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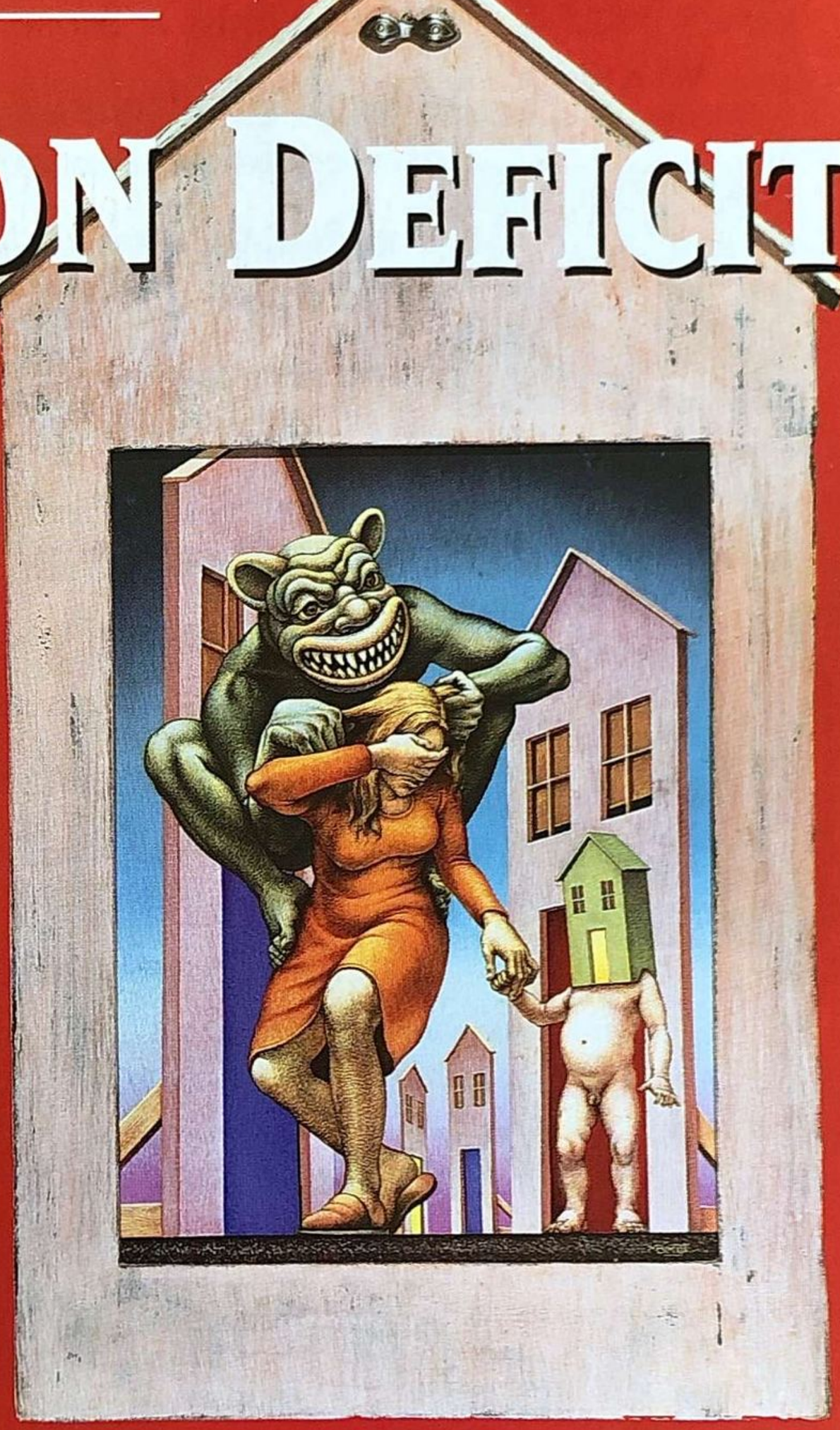
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WITH RESPONSES FROM

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Temptation

Tho we sit there smiling with wet hair
in green grass & broad daylight

nonetheless silently we must
as a requirement agree to die.

That is it, the worst
of the whole

silly business—
that is the worst thing

they fear, those blessed
melancholiacs who shudder among us,

who should love properly
our springs, & summers,

plush summer—pollinated
dahlias, unbuttoned pajama

tops, zinc-oxide
at all the lifeguard shacks—

    love this, I say
    come on,

but they can't & don't.
They won't

be tempted to be
ordinary.

