately and in context. Browning has now switched passages to level fabricated charges. (Even in the substitute passage, he learns from victims only about chronology.) Such is the "scholarship" of his letter generally.

If the paradigm I describe were a fiction, Browning would cite the putative scores of works about the Holocaust's perpetration that use victims' testimony extensively, that treat anti-Semitism in-depth, or that discuss the many central issues raised in my article, including that no German perpetrator was ever seriously punished for refusing to kill Jews. This critical fact has been known since 1967 but virtually ignored. Why? Because it undermines a core notion of the paradigm which denies human agency and which holds that external forces of some kind compelled the perpetrators to act. Whatever Browning now pretends, his peculiar peer pressure argument is a variant of a paradigm that contends that disapproving men killed and tortured because of external pressure.

Not only is Browning's contention convoluted (if they collectively disapproved, where would the pressure come from?); it is also his invention: none of the 210 perpetrators who testified states what Browning asserts, a devastating fact which he fails to mention.

Many scholars have recently referred to central aspects of the paradigm I describe. Marion Kaplan, in *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany*, states: "Jewish victims' accounts belie the conclusions of German historians who have failed to find antisemitism in their sources." Leni Yahil, author of *The Holocaust: The Fate of European Jewry*, writes in *Gesher* that my book "has broken a quasi-taboo" by emphasizing "the direct link between the antisemitism of German society and the Holocaust." Ulrich Herbert, in his review of my book agrees, writing that previous scholars fixated on "structures," so that "the perpetrators ... faded into the background, along with their mental outlook and convictions, to the point where one could ultimately conclude that radical anti-Semitism was only a marginal phenomenon in Germany and was a factor ranking extremely low in the development of the National Socialist extermination policy." "The question of anti-Semitism's significance," he concludes, "was never answered."

Are these and many other like-minded scholars also just making it up? Are their psyches and motives also to be declared suspect?

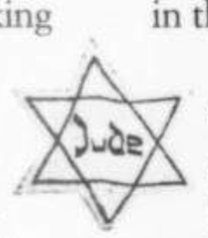
In publishing my article, I hoped that others would engage the issues so we could push forward our understanding of the Holocaust. Clearing the fog from Browning's circle-the-wagons response reveals that the issues have still not been joined. ❑

Daniel Jonah Goldhagen teaches at Harvard University. He is currently writing a book about genocide in the twentieth century.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY LAWRENCE BUSH

HOLOCAUST VICTIM TESTIMONY *(continued from page 56)*
else in the unit. They knew that the battalion consisted of foreign auxiliaries but disagreed on nationality. Different witnesses suggested Lithuanians, Latvians, Ukrainians, or Estonians. The survivors had extremely vivid and precise memories about many aspects of that traumatic day, but not about the itinerant police unit that dispatched their families to Treblinka. Given the horrific circumstances of that brief event, it is no reproach of survivors or devaluation of their testimony to note that there are some things they cannot tell us about it.

Goldhagen's second strawman is an "old" or "hegemonic paradigm" that is now allegedly crumbling in the face of public discussion "that has been taking place for the last two years" (which is to say since the publication of *Hitler's Willing Executioners* in 1996). According to Goldhagen, this "old paradigm" consists of "abstract, faceless structures and institutions" and "irresistible external forces"; it renders perpetrators into "puppet-like actors" and "effaces" them as human beings making moral choices because it portrays these perpetrators as "compelled by external forces to act against their will."



For the past twenty years, I have been publishing various case studies about particular groups of perpetrators—the so-called "Jewish experts" of the German Foreign Office, the motor pool mechanics who designed and constructed the gas van, the military administration of occupied Serbia, the personnel of the Semlin death camp, the ghetto administrators of Lodz and Warsaw, the public health doctors of the General Government, and the men of Reserve Police Battalion 101. It has been my goal throughout to put human faces on the perpetrators and assess their motivation. Never did I suggest or conclude that they had been "compelled … to act against their will" in ways that precluded moral or legal judgment.

How has Goldhagen constructed this pernicious discourse that casts himself as the pioneer hero of a morally-sensitive history and attempts to delegitimize the generations of pre-1996 historians as morally obtuse? He does so by inventing an artificial dichotomy between actions motivated by allegedly "internal" factors permitting moral judgment (namely beliefs and values, which in effect Goldhagen limits to anti-Semitic or racist convictions) and actions "compelled" by what he terms "external" factors that, because of the compulsion, are devoid of a moral dimension involving choice. In reality, of course, there are numerous "values and beliefs" that motivate people other than racist ones, such as perceptions of authority, duty, legitimacy, and loyalty to one's unit and country in wartime. And there are other personality traits such as ambition, greed, and lack of empathy that shape people's behavior without absolving them of individual responsibility. Indeed, in the penultimate paragraph of my book, *Ordinary Men*, I conclude that "The reserve policemen faced choices, and most of them committed terrible deeds. But those who killed cannot be absolved by the notion that anyone in the same situation would have done as they did. For even among them, some refused to kill and others stopped killing. Human responsibility is ultimately an individual matter" (188).

The issue between Goldhagen and the "phalanx of scholars" whom he dismisses has never been the "willing" participation of "ordinary Germans" from virtually every segment of society, as would be clear to anyone who has read with an open mind Raul Hilberg's *The Destruction of the European Jews*, first published in 1961. Nor is it an issue that "culturally-constructed racist beliefs and values … led many Germans to take part in" the annihilation of the Jews, even though the debate over the relative roles of ideological and cultural factors on the one hand and situational, organizational, and institutional factors on the other has been continuous, spirited, and fruitful. Indeed, most elements of Goldhagen's proposed new paradigm, to say nothing of the passages from Adenauer and Meinecke that he quotes approvingly, have been commonplace in virtually any course on modern German history or the Holocaust taught in the United States in the past two decades or more.

What then is all the fuss about, and why did Goldhagen's book arouse such a negative reaction among so many scholars? It is useful to remind ourselves of what he actually wrote and said in 1996. In several interviews promoting the book, Goldhagen flatly proclaimed that German culture was a "genocidal culture." In the book itself, he urged historians to rid themselves of the notion that Germans in the Third Reich were "more or less like us" or that "their sensibilities had remotely approximated our own" (27, 269). He recommended that scholars approach the Germans as they would the Aztecs, who believed human sacrifice was necessary to cause the sun to rise (28).

Goldhagen wrote emphatically that "with regard to the motivational cause of the Holocaust, for the vast majority of the perpetrators, a monocausal explanation does suffice"—namely "a demonological antisemitism" that "was the common structure of the perpetrators' cognition and that of German society in general" (416, 392). Accordingly, "equipped with little more than the cultural notions current in Germany," ordinary Germans "wanted to be genocidal executioners" (185, 279). And when given the chance, the vast majority killed with "gusto" and "for pleasure" (241, 451). In contrast, they killed Poles with "obvious distaste and reluctance" (241). A major transformation in German political culture after the war was duly noted, though the possibility of a similar or even greater transformation of German political culture under the impact of the Nazi regime between 1933 and 1941 was denied.

When I presented these quotations at the symposium of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in April 1996 as representing the core of his argument, Goldhagen acknowledged that I had read his book carefully and did not dispute that I had summarized his argument correctly. If he has muted his sweeping generalizations and fiery accusations and embraced the likes of Adenauer and Meinecke, we are witnessing not the crumbling of some "hegemonic paradigm," but the repositioning of Daniel Goldhagen. ❑

HOLOCAUST RESPONSES

Memory's Ghosts

Thane Rosenbaum



Yes, it's true: the Holocaust produced its disproportionate share of ghosts. Along with train tracks, cattle cars, ovens, gas, and smoke, ghosts inhabit—and indeed haunt—the post-Auschwitz universe as both metaphor and recurring memory. This should not come as much of a surprise to anyone. You can't slaughter 11 million people and expect their souls to sit still for such outrage. Nor can you fault those who survived the atrocity of Europe, as well as their children and grandchildren, for becoming fluent in the language of ghosts. Indeed, there is a strange alchemy between ghosts and their psychic pull on both the imagination and emotions of those left living in a world once poisoned with murder and indifference. And this is true for Jews and non-Jews alike.

But Zygmunt Bauman, in "Holocaust Ghosts and Hereditary Victimhood" (TIKKUN, July/August 1998), is apparently threatened by all this paranormal activity. He wants to live in a ghost-free world, but, unfortunately for him, the enormity of Auschwitz made ghost-busting a sinful act for Jews. A mere fifty years—a hiccup in recorded history—after Jew-killing was elevated to an Olympic blood sport, Bauman is bitterly spooked by the Holocaust's influence in shaping Jewish identity and the way that it continues to haunt those who inherited the traumas and nightmares of the survivors themselves.

For Bauman, the annihilation of one-third of the world's Jewish population is admittedly tragic, and perhaps even singular, but however large its deathly dimensions, he uncharitably recoils at the idea that it may have had any fallout or aftershock, as though the Holocaust was a genocidal, surgical procedure on a people who recovered magically the instant it was over: no pain, no scars, no post-surgical complications. What Bauman sees instead is a sham. Faked symptoms. Invented suffering. Vicarious victimization. A post-Holocaust world where Jews have inherited a fraudulent and senseless obsession with survival, a cultural pathology masking itself as a moral imperative.

Along the way, Bauman trivializes the heroism that was so vital to preserving Jewish life during the Third Reich. What others regard as a miracle of resourcefulness—the artful snatching of some measure of victory away from the Nazis and their assistants—in Bauman's mind has resulted in an entirely new Jewish ethos, one that romanticizes the Rambo survivor above all other Jewish virtues. No matter where he looks—the Diaspora, Israel—Bauman can't help but notice a me-first, cut-throat Jewish sensibility, as though this once noble tribe of Jews had suddenly been reduced to a cult that prays with clenched fists before an ark empty of Torah but crammed tight with rage and paranoia, a new secular religion governed not by god but by the soulless calculus of zero sum survival.

Frankly, who is Bauman talking about? Holocaust survivors didn't survive the camps by clawing over one another, stealing bread, nudging neighbors into the selection lines. That wasn't in the survival manual for Auschwitz. On the contrary, survival was for many a collaborative act, a beating of the spiritual drums and a call to collective arms. Those impulses and enormous luck were the necessary prescriptions for how to make it out alive. While the strategy didn't always work, few people understood survival in the terms Bauman now reports, as a "conflict between incompatible interests in which the success of some depends on the non-survival of others."

Bauman's primary focus, however, isn't really on the survivors themselves (other than for the cynical lessons that they presumably elevated to an art form). Rather, his critique lies with the children of Holocaust survivors, or with the Jews who have no genetic link to survivors, but simply imagine themselves to have been victims of the Nazis nonetheless, and who in their warped perceptions still see Nazis everywhere. According to Bauman, the aftermath of

ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID BALL

Thane Rosenbaum, a novelist, is the literary editor of TIKKUN, *and the author of* Elijah Visible *and the forthcoming* Second Hand Smoke.

Auschwitz resulted in a martyred, perpetually victimized Jew who now feels morally licensed to kill and abuse others in the name of the Six Million.

Again, who is he talking about? This kind of an accusation—the virtual condemnation of world Jewry as a bunch of morally righteous bullies and thugs—requires the naming of names. The following sentence is all that he manages to tell us about the culprits: "The crowds which applauded Goldstein's massacre of the Muslim worshippers in Hebron, which flocked to his funeral ... are the most terminally afflicted, but not the only bearers of that curse."

With the professed goal of blaming not the victims of the Nazis but rather their children for sabotaging any hope of Jewish emotional tranquillity, Bauman should have an obligation to supply a far more resonant example of this alleged phenomenon than the zealots of Jerusalem. Goldstein's followers are nothing but a fringe group of Jewish extremists operating within what is already a small community of Jewish settlers. Whenever he gets a free moment, Bauman should read up on the history of the Holy Land. Fanatics were always drawn to Jerusalem. These are the kind of people who took on the Romans despite numerical handicaps greater than what the Israelis now face. And by choosing mass suicide over surrender, the Zealots left the Jews of Israel with a Masada complex so deeply entrenched in the national psyche that it presents a far greater obstacle to peace in the Middle East than any reconstituted visions of smoke stacks and crematoriums.

Furthermore, the one example that Bauman offers in support of his thesis seems to fatally undermine his own argument. His main point is that contemporary Jews have exploited their perceived victim status in an effort to preemptively retaliate against lurking, albeit imaginary, enemies. But regardless of what one thinks about competing Jewish-Arab claims to Jerusalem, the West Bank, and for that matter, pre-1967 Israel, the fact is, a Jew has to carry a machine gun in that part of the world. There is nothing imagined about the threat. Neither is the Holocaust particularly central to that conflict, which is far more an old-fashioned fight over territory, in this case fueled by religious extremism and messianic madness, than anything else. Bauman identifies the most fanatical element of world Jewry, a group of people gathered in the red hot center of Arab-Jewish hostility, and he concludes that "the pernicious legacy of the Holocaust is that today's persecutors may inflict new pains ... while acting under the conviction that they avenge yesterday's pains and ward off the pains of tomorrow."

Who else is similarly "cursed"? Bauman won't name names, probably because he can't, certainly not without first having conducted a comprehensive survey of Jewry around the world. It's hard to reconcile his thesis with the overwhelming evidence of Jewish philanthropy, social justice, and commitment to ethical values that is so much more emblematic of Jewish life after the Holocaust than the self-perpetuating martyrdom that Bauman identifies, despises, and fears. Jews haven't turned "against the world," as Bauman sees it. Indeed, there has never been more integration between Jews and the rest of the world than at any other time in recorded history. Yes, Jews have been victims over the centuries, and the Holocaust will forever be the defining symbol of that suffering, but it is not true that the real estate of contemporary Jewish life consists mainly of haunted houses that shriek with a pathology and paralysis that make coexistence with their neighbors impossible for Jews.

There are indeed ghosts, but they are with us because of pain—ours, theirs, the lives lost, the human potential that went unfulfilled, the nightmares that work overtime during the day. Perhaps what's most troubling about Bauman's cheap shot at "hereditary victimhood" is how seemingly unfeeling—hostile even—he is in ignoring the truly deep emotional wounds of loss and betrayal that have admittedly taken out long leases in both the psyche and souls of survivors, their grieving family and friends, and their descendants. The condescending assumption that underlies and haunts Bauman's own critique is that these new victims of the Nazis actually like the pain, that they would rather not live without it, that the gas of their parents has become the oxygen for this generation.

