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TIKKUN

War in Kosovo
Noam Chomsky vs. Michael Lerner

Israel Elections
Hillel Schenker • Jessica Montell

A Bimonthly Jewish Critique of Politics, Culture & Society | May/June 1999 | $5.95

Fearing the Religious



In Israel
Amnon Raz

Worldwide
Roger Friedland

The Cost of Whiteness
Thandeka

Reflections
Mario Cuomo

Y2K
Margaret J. Wheatley

Utopia-Phobia
Russell Jacoby

Education Politics
Svi Shapiro

Infertility
Allen Selis

Altered States: Paul Krassner on Anita Hoffman; Lawrence Bush on Acid Mystery

Jack Newfield interviews Frank Rich • Strategies for Progressives: Gar Alperovitz
Spiritual Paths: Tamar Frankiel, Sharon Welch, Michael Ziegler
The Crime of Punishment: Debra Jo Immergut

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Victrola

Dead forty years Bird brings his lips to the reed.
He rules the roost, and rues the rest,
Do wot-jadda bop.

Recovered from shell-shock
The war veteran Hitler found the doctor
Who cured his hysterical deafness,

And had the man killed, hoping that I
Might never exist to tell the story here,
A little distorted.

But Illinois Jacquet playing 'Round Midnight
On the bassoon, better even
Than the death speech of Falstaff.

And listen, Moshe Leib Halpern, I
Have a miracle cabinet
Made in Japan listen.

—Robert Pinsky

TIKKUN

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY VOLUME 14 NUMBER 3



2 **LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

5 **PUBLISHER'S NOTES**

FEATURES:

6 **War in Kosovo**: *The Deeper Ethical Issues*
Clashing perspectives from **Noam Chomsky** and our editor **Michael Lerner**.

11 **Cover Story: FEARING THE RELIGIOUS**
As Western domination of the world's markets and culture increase, many people return to what can seem to be irrational religious communities as the only available way to resist. Demonizing the religious helps us avoid seeing our own participation in the globalization of domination. **Amnon Raz** shows how Israelis use the anti-religious struggle to hide from themselves their domination of Palestinians (11). **Roger Friedland** sees religious nationalism as a protest against (post) modernity (17).

23 **Israel Update**
Human rights activist **Jessica Montell** warns us not to forget human rights violations in her *Peace by Any Means?* (23). **Hillel Schenker** offers a fun and informative guide to the parties vying in *The Israeli Elections 1999* (25).

29 **The Crime of Punishment**
Four million Americans don't have the right to vote. **Debra Jo Immergut** tells why.

31 **Infertility**
Allen Selis describes his personal attempt to *Liberate Reproduction from Despair.*

33 **The Cost of Whiteness**
After interviewing hundreds of whites, **Thandeka** discovered the traumatic psychological costs they paid for their whiteness.

39 **Altered States and Utopian Visions**
Can we return to what was best about the Sixties? **Lawrence Bush** urges us to reconsider psychedelic drugs as a route to *Jewish Spirituality* (39). **Paul Krassner** follows with his account of the life and death of Yippie Anita Hoffman (44). **Jo Ellen Green Kaiser** responds to Bush, Krassner, and Sixties utopian nostalgia (49) while **Russell Jacoby** decries our current *Utopia-Phobia* (50). **Margaret J. Wheatley** suggests that *Y2K* is important not only for the dangers it poses but because of its possibilities for restoring communal solidarity largely absent since the 1960s (52).

57 **Education and Politics**
Clinton and Blair's politics may be a "Third Way," but **Svi Shapiro** cautions that they should not be confused with a politics of meaning approach to education (57). **Mario Cuomo** offers *Reflections* on American politics (62).

65 **Spiritual Paths**
While **Tamar Frankiel** (65) and **Sharon Welch** (69) discuss their personal *Soul Work*, **Michael Ziegler** gives suggestions for *Renewing Jewish Spirituality* (67).



REVIEWS:

72 *Short Takes:* A look at other magazines.

73 **Janet Burstein** on **Thane Rosenbaum**'s new novel, *Second Hand Smoke.*

75 **Gar Alperovitz** offers *Strategies for Progressives* while reviewing **Charles Derber** and **Jerome Segal**'s important new books.

79 **E.M. Broner** on *Liberating Lilith.*

Inside back cover:
Sikkum: Books TIKKUN recommends.



COLUMNS:

56 *Interview.* **Jack Newfield** interviews **Frank Rich**.

64 *State of the World.* New columnist **Thom Hartmann** reveals the dangers in our food supply.

80 *Torah of Money.* **Jeffrey Dekro** on *Welfare Reform and the Book of Ruth.*

Front cover: *From Generation to Generation and Beyond,* 1996, by Samuel Bak. Oil on linen. Courtesy of Pucker Gallery, Inc., Boston, Mass.

Back cover: *Master's Hand,* by Andrei Gennadiev. Hand watercolored etching. Courtesy of International Images Ltd.

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Letters to the Editor

Redwoods and Torah

To the Editor:

In Fall 1997 TIKKUN examined the ethical issues in the struggle over the last unprotected redwood forest. Rabbi Arthur Waskow and others discussed our collective responsibility to rebuke MAXXAM Corporation and its Jewish owner Charles Hurwitz for destructive logging and dubious business practices. The much-trumpeted March 1, 1999 agreement, which set aside a portion of the forest, has been portrayed in the press as a great environmental victory. We thought TIKKUN readers should know that there is no felicitous resolution to the redwood crisis; in fact, the story is far from over.



Buying 7,500 acres of ancient trees in the "Headwaters Preserve" cost the taxpayers half a billion dollars, vastly in excess of the fair market value of the very small number of trees which could be legally removed under existing regulations. Much as we love to see ancient groves protected, we deplore this irresponsible overpayment, especially unnecessary since MAXXAM Corporation has culled over two billion dollars from a thirteen-year spree of unsustainable, often illegal logging. (The company has been cited for over one hundred egregious violations of forest regulations and has been reprimanded in federal court for falsifying legally mandated wildlife studies.) We applaud the concept of public ownership of ancient forests, but such acquisition would not be necessary if existing laws were properly enforced and updated to keep pace with science. Although destructive logging practices have liquidated thousands of acres of old-growth redwood and fir, it is a widespread misconception that the last untouched ancient groves were about to be cut. In truth, the trees for which we just paid half a billion

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dollars were already almost entirely protected from cutting by the Endangered Species Act—if only timber companies and regulatory agencies adhered to the law.

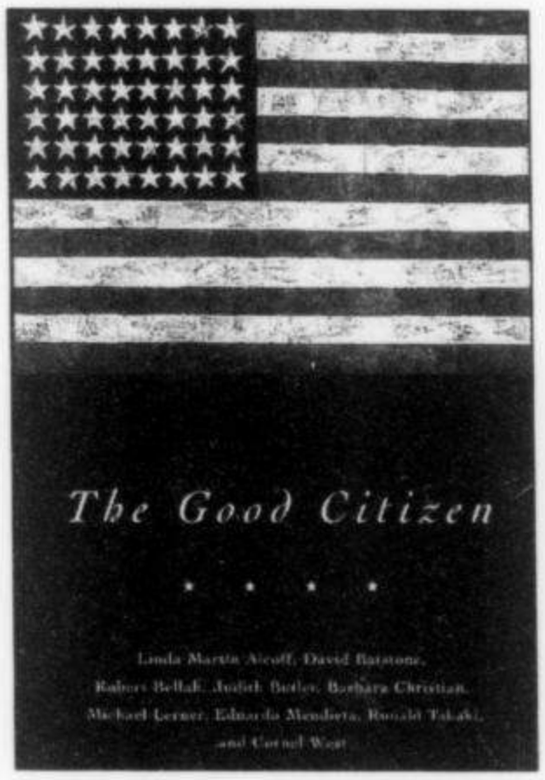
But the steepest cost of the deal is the government's agreement to award MAXXAM a so-called "Habitat Conservation Plan" and a special permit to kill endangered species on the corporation's remaining 210,000 acres. The Clinton administration has championed these HCPs, but reports from across the nation reveal that rather than conserving environmentally sensitive lands, these plans institutionalize habitat destruction. The deficiencies of the MAXXAM "Habitat Conservation Plan" are legion. We offer one example: years of logging will be allowed in critical streamside buffer zones at the same time that watershed analyses are being written to determine the needs of those streams. This defies common sense.

Newly-elected Governor Gray Davis has promised to strengthen the California Forest Practices Act and rigorously enforce existing law. Davis has chosen a new director for the beleaguered Department of Fish and Game, where wildlife biologists have been subjected to political intimidation. We hope to see the governor make wise appointments to the Board of Forestry and select a credible director for the California Department of Forestry, an agency which has routinely disregarded critical wildlife and water quality concerns. A recent court decision admonished CDF for "abuse of discretion" and mandated that approval of certain timber harvest plans be rescinded. This is evidence of just how bad things are in our forests and in the agencies which are supposed to protect them.

Judaism teaches that business people may make a profit, but not a limitless profit (Baba Batra 90a). Our tradition also teaches that the earth and its creatures do not exist for limitless exploitation (Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed* 3:13). That a ruthless corporation was allowed to reap extraordinary profits by extraordinary exploitation of the redwood forest is a source of shame for us all.

RABBI MARGARET HOLUB
RABBI LESTER G. SCHARNBERG
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California

The Good Citizen



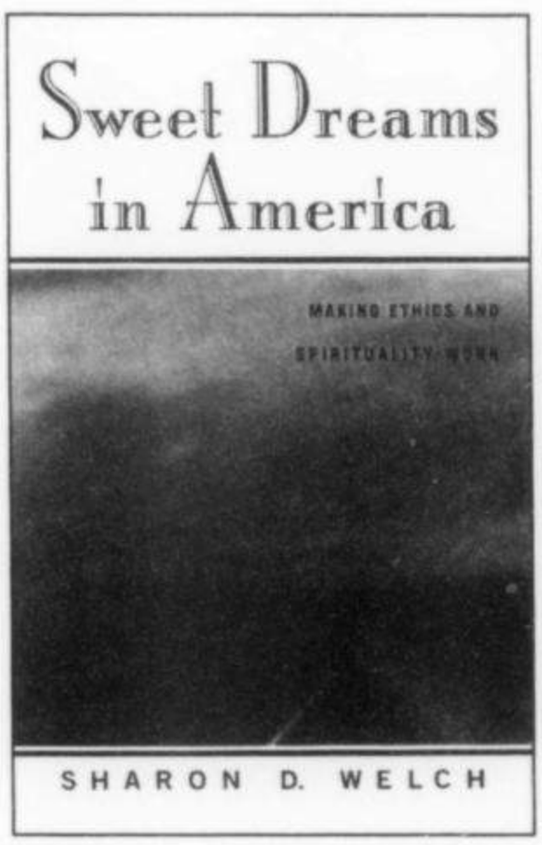
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Sweet Dreams in America

"Drawing on jazz as a primary resource ... *Sweet Dreams in America* serves up a refreshing alternative to typical feminist and leftist responses to post modern critique. A delight to read...the book is a must-read for religious and political activists on the left, for scholars and students of theology, theological ethics, and for jazz-lovers everywhere. "
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ROUTLEDGE

Hillel Incorporated

To the Editor:

Jeremy Deutchman's article "Hillel Incorporated" (March/April 1999) represents a curious reversal in public discussion of Hillel's work on campus. Whereas in the past Hillel was called to account for failing to reach out to the uninvolved masses, now it is criticized for doing just that.

Mr. Deutchman's jeremiad accuses Hillel of the cardinal sins of becoming "corporate," of "mass marketing," and, *inter alia,* of engaging in "business speak." He asserts that we will be redeemed only when we relinquish our "corporate soul." It would take a whole article to explicate fully his misunderstanding of how cultural language works and to untangle his confusion of (American) means and (Jewish) ends. If Mr. Deutchman finds it rhetorically offensive to talk of "a Jewish renaissance," would he say the same of "the politics of meaning"?

Let me rather focus on Mr. Deutchman's concerns about Hillel's lack of substance as embodied in the Jewish Campus Service Corps.

A current study of today's college students being conducted at the University of Santa Barbara, reported in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (November 27, 1998), notes an inverse relationship between students' socio-economic background and the intensity of their engagement with their studies and their involvement in cultural, intellectual, and political extra-curriculars.

What this says about students who are white and culturally and economically "advantaged," as many Jewish students of the 1990s are, has direct implications for how Hillel functions on campus. It is one of the axioms of all education, not just Jewish education, that you have to begin with the student where she/he is. The Haggadah speaks of four kinds of children, each of whom requires a different approach. When one considers Jewish students on campus today, there is no question that the ones who "don't know how to ask" constitute far more than 25 percent.

I am, therefore, not so quick to disparage the idea that we can and do "engage" students. It might mean that we have succeeded in getting their attention. It might mean that they feel some ownership of what goes on in the name of Hillel, and that it is not a "top-down" enterprise. It might mean that "doing Jewish" is not for them a burden assumed out of guilt but is rather a function of interest and of choice. Not bad, considering the negative attitudes about things Jewish all too many students carry with them when they transition from home and Hebrew school to college.

Moreover, to engage and to educate need not be mutually exclusive functions. The education we can do in the Hillel context is not curricular, not for grades nor for credit (and I say this in no way to diminish the importance of Jewish Studies). It is *informal* in the best sense of that term. Mr. Deutchman's discussion completely ignores the major new educational initiative Hillel has undertaken with the establishment last year of the Meyerhoff Center for Jewish Learning which provides text-based Jewish learning for students as well as for staff. As any Hillel professional knows, Jewish learning can take place both inside and outside the classroom.

There is no question that we need to think very carefully about what it is Hillel can and cannot do on campus. So yes: let us engage. But let us also challenge and provoke. If we communicate the passion and the sense of meaning that accrue from living a Jewish life we can address this generation of students.

RABBI JAMES S. DIAMOND
CENTER FOR JEWISH LIFE/
PRINCETON HILLEL
Princeton University

Vegetarianism and Jewish Renewal

To the Editor:

It was with great pleasure that we read Dr. Richard Schwartz' article, "Vegetarianism: Essential for Jewish Renewal?" in the March/April issue. We only wish that he had written such an article back when we stopped eating meat, as it was a wonderful way to articulate the reasons within a Jewish context.

Vegetarianism was a way in which we brought our day-to-day life more in line with the our Jewish values. There was a degree of discomfort making the transition: as with any ethical change in behavior, it carried implicit guilt as to why we had



not changed our behavior earlier. But it was important to stay ethically and intellectually honest rather than invent false justifications for bad habits (such as "taking life so that one's own life might continue"). We can assure everyone that, despite having not eaten animal products in almost eight years, we are very much alive and healthy.

Oh, and three words to Kimberly French, who felt she had to slaughter and eat her lambs lest they overpopulate and overrun her field ("Meat Eater," March/April): spay and neuter.

DEBORAH & KEVIN BLOCK-SCHWENK
Boston, MA

To the Editor:

I applaud your inclusion of Richard Schwartz' article, "Vegetarianism: Essential for Jewish Renewal?" in the March/April issue of TIKKUN. I even like the idea of your including the article by a woman who ate her own sheep, since it helps put Dr. Schwartz' teachings into perspective and presents your readers with opposing views to consider. I especially agree with Dr. Schwartz that there is value in promoting widespread discussion of Jewish values related to our diets.

MAIDA GENSER
Royal Oak, MI

To the Editor:

Richard Schwartz has given the main reasons for vegetarianism, but I should like to add one more reason for Jews to be vegetarians, and one more reason for others to be vegetarians.

For Jews, in addition to reasons of health, ecology, and compassion for animal life, vegetarianism can be an aid to the spirit of *klal* Israel. As vegetarians, all Jews can eat at the same table.

By extension, all people everywhere in the world can share the same meals if they are vegetarians. Meat of some kind is the most often taboo food. Vegetables offend no one. In *The Bold Vegetarian,* Bhati Kirchner observes that a new food culture is emerging and that new food culture is basically vegetarian. Vegetarianism travels well and mingles well.

ROBERTA KALECHOFSKY, PH.D.
PRESIDENT, JEWS FOR ANIMAL RIGHTS
Marblehead, MA

Publisher's Notes

Danny Goldberg

David Horowitz' organization, the Center for Popular Culture, has been taking out ads in numerous opinion magazines headlined "Who Is Left?"

"Who organizes the party line that promotes the rhetoric of class, race, and gender warfare in national political debates?" the ad asks. It goes on, "Who are the left? Socialists, 'progressives,' gender feminists, critical race theorists of all stripes, opponents of welfare reform, proponents of an expanding welfare state, members of the coalition to lynch Clarence Thomas and also to save Bill Clinton, tax-the-rich ideologues, Christian-haters, and PLO supporters, reflexive bashers of white Americans and America-haters in general." What follows is a list of several dozen national figures, Congressmen, writers, magazines, and organizations that are meant to constitute "the Left." (TIKKUN is not on the list).

There is no "party line" shared by Noam Chomsky and Senator Dianne Feinstein, or by the Ford Foundation and the Democratic Socialists of America. The ACLU disagrees with Catherine MacKinnon on pornography and with numerous feminist, gay, and minority organizations on the subject of "hate speech" codes on campuses. The Congressional Black Caucus invariably votes by overwhelming majorities for Israel aid packages. The idea that such pro-Israel stalwarts as Senators Feinstein or Harkin are "PLO lovers" is absurd, as is the notion that Reverend Jesse Jackson is a "Christian hater." (All three are on the list.)

Is anyone who opposed Clinton's removal "Left"? If so, Senator Arlen Specter qualifies—but he was also Anita Hill's toughest inquisitor and voted for Clarence Thomas. Likewise, Representative Peter King, one of the few House Republicans to oppose impeachment, has a perfect voting record according to the Christian Coalition.

There are economic progressives on things like tax rates and spending for social programs who nonetheless supported NAFTA. And of course there are economic conservatives, like Pat Buchanan, who opposed it. The drug war is supported by many so-called liberals including President Clinton, and opposed by some unassailable conservative leaders such as William Buckley.

In short, "the Left" as described in the ad does not exist, and despite agreement on a couple of issues like lower taxes, I'm not sure that a monolithic "Right" exists either. One of the things I like best about TIKKUN has been Michael Lerner's willingness to print voices of people with whom he disagrees (including, early in the magazine's life, Horowitz). For example, I strongly favor affirmative action, but I think it was fine for TIKKUN to publish Jack Newfield's interview with Pete Hamill (March/April 1998) in which Hamill opposed race-based affirmative action in favor of economic-based action. Even if I think Hamill is wrong, he obviously is coming from a place of deep concern for poor people, and clearly has no other agenda except a search for good policy. This kind of environment on both the Left and the Right is necessary to actually develop good ideas aside from the *Crossfire* environment of the mass media culture. There will always be issues, such as abortion, that require absolute stands on one side or the other. But on others—drug policy comes to mind—people of diverse ideological backgrounds really can get a lot done if they can overcome a need to define themselves by their enemies on other issues or in other times.

Disclosure: Michael Lerner and David Horowitz knew each other in the Sixties and Horowitz has written unflatteringly of Lerner. My support of TIKKUN, while primarily motivated by my interest in keeping Michael's brilliant voice part of the national debate on various issues, does not extend to my taking on his enemies. I met David Horowitz in the late Eighties, and for several years we were frequently teamed up as "Left/Right" adversaries on a local Jewish talk show called *Beyond the Headlines.* On several occasions, Horowitz invited me to debate him in front of various audiences. On all such occasions, but particularly when David commanded the sympathies of most of the crowd, he was very gracious to me and committed to the idea that ideological disagreement need not be disagreeable.

• • •

Norman Podhoretz' recent book is called *Ex-Friends: Falling Out with Allen Ginsberg, Lionel and Diana Trilling, Lillian Hellman, Hannah Arendt and Norman Mailer.* Allen, conveniently for Podhoretz, is no longer on earth to respond to him, but once, in the last year of his life, Allen talked to me about Podhoretz.

Firstly, as has been noted in some but not all of the book's reviews, Ginsberg and Podhoretz were never "friends." Podhoretz upgrades their acquaintanceship to "friendship" purely for the convenience of a catchy book title.

As Ginsberg recounted to me, and as Podhoretz acknowledges, Ginsberg edited the Columbia University literary magazine when Podhoretz was also attending Columbia, and

(continued on page 66)

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

The Ethics of the War in Kosovo

We hope by the time you read this that the war will be over and many of the issues raised in this discussion resolved. Yet we believe the deeper issues are difficult, and we know that members of our community have come out on both sides of them. Reflecting that divide, we first present the ideas of Noam Chomsky, who opposes the U.S. intervention, followed by our editor Michael Lerner, who supports the war only if it goes the full distance of creating a safe and meaningful return for Kosovar refugees and puts serious constraints on the Serbian ability to re-ignite this struggle.

Stop U.S. Intervention

An interview with Noam Chomsky

The following piece includes statements made by Noam Chomsky as part of an essay he wrote on the Z Magazine *website on March 27, 1999, and representative statements he made in an interview with Michael Lerner on April 5, 1999.*

TIKKUN: Many Jews believe that the intervention by the United States in Kosovo is a humanitarian act which deserves our support.

CHOMSKY: Then they are deluding themselves.

The right of humanitarian intervention, if it exists as a category in international law, is premised on the "good faith" of those intervening. That assumption of good faith is based not on their rhetoric but on their record, in particular their record of adherence to the principles of international law, World Court decisions, and so on. But if we look at the historical record, the United States does not qualify.

To be sure, there has been a humanitarian catastrophe in Kosovo in the past year, overwhelmingly attributable to Yugoslav military forces. The main victims have been ethnic Albanian Kosovars, some 90 percent of the population of this Yugoslav territory. The standard estimate is two thousand deaths and hundreds of thousands of refugees.

But let's look at the U.S. record.

Consider, for example, Colombia.

In Colombia, according to State Department estimates, the annual level of political killing by the government and its paramilitary associates is about at the level of Kosovo, and refugee flight primarily from their atrocities is well over a million. Yet Colombia has been the leading Western hemisphere recipient of U.S. arms and training even as violence there increased through the 1990s. Our assistance is still increasing, now under a "drug war" pretext dismissed by almost all serious observers. The Clinton administration was particularly enthusiastic in its praise for Colombian president Gaviria, whose tenure in office was responsible for "appalling levels of violence" according to human rights organizations, even surpassing his predecessors.

Or consider Turkey, a neighbor to the former Yugoslavia.

By a very conservative estimate, Turkish repression of Kurds in the 1990s falls in the category of Kosovo. Over a million Kurds fled to the unofficial Kurdish capital, Diyarbakir, from 1990 to 1994 as the Turkish army was devastating the countryside. The year 1994 marked two records: it was, according to Jonathan Randal who reported from the scene, both "the year of the worst repression in the Kurdish provinces" of Turkey and the year when Turkey became "the biggest single importer of American military hardware and thus the world's largest arms purchaser." When human rights groups exposed Turkey's use of U.S. jets to bomb villages, the Clinton administration found ways to evade laws requiring suspension of arms deliveries, much as it was doing in Indonesia and elsewhere.

Colombia and Turkey explain their (U.S.-supported) atrocities on grounds that they are defending their countries from the threat of terrorist guerrillas—as does the government of Yugoslavia.

I could supply many other recent examples of the moral fiber behind U.S. foreign policy directions (consider, for example, the effects of our economic boycott of Iraq, where it is estimated that about five thousand children die a month from the malnutrition and malnutrition-related diseases brought on by the UN embargo insisted upon by the United States). These and other examples might also be kept in mind when we read the awed rhetoric about how the "moral compass" of the Clinton administration is at last functioning properly in the case of Kosovo.

If this administration had a moral compass, it would not have undertaken the bombing. Predictably, the threat of NATO bombing led to an escalation of atrocities by the Serbian army and paramilitaries and to the departure of international observers, which of course had the same effect. Two days after the bombing began, Commanding General Wesley Clark declared that it was "entirely predictable" that Serbian terror and violence would intensify after the NATO bombing, exactly as happened.

A standard argument for the bombing is that we had to do something: we could not simply stand by as the atrocities continued. That is never true. One choice, always, is to follow the Hippocratic principle: "First, do no harm." If you can think of no way to adhere to that elementary principle, then do nothing. There are always ways that can be considered. Diplomacy and negotiations are never at an end.



Kosovar ethnic Albanian refugees driven from their homes by Serbian forces.

PHOTOGRAPH BY SANTIAGO LYON / AP WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

TIKKUN: What are the primary arguments that would lead a progressive person to be opposed to U.S. military intervention in Kosovo, if our stated goal is to stop the genocide there?

CHOMSKY: That was not the stated goal. That is a goal that was concocted weeks later, for the simple reason that no one was claiming that "genocide" was taking place before the bombing. The stated goal was to prove the credibility of NATO, to stop ethnic cleansing that was going on inside of Kosovo, and to bring stability to Eastern Europe. To quote from Clinton's televised address, the stated goal was about credibility, upholding values, protecting our interests, and advancing the cause of peace.

Look at the background. Starting in 1989, when Milosevic had withdrawn autonomy from the Kosovars, the Kosovars had launched a quite remarkable nonviolent opposition which persisted for the next six years. They were in effect creating a parallel civil society.

Meanwhile, in order to achieve a peace settlement in Bosnia at the Dayton peace talks in 1995, the United States completely sold out the Kosovars' struggle for autonomy and, they hoped, eventual independence. Bosnia was effectively partitioned between greater Croatia and greater Serbia. Kosovo was to remain under the authority of Serbia. Because the United States rewarded pre-Dayton nonviolence with a willingness to sell out their interests, many Kosovars concluded that the United States only respected force and violence. At that point, the Kosovo Liberation Army, previously a ragtag force, began to gain popular support and soon began a significant guerrilla struggle, attacking police stations and carrying out other actions. According to the United States and NATO, the Serbian crackdown began in February of 1998.

Now what humanitarian interest suddenly stirs the United States? The two thousand people killed in Kosovo this year, while an atrocity, is a fraction of the atrocities committed in southeastern Turkey in their own country against Kurds in the 1990s where deaths, presumably mostly Kurdish, are estimated at thirty thousand and refugees at well over a million. It's one-tenth the number of civilians that Israel killed in Lebanon in 1982 after invading another country with no pretext whatsoever. The three hundred and fifty thousand Kosovar refugees are roughly half the number of refugees that resulted from the Israeli expulsion of Palestinians in 1948. These population expulsions are called "atrocities" only when some enemy commits them.

TIKKUN: You think there's no difference between Israel in 1948 and …

CHOMSKY: Every two cases are different: I was simply talking about scale.

At the end of 1998 there was a cease-fire in Kosovo. Two thousand European monitors were introduced. Then that cease-fire broke down. The threat of NATO bombings increased the level of violence. The monitors were withdrawn, which again increased the level of violence. By the end of March NATO bombed, and then we saw a huge escalation of violence.

TIKKUN: What is your theory about why the United States engaged in this action, if not for humanitarian concerns? Certainly the bombing does not help Clinton politically; he must have known that he would almost certainly face a divided country and the risk of being drawn into sending troops to fight. No president would risk this unless he either really believed in what he was doing or had some overwhelming American interest at stake.

CHOMSKY: The United States is not going in there to save the oppressed. If we wanted to save the oppressed we could have supported the nonviolent movement instead of selling them out at Dayton.

Any kind of turbulence in the Balkans is a threat to the interests of rich, privileged, powerful people. Therefore, any turbulence in the Balkans is called a crisis. The same circumstances would not be a crisis were they to occur in Sierra Leone, or Central America, or even Turkey. But in Europe, the heartland of American economic interests, any threat in the Balkans has the possibility of spilling over. Refugees cause problems in Europe. The Kosovo conflict could lead to a Greek-Turkish war, or bring in the Russians, or undermine Macedonia.

Why did they pick this strategy?

We could have turned to the UN, as is required by international law and treaty obligations. But Madeleine Albright, speaking for the United States, has made it clear that we

will act "multilaterally when we can and unilaterally when we must" (meaning when you at the UN don't go along with us). The United States rejected World Court jurisdiction over ten years ago; we stated officially that we can no longer accept the World Court because the countries of the world no longer accept our position. So that leaves us with NATO, where the United States dominates.

Within NATO, there was a debate about how to proceed. The United States and Britain advocated force. NATO powers, including Britain, wanted to get UN authorization for sending unarmed monitors. The United States refused to allow the "neuralgic word 'authorize'," the *New York Times* reported. The Clinton administration "was sticking to its stand that NATO should be able to act independently of the United Nations." We carried out the bombing, even with the expectation of increased atrocities, in order, in part, to preserve the "credibility" of NATO.

TIKKUN: What do you expect will be the resolution to this action?

CHOMSKY: Some Western leaders have begun talking about an eventual partition of Kosovo. This would be an ugly outcome, because 90 percent of the province is Albanian. The likely partition would give the northern part of their country, the part that has not only the historical monuments that the Serb nationalists care about but most of the resources and wealth as well, to the Serbs. The south, which is kind of like a desert, would go to the 90 percent of Kosovars who are Albanian. Yet that ugly solution would be better than another outcome that may be in the minds of some military leaders—that once the Albanian population is expelled and the Serbs flee to the north, the United States may just carpet bomb the country, a Carthaginian solution aimed at showing our "credibility," as we did in Vietnam south of the twentieth parallel.

Compassion with Teeth

Caring Requires Intervention

Michael Lerner

Noam Chomsky makes many compelling points that need to be acknowledged. The United States has pursued a foreign policy often driven by a narrow desire to protect American investments and corporate power, and to open markets for new investments. As a result, the U.S. government has actively supported repressive regimes, trained military and paramilitary forces in the use of torture, and almost always subordinated concerns about human rights to concerns about American economic and military interests. The Clinton administration has continued this policy, most flagrantly in its relationship to China, but also in its policies in Turkey, Colombia, and dozens of other places.

It may well be that our government's focus on the former Yugoslavia is undergirded by a special concern about the way that our investments in Europe might be impacted by a widening struggle, or by our special interest in people we consider "white."

Yet many on the Left had previously argued that our passive role in Bosnia and Kosovo reflected our indifference to Moslems and other "peoples of color," or even reflected America's determination to make a crusade against Islamic peoples replace the Cold War as a way to justify our military budget. Now, however, we are on the non-Christian, non-white side of the struggle, belying the expectations of those who mechanistically reduce policy to class or racial interests. The startling reality is this: Americans (and others around the world as well) often manifest a powerful capacity to transcend their class/race/sex-role conditioning and let their deepest humanity flourish—so you can't always reduce policy to "interests."

In fact, our contention at TIKKUN has been that no matter how deeply assimilated we are into the dominant ethos of "looking out for number one"—that is, of maximizing our own material well-being without regard to the consequences for others—most of us nevertheless have an irrepressible urge to connect to some higher purpose in our lives and to recognize the humanity and preciousness of others. Our deep desire for meaning, love, and connection to others is often on the defensive, but it can never be fully stamped out.

Our desire for connection and for a world based on love makes it all the more difficult for us to advocate armed struggle with anyone, and is one of the reasons why under almost every possible circumstance we at TIKKUN have a predisposition to oppose armed force and to seek negotiations. But when we see acts of mass murder and genocide, the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of people from their homes, and acts of brutality and rape, we feel impelled to act. When it was the United States doing this directly in Vietnam, we did everything possible to disrupt its capacity to wage war. And now, when we see this kind of behavior in Kosovo, we reluctantly conclude that coercive or even violent interventions may be justified and morally required.

To such a position, peace activists respond that the culprit is Milosevic, and that we could take a large step towards resolving this crisis by bringing him to trial, while avoiding the bombing of innocent Serbian people. Certainly Milosevic's actions have been criminal. But the murders and rapes and mass expulsions of hundreds of thousands of Kosovars were committed by tens of thousands of "willing executioners" cheered on by a Serbian society which had supported the genocide in Bosnia and seemed willing to go along with its continuation in Kosovo. In the years before the bombing, when alternative media exposed the war crimes in Serbia, the opposition forces received only minimal support from a society that seemed all too ready to rally around Serbian nationalism and to justify genocide to itself.

As someone who was fired from his job in a university, physically beaten, and then sent to prison for his role in organizing nonviolent demonstrations against the war in Vietnam, I'm well aware that the costs for opposing one's government can be high (and higher still under a ruthless dictator). But just as many of us feel that the German people should have done more to oppose Hitler, so we have to hold accountable those in Serbia who did little to organize to oppose its genocidal policies.

In most circumstances where violence is advocated, we would oppose it for a stronger reason: we know that we can never get to the kind of world we want by using violence as the means. We respect those who take that stand in this case, and hope that they will couple their pacifist conviction will the traditional pacifists' willingness to put their bodies on the line in a pacifistic way. For example, if hundreds of thousands of pacifists were willing to go to the Balkans to serve as agents of nonviolent witness and to protect the victims of Serbian violence, such an action could have a profound effect on building the world in which we all believe.

In the long term we also agree with Chomsky that the UN and other world bodies are the appropriate vehicles to resolve inter- and intra-national disputes. Just as it seems appropriate to call the police when one hears convincing screams from a neighbor's house or when one witnesses a powerful gang beating up on others who seem unable to defend themselves, we'd be willing to call an international police force charged with this task, supervised not to use excessive force, and democratically responsive to the world's population.

Unfortunately, nothing of this sort exists.

In saying that we favor calling the domestic or international police, we don't mean to deny that the police themselves sometimes have dirty hands. The vicious racism of the New York City police department and its propensity to violence is repeated in many communities throughout the United States. But unless we had specific reasons to think that those issues were going to come into play in the specific case in front of us, we'd still call them when we saw someone being raped or physically assaulted and we had been unsuccessful in intervening ourselves. So in this circumstance we are willing to support U.S. intervention, with considerable trepidation, even though we know of its history of dirty hands. For similar reasons, many of us are glad the United States and the Soviet Union intervened against Hitler, even though they both may have had self-interested reasons for doing so, and even though both had a history of oppression in other aspects of their foreign policy.

We would prefer an international and democratically controlled force, and we hope that the United Nations will eventually get restructured in ways that build the confidence of the people of the world that it is democratic, ethically-based, and responsive to some higher vision than the self-interests of the ruling elites of the countries which compose it. But this is not the case at the moment. The structure of the UN allows for the major powers to block such interventions when they interfere with that power's perceived self-interest. Thus, the UN was totally unable to stop American aggression in Vietnam or Chinese aggression toward Tibet or Russian aggression toward Afghanistan and Czechoslovakia. And in the case at hand, given Russia's close ties and patriarchal sympathies with the thugs in Serbia, it has been totally unable to take decisive steps to prevent genocidal acts in Bosnia or Kosovo. Nor should we mystify the notion of multilateralism—it is perfectly conceivable to us that had the UN been in existence in 1939, it might have opposed any attempts to use force against Hitler and might have turned its back on the genocide of the Jews. If the peoples of the world had democratically decided to stand by and let the genocide continue, we would have supported unilateral intervention by those powers who were willing to do so.



PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHEL EULER / AP WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

By the same logic, given the role of Russia in the UN and the willingness of so many others to stand around and talk about their commitment to diplomacy in Kosovo while people are being murdered and expelled, it becomes appropriate for those who see a clear and present reality of murder and genocide to, after exhausting diplomatic channels, use their own armed forces to intervene. It's not only appropriate; it's morally mandatory. One reason why Jews have such strong criticisms of the nations of the world is that we remember their failure to intervene to assist Jews during the Holocaust. Neutrality in the face of murder is immoral.

It is reasonable to worry that any intervention we make in Kosovo may legitimate future interventions—interventions officially justified on humanitarian grounds whose real goal is to perpetuate American self-interest. The tragedy of the Balkans today is that the West has so discredited itself in the past that when it finally confronts an intervention that is morally justifiable, it has been far too hesitant to engage.

Yet the assault on this intervention by many people on the Left bespeaks both their inability to make fine distinctions and their crude, ideological interpretation of reality that precludes any complex assessment of a specific reality. The drivel about Kosovo intervention being a manifestation of America's relentless pursuit of self-interest is just ridiculous. In fact, it would have been far easier for Clinton to intervene in Bosnia or Kosovo, and to intervene in a far more decisive way, had there been such an obvious element of self-interest (as there was, for example, in the far more decisive intervention in Kuwait). It is precisely the absence of significant levels of self-interest which accounts both for the U.S. willingness to sit on the sidelines for so many years,

and for our hesitancy, even now, to intervene without the decisive force which might have prevented Milosevic's forces from being able to continue to expel the population during the first two weeks of fighting.

Yet the move towards intervention may ultimately represent the best moment in Clinton's presidency, a moment in which he remembered the dramatic appeal of Elie Wiesel at the opening of the Holocaust Museum some six years ago, when Wiesel turned to Clinton and told him he must act in Bosnia to prevent genocide. Leftist and rightist ideologues may be unable to accept this—but sometimes there are moments when a human being suddenly responds to his or her own highest voice and refuses to take the easiest and most self-interested path. The cynicism of a society, a media, and a Left so deeply committed to self-interest may be unable to recognize this moment of transcendence, and may insist on reducing it to some convoluted story of self-interest. Yet from our standpoint, it is critical for all of us to learn how to validate a more complex story.

It may be true that by the time you read these words Clinton will have moved away from this voice of principle, just as it may be true that his own wavering about going with that voice may be part of the reason that he moved so timidly even after deciding to intervene. We know that Clinton may quickly move back into his place of fear, and from there calculate that getting out of the war in Kosovo fits his narrow self-interest. But it is equally true that virtually all people on this planet have a higher part of themselves, and that that part does sometimes respond to moral and spiritual values and not just to self-interest. A more sophisticated account of human motivations has to recognize the flow of hope that sometimes makes it possible for people to go for their highest values, and also the ways in which the surrounding cynicism often makes people retreat from their highest values and fall back into more narrowly self-interested paths.

Because we wish to forge a different foreign policy in the United States, we need to be engaged in creating the circumstances in which Americans can feel greater confidence in staying with those moments of transcendence even when they seem to violate self-interest. The struggle for a politics of meaning foreign policy starts by combating the instinctive cynicism that makes us feel that "everyone is always going to be motivated by self-interest" with its correlate that "therefore the only rational thing for us is to be similarly motivated." If we want a different foreign policy, we need to foster confidence in people's sense that they can follow their highest moral voice. That's why we must intervene on behalf of the powerless in Kosovo—and thereby begin to counter the deep cynicism that has built up among so many people of the world when they have seen that no one was willing to intervene on behalf of the victims in Bosnia, Rwanda, Kurdistan, Palestine, and other places of oppression.

A politics of meaning foreign policy is one directed at building this sense of mutual confidence and hope. International law and human rights may sometimes express the level of hope and trust being constructed. But there is a danger that in talking the language of law and rights we move too far away from what we are really seeking, which is to develop in each of us a deep understanding of our mutual interconnectedness, of respect and even awe for the way each person on this planet is a manifestation of God, of the necessary unity of all human beings and the ultimate Unity of All Being. The language of law and rights often stultifies our capacity to remember what we are really fighting for.

The tragic irony of the real world is that sometimes to get to this level of caring, to create a context in which it feels safe, we must first or simultaneously use force to restrain those who are acting in a bullying manner. In kabbalistic language, *chesed* (lovingkindness) must be balanced with *gevurah* (strong boundaries). In Kosovo this requires a full-scale intervention, including U.S. troops that would build the world's confidence by showing that we are willing to share the risks. This is not a question of "NATO's credibility," but of our own credibility as caring neighbors. If we are unwilling to bring in enough troops to liberate and rebuild Kosovo, to give it full independence from Serbia (without ceding to Serbs the richer, northern part of Kosovo), and to fully punish Serbian war criminals, we should never have started the bombing and should stop it immediately. NATO's actual intervention, which in mid-April looks half-hearted, may have been worse than doing nothing. If we allow the genocidal bully of Serbia to succeed in displacing ethnic Albanians from northern Kosovo, we will have turned the phrase "never again" into meaningless rhetoric, and the bombing becomes counter-productive violence.

Of course, such military intervention is not enough. We also need to forge new directions which embody our highest vision more positively. Hence the importance of our powerful involvement with the fate of the refugees—giving the whole world a chance to show, as it has so far done in a beautiful way, how many millions of people really do care and would love to respond with their most loving and idealistic side if given the chance.

Thus, we are advocating compassion with teeth, a compassion that isn't just mushy sentiment. Yet it takes sentiment seriously—and does not allow it to be lost in the emotionally deadening legalese of rights and international law. Keeping alive a language of love and caring, affirming the humanity of the other including the humanity of those whom we must reluctantly fight, is central to the gradual thawing of cynicism that we seek. A politics of meaning approach to foreign policy is one that seeks to make concrete judgments about what actions in a given situation will produce the greatest amount of realizable hopefulness, and how to open the largest numbers of people to the possibility of a very different kind of world. ❑

FEARING THE RELIGIOUS

National Colonial Theology

Amnon Raz



The distinction between "secular" and "religious" identities is one of the common categorizations used to describe Israeli society and culture. Often presented as a clash between two opposite civilizations or between "democracy" and "theocracy," the secular/religious distinction frequently has been applied to the debate over the peace process. For example, the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin in 1995 was commonly interpreted in terms of religious zeal.

It's true that, since the 1970s, many—albeit certainly not all—religious groups have adopted a right-wing ultra-nationalistic attitude. Radical national-messianic groups have led the policy of settlement in the occupied territories and rejected any kind of political compromise with the Palestinians. On the other hand the majority of secular Jews—though again, certainly not all—have identified themselves with the "peace camp."

Nevertheless, the presentation of the political debate as one between secular and religious world views is misleading and superficial. First, it ignores the religious groups, especially Shas, which have supported the peace process and adopted a moderate policy in Israeli terms. Just as importantly, however, this presentation obscures the messianic elements inherent in the Zionist myth, and prevents us from examining the cultural attitudes which have led to the continued oppression of the Palestinian people. By identifying "secularism" with "peace," we have created a false image of the "secular" as "righteous" and "enlightened," obscuring the limitations of the concept of "peace" in Israeli culture.

It is not my intention to underestimate the danger of national religious groups, and of the process of national-religious radicalization. The religious zeal that dominates most of the settlers and their supporters is undeniable. My argument is that what made the rise of political-messianic interpretations in present Israel possible is the national-theological myth considered "secular." It is the "secular," not the religious, consciousness that facilitates the continuous policy of occupation and defines the boundaries of political discussion.

In what follows I will try to briefly describe the colonial dimension and the Orientalist images inherent in the construction of the "secular," focusing particularly on the way the secular presents the Jewish theological myth as "national" in the modern sense of the word. I will then analyze how the link between theology, nationalism, and colonialism impacts the perception of peace and allows Israelis to ignore the issue of Palestinian rights. Understanding the nature of the secular/religious debate, and especially the various aspects of the "secular" identity, is a crucial precondition for any attempt to create an authentically liberal approach, an attempt which is meaningful only if it is based on equality between Jews and Palestinians.

The very terms of the secular/religious debate define Israeli society as exclusively Jewish. Indeed, on the various occasions when the debate between "religious" and "secular" tendencies is reproduced, the participants are exclusively Jews, and tend to be Ashkenazi. Palestinians, even if they obviously hold "secular" attitudes, are not participants in the debate at all because secularism is seen as relating only to the Hebrew-Jewish culture. Being an Arab and being secular are considered mutually exclusive categories for the purposes of this debate.

The function of the religious/secular debate is, therefore, to determine the ethnic boundaries of the Jewish state. Its effect is to exclude the Palestinians, as a part of their marginalization. Rather than dividing the nation, as it is often assumed to do, this debate in fact creates and defines the boundaries of the state through its implicit inclusions and exclusions. The debate is not really about "secularism"

ILLUSTRATION BY RUSS ANDO

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at all, but about redemptive nationalism, prompted by two different cultural visions of the Jewish nation.

The construction of the secular/religious debate serves to distinguish the discussion of Jewish identity from the discussion of the Jewish-Palestinian conflict as if they were two separate issues. In both visions, peace is based on the image of an homogeneous Jewish society and is thus perceived as an internal Israeli/Jewish issue. Further, the nature of this homogeneous society is presented in Ashkenazic-European terms. That's because the religious/secular dichotomy is not relevant to Mizrachi Jews (Jews from Arab countries). At least until recently, Mizrachi Jews expressed a variety of attitudes towards religious tradition, without the conflict which characterized the historical development of European Jews. For all these reasons, secularism cannot be separated from nationalism and cannot be considered liberal and pluralistic.