They are the ones & they are
the only—trying to wait it out.

—David Rivard

TIKKUN

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY VOLUME 14 NUMBER 4



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Letters to the Editor

War in Kosovo

To the Editor:

American intellectuals are naïve to think that they must denounce the NATO campaign because it involves violence, evokes images of Vietnam, kills innocent civilians, or is led by a president they don't trust (the latter point puts them in bed with the likes of Dick Armey, Tom DeLay, and J. C. Watt). If their formula had prevailed in 1939, there would be no TIKKUN today and no Jewish community in Western Europe or perhaps in the United States, more millions would have been killed than died in World War II, and the world might have seen a violent crisis in the 1970s over the succession to Adolf Hitler. If Chomsky's logic had prevailed in 1939, the West would not have lifted a finger against Hitler because, after all, he hadn't (yet) killed that many people. Besides, resistance by the British and French might have been misinterpreted as being in pursuit of crass material national interest. What errant nonsense that man spews out!



Keep up the good work!

FRANK TACHAU
Chicago, IL

To the Editor:

It is very clear to me and many others who oppose the current bombing campaign in Serbia that what the Clinton administration is really doing is, to use a term in imminent danger of overuse, "wagging the dog." Given the sex scandal, Whitewater, the campaign financing scandal, and the security issues with China, Clinton's legacy is clearly threatened. Herein lies the self-interest you say does not exist in this case.

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As someone who was opposed to the impeachment, I must say that my opposition never evolved into wholesale endorsement of the Clinton presidency. In fact, I have been comforted in holding to my views by the fact that TIKKUN and other progressive voices have risked being critical of Clinton and his policies. So am I being cynical, or have I come to my conclusion about Clinton's self-interest after watching him be guided by self-interest time and time again, continually abandoning the quest for a politics of meaning which he seemed to believe in when he first ran for the presidency? You yourself have made these very same observations in the pages of TIKKUN.

What I see happening on the part of many is an irrational, emotional response to the Serbian treatment of the Kosovar majority. The Holocaust haunts us and makes it very difficult to think rationally about what the correct response is to potential or ongoing genocidal or "ethnic cleansing" activities.

I do not presume to have an easy answer and feel that my inability to formulate one perfectly illustrates my point. The closest I have come up with is similar to one you offhandedly refer to in your editorial: "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."

However, to fall back on the argument that in the "real world," right now, this will not happen, reeks to me of surplus powerlessness. What I have learned from you, Rabbi Lerner, and from my involvement in re-evaluation counseling, is that the "real world" is, in actuality, a "pseudo reality," the result of accumulated distresses which prevent us from forming rational relationships, communities, societies, policies, and governments rooted firmly in the belief of a benign reality; that we humans were created in the image of God; and that the natural state of human interaction is one of love, respect, cooperation, and harmony.

At the very least, the NATO air campaign is a cowardly failure in that it suggests that NATO is concerned more with reducing our losses than with the ethnic Albanians. Naturally, ground troops are distasteful to many and certainly Clinton knew this as he tried to rally public and political support for intervention. However, isn't this distaste rooted in our own self-interest, the result of too many years of being bombarded with the propaganda of the "look out for number one" mentality? We've seen historically that humans are able to step out of this mindset, willing to put their lives on the line when they are convinced that the greater good is worth it.

So, what has stopped us all from doing so this time? What prevented more being done to stop the Holocaust? You know, Rabbi Lerner—surplus powerlessness.

HOWARD MUHLBERG
Bellingham, WA

To the Editor:

I appreciate that you ran Noam Chomsky's article on the bombing of Yugoslavia. He is almost always terrific. But I just want to say how angry I am at Michael Lerner's response.

We are violating international law by bombing a sovereign country that has never bombed us. But what is worse than your ignoring this fact is when you advocate for ground troops. I am a substitute teacher in the San Francisco public schools, and it will be the kids I teach who will have to do the dying. I doubt that many subscribers of TIKKUN will see their kids die if there is a ground war in Yugoslavia. There is no reason they should die for your silly ideas. If you feel so strongly about this civil war, that the Albanians are superior to the Serbs, you should take a machine gun, you should learn how to use it, and you should volunteer for the KLA, instead of telling pacifists what they should be doing over there.