These victims, however (and they most certainly are victims, if not of the principal tragedy than of something else, because there is nothing imagined at all about the trauma that unfolded each day in their haunted houses), do not relish the legacy that was left to them, although they are morally bound to embrace it. Bauman may mock second generation self-help groups as if there is nothing at all special about an ancestry that both witnessed and escaped genocide, but only the most cynical and callous among us would treat these therapeutic sessions as if they are as ordinary, and the malady as curable, as what goes on at a meeting of compulsive closet organizers.

For Bauman, the psychological significance of all this boils down to his own hypochondriacal fantasy of a people suffering from "Holocaust syndrome" or serious "maladjustment" problems or pretenders passing themselves off as the "imagined children" of survivors. But the psychological research that he strategically ignores serves to prove a far more sanguine point: that in spite of all the acknowledged pain and trauma—and yes, even with all the ghosts—children of Holocaust survivors statistically have gone on to lead productive, nurturing and caring lives. Vengeful, misguided human missiles aimed at imaginary crematoriums is a tantalizing idea in a culture that delights in family dysfunctions and their social consequences. But in this case, the conceit is far more delusional than real.

Sadly, Bauman is blind to how much his own words are steeped in and reek of an indifference to the smoke that can never leave the lungs of those who actually lived the nightmare, as well as those who breathe beside the ghosts that keep both memory and nightmare alive. ❑

HOLOCAUST RESPONSES

Blaming the Victims and Their Heirs

Eva Fogelman

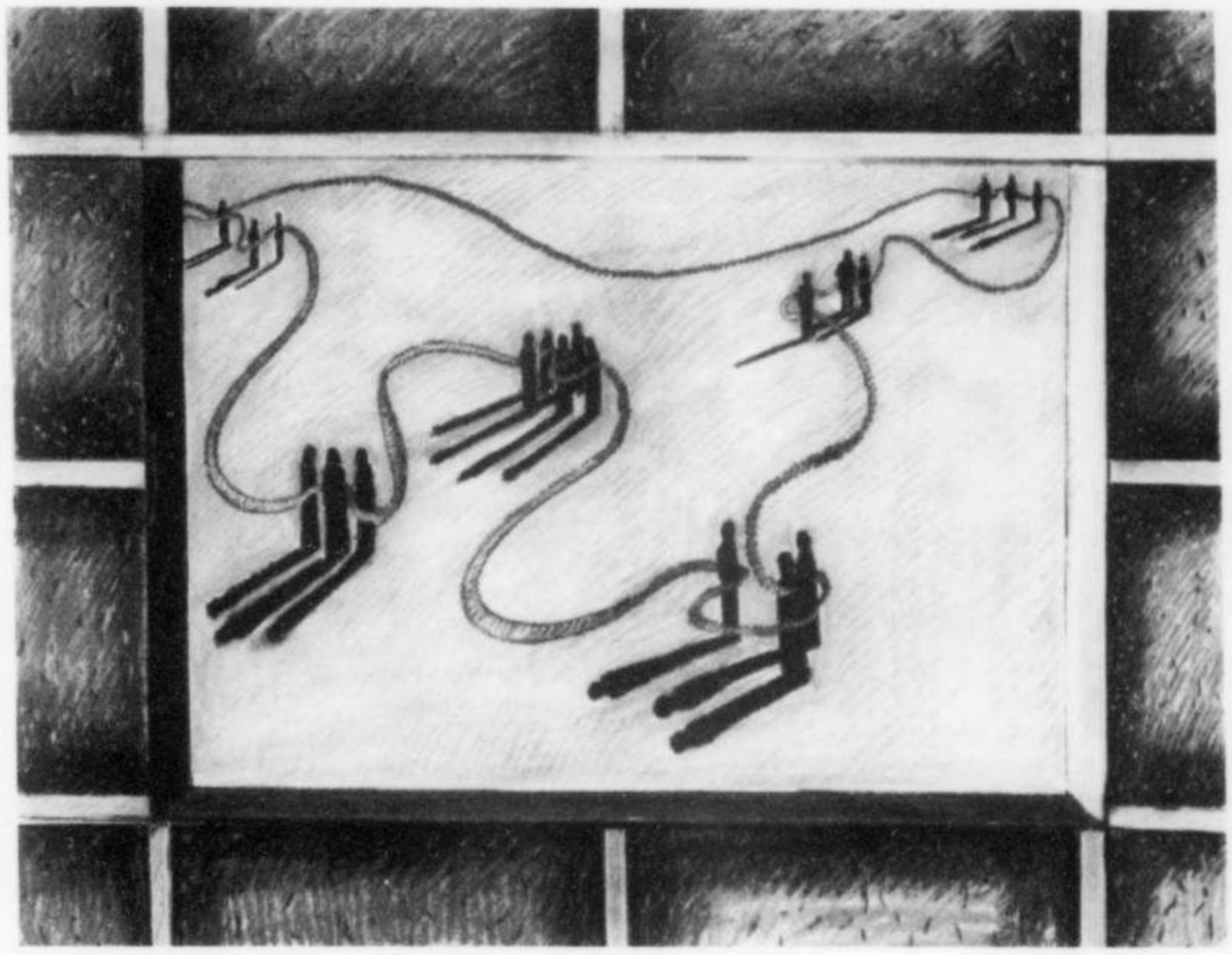


ILLUSTRATION BY RICHARD ROSS

When Zygmunt Bauman scrutinizes the choices with which Jewish victims were faced during the early stages of the German occupation in his TIKKUN article, "Hereditary Victimhood: The Holocaust's Life as a Ghost" (July/August, 1998), he reduces their response to "the value of self-preservation" which he claims "was enthroned as an incontestable legitimation of choice. Everything that served self-preservation was right."

From researchers who have painstakingly interviewed survivors regarding their coping and survival strategies—Joel Dimsdale, Judith Kestenberg, Robert Krell, Hillel Klein, and Paul Marcus—different conclusions emerge. Indeed, the sociologist Elmer Luchterhand specifically examined interpersonal relationship patterns and concluded that "the pair was the basic unit of survival" in the final days. When prisoners stole from each other, they faced severe moral condemnation from other inmates. In point of fact, fewer than 20 percent of Luchterhand's interviewees reported having stolen from another inmate. An additional 10 percent contemplated stealing. Such small numbers do not substantiate Bauman's theory that inmates gave up all moral constraints in order to survive. Were there people who were reduced to animalistic behavior? I am certain that there were such people. Some admit it, others will not. But what ought to be a challenge to sociologists is the question of why most victims were able to maintain moral constraints and act humanely towards others in such extreme conditions of barbarity.

Bauman's tendency toward "blaming the victim" reminds me of Terrence Des Pres' observation:

> [W]e tend to deny the survivor's voice. We join in a "conspiracy of silence," and undermine the survivor's authority by pointing to his guilt. If he is guilty, then perhaps it is true that victims of atrocity collaborate in their own destruction.... And if he is guilty, then the survivor's suffering ... is deserved. (*The Survivor*, 41)

Given that Bauman's article is amongst the first in which children of Holocaust survivors are presented to readers of TIKKUN, many of whom are children of Holocaust survivors—including, by the way, me—I am troubled by the Bauman psychobabble, and by the lack of seriousness demonstrated in Bauman's description of a group of Jews who share a common social trauma in their family background. Furthermore, as having formed (together with Bella Savran, in 1976) the first therapeutic groups for children of Holocaust survivors—and having trained numerous mental-health professionals and educators—my research and experience suggest that second generation groups and organizations have not perpetuated a victim mentality.

Growing up with Holocaust-survivor parents does not result in a personality disorder. For the most part, systematic research that employs control groups shows that this sociological group of Jewish adults is a well functioning one. Among them are no more psychotics or psychopaths or paranoids or depressives than in any other social group. Nonetheless, children of survivors knowingly or unknowingly undergo a mourning process, mourning people, and a community, they never knew. In extreme cases, this mourning may result in a need to identify with that pain and suffering by experiencing the pain in the present.

By banding together in "self-help" or leader-led therapy groups, or in organizational activities (such as the International Network of Children of Jewish Holocaust Survivors), the trauma of the Holocaust can be alleviated. Members of these groups begin to integrate their family's social catastrophe and numerous losses as part of their identity, rather than experiencing the Holocaust as their total identity. By having an opportunity to mourn collectively, an isolating, overwhelming experience takes on new meaning and possibilities. Bauman is correct in suggesting that the "memory of suffering does not assure life-long dedication to the fight

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against inhumanity, cruelty, and the infliction of pain as such, wherever they happen and whoever are the sufferers." However, for many children of survivors, the ability to mourn enables them to transform the memory of suffering into life-affirming actions. Those who might have initially joined groups because of a sense of victimization are moved along in a process towards channeling their feelings of guilt, rage, grief, and helplessness into a search for meaning that often engenders a need to work on *tikkun olam*. Indeed, many children of survivors have transcended victimhood and become effective leaders in the Jewish community as political and moral voices.

Bauman focuses, however, on a single, awful, aberration (the massacre by Baruch Goldstein of the Muslim worshippers in Hebron), claims this was the moral response of Holocaust victim mentality, and elevates it to a norm of the Jewish generation after the Holocaust. But how many children of survivors have gone out to kill? Had Bauman interviewed children of survivors in Israel—as a serious researcher would do—he would discover the moral angst with which this group has struggled during the years of the intifada.

Many children of survivors have transcended victimhood and become effective leaders in the Jewish community as political and moral voices.

Bauman does not fault only direct heirs of the Holocaust as having a victim mentality. He attributes the role of "Holocaust children," the hereditary victim, to every Jew, whatever his or her parents might have been "doing in the war." Yet Bauman ignores the reality that both prior to and after World War II, the American Jewish leadership and infrastructure were in a very real way in the "denial stage" of mourning. When the ghost of the Holocaust reproduces itself, it often indicates an inability to mourn. For many "Holocaust children," real or pretenders, who have mourned our communal tragedy, continuity means not forgetting the life that the dead wanted to live, the vibrant culture that was destroyed, and the books that were burnt. And indeed, the American Jewish communal agenda is shifting to reflect the cries of the real voices of the Holocaust victims. These voices are not the voices of the victim who is looking for his or her next persecutor. The emphasis is not on rage, anger, or retribution, but rather on life-affirming and healing vehicles of Jewish tradition, Jewish texts, Jewish family values, and Jewish community. ❑

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Abraham Joshua Heschel

Recasting Hasidism for Moderns

Arthur Green

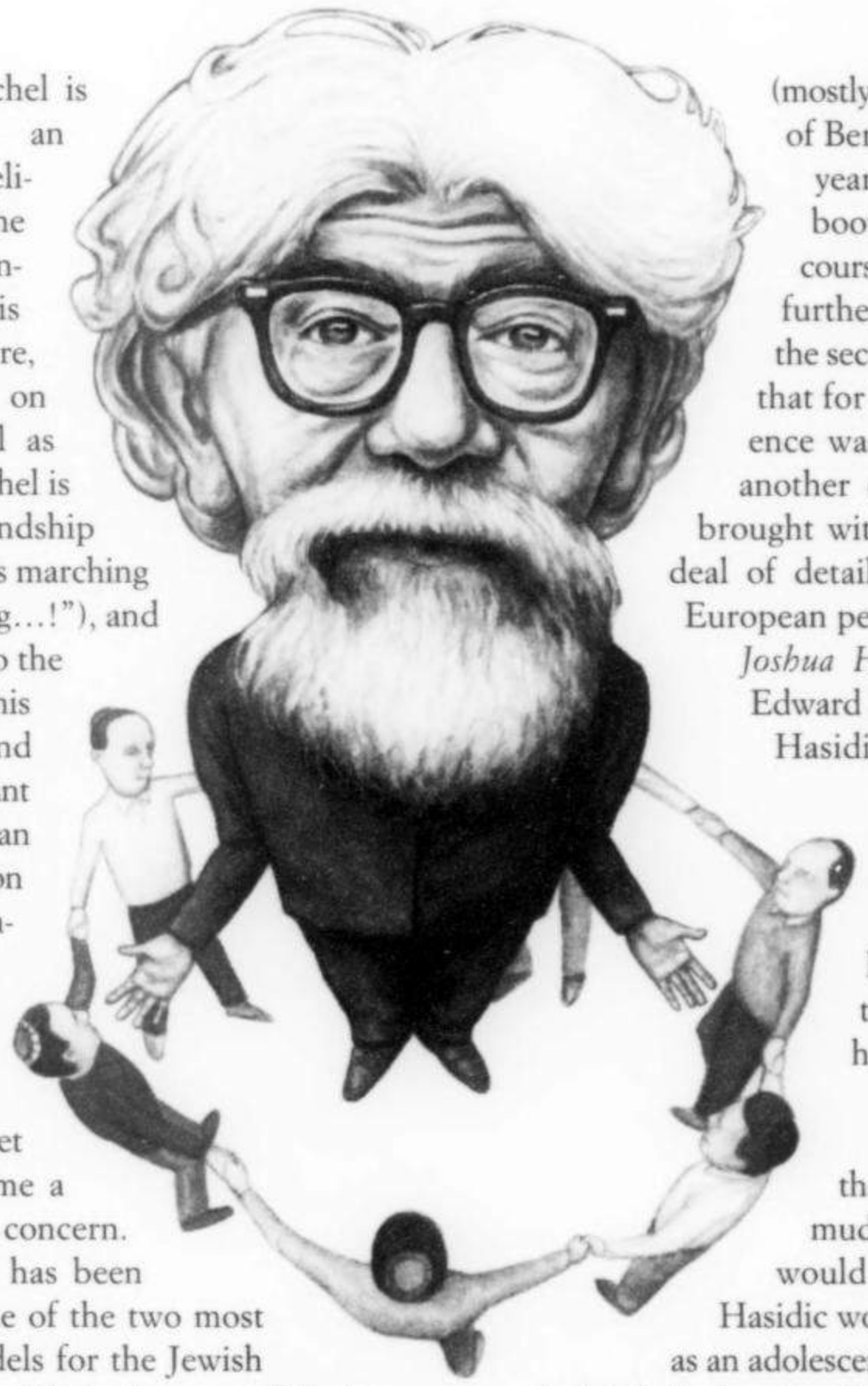


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Abraham Joshua Heschel is generally seen as an American Jewish religious thinker. When he is taught, it is primarily in the context of American Judaism. His mature works were published here, and his greatest impact was on Americans, Christians as well as Jews. In the public realm, Heschel is best remembered for his friendship with Martin Luther King, Jr., his marching at Selma ("My feet were praying…!"), and his leading role in opposition to the war in Vietnam. In addition to his great life-work as theologian and Judaic scholar, he made important contributions to Jewish/Christian relations (especially in connection with Vatican II), religious education, and the shaping of the American rabbinate. His voice, alongside that of Elie Wiesel, was among the first to be raised for the plight of Soviet Jewry, years before this became a subject of international Jewish concern. Through us, his students, he has been (along with Martin Buber) one of the two most important influences and models for the Jewish renewal movement, beginning with the havurot of the late 1960s. Heschel helped us to recover and articulate a sense of spirituality within Judaism. Translating that religion of spiritual insight and sensibility into one of imperative and action was Heschel's greatest task, and remains ours.