The way the secular/religious debate determines the boundaries of Israeli society was demonstrated in the last municipal elections in Jerusalem. The propaganda of the "secular" parties warned that the religious parties were a threat to the secular way of life (the propaganda even showed crowds of ultra-orthodox Jews as the enemy of "society" in a way that sometimes could remind one of anti-Semitic images). The reality is different: the character of some neighborhoods in Jerusalem has changed, largely as the result of segregation-by-choice as the religious population has grown and the secular population declined (some moved to the suburbs, including settlements). But in the public sphere we have witnessed a process of increasing secularization; for instance, the opening of restaurants and clubs on Saturdays, an unthinkable phenomenon ten years ago. The real tension in Jerusalem is not between secular and religious Jews, but between Jews and Arabs. Jerusalem is a divided city under forced unification. Closure prevents Arabs living in the West Bank from entering the city. A policy of slow transfer of Palestinian residents is being silently implemented. Religious settlers in East Jerusalem make the lives of their neighbors unbearable. Yet all these issues were not even mentioned by the parties of the "peace camp." They were accepted as normal measures, to be distinguished from "municipal issues." Focusing on the secular/religious conflict made the Arabs invisible, and facilitated the process of their exclusion.

Rather than referring to a real tension in the public sphere, the religious/secular dichotomy serves as an ideological construct used by secular Jews to define themselves as "enlightened," "modern" (or "postmodern"), and "civil" in contrast to a "medieval," "primitive," and "primordial" religious culture. In its structure, images, and intentions, such an attitude is no more than a manifestation of a colonial-Orientalist discourse. This discourse allows secular Jews to simultaneously exclude religious and Oriental Jews on the one hand, and Arabs and Palestinians on the other. Paradoxically the attitude associated with peace is based on the same values which facilitated the dispossession of the Palestinians.

Within this ideology, the goal of "peace" is separation: more than referring to a set of principles concerning equality between Jews and Palestinians, "peace" refers to a concrete cultural image—not the fulfillment of Palestinian rights but getting rid of them, distancing them from the boundaries of imagination. Separation is perceived not as an acceptable political solution, but as a value and even a vision in itself—as the wish to "re-establish" a homogeneous—and innocent—Jewish community modeled in the image of Western-liberal society, separated from the Orient. It is therefore not surprising that the peace process included a policy of closure against the Palestinians.

The association of "peace" and anti-religious sentiment was clearly manifested in the propaganda disseminated by Meretz, the liberal party, in the 1996 elections. After the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin, polls anticipated a decline in the party's power as many of its voters moved to the Labor party. Since the differences between Labor and Meretz on political issues were vague, Meretz decided to concentrate on a campaign against religion, presenting religion as a threat to democracy. The campaign indeed succeeded in increasing support for Meretz, resulting in nine seats in the Knesset. But it simultaneously led many religious and conservative people who supported the peace process (many of them Oriental Jews) to vote for Netanyahu, since they now saw "peace" as a tool directed against them, their traditions, and their beliefs. By promoting a secular/religious debate, Meretz thus ignored both Palestinian rights (which for them wasn't the issue) and the identity of many Jews.

This is not to say that there are no real spheres of tension between secular and religious Jews. The debate over certain issues concerning the status of religion and Halachic law is indeed important. It is certainly not my intention to underestimate the dangers inherent in several nationalistic-religious groups. Ideological constructions have their own dynamics and they eventually lead to their fulfillment. I certainly do not mean to deny spheres of Hebrew and Jewish secular culture in Israeli society. But the uncritical image of the "secular" and of the "peace camp" does not leave a satisfactory framework for the struggle against these groups. The superficial generalization of all religious groups as the "enemy" diverts the discussion from the issue of radical nationalism to the issue of religion.

What should be emphasized is that the national historical consciousness that is associated with the "secular"— Zionism—is itself rooted in theological myth. Zionist settlement and sovereignty over Palestine were based on the perception of Jews returning to their homeland, regarded as empty. The Zionist project was considered to be the





PHOTOS BY (RIGHT) TSAFRIR ABAYOV / IMPACT VISUALS; (LEFT) NOEL JABBOUR / AP WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

fulfillment of Jewish history and the realization of Jewish messianic expectations.

In that respect, Zionist national consciousness was not separated from the theological myth. Secularization meant the nationalization of religious conceptions, not their replacement. God was excluded from this discourse, yet the Divine Promise continued to direct political activity and served as a source of legitimation. Zionism was based on the biblical promise and on the Jewish prayer book, and on the messianic view that the present serves as the conclusion of history and the realization of redemption.

This historical framework was developed by early Zionist secular-socialist thinkers, and was accepted, in different versions, by most of the Zionist trends, in spite of other differences. When later Zionist religious thinkers like Rabbi Kook reformulated that historical framework in religious terms, their work was not derived from "religion" as such but from the interpretation and the articulation of the Jewish myth in Zionist secular thought. Even though the impact of Zionist history amongst secular groups has diminished in recent decades, it is still the only existing framework for a national ideology.

Religious elements exist in many national contexts, and therefore the very distinction between national and religious identities is problematic, to say the least. National identities in Europe emerged from Christian theological discourse and preserved, even in a secularized form, aspects which originated from theological discussions after the Reformation. In Moslem contexts, the link between nationalism and religion is preserved in other ways. A notion of redemption and of theological justification and mission can also be discovered in many national movements. It was, of course, an important component of colonial consciousness in different areas of the world, where religious and cultural mission was related to political and economic domination and oppression. What distinguishes the Zionist theological perspective, however, is its direct relation to the Jewish-Christian messianic images and to the Holy Land.

That is not to say that Zionism truly follows, or that it exclusively represents, the Jewish messianic tradition. Zionist thought was obviously inspired by a number of Jewish traditional sources, and cannot be understood without referring to its dialectical preparation in previous Jewish trends. Nevertheless, Zionism's adaptation to the modern Western narrative of progressive history marked a shift in the Jewish concept of history. Zionism reflects the tendency to integrate Jewish history into the history of the West, and to interpret messianism as a modern-national myth. It manifests the acceptance of a fundamental Christian attitude concerning the Jews and their exile, and the use of concepts which received meaning in Protestant theology. This context reveals the link between theology and colonialism in Zionist thought.

Interestingly, the first people to describe Jewish redemption in modern political terms were Christian millenarians in early modern Europe, who regarded the return of the Jews to the Holy Land and the restoration of a Jewish polity as the precondition for Christ's Second Coming. The representatives of this tradition expected the conversion of the Jews as part of that vision, and in that, of course, they differed from the Zionists. But their images illuminate the perspective from which Zionist nationalism was imagined. Zionists also desired the transformation of the Jew—and the creation of "the New Jew," redeemed and different from the exilic Rabbinic Jew, imagined according to similar images of personal redemption.

Similarly, the Zionist ideal of "return" to the ancient past was based on a fundamentally Protestant imagination of the Holy Land of the Second Temple period, the age of Jesus Christ. The image of the ancient Jewish community was the same image attributed to the early Church in Protestant thought, and was formulated in the same terms. The Zionist national ideal considered to be secular followed the theological imagination of Protestantism. The national images inspired by German Romanticism preserved their theological meaning.

My aim in making these connections is not to claim a direct historical "influence." Rather, I would like to suggest this connection between Protestantism and Zionism as a critical tool that can reveal crucial aspects of Zionism and advance our understanding of how the Jewish people came to be defined as a nation. The modern Western idea that history is progressive and that nations have their own teleologies, with its roots in Christian (especially Protestant) theology, clarifies this link.

The modern Western notion of history has been considered theologically neutral, but it actually serves as a mediator between the theological and the colonial. In the Zionist case, the nationalization of the Jewish memory combined the theological discourse and the discourse on identities based on ethnic and cultural distinctions. The result was a secular discourse with a theological framework and a colonialist attitude. "Released" from its theological trappings, Zionist settlement is revealed as a Western colonial project in the Orient. The difference is that the Jews themselves, the victims of colonialism in the West, become colonizers by bringing this Western discourse to the East. The attempt to distinguish their new narrative of national redemption from the previous messianic attitude, and especially the Zionist insistence that the return to Palestine was the "negation of exile," manifests their attempt to envision Jewish history as European history. Paradoxically, the exodus of the Jews from Europe enabled their assimilation into Europe, without the need for conversion. Jewish terms were reinterpreted, not necessarily according to Jewish tradition, but rather according to the meaning they received in Protestant thought and in later colonial/missionary movements. These terms were used again for a definition of the Jewish project of colonization in the Holy Land.

Jews themselves, the victims of colonialism in the West, become colonizers by bringing this Western discourse to the East.

The link between the theological and the colonial is nowhere clearer than in the national-theological perception of the Holy Land. For the Zionist, the land had no history of its own, no culture of its own, no people living in its domain other than the history, culture, and people inscribed in the theological myth—the land itself was considered to be in exile. Thus, redemption of the people and the so-called "redemption of the land" were regarded as complementary.

That mythical concept of the land continues to define Israeli culture. In both secular Zionist and religious schools, the Bible is perceived as a national text to legitimize Jewish sovereignty over all of the land. Similarly, the history of Palestine since the period of the Second Temple is not taught at all in schools, whether secular or religious. The Jewish-Christian theological language which dominates the land has denied its Arabic language and the existence of the Arabic people, even before their actual expulsion. The evacuation of the Palestinian population was later suppressed, and the Palestinian tragedy was not regarded as part of the discussion on Jewish collectivity and the establishment of the state of Israel. In the same vein, historical maps do not include Arab towns and villages. This attitude continues to dominate political discourse, and prevents the inclusion of the Palestinian perspective in the discussion on peace.

It's not surprising that, within this framework and in the context of Jewish sovereignty and domination, traditional religious concepts reappeared in radical forms and originated radical nationalistic activities. But it should be emphasized that these interpretations became possible because such redemptive terms, along with an ambivalent attitude towards messianism, were already present in "secular" Zionist thought. The political interpretation of messianic aspiration that formed secular Zionism is the background which later enabled the radical-political interpretation of religious terms.

The messianic dangers inherent in the Zionist myth were clarified by Gershom Scholem in the conclusion to his famous essay "Toward an Understanding of the Messianic Idea [1959]":

> Little wonder that overtones of Messianism have accompanied the modern Jewish readiness for irrevocable action in the concrete realm, when it set out on the utopian return to Zion. This readiness no longer allows itself to be fed on hopes. Born out of the horror and destruction that was Jewish history in our own generation, it is bound to history itself and not to meta-history; it has not given itself up totally to Messianism. Whether or not Jewish history will be able to endure this entry into the concrete realm without perishing in the crisis of the Messianic claim, which has virtually been conjured up—that is the question which out of his great and dangerous past the Jew of this age poses to his present and to his future.

The question posed by Scholem remains the same in our days and even becomes more urgent. But what should be emphasized is that Scholem's warning was not directed towards messianic speculation, towards "religion," but towards the dangers embodied within the political-secular formulation of messianism, namely its secularization. He points to the dangers which are part of the historical consciousness which he himself had a prominent role in shaping.

Scholem warned again and again against the price of messianism, but at the same time, as in the quoted passage, he described the present as the "utopian return to Zion." Scholem was one of the prominent figures who defined messianism as a national vision, and thus regarded Zionist

activity as redemptive. Though Scholem objected, after 1967, to the settlements project, his attitude prepared the way which enabled the political theology of the settlers. Even though he himself was, for a short period, an adherent of bi-nationalism, the vision of redemption he developed later was exclusively Jewish. The difference between Scholem's vision and Rabbi Kook's lies in the image of the redeemed society, and the role of Halachah: while Rabbi Kook anticipated the repentance of the secular Jews, Scholem regarded nationalism as a replacement for halachic obligations. Despite these important differences, however, both men shared the belief that the present is the fulfillment of the historical process of redemption.

Within the Zionist framework, the state is not perceived as an instrument for the well-being of its citizens, but as the conclusion of historical redemptive process and as the symbol of redemption. It is not the state of all its citizens but rather the state of the Jewish people—a definition that excludes Arab and Palestinian citizens but includes Jews who are citizens of other states and represented by the Jewish agency and World Zionist Organization. It is an ethnic community and the carrier of the theological-national mission. Thus "secularization" is associated with the sacralization of the state.

This link between the secular and the sacred was emphasized recently in a debate on the scope and jurisdiction of the Supreme Court of Israel. The matter concerned the "law of conversion" and the "law of return." The debate was presented as being between "democratic" groups who wish to separate religion from the state, and religious groups who reject the authority of the judicial system. But in fact the issue was absolutely different. The debate centered on whether Reform and Conservative rabbis would be authorized to proselytize, and therefore to accredit converts the right of citizenship according to the law of return. Secular representatives did not suggest different criteria to define citizenship; nor did they question whether rabbis should be the only authorities in matters of conversion. Instead, the secular camp focused only on which rabbis are authorized to permit citizenship. By focusing on this question, and this question alone, secular Jews were in essence establishing the connection between religion and citizenship and demanding that the court decide on theological matters.

This attitude legitimizes the dual political system which exists in Israel: the State on the one hand and the Jewish Agency and Jewish National Fund (JNF) on the other. These institutions are the instruments which, in actual practice, enable continuous discrimination against non-Jewish citizens. The JNF holds ownership of most of the land in Israel and prohibits Arab settlements. Its stated purpose, in fact, is to "redeem" the land from its Arab owners, to "return" it to Jewish hands. The "democratic" pretensions

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of liberal circles which support the JNF are thus unraveled. This discrimination is certainly not caused by "religion."

Interestingly, the only writers in Zionist history who suggested what could be considered a starting point towards secularization are some of the religious thinkers, among them the founders of the Mizrachi (Religious Zionist) movement. Well aware of the implications of the theological dimension of Zionism, they tried to distinguish Zionism from its messianic aspirations and to define it strictly as a secular endeavor. Rabbi Reines, the founder of the Mizrachi, regarded Zionism as a political activity based on the demand for a shelter for the Jews, and distinct from the messianic myth. Accordingly (and from the historical perspective, surprisingly), in 1903 the Mizrachi leadership supported a plan to establish a Jewish state in Uganda. It is not that they reduced the centrality of the Land of Israel in Jewish thought—they continued to prefer the settlement in the Holy Land, which could provide a holistic religious way of life. But they intended to distinguish political activity from redemption. Later, the most significant adherents of this secularized Zionism were religious figures such as Baruch Kurtzweill and Yeshayahu Leibovitz.

Orthodox non-Zionist and anti-Zionist circles also have rejected the Zionist secular notion of redemption as heretic. They described their own existence in Palestine as "exile in Eretz-Israel." On principle, this attitude does not necessarily reject the Palestinian existence and their rights. Theoretically, it does not necessarily lead to the ignoring of the land itself, and may even open the way for a Jewish collective definition which takes into consideration Palestinian existence and rights. It releases Jewish identity from the notion of redemption.

I do not claim that these thinkers or groups left a satisfactory alternative. But they direct us to a different definition of Israel, one which at least enables the separation of the land from the myth, and enables the desacralization of the state. They at least direct us to a discourse based on the term "Dina DeMalchuta Dina"—The Law of the Kingdom is the Law—the political exilic principle. This principle is usually considered irrelevant in the State of Israel, where the "Malchuta," the Kingdom, is considered to be Jewish. It is this very attitude, however, which continues to emphasize the theological-redemptive perception of the state. Applying this principle to the State of Israel would demonstrate the need to distinguish the national-theological identity from the definition of the state.

The main issue in Israel today is not the separation of state and religion, but the separation of national-religious identities from the definition of the state. So long as the state is defined as the state of the Jewish people, it is impossible to separate state and religion. So long as the state is considered a Jewish state, its definition will be a religious one.

It seems to me that the necessary condition for both secularization and a political compromise is to develop a bi-national perspective. Bi-nationalism does not refer necessarily to a one state solution; even for a two state solution (namely, the establishment of a Palestinian state) a common perspective must be developed. A two state solution will become possible only if it is based on the principle of equality between Jews and Palestinians and on a compromise that will include the acknowledgment of Palestinian rights and history. Any other option preserves and strengthens the myth of redemption and, consequently, the process of dispossession. "Peace" cannot be based on the concept of the separation of two peoples, and secularization cannot be established if the boundaries of discourse continue to exclude the Palestinians. The basic and only meaning of secularization is finally to distinguish the land, its history, and its political future from the theological-colonial myth.

This is not to ignore the impact of religious images of the land in Jewish culture, but to take responsibility for the effects of the political-theological myth. The history of the land and the history of its various images are inseparable. It is impossible to define Jewish collectivity in Palestine and disregard the various levels on which the land was perceived, discussed, and imagined in Jewish thought.

Nor am I suggesting that we give up completely on a notion of redemption. The issue is how we are to understand that term and whom we are to include in its context. It is impossible to describe as redemptive a reality that includes refugee camps, confiscation of property, and deprivation of rights. Bi-nationalism, unlike the present reality, would provide a context that includes the population of the refugee camps in the image of redemption. Such a bi-nationalism would be undertaken with a sense of responsibility, based on the historical understanding that the birth of Israel and the Palestinian tragedy are not two separate events, but one and the same. ❑

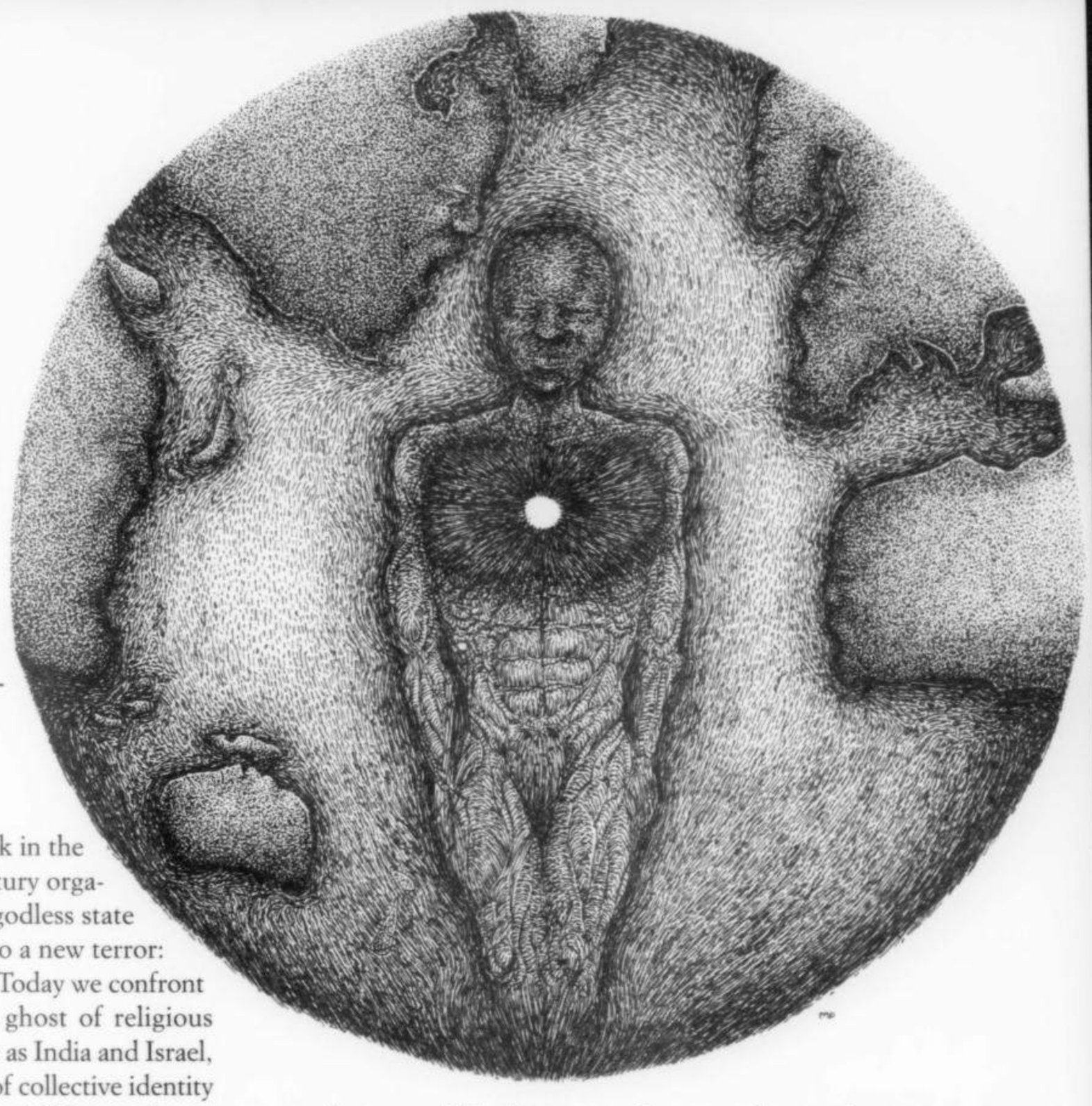
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FEARING THE RELIGIOUS

When God Walks in History

The Sources of Religious Nationalism

Roger Friedland



God is once again seen to walk in the history of nations. As a century organized around the fear of a godless state comes to a close, we wake to a new terror: states armed with powers of the divine. Today we confront a specter, an apparently pre-modern ghost of religious nationalism. Why in countries as diverse as India and Israel, Iran and Sri Lanka, is the modern unit of collective identity being stitched back into pre-modern dress? What motivates this new cladding?

The Class of Meaning

With the end of the Cold War, one might have expected a surge in class politics, given that policies advocating the redistribution of wealth would no longer be freighted with such awesome geopolitical significance. The opposite has occurred. The unregulated capitalist market is now more extensive—and granted more legitimacy—than at any time in human history.

Capital now turns on a dime, its flows impervious to frontiers. Labor cannot match capital's ease in responding to geographic differentials in wages and profits. This growing gap, widened by complex contracting networks, technologies such as electronic transfer, and multinational organization, has led to a growing income inequality within nations. The new cosmopolitans are either very rich or very poor; everybody else remains uneasily in place, aware that the forces shaping their destiny have moved beyond the horizon.

Faced with these inequalities, states find themselves paralyzed. As multinational corporations increasingly become like states, with welfare benefits and life-chances tied to employment within the corporation, states become increasingly like firms, making competitive deals to trap investment and employment within their boundaries. The first thing to go is the universal welfare state. Capital applies a continuous downward pressure on the taxes a government might wish to impose on it. States cannot afford to sustain a welfare system more advanced than those of their trading partners or competitors. The conditions for the working class have fast eroded. The republic does not care because it cannot.

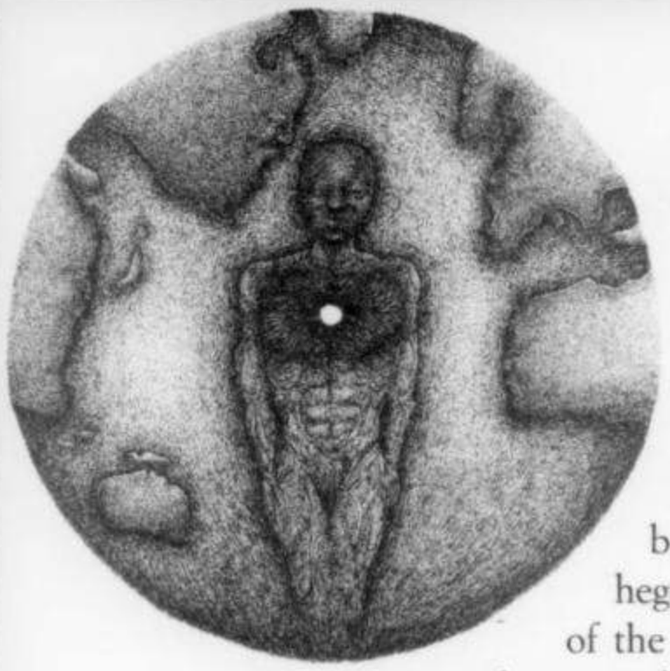
If we understand working class politics not simply as a struggle for resources but for recognition as well, then it is no wonder that, as the conditions for class organization decline, people without means might seek out alternative meanings around which to organize for resources and respect. However, the rise of religious nationalism is not simply a sublimation of class politics, nor does it have its origins in economic crisis. Its members are drawn from every class strata. As Martin Riesebrodt has suggested, religious nationalism does not put itself in opposition to a particular class, but towards aspects of capitalism as such.

Capital as a Cultural Condition

Capitalism is a cultural condition. Apparently a system for the production and distribution of material goods and services, it is, in fact, a way in which we produce and distribute ourselves. The French sociologist Emile Durkheim pointed

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Roger Friedland is professor of religious studies and sociology at UC Santa Barbara. He is the co-author, with Richard Hecht, of To Rule Jerusalem.



FEARING THE RELIGIOUS

out long ago that modernity has made a God of man, a sacred subject. The modern society reveres our common humanness, holds our species being inviolate. The unparalleled hegemony and global expansiveness of the market have steadily reduced that sacred subject to an economic man, whose right to life is reduced to a set of rights to own, to buy and sell, to offer oneself in the marketplace. As the logic of the market penetrates into every domain of familial and community life, the territory of value independent of price shrinks, and the meaning of community is itself reduced to the sum of self-interested exchanges. The capitalist economy affords a self-making that is both promise and curse, autonomous and chosen yet lonely and selfish.

This experience of ourselves as the effects of our own constructions, as media for forces we do not control, as surfaces without substance or center, has been the basis for postmodern and post-structuralist theories. These theories mime the world in which we live, a world where our collective forces increasingly elude collective control. It is a world where everything can be anyplace, a risky world that depends increasingly on complex, unbounded systems unmatched by trust and solidarity, a world where the mirror we look into to see ourselves reflects back at us the images of a global capitalist culture. Ordinary things become the most revered subjects, while, as Michael Lerner has argued in *The Politics of Meaning,* people have become things, means without meaning.

Most postmodern theorists have celebrated the blurring of human and artifact, the displacement of the human subject as a moral and ontological measure, the end of metanarrative. They celebrate, in short, what others suffer. If modernity made man a sacred subject, under current conditions being sacred is just too much for most people to bear. For these people, religion offers an alternative realm of achievement to that of occupational position or material wealth. Against the infinitely invidious individualisms of the marketplace, religion offers a living community and an alternative language through which to construct the self. Rather than an extraordinary success, one can be an ordinary miracle. Religion restores the sacrality of the person. The re-making of God is driven by a desperate desire to re-imagine the human.

Religion is also today perhaps one of the only available languages in which ordinary people can reach the public sphere. Historically, religious nationalist movements have been led by the laity, not the clerics. Their extensive services, which function as an alternative welfare state for their members, are offered and consumed within the context of a moral community, quite unlike the distant, bureaucratic, and often officious services offered by the state. Islamic, Jewish, Hindu and other religious nationalists all built their movements by offering aid—things as simple as cooking oil and well-water or places to sleep and learn—in the context of communal acts of care rather than as a way to manage a social problem. Their members are obligated and enabled to do these acts by a belief in a transcendent cosmos and a sense of membership in a moral community.

If modernity made man a sacred subject, under current conditions being sacred is just too much for most people to bear.

Commodities are not only things we use; they are markers of who we are. Our economy increasingly trucks in images, visions of whom we might become—desired bodies, satisfied souls, independent spirits. These images—of beauty, power, age, satisfaction, esteem, sexuality—increasingly constitute the value of the objects to which they are coupled. The capitalist consumer economy thrives on the production of an insatiable desire, one always deferred, increasingly unhinged from the bodily proportions of human need. The commodity does not deliver; we can never measure up. One can only forever approach a receding and elusive satisfaction, a glimpse of pleasure. Self-making is unbearably elusive for many. Instead of a subject who needs an object, we descend into a commodified looking-glass where person and thing are both mediated through images and signs. Religion offers the alternative mystery of God, whose truth, Thomas Carlson has argued, is also desire, a desire that, like that which powers the consumer economy, desires desire. In place of the mirror images of the commodity market, religion offers an alternative mysterium, through which to animate and orient the self—the image of God. This image unifies; it does not divide.

The Grace of State

But why a politicized religion? Religious nationalists make politics into a religious obligation because the polity houses our collective dreams and harnesses our collective powers. It, too, is a sacred place. Throughout the history of the world, religious communities, their priests and prophets, have moved into and out of the public square, storming the state house, only to return to their places of worship. We do not understand these movements into and out of the public sphere very well. But whether it be the Jews' rebellion against Egyptian, Selucid or Roman rule; the English revolution charged with anti-Papist energies; the galvanizing role of African American Christianity in the American civil rights movement; or the interpretive powers of liberation theology in the Sandanistas' aborted transformation of Nicaragua, religion always has potential political potency because it is a language of solidarities, of forces that reach beyond individ-

uals and classes, because it names purposes that give us meanings originating outside of ourselves.

Religion gives us access to those substances that are not things to be exchanged—the expressive, the beautiful, the spiritual, the good, the sensuous, the desires and lacks, loves and hatreds of the life world, collective solidarities and the multiplicity of their powers. These cannot adequately be parsed through capitalist mechanisms for apportioning preferences by price or the democratic aggregation of interests through votes. At a time when civil society is breaking into racial, ethnic, and linguistic communitarian pieces, when particularisms of all sorts threaten the nation's unity, when neither socialism nor capitalism can or will provide legitimacy for government authority, religion offers a cross-class, cross-race, cross-region bonding unavailable elsewhere. We cannot choose our race or ethnicity, but we can choose a religious faith and moral practice upon which to construct a collective identity.

Religions, particularly those other than Christianity, offer an autonomous cultural space, perhaps the only one, from which to protect the nation against Western capitalism's cultural onslaught. While Christianity began as a stateless faith, other religions have suffused modern national identities and nationalist movements with religious myth, symbolism, and ritual from their formation—Iran, Sri Lanka, Ireland, India, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Palestine.

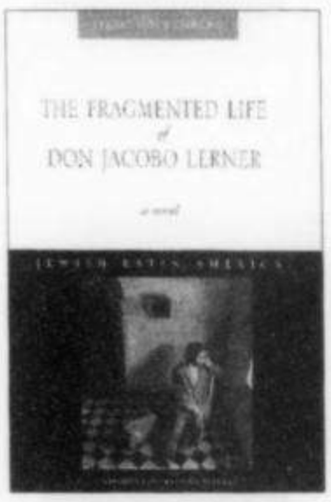
It is no wonder then that in much of the world secular nationalism is understood as a cultural form particular to the Christian West, indeed one requiring an abrogation of the existent non-Christian religious bases of governmental authority, such as *shari'a,* the laws of Islam. In a world where the divine inhabits the collective imagination, the mundane interventions of Western states, like the positioning of American troops within the *umma,* the territories initially conquered by the Prophet's armies, can easily be read as profane. Given how important religion was to the formation of many non-Western nations, it is not surprising that secular nationalism is easily perceived as a form of Christian political culture. Religion is a ready reservoir for nationalist critique.

Religion offers a discourse of difference that can bind the nation together. Religion also offers a way to restore a collective sense of time. For a modernity that has lost its capacity for collective memory, religion is a way to re-narrativize the nation. It offers an origin story that describes the nation as the result of a collective execution of divine will, not from accidents of residence and the contractual formations that ensued. Returning to God offers a way to represent a collective power capable of acting in history, a history beginning outside itself. With our circuits flooded with commodified images consumed alone, religious movements are now the only significant mass-mediated counter-presence, part of organizational networks such that the words of their texts can be joined to the voices of those

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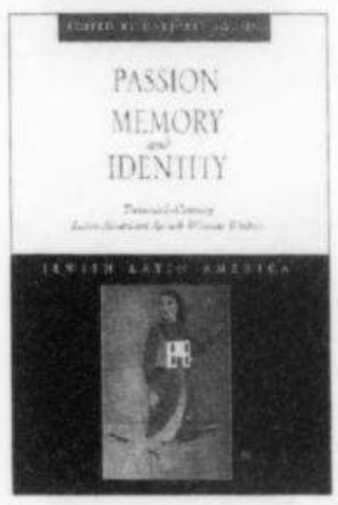
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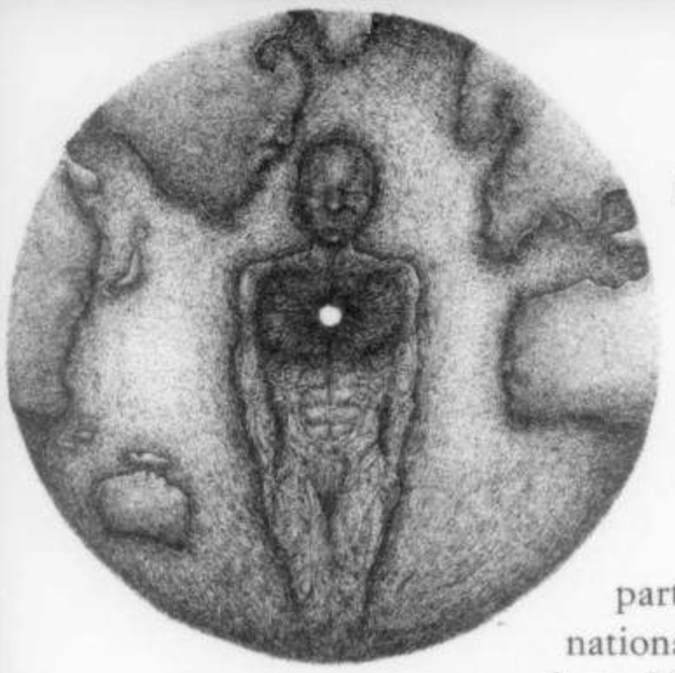
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who read and interpret them together, able, in a word, to achieve social expression.

The Subject of Sex

Religious nationalism has a particular sexuality. Religious nationalists seek a return to public modesty. They want to clean the public space, both the city's and the televisual square, of naked bodies, particularly those of women; to reassert the divisions of gender; to resacralize familial, particularly conjugal, bonds; to bolster and celebrate the public powers of the patriarch. Certainly this is the case with Hindu nationalists, Protestant fundamentalists, the Sunni Palestinian nationalists of Hamas, and the Shi'ite Iranian religious nationalists. Religious Zionists also partially conform to this portrait. While women serve both as parliamentary members and spokespersons for the religious Zionist movement, the movement otherwise staunchly defends the traditional binaries of gender in their synagogues and schools, cloaks the female body, sanctifies the family, and still affirms paternal authority within the family.

Martin Reisebrodt interprets the emergence of fundamentalism in Iran and the United States as a defense of patriarchalism in a world where women have encroached steadily on male prerogatives, an encroachment whose weight falls forcefully on the father inside the family. He writes in *Pious Passion* that

> Fundamentalism is particularly occupied with the public display of the female body. In both the United States and Iran its themes are the immoral dress of women in public, the creation of a uniform type of 'decent' women's clothing (veiling, national costume), the stimulation of male sexuality by women (dress, films, theatre, swimming pools), and unsupervised contact between the sexes and opportunities for meeting (dance halls, swimming pools, coeducation).

Fundamentalism, he argues, is a means to reassert "patriarchal structural principles" in the family, the economy, and the state.

Something more than a defense of male privilege is at work here, however. Religious nationalism is particularly deployed against the heterosexual powers of women. These powers are displayed in the spectral emporia of commodity culture, where it is women's bodies that are both the predominant object and the subject of consumer culture. Divided in production into a multiplicity of jobs and occupations, we moderns are re-united in mass consumption, a sphere whose allure is carried by women's desired and desiring bodies, a feminized and feminizing zone. If the public voice, the one that speaks in the name of the nation, is masculine, the body—the one always before our eyes—is that of a woman.

Religious nationalism both involves an outraged assault on the feminization of the collective body and a celebration of its renewed maleness. P.K. Datta has described how Hindu nationalists, for example, transformed the iconography of Ram, understood as the divine avatar of Vishnu and the originary Indian sovereign. In Tulsidas' *Ramcharitmanas* Ram is portrayed as a generous god immanent in all Hindus, protected by the monkey god Hanuman. By the late 1980s the Hindu nationalists had made Ram into a muscled warrior, his bow drawn, his image associated with the model of the temple whose rebuilding in Ayodhya would be prepared by such ferocious violence. This refiguring of Ram, as Thomas Hansen has suggested, was associated with a repudiation of the foundational non-violent, feminine, Gandhian civil culture. Likewise, the Gush Emunim sought to reincarnate the hard bodies of the *halutzim,* the original Zionist pioneers. In the eyes of the Gush Emunim, their secularized Labor Zionist successors are "womanized" for their willingness to sacrifice covenanted patrimony and for their sorrowful identification with the enemy.

Mark Juergensmeyer in *The New Cold War* describes listening to Bhindranwale, the Sikh nationalist leader.

> Bhindranwale addressed his congregation as if the men (especially the young men) were the only ones listening, encouraging them to let their beards grow in the long Sikh fashion and describing their acts of cowardice as 'emasculation.' One senses in this longing for a recovery of virility expressed by Bhindranwale and other religious activists a strange, composite yearning that is at once sexual, social and political. The marginality of such persons in the modern world is experienced by them as a kind of sexual despair.

That religious nationalists celebrate patriarchal authority and denigrate the feminine is more than a reactionary reassertion of male privileges in a labor force and political stage flooded with females. It should also be seen as an effort to refigure authority, to combat a situation in which powers abound without the words that would make them make sense, and desperate and longing words proliferate without any power at all. Capital acts without speaking and social solidarities cannot find voice. Against that, the father-centered family is the primordial ethical monist world to which religious nationalists would have us return.

That's one reason why the re-masking of the female body is not just imposed by men; it is chosen by women. Women, too, find fundamentalism compelling. When the sensuous female body has become the prime commodity fetish and when women can decreasingly count on the vows of marriage, then the embedding of the division of gender in the sacred unity of marriage offers many women a refuge and an alternative substance of love. The swathed and separated body of woman, out of sight and beyond reach, registers for many fundamentalist women as valuation, not degradation.

In every society, men and women both are taught to be subjects and to learn to obey within the context of the family. This involves, as Pierre Bourdieu and Sigmund Freud have both insisted, a process of embodiment, a forgotten history of learning through the body, which leaves in its wake the unthought schemata by which we classify the world and thereby reveal to others the class of conditions from which we ourselves emerged. This learning takes place in a gendered and sexualized environment. In the prototypical family, mother-love is body talk through the nurturant medium of the mothers' bodies working on the bodies of their children; whereas fathers choreograph their children primarily through words, signs backed by the threat of violence. The traditional family is constituted by the mother's body and the father's word.

Religious nationalism flourishes in a world where the father's words increasingly fail to signify, where economic transformation undercuts paternal authority, where agency itself is at stake. As Nancy Chodorow has taught us, in a mothered world, boys and girls learn to become subjects differently. While boys must reject the feminine to arrive at their gendered selves, girls need not. The fundamentalist celebration of the male and the expulsion of the female from the public body is a way for men to reconstitute the subject itself. If religious nationalism is understood in this way as a social movement seeking to reestablish agency for men, and not simply as a movement to reestablish male hegemony (although it is that too), then the struggle to sexually cleanse the public sphere takes on an additional meaning, an effort to create a world where men can be subjects.

Religious nationalism is an effort to create a world where men can be subjects.

The Sex of State

The nation has a territorial body. While the sense of national place, a space shared and understood in common, depends on a particular cartography of social interaction, it also depends on containment, on an area of state authority within which that interaction takes place. Physical bounding, the writing of a path, a perimeter, is, as a representation, integral to the moral bonding of which that bounding is taken to be an outer mark. The collective actions which mark off the land—settlement by pioneers and ancestors, the definition of boundaries and their determined defense—are seminal moments in the making of a people. Nationalist stories are heroic narratives of struggle against the profanation, penetration, and subordination of this land and by extension of this people. The people defend the land with their lives, for it embodies their collective life.

To forge a modern nation, the state depends on an abstract space, upon the bland fact of residence, mere location, to build a universal citizen transcending other group loyalties. The "any" man depends on "any" place. Religious nationalism, on the other hand, makes national space into divine place, joins God to the territorial nation, transforming it into something other than just another piece of sovereign real estate. Religious nationalism thus preserves the form of the nation-state, but transforms its substance.

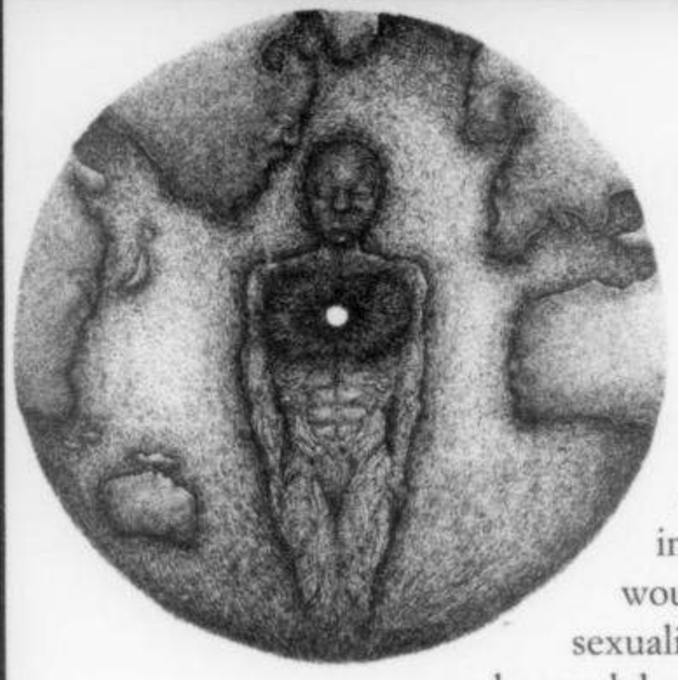
The global flows of both culture and capital make the boundaries and the agency of the nation-state increasingly meaningless, a media for forces beyond control or comprehension. Religious nationalists understand the nation's weakness, its passivity, its unwillingness to protect its perimeter and project its power, its indulgence in sterile pleasures, as a feminization. This collective enervation is to be countered by a return to, by submission before and unity with, a God who is world-making through word-making. That God is male, a fortifying force with which to fuse, to be taken within. Just as each man seeks to find himself through a return to patriarchal authority, so the nation seeks fusion with the male powers of a male God.

The Sex of the Same

Clothing, controlling, and sequestering the female body, taking it out of the sites of collective representation, religious nationalists reassert the maleness of the public body as a muscular, virile, bounded body. It is striking that religious nationalists counter the feminine heterosexual with male homosociality, the lures of sexualized women with the solidarities of men. As Mark Juergensmeyer has pointed out, religious nationalism is typically centered around energetic, diffuse, indeed, erotic forms of male bonding.

In *The Ego and the Id,* Freud argued that the self, the ego, is first constructed as a bodily form through the image of a sexed body. Judith Butler argues that the accomplishment of this gendered self depends on a disavowed, yet internalized, object, namely the body of the same sex parent. A boy's identification with his father, she writes, "contains within it both the prohibition and the desire, and so embodies the grieved loss of the homosexual cathexis." In this logic, men want the femininity they can never be and want to be the masculinity they can never have. Becoming a man, learning heterosexual desire, requires that one prohibit the femininity within. The constitution of the self involves both a constructed gender and sexuality, exclusively male or female, exclusively heterosexual.

Masculine, as well as feminine, identification and desire are both haunted by homosexual desire. "In a man," Butler writes in *The Psychic Life of Power,* "the terror of homosexual desire may lead to a terror of being construed as feminine, feminized, of no longer being properly a man, of being a 'failed' man, or being in some sense a figure of monstrosity or abjection." But perhaps it also operates the other way



around, that the sense of a masculine failure leads both to homoerotic terror and desire. If the self is under assault, endangered, decomposing, then within this structure it would not be surprising for homosexuality to emerge both as the problem and the solution, a solution which must be ultimately disavowed, discharged, expelled from both the social and the individual body. In other words, homosociality, and the erotic energies that make it pulse, becomes a source out of which to reconstruct manhood, to place women apart, to reenact Freud's mythic primal scene. One returns to men for the energy to be a man, to be a self, which is the same thing; each helps to fabricate a male collective representation, a collection of male bodies, in order to be represented as a man. In the company of brothers, one has and is a man. Rcligious nationalism re-eroticizes the public sphere, restoring the male as the body language of agency. (In a world that seems not to care, that casts caring as womanly, religious nationalism also allows men to care as men.)

If we are to do battle with their religion, we must better understand the limits of our own.

The sexuality of these politics is not new. Religious nationalists recapitulate the views of the original republicans. Jean Jacques Rousseau, the foundational fabricator of the "general will," likewise stripped the public sphere of women, made citizenship into a masculine performance. For Rousseau, men's political relation to the state is founded not on reason, but on love. "The authority the populace accords to those it loves and by it is loved," he wrote in *Discourse on Political Economy,* "is a hundred times more absolute than all the tyranny of usurpers." As Elizabeth Wingrove has shown, Rousseau made it clear, however, that the homosocial love he describes had to be purged of the homosexual. In his unpublished *Le Levite d'Ephraim,* Rousseau took Ephraim's story from Judges that takes place before Israelite kingship as a parable for his own republican drama. In the story, it is the lust of the men of the tribe of Benjamin for Ephraim and then their subsequent rape and murder of his concubine that sets in motion a murderous civil war. The homoerotic threatens the homosocial logic of solidarity. Politics has a sex because sex is our first politics, our first agency, our first subjection.