PAUL LEIBHABER
San Francisco, CA

To the Editor:

Noam Chomsky's moral compass must be magnetically challenged. On what grounds, Jewish or otherwise, does he base his proposition that those with blood on their hands are forbidden to defend prey from other predators?

First, as Michael Lerner suggests, such a proposition denies redemptive possibilities in the sinner.

However, leaving the desire for redemption aside, since when is an unrepentant sinner ethically forbidden to perform a

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mitzvah, especially that of saving life? What if one had murdered his own child? Should he be forbidden to save his neighbor's child from premeditated murder by this child's father even if the intervention be motivated more by delight in the opportunity of shedding more blood than in saving an underdog?

Continually we have been plagued by the apathy of so-called "good" people. Notwithstanding, we are now plagued by a Chomskyism, i.e., God accepts only saints in the Mitzvah Corps.

This is baloney at its treifest.

RABBI SCOTT B. SAULSON, PH.D.
JEWISH COMMUNITY CHAPLAIN
JEWISH FAMILY & CAREER SERVICES
Atlanta, GA

To the Editor:

I write this in March, the most holy time of year—and all I feel is rage in my heart.

It is the sacred time commemorating the leave-taking of enslaved Jews from Egypt, the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, the completion by many Muslims of their pilgrimage to Mecca. It is a time to reflect on the sacredness of humankind, but my mind gives my heart no peace as I see the daily images of Albanians being brutally forced from their homes in Kosovo. Their distraught, tear-stained, and haunted faces, the stories they tell of their travails, make me lose my hope for humankind and affect my ability to talk with God.

When I study a front-page photo of a middle-aged Kosovo man transporting his aged mother to safety on a wheelbarrow, when I put myself in his place or see my own mother or grandmother in that old woman, I have little hope for the new world of the coming millennium which we have been encouraged to anticipate. I cry for the people of Africa, and I cry for all of us because we never seem able to learn how to live with each other and accept our differences and similarities.

The hate in my heart for Milosevic and the people who serve him frightens me. It links me with the brutal people whom I despise. And I do not yet know how I will be able to live with my hate as the bombs keep dropping and the suffering continues.

I must find a way to surmount my rage.

BILL ZIMMERMAN
New York, NY

Eating Meat?



To the Editor:

Like most defenders of the consumption of meat, Kimberly French ("Meat Eater," March/ April 1999) overlooks the devastating realities of animal-based diets and agriculture: an epidemic of heart disease, stroke, cancer, and other degenerative diseases that are afflicting Jews and others; soil erosion and depletion, air and water pollution, destruction of tropical rain forests and other habitats, loss of biodiversity, global warming, and other environmental threats related to modern intensive livestock agriculture; overuse of water, fossil fuels, pesticides, chemical fertilizers, and other agricultural inputs; and feeding 70 percent of our grain to animals destined for slaughter while millions of people die of starvation annually.

As *rachamanim b'nei rachamaim* (compassionate children of compassionate ancestors), advocates of "eco-kashrut," and proponents of policies consistent with "tikkun olam," I believe that TIKKUN readers can and should play a leading role in placing the many moral issues related to our diets squarely on the Jewish agenda.

RICHARD H. SCHWARTZ
Staten Island, NY

To the Editor:

Kimberly French sees the sheep and lambs she calls "pets" as individuals with whom she has relationships, but denies emotional connection to those she calls Lunch and Dinner. This numbing of feeling, with its accompanying objectification, violence, and death, underlies all the misery humans have perpetuated, not only on animals, but on each other as well.

As I write this, my dog is nestled against my leg, affectionately licking my hand now and then. Later we will walk in the woods, enjoying being alive in the world and with each other. I found her in Taiwan, where she was "dinner" and would have been strung up, filleted, and consumed to satisfy a desire for meat.

Kimberly French and most Americans do not need to eat animals for survival. So many alternatives are available and even the United States Department of Agriculture has declared a vegetarian diet sufficient for excellent health. In our society, taking anyone's life for one's own purposes rests not on survival, but on the sense of entitlement which allows people to do whatever they wish to others with less power.