But Heschel, both the man and the thinker, was formed in Europe. When he arrived in America in 1940, at the age of thirty-three, the three major shaping influences on his life were already in place: the Hasidic world of his childhood, the (mostly Jewish) intellectual community of Berlin, and the experience of five years of living in, and finally being booted out of, Nazi Germany. Of course he was influenced and refined further by the land in which he lived the second half of his life. But I believe that for Heschel the American experience was seen largely through one or another of these three lenses that he brought with him from Europe. (A great deal of detailed information on Heschel's European period can be found in *Abraham Joshua Heschel: Prophetic Witness* by Edward Kaplan and Samuel Dresner.)

Hasidic Warsaw was the first part of that European experience. Heschel was the scion of several of the great Hasidic families of Eastern Europe. For at least five or six generations, virtually all of his male ancestors had been Hasidic *rebbes*. Raised to continue in the family tradition, it was at first assumed that young Heschel, who was a talmudic as well as a spiritual prodigy, would be a great figure within the Hasidic world. He left it behind, however, as an adolescent, something of a rebel, seeking the kind of education that his extended family obviously would have preferred that he do without. The Hasidic world of Warsaw was too narrow for him; he saw the smallmindedness that necessarily resulted from the tremendous effort expended to shut out the modern world. He also experienced the constant bickering that went on among the various dynasties, all of them led by men who were there because of their lineage, but few of whom retained the charismatic qualities that had first made the progenitors of their lines into *rebbes*.

Hasidism thus existed for Heschel as something he had left behind, a world to which he no longer fully belonged. Yet it seems he still felt that Hasidism belonged to him. His

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reading of Judaism was in many ways a Hasidic one. *The Sabbath* is a work possible only against the background of Hasidism—the grand entryway into *God in Search of Man*, the language of depth theology, the journey through awe, wonder, and mystery, all draw on the Hasidic consciousness. Heschel retained much affection for, and a certain loyalty to, Hasidism throughout his American years. For example, at the same time as he was writing his great theological classics (*Man Is Not Alone*, 1951; *Man's Quest for God*, 1954; *God in Search of Man*, 1956), he was also publishing, in Hebrew, meticulously researched historical articles on the early generations of Hasidism.(These studies have now been translated under the title *The Circle of the Ba'al Shem Tov*, edited by Samuel Dresner.) Some of this renewed interest in his own closest roots, of course, was sharpened by the terrible sense of loss Heschel felt after the Holocaust.

In 1944, when the dimensions of European Jewry's loss had become clear, Heschel was invited by the leadership of YIVO, the Yiddish Scientific Institute in New York (itself a recent transplant from Vilna), to deliver a memorial lecture. This magnificent piece of Yiddish oratory, *The East European Jew* (published in Yiddish in 1946), was expanded and translated as *The Earth Is the Lord's* (New York: Henry Schuman, 1950). Along with Roman Vishniac's photos in *Polish Jews*, this work served as the most significant kaddish for the Holocaust that was available to most American Jews for nearly twenty years. In it Heschel overcame any distance, either geographical or critical, that the Berlin years had placed between him and the world of his childhood. In the early post-war years Heschel came to see himself as one of the last who really understood that lost universe; he was the lone survivor in the tale of Job, the one who says, "I alone have escaped to tell thee." His re-adoption of the name "Joshua" during or immediately after the War, a change that made his name instantly recognizable to Polish Jews as that of a Hasidic rebbe, was certainly part of this, a partial willingness to reassume the mantle of family heritage. (When Hasidism was re-created in New York a decade or more later, partly by some of his own surviving relatives, Heschel remained somewhat distant. Smallmindedness, he was reminded, had also survived the destruction; there were good reasons why he had left Warsaw.)

Heschel was the product of two distinct realms within the Hasidic world: the traditions of Miedzhybozh, home of the Ba'al Shem Tov, the movement's 18th century founder, and Kotsk, home of Rabbi Mendel, the great mid-19th century reformer of Polish Hasidism. These memories were transmitted via the very different dynasties of Ruzhin and Ger. Heschel's father, great-great grandson of the Apter Rav, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel of Opatow (Yiddish: Apt; 1755–1825), grew up in Miedzhybozh, first "capital" of the Hasidic world, where his distinguished ancestor had settled. All the traditions of Ukrainian Hasidism, including those of the Maggid of Miedzyrzec, successor to the Ba'al Shem Tov, and R. Levi Yizhak of Berdichev, were carried in his family. Living in Warsaw, however, young Heschel's education was dominated by the very different style—sharper, more demanding, intellectually rigorous, and somewhat cynical—of Kotsk and Ger.

Looking in retrospect at Heschel's mature thought, we may say that the key themes of his complex writings are the loftiest mysteries of existence as perceived, celebrated, and challenged by the questioning religious mind. He seeks to create an inspired phenomenology of religious living around such themes as the mutual relationship of God and person, our human need for God, and the question of whether God has any need for us. Ever fascinated by the claim that each person is God's image, he reflects profoundly on the nature of humanity and the role of community and leadership. Seeking out the point of interconnection between human society and the divine, he re-examines and clarifies the place of prophecy, revelation, and commandment, as well as the human response to these in prayer and the power of deeds. Although all of these mighty questions are addressed from a specifically Jewish (and often Biblical) point of view, they are framed in a universal human context, addressing the non-Jewish reader as well as the Jew.

It is Heschel's universalism, including the fact that he was loved and appreciated by so many non-Jewish readers, that makes him a uniquely American phenomenon. It was widely felt that Heschel was no mere apologist or defender of tradition, but a person of authentic spiritual experience, rooted deeply in his own Hasidic background. But what did Heschel learn from the Hasidic traditions he knew so well with regard to these central themes of his future thought? What did Heschel absorb of the multilayered Hasidic milieu from which he came? How is it present in his thought, and—last but by no means least—in what ways was he at pains to transform it?

In answering these questions one must make use of all of Heschel's varied writings, published in four languages and over the course of his lifetime and later. But Heschel's first published work, a collection of poems called *Der Shem Hamefoiresh: Mentsh* (Warsaw, 1933) is of special significance. The title itself, translated as *The Divine Name: Man*, sets the tone of religious humanism that so characterizes all of Heschel's writings. Many specific themes developed later make their earliest appearance in the poems collected in this clearly highly personal and revealing volume.

COURTESY OF SUSANNAH HESCHEL

It is in five areas that Heschel's roots within Hasidism may be seen as significant. First, his work is Hasidic in that it maintains a sense of wonder about God who fills the universe. The Biblical exclamation, "The whole earth is filled with His glory!" and the Zohar's, "There is no place devoid of Him!" become twin watchwords of the Hasidic consciousness. This is the core religious experience of the Ba'al Shem Tov, around which all of Hasidism crystallized: there exists neither time nor place where God cannot be found by one who has the inner training and courage to open the eyes to see. From the *Upright Practices* of Rabbi Menahem Nahum of Chernobyl:

> Believe with a whole and strong faith that "the whole earth is filled with His glory!" and that "there is no place devoid of Him." His blessed glory inhabits all that is. This glory serves as a garment, as the sages taught: "Rabbi Yohanan called his garment 'glory'." His divine self wears all things as one wears a cloak, as Scripture says: "You give life to them all."

His work is Hasidic in that it maintains a sense of wonder about God who fills the universe.

To see this, and to show it to others, is the task of the *zaddik* or "righteous one," the holy person of Hasidism. Listen to young Heschel's bold self-description in the poem "Intimate Hymn":

> I have come to sow the seed of sight in the world,
> To unmask the God who disguises Himself as world

Like many of the lines in Heschel's poems, this one has to be read quite carefully. The Yiddish "*kh'bin gekumen zayen zeyen in der velt*" is a line of great power and daring. The "I have come" formula is attributed to the Ba'al Shem Tov in numerous sources, explaining the meaning of his mission. It is a kind of formulation familiar in the speeches of other great religious teachers as well. Young Heschel does not appropriate it lightly. The line reveals that he thinks of himself as having a mission of bringing religious awareness to others.

But here that statement is also connected to Psalm 97:11, "Light is sown for the righteous," one of the Biblical verses most often quoted and interpreted in Hasidic writings. The divine light is hidden, sown into the ground, buried behind the mask of nature. I am here, Heschel says, "to sow sight," to help others discover that hidden light. It is a line the Ba'al Shem Tov could well have used about himself.

For the Biblical authors, prophets, and Psalmist alike, it was clear that the wonders of Creation were a primary testament to the workings of God. To know God, one needed to appreciate and revere His handiwork. This view of nature as a testament to God diminished significantly in the Talmudic age and it may be said that both the Kabbalists and the Hasidim sought to restore it to its place of primacy. The Kabbalists (I refer to the sefirotic Kabbalah of the 13th century) did so by means of symbolism: nature is glorified through the fact that images of the natural world (often taken from the landscape imagery of the Psalter or the Song of Songs) are included in the symbol-clusters used to describe aspects of the divine self: *sefirot* are streams and rivers; aspects of the Godhead are described as sun and moon, sky and earth, etc.

In Hasidism the restoration of nature is done quite directly, without need for the symbolic bridge. All the world is a cloak or mask, which hides behind it the great light of God. Hasidism sings the glories of all Creation, but especially the forest, so much a reality in the East European landscape of the 18th century. This is the forest to which the Ba'al Shem Tov, as a child, would run away from *kheyder* (school) to be alone with God. This is the forest of Rabbi Nahman's tales, where one can truly lose and find oneself. This is also the forest of Heschel, the student in Vilna, who covers his head in reverence when going for a walk in the local forest, and who writes in a poem called "I Befriend Forests":

> You are a soul incognito,
> My beloved tree…
>
> As I step lightly into the forest
> How tree-like I become!
> "Grandfather! Grandfather!" I call to the spruce
> Your offspring has come to you.

In the Yiddish, "My beloved tree" is *Sertse mayns, O boim*. The choice of the Slavic word *sertse* for "beloved" is unusual; it contains an echo of Levi Yizhak, who was known to use that term in a parable about a lovable drunk who calls everyone *sertse*. Here that love is extended farther, into the natural world.

The sense of wonder, which Heschel so well understands to be basic to all religious consciousness, may be traced right back to Abraham, in a famous passage from the ancient Midrash on Genesis that Heschel quotes several times:

> Abraham may be compared to a man travelling from place to place who came upon a *birah doleqet* [usually translated as "a burning palace," but Heschel insisted that it could also be rendered: "a palace full of light"]. Could it be, he said, that there is no one to care for the palace? The owner looked out at him and said: I am the master of the palace. Similarly, since Abraham our Father wondered: Could it be that there is no one to care for the world? the blessed Holy One looked out at him and said: I am master of the world.

Here is R. Mordecai Joseph of Izbica (d. 1853/54), originally a disciple of the Kotsker rebbe, on that same passage:

> [The prayerbook] says: "He does wonders … renewing each day the work of Creation." But what renewal is there if Creation is renewed each day? Doesn't the renewal itself become habitual? What then is left of it?

> The fact is, however, that God makes the habitual into something new, bringing wonder into the hearts of those who hope in Him, so that of each thing they say: "Who created these?"
>
> Thus it was with Abraham our Father, of blessed memory. The world had gone on for some time before he came along, with no one asking or wondering about its conduct. *In Abraham's heart there was very great wonder*. "Might you say the palace has no owner? Who is the palace's owner? When God saw that his questions were not those of the natural scientist, but that he *truly* wanted to know "Who created these?" *in order to serve Him*, and had rejected all worldly pleasures for this sake, the blessed Lord had to reveal Himself and show him that He was indeed Master of the palace.

Both in evoking wonder as a key to the growth of religious consciousness and in distinguishing scientific approaches to nature from that of the devotee, Heschel is faithful to these roots in Polish Hasidism. Though Izbica Hasidism broke off from that of Kotsk, this passage is a faithful reflection of the Kotsk/Ger tradition in which Heschel was first schooled.

A second aspect of Heschel's Hasidism is his understanding that God, God's existence, and divine providence, are not to be proven. Although he sees himself as a philosopher (a point long debated among his critics), logical argumentation was hardly his forte. Heschel in fact saw himself as engaged in redeeming the word "philosophy" itself from the hands of those who had rendered it dispassionate and "objective," those so caught up in the analysis of argument and critical "distance" that they were forced into indifference to the horrors of our age. The person of faith does not argue, but *witnesses*. The God of Hasidism, despite all the pantheistic formulations, is also the God of Abraham, not that of Aristotle. For this God, postulates mean nothing. The God of Abraham is the God of living faith, not a God whose existence has to be assumed for philosophic reasons.

Here Heschel stands counter to the neo-Kantians of his age. He does not seek a God whose existence will be presumed or postulated in order to provide a basis for moral absolutes. Heschel believes that the real existence of God does in fact demand moral absolutes, to be sure. But the reality of faith comes first, and it is one to which the person of faith can and must always testify, but which he or she cannot prove. Heschel's work and life collectively constitute that testimony, of which he said in an early poem:

> How miniscule my offering,
>
> My gift, my way of honoring
> Your presence. What can I do
> But go about the world and swear
> Not just believe—but testify and swear.

The Jew as witness who testifies to God's greatness is key to the Hasidic legacy of Ger. The festivals are frequently described by the Sefat Emet, the key writing of that tradition, as times of special witnessing, connecting the term *mo'ed* (festival) with *'ed*, meaning "witness." (I have recently published a bilingual volume of selections from that work entitled *The Language of Truth: Teachings from the Sefat Emet,* Jewish Publication Society, 1998.) Its author's son, Rabbi Abraham Mordecai of Ger (who was rebbe while Heschel studied in the movement's schools), noted that the concluding two paragraphs of the daily liturgy, the *'alenu*, each of which begins with the letter *'ayin* and ends with the letter *dalet*, form the word *'ed*, serving as the two required witnesses testifying to the sincerity of our prayers. Both Sinai itself and the daily recitation of the *shema* are taken in the Ger tradition as moments of universal witness.