The Matter of Meaning

While many of us may detest the religious bases of national authority, both the content of its absolutisms as well as that absolutism itself, we err in assimilating the religious nationalists to the pre-modern past. Religious nationalism is a politics of modernity, ironically deploying the divine to shore up its sovereign subjects, individual and collective. Religious nationalism restores the binaries of inside and outside, us and them, good and evil, man and woman, and centers them in sacred space.

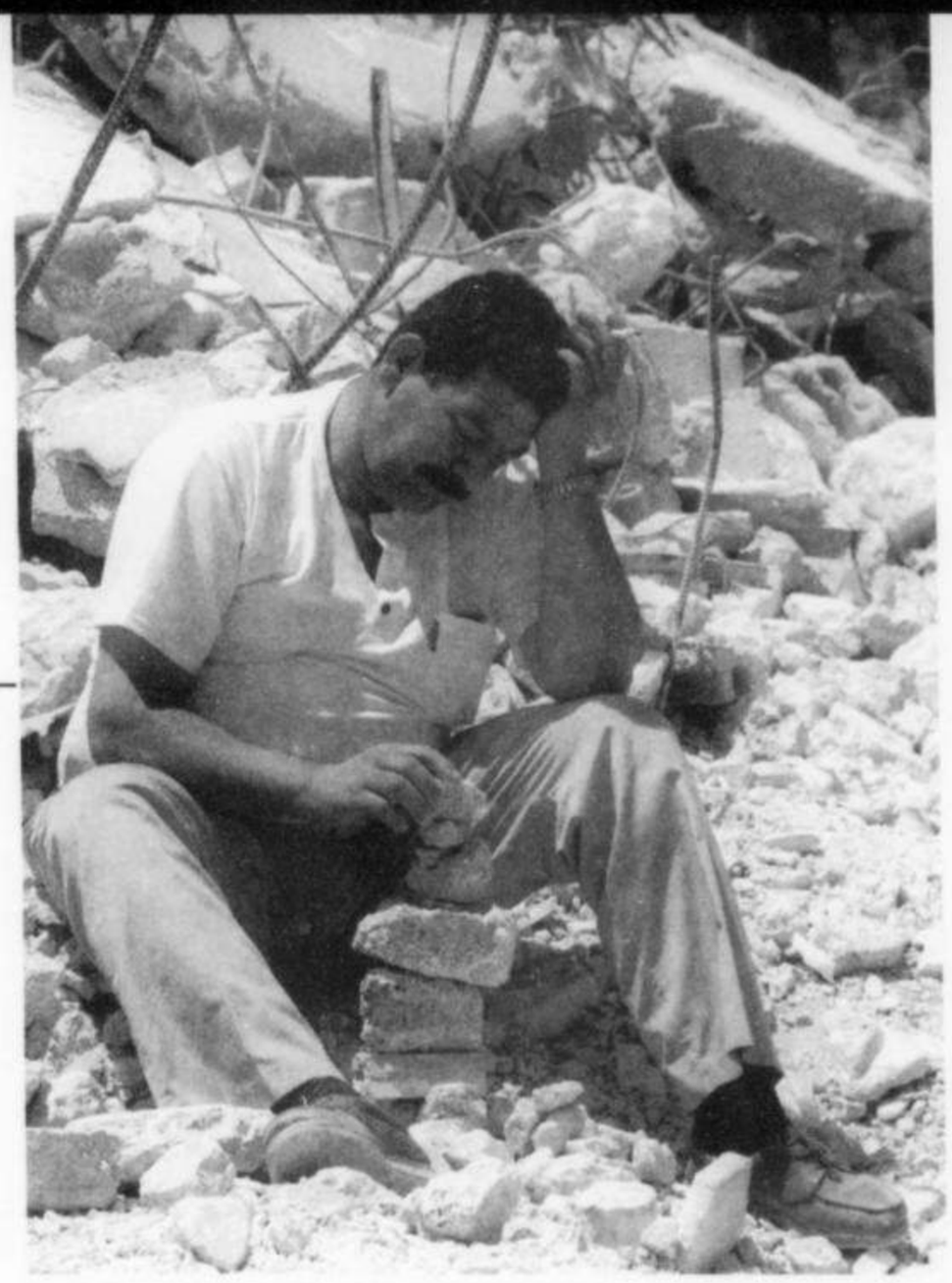
If earlier scriptural fundamentalisms responded to the successes of the Enlightenment, these new ones speak to its failures. The Enlightenment philosophers made the separation of state authority from religion an essential condition for freedom, for "mankind's exit from its self-imposed immaturity" as Immanuel Kant put it. In place of religion, the person and the polity would now assume sacred status, nationalism the trappings of a religion. If we are to do battle with their religion, we must better understand the limits of our own. And we should be quick about it, for the devil, truly, is afoot. Neither guns nor butter will suffice this time.

Imagining a practice appropriate to our condition is beyond my capacity and the limits of this space. But I do know that we must grapple with the desires to which religious nationalism responds, must enter into the terrain it occupies. Making spirituality into a political force around which to counter the moral and physical impoverishment of global capitalism, the center of Rabbi Michael Lerner's "politics of meaning," moves in the right direction. The genesis of the civil rights movements in the United States, and indeed the formation of this country itself, makes it clear that religion can move us closer to our collective humanity. But when and under what conditions it does—whether alternative values, divergent ontologies, and unfulfilled desires can now find voice in a new collective subject beyond a skein of socially responsible rabbis and priests; whether we can actually change public policy and institutionalize new social practices; and whether we can reconstitute the collectivity without plunging it into an even more divisive holy civil war—is something to ponder. At a time when Pat Buchanan may be running for President of the United States and Ze'ev Chafets, former director of Israel's Government Press Office, is publicly calling for Israel to be divided into three states—Jewish, Israel, and Palestinian—this is no longer an idle academic exercise. For this we are theoretically ill-equipped. Our bitter materialisms, our assault on the human, our re-making of the social as sign systems joined to power, our suspicion of common purpose as totalization, our reduction of critique to the celebration of difference, leave us unable to engage religious nationalism within its world. Not only does the real vaporize before our eyes into mediation, image and construction, we have no way to speak the language of community, love, the sacred, the good, or the beautiful. Until we do, we will not have a theory to inform an alternative politics, nor to connect them to the materiality of our time. Modernity is recomposing, not decomposing. We must think anew. ❑

ISRAEL UPDATE

Peace By Any Means Necessary?

Jessica Montell



Mustafa Dadean builds a tower from the rubble of his demolished Walajeh house.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JACQUELINE LARMA / AP WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

Peace is everywhere in Israel, in rhetoric if not in practice. Every political project defines itself in relation to something called "peace." So perhaps it is inevitable that the struggle for human rights has also been recruited to advance not necessarily peace itself, but the politics of peace.

Take, for example, the current government, which only mentions human rights with regard to the policies of its adversaries in the peace process. In his 1996 address before the U.S. Congress, Netanyahu called for "the states of the Middle East to put the issues of human rights and democratization on their agenda." A stable peace, Netanyahu argued, must be based on three pillars: security, reciprocity, and "democracy and human rights." Later that same year, the government cited "abuse of human rights" as one of the "ten most egregious PLO violations of the Oslo Accords." The government even had the chutzpah to cite reports by Amnesty International on the Palestinian Authority's poor human rights record. Although Oslo equally obligates Israel to respect human rights, what Amnesty has had to say about Israel was not mentioned.

The Right is not alone in using human rights to advance its political agenda. In fact, one might argue that much of the Left's current interest in human rights is politically motivated. The issue of administrative detention illustrates this point. Throughout the Occupation, both left- and right-wing governments used military orders to administratively detain Palestinians for months and even years at a time, based on a suspicion that the detainee would pose a future danger. For years, human rights groups campaigned against these detentions with little success, either on the individual or the policy level. The High Court of Justice served as the rubber stamp of the military commander; the Knesset only spoke out when Jewish militants were administratively detained; and the public appeared indifferent to the widespread use of detention without trial.

It was not until 1997 that the human rights community succeeded in organizing a public campaign against administrative detention—perhaps the most successful human rights campaign ever conducted in Israel. Unprecedented numbers of Israelis took part in various protest activities. Prominent among the participants was a new group—Open Doors—composed almost entirely of activists from the Meretz party. This campaign successfully pressured the authorities to release dozens of detainees after years in detention. Why were members of the Left suddenly so determined to end a practice about which they had been complacent for years? In the context of Israeli politics, it is clear that they joined this cause as an outlet to express their political frustration as they watched Netanyahu freeze and reverse the progress made by the previous Labor-Meretz government. Human rights became a means to an end, and not the end itself.

As Palestinian activists have discovered, however, those using human rights as a means eventually have to make a choice between the moral absolute of individual rights and political expediency. For Palestinian activists, this moment of truth came after Oslo.

During the intifada, many activists used the human rights cause to advance the essentially political project of ending the Occupation. Even the PLO espoused human rights rhetoric and distributed reports from B'Tselem, the human rights organization. The Oslo process forced a re-evaluation of this tactic, however: once the Palestinian Authority (PA) took over territory and started violating rights itself, organizations and activists had to formulate a response to these violations. This required them to redefine whether they were human rights activists—in which case they must speak out against violations regardless of the perpetrator—or

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A Jewish settlement expansion protester is restrained by Israeli border police.

instead were using human rights to fight against Israel's occupation—in which case they must continue to condemn Israel, and ignore PA abuses. Sadly, the leading Palestinian human rights organization, al-Haq, collapsed because it could not resolve this dilemma.

While less traumatic, Oslo proved a watershed in Israel as well, forcing pro-peace activists to reconsider their motives and assumptions. When B'Tselem published its 1995 report on human rights violations by the Palestinian Preventive Security Service, longtime activist Uri Avneri condemned B'Tselem for doing so. Avneri argued that, in this period, critique of the PA was counterproductive to the more important project of advancing the peace process and creating a Palestinian state.

The Rabin-Peres government also justified many of its human rights violations as necessary to achieve peace. When suicide bombings threatened to erode popular support for the Oslo Process, the government approved greater use of what it calls "moderate physical pressure" and what the human rights community calls torture. Only a few months after the 1992 election brought the Labor-Meretz government to power, this same government approved the mass deportation of over 400 Palestinians. The list of cabinet members approving the deportation included several founding members of B'Tselem, who argued that violent opponents of peace had to be removed from the Occupied Territories.

Both the Right and the Left have used human rights rhetoric to advance political goals, and have justified their violation of human rights in the name of those goals. But the comparison is unfair, some might argue, because Netanyahu's is a disingenuous manipulation of human rights, whereas the Left genuinely strives to achieve a long-term solution to human rights problems. According to this argument, violations of human rights are to be accepted—though with regret—as the necessary price for a peace that will ensure greater enjoyment of human rights for Palestinians.

This argument is spurious both in principle and in practice. The instrumental approach to human rights contradicts the very foundations of the human rights movement. No goal, no matter how lofty, can justify human rights abuses. This principle ensures that each individual is recognized as an end in herself who cannot be sacrificed for any greater good.

One could also argue that no genuine peace can be achieved by generating suffering, hostility, and resentment along the way. Furthermore, there is no indication that an independent Palestinian state will bring greater respect for human rights. The Palestinian Authority has an atrocious human rights record, including the most brutal forms of torture, prolonged detentions with no legal basis, and most recently, execution of a man for "inciting the public against the Palestinian National Authority." True, in an independent Palestine, Israel will no longer be responsible for these abuses; some argue that this is precisely the motivation for the Oslo Process: to have someone else do the dirty work of fighting terrorism. "If we find a partner for peace with the Palestinians," Yitzhak Rabin said in September 1994, "they will run their internal affairs without the High Court of Justice, B'Tselem, or all sorts of groups of mothers and fathers and bleeding hearts." For human rights activists, the fact that Israeli hands will be clean is no consolation. No, there can be no justification of unjust means even to achieve what appears to be the most just of ends.

Thus while our usual allies rally behind left-wing candidates, human rights activists face the upcoming elections with some ambivalence. It is true that this government has perpetrated grave violations against the human rights of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. Yet there is no basis to hope that a government headed by Barak or Mordechai would be significantly different—Rabin and Peres were guilty of equally grave human rights violations.

Furthermore, the pragmatists among us argue, the only difference between a left- and a right-wing government in terms of human rights is that, if a left-wing government wins power, we are likely to lose most of our parliamentary allies. Can we expect M.K. Anat Maor to continue to speak out against violent interrogation methods if the head of her party again volunteers to sit on the committee that approves those methods?

Perhaps our best hope is that the public will not accept these violations. We can hope that the same people who condemned administrative detention under Netanyahu will continue to do so under Barak or Mordechai. That this time they will not accept the argument that abuse and humiliation are the necessary means to achieve peace.

A just alternative to Israel's military occupation over the Palestinians is a goal shared by human rights and peace activists alike. But we cannot reach that goal through immoral means. Remaining true to human rights principles enables us to reach this goal, rather than some Orwellian distortion called peace. ❑

PHOTOGRAPH BY NOEL JABBOUR / AP WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

ISRAEL UPDATE

The Israeli Elections 1999

A Guide for the Perplexed

Hillel Schenker



PHOTOGRAPH BY AP WIDE WORLD PHOTOS / ZOOM77

It's like one of the songs at the end of a Passover seder, *Ehad Mi Yodeah*. There are four candidates for prime minister: Netanyahu, Barak, Mordechai, and Begin; three major parties: the Likud, Labor, and the new Center Party, etc. However, unlike Passover which celebrates the Exodus from Egypt, everyone is talking about getting out of Lebanon. And unlike a "seder" ("order" in Hebrew), the Israeli election campaign bears a greater resemblance to the chaos and confusion which prevailed in the opening passages of Genesis, with new, minor parties springing up almost daily.

So what's happening?

The bottom line of this election is very Shakespearean—to Bibi or not to Bibi.

But the ramifications of its outcome will be much more profound, having a major impact on the future image and essence of Israeli society.

The following is an attempt at a guide for the perplexed about the May 17th Israeli elections.

1. The Likud

As the party in power, Likud should theoretically have the advantage, being able to control the political agenda.

However, the government fell and early elections were called because their point man, current Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu, ran out of tricks. Netanyahu actually succeeds in making Richard Milhouse Nixon look like a paragon of honesty. Almost all of his senior allies from the 1996 elections—former Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai, former Finance Minister Dan Meridor, former Foreign Minister David Levy, former Science Minister Benny Begin, even his predecessor as a Likud Prime Minister, Yitzhak Shamir—have left him and declared him unfit for office.

The last straw was the Wye Plantation interim agreement with the Palestinians. When Bibi attempted to juggle American pressure and the consistent desire of the majority of the Israeli public for progress in the peace process with his reliance on extremist settler elements to retain power, he lost his footing and slipped off the tightrope.

The Likud is also handicapped by a slowdown in the Israeli economy, a significant drop in tourism, and a rising unemployment rate, all of which are attributed in large part to the paralysis in the peace process.

Despite this massive show of no-confidence in his leadership abilities, however, the primary factor that enables Netanyahu to remain a formidable candidate for re-election is his mastery of the media. None of the other contenders even comes close to Bibi's telegenic abilities.

In addition, Bibi is considered the ultimate outsider, a maverick who has been able to put together a coalition of outsider groups to beat the traditional elitist Ashkenazi establishment. His outsider coalition includes traditional Likud supporters (who still consider themselves outsiders despite being in power almost continuously since 1977, minus the Rabin years), the majority of the disadvantaged Sephardim and the newcomer Russians, the ultra-Orthodox, the majority of the national religious (Orthodox), and the settlers. With the system of direct elections for prime minister instituted for the first time in 1996, that coalition managed to defeat Shimon Peres by a razor-thin majority of 14,947 votes.

Bibi himself is a not-quite-Israeli Israeli. Though he is the first prime minister to have been born in Israel after the establishment of the state, he spent most of his formative years in the United States, and he comes across as someone not quite plugged into the Israeli milieu. Even within the Likud, Netanyahu's family, led by octogenarian Prof. Benzion Netanyahu, were outsiders, shunted aside by longtime leader Menachem Begin. In 1993, Bibi got his revenge by defeating Menachem's son, Benny Begin, to become

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leader of the Likud, and eventually prime minister, making the younger generation of Likud "princes" his subordinates. He also mocked Menachem Begin's traditional respect for honor and dignity by making political manipulation the order of the day.

2. *Labor*

Shimon Peres lost in 1996 for many reasons, the first being hubris—he couldn't imagine that the upstart, inexperienced Netanyahu could possibly compete with a man with his record of achievement, experience, vision, etc. In addition, he made many mistakes. First, he didn't call an election immediately after Rabin's assassination because it was "undignified." He sanctioned the assassination of apparently retired terrorist Yehiah Ayyash in Gaza (the Mosad wanted to prove that it was still effective after its inability to prevent Rabin's murder) which provoked Hamas into retaliating with the wave of suicide bombings which led the Israeli public to feel a tremendous sense of personal insecurity and caused Peres to lose his 20 percent lead in the public opinion polls. He initiated the Grapes of Wrath military action in Lebanon on the eve of the elections to reinforce his security credentials, an action which led to the accidental bombing and killing of one hundred civilians in the village of Kana and alienated a significant number of Israeli Arab voters. Finally, he put on a disastrous performance in the TV debate three days before the elections.



Perhaps the most fundamental mistake made by both Peres and his predecessor Rabin was that they felt that the process of making peace was an end in itself, and that there was no need to educate the public about the potential benefits of peace for the entire population. The result was a paradox—while almost all of the leading industrialists supported Peres' vision of a "New Middle East" without economic borders, the majority of the lower middle and working class, mainly Sephardi Jews, were suspicious of a peace which caused some of them to lose jobs to cheaper neighboring labor markets, an unstable interim peace which appeared only to increase their level of personal insecurity.

The bottom line is that Peres lost an election that was clearly winnable.

Peres' successor, Ehud Barak, is another kettle of fish.

James Carville, one of a team of three American spin doctors (together with Stanley Greenberg and Bob Schum) hired by Barak, loves this candidate: a general, the most decorated war hero in Israeli history, an intellectual with an M.S. in Economic Systems Analysis from Stanford, Barak is happily and stably married (unlike some other people I know) to a Sephardi woman and he plays the piano—wow!

But Israeli pundits ask, can the relatively reserved, overly intellectual, and not so media savvy Ehud Barak win?

In this age of global politics, Barak hired Carville and company to learn from the Clinton campaign experience, and also went to England and Germany to learn from Tony Blair and Gerhard Schroeder. Unlike Peres, he has no vision of a "New Middle East," only a Rabin-like pragmatic promise to offer a "change in the national priorities." It's the two e's: education and employment, stupid.

Barak rejects the contention that he is Netanyahu's ideological twin. He accuses Bibi of being a follower of the worst of early 1980s Thatcherism and Reaganism. "Even financier George Soros criticizes this unbridled capitalism," he said at Tel Aviv University in his sole attempt at presenting an orderly intellectual worldview. Israel isn't France, and too much intellectualism doesn't go over well with the voting public. However when he tries to explain his outlook, he talks about a British/German/Scandinavian third-way approach. If he ever used the terminology, he would probably call himself a "modern social democrat" who believes in something called a "small but deep government"; i.e., that government should be seriously involved in supporting education, security, infrastructure, and of course a social safety net, but otherwise be "small and efficient." He would eliminate inefficient bureaucracies and continue a measured privatization of government corporations.

The surprise of the Labor Party primaries for the Knesset was the fact that Moroccan-born Prof. Shlomo Ben-Ami, a relative newcomer to national politics, came in first. His current best-seller, *A Place for Everyone,* is a serious attempt at outlining an inclusive contemporary social-democratic blueprint for Israeli society today. Barak read the book in two days, and though he doesn't agree with every idea, he considers Ben-Ami to be a long-term strategic partner in shaping future government policy.

In an attempt to emulate Blair's New Labour Party, Barak formed an alliance called "One Israel," which despite its undemocratic sound is actually an attempt to broaden Labor's electoral base. With Labor at the center, the two junior partners are former Likudnick David Levy's Gesher Party with its development town Sephardi activists, and the Meimad Party, led by moderate Orthodox intellectuals and rabbis who feel that the National Religious Party, their natural home, has veered too far to the right. The perception is that both parties would have had difficulties making it into the next Knesset on their own, but their (20–30,000 or so) supporters might be enough to make the difference in a close election.

3. *The Center Party*

The new kid on the block is the Center Party, a strange amalgam of personalities and moods, which stands primarily for anti-Bibi, anti-old-style politics, and a mushy national togetherness.

In a variation on the Russian babushka theme, the party has had four "heads" in its short lifetime. The first to identify

PHOTOGRAPH BY AP / WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

the timeliness of a new center party was then-Tel Aviv Mayor Roni Milo, a former Likud hatchet man turned respectable minister and talk-a-lot-do-little mayor who has moved to the peace-supporting, anti-religious-coercion left. He was followed by former Likud Finance Minister Dan Meridor, a bright Begin democrat repelled by Bibi's immorality, whose politics have also become more pragmatic. The next potential leader to pop out of the political bottle was outgoing, personable, liberal IDF Chief of Staff General Amnon Lipkin-Shahak, who tossed his hat into the leadership ring declaring that "Netanyahu is dangerous for Israel." He was followed by Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai, the star of the Likud's 1996 campaign, and the most pragmatic member of the outgoing government, who also declared his disillusionment with Netanyahu. Grabbing the leadership ring from the other three, Mordechai announced that he would guide the country towards peace, prosperity, stability, and national compromise.

As the first Sephardi candidate for national leadership, Mordechai has asserted that he can reach Sephardi and Likud-supporting constituencies inaccessible to Barak and the old-style stigmatized Labor-left. The party's slogan says "Only Mordechai Can Win," the idea being that while Barak would be a preferable candidate to Netanyahu, only Mordechai can defeat Netanyahu.

The Center Party's spokespeople say that it will promote the peace process, a more ethical Israel, and a national dialogue to resolve all outstanding issues.

While clearly chipping away at Netanyahu's constituency, so far the polls suggest that, despite the party's slogan, Mordechai won't make it into the second round of the voting for prime minister scheduled to take place on June 1st. If no candidate wins 50 percent in the first round, an unlikely outcome given the three major candidates, there will be a second round between number one and number two.

4. The Right

The fourth declared candidate for prime minister is Benny Begin, son of the former prime minister, an unpretentious, principled ideologue who supports a contradictory mixture of Greater Israel, democracy, and moral politics and is supported by former Prime Minister Shamir. An unlikely politician who is respected by both allies and rivals, he has his father's voice but none of his charisma.

Like his close friend Meridor, he is repelled by Bibi's machinations, and he also opposed the prime minister's territorial concessions to the Palestinians. While uniting all the fragments of the expansionist right, polls say he will not gain more than single digit support.

5. The Arabs

A fifth trial balloon for national leadership has been floated by the highly articulate (in Hebrew, Arabic, and English) Arab Member of Knesset Prof. Azmi Bishara. While his candidacy for prime minister may be withdrawn before election day, his initiative reflects a coming of age of sorts of the younger, educated generation of Israeli Arab leadership. Combined with the recent appointment of the first Arab Supreme Court justice, a first Arab Miss Israel, and two outstanding Arab members of the Israeli national soccer team, his candidacy is an indicator that Israeli Arabs intend to be major players in the future of Israeli politics and society.

6. The Russians

Like the Arabs, there are about one million Russians, 20 percent of the Israeli population, potentially worth at least twenty Knesset members. They sprang onto the national scene in 1996 with a new party led by refusenik hero Natan (Anatoly) Sharansky, gaining seven seats and two cabinet ministers.

Now, like a political amoeba, they have split in two, with the machiavellian former Director General of the Prime Minister's office, Avigodor Lieberman, leading a second pro-Likud Russian party.

The Russians, with a Russian-language subculture flourishing throughout Israel, tend to live in a bubble of their own. When researchers carried out an opinion poll among a representative cross-section, asking questions about political positions without naming the political parties, most of the respondents were astounded to discover that they were supporting Meretz positions on civil rights, personal freedoms, pluralism, and a social safety net. "But Meretz is left-wing!" they exclaimed.

The majority of the Russians have an instinctive aversion to anything associated with socialism, and seem to be attracted to candidates who project "strength." Coming from the huge yet vulnerable former Soviet Union, they tend to oppose territorial compromise in "the Middle Eastern jungle."

7. The Ultra-Orthodox (Haredim)

A key linchpin in Netanyahu's coalition of outsiders, the Haredim care little about the future of the West Bank and the Golan Heights and a lot about a fundamentalistic lifestyle and budget for their ever-expanding institutions and constituency.

The leading Haredi party, the Sephardi Moroccan-based Shas Party, suffered a major blow recently when its charismatic, brilliant political operator Aryeh Deri was convicted of fraud, the misuse of public funds, etc., by a courageous judicial system under fire from both the ultra-Orthodox and the anti-democratic forces on the right.

Shlomo Ben-Ami says that the Shas leaders have filled a vacuum caused by the major parties' neglect of an important disadvantaged sector within Israeli society. While Shas succeeded in soothing their frustrations via funds and fundamentalist panaceas, he believes that their strength has

peaked, though others have worst-case scenario nightmares based upon the high birth rate of the Shas constituency (eight to ten kids per family).

8. Meretz

On the left, Meretz continues to be the most clear-cut representative of liberal, democratic, pluralistic, and humanistic values, and the most consistent supporter of the Oslo peace process. It has four women among its top ten candidates, far more than any of the three major parties, and three kibbutznicks, more than Labor has in its entire list. It also boasts the support of a Concerned Citizens for Meretz group led by former leader Shulamit Aloni, prominent author Amos Oz, and a leading Russian actress. The party is very popular with the young, but though it will be an important cornerstone in any future Labor-led government, it preaches primarily to the converted and has difficulty reaching out to new constituencies.

9. The Minor Parties

While eleven parties were represented in the fourteenth Knesset, elected in 1996, close to fifty parties have filled out applications for May 17th. Some were founded by disgruntled outgoing M.K.s who failed in their party primaries, while others represent very specific and sometimes even esoteric interests. Among them are: Shinui (liberal, pro-peace, pro-market economy, and very anti-clerical), the Third Way (middle of the road, no concessions on the Golan), One Nation (a workers' party founded by Histadrut Labor Federation Secretary General Amir Peretz, who was not content with his home Labor Party), the Pensioners' Party (led by veteran Histadrut activists and former Knesset members), the Pnina Rosenbloom Party (led by entrepreneur, media celebrity, and former model Pnina Rosenbloom—she has a chance), Yesh (a women's party led by feminist activists and academics—they don't), the Casino Party (legalize casinos), the Green Leaf Party (no, not pro-environment, but pro-marijuana), the Romanian Party, the Negev Party, etc.

The reason for this proliferation is the misguided decision to separate the vote for the Knesset and for the prime minister, instituted in 1996. While such a separation may work in the United States, with its regional representation in the lower and upper houses of Congress, in Israel the mixture of direct elections for prime minister and proportional representation in the Knesset only serves to weaken the bonds of social solidarity in the country. Instead of increasing stability and fostering a multicultural politics of identity, it has led to a growing non-ideological politics of sectoral and personal interests.

So what are the major issues in the campaign? The problem which all surveys indicate is the major point of contention within Israeli society today, the schism between religious and secular Jews, is being underplayed by all three major candidates. Barak injected the Lebanon deployment into the campaign when he announced that, after being elected, he would withdraw Israeli troops from Southern Lebanon within one year. This position is popular with the majority of the public, but it will not decide the elections.

The main issues in the campaign appear to be the economy and Netanyahu's character, with the fate of the peace process serving as a backdrop for it all.

With the Haredim in his pocket (they have nowhere else to go), Netanyahu is trying to keep the rest of his winning outsider coalition together. His current visit to Russia is aimed at keeping the close to 70 percent of Russians who voted for him last time in line. His other major struggle is to revive the idea that the Likud is more than just another party, that it's the psychological and spiritual home of secular and traditional Sephardic Jews, the party which gave them pride, self-respect, and a piece of the political pie. When an unemployed worker in the development town of Ofakim tells a TV reporter that "even if Arafat would be our candidate, I'd vote for the Likud," it sounds as if Netanyahu's succeeding. But other unemployed workers have told reporters that pride is not quite the same as bread and jobs. And it got a little harder to talk about the Likud as the home of the Sephardic Jews after the two leading Sephardic figures in the party, Yitzhak Mordechai and David Levy, both left.

In the end, Bibi will probably resort to the politics of fear to counteract Barak and Mordechai's politics of hope; i.e., only a devious, macho, charismatic liar like myself, he will suggest, can confront the Palestinians, Syrians, Iraqis, Iranians, Germans, Americans, the whole entourage, in short, of Israel's enemies and so-called friends, and get the best deal possible. As a counterpoint to this politics of fear, one of the most crucial questions in the June 1st runoff will be the number of Israeli Arabs who will be ready to overcome their profound psychological reservations to vote directly for a Zionist former general—either Barak or Mordechai—to defeat Netanyahu.

The perception is that the 1999 elections will be a crucial turning point in Israel's development. If Netanyahu wins, despite the economy, the breakdown in the peace process, and the character issue, the result will have severe repercussions beyond the fate of the peace process. It will further undermine the country's already fragmenting social cohesiveness, and produce a growing challenge to Israel's relatively liberal democratic values and institutions.

High above the Ayalon Highway leading from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, Meretz leader Yossi Sarid has posted the largest political billboard in Israel, "possibly in the world." It's a variation on the classic poster advertising "Gone With the Wind," with Netanyahu and Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon replacing Clark Gable and Vivien Leigh. At the bottom appears Scarlett O'Hara's classic closing line—"Tomorrow is another day." We shall see. ❑

Disenfranchising the Powerless



Debra Jo Immergut

These days, Americans are fairly blasé about their right to vote. Battles to extend suffrage to every man and woman of legal age were fought and won years ago in the United States, and by now many eligible voters have such a sense of entitlement when it comes to casting ballots that, when election day rolls around, they don't even bother to show up at the polls.

But Reverend Tommy Waites of Montgomery, Alabama, is anything but blasé when it comes to voting, because for years he was forbidden to do so. Having served eight and a half years in prison for non-violent offenses, he was barred from voting long after his final release in 1986, after he had rehabilitated himself, won several community awards, and become a minister at a large Methodist church. "Politics are important to me because of the responsibilities I have here," says Waites. "Voting, playing a part in the community, means a lot to me." But because of Alabama's stringent criminal disenfranchisement laws, it took a caring parole officer to secure Waites the government pardon that enabled him to cast a ballot once again.

As recently released figures demonstrate, Waites' experience with disenfranchisement is hardly unique. In fact, American suffrage is not as universal as we might assume. Is it widely known that a third of the black men living in Alabama and Florida have no right to vote? That in seven states, one in four black men is permanently banned from the voting booths? That nearly 4 million Americans of voting age are currently barred from fully participating in their nation's democratic processes? These stunning gaps in the electorate are the result of criminal disenfranchisement laws, which affect imprisoned offenders and, in some cases, ex-offenders who have long since finished their sentences. Many of these laws are archaic holdovers from earlier eras. What was once seen as a way to maintain the "purity of the ballot box" by excluding voters lacking in virtue is now having a serious impact on the racial make-up of the voting population in certain states, according to a recent report issued jointly by the Washington research organizations The Sentencing Project and Human Rights Watch.

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRIS PAPA

Debra Jo Immergut's writing has appeared in the Wall Street Journal, New York Magazine, Harper's Bazaar, Salon, *and* Details.

"In the last twenty-five years, because of the growth in the numbers of people in the criminal justice system, the number of people affected by these laws has increased enormously," says Marc Mauer, assistant director of The Sentencing Project and co-author of the report. All but four states (the exceptions are New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Utah, and Vermont) have wide-reaching disenfranchisement laws on their books: forty-six states and the District of Columbia deny the vote to all convicted adults in prison, thirty-two states ban those on parole, and twenty-nine states ban those on probation. Most extreme are the fourteen states where ex-offenders, people who have fully served their sentences, are barred from voting for the rest of their lives. All told, 3.9 million Americans, or nearly one adult in fifty, are currently without the right to vote. Nearly three-fourths of the disenfranchised are not in prison, but instead are on probation or parole, or are "free and clear," having finished serving their time.

Like many legal principles in the United States, disenfranchisement laws trace their roots to ancient Greek and Roman traditions. The concept of "civil death," in which offenders were cast out from society, was standard in medieval Europe, and English law included provisions stripping offenders of basic rights such as the ability to inherit property or bring suit. The "civil death" concept crossed the Atlantic with the English colonists. Even though, with independence, many of these civil disabilities were disavowed, the idea of criminal disenfranchisement lingered in American legal codes. In the period following the Civil War and the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment granting blacks the right to vote, disenfranchisement laws attracted new attention—particularly in many Southern states, where the laws were often rewritten in an attempt to decrease the numbers of black voters. An article by attorney Andrew Shapiro in the *Yale Law Journal* cites the example of South Carolina, where crimes considered to be more

prevalent among blacks, such as "thievery, adultery, arson, wife-beating, housebreaking, and attempted rape," were specified as grounds for disenfranchisement. While other laws based on such patently racist ideas have long since been stricken from state codes, most disenfranchisement laws have been allowed to stand.

Criminal disenfranchisement has also been kept on the books due to concerns about voter fraud and electoral "purity"—the idea that felons and ex-felons are more easily corruptible than other citizens, and that they therefore represent a threat to fair and democratic elections. This is an idea Mauer and his co-author Jamie Fellner dub "risible" in their report. "This is simply not a risk," says Mauer. "Even when it comes to people currently in the criminal justice system, just look at the four states where currently imprisoned felons do have the right to vote. The political structure in those states hasn't fallen apart. The notion that this would disrupt the system is farfetched." A few states limit disenfranchisement to those convicted of crimes related to the political process, such as treason or electoral fraud, but most states do not—and in the worst cases, offenses from passing a bad check to possession of a small quantity of marijuana can result in the permanent loss of voting rights.

Blacks are losing their right to vote at many times the rate of whites.

Decades and even centuries down the road from the time in which these laws were conceived, their enforcement now comes with unintended consequences, the most serious of which are these laws' disproportionate impact on African American communities. With prison populations skyrocketing due to the current trend toward mandatory-minimum sentencing laws, "three strikes" laws, and truth-in-sentencing laws, blacks make up an increasing percentage of the incarcerated. Department of Justice statistics show that, in the past decade, black males' rate of incarceration increased at ten times the rate of white males'.

Many analysts believe that drug control policies instituted in the 1970s and 1980s are to blame for this racial disparity. Mandatory sentencing laws such as the Rockefeller laws in New York State have meant that more offenders convicted of minor drug charges land in prison. And though drug abuse plagues all sectors of U.S. society, the "war on drugs" has focused intensively on the streets of low-income, largely minority communities, where dealers and users are more easily caught in the act. The end result: an astounding increase in the number of black men and women in prison. In state institutions alone, the number of black men incarcerated for drug offenses rose from 16,600 in 1985 to 134,000 in 1995.

All this means that, due to disenfranchisement laws, blacks are losing their right to vote at many times the rate of whites. Thirteen percent of all adult black men are currently barred from the polls, some 1.4 million. With voter apathy endemic to all segments of society, such roadblocks only worsen the chances that a community will be fairly represented at the voting booth. Again, statistics tell a grim story: the 1.4 million black ex-offenders currently disenfranchised loom especially large when compared to the 4.6 million black men who voted in the 1996 elections. "It's another concrete representation of the unintended consequences of the terrible course that we embarked upon twenty-five years ago" with mandatory sentencing laws, says Robert Gangi, director of the Correctional Association of New York, a prison reform organization. "And we're still heading down that course willy-nilly."

Especially in states where disenfranchisement is permanent, the laws can have a devastating impact on a community and its members. "Basically, these are faceless people," says Jerome A. Gray, state field director of the Alabama Democratic Conference, of the disenfranchised in his state. "They tend to be ashamed, or embarrassed, so they tend not to come forward. The vast majority of the disenfranchised are people that have completed everything, folks who are really in the clear, but they don't know that they can get their rights restored."

Getting rights restored, as Reverend Waites did, has become increasingly difficult in Alabama. "You have to jump through hoops now," says Gray. Before applying for a pardon, ex-offenders must get a DNA test that requires a trip to one of four cities, which may mean a day's drive for some people. Applicants are required to fill out a rather arduous multi-page form. According to Gray, the process takes six to eight months and takes a significant amount of persistence.

Legislation dealing with criminal disenfranchisement, both pro and con, is being debated in several states this year. In Florida, where offenders are currently disenfranchised for life unless granted a governor's pardon, a bill has been introduced in the state legislature that would allow them to regain their voting rights automatically one year after they complete their sentences. In Massachusetts, on the other hand, state legislators have passed a constitutional amendment to deny prisoners their voting rights; it will be voted on again soon. In the current "tough on crime" climate, the banishing of felons from the voting booth might seem like an old idea whose time has come around again. But the consequences of all punitive measures, including disenfranchisement, must be carefully weighed. Says Mauer, "What people often forget is that more than 95 percent of people who go to prison are going to come out someday and live in our society. Having some sense of responsibility, some sense of obligation, is a crucial factor in whether or not they're going to make it when they come out. And it seems to me that participation in the political process is key for any member of society. And voting is at the very heart of the political process." ❑

INFERTILITY

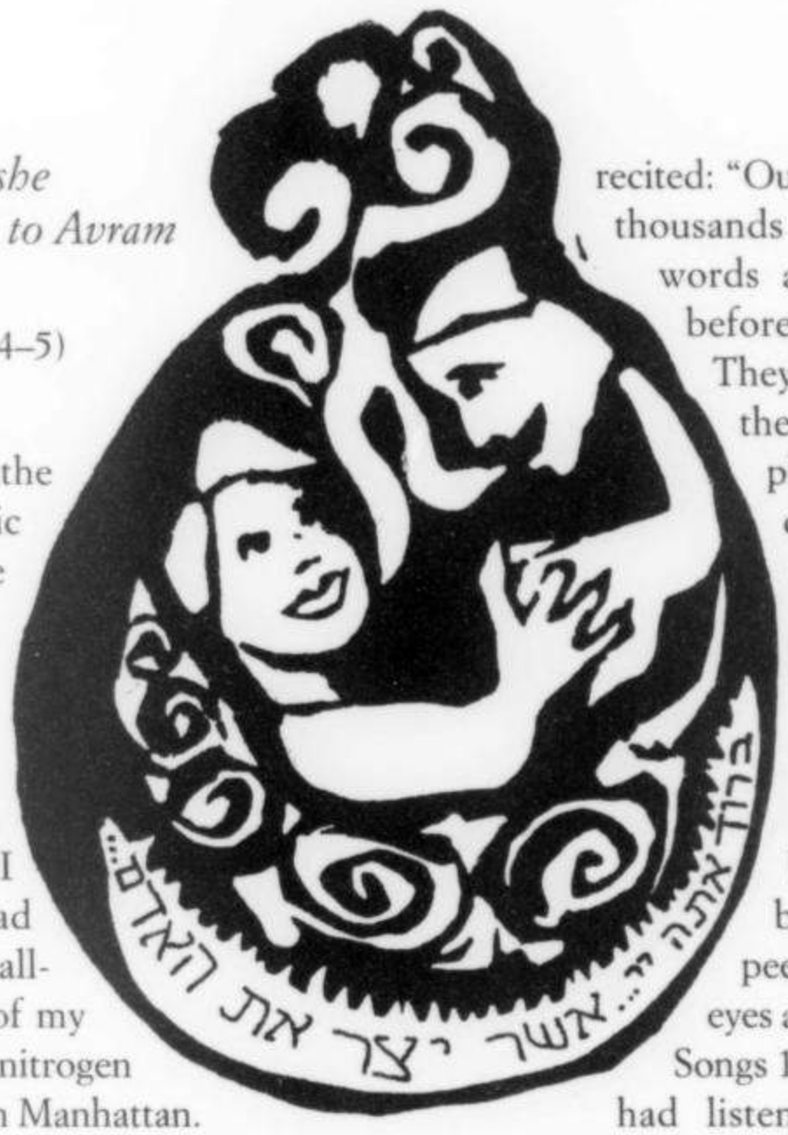
Liberating Reproduction from Despair

A Kavanah For Conception In The Age Of Infertility

Allen Selis

So Avram slept with Hagar, and she conceived.... And Sarai cried out to Avram ... this is humiliating!

(After Genesis 16:4–5)



I joined the infertility club at the end of my first year of rabbinic school. A lump at the base of my neck begat doctors' appointments, X-rays, and finally CT exams. Nine months of chemotherapy followed. It was a battle, and, like most battles, it ended in a draw. My cancer was defeated, but I was left sterile. My fertility had become a necessary casualty of an all-out medical war. What remained of my reproductive future sat under liquid nitrogen at a cryogenic storage lab in midtown Manhattan. The future was painful, and uncertain.

My wife joined the club as we prepared for our wedding. During our engagement, we attended another wedding in which the rabbi pressed the couple to "have lots of kids" in his remarks under the *huppah* (wedding canopy). We nearly cried during the ceremony. It was a moment of difficult learning for us. First, we suddenly appreciated how warm sentiments could feel painful to infertile couples like us. The clumsily offered "blessing" reminded us of our own shared fears that dreams of children might go unfulfilled. Secondly, we recognized that Jewish ritual held the potential to insult or embarrass us as an infertile couple. Did it have the capacity to heal and transform as well?

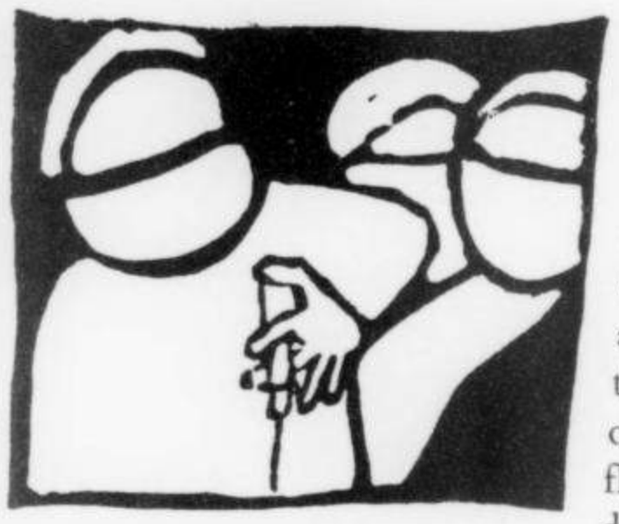
Our answer to this last question began, oddly enough, with a small revolt against the wedding liturgy. On our own wedding day, rabbi and friends were under orders not to mention children during the ceremony. At the *badekken*, the ceremony for veiling the bride, a traditional blessing is recited: "Our sister, may your offspring grow into thousands of myriads!" (Gen. 24:60). These words are the blessing given to Rebecca before she went to meet her groom, Isaac. They are beautiful words, but in our ears they rang hollow. Be fruitful and multiply! Give us *nachas!* Give us grandchildren! If only it were so easy. We did not take it for granted that we would ever have children. Nor could we bear to recite a fertility blessing during our wedding ceremony. After my bride was veiled, I recited verses from the Song of Songs instead: "How beautiful you are my companion, how beautiful, with eyes like doves, that peek out from under your veil. Turn your eyes away, for they overwhelm me" (Song of Songs 1:15, 6:5). The revolt was a success. We had listened to the ritual blessing of the badekken, and appreciated its yearning for the future. But we had also spoken back and told it our needs: Do not shame us on the day of our wedding. The ritual listened to us, gave way, and eased our anxieties. A moment that would have been difficult and embarrassing had become transformed. At the badekken, we felt tender reassurance and affirmation. We learned to trust that Jewish ritual could open doors to healing.

After two years of marriage, our first attempt to conceive a child by in vitro fertilization (IVF) was a success. We began the process naïvely, and came through with beginners' luck. Our son was born on the day of our wedding anniversary. Now three, he is challenging, inquisitive, and joyful. For all the pleasure that our son has brought to us, however, his birth was not enough to blunt our painful memories of the process of IVF. Our son's conception was worth the pain we suffered on the way, but this joyful outcome did not erase the anguish which we experienced as an integral part of his conception. It only made the anguish worthwhile.

The success of IVF is at best a half-truth, and at worst a contradiction in terms. Simply put, IVF is no picnic. It is invasive and disheartening. There is an element of despair

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JEN SERON

Rabbi Allen Selis began exploring Jewish spirituality as an undergraduate at Dartmouth College. Following rabbinic school at the Jewish Theological Seminary, he became the spiritual leader of Congregation Bonai Shalom in Boulder, Colorado.



that is part and parcel of doing a cycle of IVF. The despair is not only physical, but spiritual as well. It dwells in the territory of frustrated dreams and dashed hopes. But its goal is life-affirming. There is no way to go through the process of IVF without being engulfed by these conflicting emotions. Hopes and dreams of creating a new life vie against paralyzing fears of failure. At its best, IVF is an invitation to spiritual whiplash.