For all our sakes, I ask Ms. French to rename anyone currently called Lunch and Dinner so they can emerge and live as the individuals they truly are. As George Bernard Shaw said, "The worst sin towards our fellow creatures is not to hate them, but to be indifferent to them. That's the essence of inhumanity."

MARIAN A. KELNER
Greenfield, MA

Saint Edith?

To the Editor:

To say, as Mary Gordon does (March/ April 1999), that "it is no accident" that Oscar Romero, Dorothy Day, and Pope John XXIII have not been canonized under John Paul II is to misunderstand the process entirely. All three have already been informally canonized by millions of Catholics and in each case, as I have detailed in my book, *Making Saints: How the Catholic Church Determines Who Becomes a Saint, Who Doesn't and Why,* there are plenty of other reasons these three causes are still in process. And they have nothing to do with the political views attributed to the candidates.

But these are side issues of Gordon's manufacture. Also specious is the suggestion that Edith Stein would not have converted had women been permitted to study in a Talmud Torah. Nor did Stein join the Carmelites in order to pursue philosophy. She converted because she accepted Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the Living God, and she became a Carmelite in order to live a life of prayer—in greater communion with others, by virtue of her contemplative life, than if she had remained a laywoman. It is, of course, terribly "postmodern" not to take people at their word, but then one can only imagine what a thinker with Stein's robust spiritual insight would make of such surpassing intellectual arrogance.

One must also reiterate that Stein did not convert from Judaism but from rationalism (she had no faith except in intellect) and did so in part because of the example

of committed Christian intellectuals in her intellectual circle. That is, by the way, what serious Christians do: set examples. I was in Cologne for Stein's beatification and spent the night before at dinner with her relatives, who had never before been in the same room together until that moment. Many of them were, like Stein, Jewish in name only. In his beatification speech the next morning, John Paul adroitly stated the obvious truth: that Sister Benedicta of the Cross, the religious name Stein chose, was killed because she was a Jew and because she was a Christian. Gordon is therefore simply wrong to assert that the pope or "the church" has said otherwise.

To say that the pope has been "obsessive" in "asserting that the Holocaust had other victims than Jews" overstates a simple truth. It isn't just Catholics, however, who concern him but the entire Polish intelligentsia, which the Nazis quickly, systematically exterminated. This pope has repeatedly acknowledged the specific genocide directed at Jews, but why should he not—indeed how could he not—call attention to the millions of others who were also exterminated?

Most disturbing is Gordon's assertion that Stein did something immoral by joining the convent rather than remaining outside with "her people" and by leaving Germany for Holland after Kristallnacht. Would Gordon also condemn Abraham Heschel (who, as a man of prayer, would surely have understood Stein as a soulmate) or anyone else who escaped the Nazis—as Stein did not? Had no Jews escaped the Holocaust, who would have lived to tell the tale, or to carry forward the Jews as a people? I confess I find Gordon's "moral" argument here so finely ground as to be non-existent.

Finally, Gordon worries overmuch about Stein's spiritual last will which she made, as all novices must, upon entering Carmel. Jewish readers of TIKKUN must realize that Stein came from a stratum of German intellectual life in which many Jews had abandoned the God of their fathers (and mothers) just as Stein had. Her effort to atone for "the unbelief of the Jewish people" in that context made perfect sense. It was and is consistent with conversion.

Christianity has from the beginning been a religion which requires conversion, even of those who, like Gordon, were baptized as children. You cannot be born a Christian—which is why all Christians are "born again" in baptism and the Spirit. For Jews (and Hindus), it is the other way around. And some Orthodox would say a Jew is always a Jew even when he or she becomes by choice something else. In philosophy, as in religion, one is called upon to witness the truth. That is what makes conversion always more than merely personal. And what makes it painful to those, Christian or Jewish, whom one leaves behind. To call Stein's entrance into Carmel "self-interested" and "morally compromising," as Gordon does, is itself self-interested—and morally compromising.

Gordon's mishandling of "Saint Edith" suggests that the time has come, as Rabbi James Rudin has recently put it, for Jews and Christians to change the focus of interfaith dialogue from the Holocaust to spirituality. Observant Jews and committed Catholics do share more than urban turf and a sense of peoplehood. But the spiritual differences can be quite sharp—the concept of saints being a major case in point. As Robert L. Cohen has pointed out (in *Sainthood on the Periphery: The Case of Judaism*), sainthood is foreign to rabbinic Judaism, the only analog being Hasidic rebbes. Is it too much to suggest that instead of looking at canonization as some form of political statement by this or any other pope—a hopelessly wrong-headed view—Jews begin to see it for what it is: a way of recognizing exceptional holiness to those whose lives have been transformed by the gift of grace?