> God has chosen the Children of Israel as His own portion. One might think that this would make for a greater distance between God and the other nations. But actually just the opposite is true. This was God's deeper plan: to bring all nations near to Him by means of Israel … for they are God's emissaries, to bring all creatures near to Him.
>
> This is the meaning of: "The Lord spoke all these words, saying: 'I am the Lord your God' (Ex. 20:1–2)." … The intent is that Israel speak these words, drawing them into rung after rung, until all creatures are brought close to God. The life-force of all is in the Torah, and all are to be redeemed by the power of Torah. This is the meaning of "saying" in that verse: every one of Israel has to bear witness to the Creator each day. Twice a day we say "Hear, O Israel." These words shine forth to all the world, to all who are created.… This becomes the oral Torah, of which we say: "Eternal life has He emplanted within us." The words of Torah were absorbed into their souls … their very selves became Torah.

Here is Hasidism, a highly particularist and exclusivist reading of Judaism, veering as close as it ever does to the universalist edge. The Oral Torah is the Torah that we speak, proclaiming God's truth before the world each day. Heschel, an avid reader of the Sefat Emet, would have rejoiced at finding such a passage. That is the level of testimony of which each Jew is capable, daily bearing witness to the world—not just believing, but testifying and swearing. Or, in the words of Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav: "I *am* a 'know what to answer the heretic!'" R. Nahman means to say that his life itself, not only his teachings, serves to refute the heretics' claims. Heschel would agree that life itself is testimony.

A third sense in which Heschel speaks as one emerging from the Hasidic tradition: he understands that a Jew speaks to God out of a continuous unbroken relationship with the entire Jewish past. There is no radical break called "modernity" in the face of which all things must change and old sources be set aside. Despite his full and pained awareness of the times in which he lived, and his activist commit-

ment to social change, Heschel also still lived in a world where Avraham Avinu (Abraham our Father), Moshe Rabbenu (Moses our Teacher), R. Akiva, the Rambam (Maimonides), and Levi Yizhak (Heschel's ancestor, the rabbi of Berdichev) were all living figures, persons with whom one could, and did, enter into dialogue. In this his thinking and writing are very different from those of modern Jewish theologians who write in the more Western mode, and who are themselves intellectually and spiritually much more assimilated into modernity, plagued by historical self-consciousness when quoting pre-modern Jewish sources. Heschel in this remains an East European Jew and a scion of Hasidism.

A look at the footnotes to *God in Search of Man* is most instructive as to the nature of Heschel's Judaism. Biblical and Rabbinic sources are passed on through an unbroken chain that includes the classic philosophical/ethical works of Saadya, Bahya, Halevi, and Maimonides, but also, quite frequently, the Zohar, as well as the Kabbalistic classic *Two Tablets of the Covenant* by R. Isaiah Horowitz of Prague (17th century), and a wide array of Hasidic works, both of the early Ukrainian and the later Polish schools. Although Heschel was well trained in modern philosophy and certainly was quite familiar with the writings of Western Jewish intellectuals in the 19th and early 20th centuries, reference to them is extremely sparse. Heschel liked to spar "anonymously" with his contemporaries. This too is in the Hasidic tradition, where contemporaneous authors rarely make direct reference to one another.

Heschel understands that a Jew speaks to God out of a continuous unbroken relationship with the entire Jewish past.

The fourth point is that Heschel knows the world is in need of great charismatic religious figures. Such people can have tremendous power and effect upon those around them. Heschel grew up nourished by tales of such people, "with my mother's milk," as he used to say. In the classic Hasidic tradition, of course, the transformative power of the holy man's words affected not only people, but God. "The blessed Holy One issues a decree but the *zaddik* can cancel it" is a talmudic dictum that underlies the popular Hasidic belief in the efficacy of wonder-working rabbis' prayers. It seems rather clear that Heschel was not one to take this belief too literally. Without some rebellion, at least on this level, he never could have left Warsaw. Well-trained to the Kotsker's critical view of Hasidism, he saw such claims as being of very varied merit. Later, of course, he was also enough of an insider to the years of post-Holocaust trauma, when such claims seemed so utterly hollow, that he could not trumpet them. But this does not mean that he abandoned the Hasidic faith in charismatic leadership and its role in human religious community. Much of his intellectual life, after all, was devoted to the prophets, their experience of God, and their message. It is hard to imagine that images of the Hasidic masters, especially of the Kotsker, did not cross his mind as he read and considered the prophets.

I would like to suggest that the prophets served a similar role for Heschel to that served by the Hasidic masters for Martin Buber. Each of these men had to look elsewhere—Buber to Hasidic Eastern Europe, Heschel to the distant past of ancient Israel—for examples of the holy and charismatic figures that both men strove to become and knew were so much needed in our day. The Hasidic masters were too close for Heschel to use them as his primary example; he knew too much of their failings to put them on the sort of pedestal that the more distant Buber could. Heschel could have been a Hasidic rebbe, after all, but had chosen not to become one. But the figure of the prophet, the topic of Heschel's doctoral dissertation in Berlin in 1936 and a major book (*The Prophets*) in 1962, emphasizing the experience of pathos and identification with God as the core of the prophetic phenomenon, surely bears echoes of such religious figures as Heschel knew them in the Hasidic setting. The Hasidic yearning for *true* charisma is alive and well in Heschel.

As for the claim that the true Hasidic master could negate the divine decree, Heschel was able to re-read it in the spirit of R. Levi Yizhak, who insisted that the decree that the zaddik can nullify (or better here: "transform") is nothing other than Torah itself!

> A basic principle in God's service: we … believe in two Torahs: written and oral, both given by a single Shepherd.… The written Torah was given us by Moses, God's faithful servant, in writing etched on the tablets, black fire on white fire. The oral Torah given to Moses is its interpretation, including "everything a faithful student is ever to discover." This means that the oral Torah as given to us essentially follows the interpretation of the *zaddikim* of the generation. *As they interpret the Torah, so it is.* This great power has been given us by the Creator out of love for Israel, His chosen people. All the worlds follow their will in Torah. Thus did the sages say: The Holy One issues a decree, but the *zaddik* may nullify it.

It does not seem far-fetched to say that this is what Heschel sought to do for his own era: to be the charismatic voice that had survived and come to the new world, re-articulating the truth of Torah in a new language, for a new generation. By the time of *Man Is Not Alone*, Heschel has accepted the obligation not to flee from this attractive, yet terribly frightening and overpowering, role. The legacy he had left behind in Warsaw had indeed caught up with him.

Finally, Heschel is Hasidic in his belief that human deeds matter, that our efforts at doing good, however meager they may seem, make a real difference. That which man does affects the cosmos. This is the essence of the R. Akiva school's position as Heschel describes it in the first volume of his *Torah min ha-Shamayim (Theology of Ancient Judaism*, 1962). Whether it is the battle of Israel against Amalek, the need to redeem God Himself from Egypt or Babylon, or the devotional meaning of animal sacrifice (seemingly containing an element of "feeding" or sustaining God, our Sustainer), the point is that human deeds and intents have a mysterious power that stretches beyond where we can see. This is related to R. Akiva's vision of love as the essence of Torah, and hence his strong continuation of the prophetic sense of *pathos*, here mostly seen as divine participation in human suffering.

This belief in the ability of human actions to affect God, or in a God, if you prefer, who in His love for humans makes Himself vulnerable to being affected by them, grows among the Kabbalists, the medieval heirs to the Akivan position in this debate. Nahmanides is the key figure here, the medieval embodiment of R. Akiva's view, as opposed to Maimonides, whose opinions may be seen as an extension of those of R. Ishmael. It is Nahmanides who popularizes the term "divine need" as a way to describe both the Temple service and the ritual and prayer life of the community of Israel. God's own wholeness, according to this view, is dependent upon the flow of spiritual energy given forth by Israel's devotion to the commandments. From Nahmanides, and borne aloft partly by his own prestige, both term and idea pass into the mainstream of Kabbalistic thought. In Hasidism this notion of the cosmic power of human deeds comes to be embodied chiefly in the zaddik. This is the theoretical basis for all the tales claiming that each time the rebbe moves his little finger, he moves the upper worlds along with them. Thus our fourth and fifth points, the role of the charismatic figure and the mysterious power of deeds, tend to converge in Hasidism.

What is the purpose of the religious life? Are we out to affect God or to help the world? Is it the union of the *sefirot*, the restoration of cosmic harmony, that the zaddik seeks to bring about by his deeds, or is it this-worldly goods, the healing energies for those human and domestic ills that the people seem to hope for when they ask the zaddik's blessing? This debate is carried on throughout the Hasidic sources. On the one hand, since Israel—and especially the righteous—have the power to affect the upper worlds, how dare one think of anything less? Petition for blessings for this world seems trivial, almost demeaning, to the herculean efforts of the zaddik to sustain the cosmos and protect the Shekhinah from the evil forces. Surely the highest form of worship is for God's sake; do it "like the servant who seeks not to receive reward," as one of the early Hasidic manuals intentionally misreads the well-known passage in *Pirkey Avot*. True worship requires utter selflessness, as though you did not exist in this world at all.

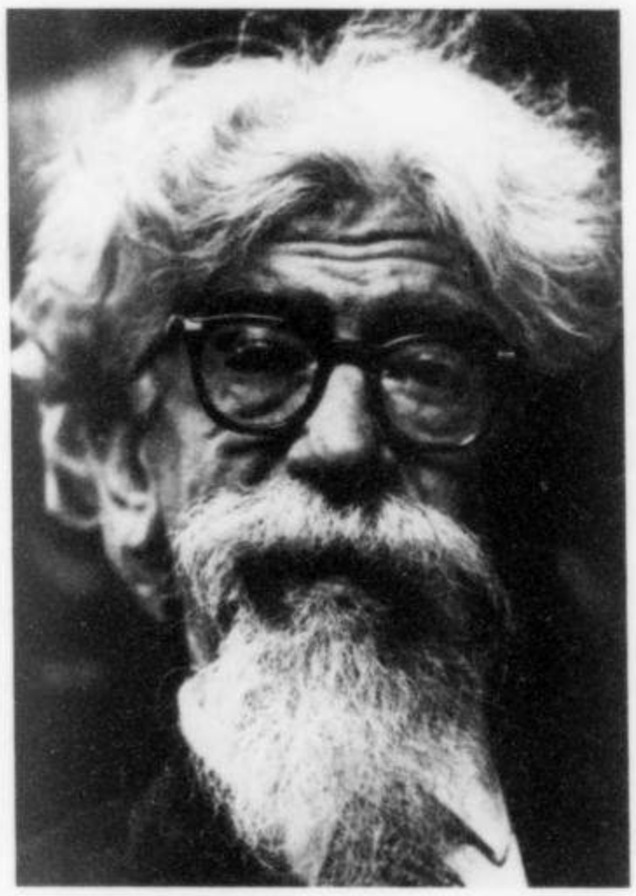
But all those lofty pronouncements co-exist with the zaddik as we know him in social context, a side of Hasidism that also has its intellectual defense. The zaddik cares so much for the world, loves his people so dearly, that he wants to bring them blessings. This is, after all, why Hasidism forced the ancient Jewish zaddik-figure out of hiding. The *lamed vav*/thirty-six hidden righteous could have sustained the cosmos by their prayers without being known to anyone; perhaps they could have done so better if left undisturbed. By proclaiming the virtues of the *public* holy man over the hidden one, Hasidism precisely wanted him to serve as a link between the upper and lower worlds, to be the conduit of divine bounty in the world.

An interesting debate took place on this matter between two schools of Hasidism, the HaBaD tradition, in the person of R. Shneur Zalman of Liadi, and his close friend and in-law, R. Levi Yizhak. In theory the debate was about the religious life of Avraham Avinu and in general of the generations that preceded Sinai. R. Shneur Zalman claims that Abraham's religious life was that of a good Kabbalist: his primary attention was given to the uniting of the upper worlds. The effect he had on those around him was quite incidental to the real focus of his labors. He had to bring the infinite light into the vessels of the sefirot. The spiritual "commandments" he fulfilled were tied entirely to the clearing of 613 channels above, so the lights could flow properly.

According to tradition, Abraham was not yet truly commanded, as we are since Sinai, concerning Torah and mitzvot. Therefore, according to HaBaD, only with receiving the Torah do we begin what is called "worship by means of Torah and commandments," which is what is needed to cause God's presence to dwell in this world. HaBaD, the product of a true elitist strain within Hasidism, was never concerned with the flow of divine bounty into this world, sensing that prayers for such blessings always bordered on vulgarity. But the bringing of divine presence and energy into this corporeal world sufficient to justify its existence, or quasi-existence, takes place only from Sinai onward. Before Torah and commandments there is no way for humans to bring divinity into the corporeal world at all; the world is sustained simply by divine grace.

Levi Yizhak takes an entirely different approach. He contrasts Abraham not with Moses, but with his contemporary Melchizedek. The latter served God by pure formless devotion, as did Abraham until he entered the land. But once Abraham came into the Holy Land his mantle of pre-Sinaitic commandments was whole, even if undertaken voluntarily. Because this service involved corporeal actions, it served to bring blessing into the lower world, that which

Melchizedek's formless and "pure" religion was unable to do. Levi Yizhak's Abraham cares about this world and its need for "ordinary" blessings, what he frequently calls the "miracles within nature." Abraham was already working to bring the Shekhinah down to earth, tying upper and lower worlds together, and thus bringing about this-worldly blessing. He did it through the single mitzvah of circumcision; he did it by his very willingness to do the commandments. The point is that *any* holy deed can bring God's presence into the world; it doesn't require the specifically Jewish form of Torah and commandments.



Heschel, in this debate, stands firmly with Levi Yitzhak. He understood Abrahamic piety in its broadest sense; this is a major reason why he and his thought have been so popular among Christians. Abraham understands and empathizes with the "pure devotion" religion of Melchizedek, but he is given the chance to go beyond it to Judaism, a life of sacred this-worldly *deeds*. (Could Levi Yizhak have realized the role he was taking in the ongoing Jewish-Christian debate?) But Heschel goes beyond Levi Yitzhak. The holy deed of which Heschel writes with such passion is not limited to the ritual sphere and is surely not the exclusive property of Jews. Holiness is brought into the deed by devotion, by wholeness of heart. This can be done of any person; it is necessarily universal, since each of us is the divine image. To limit the potential of holy doing to Jews alone or to specific "commandments" alone, Heschel would tell us, is *le-ma'et et ha-demut*, a diminishing of God's image.