Even a successful IVF offers bitter reminders about our inadequacy. We despair over needing this process in the first place. Why can't we get pregnant the normal way? Why can't we take off our clothes, get into bed, and make babies like everyone else? Making love is everything that a cycle of in vitro fertilization is not. Making love is intimate, while an IVF is awkwardly exposed. Making love is spontaneous, pleasurable, and free. Our IVF was regimented, painful, and costly. Making love offers mutuality. IVF reduced my partner to a maddening state of medically-dictated passivity. No decent sexual ethic would ever allow a woman to suffer the powerlessness or objectification which was forced upon my wife by our IVF protocols. For the duration of this process she became an object of the pokes, prods, and jabs of doctors and lab technicians. No wonder they call this "assisted reproduction."

We had made the mistake of allowing the physician to become god. And he was not up to the task.

Technology has saved us from infertility—but at great cost. The process of creating a life has become joyless and antiseptic. The ultimate irony is that our technology has stolen the wondrous quality of reproduction and transformed it into an experience fraught with sterility. Making love is a meaningful act, whether or not you become pregnant. Watching a doctor insert a catheter into your lover's womb is at best benign, and at worst a demeaning invasion. It is reproduction robbed of meaning, denuded of pleasure, and stripped of joy. An IVF procedure might give us a child, but, like most technology, it cannot restore our wholeness.

Our second attempt to become pregnant by IVF failed. That failure put us both through an emotional roller coaster ride. We careened between bitter mourning and saccharine denial. The spiritually eviscerating features of going through IVF became all the more apparent to us this time. After learning that we had failed to conceive, we waited weeks to get a ten-minute phone consultation with our doctor. Apparently, "god" was busy making other babies, and didn't have time in his schedule for us. He had no stake in our personal loss. After all, we could always try again. His business office called promptly the next day to demand payment of an overlooked charge.

As we prepared for a third attempt to conceive, tough questions loomed large in my mind. Was it possible to do IVF without the emotional emptiness or spiritual anguish? Could Judaism help us create life in a more meaningful way? Two Jewish texts guided my thoughts, and led me towards answers.

The Talmud offers that "there are three partners to the creation of a life. Man, woman and the Holy One Blessed Be God" (Bavli, Niddah 31a). This text holds out a model of beautiful, passionate, and life-affirming sexuality. It describes a creative moment in which two individuals share love and concern for one another. That love is suffused and sanctified by God's presence. My reflections on this text pointed out exactly what was spiritually crushing about the process of IVF. During both of our previous attempts to conceive there had, indeed, been three partners in creation: myself, my partner, and the doctor. We had become so focused on the medical setting and its attendant cast of characters that we had forgotten to include God as an essential third party in our conception. We had made the mistake of allowing the physician to become god. And he was not up to the task.

The second text which offered me guidance was the Iggeret HaKodesh, which I studied in the days leading up to our latest IVF procedure. Written in the thirteenth century, the Iggeret is a mystical text offering its initiates a path for sanctifying sexuality. The author of the Iggeret presents an idea that opened doors of understanding for me. "One must sanctify one's self for the moment of intercourse." Intimacy may not be objectified. It must be infused with holiness. Time and time again, the author of the Iggeret cautions his readers not to become deceived by the physical aspect of sexuality. If so, they would lose sight of the transpersonal, spiritual moment that dwells within life-affirming sexuality. For the author of the Iggeret, physicality was positive but should be put into context, otherwise it became an end in itself, a distraction from holiness. For me and my wife, the physical trappings of our conception were unpleasant and obstructed our appreciation for the holiness of our attempt to create life. We tried to take the advice of the Iggeret, so perfect for couples going through an IVF: Make peace with the physical side of

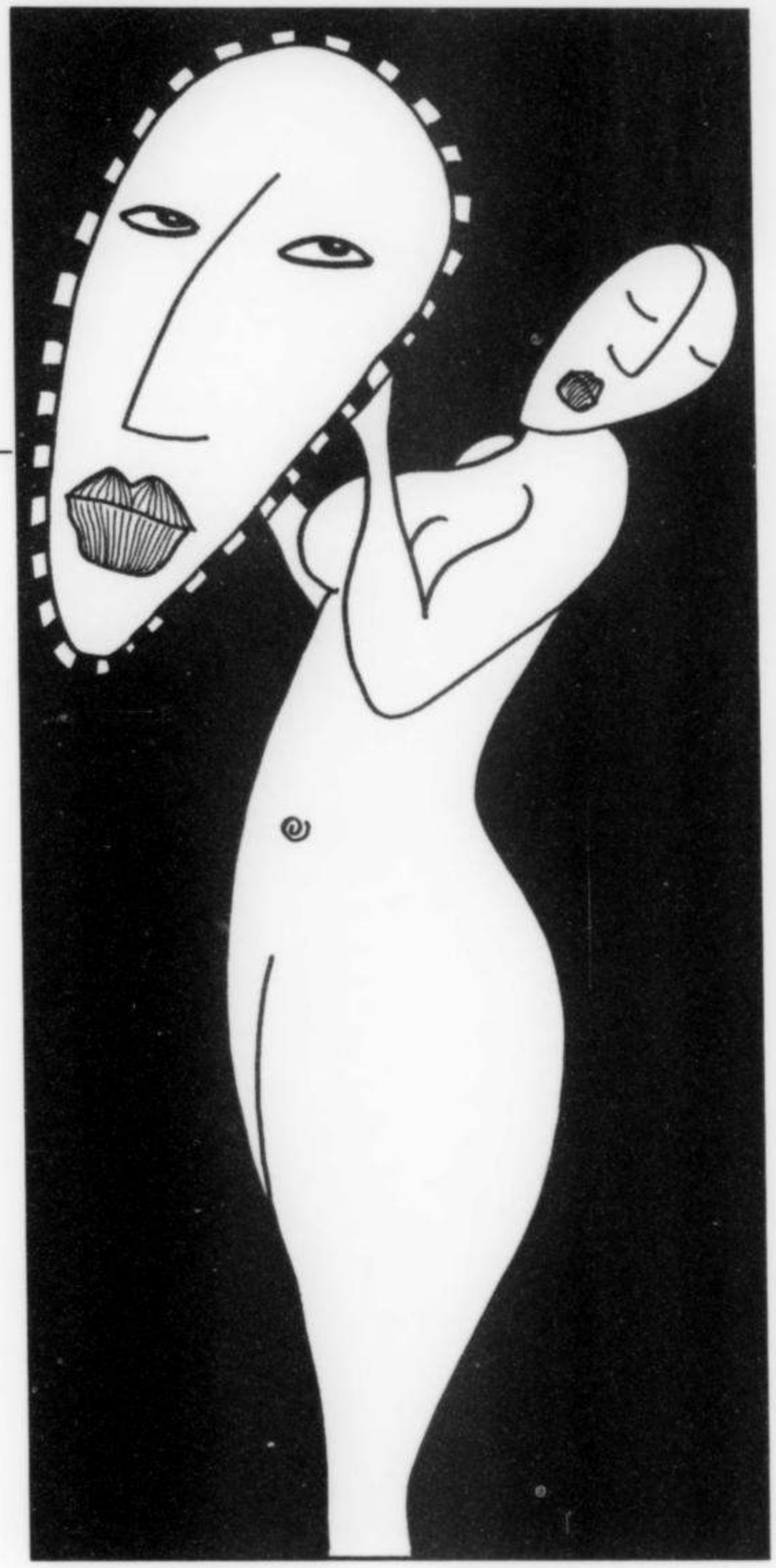
(continued on page 63)



RACE POLITICS

The Cost of Whiteness

Thandeka



ILLUSTRATIONS BY NADINE EPSTEIN

Most white Americans believe they were born white. Yet their own stories of early racial experiences describe persons who were bred white. Which is it—nature or nurture? Neither. The social process that creates whites produces persons who must think of their whiteness as a biological fact.

The process begins with a rebuke. A parent or authority figure reprimands the child because it's not yet white. The language used by the adult is racial, but the content of the message pertains to the child's own feelings and what the child must do with feelings the adult doesn't like. Stifle them. Philosopher Martha Nussbaum, in her book *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education,* tells how she learned to do this as a child being taught to be white.

Nussbaum's reflections begin with a description of the incident that provoked her father's racial rebuke: "In Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, in the early 1960s, I encountered black people only as domestic servants. There was a black girl my age named Hattie, daughter of the live-in help of an especially wealthy neighbor. One day, when I was about ten, we had been playing in the street and I asked her to come in for some lemonade. My father, who grew up in Georgia, exploded, telling me that I must never invite a black person into the house again." Nussbaum's first lessons ended at school where the only African Americans present were "kitchen help." Here, she and her classmates learned how to "efface them from our minds when we studied." The target of Nussbaum's first lessons in whiteness was her own sentient awareness of the surrounding environment. She had to learn how to disengage her own feelings, how to dissociate herself from them.

Most discussions of the creation of whites overlook this stage in the development of a white racial consciousness and thus assume that whites are insensitive to blacks by nature. White supremacist and anti-racist groups seem to hold this belief in common—that whites are born racist with a biologically predetermined disposition to hate blacks. To begin elsewhere, we have to pay attention to the feelings the child learns to squelch. I was able to listen in on these feelings when I conducted interviews for my book, *Learning to Be White.* An adult I call "Jay," for example, described the rationale for his parents' decision to take him on a car tour of the "black ghetto" when he was four. His parents knew he had never seen black people before and did not want him to embarrass the family by staring at "them" when the family went to New York on vacation the following month. The adult motivation for this mini tour of black America was to pre-empt a parental rebuke that would have occurred if Jay had indeed stared at "them" while on vacation. Jay thus learned something about what to do with his own natural curiosity. Suppress it. The protocol associated with this new knowledge was self-evident: don't stare at them. The deeper implications of the message Jay received would develop over time: don't even notice that they are there. Such behavior, of course, is described by Ralph Ellison's protagonist in

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Invisible Man: "I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me." Jay had begun to learn not to see what he saw.

Another example. "Sally's" parents, strong civil rights supporters, preached racial equality both at home and in the streets. She was thus flabbergasted when her parents prevented her from going out with a high school friend who came to pick her up for a Friday night date. He was black. The parents sent him away and forbade her to date him. "What will our neighbors say if they see you on the arms of a black man?" Sally was furious with them and thought them hypocrites. But she submitted to their dictates. "What was I going to do?" she asked rhetorically. "Rebel? Not in my household. They would have disowned me." So she suppressed her feelings.

Then there's "Dan." In college during the late 1950s, Dan joined a fraternity. With his prompting, his chapter pledged a black student. When the chapter's national headquarters learned of this first step toward the integration of its ranks, headquarters threatened to rescind the local chapter's charter unless the black student was expelled. The local chapter caved in to the pressure and Dan was elected to tell the black student member he would have to leave. Dan did it. "I felt so ashamed of what I did," he told me. "I have carried this burden for forty years," he said. "I will carry it to my grave." And he began to cry. Why? Because as psychoanalytic theorist Judith Lewis Herman reminds us in the opening pages of her book, *Trauma and Recovery,* the unspeakable will out.

"Sarah." At age sixteen, Sarah brought her best friend home with her from high school. After the friend left, Sarah's mother told her not to invite her friend home again. "Why?" Sarah asked, astonished and confused. "Because she's colored," her mother responded. That was not an answer, Sarah thought to herself. It was obvious that her friend was colored, but what kind of reason was that for not inviting her? So Sarah persisted, insisting that her mother tell her the real reason. None was forthcoming. The indignant look on her mother's face, however, made Sarah realize that if she persisted, she would jeopardize her mother's affection toward her. Horrified by what she had just glimpsed, Sarah severed her friendship with the girl. Sarah told me she had not thought of this incident in twenty years. She also said that until now, she had never consciously said to herself that for her the deepest tragedy in this incident was her loss of trust in her mother's love. Sarah, like Dan, began to cry.

Every European American I interviewed could tell me a tale about how they learned as youth to blunt positive feelings toward persons beyond the pale. These aren't the kinds of tales I had expected when I asked them to recount stories of their earliest racial incidents. To my astonishment, instead of describing interracial incidents, they described intra-racial conflicts. The message they learned was repress, deny, and split off from consciousness feelings that, if expressed, would provoke racial attacks from the adults in their own community. From these stories, I learned that becoming white is the product of a child's siege mentality. It's a defense mechanism to stop racial rebukes from one's own kith and kin.

Few accounts reveal this white siege mentality better than a story by writer Don Wallace in his *New York Times,* October 11, 1995, op-ed piece, "How I Learned to Fear the Cops." Wallace, in this essay, describes several incidents in which he was accosted by cops. The first altercation occurred when Wallace was ten. Wallace uses the third-person singular to tell this tale in the opening paragraphs of his essay:

> The 10-year-old boy skipped down the sidewalk a few steps ahead of his parents in the warmth of a Los Angeles night in 1962. Behind him glowed Olvera Street, a slice of the old California's Mexican heritage.... He heard the screech of brakes but paid no mind until a police officer seized him by the shoulder and pushed him against a wall. Another officer shoved his 12-year-old brother. Then the boy saw something even more terrifying: the gun in the cop's hand.

Wallace's father spoke up, berating the cop and demanding an apology for pointing a gun at his sons, who were church-goers, Boy and Cub Scout members, and good students. The cops stood their ground, demanding that he get out of the way or face arrest. Wallace, who until this point has not told the reader the "race" of the family, now teases his reader, asking: "What do you think happened next? You've read the papers. You followed the Rodney King case. If the family in this true story were black, what odds would you give on the father staying out of jail? Or staying alive?" But he and his family are white, Wallace tells us, and they "got to go home to [their] all-white suburb."

As a teenager, Wallace continued to play on the wrong side of town. He attended a large inner-city high school in Long Beach and would often visit his first girlfriend, "a biology whiz" who had a Spanish surname and lived on the west side. To visit her, Wallace had to go through a Checkpoint Charlie consisting of a concrete levee, oil fields, and two eight-lane boulevards marking a racial change from all-white to brown, black, and yellow. The few streets which led in or out of the area created choke points and were usually "guarded by a squad car at each one, day and night." In his sophomore year, almost every night as he drove from his girlfriend's house, a squad car would swing behind him and tail him. "I got used to it," Wallace says with the determination of a teenage Rambo. He treated "each drive home as if it were a mission through hostile territory: my signals perfect, my turns crisp, my speed steady and always five miles per hour below the limit." Nevertheless, in spite of his white, "preppie look," he was stopped eleven times "with nary a ticket to show for it." The policemen's message was clear: whites were not allowed to socialize in a non-white zone.

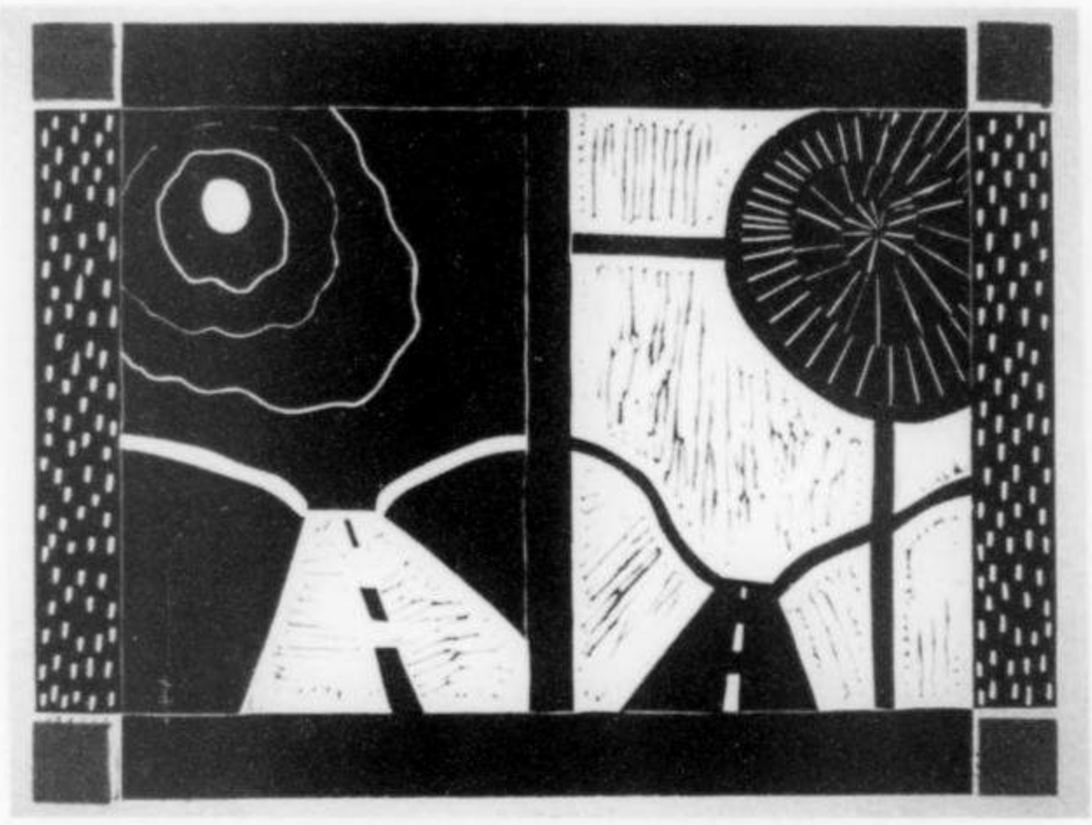


ILLUSTRATION BY BENNY ALBA

Recounting an incident in which he and two friends were caught in the wrong zone, Wallace writes: "The police marched three of us into a field behind a screen of oil wells and then separated and handcuffed us. For an hour we were threatened with a beating and arrest, yet no infraction was mentioned. The police were delivering their message of intimidation, insuring the crackle of fear, the walking-on-eggshells feeling, every time we entered the nonwhite zone." Similarly, when Wallace, who was president of the student body and a football letterman, chose to sit with black friends during a school basketball game, two police officers "waded into the bleachers and hauled me out to the floor to be searched, in full view of my teachers and friends."

Such incidents made it clear not only that race mixing was prohibited by these cops, but that neither whites nor nonwhites are safe from police brutality when they enter a racial zone off limits to their kind. There is, however, another story being told. Wallace, in the process of recounting his youthful escapades with the police, also sings a different tune. He tells us how "this white boy [who] got the message long ago" grew up to "fear the cops." Wallace recounts this adult tale of submission to authority in another key.

Wallace's journalistic eye focuses our attention on the fact that as a youth, in spite of his ostensibly rebellious nature, he did not rebel. The boy did not protest his harassment but adjusted. Writes Wallace: "I am astonished how we adjusted to this state of constant siege." This adult astonishment forces us to set aside his teenage bravado and focus on a fact that neither the teenager nor the adult could state directly: both the white youth and white adult civilians in Wallace's recollections submitted to the policemen's harassment. That he submitted to authority is clear. We simply must pay attention to the unsaid. Absent from Wallace's account is a description of complaints to his parents or schoolteachers. Nor does he report having gone to either the local police station or to the District Attorney's office to file a complaint. Such acts would have been made less likely by the fact that both his parents and the adults at his school were models of submission to police abuse rather than rebellion. Even Wallace's father, after an initial dismayed protest against the officer who had pulled a gun on white boys who were good (Scouts, Christian, and smart), relented and took his family home to their "all-white suburb." This, of course, was what the cops had wanted in the first place.

Wallace is recounting the antics of a teenager who grandstanded rather than rebelled. He is describing more than members of a police force out of control. He is also exposing a pervasive white adult submission to the threatening presence of its own police force, which is dead set on preventing so-called race mixing. The adult submission to this threat, in the boy's eyes, was the same as consent. Police harassment, together with the massive submission of adults to this brute force, taught the boy and the adult he grew up to be what he must do to act like a white person: submit to the unwritten race laws of his policed state. This demand for submission to white race laws created a zone of fear and timidity within Wallace, the adult. As he writes: "Layer upon layer of incidents like these build a foundation of mistrust. It's why I'm a very cautious driver today." Wallace, in effect, has described the origins of his present siege mentality.

He had learned through experience that in a *de jure* and/or *de facto* system of racial apartheid, every member of the community is under siege. Instead of inspiring his rebellious rage, however, this siege mentality actually prevents Wallace from expressing his rage toward the police force. Even in his essay, instead of calling for more civilian oversight of an out-of-control police force, Wallace muffles his impulse to protest by cloaking it in blackness and concludes his essay with the moral tepidity of an interracial truism: "I firmly believe there will be no peace until black people can walk the same streets as white people without fearing the sound of the squad car's brakes, as I learned to do that night on Olvera Street." By referring to the risk African Americans run when they enter white zones, Wallace expresses in blackface his own fears as a European American caught in the wrong racial zone. Albeit unwittingly, this gesture towards tolerance ends up confirming the system Wallace criticizes.

After the siege mentality is in place, race talk by the newly created white usually follows. Such talk, however, often distracts attention from what produced it: white adult abuse against their own kids. The story of Dorothy, a middle-aged woman I met at a dinner party in an Upper West Side Manhattan apartment, shows how race talk about racism begins as a distraction from the emotional pain entailed in becoming white.

Dorothy and I were introduced by the host of the dinner party: Dorothy was a "poet," whose most recent volume of

poetry was prominently displayed on the coffee table in front of the couch on which we were seated. I was a "writer" working on white identity issues. After our host departed, Dorothy wanted to know what a "white identity" was. She did not have one, she assured me. She was simply an American. I could help her find hers, I responded, if she wanted to know what it looked like. Her interest piqued, she accepted the offer. True to form, I asked her to recollect her earliest memory of knowing what it means to be white.

After a little excavation, she finally found the memory: When Dorothy was five, she and her family lived in Mexico for a year. Although her family's housekeeper brought her daughter, who was also five, to work, Dorothy's parents forbade her to play with the little girl. Dorothy, in fact, was never allowed to play with any Mexican children, and she and her two brothers were forbidden to venture beyond the gates of their backyard. Dorothy remembered her feelings of sadness and regret. The Mexican children and their parents seemed so much more at ease with themselves and each other. They seemed warm and tactile, unlike her own family, whose manners and expressions were cold and constrained.

Dorothy told me she had not thought of these feelings in years. She confessed that she now recalled how often, during that year, she wished to be brown. I suggested that the term "white" might not mean anything consciously to her today because it had too much negative meaning for her when she was five. She agreed and now expressed surprise that she had not written about these feelings, memories, or experiences in her work. She said much of her life had been devoted to freeing herself from the emotional strictures imposed on her by her parents. Most of her poetry was about them and the way they had drained life out of her. She reiterated her astonishment that this set of memories had not surfaced in her work. As she blushed, the resurrected feelings of the child seemed to disappear.

I now watched Dorothy transfer her own dis-ease to me and I braced myself for an attack. She was no longer the object of her painful racial memories. Now, I was. "You know," Dorothy now said pointedly, "you are the first black I've ever felt comfortable with talking about racism." To which I responded, "Why is it so easy for you to think of me as a 'black,' and yet until a few minutes ago you could not make any sense out of thinking about yourself as a 'white'?" Further—"Were we really talking about racism? And if so, whose? Your parents'? Yours? That of the five-year-old girl who wanted to be brown?"

Dorothy was silent for a long moment. "I now understand what I've just done, and I'm horrified," she finally confessed. She realized that if I were a black, she, too, must have a race: the one that had enraged her as a child. Not surprisingly, Dorothy now confessed that she was afraid to say anything else—not because I might condemn her, but much more tellingly because, as she put it, "I might not like what I hear myself saying." If she'd been forced to listen to herself continue to talk, she would have had to listen to a white woman speak in ways that the five-year-old child would have despised. She did not want to listen to such talk. Nor did I. Our conversation very quickly came to an end.

Dorothy had recalled the feelings of the child whose parents wanted to love a *white* child. The parts of her that were not "white"—her positive feelings toward Mexicans—had to be set aside as unloved and therefore unlovable. This sense of being unlovable is the core content of shame, psychoanalyst Léon Wurmser reminds us in his book, *The Mask of Shame*. Shame, Wurmser suggests, "forces one to hide, to seek cover and to veil or mask oneself." Such feelings, self psychologist Heinz Kohut notes in *The Search for the Self,* actually result from the failure of the parents or caretakers to adequately love the child, but the child blames itself rather than its parent or caretaking environment. Guilt, by contrast with shame, Helen Merrell Lynd notes in her book, *On Shame and the Search for Identity,* results from a wrongful deed, a self-condemnation for what one has done. A penalty can be exacted for this wrongful act. Recompense can be made and restitution paid. Not so with shame. Nothing can be done because shame results not from something one did wrong but rather from something wrong with oneself. Split-off feelings can create this feeling of personal shame.

No contemporary writer has made this link between personal shame and racial antipathy towards African Americans more evident than Norman Podhoretz, the neo-conservative editor-at-large of *Commentary*. I think of him, in fact, as an unwitting progenitor of modern White Studies, because he so carefully chronicles his own lessons in whiteness as both defense process and invention. While White Studies scholars like Michelle Fine, Lois Weis, Linda C. Powell, and L. Mun Wong study "whiteness as a system of power and privilege, as a group, an identity, a social movement, a defense, an invention," Podhoretz chronicles whiteness writ small as his own fretful I.

Podhoretz begins his February 1963 *Commentary* essay, "My Negro Problem—and Ours," by showing how he transformed the shame entailed in his personal ordeal of becoming white into his "Negro Problem." First, he describes how the Jewish and Italian children in his lower-class Brooklyn neighborhood were united as "whites" by their shared experience of persecution by local "Negro boys." He tells us that as a child in the 1930s, he was repeatedly "beaten up, robbed, and in general hated, terrorized, and humiliated" by the Negroes in his Brooklyn neighborhood. Next, he tells us that, thirty years later, he's still mad even though he's now a self-identified "liberal." He hates Negroes. However, he bases this confident declaration of hate on his belief that all whites, whether they have had personally harrowing experiences with black Americans or not, "are sick in their feelings about Negroes." We can gather from this remark that Podhoretz' "Negro Problem" doesn't



stem from his actual assault by the "Negro boys." What then is the cause of this pervasive feeling? Podhoretz' answer is painfully clear. It's the repression of feelings entailed in becoming a white that creates a cauldron of self-contempt. For Podhoretz, the Negro began to represent all the impulses in himself that he had to repress in order to make it in the white world. The Negro, Podhoretz says, "feared the impulses within himself toward submission to authority no less powerfully than I feared the impulses in myself toward defiance. If I represented the jailer to him, it was not because I was oppressing him or keeping him down: it was because I symbolized for him the dangerous and probably pointless temptation toward greater repression, just as he symbolized for me the equally perilous tug toward greater freedom. I personally was to be rewarded for this repression with a new and better life in the future, but how many of my friends paid an even higher price and were given only gall in return."

Podhoretz' perspective makes even more sense when put in the context of his book, *Making It.* There he discloses America's "dirty little secret": if you aren't a WASP, you'd better become a "facsimile WASP" if you want to make it. Podhoretz thus had learned early on that "there was no socially neutral ground to be found in the United States of America." Instead, "a distaste for the surroundings in which I was bred, and ultimately (God forgive me) even for many of the people I loved, and so a new taste for other kinds of people" was required. For Podhoretz, the trick was to become white without being Anglo-Saxon or becoming Protestant. After all, he was not about to break ranks with his chosen family, the New York Jewish intelligentsia, as he "made it" into the American realm of power, privilege, and prestige. Thus, his annals tell us not how he became an Anglo-Saxon Protestant, but rather how he became "a white" with WASP-like sentiments which show up, not surprisingly, as his own self-contempt. "Becoming white" for Podhoretz meant making the anti-Semitic sentiments of the WASPs around him his own. The self-hatred entailed in this process was hidden from Podhoretz by his mask of white racism towards "the Negro." Podhoretz, in short, learned that being "white" was not a privilege, but a very painful, life-long psychological process of denying his own more original feelings toward himself as whole, wholesome, and good. At this level of psychological development, we must conclude that Podhoretz' deepest sense of self is not "racist" but "broken."

Podhoretz' plot line is not new. In Europe, as University of Chicago master social theorist Sander L. Gilman reminds us in his books *Jewish Self-Hatred* and *Freud, Race, and Gender,* Jews were thought of as blacks. They were the "white Negroes." Writes Gilman, "In the eyes of the non-Jew who defined them in Western [European] society the Jews became the blacks." The male Jew and the male African were conceived of as equivalent threats to the white race.

What's new about Podhoretz' confessions is his attempt to stay Jewish while publicly acknowledging his acquired distaste for "many of the [Jewish] people [he] loved." He talks freely about his "Jewish Problem." Thus the "tears of rage" he felt toward the Negro boys who humiliated him begin to blend with his own feelings of "self contempt," because he's ashamed of some of his own feelings toward Jews. The Negroes begin to represent for him "the very embodiment of the values of the street that he had abandoned: free, independent, reckless, brave, masculine, erotic." They were "beautifully, enviably tough, not giving a damn for anyone or anything"—all the things that Podhoretz, in his own eyes, was not and dared not give into: the perilous tug toward greater freedom from his internalized WASP rule over his own feelings.

Podhoretz, however, does not see the connection between his "Negro" and "Jewish" problem. Instead, he characterizes his "rage" against Negro anti-Semites as "insane" and proposes to end the "Negro Problem" completely through miscegenation. The source of his rage may not be clear to him, but is clear once we understand "whiteness." The Negro anti-Semite becomes a mask for Podhoretz' own feelings of self-contempt as a Jew. His rage against the Negro hides his own shame as a WASP-manqué with anti-Semitic sentiments. That same need to hide from himself also obviously prevented Podhoretz from seeing the absurdity of his "final solution" for the Negro. This was brought home to him by novelist Ralph Ellison, who suggested that such a strategy would simply "increase the number of 'colored' children." Says Podhoretz: this was "a point, I had to admit, which had never occurred to me before." But this point is so obvious that we have to ask ourselves, what blinded him to it? The answer is self-evident. His solution to "the Negro Problem" would get rid of his "White Problem" by bringing about the disappearance of the WASP. Podhoretz concludes his essay with the frank admission that if his daughter wanted to marry a Negro, he would rail, rave, rant, and then "give her my blessing." Here we find Podhoretz with both his best and his worst foot forward at the same time, stepping forward simultaneously as both racial bigot and race reformer.

What can we conclude from these various examples of the processes entailed in becoming white in America? Two things. Whites like to think of themselves as biologically white in order to hide what they'd like to forget: once upon a time they were attacked by whites in their own community because they weren't yet white. To stop the attack, they learned to disdain their own feelings. Who wants to remember such attacks? Who wants to know that they were once

racial outsiders to their own racial group? Who wants to unearth denied feelings? Better to blame the blacks (and other so-called "colored groups"—"so-called" because I've never met anyone who didn't have a color!) than face the truth: whites are race victims of their own community's racial codes of conduct.

Most whites suffer from a survivor complex. They are products of a race war that rages within white America. The fact that there's a racial pecking order among ethnic groups in white America exacerbates this problem. As social psychologist Gordon Allport notes in his classic 1954 study *The Nature of Prejudice*, this race rating-scheme is widespread and remarkably uniform in judgments "concerning the relative acceptability [that is, whiteness] of various ethnic stocks: Germans, Italians, Armenians, and the like. Each of these can in sequence look down upon all groups lower in the series." Such racial abuse meted out to "ethnics" who are too far away from the Anglo-Saxon Protestant ethnic ideal can have devastating effects not only on one's personality but also on one's paycheck.

Their wage of whiteness is a "consolation prize."

This economic penalty is difficult to grasp because Americans have been taught to think only of the benefits—the "privileges"—of whiteness accorded to Europeans who immigrated to America and became white. W.E.B. Du Bois called the race privileges given to these workers and their progeny "the wages of whiteness." Whiteness, as Du Bois notes in his book *Black Reconstruction in America: 1860-1880,* meant "public deference and titles of courtesy"; access to "public functions, public parks and the best schools"; jobs as policemen; the right to sit on juries; voting rights; flattery from newspapers while Negro news was "almost utterly ignored except in crime and ridicule." These privileges also included the right, based on legal indifference and social approval, to taunt, police, humiliate, mob, rape, lynch, jibe, rob, jail, mutilate, and burn Negroes, which became a sporting game, "a sort of permissible Roman holiday for the entertainment of vicious whites." During the late 1800s, for example, "practically all white southern men went armed and the South reached the extraordinary distinction of being the only modern civilized country where human beings were publicly burned alive."

The price exacted for these privileges, however, was also considerable. Du Bois summarizes the main cost in the nineteenth century antebellum South: no major labor movement to protect the region's five million poor whites, who owned no slaves, from the 8,000 largest slave-holders who, in effect, ruled the South. Hatred of the Negro, slave and free, blocked furtive attempts by the lower classes to fight their own race's class exploiters. By playing the labor costs of both whites and Negroes against each other, contractors kept the earnings of both groups low. Both before and after the civil war, white privileges functioned as a kind of "public and psychological wage," supplementing the low-paying jobs that whites could easily lose to a lower-paid black worker.

I am not denying "white privilege." "All whites," as legal scholar Cheryl J. Harris notes in her essay "Whiteness as Property"—regardless of class position—"benefit from their wage of whiteness." Such talk of privilege, however, is incomplete unless we also speak of its penalty. For poorer wage earners "without power, money or influence," their wage of whiteness functions as a kind of workers' "compensation." It is a "consolation prize" to persons who, although not wealthy, do not have to consider themselves losers because they are, at least, white.

The irony, of course, is that neither in the past nor today are low-paid wage earners held in high esteem by their own white bosses who exploit their labor. These workers are, in effect, exploited twice: first as workers and then as "whites." Their "race" is used to distract them from their diminishing value as wage earners. Diminished as workers, they feel shame. Inflated as whites, they feel white supremacist pride. This is the double jeopardy of whiteness Martin Luther King, Jr. pointed to in his 1967 book, *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?,* when noting that racial prejudice put poorer whites in the ironic position of fighting not only against the Negro, but also against themselves. White supremacy, King wryly noted, can feed the egos of poor whites but not their stomachs.

Today's "poor whites" are the working poor, the "overspent Americans" be they lower- or middle-class—all the white Americans who are living from paycheck to paycheck. Whiteness functions as a distraction from the pervasive class problem of the white American worker. Talk of white privilege from this class perspective is really talk about the privileges entailed in being and remaining poor and exploited in America. Such talk is cheap. Too cheap.

We can do better than this—but only if we attend to the way in which most "whites" are broken by the persons who ostensibly made them white "for their own good": their parents, caretakers, and bosses.

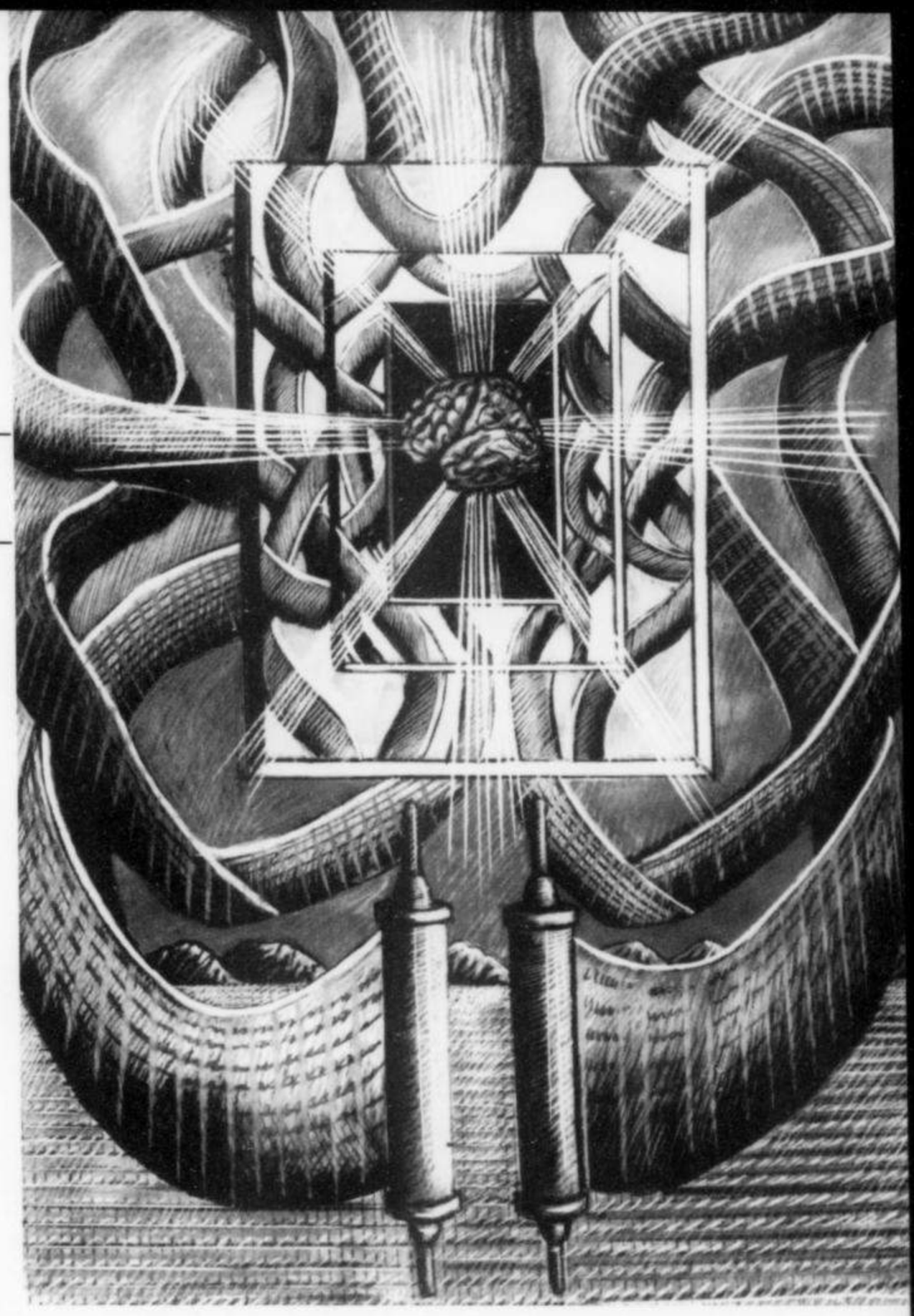
In his September/October 1996 essay "Can the Left Learn to Take Yes for an Answer?" TIKKUN editorial board member Michael Bader describes a repeated pattern among white American progressives: "an unconscious belief that they're somehow not supposed to have a happier and healthier life than their loved ones, past and present." To explain this syndrome, Bader talks about "survivor guilt." We must begin to talk about survivor shame in Americans who are forced to become white. Without such discourse, the fact that European Americans racially abuse their own children, suffer from class exploitation under the guise of "white-skin privilege," mask their own racialized feelings of shame, and then download their self-contempt on the rest of us will remain America's invisible race problem. ❑

ALTERED STATES

Drugs and Jewish Spirituality

That Was Then, This Is Now

Lawrence Bush



ILLUSTRATIONS BY RICHARD ROSS

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Rabbi Kahana explained an inconsistency: the word for "wine" is spelled tirash but pronounced tirosh. If a man merits it, wine makes him rosh, "chief"; if not, it makes him rash, "a poor man."

Rava explained another inconsistency: as spelled, the text reads, "Wine that desolates [yeshammah]*" (Ps. 104:15), but we pronounce the last word, "yesammah* [that maketh glad]*." If a man merits it, wine makes him glad; if not, it desolates him. That is what Rava meant when he said: Wine and spices stimulate my mind.*

—Babylonian Talmud, Yoma 76b,
in H.N. Bialkik & Y.H. Ravnitzky, *Sefer Ha-Aggadah*

The first time I ever stayed up all night and saw daylight return, I was seventeen years old and "tripping" on LSD. The solidity of the New York cityscape as dawn spread through the streets was profoundly comforting to me: after the radical shifts in perception that I had weathered through the night, here I could affirm that the world does not dissolve during the hours of sleep, but "remains the same forever" (Eccles. 1:4).

Uncertainty about such existential fundamentals eventually drove me to abandon LSD and all other drugs. By dint of personal wiring and family history, I was lacking in *emunah,* the faith to know that I could have such experiences and land in a grounded reality. Looking back, today, on the twenty-plus "acid trips" that I took as a much-too-young adult, I sort them into two varieties. At their most gentle, psychedelic drugs evoked some superb sensory experiences: the half-hour examination of the exquisite symmetry of a dew-hung spiderweb, the glimpsing of a smile on a trotting dog's face, the sudden apprehension of cubism as a form of realism. "Hallucination" belittles these experiences: dogs, after all, *do* smile.

More problematic were the "mystical" moments, tinged with madness, that involved a greatly intensified sense of metaphor and meaning, the dissolution of ego borders, the powerful "perception" of what was real and illusory, natural and bizarre, holy and profane—and the manic longing to organize these insights into a redemptive system. Such episodes, deeply challenging to the rationalism that my family held dear, would leave me incapacitated by ambivalence. *Bouncing ego can't be free, boundless ego won't be me,* I wrote in a poem at age eighteen. And so, like the Hebrew people at the foot of Sinai, I "fell back and stood at a distance" ("Let not God speak to us, lest we die," Exod. 20:15–16). I left psychedelic drugs behind, far less with a sense of relief than with a sense of failure, incompleteness, and envy for those free spirits who *could* safely ascend the mountain.

Such Jewish imagery probably would not have occurred to me during my drug-using days, when I identified more with the Woodstock Nation than with the Jewish People. Today, however, I do know more than one rabbi and Jewish professional who either postponed or extended the baby-boomer rite of drug experimentation to a time when Jewish

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metaphors came naturally to them. Their psychedelic experiences thus became tightly interwoven with their Judaism and deeply influenced their professional practice.

Rabbi C., for example, never took LSD during the Sixties heyday, but waited until he was in his late forties. With his own rabbi serving as his (drug-free) "guide," C. spent some six hours rapturously experiencing the Revelation at Sinai. He had an overpowering sense of *devekut,* oceanic union with God; he could "see" the entire cosmos, micro and macro, and experienced what he calls "an unbearable feeling" of having his own boundaries stretched to encompass it all. This piercing perception of the infinitesimal yet infinite nature of his individual identity was accompanied by an overpowering infusion of faith, a certainty about there being meaning in the universe and interconnection among all life. This mystical encounter served as the bedrock of Rabbi C.'s creative theology for the next eighteen years. "What I experienced and felt," he reports, "was not unreal or less real but *more* real than my daily perception of reality. I've never felt any other way about it."

Another rabbi, N., an executive within Jewish organizational life, was a weekly user of marijuana and hashish and "tripped" several times annually for a twelve-year period before entering rabbinic school. Rabbi N. believes that "drug experiences opened me up for prayer experiences and a relationship to God—there are even similar feelings of community in getting high with people and praying with them." He especially deplores the criminalization of drugs in America, which has made drug use into "the leading source of crime and waste of government money." Instead, N. believes, "a way should be found to allow marijuana and psychedelics to expand people's spiritual consciousness in a safe environment."

A Jewish educator and day school principal, B. took psychedelic drugs about a dozen times, "always with a sense of spiritual mission." She remembers a Shavuot some twenty years ago when she and three other women (all prominent in Jewish life today) "borrowed" a Torah scroll from a day school ("It was locked away on Shavuot!"), took it to a state park, ate hallucinogenic mushrooms and spent the day reading Torah, along with "woodland creatures, frogs, and deer," who "came out and participated!" B. admits that "the fact of connectedness or 'oneness' that the *Sh'ma* expresses first became clear to me on LSD."

A successful editor of Jewish books, F. had numerous psychedelic experiences in the 1970s. "I look back on nearly all of them with great awe and respect," F. says. "Each time was a 'big occasion' with a consistent teaching: that there are all kinds of things going on in the spectrum that my normal waking consciousness doesn't pick up. It's like a dog whistle—your ear doesn't hear all frequencies. But with each 'awakening' there is some residue left in the senses, as with the lightning bolt described by Rambam [Maimonides], which briefly illuminates the sky."

A third rabbi, J., who heads a vibrant congregation in the Northeast, undertook two LSD experiences during and shortly after college and feels that they strongly influenced his later rabbinic practice. "I remember sitting outside our apartment in the snow," reports J., "drawing a circle in the snow to make a pie, putting jelly on it, cutting up slices and eating them. Looking through the patio doors of the next apartment, I saw a very fancy cocktail party. I realized at that moment that every social interaction is a construct, a kind of pretense. The perception didn't require me to 'drop out,' but it did help make me radically unregimented as a rabbi. I saw that there is no particular activity or time that has a meaning beyond that which we humans have attached to it. Nothing is sacred, in other words, except when we choose to make it sacred—which is something I really value and love doing."

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Were the great ritual moments of Judaism used as reminders (or recreators) of states of elevated consciousness, as they once were used to some extent by the Kabbalists, those of us who have gained religious insight through the use of drugs might indeed find great excitement in the ritual life.