KENNETH L. WOODWARD
New York, NY

Israel and Memory

To the Editor:

Thane Rosenbaum writes in "Memory's Ghosts" (January/February 1999) that it is a "fact" that Jews have to carry machine guns in Israel/Palestine. Over the last three years, while working in the West Bank city of Hebron, I have met hundreds of Israeli and non-Israeli Jews who come unarmed and without bodyguards to visit Palestinians in Hebron. As far as I know, none of them was ever attacked. Soldiers and settlers who carry machine guns in Hebron, on the other hand, do seem to engender hostility in the local residents.

Behaving like neighbors instead of conquerors makes all the difference.

KATHLEEN KERN
Webster, NY

Hillel Incorporated

To the Editor:

Jeremy Deutchman ("Hillel Incorporated," March/April 1999) warns of the over-secularity of Hillel and the tendency of Hillel patrons to invest most of their efforts in getting more non-observant, less knowledgeable students while neglecting the more committed. It's true that Judaism could be a good alternative to selfish America, but one must understand the importance of assuring the newcomer into Judaism that he is still a part of the American society. Though rediscovering Judaism is a beautiful process, it is also full of stress, sometimes even fear. That's why these youngsters need to know they can still attend a comedy club or watch *Jerry Springer* and still be Jewish.



As an Israeli, I know the fear of losing one's freedom and being identified with ultra-orthodoxy that has caused generations of Israeli youngsters to escape whatever smells of Judaism and caused others to look to Buddhism or to run from extreme secularism to extreme orthodoxy.

Hillel introduces young Jews to Judaism, while reassuring them that they need not completely abandon the culture from which they came.

TIDHAR WALD
Tel Aviv, Israel

To the Editor:

Jeremy Deutchman's critique of the "Judaism as gimmick" approach of much of Hillel's current programming (March/April 1999) is the most accurate and thorough examination I have yet seen of Hillel *á la* Richard Joel.

Deutchman correctly notes Hillel's emphasis on big, splashy events, which draw huge numbers and garner significant publicity. But along with this phenomenon, as he notes, has come a reduction in Hillel's provision of Jewish programming of any real substantive content. Also largely unnoticed in the Jewish press has been a quiet revolution in the professional leadership of Hillel. When Richard Joel became international director of what was then the B'nai

B'rith Hillel Foundations in 1988, the overwhelming majority of campus Hillel Foundations were still directed by rabbis. Since then the "Hillel rabbi" has become an endangered species. Whether they left voluntarily, frustrated by the increasing fundraising demands and the Jewish emptiness of the programs they were expected to create, or whether they were forced out by the increasingly corporate National Office or local boards captivated by Richard Joel's eloquence, literally dozens of rabbis have left Hillel in the last decade. As often as not, they have been replaced by social workers or executives recruited from the Federation or JCC movements.

Doing programs with serious Jewish content takes time and effort. They result in rich spiritual experiences and a deepened commitment to Jewish life, but they are not splashy, do not draw huge numbers, and will never garner headlines in the campus press. In my final years as a Hillel rabbi I was told by the national office not to perform conversions because it was not an efficient use of my time to spend an hour or more a week on only one student. Similarly, it was suggested I discontinue my Mishnah class for graduate students because it was not time-efficient to spend class and preparation time on a program that drew only four or five students. Never mind that the majority of students who took my Mishnah class went on to careers in Jewish communal service.

Richard Joel is a knowledgeable and observant Jew. The current incarnation of Hillel is not the result of a bias in favor of giant matzoh balls and against Talmud study. The reality is complicated, but the genesis of Hillel, Inc., lies in the fiscal collapse of B'nai B'rith in the late 1980s. At the time the Hillel movement was faced with two choices: close up shop or turn to the Federation world and major philanthropists to rescue the operation. The result was the replacement of B'nai B'rith Hillel by the Foundation for Jewish Campus Life (FJCL), funded by federations and major players like Edgar Bronfman and Michael Steinhardt.