Heschel takes the Kabbalistic/Hasidic view of Judaism and its commandments most seriously. He understands that it gives an infinity of meaning to the religious act that no claim of the spontaneous celebration of God's presence (Buber) and no debate about autonomy or heteronomy (Hermann Cohen) could ever provide. Here one is doing something for God, offering a gift of mysterious and unfathomable significance. But Heschel's creativity lies in the great subtlety with which he treats this theme of "the deed," which serves as the climax of his philosophy. Heschel is no Kabbalist; he does not want to say in any coarse or simplistic way that the mitzvot fulfill a divine need. But he does want to say that human actions done in holiness, deeds that seek to fulfill God's will in this world, are an infinite source of blessing to God and to the world. Here are his words on the subject, from the concluding pages of *Man Is Not Alone*:

> Piety, finally, is allegiance to the will of God. Whether that will is understood or not, it is accepted as good and holy, and is obeyed in faith.... All the pious man's thoughts and plans revolve around this concern, and nothing can distract him or turn him from the way.... His preoccupation with the will of God is not limited to a section of his activities, but his great desire is to place his whole life at the disposal of God. In this he finds the real meaning of life.... In this way, he feels that whatever he does, he is ascending step by step a ladder leading to the ultimate. In aiding a creature, he is helping the Creator. In succoring the poor, he fulfills a concern of God. In admiring the good, he reveres the spirit of God. In loving the pure, he is drawn to Him. In promoting the right, he is directing things toward His will, in which all aims must terminate.... The glory of a man's devotion to the good becomes a treasure of God on earth.

Torah and commandments, as Judaism classically knows them, are part of this, to be sure. But the boundaries of good deeds are expanded beyond all limitation. Heschel has subtly turned around the order of priorities. The Kabbalists offered their most mystery-laden teachings around certain *ritual* deeds, especially those that seemed to defy explanation. The secrets of *tefillin*, *lulav*, and *shofar* are the great and mysterious sacraments of the Kabbalistic tradition. Without invalidating these, Heschel chooses the other half of the commandments, those between person and person, or the ethical duties, to be the chief focus of his glorification of the deed. Yes, the mitzvot are indeed divine need, he says, but it is in the first case these commandments—the life of goodness and justice—that God needs of us. In doing this, of course, Heschel again makes the link between the Hasidic masters he knew and the prophets of ancient Israel. The God who needs us to live holy lives, to be His witness in the world, by loving goodness and doing justice, is a God who is rooted in Isaiah and Jeremiah as well as in Levi Yitzhak. The message is a Biblical one, one that the world can again learn from us, one that needs to be shared and made real by marching in Selma, by speaking out against unjust war.

Heschel is very much to be read as a Neo-Hasidic thinker. He comes from that place in the Hasidic tradition that loves the commandments, seeing them as God's great gift to us as a means to be close to him, even as a meeting-place between the divine and human spirit. Not mere requirements of the law-code or ways to fence about our evil urge, the mitzvot are the means by which we reach toward transcendence. Ever the man of expansive vision, Heschel understands this to mean that God in His love for all of us humans calls upon us to do transforming deeds, to act in ways that will make our lives holy and the world more whole. The hope of humanity is that we can, and will, still respond to that voice, one that has never ceased calling out to us. ❑

JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

EMPLOYEE OWNERSHIP

(continued from page 42)

money). Downsizing is rampant. Lines of communication, news, entertainment, bank savings by the trillions, and the legislative agendas of both parties are increasingly controlled by a handful of global conglomerates. We urgently need a social movement that shifts sovereignty back to people and supplants market values with human ones.

Employee ownership can be a critical part of such a movement, but it can also help undermine it. Timber cooperatives in Oregon and Washington—America's oldest enduring employee owned firms—now boast a rich tier of worker-owners who vote Republican and are bastions of capitalist enterprise. The rise of the Mondragon cooperatives in Spain, the most famous coops in the world, helped to undermine a labor movement during a period of Basque radicalism. A more progressive employee ownership movement—that helps to dismantle corporate sovereignty rather than bolster it—must heed three principles.

First, it must create real democracy in the firm, turning the firm into a participative community. Most employee stock ownership plans (ESOPs) do not give workers a vote or any incentive to participate. The ESOPs that pass on the vote do so on a one share, one vote basis which leaves power in the hands of managers who own most of the shares. Only when every employee has one vote regardless of the number of shares they own is there a chance of true organizational democracy, and even then it will take deeper shifts in core values and managerial morality and hierarchy—something that has happened only modestly at Mondragon, and in very few American ESOPs.

Second, the employee ownership movement must champion a populist struggle for democracy in the macro market and political system. Worker-owners today, even if they democratically run their company, will subvert the community and the environment because the law as well as market competition dictate allegiance purely to the God of profit. Only a politically legislated change in corporate charters and global market rules can create real change in how corporations act—no matter who runs them.

Engaging this populist struggle means promoting the labor movement, as well as feminist, multicultural, and environmental visions. The great danger is that employee ownership will undercut the labor movement by posing as an alternative: why do we need unions if workers own the company? The answer is clear: not only can unions play a role in keeping employee owned firms truly democratic, but only a robust labor movement can lead any large-scale movement against corporate sovereignty. The employee ownership movement must stop defensively wrapping itself in the mantle of capitalism and frankly assert itself as an oppositional force aligned with the most progressive elements of labor and other social movements to challenge the market system as we know it.



Without an explicit challenge to the materialism and self-promotion of today's business culture, employee ownership can easily become greed with a human face.

Finally, the coop movement must redefine itself as a force to revolutionize our values and morality. The workers at the Oregon timber coops ended up seeing employee ownership as just a way to get rich. Without an explicit challenge to the materialism and self-promotion of today's business culture, employee ownership can easily become greed with a human face. One of the great merits of employee ownership is that it has the potential to turn the workplace into a community in which people can learn to be more loving and principled, as well as more productive. But this will happen only if the employee ownership movement explicitly challenges our current business culture, and embraces a new moral creed based on communitarian and democratic ethics.

The employee ownership movement is currently not a social movement but a business reform coalition. It is led by liberals who have turned themselves into business experts and hope to reach mainly bankers, entrepreneurs, and managers. This pragmatism, which emphasizes the tax benefits and efficiency gains of worker ownership, is understandable—even necessary—to win widespread credibility. But it is currently sabotaging the promise of the idea.

We need to put the movement back into employee ownership, linking it to the labor movement (which is increasingly receptive) and tailoring it to workers rather than elites. It is absurd to expect an employee ownership fashioned by corporate leaders or consultants to become populist, democratic, or communitarian. But there is every reason to believe that the new millenium's army of disposable workers and anxious middle classers will join a more meaningful movement for employee ownership. All it takes is talking to workers rather than their bosses—and taking seriously the idea that it is the employees who must take ownership of the employee ownership movement. ❑



THE COMING COLLAPSE *(continued from page 38)*

A bad model gives bad results. We have adopted a bad model and now we are living with the terrible consequences.

The present global power system is a transient, terminal phase in a process that began 500 years ago with the emerging Age of Reason. It has reached its zenith in the twentieth century, powered by the global arms trade and war and enabled by a soulless, greed-based economics together with a hastily developed and uniquely dangerous technology. This power system, with its transnational corporations, its giant military machines, its globalized financial system and trade, its agribusiness replacing agriculture—with its growing numbers of jobless people and people in bad jobs, with its endless refugees, its trail of damaged cultures and ecosystems, and its fatal internal flaws, is now coming apart. Realization of the machine's mortality is the necessary first step before we begin to plan and work for something better. As the great British philosopher Mary Midgley says, "The house is on fire; we must wake up from this dream and do something about it."

Looming over us is an ominous conjunction of the internal sources of breakdown I have just described with the many, interlinked ecological and social threats that I only briefly listed. What can we do? Obviously a crash as comprehensive as the one that's coming will affect all of us, but that doesn't mean that there is nothing that can be done to soften the blow. We should begin by accepting the possibility that the system will fail. While others continue to sing and dance wildly at the bottom of the avalanche slope, we can chose to leave the insane party.

I do not mean going back to some prior state or period of history that was allegedly better than the world today. Even if going back were possible, there is no halcyon period that I would want to regain. Nor do I mean isolating ourselves in supposedly avalanche-proof shelters—gated communities of like-minded idealists. No such shelter could last for long; nor would such an isolated existence be desirable. In the words of my friend, geographer Meg Holden, we should be unwilling "to admit defeat in the wager of the Enlightenment that people can create a nation based not on familial, racial, ethnic, or class ties, but on … the betterment of self only through the betterment of one's fellow citizens." There is no alternative but to move forward—a task that will place the highest demands on our ability to innovate and on our humanity.

Moving forward requires that we provide satisfying alternatives to those who have been most seriously injured by the present technology and economics. They include farmers, blue-collar workers suddenly jobless because of unfair competition from foreign slave labor or American "workfare," and countless souls whose lives and work have been made redundant by the megastores in the shopping malls. If good alternatives are not found soon, the coming collapse will inevitably provoke a terrible wave of violence born of desperation.

Creating a Shadow System

Our first task is to create a *shadow* economic, social, and even technological structure that will be ready to take over as the existing system fails. Shadow strategies are not new, and they are perfectly legal. An illustration is Winston Churchill's role in Britain before the start of World War II. Churchill was a member of the governing Conservative Party but was denied power, so he formed his own shadow organization within the party. During the 1930s, while Hitler was rearming Germany and the Conservative leadership was pretending that nothing was happening, Churchill spoke out about the war he knew was coming, and developed his own plans and alliances. When Hitler's paratroopers landed in Holland and Belgium in 1940, and Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's silk umbrella could not ward them off, Churchill was chosen by popular acclaim to replace him as prime minister. He created a dynamic war cabinet almost overnight, thanks to his shadow organization.

The shadow structure to replace the existing system will comprise many elements, with varying mixes of the practical and theoretical. These elements are springing up

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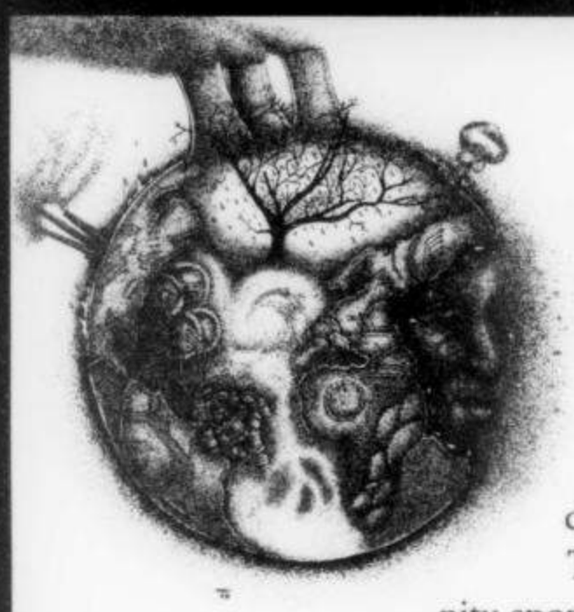
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Thich Nhat Hanh, from the Foreword

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independently, although linkages among them are beginning to appear. I will give only two examples; both are in the early stages of trial and error development.

The first is the rapid growth of community-sponsored agriculture (CSA) and the return of urban farmers' markets. In CSAs, farmers and local consumers are linked personally by formal agreements that guarantee the farmers a timely income, paid before the growing season, and the consumers a regular supply of wholesome, locally grown, often organic, produce. The first CSA project in the United States was started in 1985, in western Massachusetts, by the late Robyn Van En—just thirteen years later, there are more than 600 CSAs with over 100,000 members throughout the United States. Urban farmers' markets similarly bring city-dwellers into contact with the people who grow their food, for the benefit of both. Although difficulties abound—economic constraints for farmers whose CSAs lack enough members, the unavailability of the benefits of CSAs to the urban poor, who do not have cash to advance for subsequent deliveries of produce—creative solutions seem possible. A related development has been the burgeoning of urban vegetable gardening in cities across the country. One of the most exciting examples is the garden project started by Cathrine Sneed for inmates of the San Francisco Jail and subsequently expanded into the surrounding urban community.

On another front, less local and immediate but equally important, is the embryonic movement to redefine the rights of corporations, especially to limit the much-abused legal fiction of their "personhood." The movement would take away from corporations the personal protections granted to individuals under the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights. The Constitution does not mention corporations; state charter laws originally made it plain that corporations could exist and do business only through the continuous consent of state governments. If a corporation violated the public trust, its charter could be revoked. The loss of the public right to revoke charters of corporations and the emergence of the corporation as an entity with limited liability and the property and other personal rights of citizens, was a tragic and often corrupt chapter in nineteenth-century American law. It has led to our present condition, in which transnational corporations with no local or national allegiances control many of the government's major functions, subverting democracy and doing much to create the unstable conditions I have described.

Recapturing the government's right to issue and cancel corporate charters should be a primary goal of those trying to build a more durable and decent social, economic, and technical system. Michael Lerner, editor of TIKKUN, has suggested that we add a Social Responsibility Amendment to the Constitution containing the key provision that each corporation with annual revenues of $20 million or more must receive a new corporate charter every twenty years. Similar ideas are being advanced by Richard Grossman and Ward Morehouse of the Program on Corporations, Law & Democracy; by Peter Montague, editor of *Rachel's Environment & Health Weekly*; and by others in the United States and Canada. Although still embryonic, the movement has drawn support from both conservatives and liberals—the shadow structure is neither of the right nor the left, but is an emerging political alliance that may gain power when the transnationals decline.

In the words of Vaclav Havel, president of the Czech Republic, spoken in Philadelphia's Independence Hall on July 4, 1994: "There are good reasons for suggesting that the modern age has ended.... It is as if something were crumbling, decaying and exhausting itself, while something else, still indistinct, were arising from the rubble." What is crumbling is not only our pretentious techno-economic system but our naive faith in our ability to control and manage simultaneously all the animate and inanimate functions of this planet. What is arising—I hope in time—is a new spirit and system rooted in love of community, and love of the land and nature that sustain community. And the greatest challenge will be to make this spirit and system truly new and truly enduring by finding ways to develop our love of nature and community without returning to destructive nationalisms, without losing our post-Enlightenment concern for the common good of the rest of humankind and nature. ❑

TORAH OF MONEY *(continued from page 44)*

"Women's giving moves in the opposite direction from men's," she explains. "First a woman volunteers, or is drawn to a cause; then she writes the check," with amounts often "determined by how intimately and specifically a donor can connect" more than by "the social status of the person asking for the money." Women are wary of large-sum public giving, as they tend to "fear success as men fear failure" and to seek "an erasing of differences in order to find common ground." Most important, Jewish women are willing to "provide venture capital for ideas," in the words of one of her interviewees, Susan Crown of Chicago. While "men give to preserve institutions," Schneider concludes, "women give to create new programs."