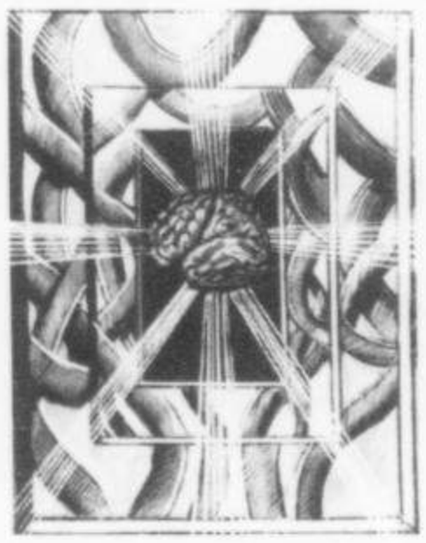
—Rabbi Arthur Green, writing pseudonymously as Itzik Lodzer, in *Response,* Winter 1968

The Jews I have quoted are certainly among the more radical in contemporary Jewish life. They are hardly alone among baby-boomer Jews, however, in their experiments with psychedelic drugs and their positive associations between those experiments and their Jewish spirituality. Nor are such Jews limited to the liberal denominations: "I know many *ba'alei teshuvah,*" reports F., speaking of Orthodox and Hasidic friends and neighbors, "who cannot deny that their spiritual journey included 'getting high with a little help from their friends.'"

"Awakenings" via drugs have often led to a desire to awaken Judaism itself. In particular, many psychedelic voyagers have spent subsequent years pushing against what Rabbi Arthur Green called, in his thirty-year-old *Response* article, the "cult of God-as-father" that "has been allowed to run rampant for hundreds of years" in Jewish life. "As presented today," wrote Green,

> Judaism … has lost the creative mystic drive which led beyond its own images into a confrontation with the Nothing *[Ein Sof]*. The Judaism which contemporary Jews have inherited is one of a father figure who looms so large that one dare not *try* to look beyond Him. We have indeed become trapped by our image.

This trap, according to Rabbi Green, guaranteed that "most psychedelic voyagers" in the 1960s, including Jews, "sought their religious guidance in the traditions of the East," which encourage altered states of consciousness and



are tolerant of fluid images of divinity. Against such a backdrop, the creative metaphysics of tripping (what Green called "the construction of elaborate and often beautiful systems of imagery which momentarily seem to contain all the meaning of life") seemed less heretical and more resonant.

Green's article proceeded to offer an alternative to the stodgy ol' Judaism of the 1960s by drawing four analogies between psychedelic drugs and kabbalistic mysticism. First, he wrote, the "everything-has-been-changing-but-nothing-has-changed" experience of tripping is analogous to "the Kabbalists' descriptions of God as *Sefirot,*" in which "there is no limit to the ever-flowing and ever-changing face of the divine personality." Second, LSD's "terribly exhilarating liberation … from the bondage of all those daily ego problems" has analogy in Judaism's "'stripping off of the physical' *(Hitpashtut ha-Gashmiyut),*" an "interpretation that some of the Kabbalists give to the act of fasting on Yom Kippur." Third, the acid-induced sense of time as a "union of moment and eternity" is parallel to the kabbalistic view that "all future moments were contained within creation, and creation is renewed in every moment."

Finally, Green wrote of "the deepest, simplest, and most radical insight of psychedelic/mystic consciousness … the realization that all reality is one with the Divine." Despite Judaism's built-in "fears and reservations" about this insight, he declared, "the feeling of the true oneness of God and man is encountered with surprising frequency in the literature of the Kabbalah."

This theology of immanence (God is everywhere) is a typical hallmark of many Jews whose résumés have "LSD" invisibly written in the white space between the lines. So is a deep interest in Jewish mysticism and a desire to broaden the Jewish agenda from survivalism/group solidarity to "God-consciousness" and spiritually meaningful observance. To the extent that these interests have become pervasive among a wide variety of Jews, so do we glimpse their influence.

Yet the impact of psychedelic drugs on these innovators goes unacknowledged, even three decades after Rabbi Green's ground-breaking article. Perhaps his analogy between drugs and Jewish mysticism holds here, too, as the Talmud (Hagiga 13a) warns that "The things that are as sweet as honey," i.e., arcane knowledge, "should remain under your tongue." Most tongues have been tied less by reverence, however, than by the "Just Say No" propaganda of the past two decades, which has made saying "yes" or even "maybe" into a major career risk. It seems you cannot become president—not even in the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations—if you admit to having inhaled.

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Our masters taught: Four men entered the Garden, namely, Ben Azzai, Ben Zoma, Aher, and Rabbi Akiva.... Ben Azzai cast a look and died.... Ben Zoma looked and became demented.... Aher mutilated the shoots. Rabbi Akiva departed unhurt.

—Babylonian Talmud, Hagiga 14b
in H.N. Bialkik & Y.H. Ravnitzky,
Sefer Ha-Aggadah/The Book of Legends

There is no stronger antidote to the intoxication of youth than the fears accompanying parenthood, and when I contemplate the prospect of my children (twelve-year-old boy/girl twins) "entering the Garden," I become very sober.

The hazards are many. An LSD trip is not an amusement park ride, delivering safe thrills within set parameters; it is an intense, day-long experience of altered brain chemistry, and its outcomes are strongly influenced by many factors, both subjective and environmental. Psychosis and exaltation walk side by side: the dissolving of ego borders and the uprooting from mental certainties can be terrifying, even lethal. The thirteenth-century Jewish kabbalist Abraham Abulafia could easily have been discussing LSD when he wrote of "spirits of jealousy" that gathered around him during his own mystical "trip," even as "God touched my mouth" and "a spirit of holiness fluttered through me." Over the course of the next fifteen years, "I was confronted with fantasy and error," Abulafia admitted. "My mind was totally confused, since I could not find anyone else like me, who would teach me the correct path. I was therefore like a blind man, groping around at noon" and "Satan was at my right hand to mislead me" (Tr. by Aryeh Kaplan; see Diane M. Sharon's essay in *The Fifty-Eighth Century,* ed. by Shohama Wiener, 1996).

Beyond psychosis, I dread having my kids physically injured or even killed while intoxicated by misjudging their own physical limits, disregarding the laws of physics, or simply driving a car. Although LSD is known for its peculiar virtue of provoking fantastic visions while maintaining an objective, "watcher" frame of mind, I would not want my children's lives to depend on the steadfastness of that "watcher." Instead, *I* want to serve as their watcher: the principle of *s'yag l'Torah,* making a fence around the Torah, has no greater application for me than in protecting the lives of my children through prudent parenting.

It is, however, the criminalization of drugs, rather than their inherent dangers, that most prevents me from serving as "watcher" over my children's safety and mental health. Certainly, the hostile policies of America have kept me from discussing drug use in as honest and nuanced a way as I would like with my kids, for fear that their naïve interpretations and adolescent gossip might lead to serious stigmatization, despite our being a drug-free household. As a result, their main source of drug education has been their school's DARE program (Drug Abuse Resistance Education)—

a program awash with a repressive mystique that violates my values, while its deterrence power is very questionable. My own father, a pharmacist with detailed knowledge about the dangers of drugs, gave up a two-pack-a-day cigarette habit in the 1960s to deter my drug use by example. If such intimate heroism failed to halt my experimentation, why should a local sheriff's corny propaganda be effective?

Criminalization further assures that if my kids ever do mess with drugs, I will be helpless to assure "quality control" and maximize their safety. They will be left to procure their substances from whatever unsavory sources, in whatever dosages, for use in whatever environments, because they will lack my cooperation and guidance—guidance that could lead me to prison and loss of custody. American law thus throws up a huge wall between me and my children and all but assures that the spiritual possibilities of their drug use, if it transpires, will be seriously compromised.

What about Jewish law? "I brought the issue of substance use to a teacher of mine in the traditional world," reports F., the editor. "He told me there are two problems. The small problem is that the *halachah* teaches us to be law-abiding: *dina malkhuta dina,* 'the law of the land is the law.' The larger problem is embodied in the question: Who is the master and who is the servant?"

F.'s rebbe was talking about addiction—a scourge that directly challenges my open-mindedness about drug use. Drug and alcohol addiction, after all, are powerful catalysts of crime and social blight. Statistics on child abuse, domestic violence, rape, robbery, and murder reveal the central role addiction plays in facilitating human misery.

Advocates for the legalization of "soft" drugs, moreover, strike me as naïve when they deny that there is any link between use of marijuana and psychedelics and use of the harder stuff. "Sin begins as a spider's web and becomes a ship's rope," teaches Rabbi Akiva in *Genesis Rabbah* (22.6). Even as a reasonably sensible, self-aware, and middle-class pothead in the Sixties, I tried almost every available drug at least once, including cocaine, amphetamines, tranquilizers, opium, and angel dust (nasty!). Only heroin, with its reputation for addictiveness, fatal overdose, and nausea for novices, provoked me to "Just Say No."

Addiction is not limited, moreover, to "hard" drugs. Several of my friends, for example, became psychologically "addicted" to marijuana well into their mature years. The narcissistic qualities of getting high—the sense of achievement, loosened inhibition, personal brilliance and hilarity—provided a buffer against the frustrations of thwarted ambition, relational *ennui,* and existential boredom that most human beings face. Only when these individuals realized that a plunge into the depths of humility was prerequisite to their growth were they able to stop medicating themselves.

Is their drug use fundamentally different or somehow less reprehensible than those of inner-city folk who smoke crack to rise above their blighted landscapes? The truth is that any drug, whether used to "awaken" the soul or to "deaden" it (a very subjective and culturally determined distinction), can be overused and misused. And all such abuse, to my mind, deserves a compassionate, psycho-spiritual response. Criminalization simply maximizes the degradation of the human beings involved—and turns my parental fears into nightmares.

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When I can undergo the deepest cosmic experience via some minuscule quantity of organic alkaloids or LSD, then the whole validity of my ontological assertions is in doubt. [Yet the] psychedelic experience can be not only a challenge but a support of my faith. After seeing what really happens at the point where all is One … I can also see Judaism in a new and amazing light. The questions to which the Torah is the answer are recovered in me. —Rabbi Zalman M. Schachter, writing in a *Commentary* symposium on "The State of Jewish Belief," August 1966

Apart from legal impediments, why shouldn't psychedelic drugs be used in Jewish life as they have been in other faith traditions—as a tool for wrenching open the mind and heart to "God's presence"? Why not embrace the spiritual power of the psychedelic experience and try to elevate it, as we do with sexuality, above the recreational and into the sacramental zone? Why shouldn't the roster of Jewish life-passages include the opportunity to have a psychedelic experience (perhaps after the age of forty, Judaism's traditional age of enlightenment and mystical initiation, or perhaps at an earlier stage of development)—with rabbinic guidance and community approval? If Abraham's Voice and Moses' Burning Bush and the Revelation at Sinai are the archetypal encounters that inform our faith, why not strive to recreate such experiences throughout our "nation of priests"?

One "why not" is rooted in a spiritual work ethic. Arthur Green put it as follows in a second article in *Response,* published three years after his pseudonymous one: "That which you don't work out on your own, in a struggle that has to begin way down here in the world of ordinary weekday consciousness, somehow just isn't going to last."

True, LSD is promiscuous in its power: you needn't read Hebrew, study Torah, or make any Jewish commitments before you stand on "holy ground." The logic of banning such a powerful tool of religious awakening, however, would also have us banning English translations of holy texts, cross-referenced CD-ROM versions of the Talmud, and all such tools of "easy" access—as well as outreach strategies that seek to provide Jewish contexts for people's "real life" passions and hobbies (Jewish elder hostels, Jewish environmentalism, Jewish ski weekends, etc.). Jewish life has simply moved too far in the direction of democratization and cross-cultural pollination to retreat now.

Another "why not" targets mysticism itself. Writing in *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought* (ed. by Arthur

A. Cohen and Paul Mendes-Flohr, 1987), the late Israeli philosopher Yeshayahu Leibowitz devoted his entire essay on "Idolatry" to a denunciation of mysticism, which "is another name for idolatry." In particular, he wrote, the kabbalistic *sephirot,* which are "thoroughly imbued with ... aspects of the divine ... directly contradicts the scriptural view of God," which ascribes holiness to God and to nothing else. "How difficult it is," Leibowitz continued,

> for man [*sic*] to accept the distinction between the holy and the profane, between the creator, who alone is "truly real" ... and utterly holy, and his own status in God's world, which is contingent and profane.

Such a critique, though rare in contemporary Judaism, has dogged Jewish mysticism for centuries. In particular, the Hasidic flowering of the mid-1700s was violently opposed by traditionalists (the *Mitnaggedim*) who viewed the Hasidic emphasis on ecstatic worship over study and *mitzvot* as heretical and idolatrous. Similarly, Rabbi C.'s LSD-induced experience of *devekut,* B.'s conviction that "connectedness and oneness" is the meaning of the *Sh'ma,* and Rabbi J.'s humanistic perception that "nothing is sacred, except when we choose to make it sacred," would all likely have been denounced by the Gaon of Vilna, leader of the *Mitnaggedim*—or by Yeshayahu Leibowitz—as egotism writ large.

Mysticism nevertheless seems integral to the spiritual upsurge of the 1990s. For better or worse, "getting high on God" far outweighs "submitting to the yoke of the *mitzvot*" in most Jewish circles, while courses in Kabbalah, meditation, and other Jewish techniques of consciousness expansion have full enrollments. Unless our community turns away, *en masse,* from this quest to "get high" through Jewish ritual, there is little ground here for excluding psychedelic explorations from our sacramental roster.

The fact is that psychedelic drugs have already been part of the "sacramental roster" for many baby-boomer Jews, who sensed while under the influence that "Surely the Lord is present in this place, and I did not know it!" (Gen. 28:16). Rather than emulating Jacob and erecting a pillar at the site of their discovery, they have been forced by two decades of repressive social policy to bury and hide it. Like the Marranos of old, they have bought respectability and influence with silence—a choice that has facilitated many innovations in American Jewish life. But that silence has also left our children to fend for themselves. It has left psychedelic voyagers without a Jewish port-of-call—and tens of thousands of human beings to wallow in prison without Jewish protest. It has left the heritage of the Sixties vulnerable to slander, while the "War on Drugs" rages out of control, with inquisitors and cowards calling the shots.

"Truth is the center of the circle," wrote Abraham Ibn Ezra, the world-wandering Hebrew poet, commentator, and holy man of the twelfth century. Perhaps the time has come to step into Ibn Ezra's circle, face outwards to America, and admit to having inhaled. ❑

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Anita and the Blow-Up Doll

Death of a Yippie

Paul Krassner

Exactly five weeks before Sunday, December 27, 1998—the day Anita Hoffman had chosen to die—she was talking on the phone about a blow-up doll that she and her husband, Abbie, had once bought as a present for me. That was almost three decades ago. The blow-up doll never arrived, and Anita now found it necessary to reassure me that they really had ordered it. Their gift may have been a gag, but it wasn't a hoax.

"We were probably the only ones that happened to," she said.

"Oh, no," I replied, "I think they probably screwed everybody. No one *ever* received their blow-up doll, but they were all too embarrassed to report it to the Better Business Bureau."

My missing blow-up doll was just another loose end from Anita's past. She was in the process of tidying up her life before taking it. Three of my closest friends had ended their lives too early—comedian Lenny Bruce in the 1960s, folk singer Phil Ochs in the 1970s, and revolutionist Abbie Hoffman in the 1980s—and I was deeply saddened each time, but it was different with Anita.

"There's no despair here," she said. "I'm happier than I've ever been. I'm really looking forward to my death."

She had been suffering from breast cancer, which metastasized to her hips. In September she emailed: "I've been very ill. Too sick to sit at a computer, thus off-line for several weeks. Today felt like sitting here and catching up. I'm undergoing radiation treatment. The cancer in my spinal column is affecting my spinal cord, and thus weakening my right leg. I can't walk so good. Use cane. Bedridden. Anyway the radiation is in hope of stopping that encroachment." She spent her time on the Internet, watching television, and reading *The New York Times*, which didn't carry program listings for California, so I got her a subscription to *TV Guide*.

"I must admit," she said, "that I'm hypnotized anew by the visual medium."

But now she was paralyzed from the waist down and had been informed that she had two months to live. "Maybe four," she said, "but, you know, I've always been a pessimist." So here she was, at the age of fifty-six, in an altered state bordering on ecstasy from pain-killing drugs—morphine, Marinol, marijuana—and the self-empowerment of orchestrating her own departure.

When we lived in New York City in the 1960s, Anita and Abbie's TV screen had the word *Bullshit!* taped on the lower right-hand corner. Our friendship was permeated with media manipulation and punctuated by LSD sessions. So when CBS News wanted to film a hippie acid trip at the Hoffmans' apartment on the Lower East Side, being countercultural propagandists, we agreed to do it. As a joke, I suggested to CBS that they ought to pay for the LSD, because I was curious to see whether they would charge the expense to Entertainment or Travel. Blaming my suggestion, they changed their corporate mind, expressing fear that the trip would now be "staged." We took the acid anyway—Abbie, Anita, my friend Phyllis, and me—and we *watched* CBS. Every commercial seemed to be trying to sell us what we were already on.

At one point, Abbie and Anita left the living room, and when they walked back in, they were both totally naked, smiling broadly. I suspected they might have an impromptu foursome in mind, but Phyllis whispered to me, "I think we ought to leave now." Just then a phone call came about some trouble at the Ninth Precinct. Abbie and Anita quickly got dressed, and we all strolled down to the police station. Some African American kids had been busted for smoking marijuana in Tompkins Square Park. Abbie wanted to indicate that there could be solidarity between hippies and blacks, so he insisted on getting arrested too. The cops refused to oblige his request, but Abbie just stood there in the lobby of the station house. Captain Joseph Fink beckoned to me.

"Paul, do you think you could persuade Abbie to leave?"

"Abbie's his own man," I replied.

Abbie was standing in front of a display case filled with trophies. Suddenly he kicked backwards with his boot, breaking the glass as though there were an emergency. Since Abbie was most meditative when he was engaged, this was for him a transcendental moment.

"*Now* you're under arrest," yelled Captain Fink.

Paul Krassner's Impolite Interviews *will be published this spring by Seven Stories Press, and* Pot Stories For the Soul *will be published this autumn by High Times Books.*



Anita Hoffman with the author.

PHOTOGRAPH BY NANCY CAIN

Abbie enjoyed the rest of that particular acid trip behind bars. Phyllis went home, and I accompanied Anita back to the apartment on St. Marks Place, where she immediately got on the phone to contact lawyers—and journalists. "Hi," she would begin each call, "this is Anita Hoffman, Abbie's wife." That was her role, and she played it with diligence. She would have preferred a simpler lifestyle, but Abbie functioned as a community organizer, and Anita was his willing helpmate. Whether bailing him out of jail or bringing him to a hospital after a demonstration, she was always there for him, planning and participating in guerrilla theater events from showering $1 bills on the Stock Exchange to levitating the Pentagon.

Abbie provided an adventurous vehicle for the radical consciousness that Anita had already been exercising before they met. She had become politicized simply by reading between the lines of *The New York Times*. With a master's degree in psychology, she had intended to get a Ph.D., but dropped out because she was so upset about the Vietnam war. She began working for the New York Civil Liberties Union, but quit her job, afraid, ironically, that she wouldn't get promoted because of sexism. This was in 1967.

She met Abbie—who also had a master's in psychology—when she went to volunteer at Liberty House, a store he founded as an outlet for items crafted by poor people in the South. That evening, Anita and Abbie had their first date. She put on the Beatles' *Revolver* album, and while they were dancing she told him that she wasn't a good dancer but that she *was* a good kisser. Abbie stayed the night. Soon after, they got married in Central Park in an alternative ceremony. Without telling her, Abbie had leaked an invitation to the press, and a photo of their wedding appeared in *Time* magazine, where they were identified only as "a hippie couple." Anita wore dark glasses because she didn't want to be recognized by her parents. She had taken her vows with Abbie, and now she was also married to the media.

There was, for example, the fake orgy that took place in their apartment. In order to build up interest in the exorcism of the Pentagon, Abbie had invented an imaginary drug, LACE—supposedly a combination of LSD and DMSO—which, when applied to the skin, would be absorbed into the bloodstream to act as an instant aphrodisiac. It was to be sprayed on military police and the National Guard in Washington. Actually, LACE was "Shapiro's Disappearo," a novelty item from Taiwan that leaves a purple stain, then disappears. A press conference was called to demonstrate the effect of LACE on three hippie couples. Mattresses were spread across the living room floor for them to have sex on after being sprayed with LACE from squirt guns, while the reporters took notes. For some reason, Abbie wasn't even there, leaving the shy Anita to host this bizarre prank.

Originally, I was supposed to be there as a reporter who accidentally got sprayed with LACE. To my surprise, I would put down my pad, take off my clothes and start making out with a beautiful redhead who had also been accidentally sprayed. I was looking forward to this combination media event and blind date. Even though the sexual revolution was at its height, there was something exciting about knowing in advance that I was guaranteed to get laid, although I felt guilty about attempting to trick fellow reporters. But there was a scheduling conflict. I was already committed to speak at a literary conference at the University of Iowa on that same day. So Abbie assigned me to purchase some cornmeal in Iowa, which would be used to encircle the Pentagon as a prelevitation rite. I was a rationalist, but it was hard to say no to Abbie. And so I flew back to New York with a thirteen-pound sack of coarse cornmeal properly stored in the overhead compartment. The hippie who had substituted for me in that ostensibly accidental sexual encounter with the beautiful redhead at the LACE press conference ended up living with her. Somehow I felt cheated.

"You really should have a steady girlfriend," Anita teased.

Abbie and Anita had an open marriage, but only Abbie acted on it. He was insatiable. He often stopped by my loft on Avenue A with his latest paramour for a matinee performance. I would be at my desk, writing something for *The Realist* or on the phone, and they would be screwing away in my bed. Abbie obviously wanted his trysts to be kept secret. Yet, since he and Anita were my friends individually and as a pair, I felt conflicted—strangely disloyal—as though I were part of a conspiracy to keep the truth from her.

In December 1967, the three of us decided to take a vacation in the Florida Keys. We rented a small house-on-stilts in Ramrod Key. We heard on the news about black leader Stokely Carmichael's return from Africa to the United States, and Anita remarked that we should have been at the airport to greet him. Instead, we ingested acid at the Seaquarium in Miami and watched dolphins frolicking.

"I think hippies have been using dolphins for their role models as pioneers of a leisure economy," Anita observed.

We had planned to see *The Professionals* with Burt Lancaster and Lee Marvin—"That's my favorite movie," Abbie said—but it was playing too far away, so instead we saw Dino De Laurentiis' version of *The Bible*. On the way

back home, Anita mediated our debate about the implications of Abraham being prepared to slay his son because God told him to do it. I dismissed this as blind obedience. Abbie praised it as revolutionary trust. This was the week before Christmas. We purchased a small tree and spray-painted it with canned snow.

Still tripping, we watched Lyndon Johnson being interviewed. The TV set was black and white, but L.B.J. on LSD was purple and orange. His huge head was sculpted into Mount Rushmore. "I am not going to be so pudding-headed as to stop our half of the war," he was saying. Now the heads of the other presidents—George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt—were all snickering to themselves and covering their mouths with their hands so they wouldn't laugh out loud.

Abbie, Anita, and I talked about the styles of protest that would be taking place at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago the next summer. While the Democrats would present politicians giving speeches at the convention center, we would present rock bands playing in the park. There was no separation between our culture and our politics. We would have booths with information about drugs and alternatives to the draft. I went outside and, under the glow of moonlight, I followed a neighborhood crow named Alice down the road to a gas station, where there was a phone booth. First I called Dick Gregory in Chicago, since it was his city we were planning to invade. He told me that he had decided to run for president, and wanted to know if I thought Bob Dylan would make a good vice president.

"Oh, sure," I replied, "but to tell you the truth, I don't think Dylan would ever get involved in electoral politics."

Instead, Gregory would end up with attorney/assassination-researcher Mark Lane as his running mate. Next I called Jerry Rubin in New York to arrange for a meeting when we returned. The conspiracy was beginning. And, concomitantly, egos were expanding. Rubin would later insist that he had called us, but there was no telephone at our house-on-stilts. When I returned, I could hear the rambunctious sounds of Anita and Abbie making love, alternately moaning and giggling. This, then, was the conception of the Yippies—the Youth International Party—an organic cross-fertilization of psychedelic dropouts and political activists. We had come to share an awareness of the connection between putting people in prison for smoking marijuana in this country and burning them to death with napalm on the other side of the planet—the ultimate extension of dehumanization.

This was the most exciting acid trip we'd ever had.

Two days before Thanksgiving 1998, Anita moved from Petaluma to San Francisco, carefully chauffeured by photographer Robert Altman.

"Goodbye, room," she said to her little cottage. "Thanks for giving me cancer."

Her immobility had prevented her from seeing the sky, but her friend Cindy Palmer was living at a house in San Francisco owned by her daughter, actress Winona Ryder, and offered the master bedroom to Anita. The plan was to have a steady stream of visitors there. Poet Diane Di Prima, for instance, would be coming over to read Buddhist death prayers. Timothy Leary was Anita's role model for the way he lived the final months of *his* life, except that, unlike him, she would not be seeing groupies or reporters. Leary had said, "You couldn't choose how and when and with whom you were *born*, but you can take charge of your own death," and that's precisely what Anita was doing.

"I'm in total hostess mode," she said, joyfully. "I'm on automatic party time."

My wife, Nancy, and I flew to San Francisco in early December to visit her. Steve Wasserman, a friend and editor of the *Los Angeles Times Book Review*, arranged to be on the same flight. Years before, he had edited the *Los Angeles Times'* Sunday Opinion section, but moved to New York to escape the pain of an unrequited crush on Anita. Now he was going to see her for the last time.

Anita was living her fantasy. She could not only see the sky, but also the San Francisco Bay and the Golden Gate Bridge. Alcatraz Island was included in the view, though not from the angle of her bed, and she preferred it that way. Her appetite was ravenous, and her humor was dark. After devouring a pastrami sandwich, she remarked, "I better brush my teeth, I don't want to get gum pockets." Someone was bringing over "pineapple-coconut ice cream to die for," and Anita responded, "I guess I'm ready for that." And when we were talking about an upcoming movie, she said, "I'm sure we'll all be going to see that … oops." In this frame of mind, she would act on an impulse immediately because, as she explained, "I'll never have a chance to do it again." And so she asked for a photo that was on a bookshelf. The rest of us in the room assumed that perhaps she was going to share a memory, but instead she simply ripped the photo in four pieces and tossed them in the trash. Who was in that photo and why she tore it up remains a mystery.

The question arose, since Anita was so euphoric, why not continue living? But her euphoria came from knowing exactly when there would be closure. Of course, Anita's family—her mother, her sister, her son—were not quite so elated. Nevertheless, she wanted them to be at her bedside "to comfort each other."

Before the debacle outside the Chicago convention in the summer of 1968 was officially labeled a "police riot," Mayor Richard Daley's office produced a documentary, "What Trees Do They Plant?"—asserting that reporters were accidentally beaten by police because their credentials were hidden in their jacket pockets. Even if that were true, it only indicated that the cops did in fact attack at random, but the truth was that clubbings took place as a *result* of reporters

showing their press cards. Notebooks were seized, cameras were smashed, film was thrown into the lake. When this anti-protester documentary appeared on network TV, the Yippies managed to get rebuttal time. Abbie asked me to write a script. At one point, I included this line: "It's not that we hate America, it is that we feel the American dream has been betrayed."

"But we *do* hate America," Anita scolded me. "You hate what America has *become*," I replied.

We argued, but she finally agreed with me, and the line stayed in. Indeed, at the Chicago conspiracy trial, Abbie repeated that line in his final statement. Moreover, when Anita gave birth to a baby in 1971, he was named "america"—with a lower case 'a' "because we didn't want to be pretentious," she explained. "We chose that name because he was our vision of what the country could be." When america went to school, he was called Alan, though he would later reclaim his name and his heritage.

In 1974, Abbie went into hiding for several years after he was arrested for selling cocaine. He and Anita had already separated, but she continued to be supportive, even after he met Johanna Lawrenson while he was on the lam and she became first his "running mate," and later, after divorcing Anita, his wife. In a letter included in a collection of the correspondence between Anita and Abbie, *To America with Love: Letters From the Underground,* Anita wrote, "I needed to live desperately, separately from you in order to become a separate person. Do you understand?"

Anita gave me an inscribed copy of the book. And she made sure that Abbie mailed me his signature on a yellow Post-it.



Abbie and Anita had an open marriage, but only Abbie acted on it. He was insatiable.

In the final weeks of Anita's life, members of her extended family visited her in San Francisco.

Stew and Judy Albert, co-editors of *The Sixties Papers,* flew in from Portland, Oregon. They had a reunion in Anita's bedroom with Rosemary Leary, whom they had last seen twenty years ago, when they were all tripping on the beach in Algeria. Anita went to Algeria trying to renew an alliance between the Yippies and the Black Panthers, but she found Eldridge Cleaver so authoritarian and misogynistic that, afraid for her safety, she climbed out a window to escape. Now they were all laughing about it over an afternoon snack of matzahs and jam.

Sam and Walli Leff, Yippie archivists and the cornerstone of Abbie's overground support system when he was a fugitive, flew in from New York. At Anita's request, they brought from Zabar's delicatessen a carton, packed with dry ice and properly stored in the overhead compartment, containing kippered salmon, sliced sturgeon, smoked sable, herring in cream sauce, herring in wine sauce, whitefish, Jewish rye bread with caraway seeds, cole slaw, potato salad, Russian coffee cake—and they had a lovely picnic in her bedroom. Ron Turner, publisher of *Last Gasp* comics, brought a whole case of grape soda, and promised to deliver a video of *A Bug's Life.*

Janeane Garofalo, who had successfully sought to play the part of Anita in Robert Greenwald's unreleased film biography of Abbie, *Steal This Movie*, for which Anita was a consultant, came to visit her fading prototype. They had met during the filming. She has called Anita "a very, very bright woman who definitely marched to the beat of her own drummer. She was very dynamic. When she walked into the room, you knew she was there." Garofalo said the whole experience reinforced her desire "to live a very Berkeley life wherever I am." Anita felt she had to warn certain visiting friends—Martin and Sarah Carey from Woodstock; Nancy Kurshan from Chicago (who ran the Yippie office and was Jerry Rubin's girlfriend)—that they would not be portrayed in the movie.

"The film makes it seem as though Stew and Judy were the only other Yippies and our best friends," she told me. "Everything other people did, such as donate their kids' bar mitzvah money—the Careys—or forward underground mail, is credited to Stew and Judy. When I mentioned the paucity of other characters, Roberts replied that on a low budget film we just can't afford a lot of major players. This is Hollywood."

Robin Williams learned about Anita's situation from his co-star in *Good Will Hunting*, Matt Damon, who had been told about it by his girlfriend, Winona Ryder. Williams had never met Anita, but he called and offered to pay a visit, in keeping with his benign case of Patch Adams Syndrome. After all, if Patch could travel to Trinidad to entertain murderers who were hanged three days later, why shouldn't it be appropriate for Robin to make Anita laugh on Christmas Day? Anita hesitated—"I've never really been a fan of his work"—then invited him to come. He did conversational shtick for a solid hour, and she became an instant fan.

ILLUSTRATION BY GARY THARLER

Wavy Gravy, the socially conscious clown who became a Ben & Jerry's ice cream flavor, originally met Anita at Liberty House in 1967, when she and Abbie were busy stringing love beads. Now Wavy came to her bedside holding a stiff, knotted, leather dog leash, leading a large rubber fish named Saul Bass. Anita wanted to touch it but Wavy wouldn't let her.

"No," he said, "you don't know where this fish has been. People try to kiss him all the time, but he's been out sniffing a lot of dogs' asses."

Wavy sang a plaintive song, "She Carries Me to the Other Side," while Anita sat in bed wearing his red plastic clown's nose.

On February 14, 1969, I was a guest on *The Tonight Show*—host Orson Bean, substituting for Johnny Carson, had invited me—and naturally I ingested a tab of LSD for the occasion. I was wearing a black Mexican hat Abbie gave me and a bright orange shirt Anita had embroidered with an Aztec Indian design of an owl.

They and many other Yippies had spent the previous day rolling some 30,000 joints, wrapping each one in a flyer wishing the recipient a Happy Valentine's Day and containing facts about marijuana. Over 200,000 arrests for pot-smoking were made the previous year, and Mayor John Lindsay had just petitioned Governor Nelson Rockefeller to raise the penalty from one to four years for possession. The Valentine joints were sent anonymously to various mailing lists—teachers, journalists—and to a guy listed in the phone book as Peter Pot. The project was financed by Jimi Hendrix. One newscaster who displayed a joint was visited by a pair of narcotics agents on camera while he was still delivering the news, a TV first.

I discussed this political prank on *The Tonight Show,* and Anita recounted it in *Trashing,* a fictionalized account of the Yippies, under the pseudonym Ann Fetamen. "There was no way of knowing how many people got high on Halloween *[sic]*," she wrote, "but we knew it was the busiest night in the history of the Narcotics Division."

The next day I was visited by a pair of narcotics agents who had seen me on TV. I told them that the Mafia must have sent out all those marijuana joints in order to discredit the Yippies.

And, although I was the one who had been tripping on acid, it was a viewer who wrote NBC complaining that I had worn a shirt with the internal diagram of a uterus.

Anita was efficient in death as in life, taking care of business right to the end. And so it was that I received a refund from *TV Guide* for the unused portion of her subscription. Details, details....

At 10 PM on Saturday, December 26, she ingested a cocktail that had previously been provided by a compassionate doctor. That she would administer her own deliverance in such a way had been kept secret from almost everyone. Not even the hospice volunteers knew. On Sunday, at 4:15 PM, Anita accomplished her goal. She died in peace and serenity, believing in the continuation of her consciousness.

"I know I'm not enlightened," she said, "so I'll probably have to come back."

In her later years, Anita had become intrigued by the twin towers of mysticism and conspiracy. She believed that there is life on other planets, and accepted the notion of certain UFO aficionados that extraterrestrials have been making a movie of the earth's progress.

Her last words to me were, "I hope I remember to ask to see that movie."

"Somehow, Abbie will see the movie," Anita had said—referring to *Steal This Movie*, in which she plays a cameo role in a courtroom scene. "He was the love of my life," she added. "One of the best things about dying is that I'll be able to say hello to him again."

Meanwhile, she had continued to serve as the keeper of his image. When *Steal This Dream: Abbie Hoffman and the Countercultural Revolution in America* by Larry Sloman was published (in September 1998), she wrote a letter to the editor of the *Los Angeles Times Book Review*, which had stopped printing such correspondence several weeks earlier. Finally, she called Steve Wasserman and told him that she was dying—yes, she played the death card—and he published her letter:

> Abbie's legend has a life of its own by now and is surely beyond correction, but I can't help sending in a small correction to J. Hoberman's otherwise fine review of *Steal This Dream* and four other books about the '60s counterculture. Contrary to the quotation from one observer, Abbie Hoffman did not ingest LSD 'like corn flakes' every morning. I would estimate that he took LSD about four times a year for three years during the late '60s. Also, Abbie never took acid or any other psychedelic during the Chicago conspiracy trial. It was Paul Krassner who was on acid during his testimony in that trial. Abbie and I were furious and didn't speak to Krassner for several years thereafter. I think it's important to be accurate about this for the sake of young people who may be influenced. I continue to believe that psychedelics are a useful tool or sacrament for special occasions.

Actually, it was not several years, but ten months that Anita and Abbie didn't speak to me, although it *seemed* like several years. Ten months after the break-up of our friendship, I had noticed a tiny ad in the movie section—*The Professionals* was playing at the Charles Theater on Avenue D—so I mailed the clipping to them, and forgot about it. But that gesture broke the ice, and we proceeded to have an emotional reconciliation. It was then—when I still didn't have a steady girlfriend—that they had ordered a blow-up doll for me, the one that never came. But it really was the thought that counted. ❑

Back to the Garden?

Response to Bush and Krassner

Jo Ellen Green Kaiser

Even as we enter a new millennium, we increasingly find ourselves turning back to the 1960s. The pleasures of that era were the pleasures of youth, and not soon forgotten by the now-aging boomers who experienced them. It's too bad that it's mainly the pleasures that are remembered now, because the Sixties' embrace of sex, youth, and rebellion opened many of its participants up to the possibility of possibility, the urge, as the song "Woodstock" goes, to "get my soul free."

Today, when possibilities seem so limited, both the generation of the Sixties and its successors are trying to make their way "back to the garden." Like Eden, however, this is one place to which we cannot—and I would say should not—return. Historically speaking, the Sixties was a unique time in large part due to forces beyond the control of any of the individuals whom we now regard as leaders of that era. A growing economy and a technological revolution gave people the freedom and the means to experiment with alternative lifestyles, even as the Vietnam war and the civil rights movement provided the crises that prompted reformers to join together in committed communities.

With the benefit of hindsight, we also have become more aware of the serpents lurking in that particular garden. While draft-dodgers and college students were experimenting with a new way of life, too many lower-class kids, black and white, were dying in the jungles of Vietnam. We know that many of the hardest workers in the anti-war movement—women—were denied positions of prominence within radical organizations. We know that many of the youth who "tuned in and dropped out" became the leaders of the "me" generation, awash in narcissism and a consumeristic desire to fulfill their own needs first.

What we need from the Sixties isn't nostalgia for the era's pleasures: the drug highs, the casual sex—in short, the feeling of individual freedom that Paul Krassner alludes to in his essay. Our problem today is that we have more than enough of this kind of freedom, this kind of pleasure. Those of us who have benefited from the globalized economy live, in essence, in the garden, and have used our pleasures to insulate ourselves from the suffering of others. We know something is missing, but too often we seek to fill this need by searching for more pleasure, more ways to feel that "I'm OK," instead of reaching out to others.

That's why I disagree with Larry Bush. He uses his Sixties experience to argue that hallucinogenic drugs can help us connect to something larger than ourselves. They can; but is this the best route to spiritual growth? It's not just that the problems of addiction are so much clearer now, nor that white middle-class promotion of drug use contributes to a cycle of increased drug policing and enforcement which ultimately impacts more poor, urban blacks than suburban whites. My main concern is that, in our current environment, we need a communal route to spiritual experience instead of the often solitary route of drug use.

We need a communal route to spiritual experience instead of the often solitary route of drug use.

I do agree, however, that we should take the best elements of the Sixties as a guide to our present. During the Sixties, progressives re-learned the power of community organizing, only to lose that sense in the Eighties as those communities became fragmented along the lines of sexuality, ethnicity, and single-issue goals. We don't need a crisis to return to the Sixties' sense of community—what we need is a willingness to leave behind our fear that if we do not promote our own group exclusively, we will not be heard.

The Sixties was a period of great rebellion. Sadly, however, that rebellion lives today only in a cultural form. Let's hope that shock jocks are not the final legacy of the Woodstock Nation. We need to concentrate instead on what was really shocking about the period—the end of institutionalized racism; a people's refusal to fight an unjust war; the mass mobilization of the young toward political causes.

At TIKKUN, we have advocated a politics of meaning as one way to build on the lessons of the Sixties. By calling for each of us to connect to a force larger than ourselves through our connection to others, we hope to reconstitute the Sixties' sense of both communal purpose and spiritual search. We cannot return to the particular Eden that was the Sixties, but we can and do need to return to the Sixties' embrace of edenic possibility. In that possibility, lies our own. ❑

Jo Ellen Green Kaiser is managing editor of TIKKUN.

Utopia-Phobia

Russell Jacoby

This century has not been kind to utopian visions. By the 1950s, the ossification of the Russian Revolution; Nazism; the revolts in Eastern Europe against Stalinism; the affluent and bustling economies of the West; and the political conformism of students and youth all suggested that the future belonged to welfare capitalism, not to any utopian alternatives. Scholars decided that the era of utopias and ideologies was definitively over.

Yet history sometimes surprises even its best students. No sooner were the elegies delivered than utopia came to life. In the 1960s, not only a political revolution, but a revolution in life, morals, and sexuality was discussed—and sometimes pursued. The civil rights movement, black power, anti-war protests, national liberation struggles, feminism: the world seemed drenched in revolution and ideology. Nothing seemed more ridiculous than the pronouncement of the demise of fundamental political fissures, the end of utopia.

Without a utopian spirit, life and politics turn grey.

Until today. In 1989 communism collapsed in Eastern Europe; the disintegration of the Soviet Union soon followed. The events of 1989 mark a decisive shift in the zeitgeist: radicalism and the utopian spirit that sustains it have again ceased to be major political or even intellectual forces. Nor is this pertinent simply to adherents of the Left. The vitality of liberalism rests on its left flank, which operates as its goad and critic. As the Left surrenders a vision, liberalism loses its bearings; it turns flaccid and uncertain.

Today socialists and leftists do not dream of a future qualitatively different from the present. To put it differently, radicalism no longer believes in itself; it has surrendered its utopian moment. Once upon a time leftists acted as if they could fundamentally reorganize society. Intellectually, this belief fed off a utopian vision of a different society; psychologically, it rested on self-confidence about one's place in history; politically, it depended on the real prospects for change.

At present this utopian vision has faltered, self-confidence has drained away, possibilities have dimmed. Almost everywhere the Left contracts, not just politically but, perhaps more decisively, intellectually. To avoid contemplating such a defeat and its implications, the Left now largely speaks the language of liberalism—the idiom of pluralism and rights. At the same time liberals, divested of a left wing, suffer from waning determination and imagination.

At best radicals and leftists envision a modified society with bigger pieces of pie for more customers. They turn utilitarian, liberal, and celebratory. The Left once dismissed the market as exploitative; it now honors the market as rational and humane. The Left once disdained mass culture as exploitative; now it celebrates it as rebellious. The Left once honored independent intellectuals as courageous; now it sneers at them as elitist. The Left once rejected pluralism as superficial; now it worships it as profound. We are witnessing not simply the defeat of the Left, but its conversion and perhaps inversion.

One example: even a robust effort to invigorate radicalism like Ralph Miliband's *Socialism for a Skeptical Age* presents itself mildly and soberly: "A socialist government would give a very high priority to the achievement of full employment and would seek to turn the right to work into a reality." He believes that "a fundamental aspect of policy would be the provision of ample facilities for retraining and the renewal of skills." Once upon a time leftists and radicals talked of liberation or the abolition of work. Now the talk is about full employment and retraining the workforce.

What is true for the socialists need hardly be proved for those closer to the center: liberals. The differences between these political categories have never been clear, but it can be safely assumed that if leftists have abandoned a belief in a different future, liberals commit themselves more than ever to the welfare state. As the philosopher Richard Rorty puts it, "we liberals have no plausible large-scale scenario" for the future; we have no ideas analogous to those of "our grandfathers … for changing the world." We must junk the big proposals and ideas that misled us in the past. We must "conclude that bourgeois democratic welfare states are the best we can hope for."

What's at issue is the decline of a utopian vision that once imbued leftists and liberals. The point is hardly that improved air, enhanced welfare, or a broader democracy is bad. The question, rather, is the extent a commitment to

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reasonable measures supplants a commitment to unreasonable ones—those more subversive and visionary. Can liberalism with a backbone exist if its Left turns mushy? Does radicalism persist if reduced to means and methods? Does a Left survive if it abandons a utopian hope or plan? "The idea of utopia," commented T.W. Adorno some years ago, has "disappeared completely from the conception of socialism. Thereby the apparatus, the how, the means of socialist society have taken over any possible content."

To be sure, even those with little familiarity with Marxism know its founders denounced "utopian" socialism and prized "scientific" and practical approaches. This is only half right. Marxism and utopianism did not exist as simple opposites. Yet it is true that the utopian spirit remained alive mainly among the dissenting leftists from Paul Larfargue and William Morris to Walter Benjamin and Ernst Bloch. These thinkers protested an idea of the future as an improved model of the present, where labor was not abolished or minimized, but simply better compensated. On this very issue, Larfargue, Marx's son-in-law, penned in 1883 a caustic pamphlet attacking the fetish of work: *The Right to be Lazy.*

Over the years and against conventional wisdom, utopians sustained a vision of life beyond the market. Amid the revolutionary surges following World War I, the Hungarian George Lukacs set forth a theory of the "old and new culture" in which he argued that the socialist economy was not the goal; it was simply a precondition for humanity to advance to a new and humane culture. Most radicals do not understand that political power and economic reorganization is not the end-all, stated Lukacs. The goal is not a new economic order, but freedom from an obsession with economics.

> We can clarify this with a very simple example: someone is racking his brain over a complex scientific problem but during his work he contracts an unrelenting toothache. Clearly, in most cases he would be unable to remain in the stream of his thought and work until the immediate pain is relieved. The annihilation of capitalism, the new socialist reconstruction of the economy, means the healing of all toothaches for the whole of humanity.

"The healing of all toothaches for the whole of humanity": that this statement can no longer be thought, much less restated, bespeaks the end of utopia.

Of course, for many the demise of utopian thought is for the good. Conventional wisdom links utopia and violence. On what basis? Ironically, refugees from Nazism like Hannah Arendt, Karl Popper, and Jacob Talmon successfully argued that utopians have bloodied the world. The factual basis of this proposition remains slender. What was utopian about Nazism? Only by distorting the term can utopianism be associated with anti-Semitic and racist movements. On the slaughter bench of history, much more blood has been shed in the twentieth century on behalf



ILLUSTRATION BY JON STRAUS

of bureaucratic calculation, racial purity, ethnic solidarity, nationalism, religious sectarianism, and revenge than utopias. The notion that utopians are violent and that realists are benign belongs to the mythology of our time.

This is not to clear utopians of all charges, but distinctions must be made. Utopians are hardly uniformly violent. What was violent about Edward Bellamy or Martin Buber? Moreover, utopias play an irreplaceable role, appraising the present in light of a different future. "A map of the world that does not include Utopia," wrote Oscar Wilde in *The Soul of Man Under Socialism,* "is not worth even glancing at."

Without a utopian spirit, life and politics turn grey. Utopia here does not entail blueprints for the workshops of the future. Especially within the Jewish tradition, utopias are undefined. The "striking absence of detail from the Jewish messianic visions," writes Lionel Kochan, is partly derived from the prohibitions against images. This ban does not block a future, but protects it.

Protects it from what? From efforts, inevitably small-minded and limited, to fashion the future that damn it to replicate the present. On this score Marx remained a good Jew; he remained virtually silent about the details of emancipation, understanding that a free society could only determine itself. His complete writings describing life after a revolution amount to about a page. Yet allegiance to this austere utopianism hardly signifies passivity. On the contrary. Today more than ever we must work against a bleak cynicism; today more than ever we must defend the utopian spirit and allow what Gershom Scholem once called the "anarchic breeze" of messianism to waft through the stuffy house of history. ❑

I Once Was Blind but Now I See

The Amazing Grace of Y2K

Margaret J. Wheatley

If you don't know the kind of person I am
and I don't know the kind of person you are
a pattern that others made may prevail in the world
and following the wrong god home we may miss
our star.

—William Stafford, from "A Ritual to Read To Each Other"

There are great teachers moving among us. They are not individuals, but events we have created from our beliefs and practices about how the world works, or how we want to make the world work. These events are now upon us, emerging as forces larger and stranger than anything we imagined when we chose the gods we would follow home. As teachers, they go by many different names. Here are only three: global warming, environmental degradation, and the year 2000 problem (Y2K). While there are many other great ones, these three teach the same lesson: we are one world, woven together in intricate ways, forced now to confront the consequences of how we choose to belong to the planetary community.

Among these teachers, Y2K has been my particular guide since April 1998. I felt compelled to become involved in Y2K because, for years, I had been studying and writing about systems thinking, technology, and human behavior in organizations and in times of crisis. In Y2K I saw many of the issues that had engaged me in my earlier work. I knew that Y2K was far more than a simple computer problem that could be fixed by programmers. As a system's problem, I knew Y2K could not be contained, limited in its effects to only a few organizations and systems.

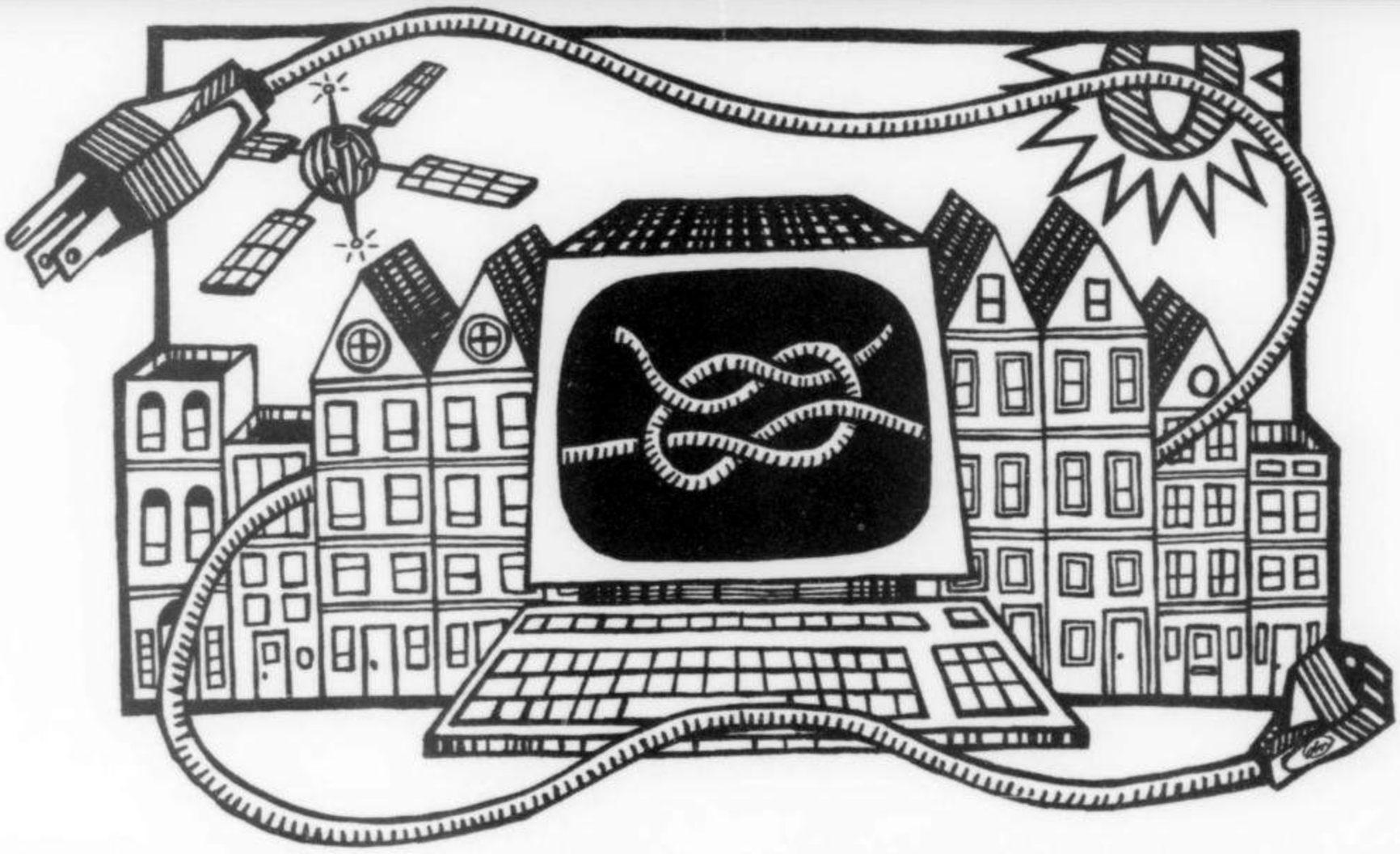
And the ironies of Y2K were—and continue to be—compelling. Our ardent worship of technology and science has led to our enslavement. We are confronted with the fact that *we* have become the servants, terrifyingly dependent on the technology we have created to serve us. A second irony was the Y2K time bomb that ticked off the first-ever, non-negotiable deadline. After many years of believing we could negotiate with time—seeking to collapse it by our demands for speed, ignoring it as necessary to any growth process, attempting medically to prolong life—suddenly, for this generation of arrogant negotiators, time stands adamantly at the threshold to the new millennium, barring easy entry. And we have done this to ourselves because we have been too busy to ponder a future described by a four-digit year.

Since working with Y2K, particularly in the area of community preparedness, my initial understanding of what is happening has swelled large, then receded into confusion, leaving me alternately peaceful, frantic, expectant, and resigned. But I welcome this teacher. Because of the year 2000, I have been provoked to explore deeper and less certain places. The amazing grace of Y2K is that it illuminates so many different dimensions of modern life. I still see through a glass darkly, but some aspects of this culture aren't quite as hidden as they once were. This has been a spiral journey that began with my growing awareness of the physical systems that weave our contemporary world together, and now has moved into realms of the invisible, raising questions about the human spirit and the greater movement of Spirit in this time.

The amazing grace of Y2K is that it illuminates so many different dimensions of modern life.

I did not know how this world works before Y2K. I had virtually no awareness of what it takes to support my life, to sustain me and many others on this planet. It has been a great gift to learn that every major component of our modern infrastructure is supported by dense networks of systems and equipment, each of which relies on computers to perform its functions. These computerized systems manage everything: transportation, power generation, manufacturing, telecommunications, finance, government, education, health care, defense. Our reliance on technology has created a world whose efficient functioning in all but the poorest and remotest areas is dependent on computers. It doesn't matter whether one personally uses a computer, or that many people

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around the world don't even have telephones. The world's economic and political infrastructures rely on computers. And not isolated computers. We are supported by complex networks of reliance around the globe. Whatever happens in one part of the network has the potential to impact any other part of the network. We have created not only a computer-dependent society, but a planet whose interdependencies extend far beyond our imagination.

Think about the multiple systems we activate when we turn on an electric switch, use a gas pump, go to an ATM, pick up a telephone, or turn on a tap. Follow for a moment how many systems are required for the seemingly straightforward and essential act of filling your gas tank. (And note how these systems get caught in a circular dependence on one another.) To access the gas stored in underground tanks at your neighborhood station, electricity is required. Electricity is generated by turbines, often fueled with coal. Turbines require electricity to operate. Coal is transported by rail, so the railroad system is important. To pay for gas by credit card involves electricity, phone networks, and, perhaps, satellite communications. The gas in the local storage tank was brought there by trucks, which require gas. The majority of oil used in America comes from abroad, so what's going on in Venezuela or Mexico or the Mideast matters. Individual drilling rigs are dependent on computers to ensure that oil is extracted without leaks or environmental disasters. Huge tankers from foreign ports transport oil to U.S. ports—of their many computer systems, these ships also rely on satellites for navigation. Once the ships reach U.S. ports, computer-dependent customs officers monitor their cargo and authorize entry. To operate the port requires multiple systems, especially electricity and telecommunications.

Compared to other modern systems, pumping gas activates a relatively simple system of interdependencies (and I've only sketched out the bigger systems here). Every one of these systems is heavily dependent on computers or embedded microprocessing chips to perform its operations. Whether it's a customs official accessing a computer database, an offshore drilling rig relying on embedded chips hidden beneath the water's surface, a microprocessor in a distant satellite, the computer chips in railbeds that control the switching function in every track in America, or a hydroelectric plant connected to its grid by computers, a failure in any one part of this system would create a major disruption in the movement of oil from reserves deep in the earth to the tank of your car. And what other systems would be affected if you couldn't use your car?

The movement of food into our local supermarkets reveals a similar network of inter-reliant systems. As consumers, we demand fresh produce—but few of us are aware of the systems that get a mango from Peru to my table midwinter in Utah. Most U.S. food markets get fresh food shipments every two to three days. Whether it's brought in by truck, train, or ship, instantly we're back in the system networks just described, with the addition of new levels of complexity from the many systems that support food production, storage, and sales.

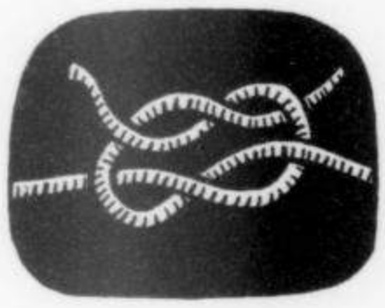
Y2K quickly exposes these interdependencies, and it also reveals something we already know from experience: these complex systems are exceptionally fragile. They can crash from a small failure in any part of the whole system. Pagers went down across the United States because a computer chip failed in one satellite. Auckland, New Zealand's major city, had no electricity for more than a month because of a failure in one small part of its grid. The American and Canadian Northeast froze after an ice storm and couldn't bring its electrical grid back on for weeks because of problems with one small generating plant. In striving for efficiency, almost all modern systems are linked together serially; there are few redundancies or back-ups. In giving hegemony to efficiency, we have created systems of brittle fragility. "The chain is only as strong as its weakest link" is the mantra of modern systems.

Even though analysts have mapped these dense and fragile networks, it remains *impossible to predict* just how Y2K will materialize, or the extent of the disruptions.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JOSH MACPHEE

"Weakness" isn't a precise property of any one part or place; it can't be defined independent of the relationships between that link and others. Analysts can draw the primary relationships, and thus predict probable areas of concern, but no one can predict the behavior that gets set in motion because of those relationships. What we do know is that a minor failure in a network of relationships can trigger responses elsewhere that suddenly, exponentially, emerge as catastrophic.

This is why assessments that an organization is 80 percent compliant, or announcements that the Social Security Administration is 100 percent compliant, are meaningless. Old ways of measuring, such as figuring percentages, averages, or rating an individual system, tell us nothing about the behavior of the network. Whatever happens will occur because of the relationships among the constituent parts of the system. Individual readiness is not possible unless each organization separates every connection it has to its networks (thereby, of course, incapacitating the organization from accomplishing anything). The only meaningful Y2K compliance report would be a statement that 100 percent compliance had been achieved everywhere in the global network. Because this is impossible, we must continue to probe for other information about Y2K, not the legally-induced or paternalistically-motivated statements that now predominate in the public arena.



Good information about Y2K is hard to come by, and we may never be able to develop the quality of information we think we need. This is not because of poor analysis, but because we are dealing with complex systems, and these systems do not succumb to traditional modes of analysis. Many analysts report that the longer they study Y2K, the more difficult it is to know what will happen. The more they try to bring things into focus, the fuzzier they become. This fuzziness, paradoxically, is a necessary consequence of learning more about the system. As a picture of the system develops—its convoluted networks and interdependencies—the overall portrait comes into relief, but the details of the portrait lead to an infinite realm of connections. Studying them only increases the confusion; the more we see, the more there is to see. Clarity slips away as we see more clearly.

Such inability to make definitive statements and predictions is having a terrible effect on the public. In the absence of prediction, and instead in the presence of many conflicting assessments, many people have withdrawn from the Y2K problem. Faced with a problem that is new, and in the absence of one expert voice authoritatively defining Y2K, people feel free to withdraw, to deny, to stop inquiring. As a culture, we are very good at denial, and the fuzzy quality of Y2K information is easy to deny. I had thought that the confusing and dramatic proportions of Y2K would wake us up, but what I now observe is that it has put many of us to sleep. We don't know how to think in a world of murky shapes and indefinite impacts. We were never encouraged to dwell in the unknown. So we grab quickly for the safety offered by individual commentators—the computer friend who tells us there's no problem, the government official who tells us things seem to be improving, the internal voice that says nothing this bad could possibly be happening to me.

Past the absence of facts and statistics that mean anything, Y2K takes us deeper, exposing the beliefs that engendered the world we now inhabit. The modern Western mind has prized, among other values, independence, control, and unrestricted growth. In creating this twentieth-century world, we didn't notice that we were building systems so woven together that eventually they would demand that we embrace a contrary set of values, values of dependence and limitation shaped by a world of interdependencies. The web of life has been revered by most cultures through time—how ironic that our individualistic economic and cultural beliefs led us to create a world that now requires our return to more ancient beliefs.

But even as our Western beliefs are challenged now by our failures, it will be difficult to let go of them. Because Y2K confronts people at this deep level of cherished beliefs, it only becomes more difficult to rouse them to focus on preparedness. We are not making a simple request when we ask people to prepare for disruptions in food, electricity, etc. To acknowledge that Y2K requires preparation for breakdowns in our modern systems means that we are acknowledging something much scarier. We are acknowledging that the gods of technology, economics, and individualism have failed us. We followed the wrong gods home. Because this is not what people want to hear, even at a subconscious level, it might help explain the extraordinary levels of denial that Y2K evokes. Yet if what I describe is accurate, then Y2K is just the beginning. For Western culture to decide which new gods to follow into the twenty-first century will require devoted work from many of us, work that will extend far past the calendar click of January 1, 2000.

The community preparedness work of today is teaching us some important lessons about planning for failures in complex systems. Traditional planning tools and measures don't work. We can't sit back and plan for what we want to have happen in terms of precise strategies and outcomes. Instead, we have to move *inside* these systems, sit with their imponderables, and try to develop a shared sense of what might happen. We need to *participate* with people who work within the many systems at risk—utility executives, hospital officials, school personnel, food merchants, local officials. In the hundreds of community preparedness groups active in the United States, one lesson is clear. Traditional boundaries and adversarial relationships do not help. People need to recognize that they are partners and participants in encountering the unknown. We are in this together.

Complex systems also require that we be *present,* reinforcing a way of being in the world that has been described

in spiritual teachings for millennia. We have to become astute interpreters of what just happened rather than dreamy planners for what we want to have happen. We can no longer sit as distant gods, manipulating and controlling things for our own purposes. To accomplish anything, to have influence, we must work from within, humbled and respectful of the powerful dynamics in which we participate, dynamics which are far beyond the control we once aspired to have.

There are hundreds of Y2K community preparedness efforts going on in the United States, Australia, Canada, and England (and many more just beginning). These efforts seem to be succeeding not because the organizers guiding them know how Y2K will materialize, but because they are creating the relationships, trust, and good thinking that will enable them to deal with whatever happens. One learning shines forth: we don't need to predict the future in order to prepare for it. The most important benefits gained from looking at alternative scenarios, drawing system maps, or auditing community resources are the relationships we develop. Prepared communities are those that have developed open, trusting relationships, not those who have just stored away physical necessities. Whatever planning processes are used, they must focus on new levels of invitation and participation, welcoming in those from whom we've been estranged, or those we've disliked, discounted, or ignored. We can walk into the unknown with far less fear and more capacity only if we learn how to walk there together.

"The politics of meaning," so wonderfully articulated in the pages of TIKKUN, is clearly evident in Y2K preparedness work. Those engaged in community preparations are discovering what has been well-noted by others—our deep, eternal need for relationships, for lives lived meaningfully together, where we can be truly present for and to the other. Many mourn the loss of community and are suffering from what Paul Wellstone, in an earlier issue of TIKKUN, describes as "the new isolationism." Michael Lerner has noted that we are "a society that undermines love." Into this sad culture walk the Y2K activists, insisting, as Paloma O'Riley of The Cassandra Project for community preparedness so succinctly puts it: "If your neighbor isn't prepared, you're not prepared." How can there be individual preparation in this world of interdependence, a world that we wove together in order to sustain us?

Y2K insists that we encounter the reality of the other, the fact that we are truly dependent on so many others, those both far and near. The global village has been exposed; what happens in a Venezuelan oil field may make my life miserable. And conversely, Y2K demands that we turn to one another, to those who live near us. If any of these global systems fail, we will need our neighbors. As cyberspace unravels, we must move from virtual community to old-fashioned physical neighborliness.

I am sometimes told by people that the problem is not that they don't *know* their neighbors; they know them and *dislike* them. They don't want to work with them. But here's an insistent teaching: we no longer have the luxury of being only with those we like. Y2K starts as a lesson in systems that becomes a lesson in the essential behaviors of human community: tolerance, forgiveness, compassion. The communities created in cyberspace do not require any of the behaviors that nourish human relationships. In cybercommunities, we pick and choose, joining only those who are momentarily pleasing to us. Nobody has to change; we just select from among who's there. At any point, if we take offense or things became sticky, we don't have to change, we just evaporate. This "community" has led us far from one another and I personally am looking forward to the challenge of slogging through the messy, muddy terrain of working with neighbors I don't like, but whom I now need.

There is one last teaching to relay and, of course, I saved what I value most for last. In December, a group of Y2K activists were meeting in the Bay Area. What gradually surfaced was that traditional Y2K planning efforts, which months ago had given them energy, no longer motivated them. Members reported feeling as desiccated as the freeze dried foods they were recommending for food storage. It was a dispirited group, and it didn't take long to realize that the absence of Spirit was precisely the problem.

This has become a familiar conversation within the Y2K preparedness community, and it is a profound yet familiar learning of the human experience. We are not the first people to contemplate profound disruptions to our way of life. We are not the first to journey into the unknown. But we do live in a culture which has divorced us from the rituals, beliefs, and traditions that would help us prepare for this perilous opportunity. We don't know how to clothe ourselves for the hero's journey; we don't know the stories that would help show us the way. So the work of true preparedness becomes something far beyond the physical—it becomes our task to know our Source, to work from center, to ask for guidance, to learn the stories from those who know the way. We are not misunderstood prophets, but well-accompanied pilgrims. There are probably many tests to endure, for this is the pilgrim path. But the work is to find the gods that will lead us to some place new, a place different from where we now reside, a place of human community that feels more like home. ❑

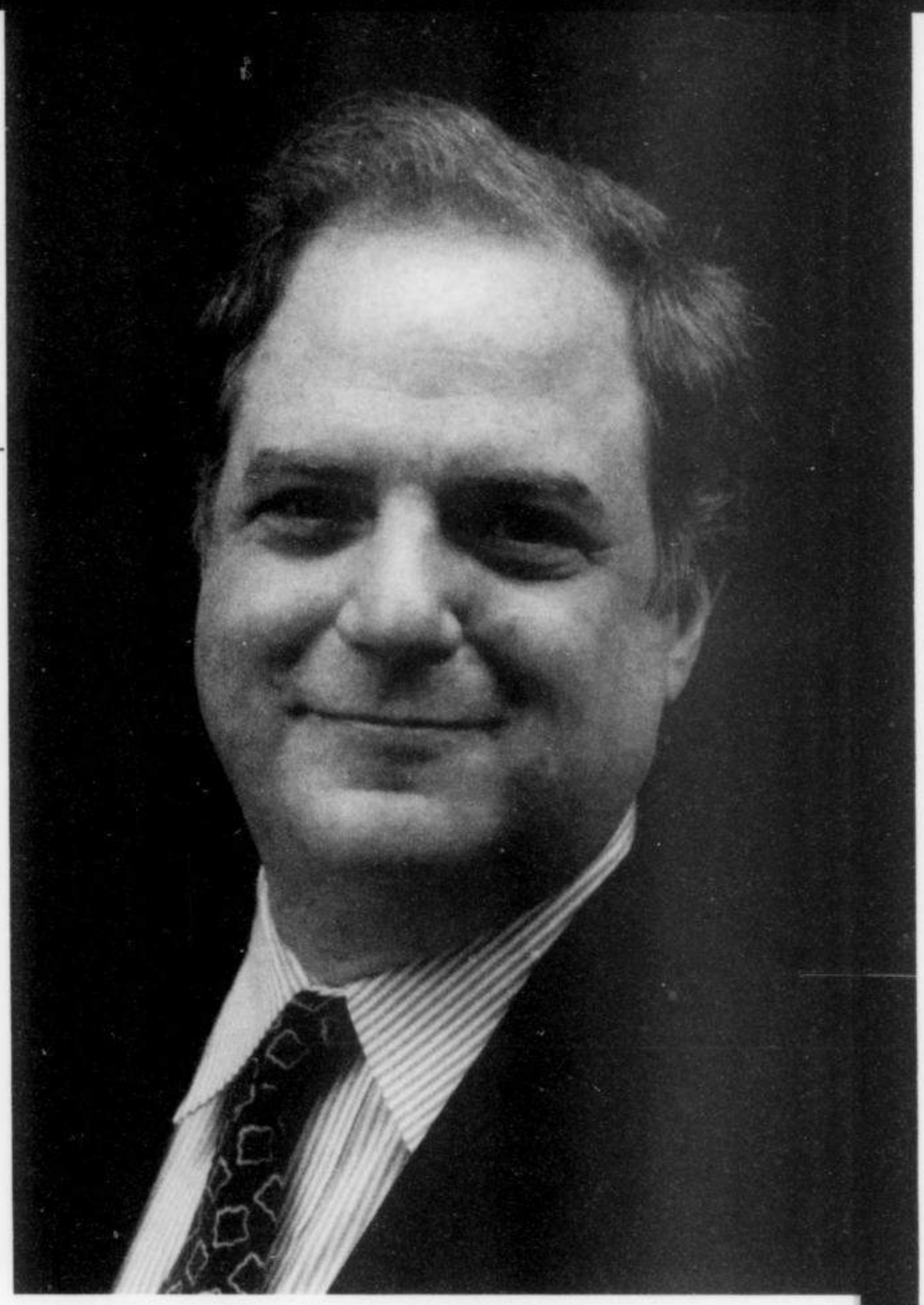
If you are interested in learning more about community preparedness efforts, there are abundant resources being developed for you by many who are already walking the path. The Web is the best source for resources and connections. See:

www.berkana.org
www.co-intelligence.org
www.resilientcommunities.org
www.cassandraproject.org
www.Y2Kcommunity.org
www.wild2K.org
www.CY2KR.org

INTERVIEW

AN INTERVIEW WITH Frank Rich

Jack Newfield



Frank Rich is both a columnist for the New York Times *Op-Ed page and a senior writer for the* New York Times Sunday Magazine. *Prior to joining the Op-Ed page, Rich was the* Times' *chief drama critic. His most recent book,* Hot Seat: Theater Criticism for The New York Times: 1980–1993, *was published by Random House in 1998.*

NEWFIELD: Unlike Walter Lippman, who concealed his Jewish identity, you have made anti-Semitism one of the recurring themes of your column, particularly when writing about the Christian Coalition. In your columns you've been proud of your Jewish identity; I wonder where that comes from?

RICH: I'll start backwards. I get some incredible mail that cracks up my teenage sons; the letters begin "Dear Jew." I keep a file of anti-Semitic mail and show it to my kids for their amusement. I've thought a lot about where my motivation comes from because I've certainly not been a victim of anti-Semitism. It's a larger cultural issue, which is typical of things I address in my column. Certainly, in this century, anti-Semitism has been a strain of the far Right in this country. The clue to it, to me, is that it's not so much about anti-Semitism itself but the relation of anti-Semitism to all kinds of bigotry, including racism and homophobia.

I grew up in Washington, D.C. My father was a victim of anti-Semitism when he applied to colleges just before World War II. My mother had anti-Semitic things happen to her that were a vivid part of my childhood. I think from the very beginning I saw these events in a political context. I remember George Lincoln Rockwell, and his sort of Nazi storm troopers, marching in Arlington, Virginia, in the Washington suburbs when I was a kid.

My first real newspaper job when I got out of college was at a muckraking political paper—kind of modeled on the old *Village Voice*—that I started with some friends.

NEWFIELD: *The Richmond Mercury.*

RICH: *The Richmond Mercury.* And there I just naturally gravitated towards covering the religious right. It wasn't called the religious right then—some of it was still the John Birch Society. I'm fascinated by it. For instance, I'm fascinated by the point where Louis Farrakhan's rhetoric about Jewish bankers and the new world order exactly dovetails with Pat Robertson's new world order book; they're still both talking about the Warburgs. It's a point where the crazy left and the crazy right meet, and that just interests me.

NEWFIELD: Another big element of your column is the intersection of politics and culture. Do you think the far right hates Clinton more for cultural than for political reasons? Do they just see him as the avatar of the 1960s with sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll?

RICH: Yes. In some ways it's absurd because many people who still believe in the Left of the 1960s would find Clinton a very poor example of it. He wasn't really a serious Vietnam war protester; he was an opportunist even then. We know he smoked marijuana, but he's hardly an exemplar of the Ken Kesey LSD generation. Even his taste in Sixties music, I would say, is extremely suspect. That he's a kind of ambitious glad-hander makes me speculate that the leftists on his campus probably despised him. It's very complicated. Some of the hatred may be about Hillary Clinton and particularly how she appeared in public in the early days of his administration, but to me he has clearly become a symbol of what

(continued on page 70)

PHOTOGRAPH BY EDWARD KEATING

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.*

Education and Politics of the "Third Way"



Svi Shapiro

The end of the impeachment process also ended, for now at least, the right wing's obsessive attempt to destroy the Clinton presidency. This moment of relief is also a time to return to some serious thinking about what Clinton now offers us in the way of policies concerned with social change. The State of the Union and subsequent speeches, while certainly reflecting the President's adroitness at measuring the public mood, bring us back again to his tepid and limited agenda for reform. His major proposals—saving Social Security and raising educational standards—while significant, at least as far as the former is concerned, are hardly radical or earth-shaking. Neither demands any serious rethinking of the basic contours of our vision and commitments as a society. Yet such limitations call for something more than a new round of "Clinton bashing." We need to look beyond this individual to the deeper influences that are shaping the Left's vision and agenda. Looking beyond our own shores (an increasing rarity in the media today) to the politically successful social democratic parties in Europe underscores just how much this is a time of modest expectations and widespread accommodation to the forces and thinking of the global marketplace. It also reminds us of just how much needs to be done to awaken and renew a politics concerned with deep and significant transformation.

That perception was powerfully brought home to me during a recent visit to Britain. It was a sober reminder (if I needed one) of just how little now remains of a radically different social vision within the mainstream politics of the Left. Both sides of the Atlantic talk instead of a "third way"—one that is represented in the United States by the "New Democrats" (of whom Clinton is the most famous standard-bearer), and by Tony Blair's "New Labour" in the United Kingdom. In Britain, where politics has been less obscured by the media's obsessive and sleazy focus on the personal behavior and misdemeanors of politicians, the larger meanings of public policies remain visible and relatively clear. What becomes very apparent is that the special rapport between Blair and Clinton reflects not just mutual affection based on a similarity of generation and culture, but, more crucially, a broad identity of social outlook and understanding about what is needed in responding to, as well as shaping, the world of the twenty-first century.

Not accidentally, at the center of New Labour's (Blair is insistent on the prefix) domestic policies are improvements in education. Indeed education is one of the defining concerns of the new government. And one could not help but be struck by the similarities between Blair's policies and the educational policies and proposals that Clinton himself continues so forcefully to argue. Of course education for both men means mainly the process of "investing in human capital" so as to make the workforce more adapted and suited to the conditions of the new global business environment. It is not hard to understand why a government might define the importance of education in this way. In the volatile and unstable conditions of the global economy, where workers' jobs depend increasingly on the ability of

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ILLUSTRATION BY JIM FLYNN

countries to court corporations to their shores, regions, or cities, a suitably skilled workforce appears to offer some leverage over future economic prospects for both individuals and nations. One can hardly question the importance of the capacity to earn a living to the sense of people's well-being, and a government's—especially a progressive government's—responsibility to make that possible. Yet the fixation on education as preparation and training for future jobs certainly means a very limited vision of what education might be about.

For example, there is little in Labour's educational priorities that really distinguishes them from those of the previous Tory government. There is nothing, certainly, that suggests a vision of education rooted in some larger, socially transformative vision of public policies that might connect Labour's educational reforms to the rich traditions of democratic socialism in that country. The government's important White Paper, laying out its policies and plans for education, says little about the crucial role of public education in renewing and revitalizing notions of citizenship and the culture of democracy which, as in all Western countries, has been so devastated by the ethos of consumerism and individualism. Nor does the White Paper contain anything which connects education to its role in helping to develop communities in which care of the other, and respect for difference, are seen as important to the quality of human existence. The notion that education is a crucial part of what the celebrated British socialist Raymond Williams once called the "long revolution"—the process of cultural change aimed at transforming the character and values of society in the direction of greater social justice, a more vital democracy, and humane community—has all but disappeared in New Labour's language. One looks in vain, in the Labour government's educational vision, for something that speaks to the need for schools to teach students to think critically about growing social inequalities and increasing poverty, the ecological wastefulness of so much that is produced, the moral and spiritual emptiness of consumer-driven economies, the increasing dominance of political and cultural life by corporate interests, and the growing callousness and insensitivity in our communal lives.

Being progressive has come to mean advocating educational policies that ensure the "rational" use of "human resources."

In Britain, as in the United States, being progressive has come to mean advocating educational policies that ensure the "rational" use of "human resources." New Democrats and New Labour are united in their belief that an educated nation is one that efficiently prepares its citizens to fully accommodate the changing needs of the emerging technological and economic order. These Left parties have lost their connection to a progressive agenda that would recognize the crying need for an education system concerned with the making of a socially responsible and ethically sensitive citizenry, and schools that act as public spaces in which democratic values and practices are learned and fostered. Conversations with teachers in Britain (much as in the United States) made clear to me their sense of despair about the erosion of any vision of schooling that truly centers on the needs and interests of children. This is especially poignant in England, where there had been a much-honored tradition of child-centered progressive education.

Today, Labour has committed itself to a reactionary, conservative national policy focused on an unparalleled regime of testing and "performance measures." It has made the criterion of its success the ability to show an extraordinary and rapid (i.e., before the next election) rise in standardized test scores in the areas of reading and what it calls "numeracy." Success in these tests deliberately pits individual schools against one another in a competitive environment in which schools that fail to measure up are publicly "named and shamed." More recently (echoing developments in this country), the government announced its desire to replace salary raises for teachers with increases based on "merit"—that is, success in raising test scores. Not surprisingly, this is adamantly opposed by the teachers' union, which resists the linking of pay to pupils' performance. Merit pay can only undo the sense of connection among teachers and exacerbate the level of isolation among them—strange notions indeed for a government that represents a movement whose historical watchwords have been solidarity and mutual support.

Of course one also begins to hear complaints, much like those heard here, about the way that schools become obsessively focused on test results so that teaching is more and more oriented to preparing students to take tests. Teachers of young children especially anguish at the role this testing regime has in depriving children of experiences in the arts or other creative or playful activities. Ensuring the transmission of utilitarian skills and information over all else means the loss of that notion of educating the "whole child" in all of its variety and richness. Added to this is the Department of Education's extraordinary level of control over these policies, which includes an unprecedented degree of surveillance over the instructional process. This means managing not only the goals of teaching but the exact allocation of daily time to be spent on aspects of the curriculum, as well as the precise methods to be employed by teachers. Far from dignifying the work of educators, all of this adds up to the de-skilling of their jobs and an intensification of factory-like attitudes and conditions in schools. How far all this is from a Labour ideology, which once spoke to the emancipation and humanization of work.

Educational critics on both sides of the Atlantic have long noted that the emphasis on tests, with their attention to prescribed skills and measurable outcomes, closes off the possibility of educational experiences that encourage reflexivity and the struggle to create personal meaning. The game of finding correct answers to a quiz or a test does little to help young people address the complexities and ambiguities of the real world. Meaningful dialogue and critical reflection have minor roles in the tightly controlled, individually tested, black and white world of what policy makers are so fond of calling "educational excellence." What is at stake here is eloquently expressed by the American educational philosopher Maxine Greene:

> It is through and by means of education, many of us believe that individuals can be provoked to reach beyond themselves in their intersubjective space. It is through and by means of education that they may become empowered to think about what they are doing, to become mindful, to share meanings, to conceptualize, to make varied sense of their lived worlds.

Greene notes that in our hyper-technical culture, where the dominant terms are "effectiveness," "proficiency," "efficiency," and an "ill-defined, one-dimensional excellence," such notions of education become increasingly foreign. She is worth quoting again:

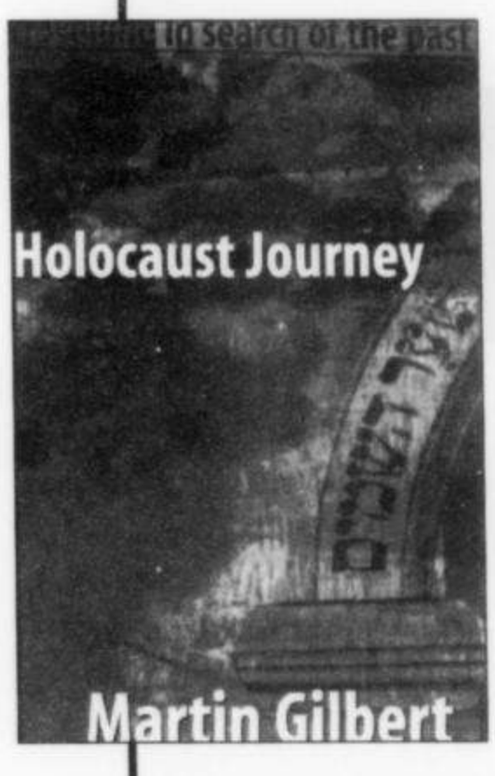
> Reforms or no, teachers are asked to teach to the end of "economic competitiveness" for the nation. They are expected to process the young (seen as "human resources") to perform acceptably on some level of an increasingly systematized world. Of course, exceptions are made for the privileged and talented, for whom multiple and diverse literacies are made available; but, except in cases of hopeless neglect, the major focus is and will be on technical or "coping skills." Whether the students are rich or poor, privileged or deprived, the orientation has been to accommodation, to fitting into existing social and economic structures, to what is given, to what is inescapably *there*.

On both sides of the Atlantic the obsessive focus on economic competitiveness and technical capability has meant an educational vision devoid of anything that speaks to the richness of human possibility. Test scores replace the capacity to reflect and think critically. The measured performance of individuals, schools, and, indeed, of national systems of education are seen, much like the Dow Jones, as the indices of a society's advancement. For New Labour, as much as for New Democrats, little remains of a vision which connects education to the quest for cultures more just, purposeful, or democratic.

There is another dimension of school reform, both in Britain and in the United States, that speaks to the way in which the ideology of the marketplace becomes the template for more and more aspects of public policy. Under the guise of decentralizing authority, individual schools are forced, like firms, to compete against one another for recognition, resources, and even survival. This is most obviously done by the increasing practice of constructing and publicizing "league" tables that rank schools according to their relative success. This tendency has been bitterly criticized by educators because it takes no note of the fact that educational performance and achievement are deeply affected by the type of population attending a particular school. Indeed, it is quite clear that the social and economic character of the students attending a school is the single most important predictor of educational success. Poor test scores, high rates of discipline problems, disproportionate turnover among teachers, and so on are clearly the effects of the social context in which some schools operate. (This correlation between student body and educational success also points to the hidden dangers of Clinton's campaign to end social promotion by instituting more end-of-grade tests. Such policies will further stigmatize the poorest children, further compounding their educational disadvantages relative to their more affluent peers.) It is not unusual to find that the most committed and hard-working teachers and principals, operating in areas of high poverty or social deprivation, find themselves being taken to task for poor results and problem schools.

It is paradoxical indeed that political parties that have historically been the focus for struggles against social and

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economic inequality should promote policies that ignore the fundamental influence of such inequalities in the life of the society and in the success of schools. In the brave new world of the marketplace, in which all concerns are viewed as most effectively approached through the competition of "privatized" or autonomous entities, too many people hold the naïve and misleading belief that achieving success depends on nothing more than individual hard work and commitment. In the case of schools, the work of teachers and local administrators, not social or economic inequities, is regarded as the only real limit on student achievement.

Individual schools have more and more control over less and less of the things that really matter.

As the public sector increasingly resembles the market, so the distinctions between "public" and "private" disappear. Educational "vouchers," open choice plans, "charter schools," and so on will more and more blur the line between state and private schooling. Consumer choice, not equality, becomes the guiding light for policy makers in education. Of course, these policy makers assume that such choices are made with a rough equality of information and awareness, that consumers are equally and rationally able to make decisions that are to their benefit. It is much more likely, however, that already advantaged parents will be able to turn their own knowledge and information into decisions about where to send their kids to school that will keep them ahead in the educational race. Educational researchers have shown that it is the middle- and upper-middle-class parents who are best able to use systems of school choice to the benefit of their own children.

The "third way" politics of New Labour and the New Democrats seems to offer a contradictory attitude towards the state. On the one hand they reject the Left's traditional advocacy of the state over the market as the way to address social and economic concerns. Instead, they offer a historically unprecedented embrace of the marketplace as the way to improve the quality of life. This means a strong belief in neo-liberal or laissez-faire economic policies that deregulate labor markets, allow the free flow of capital and goods around the world, reduce government restrictions on financial institutions, and so on. The Labour government plans no serious reversal of the previous conservative government's wholesale policy of privatization of state industries. Both countries' governments support welfare reform that forces individuals to rely on the market as the means to provide livelihoods rather than depend on social entitlements. In education, the belief in the efficacy of markets has meant that there is support for a decentralizing of administrative structures so that individual schools are treated as relatively autonomous institutions responsible for their own progress. This does mean some movement away from top-down control of school systems in favor of locally governed "site-based" management by teachers and principals.

Paradoxically, however, this weakening of the state's administrative control over everyday matters is accompanied by a simultaneous strengthening of its dominance over many of the things that really shape educational priorities. It is as if individual schools have more and more control over less and less of the things that really matter—especially curriculum and the assessment of students. The Labour government's educational policy prescribes in minute detail curriculum goals for schools in Britain, even including the appropriate methods of classroom instruction. Its White Paper sets out in endless detail the methods of surveillance and supervision that will be installed in order to ensure the accountability of "autonomous schools." And, of course, as in the United States, the move towards increased standardized testing ensures that what is taught in the classroom more and more conforms to set goals and criteria.

All of this tells us a lot, not only about education but, more broadly, the meaning of this political "third way." Even as the state appears to be in retreat, curtailing its role and involvement in social and economic life, in education there has emerged what Michael Apple refers to as the "evaluative state." He notes:

> At the same time as the state appears to be devolving power to individuals and autonomous institutions that are themselves increasingly competing in a market, the state remains strong in key areas. In many ways, this is actually one of the hallmarks of neo-liberalism. Indeed, one of the key differences between classical liberalism and its faith in "enterprising individuals" in a market and current forms of neo-liberalism is the latter's commitment to a regulatory state. Neo-liberalism demands the constant production of evidence that one is in fact "making an enterprise of oneself."

This might help account not only for what is happening in education but also for the explosion in the number of prisons and prison populations in the United States in the last decade. When the "carrot" of education fails to induce those who seem ill-prepared or unwilling to work into the market, the punishment of jail awaits. (Despite widespread reductions in expenditures on human services and on welfare, government has managed to increase spending on prisons by 325 percent since 1980. Since 1992 the four largest states have allocated more than a billion dollars to prison building.) The "third way" celebrates the unprecedented choices opened up by the expansion of the market. It also insists that the individual—or individual enterprises—take responsibility for utilizing the opportunities available. Self-sufficiency and independence, not solidarity or interdependence, are the moral imperatives of the day.



This seeming contradiction of a state that is both neo-liberal and regulatory can, perhaps, be deciphered in other ways as well. Deregulation of markets and the global nature of capitalism increases the uncertainties around jobs and incomes. It creates an enormous sense of anxiety and vulnerability in the lives of many people. In this environment of worry, governments offer policies that reflect what the British sociologist Stuart Hall calls an "authoritarian populism." Such policies appear to counter the social and economic uncertainty by promising stronger regimes of moral discipline. So we have radical reforms of welfare to end the culture of work and sexual irresponsibility; changes in sentencing and policing that vastly increase the numbers behind bars and the severity of their punishments; and school reforms that emphasize learning the "basics" in a very prescribed and hierarchical manner. It is clear that parties of the Left, in order to claim middle-class support, have worked hard at representing themselves as embodying this kind of moral authoritarianism—no less than parties of the Right. This has been a difficult struggle for the Left, centered on trying to separate themselves from what has commonly come to be defined as the moral erosion and laxity of the Sixties and the movements that emerged from them. (Of course this is what makes the sexual scandals swirling around Clinton such a potentially damaging phenomenon for "New" Democrats.)

Andrew Marr, columnist for the British newspaper *The Observer,* has suggested that at the core of Blair's beliefs is a return to nineteenth-century liberalism. His emphasis, he says, is on "personal duty, fiscal rectitude from the state, and above all, education, education, education as the key to social progress." Blair's world is not the socialist one, which was anti-capitalist, relied on collective struggle for progress, and saw state intervention in the economic and social system as indispensable for the making of a more equitable world. While his politics is one that does worry about social exclusion and the erosion of community, in the end he wants less economic regulation and much more reliance on individual responsibility and enterprise. Indeed social and educational policies aim, mainly, to make such individual behavior possible among the greatest number of people.

ILLUSTRATION BY JIM FLYNN

Blair's return to a nineteenth-century model only highlights the failure of the "New" politics to engage the conditions facing human beings at the end of the twentieth century. In this world view, educational policies become a metaphor for the absence of any significant moral, spiritual, or culturally transformative agenda. The enormous emphasis on a meritocracy of successful test-takers ignores the documented influence of social context on who wins and who loses in the arena of classrooms. It is a vision in which politics means more efficient means for constructing hierarchies of achievement rather than challenging growing social inequities and economic deprivation. It is a world in which the highest concerns are effective preparation of job skills and human resources for the marketplace, not the development in the young of the capacity for meaningful participation in a democratic culture. Such a democratic culture would surely seek to question and challenge the enormous concentrations of power and influence in shaping our social world. It would value and encourage relationships that emphasize human connection and interdependence, values that are at least as important as individual responsibility and self-reliance.