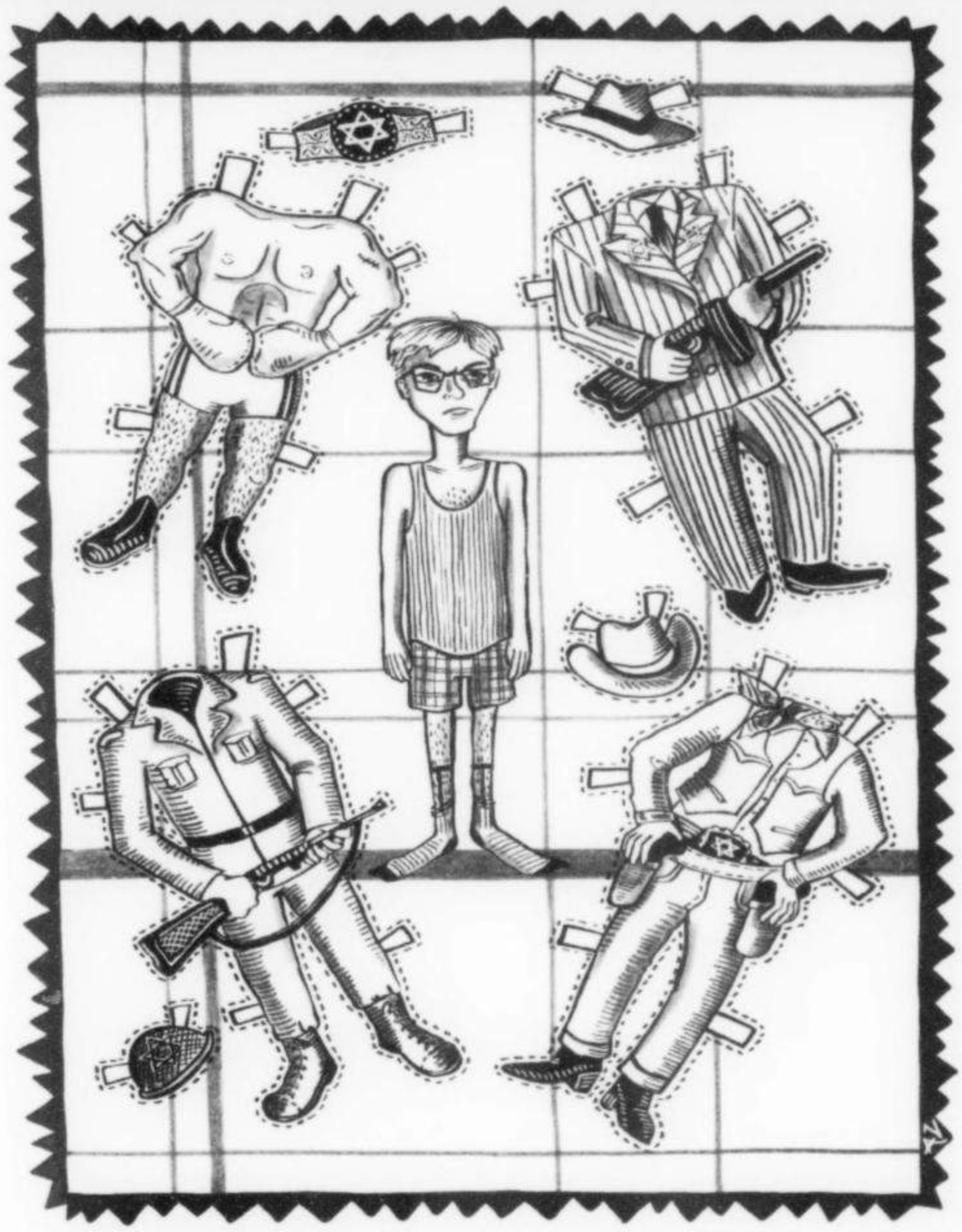
One modest example of this tendency to innovate has been The Shefa Fund's Pooled Fund for Jewish Feminist Curricula (215-247-9704), which, with only $50,000 in grants, has enabled teachers and artists to make some fundamental (and prize-winning) changes in the content of Jewish education. For a community confronting a generation gap, an intermarriage gap, and other challenging opportunities, similar efforts to provide "venture capital for ideas" are critical. ❑

REVIEW

Tough Jews: A Dissent

Andrew Furman

- *Tough Jews: Political Fantasies and the Moral Dilemma of American Jewry,* by Paul Breines. Harper Collins, 1990.
- *An Impossible Life: A Bobeh Myseh,* by David Black. Moyer Bell, 1998.
- *Tough Jews: Fathers, Sons, and Gangster Dreams,* by Rich Cohen. Simon & Schuster, 1998.



ILLUSTRATIONS BY ANDI ZEISLER

Walt Whitman, an American, one of the roughs, a Kosmos …" So the poet introduces himself in the first edition of *Leaves of Grass*, which appeared on the Fourth of July, 1855. Whitman—a gentle soul who would later serve unofficially as a nurse for both Union and Confederate soldiers during the Civil War—realized that if he were to successfully compel the country to "absorb" him to the same extent that he wanted to absorb America in his poetry, he would have to exude more than just a modicum of toughness. Nearly a century and a half since he flexed his poetic muscle, can one name a figure in our national psyche more quintessentially American than he?

Given the stock that Americans place in their inherent toughness, it should strike no one as a surprise that Jews in this country have long sought to affirm their own toughness; what better way to prove their Americanness to themselves as well as to non-Jews. It is no accident, for example, that Saul Bellow creates a tough Jewish protagonist in his most self-consciously "American" of novels, *The Adventures of Augie March*. "I am an American, Chicago born … and go at things as I have taught myself, free-style, and will make the record in my own way: first to knock, first admitted; sometimes an innocent knock, sometimes a not so innocent," Augie proclaims in the novel's opening sentence. Like Whitman, Augie would count himself as one of the roughs.

In this country, which celebrates and rewards its tough guys to such a gross degree, it's difficult not to succumb to what we might as well call the cult of toughness. Consider, for example, the special pride that American Jews have long held for their tough professional athletes. "Give me a Jewish fighter who can be built up into a challenger for the heavyweight championship," the gambler Tex Rickard contended, "and I'll show you the man who can bring back the $1,000,000 gate"—so certain was he that Jewish fans would travel miles to witness their hero pummel his unfortunate non-Jewish foe.

It would take the Six Day War in 1967—rather than a Jewish heavyweight or Bellow's Augie March—to shatter many of the stereotypes regarding Jewish weakness and to affirm, however perversely, their rightful place in America. Indeed, it is difficult to overstate the extent to which Israel's decisive victory over Egypt, Syria, and Jordan served to define and bolster the ethos of the American Jew. In *From Beirut to Jerusalem* (1989), Thomas L. Friedman aptly describes the nature of the war's transformative effect: "When the smoke cleared and the extent of Israel's victory became apparent, American Jews pored over the headlines, watched all the television footage of Israeli soldiers swimming in the Suez Canal, and said to themselves, 'My God, look who we are! We have

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power!... We are not the cowering timid Jews who get sand kicked in their faces, we are tank commanders.'" Practically overnight, Jews began to see themselves as *shtarkers*, tough guys, and began to eschew their long-standing self-image as the *nebbish,* or weakling. Further, emboldened by Israel's heroics, Jews could begin to celebrate, rather than shroud, their Jewish identities. As a friend of mine recently joked about a Jewish colleague of ours, "I knew him before 1967, before he was Jewish." Or, as the Chinese American writer Gish Jen observes through her protagonist in a recent novel set in 1968, "the Jews have become The Jews, on account of the Six Day War."

Still, if Israel's military victory in 1967 suddenly made it acceptable, even cool, to be Jewish in America, it did so not through establishing the virtue of anything particularly Jewish. It wasn't as if the "*Adon Olam*" hymn had suddenly caught on with the American masses. Rather, the war in Israel merely seemed to prove, once and for all, that Jews possessed that most American of qualities, toughness. An old quip goes, Jews are just like everyone else, only more so. What the Six Day War seemed to prove was that, in addition to being more neurotic, more brainy, more sensitive, more effusive, and more comic, Jews—could it be?—were also more tough.



At the precipice of a new millennium, as the fourth and fifth generation of American-born Jews begin to outnumber their predecessors, one would think that Jews in this country could finally eschew the ethos of physical toughness, pagan at its core. Disturbingly, however, the cult of toughness seems to be gaining, rather than losing, momentum within Jewish circles. Alan M. Dershowitz was, perhaps, the first significant Jewish voice of late to offer up such spiritually thin gruel with his best-selling 1991 book, *Chutzpah*. "American Jews need more chutzpah," Dershowitz contends in the book's opening line. "Notwithstanding the stereotype," he continues, "we are not pushy or assertive enough for our own good and for the good of our more vulnerable brothers and sisters in other parts of the world." For Dershowitz, practicing Jewish toughness in the secular world has largely replaced the observance of Judaic ritual, which he seems to have outgrown. The content of Hebrew prayers, for example, does not resonate for Dershowitz in the now, but merely "produces a warm glow—sometimes even a tear—of emotion and nostalgia." He expresses only an ephemeral pang of regret that he cannot leave his progeny "any legacy comparable to the Orthodox commitment to, and intimate knowledge of, Jewish tradition and practice" that was left to him, and enthusiastically embraces an amorphous notion of Jewish identity rooted in tough, tribal (if not self) aggrandizement.



Lamentably, a large segment of the Jewish population in America seems to have absorbed Dershowitz's thesis. "Forget Hulk Hogan—Meet Bill Goldberg," boasts the title of a recent front page article in the *Forward.* A color photograph above the fold shows this burly wrestler towering above his latest victim, who lies prostrate on the canvas. Our childish pride in Jewish tough guys is disturbingly invited out to play as we learn that "loyal fans scream 'Goldberg!' at the top of their lungs and wave signs proclaiming what part of the body Mr. Goldberg kicks"; that Goldberg "has gone undefeated in 98 matches and proudly wears the belt of the United States Heavyweight Champion"; that if any spectator ever dares to accost him with an anti-Semitic slur, "he will go into the crowd after them."

I don't suppose that I dispute the newsworthiness of the prevalence of Jewish wrestlers on the professional circuit. Before chancing upon this piece, however, my annoyance had been primed. For I had just finished reading two recent books written by American Jewish writers that more substantially partake of and celebrate the American cult of toughness: David Black's *An Impossible Life: A Bobeh Myseh* (1998) and Rich Cohen's *Tough Jews: Fathers, Sons, and Gangster Dreams* (1998).

In *An Impossible Life*, Black's protagonist remembers the life of his grandfather, Moisha Ba'er Polishook, a Lower East Side bootlegger and gangster; the novel brims over with vivid accounts of the sordid world of New York Jewish gangsters. Black explained in a recent interview that he engaged this less respectable immigrant Jewish milieu, at least in part, because "[i]f you don't own up to it, you're denying a part of your heritage, denying the totality of the Jewish immigrant experience." Fair enough. The rub, however, is that Black does not so much "own up" to the gangster past of our American Jewish tribe in *An Impossible Life* as he celebrates, and even romanticizes, this past. Moisha emerges as an ultra-cool defender of weak and victimized women. The narrative perspective far from abhors the violent, stark, inhumane world in which he operates. Instead, what one comes away with after reading Black's novel—or at least what the tenor of the novel encourages one to come away with—is admiration for the moxie of Polishook's gangster relatives, and a nostalgia for this Wordsworthian spot of time in the American Jewish experience before Jews succumbed to more respectable (i.e. boring) lives and occupations.

While Black can justifiably be accused of romanticizing Jewish gangsterism, Rich Cohen's paean to the Jewish gangster in *Tough Jews* makes Black's take on his fictionalized Jewish toughs seem aloof by comparison. *Tough Jews* is part journalistic account of the heyday of American Jewish gangsterism earlier in this century and part memoir. Jewish gangsterism functions as the site through which Cohen,

above all, attempts to understand his father and the world from which he came; Cohen's father and his friends idolized the Jewish gangsters and, to this day, still get together occasionally at Nate 'n' Al's, a Beverly Hills delicatessen, to wax nostalgic over old Brooklyn and the stories of the famous Jewish gangsters. Small wonder that the nostalgic banter in Nate 'n' Al's becomes the stuff of myth in *Tough Jews*—that, despite his professed wishes, Cohen valorizes the thuggery of the Jewish gangsters.

Consider Cohen's reflections upon one "hit" by up-and-coming Jewish gangsters: "To me, these killers seem about as skillful as the Israeli commandos who slipped into Entebbe, freeing Jews held hostage at the airport in Uganda. These were men hand-picked by Lansky for their cool." Cohen, in fact, continually insists upon drawing annoying—and often downright offensive—analogies between his Jewish hooligans and the great personages of history (e.g., the leaders at the Yalta Conference, Moshe Dayan, Anne Frank, God, et al.). In short, Cohen succumbs dizzily to the cult of toughness.

Cohen makes no bones about the fact that he genuinely admires these people. He even lauds them as multiculturalists before their time: "In an era when much of the country was hyper-aware of background and religion," for instance, "Lansky and Luciano got beyond that. They believed that in America your brother can be born to any parents, in any house." He rues the decline of those sordid days "when a Jew in Jail didn't have to mean white-collar crime." "If Jewish gangsters still thrived today," he writes in the book's most shocking paragraph, "if they hadn't gone legit, if Jews of my generation didn't regard them as figments, creatures to be classed with Big Foot and the Loch Ness monster, I think the Jewish community might be better off." My immediate visceral response upon reading these lines still seems to me the most apt: is this guy serious?

To be fair, Cohen does not extol Jewish thuggery, per se. Rather, he laments the demise of Jewish gangsters because these figures freed him (and other Jews, he suggests) from the prevalent stereotypes of Jews as weaklings and brains, as "physically unthreatening office creatures." We would be better off with the gangsters because "everyone needs someone who gives them the illusion of strength."

Cohen's rationale, couched in the vernacular of self-help, may sound harmless enough. However, in valorizing his Jewish *über*-thugs, Cohen does not so much combat the stereotype of the Jewish weakling as he reaffirms this stereotype in thunder, often to pernicious effect. For example, he insists upon depicting the Jewish gangsters as especially prescient and courageous when it came to the Holocaust. According to Cohen, they "understood Nazis in a way most law-abiding adults could not." Jewish gangsters across the country, Cohen reports, even beat up several Nazis at their Bundist rallies in America; he also takes special pride in the apocryphal story of Bugsy Siegel's aborted assassination attempt against Hermann Göring and Joseph Goebbels. The Jewish gangsters "knew how to handle" the Nazis, according to Lansky, whom Cohen deferentially quotes.

The scurrilous implication: the Jews of Europe were ineffectual weaklings compared to these gangsters, "a prototype of a new kind of Jew, the sporty, all-terrain model that would emerge from the ashes of World War II." If only the "old" Jews of Europe had been more like the Jewish gangsters, we are to glean, the Holocaust may not have occurred. Cohen proffers the equation unwittingly but unmistakably. In doing so, he casts undue blame upon the victims of the genocide in Europe rather than upon their victimizers.

What is more, the "weak Jew" stereotype of Hitler's victims, like all stereotypes, is simply inaccurate. That

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the Jews of Europe were "sheep led to the slaughter"—to use the popular analogy—was a post-Holocaust construct, one of several desperate and desperately flawed theses to explain how Hitler successfully managed to murder nearly 40 percent of the world's Jews. But truth is, there were plenty of tough Jews among, say, the highly assimilated pre-war Jewish community in Germany. Most of these Jews were murdered right along with their weaker brothers and sisters. To infer, as Cohen seems to have inferred, that Bugsy Siegel's brand of toughness would have counted for much in Nazi Germany is ludicrous, just as it would be ludicrous to posit that Lucky Luciano—who forged self-serving alliances with the Jewish gangsters and so enjoyed corned beef sandwiches (as Cohen reminds us repeatedly)—would have, thus, put his life on the line to shelter Jewish gangsters from the Nazis had they all been living in Berlin rather than in Brooklyn during the war years. All of which is to say that the atrocity in Europe redefined such concepts as "toughness," "heroism," and "evil," and that to espouse the tough ethos of the Jewish gangsters of Brooklyn as some sort of corrective to the "weak" Jewish ethos of Nazi Europe is to descend into absurdities.

None of this is to suggest that toughness doesn't have its place. For example, most American Jews, I suspect, would agree that it's a good thing that Jews have been tough enough to survive the past two thousand years or so of exile living amid hostile nations and empires, that Jews in the wake of the Holocaust were tough enough to establish and defend the State of Israel. To be sure, in speaking out against the resurgent exultation over tough Jews, I do not mean in this piece to celebrate or, worse, to romanticize, Jewish weakness. Beyond the simple fact that frailty is nothing to rejoice over, the image of the weak Jewish victim—as Rich Cohen's ode to Jewish gangsterism makes crystal clear—is inextricably related to the image of the tough Jew. That is, the exorbitant pride Jews, like Cohen, seem to take in Jewish tough guys arises at least partly out of their illusory yet unshakable self-image as weaklings.

Perhaps the most disconcerting part of Cohen's book is that while he rightly excoriates the Jewish ethos of weakness, he blithely celebrates the flip-side of the pathological coin, Jewish toughness. "If the gangsters lived in Palestine, there would be no Wailing Wall. It would be the Don't-Fuck-with-Me Wall!" he ebulliently contends. He fails to see that the dynamic interplay between—and interdependence of—these polar self-images can be especially pernicious. As Zygmunt Bauman recently articulated in the pages of this magazine, the status of the weak victim "can be, and often is, brandished as a signed-in-advance and in blanco certificate of moral righteousness; whatever the offspring of the victims do must be morally proper (or at least ethically correct) as long as it can be shown that it was done in order to stave off the repetition of the lot visited on their ancestors." In short, Jews can be every bit as tough and ruthless as they wish, for they have been victims long enough. So the logic goes.

This logic is dissected in Paul Breines's *Tough Jews: Political Fantasies and the Moral Dilemma of American Jewry* (Breines came up with his title and book cover of a brass-knuckled fist well before Rich Cohen appropriated both for his book). Here, Breines contends that from the outset Zionism depended upon the interplay between the weak and tough Jewish self-images to establish itself as, and remain, a viable political ideology:

> Zionism is at once a decisive break with the traditions of Jewish weakness and gentleness and also not so decisive a break: it rejects meekness and gentleness in favor of the normalcy of toughness, while preserving the older tradition of the Jews as a special or chosen people, which depends on imagery of Jews as frail victims. Zionism needs its weak and gentle Jewish counterparts to give moral justification to Jewish participation in the world of bodies, specifically, of physical violence, including killing or even sadism. To put the matter most starkly: the image of Jewish victimization vindicates the image of the Jewish victimizer.

Breines certainly has a point. While the popular view maintains that Israeli Jews successfully exorcized the Jewish ethos of weakness through the creation of a militarily strong Jewish state, it seems to me just as true that the familiar phrase "never again" has served to keep this ethos very much alive (an ethos that thankfully no longer obtains), and that the collective memory of Jewish victimization in Europe has, in turn, served to justify injurious policies and acts of violence toward the Palestinians in the Middle East.

That said, discrete acts of Israeli aggression do not, by definition, arise out of a pathological Jewish ethos of weakness. That is, a distinction exists between morally justifiable aggression and immoral victimization. Jews were victimized horribly in Europe; Jews were morally justified to participate in

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the "world of bodies" to create the state of Israel and, thereby, ensure their survival. No matter how sick people may be of hearing about the Holocaust, one cannot begin to debate the morality of the modern Zionist movement and the creation of Israel without taking into account the long history of Jewish persecution in Europe that culminated in the Holocaust. But because making such distinctions is often terribly difficult, Jewish acts of arguable aggression/victimization must be strenuously interrogated and debated among Jews across the political spectrum.



When push comes to shove and Jews must act tough in the Middle East (or anywhere else for that matter), such aggression should not, however, be touted as if it represented the high water mark of Jewish self-actualization. This is easier said than done, I realize. The cult of toughness is seductive. Thomas L. Friedman was certainly not the only American Jew who fantasized about being a tough Israeli soldier after the Six Day War, just as Rich Cohen was assuredly not the only American Jew who dressed up like Bugsy Siegel as a child. Still, the cult of toughness should be resisted, or, at least, contained. Jews can be interested in their Meyer Lanskys and Bugsy Siegels, but what's there, really, to admire about them?

It makes perfect sense that in the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust, Jews worldwide rejected the traditional modes and practices that failed to protect them from the atrocity and sought to adopt a tough, new ethos. Hebrew, for example, painstakingly modernized by Eliezer Ben-Yehuda and others, was adopted as the national tongue of Israel largely (though not wholly) because it was perceived to be a language of strength. It was the *lingua franca* of the Jews before the Temple was destroyed, before the tribes were scattered across the earth. Yiddish, by contrast, the *mama loshen* of Hitler's victims, was the language of the poisoned Diaspora. It bore the indelible thumbprint of weakness, and simply wouldn't do.

The survivalist impulse, to be sure, served Jews well in the wake of the Holocaust. However, we are no longer in that wake and should not seek to ride it into the next millennium. The tough ethos of Jewish survivalism that prevailed in the aftermath of the Holocaust should, ultimately, represent a mere blip on the screen of Jewish consciousness, a historical aberration brought on, understandably, by one of the greatest human catastrophes in recorded history. This historical aberration should not become the Jews' ongoing aspiration. Many Jews have already realized as much. To wit: the revitalized study of *yiddishkeit* in both Israel and the United States. This, indeed, should be a time for the retrieval of the Jewish soul rather than the continued construction of a tough, ersatz variant.



There are plenty of Jewish warriors in the Hebrew Bible. But two thousand years of scrupulously recorded Jewish law—from the sixty-three books of the Talmud to the responsa still being painstakingly composed—can only be the work of a just and humane people who walk softly upon God's earth. Jews living today are the heirs of a deep-seated tradition of moral self-scrutiny. Several manifestations of Jewish behavior which may outwardly appear weak arise directly from this tradition. For example, Jews in America may seem weak when they forego hunting game. (Woody Allen, in fact, has played upon the image of the nebbishy Jewish hunter to comedic effect). The deeply humane laws of *kashrut*, however—not weakness—account for the longstanding Jewish aversion to hunting. The laws regulating kosher slaughter dictate a precise method to minimize the pain inflicted upon the animal and, thereby, proscribe hunting, for not even a *shokhet* (a trained slaughterer) can regulate the pain inflicted upon prey during a hunting situation. That even the most secular of contemporary Jews tend not to hunt suggests how deeply rooted the Law remains within the Jewish psyche.

Every act brings us one step closer or one step further away from *tikkun olam*, the reparation of the world. Jews are to behave as if the good and evil of the world are in perfect balance and that their every next act will tip the scale. So it should be of little surprise that even many self-described secular Jews tend toward reticence, passivity, humility, empathy.

In America, such qualities may never cut much ice—they are qualities rooted in the Jewish communal vision so at odds with the rugged, individualist ethos of America. These self-centered values have largely defined the American identity at least since Benjamin Franklin detailed in his autobiography how he "emerg'd from the Poverty and Obscurity in which I was born and bred, to a State of Affluence." Franklin quite self-consciously meant to instruct readers how to be tough enough to achieve a life of comfortable materialism. Hence, those who succumb to the cult of toughness succumb to this self-centered ethos, as de rigueur in America today as when Ben Franklin penned the first lines of his autobiography. In a very real sense, then, embracing Jewish toughness (à la Dershowitz, Cohen, et al.) is an act of utter weakness as it represents an acquiescence to the self-centered, take-no-prisoners American ethos so antithetical to the Jewish communal precepts of mutual aid and *ahava meetod hesed*, lovingkindness.

These are the very qualities, so embattled in our contemporary society, that need to be nurtured. For they are our qualities, and they are good. They originate, I would argue, from the great blessing and burden that is the Jewish Covenant with God. To replace these humane qualities with such prosaic, assimilationist attributes as toughness, assertiveness, chutzpah, or what have you, would greatly threaten the health of the Jewish soul that is our birthright. ❑

Short Takes

A Look at What's in Other Monthlies and Bi-Monthlies

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

The Atlantic Monthly

Lawrence L. Langer, who has written widely on Holocaust literature (including in the pages of TIKKUN), appears this month in the November issue of *The Atlantic Monthly* with "Pre-empting the Holocaust." Langer continues to challenge secular and religious moralists who attempt to find in the Holocaust universal themes of hope and meaning. He also reminds writers that language will always fail in trying to depict Auschwitz; our capacity to understand is limited by an event so deviant from ordinary human nature that words are incapable of describing it: "[O]nly the least sensitive among us could celebrate a return to normalcy after such chaos. Indeed, another major legacy of the event is the defeat of the words that try to describe it, since after such abnormalcy our very definitions of the normal seem flaccid and weak." Langer looks at the work of the writer Tzvetan Todorov, the artist Judy Chicago, and the Christian theologian Franz Jozef Van Beeck as examples of what he calls the exemplarist school of Holocaust memory, in which the guiding impulse is to locate universal themes within the larger tragedy. Langer is ultimately a "literalist" when he writes that "I feel no impulse to reclaim meaning from Holocaust atrocity or to embrace a Lincolnesque rhetoric seeking to persuade us that 'the horrible experience of the camps will not have been in vain'.... If the Jewish experience in the Holocaust can be made to 'stand for' something else, then the intolerable may seem more tolerable, but the result is to dilute or diffuse the particularity of mass murder."

Harper's

Writing in the November *Harper's*, Christopher Hitchens takes on historical illiteracy in America in "Goodbye to All That: Why Americans are not Taught History": "The measure of an education is that you acquire some idea of the extent of your ignorance. And it seems at least thinkable that today's history students don't quite know what subject they are not being taught." Currently, most high school students are required to take one year each of American and world history, with several states having no history requirement at all. These students just "don't know, and very probably don't care. Their immediate past has been airbrushed, or whisked, as surely as antiquity." That's why television, movies, and memorials have become the primary sources of the teaching of history. Hitchens takes his readers through a survey of what seems to be happening in high school curricula, and concludes that "[h]istory textbooks have oscillated between demands for an intelligible narrative and cries for a story more 'user-friendly' to minorities.... Those who care about cultural literacy are chiefly volunteers, and they are already hard-pressed on numerous fronts. But the potential 'pool' of volunteers for a struggle to reinstate historical discourse is quite substantial. What needs to be combated is the idea, so often and so worthily expressed—and so stultifying—that 'light' is to be preferred to 'heat.' Heat ... is the only possible source of light."

American Prospect

In the November/December *American Prospect*, David L. Bosco writes "Sovereign Myopia" on the United Nations conference on an International Criminal Court. The conference, which took place this past summer in Rome, saw the United States opposing the drafted outline for such a court that was eventually passed. "The irony was complete. The country that had been the driving force behind not only the Nuremberg trials but also the recent tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda had become the most powerful opponent of a court intended to fulfill the promises of those earlier initiatives." Bosco points out that both Senator Jesse Helms and the Pentagon have long opposed an international court. Their fear is the court would classify a unilateral U.S. military operation—Grenada, Libya, Panama—as an act of aggression or a crime against humanity. "But there's something more fundamental at work: a generation-long American disenchantment with international institutions and universally applicable human rights law."

Lingua Franca

In the November issue of *Lingua Franca*, Michael Steinberger writes about the impact of feminism on economic theory in "The Second Sex and the Dismal Science: The Rise of Feminist Economics": "[F]eminism has at last unleashed its deconstructive powers on the world of supply and demand curves." There is now an International Association for Feminist Economics,

and a graduate level course at the University of Minnesota. Steinberger points to the work of University of Chicago's Gary Becker as the standard around which feminist economists began to rally in opposition. Becker's neoclassical look at the division of labor within families resulted in a model that explained why women stay at home while men go out and work. "Unsatisfied by Becker's work, and inspired by feminist scholarship in other disciplines, feminist economists have sought to correct the field's blind spots concerning gender as an economic variable and—more radically—tackle issues directly related to improving women's living conditions." Some of these approaches argue in favor of recalculating the gross national product to include the unpaid labor produced at home. Others limit the focus to creating "half-time" positions in college economics departments in order to enable female economics professors an opportunity for both family and tenure. Other approaches are "[i]nfluenced by postmodern and feminist critiques of science ... [attacking] the math-for-math's sake attitude that dominates the field to the androcentric biases of the Western tradition." Steinberger concludes that most feminists do not seek to destroy Becker's neoclassical formulation. Instead, their difficulty with his rational-choice model is that it does not work in all cases.

Civilization

Jaron Lanier guest edits a series of articles in the November issue of *Civilization* that all deal with the relationship between technology and humanism. In his own essay, "The Endgame of Humanism," Lanier writes that "[o]ver the centuries, Western civilization has often perceived itself to be on an ascending ramp, forever bettering the human condition, forever advancing our understanding of nature and ourselves." But according to Lanier, science is now thought to be "in charge of its own processes, probing and changing people in order to further its own course, independent of human agency." Lanier observes that some computer scientists believe that "humanity will give way to a new form of life made possible by technology." But there has also been a backlash against what science might someday bring. "Now, as people get a whiff of where the ramp of science could deliver them, they turn to one sort of fundamentalism or other in order to preserve their cultural certainties.... [W]e see more technophobic militancy—against new abortion methods, MTV and other identity-transforming technologies—than we do militant activism against economic or political injustice."