The moral and spiritual agenda of this "New" politics is a strangely limited one stuck somewhere between the individualism of a progressive liberalism and the ideology of ever expanding consumption and the unquestioned values of technological growth. It does evidence concern for some of the destructive human and environmental consequences of unrestrained capitalism. Yet there is no call here to any serious reflection on the meaning and direction of human existence in a world in which material resources are so grotesquely misappropriated and human energies so selfishly utilized. Education which is not about encouraging young people to reflect on the meaning and purpose of their lives, but instead emphasizes personal success, jobs, and the unmitigated virtues of high technology, belongs to this new politics of global capitalism. The "third way" may be the best political choice in our present circumstances, but it should not be confused with a serious politics of meaning, or an agenda for transforming the social and economic priorities of our nation or our world. ❑

REFLECTIONS

The Power of an Idea



PHOTOGRAPH BY RON EDWARDS / AP WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

Mario Cuomo

America today is greater than the fondest aspirations of its Founding Fathers. We have the world's largest and most powerful economy and we have been the most generous engine of opportunity, ever. We have saved much of the world from oppression and currently stand as the free world's guardian. We have more billionaires, millionaires, and people who earn over $100,000 a year than ever before. All of this is reason to be grateful; certainly it is not a success to be offended by. But we are not nearly as great as we could be if we *willed* it, if we came together to achieve our full potential as a nation.

Today, as we know, more Americans than ever have made it to the "Shining City on a Hill." But there is a second city in America where the glitter doesn't show and where most Americans live. While 4 percent of our 270 million people earn over $100,000, the average American earns less than $22,000, and the average family less than $37,000. More than forty million of our people are poor. One child in four is raised in poverty, surrounded by the most corrosive aspects of today's culture: drugs, violence, broken families, diminished opportunities.

The gap between rich and poor is wider here than in any other country in the industrial world. Chairmen's wages were once forty times their workers'; now they are two hundred times. Highly skilled workers do well in this country, earning upwards of $90,000 in our high-tech industries. But we import many of those workers from overseas because our schools are not meeting our needs. Indeed just 20 percent of 160 million workers in the United States are highly-skilled, while over 120 million workers are only low- or moderately-skilled. The household incomes of these workers are less today than they were in 1989, while the costs of their health care, higher education, housing, and transportation are higher. There are 43 million Americans who do not have health insurance; they are not poor enough for Medicare and not lucky enough to have employer-provided coverage.

To create the opportunities that 80 percent of our work force begs for, and to fill the jobs American industries have generated, we must improve the education we give to our children. Tougher standards for our school systems, more discipline in the classroom, and increased accountability of administrators and teachers can be accomplished with little or no investment of dollars. It's a hoax, however, to assert that we can improve our education system sufficiently without making *some* additional investments. We need billions to repair school buildings, to provide every child with a computer, to reduce class size, and to hire more teachers. We need to extend our school year from 180 days a year to at least 210 days. We need to make both public and private universities more accessible. We need more federally subsidized loans, apprenticeships for unskilled youths, and vouchers for skills training.

The federal government must provide funds for such initiatives without raising taxes or increasing the deficit. We've found the money before and we can do it again. Ask yourself how we've funded things over the years—during the recession and with budget deficits—things like the space program, the Iraqi conflict, and across-the-board tax cuts. We had money available last year and the year before. And now we're expecting more than $4 trillion in surpluses over the next fifteen years. Where once there were "deficits as far as the eye can see," now there will be surpluses.

With those surpluses, we can do it all: create educational opportunities, provide health insurance, clean our inner cities. If we want to. The real question is: Do we? We must decide what kind of nation we will be. From our founding until 1932, the United States was guided by a philosophy of individualism. God helped those who helped themselves, and the federal government helped only land barons and business magnates. Then, we invented an America to save ourselves from the Great Depression. Franklin Roosevelt marshaled the strength to raise the nation from its knees with the WPA, unemployment insurance, worker's compensation, Social Security. Thirty years later we added Medicare, Medicaid, and civil rights. And now we've wound up as the greatest nation in world history.

President Clinton has said he wants to invest our vast new wealth in helping people help themselves. His political opponents say they would prefer to spend the wealth on across-the-board tax cuts, which would give most of it back to the wealthiest people in America, the people who have and maintain political clout.

Mario Cuomo, the author of numerous books, among which are Reason to Believe, The Diaries of Mario Cuomo, *and* Forest Hills Diary, *was governor of New York from 1983 to 1994.*

In the face of that political power, we'll have to be much stronger as a people. In recent years, although 78 percent of those polled said we were becoming a nation of rich and poor, only 27 percent of those eligible even voted. We have been lulled into accepting lower expectations, replacing Mama's ambition with resignation.

If only we had a heroic figure to show us the way. It might have been Bill Clinton, but it won't be now. In fact, it won't be a hero who brings us together again, for the age of heroes is behind us, perhaps irretrievably. As the song goes, "Where have you gone Joe DiMaggio, a nation turns its lonely eyes to you." The ground is too hard now, too unforgiving to grow heroes. The last time the people of this country locked arms in a grand common cause was World War II. We put aside our differences and threw ourselves entirely into the battle. Our unity made us fantastically strong, and we triumphed. But if we have no hero must we have a crisis or a cataclysm to unite us behind the highest ideals?

The answer is no. What we need is a heroic notion; something clear enough for all of us to recognize, sensible enough for all of us to believe, powerful enough to uplift all of us. Something that's practically sound and morally reassuring.

The idea that could do this is simple and accessible and ancient. It's as old as the cave dwellers clustering together to ward off their enemies, to find food, to raise children. It's the idea that drew thirteen states into the Articles of Confederation and then drew them closer through a Constitution designed to increase the individual strength of each by tying all together. It's the idea that allowed us to conquer the Great Depression, that prompted us to help lift Germany and Japan from their knees after they were defeated in their attempt to destroy us. It's the notion that we are all in this together.

We are all interconnected and interdependent and, therefore, we should each bear our individual responsibilities to work as hard as we can to help ourselves, as a whole. We must share our benefits and burdens. In recent years we have been tempted to believe that sharing is a less-than-worthy democratic exercise. We have been told we cannot help the weakest among us without hurting the strongest of us. We forget that by helping the weakest of us to become self-sufficient, we are all strengthened. If we understand that about our international relationships—with Russia, Brazil, Korea—why can't we understand it about our relationships in the South Bronx, Mississippi, Los Angeles?

While economic and cultural circumstances conspire to drive us apart, isolate us, divide us, we must come together. In the United States we risk being fragmented along lines of race, class, color, religion, and skill level. We must remember and act with the understanding that we are all in this struggle together. We will find our individual good in the good of the whole community. It is simple common sense and practicality. It gives us something real to believe in, something well worth living and fighting for. ❑

Liberating Reproduction *(continued from page 32)*

what you are doing, but do not let it obscure the spiritual importance of your actions.

One final text helped us approach the moment of conception with better spirit. In the traditional wedding ceremony, seven blessings are chanted under the huppah to consecrate the bond between two partners. The fourth of these blessings acknowledges God's choice to form humanity in the Divine Image. This blessing goes even further by acknowledging that God has given human beings the power to create their own perpetuity. God no longer creates human beings—instead, the Holy One has bestowed that power upon men and women. Part of what makes any relationship holy, then, is the assertion that its partners become God-like, capable of creating new life. My wife and I drew upon that text as a blessing to sustain us in our own moment of creation.



With all of this as the backdrop, we approached the creation of a new life. On the day that our clinically fertilized embryos would be placed into my partner's womb, we arrived at the doctor's office and were sent to a small procedure room. After details and paper work, my wife lay down in the hospital bed and the medical staff left us alone. I stood at the foot of the bed and *davened* minchah, the afternoon prayer. Afterwards, we held hands, and talked about the life that we wanted to create. We invited God to send a soul that was compassionate, vivacious, and loving to animate the cells that would soon be slipped into my wife's body. We shifted our attention away from the fog of medical technology and stopped to appreciate the yearning call of creation which enveloped us. Finally, we said this blessing from the wedding ceremony together:

> We stand in awe of Your blessings, our God, for creating man and woman in Your Image, and blessing them with the power to create new life. Bless you, God, for creating human life.

Our ritual closed with a kiss.
Then the staff arrived in sterile scrubs. That was fine.
This time, God had arrived first.

Postscript

In the moment that God blessed our mother Sarah with conception, many others shared in her blessing, and conceived along with her. And many who were wounded found healing.

(Bereishit Rabbah 53) ❑

STATE OF THE WORLD

No Place to Escape

Thom Hartmann

Ever have the fantasy that you could just watch the environment deteriorate without getting personally involved? If so, think about this: in March, it was reported that between 1 and 5 percent of the wild deer and elk in parts of Colorado and Wyoming are infected with a form of transmissible spongiform encephalopathy (TSE), and that percentages were much higher in a few "game farms" where people pay to hunt "wild" animals on fenced ranches. In 1998, for example, 39 out of 179 elk on one game farm were positive for TSE: that's 22 percent. Most Americans are more familiar with the term "Mad Cow disease" for the condition caused by the "contagious proteins," known as prions, which cause TSE and its human version, Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD).

One avid Utah hunter and eater of wild game, Doug McEwen, age thirty, found out about prions the hard way. Infected by CJD, by March he had lost nearly all his bodily functions and memory and was on the edge of death. McEwen was also a blood donor, and his blood and blood products were mixed with numerous others, even after his symptoms first appeared. When this information became public, one of the world's largest pharmaceutical companies announced a recall of many of its blood products collected in Utah. Yet, despite the recall, forty-nine people in Hong Kong hospitals are confirmed to have received blood products possibly contaminated with CJD prions.

In the past few years, TSE has also been found in ranch-raised U.S. sheep and mink, as well as in cattle in England and now Portugal, where the European community recently blocked the export of Portuguese beef because of an explosion of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE or Mad Cow disease) there. Interestingly, during the 9 years from 1989 to 1998 when there were 16 deaths in Utah attributed to CJD, there were 425 attributed to "dementia," a catch-all category which easily includes CJD and Alzheimer's. A Yale study found that 13 percent of Alzheimer's-diagnosed people had actually died of CJD. If just 5 to 10 percent of the millions of Alzheimer's patients in the United States actually have CJD, as this study and another at the University of Pittsburgh suggest, then we may have a very serious problem. While Texas farmers are suing Oprah for discussing such issues, "dementia" is on the increase, both among humans and non-humans in our food chain; Utah alone has over 25,000 people diagnosed with Alzheimer's, meaning there may be over 2,500 cases of CJD in just that state.

CJD is not the only health issue we face with regard to our food supply. Europeans, at least, are just as concerned about the spreading use of synthetic growth hormone. They have also banned the import of non-labeled, U.S.-grown, genetically altered food products, and virtually all U.S.-grown beef products.

The ban on genetically engineered crops in Europe has been particularly galling for U.S.-based multinational corporations. While few Americans realize it, American farm acreage planted with genetically engineered Roundup Ready® soybeans rose from under 1 million acres in 1996 to over 9 million acres—15 percent of the U.S. crop—in 1997. Similarly, the use of Monsanto's Yieldgard® corn rose from around 1 million acres in 1996 to over 6 million in 1997. Two-thirds of all genetically engineered crops being developed and brought to market are modified not to increase yield or climate-hardiness, but to make the plants immune to plant-toxic herbicides such as Roundup®. The effort has been so successful that in 1997 Monsanto manufactured over 26 million pounds of Roundup®, a boon for stockholders.

Industrial waste, along with chemicals sprayed on U.S. crops, end up in waterways that flush into the ocean, where currents then bring them to the Arctic. There, the heavy molecules settle out, entering the food chain in microorganisms that live on the sea floor which flow up the food chain to whales and seals with extraordinary efficiency. A single bite-sized piece of *muktuk*—an Inuit delicacy consisting of raw whale skin and blubber—contains PCB levels which exceed maximum exposure limits for an individual for an entire week. DDT levels in mother's milk among Inuit people are so high that the Canadian government is recommending the Inuit forsake their traditional foods of whale and seal in favor of processed foods brought in by plane from the cities of the South. When I was in Yellowknife last November, an Inuit said to me of this situation, "This could be the beginning of the end of our traditional way of life. The end of our culture."

There is no place to escape. The spiritual recognition that we are all united in One Being is reproduced every day in the harsh realities of growing ecological catastrophe—and no one has a place to hide. ❑

Thom Hartmann is the award-winning author of numerous books, including The Last Hours of Ancient Sunlight *and* The Prophet's Way. *He is a psychotherapist and occasional wood-splitter living in central Vermont.*

SPIRITUAL PATHS

Soul Work

Tamar Frankiel



ILLUSTRATION BY LYNNE FELDMAN

The apparent dichotomy between spirituality and social action stems from a limited understanding of the reality of Soul and God.

God is One. Soul is the manifestation, on the human level, of God in the world. Our individual souls are kaleidoscopic fragments of the collective Soul.

Each act that we do can either reveal the Godliness that is present in us and in the universe or conceal it, maintaining the veils that hide us from our true selves and keep God in hiding. The person who spends hours in meditation can be using that practice positively to discipline his emotions, or negatively to avoid passionate involvement. One who devotes countless hours to political action may be mastering her narcissism by thinking of other people first, or may be using it to fasten her ego more firmly to the satisfaction of achievement.

How do we discover which is the truth in our own situations? The good old-fashioned ways are probably the best: relentless self-examination and listening to those friends and advisors who desire our welfare and are themselves devoted to the highest purposes.

There is no prescription as to which should come first, inner work or outer action. How we were raised, the people we associate with, the tendencies of our society at any given time all influence us in one direction or another. When our inner guidance systems hint that we are out of balance, we may seek an opposite direction.

For example, since I graduated college some thirty years ago, I have moved from social action to intellectual pursuits to immersion in ritual practice and spirituality to marriage and child-rearing (an important form of social action *and* spiritual work) to intense spiritual work combined with teaching and public speaking.

The spiritual work involves using, on a regular if not daily basis, the traditional Jewish prayers as a general framework for prayer, with body movement and meditation. I consider physical exercise an important part of my practice. I use the bedtime prayers to end the day with forgiveness and emotional clearing, examining whatever the day brought and how to understand it. I also track my dreams, writing them down almost daily. On a weekly basis: Shabbat. Regularly: meeting with advisors, friends, other dream-workers to reflect on our own experiences and on what is going on in the world. Most of my time is spent either in family obligations or in writing and teaching. These too are spiritually revelatory and socially transformative.

I have often been judgmental of myself for not being politically involved. However, in recent years, through intense spiritual work on a group level, I have come to recognize that my contributions—usually through teaching or writing—are unique, and the people I influence through these acts will take a piece of my work out into the world. Reciprocally, the work that others are doing in the world affects my thinking and enlarges my awareness.

My spiritual practice has helped me to understand that every event—from the largest political arena to the emotional ripples in my children's lives—reverberates in the collective consciousness. My job is to filter it through what compassion and wisdom I have and to return it to the world in a way that encourages others to evolve in a good direction.

A couple of examples: the August bombings in Kenya and Tanzania could be used to stir up hatred, but my job is to recognize them as a revelation of the state of human consciousness at this moment. When I speak of such events, I try to teach that this kind of act does not advance the human race, and that the insanity of the perpetrators refers us back to a pain and passionate darkness that no one has yet penetrated.

Tamar Frankiel, Ph.D., is a scholar of comparative religion. In the Jewish world, she is best known as a teacher of Jewish mysticism, and as author of The Voice of Sarah *(Biblio, 1995) and co-author of* Minding the Temple of the Soul *(Jewish Lights, 1997).*

SPIRITUAL PATHS

When a world leader is arraigned on charges of sexual or other misconduct, my job is not first of all to take sides, but to understand that this event signals problems on many levels. On one level, it signals problems in social morality because leaders tend to reflect and amplify the level of their followers. On another, we learn that fixing blame and pronouncing judgment has become an obsession on an epidemic level. On still another, the stability of the world is threatened when a person in such a position cannot devote his attention to the well-being of his countrymen and the world. In a global perspective, one can wonder whether the Asian and Russian economic crises stem partly from our country's neglect of larger responsibilities while we fixate on private peccadillos. After all, according to Kabbalah, sex and money are part of the same set of energies!

I have learned that when my child can't sleep at night, it is not just a matter of whether she drank cola or how much activity she had that day. I wonder whether I am being asked to give more attention to sleep and dreams; I ask around to see if other children are having more sleep problems than usual. Children are barometers not only for the family, as systems theorists have taught us, but for all kinds of shifts in energy in the community and the larger world.

It is this multi-leveled consciousness that I think is important for all of us to develop, more and more fully. The action we take will depend on the work we've been given to do—whether it's parenting or heading a modern corporation, doing volunteer work for Jewish organizations or gardening.

I also believe it's extremely important that we develop a practice that enables us to clear ourselves of egotistical preoccupations. Therapy helps us identify our trouble spots, then we have to rid ourselves of them. There are many disciplines that can help, from insight meditation to Breslov *hitbodedut* (making a personal connection with God). I use a process that combines the forgiveness prayer of Jewish tradition with recapitulation (visualization of specific incidents that have an emotional charge). This is essential. Otherwise, we just run the same programs through our lives, over and over again.

Then what about the traditions of religious practice we have inherited? For me, this has been a *sine qua non*. If I hadn't adopted a personal discipline in my private life, if I weren't motivated to have times for prayer and meditation, I couldn't have moved forward at all. Of course, there is room for critique of received teachings. And each person has to re-weave the strands of tradition into his/her unique configuration. It seems to me a waste of energy, however, to start from zero and try to create an ethic for today's society instead of building on what is there already. Collectively, our tradition provides an important groundwork. By building upon its foundation and demonstrating our commitment to creating the divinely-inspired society envisioned by our ancestors, we can more intelligently and appropriately lead our communities, our nation, and the world into the next stage. ❑

PUBLISHER'S NOTES *(continued from page 5)*

Ginsberg was unimpressed by Podhoretz' poetry. Also undisputed is that Podhoretz became a virulent public critic of the Beats, including Ginsberg and Kerouac, and that Ginsberg, understandably, resented the attacks.

As Podhoretz preposterously tells it, Ginsberg "did crave my approval of his work, and even of his 'lifestyle.'" Ginsberg was indeed a brilliant and relentless self-promoter, but only in service of art and ideas for which he craved no approval but his own. He did not hesitate to disagree with Abbie Hoffman et al. about the Chicago protest, and brought as much passion to his Brooklyn College course on William Blake as he did to any talk-show appearance.

Allen told me that he had indeed imagined Podhoretz' voice in his head when he was framing political arguments. To him, Podhoretz represented the intellectual opposition to much of what Allen believed in; he felt if he could sharpen his ideas against what he imagined Podhoretz would say, he would be well-armed to deal with all other opponents. As a Buddhist who believed in love and forgiveness, Allen struggled with his demonization of Podhoretz, and decided to define him in his mind as a "teacher" since Podhoretz' opposition, real and imagined, strengthened his clarity and conviction. Allen mentioned this in a couple of interviews in the last decade of his life and contacted Podhoretz, whom he had not seen in almost forty years, but Podhoretz refused to see him.

Podhoretz' explanation is that he could "not forgive" what Allen had done to the culture, blaming him, apparently, for the normalization of homosexuality, and a rebellious spirit which, to Podhoretz, had poisoned the culture. But perhaps Podhoretz refused to meet him because he was afraid he would like him and thus put at risk his own identity which so obviously has become defined not by his beliefs but by his enemies.

More surprising than Podhoretz' dyspeptic take on his literary betters is the critical legitimization of his perspective. *Time Magazine*'s Lance Morrow was perhaps the most outrageous, writing, "Ginsberg seemed to have a fixation on Podhoretz—possibly because he suspected that Podhoretz had his number as a personality-poet camouflaging mediocrity." Like Salieri belittling Mozart to the royal court, Podhoretz and Morrow only sully their own place in history.

Artists always have the last word. For a window into Allen's true spirit in his latter days, I suggest reading the wonderful volume of his last poems, *Death and Fame*.

When City Light Books was prosecuted in 1957 under obscenity laws for publishing Ginsberg's *Howl,* the prosecutor, Ralph McCintosh, engaged in the following colloquy with literary critic and *Howl* defender Mark Schorer.

MCCINTOSH: Do you understand what "angel-headed hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly dynamo in the machinery of night" means?

SCHORER: Sir you can't translate poetry into prose. That's why it's poetry. ❑

SPIRITUAL PATHS

Renewing Jewish Spirituality

Michael Ziegler



ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID BALL

Secular American Jews have not inherited a spiritually satisfying Judaism that integrates the celebration of ritual, the study of Jewish wisdom traditions, and the contemplative prayerfulness of a community—the kinds of practices, in short, that are the baseline containers of any spiritual culture. Despite this absence of any meaningful contact with an embodied sacred Jewish culture, however, many assimilated Jews still identify with their religious and cultural heritage and search for deeper insight into their souls. These seekers have increasingly turned to offerings of Jewish meditation and spirituality.

Traditionally, Jewish spiritual seekers deepened their contemplative process only after having mastered the rudiments of normative practice and rabbinical learning. Today, however, when the experiences of personal meaning and context supersede the structures of tradition, the requirement for directly-felt personal religious experience precedes the impulse to learn the fundamentals of the religious idiom. Unwittingly, many spiritual seekers have internalized the standards they have come to expect from popular media culture; in the emerging spiritual marketplace, having a "spiritual experience" has become just another consumable that competes for attention with other entertainment options.

That's not what meditation or spiritual practice is about. Meditation requires a deeper commitment. It provides a context for an individual to become an inner, silent witness to the flow of consciousness in the mind, the feelings of the body, and the mystery of the cosmos. The watcher is not identified with his or her actions, thought, or emotions, but instead is an awareness, an attentive presence to the directly-felt experience of being. If this practice sounds like other meditative practices, that's because the experience of meditation and contemplative awareness is a universal phenomenon and is not inherently Jewish. In fact, contemplative awareness is not dependent on a particular religious form. A particularly Jewish meditative practice arises because, when Jewish contemplatives leave their inner world, they need to communicate their experience, to embody it and to transmit it to others in a manner that can be understood by their community. Judaism's religious language, poetry, and music are important containers to communicate these experiences.

Jewish contemplative practice must constantly struggle for survival at the margins of the dominant, extroverted American Jewish paradigm. Because the Jewish contemplative seeker is focusing on his or her inner life while the dominant model is focused on the elements of physical and cultural survival, Jewish seekers can feel a dissonance between their path to renewal and the community they seek to renew. Too often this dissonance creates an increased sense of loneliness and isolation that the very process of spiritual practice was intended to alleviate. Some Jewish

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seekers respond to that by turning to secular American contemplative traditions, such as those emerging from Buddhism, in order to gain access to their inner lives with a built-in community of practitioners. Others, unfortunately, are led by that sense of isolation away from the inner work of contemplative practice and towards some consumer-based "Judaism lite" that will produce an immediate emotional response without any grounding in either normative practice or contemplative experience.

The downside of most of the current offerings in Jewish meditation and spirituality is that, though they purport to offer the seeker a door into contemplative experience, they are really just cleverly packaged offerings of "Jewish Spirituality Lite." We must be honest in saying that most of these offerings in Jewish spirituality, meditation, and Kabbalah are intellectual venues to talk about the subject rather than experience it. Worse still, many of those leading classes in contemplative practice are not qualified because of their own lack of experience. We have very few qualified teachers or venues where people can deepen their practice. We are not helping matters when we discourage seekers through the shallowness of our offerings. Many assimilated Jews who have had a depth of contemplative experience which they developed outside of the Jewish community, and who then come to connect with a similar experience in Judaism, are amused by the offerings they find.

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In order for a contemplative Jewish spiritual renewal to take root in America, teachers and students will have to commit themselves to participate collectively in deepening the Jewish context for contemplative practice. Most of the skilled teachers who will emerge will have gained their contemplative experience outside of the Jewish context, but will be people who find themselves deeply engaged to share connections between their inner world and their Jewish community and its traditions and poetry. We are just beginning to develop new modalities of meditation and a means of presentation that have a particularly Jewish fragrance, and that are not just practicing Zazen while wearing a *tallis* (prayer shawl). The trend to resurrect old kabbalistic meditation techniques from the Middle Ages so that we might claim an authentic Jewish contemplative tradition is not how this will be accomplished. If we are seeking to cultivate contemplative awareness, then our constant quibbling over the religious purity of our contemplative technologies in our postmodern world misses the point. It doesn't matter if a meditation practice was developed by a Jew, or a Buddhist, or a Taoist. What matters for Jewish contemplative practice is that we are cultivating awareness, and providing a supportive Jewish context to share this experience. I suggest that the emerging Jewish contemplative practice will integrate traditional Jewish modes of prayer, music, art, and community with the refined contemplative techniques of American Buddhist practice and transpersonal psychology.

It goes against the current trend to suggest to seekers that entertaining spiritual experiences and intellectual stimulation alone do not constitute an inner journey of soul discovery. Watching a Jewish-themed movie or even reading the latest scholarship on the Kabbalah is not enough. What I suggest is that people commit to contemplative practice for five days or longer outside of normative culture and then continue to cultivate this sensibility in their daily lives. Because that sort of internal journey can be difficult and isolating for new practitioners, we will need more Jewish retreat centers where Jews can go to immerse themselves deeply in prayer and contemplative practices in a place where they will be surrounded by other seekers like themselves.

I am not arguing that contemplative practice is the only way to investigate spirituality. I do maintain, however, that unless Jewish spirituality is grounded in a patient and deep investigation of the soul through a contemplative practice, it is unlikely that it will deliver on either its potential or its promise. The exchange and convergence between those assimilated Jews who have already mastered different modalities of contemplative and spiritual practices and are seeking to deepen their Jewishness, and those committed Jews who have a rich sense of community and the language of Jewish practice and who are seeking a means to go deeper into their souls, is our best hope for generating a new model of Jewish spiritual renewal. ❑

Spirituality without God

Sharon Welch

I am a mystic, a political activist, and an atheist—an odd combination, I grant, but one that I come to naturally. I was raised in a religious tradition in which spirituality was inextricably bound with politics, in which the motive for prayer and service was not guilt or duty, but living fully, deeply, and well. For my parents and grandparents and many members of their churches, life was spirituality and spirituality was life. Service and belief in God did not require sacrifice of individual will, aspirations, or intellect—such religious practice was, rather, the chance to live out the best of one's talents in response to nature, to people, to the particular opportunities for beauty and justice in one's immediate world. Spirituality was that which brought us into full engagement with the world around us.

For my parents, this work took many forms—serving as pastors, church administrators, farmers, activists in the liberal wing of the Democratic party, members of the hospital board, leaders of programs to empower teenagers. It was always fascinating to see what new avenues for activism and service they discovered. Their work was filled with laughter, exuberance, and a delightful absence of fanaticism or self-righteousness. While their political activism and work in the church was grounded in a clear sense of the divine, they were aware that they could be wrong, that it was possible to feel led by the spirit and to misinterpret that leading. They brought two basic criteria, both collective, to their private and communal spirituality: 1) Do these spiritual practices and experiences make us more loving? Do they help us see the worth of everyone? and 2) Do these experiences change how we live?

I remember my fascination as a teenager with tales of angels. When I left for college in 1971, one of the stories being commonly told was of people picking up a hitchhiker, the hitchhiker telling them that Jesus would soon return to earth, and then the hitchhiker disappearing. I told my father about these stories, sure that he would be thrilled at the announcement of the imminent return of the messiah. His response was measured and clear. "Well, Sharon, I don't know if the people really saw an angel or not. What I would want to know is this—did that encounter change their life? Did it make them a better person?"

At this point in my life, I don't believe in God. I know of no concepts, symbols, or images of God, Goddess, gods, or divinity that I find intellectually credible, emotionally satisfying, or ethically challenging in the face of evil and the complexity of life. I do know, however, of spiritual practices that do change our lives, that help us see where we are wrong, that propel us to work for justice, that provide a sense of meaning and joy. For my parents and their community, such solace and challenge could be found in daily prayer, in preparing and giving sermons, in individual and collective study and worship, and in physical work with other people—building cabins at the church campgrounds, cooking, cleaning, working together on the concrete tasks that sustain us physically.

Spirituality was that which brought us into full engagement with the world around us.

For me, the same purposes of awareness and gratitude are served through meditation, dance, hearing live music (especially jazz), teaching ethics, and, like my parents, manual labor with and for other people. Spiritual openness may be sustained by intense physical activity and evoked by meditative awareness. These practices do not guarantee, however, that we will act justly. Profound experiences of connection and spiritual ecstasy can easily fuel self-righteous certainty and exclusivity. But these same experiences may also provide the connections with other people and with nature that motivate us to work for justice, honoring that nature, those people we respect. These practices can enable us to learn where we are wrong in our strategies and actions, can teach us to learn from criticism, and help us to gain the courage to act on our ideals.

There are spiritual practices that are intellectually credible, emotionally comforting, and ethically challenging, habits of individual and collective attention, meditation, reflection, and physical ecstasy that can sustain us as we work for justice, that can promote joy and resilience in the face of life's challenges. I don't think that life makes sense, but I do know that there can be joy and wonder in the service of beauty and justice. As I told my father shortly before his death, "You don't have to believe in God in order to serve God." ❑

Sharon Welch is a professor of religious studies and women's studies at the University of Missouri-Columbia and author of A Feminist Ethic of Risk *and* Sweet Dreams in America: Making Ethics and Spirituality Work.

AN INTERVIEW WITH FRANK RICH *(continued from page 56)*
people hate about the 1960s. It's kind of preposterous. It's like if you hated Elvis Presley, choosing Dick Clark as the person to focus on. I'm not a Clinton fan, but he's just not worthy of the kind of hatred that everyone has for him. It's disproportionate to his worst transgressions.

NEWFIELD: In your column, you highlighted the Sally Quinn side of the story, summarizing the Washington establishment's hatred of Clinton.

RICH: That's about Washington. I have very strong feelings about Washington as a place. I really feel Washington as a culture is totally non-ideological. Rather, it is a culture that's about being in the club. They don't like people who are not part of the club. As someone who grew up in Washington but whose parents were not in government—my father was a Jewish merchant who sold shoes to Mrs. Calvin Coolidge—I was very aware of that even as a kid. Just as a reader of the *Washington Post* and the *Times Herald,* as it then was, I was aware of this community—of the Alsops, the Krafts, certainly the Grahams, and ultimately Ben Bradley and Sally Quinn. It's a snotty group and Clinton came in from outside. He was this Arkansas guy who had not been in Congress and who didn't know the local mores and I think he pissed people off by not kissing their asses.

Clinton's hardly an exemplar of the Ken Kesey LSD generation. Even his taste in Sixties music, I would say, is extremely suspect.

NEWFIELD: But as you've written, that has to do with the moral superiority of the Washington culture over this white trash hillbilly.

RICH: The Washington elite is a kind of WASPy hunt club. There are Jews in it, but it is a kind of WASPy country club establishment that doesn't want a hick from a blue collar background. Look, we forget it now, but these people didn't like Jimmy Carter either. Jimmy Carter could not be more different than Bill Clinton. But to them Jimmy Carter was also like a piece of lint, you know, someone who was not really worthy of being at a dinner party....

NEWFIELD: Let me change the subject a little bit and get your opinion about Elia Kazan receiving an Oscar for lifetime achievement. Should there be some ideological tests for recognizing creative or artistic contributions?

RICH: In the case of Kazan, there's no question that he's a great artist, both in theater and in movies. Now, in retrospect—or not in retrospect—we realize that a lot of people in Hollywood who supported the Communist party, for whatever reasons, were supporting one of the worst totalitarian regimes in recorded history. In most cases it was innocently, but not in all. They may have done it in a kind of silly Hollywood way. They weren't the Rosenbergs. But those who genuinely felt that they should renounce Communism once they figured out what Stalinism was, and did it early, should not necessarily be punished now.

So, that Kazan became an anti-Communist is to his credit. The naming names part of it remains reprehensible because the fact is that he did destroy the careers of some people who may not even have been Communists. They were friends of his that he just turned on and I feel he did it for opportunistic reasons. The fact of the matter is that he could have kept working, *he* was someone who wasn't really threatened by the blacklist. There was no blacklist to speak of for Broadway, but he wanted to have his movie career too. I feel he did a very dishonorable thing. Should he receive the award? I don't have any objection, I don't attach much importance to awards anyway.

NEWFIELD: How do you feel about what Larry Flynt has been doing? Do you think that exposing members of Congress who've had affairs just allows the invasion of privacy or is it a fair exposure of right-wing hypocrisy?

RICH: I don't like any of this exposure business. But what I find refreshing about Larry Flynt is that he doesn't pretend to be anything other than a scumbag. He says, "I'm a pornographer. I want to bring down the hypocrites in Congress. I love Bill Clinton. I want to derail the impeachment process and so I'm gonna do this scuzzy thing."

Only in the moral universe we've been in over this past year does that seem slightly preferable to the investigator with $40 million who says it's out of some great constitutional duty that he has to get into the sex life of the president of the United States and use the entire force of the federal government to investigate it. At least Flynt's honest about what he's doing.

NEWFIELD: You've had a lot of fun recently with the word "bloviate." Would you name the top bloviators in public life, the arts, the media, in politics?

RICH: Bill Bennett is at the top of my list. Then Henry Hyde, Cokie Roberts, David Broder of the *Washington Post,* Charlton Heston. I would also include Dr. Laura Schlesinger, David Gergen, Senator Joseph Lieberman, and Kathy Lee Gifford.

NEWFIELD: All columnists I know, including myself, have a kitchen cabinet of four or five friends who we go to for private scoldings, reality checks, or second opinions. Who do you go to when you ask, "Should I write this? Should I get into this?"

RICH: First of all my wife, Alex Witchell, who doesn't write about any of these subjects but is a reporter at the *Times*. Michiko Kakutani, a colleague who was a close friend of mine at *Time* and now here. Lately, I've talked a lot to Jonathan Reynolds, a playwright, whose politics are very conservative but with whom I'm in pretty regular touch.

NEWFIELD: What do you get from the kitchen cabinet as a columnist?

RICH: Probably the same thing you do. First of all I get things I might have missed. People say "Why aren't you writing about Kazan?" Actually Jonathan did that. I thought, "Yeah, right. I saw that news story," and it hadn't clicked in my head as a possible column idea. I didn't get to it, actually, I got sidetracked. But they say, "I really disagree with you about this," and I get to hear the counter argument.

NEWFIELD: You've made intolerance of homosexuality a strong theme in your column. Why? I can't think of any other major columnist like you who comes back to intolerance again and again.

RICH: I feel gays have become ground zero for bigotry right now. It's still the most predominant, accepted form of bigotry. It's a kind of bigotry that doesn't have to even be hidden—leaders in Congress can describe it as an illness that must be cured, or a sin against God. And no one says boo about it.

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NEWFIELD: Do you think if Armey's slur of Barney Frank had been about another group it would have created a much bigger firestorm?

RICH: Yes. What if he had said Barney Kike instead of Barney Fag? I think there would have been quite a different response. I think my interest in homophobia is in part a natural outgrowth of my interest in civil rights and my interest also in the far right in general. It's connected.

NEWFIELD: Intolerance connects anti-Semitism, homophobia, and the right wing?

RICH: Right, and it's usually the same people. Jerry Falwell calls for gay people to be cured and calls them sinners and then he's also the one who says that the anti-Christ is going to be a Jewish male. It's part of the same syndrome to me. In some cases it's the same people who once were publicly racist about black people and are less likely to be so, or to show that, now.

I never really thought much about gay civil rights at all until I was confronted with it on my previous beat, as a drama critic. I was theater critic for the *Times* in a period when the AIDS epidemic happened. And it forced me, like many people, to first of all cover that as a story, even in an indirect way. The fact was that people in the theater were getting sick and dying, and subsequently there were people writing plays about the politics of gay people in America—connected to AIDS or not. And that was a real eye opener for me. As I switched into this job, those issues were still very much with me. I began to see how they played out in a larger public arena that went way beyond the New York theater.

What I didn't reckon on was that the Right would turn gay-bashing into sort of a calling-card issue, and that's happened while I've been on the column. One theory has it that what used to be the calling-card issue, abortion, another issue I've covered, has faded for fundraising reasons. The trumped-up crusade over partial birth abortion has fallen flat because every time a law has been passed on the state level, the local court has thrown it out. That's come to a dead end, so they go after gay people to raise money.

NEWFIELD: Do you think it's effective politically?

RICH: I think, as the cliché goes, it's effective with their base. It is effective for raising money, it is effective for getting people angry. Is it a recipe for winning national elections? Absolutely not. I think the country is way ahead of the Right on this issue. I think most people are tolerant. And most people, including some conservative Republicans who are not part of the far Right, believe what happens in people's private lives is their own business and that it's not the government's job to regulate.

But the problem is that even if no one is going to be elected president by bashing gay people, in fact we have seen a rise in hate crimes. People are angered by this rhetoric that stokes the fire of hate because it plays out when some kid is beaten up somewhere. That cannot be ignored.

NEWFIELD: Do you think there was an appropriate response in the national media to the murder of Matthew Shepard?

RICH: Yes and no. I felt the response was spotty. Of the two issues the national media really has trouble dealing with, one is religion in general. Most of the national media really still don't quite know what to do with religion. For instance, because I've learned a lot about the religious right it bothers me when it's assumed that all evangelical Christians are part of the religious right. They're not. There are plenty of evangelical Christians who are not bigots, who live and let live, who are very good people.

Homosexuality is another issue that throws the national media for a loop. They just don't quite understand it. They may not know enough people; people who write about these issues don't often know openly gay people. We have a privileged view living in New York and traveling to the cities we travel in. So it's just off. It's not mean spirited. With Matthew Shepard's murder, I felt some of the coverage was quite good, including most of the major newspapers and magazines; but some of it was off. Particularly on TV. Some people made an effort. *The Today Show* I remember made a particular effort. But the Sunday morning talk shows, I found they didn't really want to deal with it. The response just was, "Oh it's terrible. How horrible." But no one wanted to look at the politics of it or look at it in any detail.

NEWFIELD: Thank you. ❑

Short Takes

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

Harper's

Arthur Miller parses the critical terms for Broadway plays in the March issue of *Harper's*. The current commercial requirements of a Broadway production, combined with the dominance of the *New York Times'* theater critics, result in two trends: the marginalization of stylistic innovation to small, off-Broadway venues; and confusion in the language used to critique (and so make or break) a production. For the critics, Miller writes, "'Experimental' is attractive; 'traditional' is not." According to Miller, a Broadway play's success depends on monikers like "dreamlike" and "metaphorical," a production's veneer of innovation being more important than its affective impact. (Miller does not give examples, a problem considering the recent success of straightforward plays like *A Doll's House*.) He concludes that "stylization in the theater will be justified not by its novelty … but by the degree to which it illuminates how life works in our time."

The Atlantic Monthly

Tracy Kidder's quiet story of a small-town cop leads *The Atlantic Monthly's* April issue. The cop is Tommy O'Connor, born and bred in Northampton, Massachusetts, a boy who wrote on his closet wall, "Tom O'Connor September 29, 1972. I want to be a policeman. I am in sixth grade." Kidder juxtaposes O'Connor's sense of purpose and place with the distance a cop must have to see the streets he patrols. Tommy's grace and compassion make him the kind of policeman we think we lost to the good old days. In a typical scene, he warns a wheelchair-bound junkie to avoid bags marked "C-smack" because it's lethal. He says, "I haven't had the heart to bust him. I don't know. If I was in a wheelchair, I might take heroin too."

American Prospect

In the March/April *American Prospect,* James Fallows susses out how The Monica Story got so bloated. He begins with this gruesome point: "Monica dominated coverage more completely than Watergate did until its final months, and more than the Vietnam War did throughout most of the 1960s." Fallows claims journalists failed to prioritize stories emerging from the affair, the essence of a journalist's job. Walking us through the press' downward trends, such as its tendency to report lazily and to make itself the story, he suggests the press could become just another "content provider," filling the space between commercials with engaging tidbits. But, he also thinks there is still hope. First, because after the initial rush, some in the media did shape up and do a better job. And second, because those dominating the pundit-circuit are, quite frankly, ready to retire. A few statistics: William Safire, seventy. Cokie Roberts, fifty-six. Sam Donaldson, sixty-five. And that *enfant terrible* Maureen Dowd? She's just turned forty-seven.

Utne Reader

The March/April *Utne Reader* brings us a long section on "Forgiveness: And Other Myths in an Age of Apology." Leading it off is a meditation by family therapist Molly Layton (originally in *Family Therapy Networker*) on the stages and nature of forgiving. Using the breakup of her own thirty-year marriage as a starting point, Layton outlines the movement from loss to injury to obsession, and finally to transcendence (or forgiveness). For Layton, true forgiveness is textured. She writes, "There is nothing about genuine forgiveness that precludes holding people accountable if we have that power.… To forgive means, literally, to give up—to give up hatred, revenge, punishment, hard payment of a hard debt." Layton's is not the newest lesson, but it is one well worth revisiting.

Lingua Franca

Lingua Franca's March issue features a profile of Wilhelm Reich by Hal Cohen. Cohen traces Reich's strange career, starting from Freud's inner circle and ending with Reich's own imprisonment in Pennsylvania. Where Freud believed that neuroses gave rise to physical tension, Reich believed the reverse. His therapy consisted of deep breathing and physical contact to facilitate the release of tension, with the ultimate release being the (heterosexual) orgasm. While his hands-on, orgasm-centered therapy influenced the work of Saul Bellow, Norman Mailer, Allen Ginsberg, and William Burroughs, Reich also was read by social theorists such as Erich Fromm, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Gilles Deleuze, and Félix Guattari for his synthesis of Freud and Marx. Reich argued that repressive forces in society succeed because they simultaneously promise violent release and suppress the drive that the masses most fear in themselves—sexuality. Unfortunately, because he later became obsessed with finding the "orgone," a scientifically-quantifiable force that he believed powered the orgasm and creativity, his earlier work has too often been forgotten. ❑

BOOK REVIEW

Legacy of Pain

Janet Burstein



- *Second Hand Smoke,* by Thane Rosenbaum. St. Martin's Press, 1999.

Like travelers on the eve of departure, we stand at the edge of millennial change wondering which fragments of the past we should pack. We are sometimes encouraged to move on without the heavy memories. Zygmunt Bauman (TIKKUN July/August 1998), for example, argues that memories of the Holocaust, like extra shoes that wrinkle other things in the suitcase, threaten to distort values more appropriate to present needs. But historians and psychologists counsel otherwise. Theorists since Freud insist that a traumatic past can't be mastered until we mourn it. And the process of mourning moves slowly, requiring us not only to clarify what has been lost, but also to achieve critical distance from our loss, and to realize through our feelings the anguish of losing. To some extent, this work belongs to all Jews who come after the Holocaust, for both the collective identity that we share with victims and survivors and the culture that sustains us as Jews are marked, now, by that event.

Writers of the second generation can help us to read those markings. TIKKUN's literary editor, Thane Rosenbaum, is one such writer. He has now published the second in a trilogy of works that reflect, from the perspective of survivors' children, the landscape of the damaged post-Holocaust world. His first work, *Elijah Visible,* wrote large the psychological dysfunctions that mark such a child's experience in a world whose brokenness accounts for many of Rosenbaum's narrative techniques. Mindful of the sharp edges presented by shards of that experience, Rosenbaum's new novel, *Second Hand Smoke,* recalls Kafka's belief that the works we need are like an axe, to break the frozen sea inside us. This novel applies more delicate instruments to the defenses we build against memories of the Holocaust. But one feels the assault nonetheless.

Perhaps the most painful element of Rosenbaum's new novel is the mother of its male protagonist, who reconfigures our image of the destructive Jewish mother. A woman profoundly damaged by her experience of the camps, determined to pass on what that experience has taught her, Mila abandons and disfigures one child, and emotionally cripples the other. Memory, the narrator says, is the "true curse of her life." It enlarges to grotesque proportions in her what all parents feel: the desire to pass on the significant lessons of their own lives.

Mila teaches Duncan, her American son, what she learned in Auschwitz: to fight, to be hard, to be alone. Wishing him to know pain so that it will never unman him, she will not allow the *mohel* to offer him the traditional sop of wine at his circumcision. Enraged by her tutelage, he will spend himself pursuing and prosecuting Nazis. Before Mila abandons Isaac, her Polish infant—in a scene so powerfully written that it leaves one shaken—she marks his flesh with her own numbers from the *lager.* The narrator, watching, knows that as she nurses the baby to still his screams, he will take in with his "mother's milk" the "fateful kiss of second hand smoke" from the chimneys at Auschwitz.

A feminist reader will quickly identify Mila as one of the harsh, castrating mothers who disfigure Western literature from Grimm to Disney and Philip Roth. But the identification is mistaken. Mila has been shaped by forces undreamt of in earlier literature. Before Auschwitz one could understand maternal monsters by taking into account the psychological, structural, and gendered givens of individual development and family life. For example, theorists like Nancy Chodorow and Dorothy Dinnerstein have explained that when children need to grow beyond infantile helplessness, they transform the primary caretaker—read "mother" in this culture—into the threatening figure who stands over them like Mrs. Portnoy with a bread knife, compelling them to eat their oatmeal. A different insight, from Jessica Benjamin, suggests that this culture allows men to act upon their own desires but encourages women to become the objects of male desire. Thus, for the child who wishes to be subject rather than object of desire, mother becomes a negative model. Neither of these theoretical insights, however, helps one to understand Mila Katz.