George

In the November issue of *George*, Lisa DePaulo reports on the plight of the Willis family of Pike County, Alabama, in "What Would Jesus Do?" The Willises, who are Jewish and the parents of four children, moved to Alabama and landed in a community committed to Christian prayer in school. The Willis children are the only Jews in a district of 2,600 people. In refusing to participate in various prayer rituals in a public school setting, the Willises were subject to all sorts of horrifying ridicule: from having swastikas painted on the back of their shirts to having their yarmulkes taken and thrown in the garbage dumpster. "Once a principal sent them home for wearing their Stars of David, with a note to [the parents] explaining that the stars were 'prohibited gang symbols.'" DePaulo points out that while Alabama ranks virtually last in every category of social progress, "[w]hen it comes to religion, Alabama is far and away the most homogenous state in the Union." Ironically, the Supreme Court's 1962 decision banning school prayer was originally supported by Jews and Southern Baptists as an attack, among other things, against Protestant elitism. But now, Southern Baptists have adopted attitudes that are "strikingly similar to those of white southerners who resisted the civil rights movement: They felt that society was under siege, a moral way of life under assault from liberal, elitist outsiders." The Willises ultimately hired the ACLU and their lawsuit against the county was settled, which in theory now protects their children from harassment as well as enjoining the school system from sanctioned Christian prayers and religious activity. Mrs. Willis said that she and her husband refused to leave because if they did, "they will have won. They will have 'driven out the Jews.' And then what happens to the next kid who comes along who isn't Christian?" ❑

LETTERS *(continued from page 4)*

causes and the destruction of the environment to which it mightily contributes. We manage not to notice all this for the same reason that citizens of Hellenistic civilization could not notice or understand the systematic destruction of indigenous cultures and the incredible human suffering and pain inflicted by Greek imperialism as it forged a powerful empire, because our attention is so riveted to the very real scientific, aesthetic, and cultural accomplishments that very wealthy societies allow and sometimes fund. Rather than assimilating itself to the dominant selfishness and materialism of these societies, a Jewish renewal movement must continually engage with them, value their positive achievements, but join the spirit of the Maccabeees in rejecting and combating the spiritual corruption at their core.

Reclaiming Referenda

To the Editor:

HURRAY! I just read your truly wonderful and extremely heartening article on the referendum by Julia Bloch (September/October 1998). I'm working on a book that seeks to reclaim the radicalism of direct democracy, but thought I might be the only progressive person in the world who actually believes in this. Excellent work—and many thanks.

Nelson Tebbe expresses a horrific brand of "liberalism," but one that is far too common. You expressed exactly what is wrong with that point of view.

ROBERT JOHNSON
New Haven, CT

Sikkum: TIKKUN RECOMMENDS ...

The Conversion

Aharon Appelfeld
(Schocken, 1998)



Appelfeld is one of Israel's most esteemed authors, and this new novel is one of his most convincing gems. Graced by one of Israel's most accomplished translators, Jeffrey M. Green, this powerful story takes us into the intrigues of Jewish assimilated life in pre-Holocaust Austria—and the slowly dawning consciousness that no amount of mimicking the dominant culture could save Jews from the emerging wave of anti-Semitism that would soon engulf Europe.

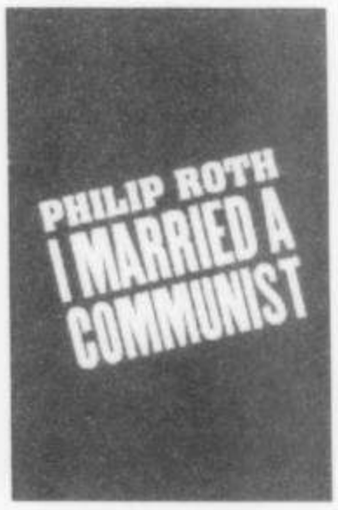
Brother Against Brother

Ehud Sprinzak
(The Free Press, 1999)

Violence and extremism are nothing new in Israeli politics. In this powerful history, Hebrew University political science professor Sprinzak brings us up-to-date on the twists and turns in the politics of Jewish right-wing extremists who continue to play a decisive role in shaping Israeli policy even after the Wye accord. Careful to insist that Jewish violence pales in comparison with the extremism of other nationalist movements in the contemporary world, Sprinzak forces the reader to confront the powerful reality of violence which continues to shape the politics of modern Israel.

I Married a Communist

Philip Roth
(Houghton Mifflin, 1998)



Roth remains a masterful storyteller, and so this latest novel is both engaging and instructive as it recounts the spirit of emerging McCarthyism of the late 1940s and early 1950s. In the face of a growing tendency on the Right to rejuvenate McCarthyism ("there really were all these communists posing a danger to America"), Roth's imaginative retelling of a Jewish boy from Newark who becomes an advocate for the watered-down democratic faith in the masses that was at the center of much of American communism connects us to the perverse interplay between power seekers, the media, individual neuroses, and the anti-communist hysteria that shaped the politics of the U.S. for many decades.

A Kind of Rapture

Robert Bergman, Introduction by Toni Morrison
(Pantheon, 1998)

The images in Robert Bergman's new book are immensely powerful capturings of the longing for human connection and the pain of its absence, as seen in the faces of ordinary people on the streets of American cities. This book is not simply a great work of art, but a visual social critique of the effects of the frustration of the need for meaning and love.

Avoiding Politics

Nina Eliasoph
(Cambridge University Press, 1998)



Eliasoph seeks to understand how American politics manages to produce political apathy. Common sense in America defines the public sphere as the place for translating self-interest into short-sighted public policies, not a sphere for individuals to acknowledge their caring about each other. The larger the audience, the more reluctant people are to speak in a publicly minded way or to ponder issues of justice and the common good, though they care passionately about these. Eliasoph's book is a powerful antidote to the one-dimensional cynicism generated by media descriptions of what Americans really care about.

Buddha's Nature

Wes Nisker
(Bantam Books, 1998)



Although it might sound preposterous to some scientists, Wes Nisker asserts that the path of meditation can reveal the most basic qualities of cognition and consciousness. Meditators begin to discover that rather than a permanent "knower" or steady-state condition, consciousness can be seen to arise anew in every split second or mind-moment. We co-exist and dependently co-arise with all creation. The development of compassion and lovingkindness are not moral commandments, then, but rather an organic outgrowth of wisdom: as we realize our evolutionary nature, we automatically begin to feel increasing kinship with all forms of life. Nisker thus joins Sharon Salzberg and other Buddhist teachers who are connecting Buddhism to the more universal task of helping each other to evolve ("we are all on the same team").

Sikkum: TIKKUN RECOMMENDS ...

Israel and the Bomb

Avner Cohen
(Columbia University Press, 1998)

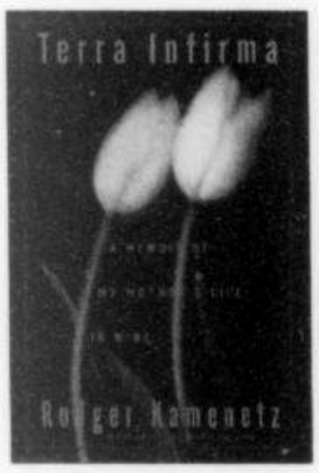


Israel is the only state in the Middle East to introduce nuclear weapons, enjoying a regional nuclear monopoly without incurring the political costs (e.g. the imposition of sanctions on India and Pakistan when they recently followed this same path). Systematically denying that it holds these weapons, Israel has prevented any democratic discussion within Israel about how or under what circumstances these weapons might be used or about how this fact of nuclear supremacy might affect the pervasive fear of Israelis that their state is in serious danger from surrounding Arab states. Avner Cohen provides a balanced and carefully documented account of Israel's attempt to keep these issues from public discourse.

Terra Infirma

A Memoir of My Mother's Life in Mine

Rodger Kamenetz
(Schocken, 1999)



Rodger Kamenetz, who has written for TIKKUN and is the author of *The Jew in the Lotus* and *Stalking Elijah* (both books that deal with the search for spirituality) has now written a powerful memoir about his mother and the dreams that she had for her son and herself, and the dreams that the son, the poet Kamenetz, had in return. As his mother is dying of cancer, Kamenetz begins his encounter with maturity and self-understanding as both an artist and man. In magical words, this book speaks about death and grief, about dreams and hopes and journeys undertaken, stalled, and then recaptured. Honest and moving, this beautifully written memoir shows us how a first-rate poet honors his mother, while at the same time is liberated to travel along his own separate path.

Ecology

A Pocket Guide

Ernest Callenbach
(University of California Press, 1998)

This little book provides an elegant and extremely accessible entrée into contemporary ecological thought. Using non-technical language and a keen sense of what the layperson ought to know, Callenbach's book gives us the basics to participate intelligently in the current debates about how to save the planet.

Res Publica

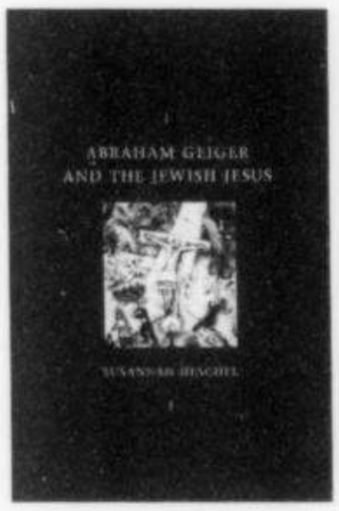
Alan Williamson
(University of Chicago Press, 1998)



The title sequence in Williamson's new book of poems, *Res Publica*, offers readers a fresh meditation on the turmoil, passionate social commitment, and sense of overwhelming political and cultural change that defined the 1960s. While the Latin phrase points to Williamson's interest in the individual's struggle for an authentic life within the "republic," it also speaks to universal concerns of love, human connection, the "place of arrivings [and] goings into nowhere." The poet's own sense of arrival throughout the book is to a place where the past remains alive through an allusive, many-layered imagination that ranges among the multiple cultures within our republic of letters—from antiquity to the postmodern, Puccini to Cobain, Dante to Montale, Christianity to Zen. In poems that effectively mix a sense of conversational language with lyric intensity, of personal story becoming history, Williamson inquires into the meaning of a period we are just beginning to understand; "And we went on living it, like a wave, that doesn't know/it is at every moment different water."

Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus

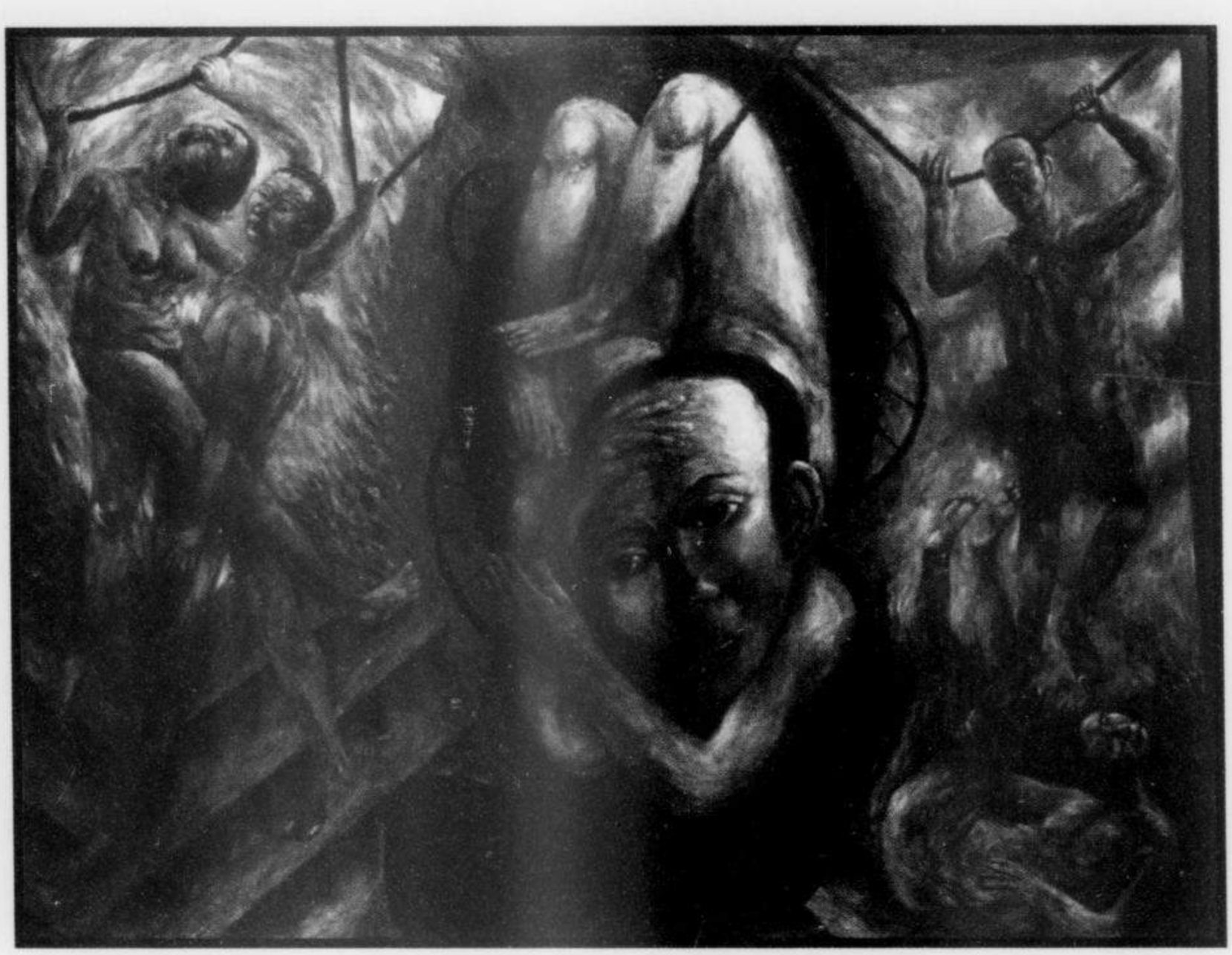
Susannah Heschel
(University of Chicago Press, 1998)



Geiger was a nineteenth-century Jewish scholar who challenged the triumphalist and supercessionist Christian views that Pharisaic Judaism was a morally decrepit and degenerated form of religion that Jesus managed to transcend as he created the basis for a new religion. Acutely sensitive to the long history of Christian anti-Semitism (which, in TIKKUN's pages, she has continued to document in contemporary Christian feminist thinking), Susannah Heschel uses this scholarly study of a nineteenth-century academic to highlight the way Judaism functions in Christian theology as the other whose negation confirms and even constitutes Christianity. This important work highlights the ongoing question of how Judaism can speak back to the master narrative of Western history, which is rooted in traditions of Christian religious supremacy.

תיקון

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



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on spirituality, American politics & culture,
religion, psychology and Jewish issues

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