Rosenbaum's fictional mother diverges even more radically from the models of inadequate or destructive mothering offered by earlier American Jewish literature. For immigrants like Anzia Yezierska, for example, the mother carried the stigma of her traditional subordination to patriarchal imperatives of service and submissiveness. In later stories by Edna Ferber and

ILLUSTRATION BY OENONE TERRILL

Author of Writing Mothers, Writing Daughters: Tracing the Maternal in Stories by American Jewish Women, *Janet Burstein is Professor of English at Drew University. She is presently at work on a book about the new wave of American Jewish writers.*

Fannie Hurst, rejected mothers transmit ethnic qualities that the culture devalued and their children wished to lay aside. Since the Sixties, the bad mother has often been defined by her behavior toward men: whether she depends on them to "complete" herself (as in *Fear of Flying*), or strenuously liberates herself from their authority (as in *The Autobiography of My Mother*), or both (as in *Eve's Apple*), her children fear and fly from her as a secondary creature. Because she is always the first beloved, however, there is no clean getaway; her image usually needs to be disfigured before it can be cast off.

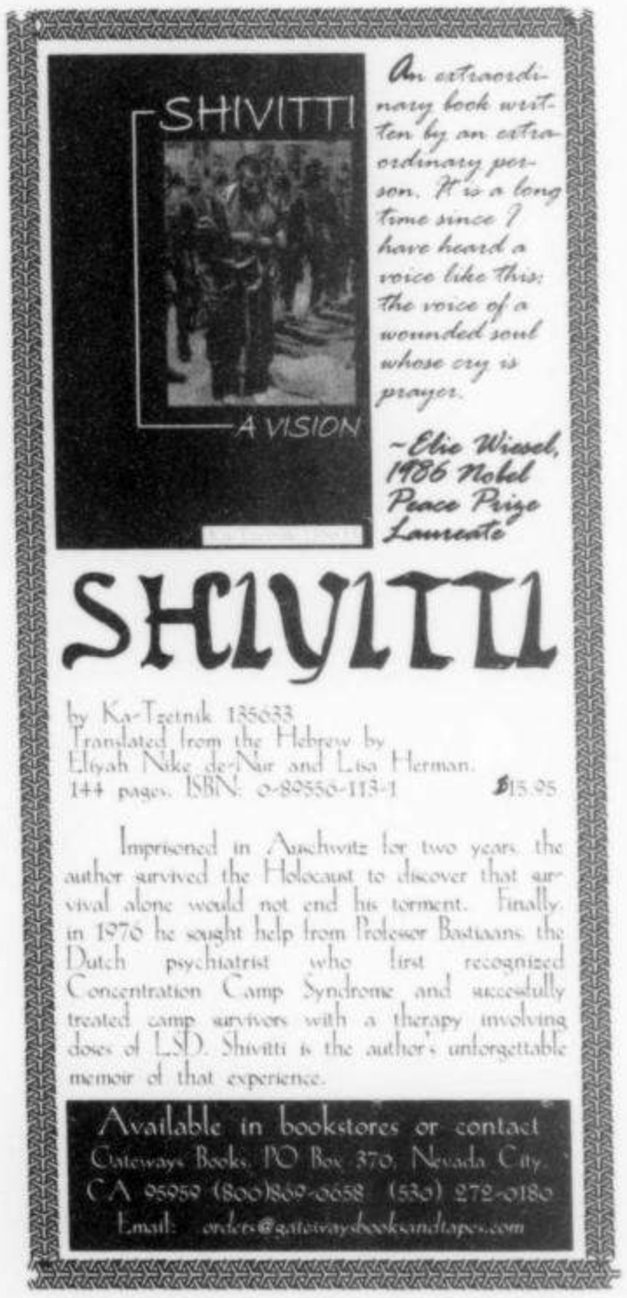
But the point of Rosenbaum's portrayal inscribes an entirely different awareness. After Auschwitz, even the monstrous mother looks different. Mila has been rendered destructive not by any reflex of infantile dependence; not by patriarchy, gender or tradition; and not by cultural devaluation. She has survived extermination. And it has deformed her. The deformity, like the lengthened claws of an armored creature adapting to a dwindling food supply, becomes her most powerful legacy to her children.

The novel will insist on the complexity of her maternal legacy. Duncan's body, beautifully formed and carefully trained, masks an intestinal system so vulnerable that he drinks Donnatal like water. But Isaac, whose vulnerability is exposed in both the numbers tattooed on his arm and the rounded softness of his body, develops a spirit made strong, loving, and resilient by early suffering. Where Duncan excels at karate, Isaac becomes a master of yoga.

Beneath these differences, however, the novel suggests deeper likenesses that both sons owe, in part, to Mila's legacy. Duncan's tenderness toward his child unconsciously mimics his mother's carefully concealed gestures of devotion to him. And Isaac's ability to confront and minister to his brother's hidden pain recalls qualities that Auschwitz has not wholly extinguished in his mother. Having won at poker large sums of money from other patients in a hospital, Mila returns the wager of a young boy who has lost his arm in an accident. She shows him her own arm, tattooed in Auschwitz. When the boy says, bitterly, he "would rather have your arm than the one I am missing," Mila responds: "I know. It would be better. You are young; this should not have happened to you." This response neither masks her pain nor minimizes his. Removing from Mila the heavy burden of maternal responsibility, the writer reveals a woman rendered empathic by guilt and her own suffering. Another critic might call this moment "redemptive." For me it signals the power of this young writer to move through the perspective of the hurt child toward clearer perception of the wounded parent. As he lets go the pain and rage of Mila's children, his novel achieves a moment of critical insight and tenderness toward her that reshapes our image of the survivor-mother and makes mourning possible.

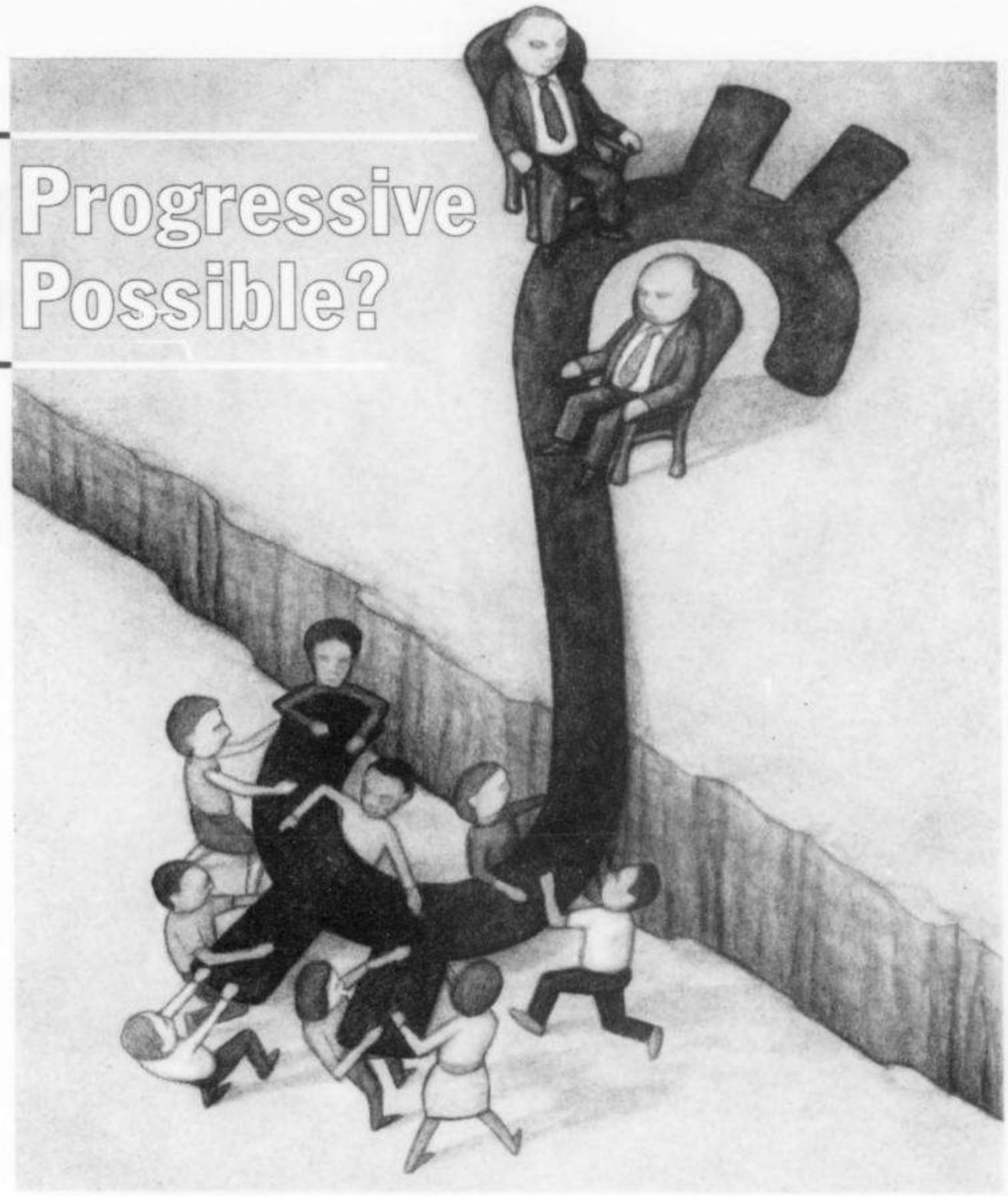
Even Mila's spirituality survives in Isaac, though the novel both recognizes and mourns her longing for a protective power sufficient to the brutality of the world she has known. In other ways as well, the novel furthers the work of mourning by clarifying the residual deformations and fractures that litter post-Holocaust experience. Linearity, for example, has virtually disappeared from this text. The story artfully breaks chronology to accommodate memories that open out from present moments, overlapping immediate experience with flashbacks—without transitions to smooth the way. Perhaps after Auschwitz, where so many were lost, the logic of a human life lies not in the consecutiveness of its moments but in the ways those moments recall, or edit, or unravel their predecessors: Mila loses her son's picture when border guards block her escape from Poland; Duncan loses his daughter's picture when border guards block his return to "the forbidden motherland."

One could call this work with time "mythic," remembering the power of cycles and repetition in myth and the necessity of return to places of origin. Even the somber consolations of myth—without which mourning would never end—gleam in this waste of scarred and broken spirits. Despite the pain of Mila's experience, Rosenbaum's deftness with metaphor delivers a world often saturated with meaning. And his faithfulness to the simple givens of the natural world accompanies these metaphoric moments of vision, offering—like the Anselm Kiefer painting that breeds poppies out of the dead land—the surprise of consolation, even of hope. Where words still carry meaning, still deliver fragments of what Henry James called "felt life" in the world, anything seems possible. On the level of plot, one might say that healing becomes possible for the American brother as he moves beyond rage, spiritually anchored in the Polish brother whose own healing began long ago. But for readers the novel realizes another possibility: reshaping emotional awareness of collective experience, readying memory for the long work of mourning. ❑



BOOK REVIEW

Is a Progressive Future Possible?



Gar Alperovitz

- *Corporation Nation: How Corporations are Taking Over Our Lives and What We Can Do About It*, by Charles Derber. St. Martin's Press, 1998.
- *Graceful Simplicity: Toward a Philosophy and Politics of Simple Living*, by Jerome Segal. Henry Holt and Company, 1999.

It is difficult—indeed, all but impossible—for most progressives to confront their own gnawing sense that many important trends in American life are moving inexorably and inevitably (not simply temporarily) in the wrong direction: inequality has been growing—painfully and progressively; money and media increasingly dominate politics; de facto racial resegregation is increasing in many urban centers and universities; environmental laws are passed but gains are the exception in many areas, losses the rule. Most of all, voting patterns, the polls, and everyday experience teach that growing numbers of Americans no longer believe democracy works. Too strong? A 1992 Louis Harris poll found:

- 83 percent of the public believe that the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer.
- 67 percent believe that most people with power try to take advantage of people like them.
- 67 percent feel that what they think doesn't count very much anymore.
- 61 percent believe the people running the country don't really care what happens to them.

To be sure, the economy—for the moment—is doing reasonably well for those with money and access to good jobs. But just beneath the surface—and behind the worrisome convictions—lie deep difficulties. Two of the most serious are the decline of organized labor as a political force and the impact of globalization on the economy and the politics of the economy. At its postwar peak, union membership in the United States reached just over 35 percent of the labor force; it is now only 14 percent and even creative and aggressive AFL-CIO leadership has been unable to reverse the trend as old members are lost faster than new ones can be recruited. In 1968 U.S. exports and imports combined added up to only a tenth of the gross domestic product (GDP); since then they have expanded to a quarter.

Organized labor has historically been the institutional keystone of progressive politics in all the advanced industrial nations—the source of money, man- and woman-power, ongoing organizational strength and stability, lobbying power, and, occasionally, the capacity to disrupt. Even before recent declines, the weakness of labor in the United States compared to other nations went a long way towards explaining the comparative weakness of the American welfare state: union membership is 28.9 percent of all workers in the new united Germany, 44.1 percent in Italy, and 91.1 percent in Sweden. The modern decline of labor, taken together with the growing impact of the global economy, goes even further toward explaining downsizing, job insecurity, growing pay differentials (and inequality), destabilized communities, and—most of all—the widespread sense that nothing really significant can be done to alter the big trends.

There are, of course, exceptions,

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one of the most important being the 1997 and 1998 rejections of "fast-track" authority to facilitate presidential negotiation of even more open trade. In this area it is possible that further backlash pressures will develop in the future (especially when the next recession hits). But for the most part even such recent political victories must be seen as attempts to close the barn door after the trading "horse" has long since escaped into the field of globalized "freedom."

Charles Derber's response to the profound challenge facing progressives is to urge a "new populism" and to rally the troops to action. Our problem, as he defines it in *Corporation Nation,* is that "Corporations are taking over our lives." The issue for him is: "What we can do about it." On the whole Derber's book is a useful contribution—especially in its compilation of the many things which people who care about political change can do and are already doing. Derber provides solid information on everything from new worker-ownership strategies to "stake-holder" and "national chartering" approaches to corporate governance. He even offers handy lists of things to do and "movements to join" for those ready to sign up. His new populism includes an anti-materialist spiritual concern.

Corporation Nation is an explicit attempt to be anti-corporate without being anti-business, and to advocate social ways to control the large corporation without resorting to traditional forms of "big government." Derber criticizes both Left and Right as he attempts to maintain his balance walking this fine line. However, the truth is many of the proposed reforms imply a much more traditional form of government regulation. For instance, in Derber's ideal world not only will the giant corporation have to be chartered by the federal government, it will be required to have consumer, labor, and community representatives on its board and held to public interest standards on environmental and other issues. At the same time, trying to maintain a pro-business stance and still energize a "positive" anti-corporate populism is not going to be very easy in political or emotional terms—a special problem for a book which self-consciously aims to energize the faithful.

Derber seems aware of other, even greater difficulties. At one point he rather wistfully suggests that there "will be no meaningful limits on the corporation in the United States without the rise of global countervailing powers and the democratization of the global economic system." At another he observes that "the 200 leading corporations of the world are so large and dominant that it is hard to know whether even public chartering or employee ownership will prove able to make them democratic and responsive to the public interest." As a start, Derber urges further government action in the form of a strong anti-trust program. However, he is simply not convincing in explaining what might alter anti-trust legislation's century-long record of largely failed attempts to significantly challenge corporate financial, legal, and political staying-power.

This is not to say that nothing useful can be done or should be attempted. The difficulty in Derber's argument has to do with the central strategic question. To achieve any serious alteration in the big trends, Derber's strategy depends ultimately upon putting together a new populist coalition in a labor-weak continental-scale society, and doing so in a racially divided culture which offers numerous openings for divide-and-conquer right wing strategies: we are back to our common problem.

Jerome Segal confronts the pain of late twentieth-century America from a different perspective entirely. His *Graceful Simplicity* starts with Aristotle and the fundamental philosophical question of how to define "the good life." Like many "simple living" books which urge a voluntary individual downsizing of consumption, work, and the pressures of everyday life, Segal suggests we would all be better off if we somehow got off the treadmill and opted out of the rat race. The "graceful" part of the "simplicity" he urges includes a rediscovery of the beauty of beauty itself. Segal—a professional philosopher who writes in down-to-earth terms—offers a vision of the "good life" understood as a psychologically and spiritually thoughtful handling of time and the affirmation of "beauty, peacefulness, appreciation and generosity."

Unlike most simple living advocates, Segal takes up the nasty "reality" problem of whether there is any way for ordinary Americans—defined as a married couple with children and median 1997 family income of $54,000—to participate in "the good life." This is his greatest contribution: Is simple living simply for the affluent who can decide to opt out? Or is it for the marginal who can retreat to the land and grow their own food? Segal dissects everyday budgets to clarify precisely what the average family must of necessity spend for housing, education (and/or child care), health, food, clothing, and transportation. Although something can be done by less-than-affluent Americans to reduce wasteful consumption (keep your old car a bit longer), Segal concludes that simple living cannot—repeat, cannot—be achieved by most Americans without changes at a ... ro-political level.

The central elements of any serious strategy to make simple living possible for the vast majority are (1) a politics of redistribution and (2) a collective national decision to translate productivity gains into a general reduction of the work-week in the new century—rather than ever-increasing wages and salaries to keep up with the Joneses who themselves are trying to keep up with someone else. Segal concentrates on the second strategy; he suggests that time gained through productivity improvements should be allocated in the form of three-day weekends taken every other week, and he proposes a goal of husband and wife each working a twenty-five hour week. He sees the

current earned-income credit—which adds to the pay of low wage-earners without adding to hours of work—as a step in this direction. Another requirement of a serious strategy for simple living—suggested but not spelled out by Segal's analysis of housing and transportation costs—is the redesign and rebuilding of communities so as to reduce the expense of both.

Although Segal is clear that collective—hence, political—action is required to achieve the goal of simple living, he is even less clear about the viability of a specific strategy than Derber. And although his discussion of the median-income family is extremely illuminating, he substantially neglects the even more challenging problem of the bottom one-third. A related omission in this very thoughtful book is any serious discussion of problems presented by race.

I am generally a prudent optimist in politics. Yet cool realism suggests that on our current trajectory the negative trends we currently see will continue and progressives are likely to be able to achieve only modest gains at the margins of these trends. Moreover, the decay building up at the bottom of the system at some point could easily explode into violence, and with violence will almost certainly come repression. On the other hand, it is also true that the long-term fundamental transformation of societies is as common as grass in world history. And it is highly unlikely that any political-economic system, including our own, will remain as it is forever.

The place to look for clues to ways out of the box in which progressive politics finds itself is almost certainly in the deep grass-roots of unpublicized local activity. Scholars probing the sources of the civil rights explosion of the early 1960s know that the real foundation stones were laid—and some of the most difficult and dangerous work undertaken—in countless little-noticed local efforts in the South during the 1940s and 1950s. Historians of the French, American, Chinese, and, indeed, every major revolution know that what might be called "pre-history" in large part is history.

At one point Derber comments, almost as an aside, on some quietly evolving contemporary efforts which could conceivably play a "pre-historical" role in a longer process of change. His discussion is very short, but what he clearly has in mind is the little-studied but rather impressive build-up over the last few decades of a new kind of "community-based" economics including: local cooperatives, neighborhood development corporations, worker-owned firms, small municipal enterprises, local neighborhood land trusts, and a broad range of "hybrid" non-profit community-building organizations engaged in practical for-profit business on behalf of local public goals. Neither quite capitalist nor quite socialist in nature, most are characterized by some form of "democratization of capital"—i.e., institutional arrangements which give ownership to (small) public or quasi-public groups. A forthcoming survey by Ted Howard of the National Center for Economic and Security Alternatives suggests that (depending on the definitions one chooses) the numbers of these groups already run into the tens of thousands.

Derber observes that people concerned with such efforts "envision a proliferation of community-based (and sometimes worker-owned or community-owned) small manufacturers, credit unions, banks, retail stores, farms, and other small-scale businesses...." The goal, though very long term, is not simply a reform of the corporate world: "Unlike the other populist strategies described thus far, this populism seeks an end run around the corporation. Rather than change the corporation from within, the cooperativist would build workable alternatives...." For Derber, such

> a broadening of the cooperativist vision to the national level has great appeal, since it offers not only a concrete alternative to the corporation but a vision of a better way to live. By highlighting the value of local participation, it speaks to the deep desire of many Americans to see values of community, self-development, and democracy prioritized over a life based on consumerism and competition.

Can we take this text at face value? Is what is being said as radical as it sounds—and as utopian? This is a revolutionary goal—even if by peaceful evolution. The projected "system" of co-operative institutions would be quite hospitable to Segal's long-term vision. The target, indeed, is the very nature of capitalism—and the long-term goal is to replace the corporation with a "concrete alternative," not attempt somehow to reform or regulate it. Derber seems to grasp this point—and rightly adds that ultimately "to succeed the community-based alternatives have to be linked with a broader positive populist movement that offers a vision of how to transform the

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biggest corporations, the national and global market, and the government itself, in the service of all communities." But then he backs off, making it quite clear that the only "linking" of so radical a reconstructive strategy he thinks viable is with his own more limited reform-the-corporation agenda.

Derber's position is reasonable: it has been a long time since we allowed ourselves to think seriously about transcendent goals, and the odds against a fundamental transformation are very long indeed. On the other hand, the logic of Derber's own argument—and of many scholarly studies of corporate power—point beyond minor reform. The self-evident problem is that large corporations form a system not only of economic but of political power. They generate inequalities of income and wealth which in turn further re-enforce inequalities of political power. They must of necessity sustain a sell-consume-grow dynamic in an era which cries out for ecological limits. They have an inherent capacity to thwart and marginalize many proposed reforms. In his prize winning study, *Politics and Markets,* Yale professor and former president of the American Political Science Association Charles Lindblom bluntly concludes: "The large private corporation fits oddly into democratic theory and vision. Indeed, it does not fit."



But what might conceivably replace the corporation—even over the very long haul? Quietly—but persistently—various writers both here and abroad have begun to explore models of larger-scale economic activity which move beyond the corporation as we know it. For instance, the late Louis Kelso, a Cambridge Nobel Laureate; the late James Meade; and the radical American economist John Roemer have all put forward carefully worked-out proposals for quasi-public corporate structures which pass on profits to all citizens as a matter of right. (For those who like precedents, the proposed models might be thought of as enlarged versions of the Alaska Permanent Fund—which as a matter of right currently provides each citizen of that state with about $1,000 a year from profits earned by publicly invested oil revenues.) Other scholars are revisiting the very early vision of the Tennessee Valley Authority—a regional public enterprise structured along grass-roots participatory principles. In another area entirely, many have noted that approaches to Social Security reform which include stock market investment point ultimately towards some form of public management on behalf, minimally, of unsophisticated poor and low-income Americans—and this in turn (as conservatives rightly fear) is likely to lead to greater public control of capital investment.

Significant opportunities for structural change are also likely to emerge as the economy itself changes. Within a decade traditional manufacturing is expected to employ no more than 12 percent of the labor force—and it will continue to decline as the century progresses. As it does, most big factories will disappear—to be replaced by enterprises quite different in kind, size, and structure. New technologies which permit great decentralization are also likely to make new institutional forms both more feasible and more accessible to democratic control. Again, as the century progresses the economy—which currently generates roughly $120,000 for every four people—will reach levels permitting the equivalent of $240,000, to be taken in money or time, for every family of four. (This is almost certainly a conservative estimate: some projections of twentieth-century trends suggest the amount could be almost twice this on average for families of four by the end of the century.)

What I find most significant is the dynamic process at work: it is precisely because the traditional strategies are not working that people keep struggling to build alternatives at the local level. And it is because the old ideas do not satisfy that writers and thinkers keep struggling to break new intellectual ground. If the larger political-economic stalemate continues, this laying down of the theoretical and real-world groundwork for "something different" may turn out to be the critical function of this phase of our development. To me, books like Derber's and Segal's appear not so much to be offering "answers" as to be suggesting "vectors" which point towards something different, something which might one day become viable as we move deeper into the new century. As a next stage of ideas and proposals builds upon the current crop, others in turn will follow upon these. Similarly, the process of each experiment building upon past experiments over time—with each suggesting principles for larger scale application—is much more important than the specific features of any one effort at any particular moment in time. Moreover, such proposals raise expectations which clarify what can—and what cannot—be done without further change.

It may be that all of this will come to naught. On the other hand, if one views our strange and difficult present both as current history and as evolving "pre-history," strategies akin to what the Chinese used to call a "walk on two legs" approach become interesting: the thing to do, of course, is to move forward with whatever conventional reforms are possible—even though their limits within the current system are well understood. At another level—simultaneously—it is also important to open a far-ranging debate about the historical realities we face and the logical requirements of a fundamental solution involving different institutional patterns—even if over the very long haul. Just possibly, doing what can be done today but not ducking what must be discussed and developed for tomorrow might allow us to establish a serious foundation for the transformation the new century is all but certain one day to require. ❑

BOOK REVIEW

Liberating Lilith

E.M. Broner

- *Which Lilith? Feminist Writers Re-Create the World's First Woman.* Edited by Enid Dame, Lilly Rivlin, Henny Wenkart. Jason Aronson, 1998.

Why are we still resurrecting our mythic foremother, Lilith?

Three decades ago, in 1972, Lilly Rivlin re-called Lilith in *Ms.* magazine. About the same time, Judith Plaskow, in *From the Coming of Lilith: Towards a Feminist Theology*, described leading a class which "took Lilith as our process.... We tried to express through our myth the process of our coming to do theology together." Susan Sherman addressed Lilith in verse form, her poem still powerful and still the best: "To fear you is to fear myself/to hate you is to hate myself/to love you is to love myself."

She, the wild-haired one, the redhead dressed in purples, jewelry cascading over her body, is also, we have been instructed, our nemesis, our "screech owl" (Isaiah). She is evil-tempered, cannibalistic, orgiastic.

Fortunately, this new anthology deconstructs the Lilith legend as scholars, political writers, poets, theologians, and therapists address Lilith or invite her to speak directly to us. The editors, Enid Dame, Lilly Rivlin, and Henny Wenkart, have selected works that are wide-ranging, visionary as well as revisionist, both fierce and lyric at the same time.

There are, unfortunately, *shtick* pieces in this anthology, especially the poetry—Louise Jaffe's "Sisters" or Joanne Seltzer's "Lilith's Version"—and the usually distinguished poetry of Alicia Ostriker is, in "The Lilith Poems," more programmatic than poetic. For the most part, however, throughout the anthology, Lilith is incorporated, that is, made corporeal, of body and flesh, in the sensual poetry of the text as well as in the retelling of the tale in Rivlin's automythography.

Nikki Stiller speaks of the children of Lilith and Adam as "two diverse nations/which still exist, until this day." Wenkart asks Adam's question, "How did she turn into his nightmare and his dream?" Dame invites Lilith into the Jewish family where she performs the role of the rebellious daughter who expresses inexpressible pain and keeps the family's secrets.

She is defined as "the first wife who flew off in a rage..."

Several writers point out the biblical tradition of pitting woman against woman, Lilith and Eve being only the first, and the desire to heal this dichotomy. Other voices in this rich book contrast a connecting Miriam to a disconnecting, destructive Lilith. Aviva Cantor claims Lilith is *the Jew*, outsider, attacked, seeking her liberation at the Red Sea, just as the children of Israel gathered at the banks sought theirs.

Others advise that we may no longer need Lilith's screeching tone, but that we do need to bring her back from the desert and integrate her. One may well question this solution.

Listen to Sue D. Burton's "Lilith at the Red Sea": "It's a very strange legend. A woman runs away from a rapist and is told by her father—or a judge, or God ... to go back, 'or else.' She doesn't go back."

It is Lilith who knows "her father's ineffable name, his magic, secret name." She is defined as "the first wife who flew off in a rage, but whose scent won't wash off the sheets."

Lilith has too much knowledge, and knowledge, as we know from the Expulsion, is dangerous.

Burton asks herself, "How can Lilith be redeemed?" Perhaps by hearing "her" side, for God only heard Adam's. Burton suggests that it was Lilith who parted the sea for the fleeing Hebrews, and that Miriam is Lilith's heir. Like Lilith, Miriam is also humiliated for questioning the order of things.

Lilith has served as a concentration of sexual dread, of the unexplained energy flowing through men. That same myth continues with a different victim, a president, a man of high regard, brought low not only by his appetites but by the ancient fundamentalist interpretation of scripture. Lilith transmutated, transsexual, is still, in the wrong hands, a powerful, dangerous social force.

We do not liberate Lilith by smoothing her owl's feathers, clipping her horny toe nails. We need to hear the poignant question of the totemic owl, with whom Lilith is associated—"Who? Who am I?" It's of no use to merely listen to the pleasant trill of the song bird, as those who would domesticate her would prefer.

Lilith circles above the pages of this volume, flies to the sea, to the desert, and invites us on this wild ride. ❑

E. M. Broner is the author of nine books, including The Women's Haggadah *(with Naomi Nimrod). Her tenth book,* Recipes for the Spirit, *is scheduled for Fall 1999.*

TORAH OF MONEY

Welfare Reform *and the* Book of Ruth

IMPOVERISHED BY HER HUSBAND'S DEATH, A SEDUCTIVE WIDOW SLEEPS HER WAY TO THE TOP AND BECOMES GRANDMOTHER OF A REAL KING!

Jeffrey Dekro

If the Book of Ruth were a contemporary novel, this might be its blurb. While other "sensational" features of the book could be promoted—its portrait of love between women, its endorsement of intermarriage, and so forth—the blurb as written delivers the *p'shat,* the simple meaning, of the text. The Book of Ruth is most essentially about women living in poverty. And this Shavuot (eve of May 20–May 22), as Jews fulfill the holiday tradition of studying Ruth, that same poverty will be afflicting hundreds of thousands of our neighbors.

Poor women and their children across the United States are up against the "two years and out" state limit on income assistance permitted by the 1996 welfare reform law, the so-called "Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act." According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities in Washington, D.C., "decrease in assistance is one of the reasons that poverty rates have not declined more … amidst a stunning performance by the economy, and … why the average poor family has become poorer":

> Just between 1996 and 1997, the number of … poor people in [female-head] families [with children] fell 1.7 percent … while the number receiving welfare assistance in an average month fell 15.7 percent. Similar developments mark the food stamp program.… During the two-year period from 1995 to 1997, the decline in the number of people receiving food stamps—4.4. million—was five times greater than the decline in the number of people living in poverty.

To cultivate popular support for such cruelty, conservatives have for years portrayed welfare as a major drain on the debt-ridden American economy. In truth, the $22.3 billion spent on Aid to Families with Dependent Children in 1993, just before the Republican "Contract with America" was proclaimed, consumed less than one-half of one percent of the gross domestic product. Of this, the federal expenditure was $12.2 billion—less than 1 percent of all federal spending. (Statistics from The Century Foundation's Welfare Reform page are available at http://epn.org/tcf/tcwelf.html.)

Even more noxiously, the Right has portrayed "social pathology" as poverty's primary cause rather than its sorrowful outcome. Welfare recipients are attacked as lazy and licentious people who must be "forced" to work.

This column is not the place to debate poverty's causes—only to observe that the Torah of Money, as documented in Ruth and throughout Jewish texts, skewers those who dehumanize the poor or treat their poverty as a stigma. When Ruth goes out to glean grain in the fields of her mother-in-law's people, she does so with a sense of dignity and entitlement, for the Torah itself mandates that farmers "not reap all the way to the edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest … you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger" (Lev. 19:9–10). Poverty, in Judaism's view, is an abiding social condition that grants society the chance to increase justice, and the individual the chance to uplift his or her own soul, through tzedakah. And fundamental to tzedakah is the preservation of poor people's dignity.

By contrast, American culture has wallowed in a disdainful, punitive, and racist indifference to the poor that ultimately converts all welfare and back-to-work efforts into failed, grudging programs. In conjunction with congressional opposition to minimum wage increases, to union activism, to national health insurance, and to progressive tax reform, welfare "reform" increasingly looks like a conspiracy to rape and debase Ruth as she exercises her gleaning rights.

The tendency to psychologize poverty has affected the Jewish community, too. Even in the wonderfully innovative book *Reading Ruth,* a collection of essays, poetry, and artwork by thirty prominent Jewish women (eds. Judith A. Kates and Gail Twersky Reimer, Ballantine Books, 1994), the economic themes of the Book of Ruth go virtually unmentioned amid compelling discussions of therapeutic relationships, lesbian relationships, bereavement and mourning, fertility and loss, history and herstory. Between our community's prosperity and the ubiquity of conservative propaganda about the "pathology" of poor communities, many of us have lost sight of the fundamental realities of poverty. Perhaps this Shavuot, the plain meaning of the Book of Ruth can help restore our vision. ❑

Jeffrey Dekro, President of The Shefa Fund, founded TSF's Tzedek/"Justice" Economic Development Campaign. He can be reached at Shefafnd@libertynet.org.

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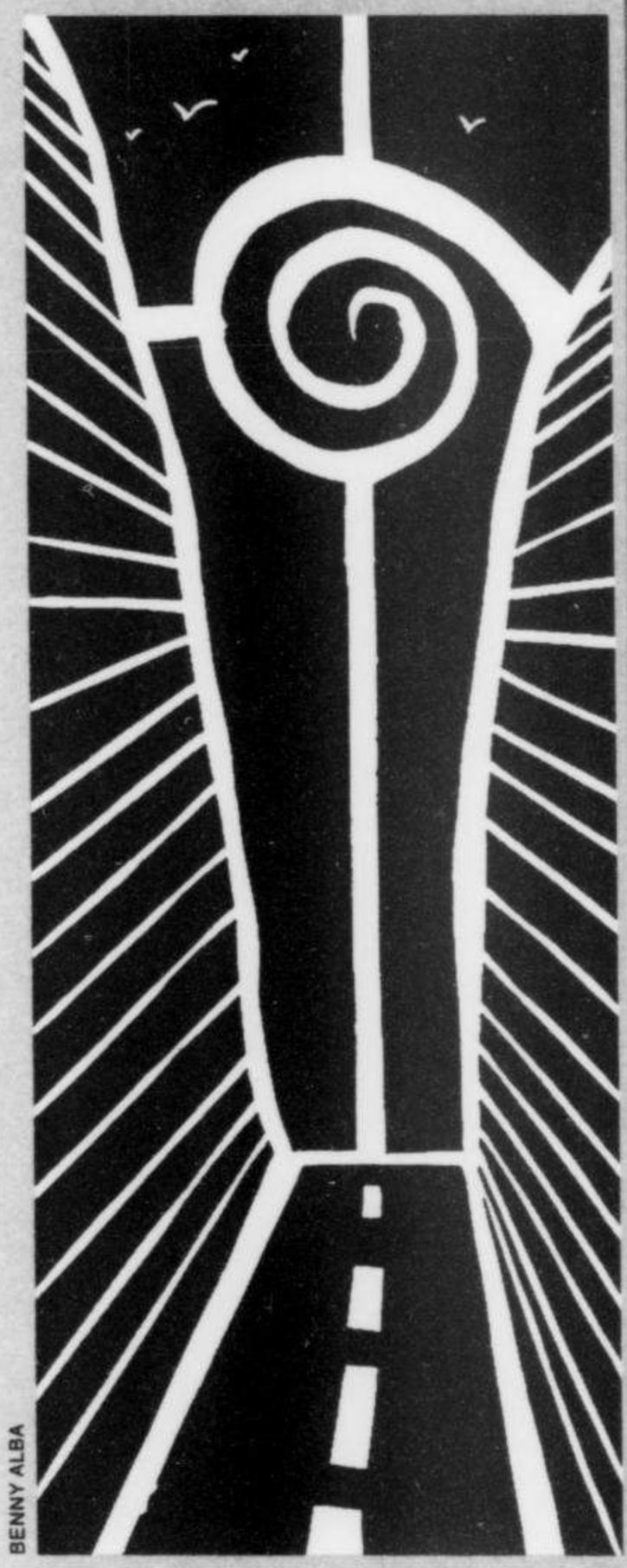
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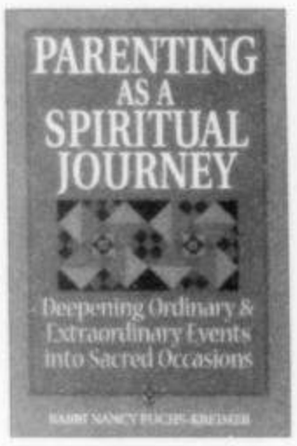
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Anita Diamant
Schocken Books, 1998



Judaism rejected the death-oriented religions of Egypt and Babylon, but it nevertheless developed a very sophisticated technology for mourning. It's laid out in a clear, accessible way in Diamant's guide. She handles everything from prayers at the bedside of a dying person to how to deal with the body of the dead to funerals, why we say kaddish, and yahrzeits.

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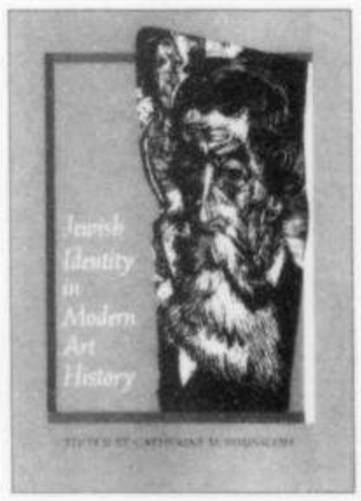
Alicia Suskin Ostriker
University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998



Alicia Ostriker has been described as one of America's finest poets, and this collection of her poetry from 1968 to 1998 shows you why. Ostriker's important contributions to Jewish feminism, demonstrated in her *The Nakedness of the Fathers: Biblical Visions and Revisions* and in other writing, forms one of the foundations of poetry that Joyce Carol Oates describes as "brilliantly provocative and imaginatively gifted."

Jewish Identity in Modern Art History

Edited by Catherine M. Soussloff
University of California Press, 1999

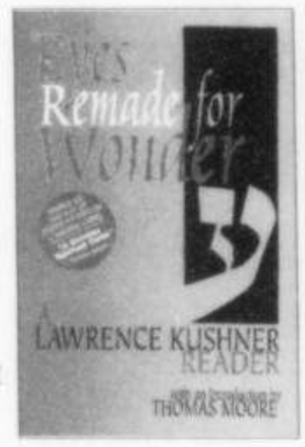


The field of art history has been dominated by Jewish writers. This collection of contemporary art theorists asks whether that matters, and why Jews have been so unaware of themselves as Jews within the field of art and art criticism.

Eyes Remade For Wonder

A Lawrence Kushner Reader

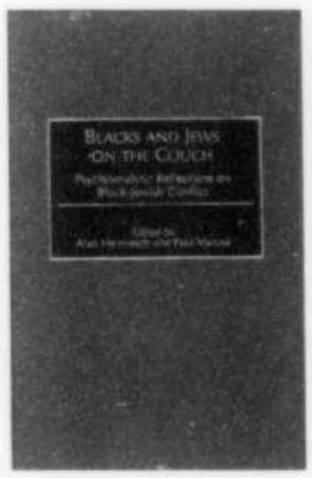
Jewish Lights Publishing, 1998



Lawrence Kushner is one of our most gifted exponents of Jewish mysticism. This collection of his writings melds together his thought to create a coherent, albeit free-associational, presentation of his work. Kushner teaches us how to see the world from the awareness that everything is within God, that all is God. As Kushner points out, the wonder is in part that this source of all being can get through to human beings, or at least to those who are listening.

Blacks and Jews on the Couch

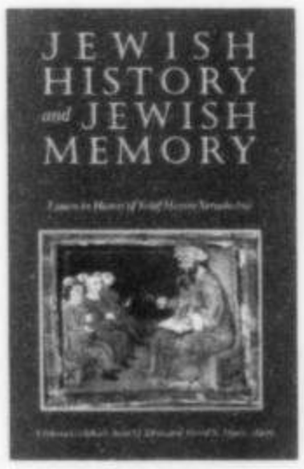
Edited by Alan Helmreich and Paul Marcus



Starting from the works of our editor Michael Lerner and Cornel West in their *Jews and Blacks: Let the Healing Begin*, the psychoanalytic thinkers in this book theorize about the peculiar attraction/repulsion of two peoples who might have chosen to go their separate ways. This book is a must-read for anyone hoping to build reconciliation between these two communities.

Jewish History and Jewish Memory

Edited by Elisheva Carlebach, John M. Efron, and David N. Myers
Brandeis University Press, 1998

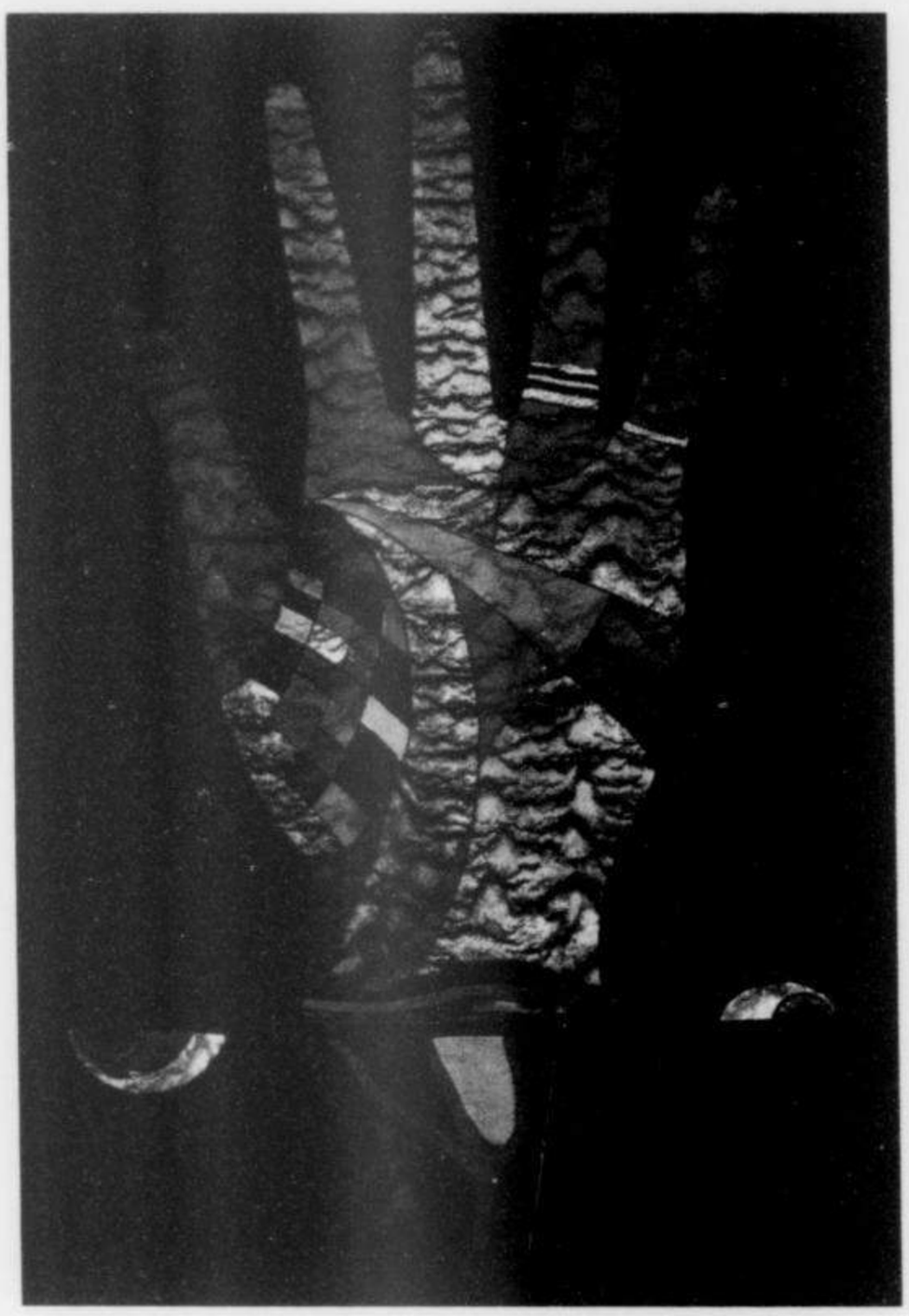


The list of contributors to this volume of essays in honor of Jewish historian Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi constitutes a virtual "Who's Who" of contemporary Jewish historiography: Robert Chazan, Marc Saperstein, and Talya Fishman write about the pre-modern period; Moshe Ideal focuses on time and history in Kabbalah; Elliot Wolfson addresses the construction of history in the Zohar; Todd Endelman confronts the way that Jewish pasts continued to limit the possibilities of converts from Judaism to Christianity in the post-Emancipation world; and Michael Meyer reflects on Jewish modernization. Though written in academese, there are important insights in these writings.

תיקון

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