But the creation of JFCL came with a Faustian bargain. Hillel would now reach huge numbers, not the 20 percent or so who came to the campus already actively involved in, or favorably disposed to, meaningful Jewish activities. The problem was and remains that even larger budgets available under the new FJCL don't allow Hillels to provide a level of staffing and a programming budget that allow for *both* the "Judaism lite" programs and the time-consuming intensive activities. Given the pressures to show numbers of Jewish bodies passing through the door, program budgets and staff hours are more likely to be spent organizing a comedy night than a lecture series.

What is needed is a new communal compact. Hillel needs to re-affirm its willingness and ability to provide meaningful Jewish content to students who want and need it, in addition to the secular and social activities that now dominate the Hillel program. In return, the community needs to fund Hillel at a level that gives it the resources to do both. To paraphrase Rosa Luxembourg: "We need giant Matzoh Balls, but we need Mishnah too."

RABBI CHARLES ARIAN
York, PA

To the Editor:

I am a senior at California State University, Chico. Chico State was voted by *Playboy* magazine as one of the wildest party schools in the nation. Unfortunately, the school has suffered. In an atmosphere of lawlessness and depravity, I find Shabbat dinners refreshing. The students dressed up as Hamantaschen and passing out gifts for Purim is fun, too.

To me, Hillel represents opportunities to go to Israel, Judaism conferences, and friendship. On a personal level, I see very little corporate activity but I feel a great amount of spirituality in Hillel.

TODD TAYLOR
Chico, CA

Seder of the Children of Abraham

To the Editor:

I was amazed and thrilled to open the March/April 1999 issue to find Arthur Waskow's seder of reconciliation between Jews and Arabs. Not only am I a big fan of Rabbi Waskow's, but I had been thinking about hosting such a seder. I have had several outstanding Moslem students in the college classes I teach on Hebrew Bible and Judaism. Through them, I have become aware of the great interest in and potential for dialogue.

The seder is beautifully written, but I was extremely disappointed by the one-sidedness of the viewpoint. There is an endless litany of Israel's abuses, with no suggestion of any remorse on the part of Israel. But there is only one incident of anti-Israel violence mentioned—by a crazed Jordanian soldier, for which King Hussein immediately, personally, and movingly apologized. The strong implication here is that Israel is the unremorseful villain.

I cannot and will not host a seder of Jewish-Arab/Moslem reconciliation that omits mention of the real and extensive suffering on the Israeli side of the conflict. Such a Haggadah is self-defeating as well as unfair, for there can be no reconciliation unless each side confronts the other's pain.

JUDITH ALEXANDER
Oak Park, IL



To the Editor:

For several years, TIKKUN's annual Passover Seder Supplement had been the high point of my family's services. It not only helped put the year into a perspective, but also gave special meaning within the context of the Haggadah.

The 1999 effort, however, didn't work for me because it was too focused on the one topic of Jews and Palestinians together. I missed the compassionate and well-thought-out effort to incorporate such contemporary 1998–1999 topics as homophobia in Wyoming, racism in New York, intransigence in Israel, Y2K, environmental degradation everywhere, and so on, and indeed, to generate ideas for using the Seder to move from discussions of the past to the present.

Please, please, please—go back Michael! Go back to the promised plan (the old supplement)! Tell, old publisher: let my readers go!! (Apologies!) May I suggest that you use your web page to incorporate several different seder supplement versions that readers may download, without publication expense! (The Rabbinic Manifesto may very well be the topic our family reads from at our seder!)

MARK BEHAR
Milwaukee, WI

EDITORIAL

Meaning *and* Spirit *in the* Public Square



Reflections by Michael Lerner on the way that meaning and spiritual issues are understood in the public sphere.

LITTLETON...

I waited in vain for someone in the media to acknowledge that the shootings at Littleton's high school reflect the depth of America's spiritual crisis.

Tens of millions of Americans hunger for some form of meaning or purpose to their lives or some way of feeling recognized and connected to others. But politicians, social scientists, and the media miss the ways that the frustration of our hunger for meaning and recognition, and the various attempts to substitute money, fame, sex, and power for meaning and recognition, actually create huge amounts of unhappiness and pain.

No wonder, then, that the pundits are always "amazed" by the violence and craziness that keep reappearing. They can't understand how the frustration of these fundamental human needs inevitably produces a wide range of individual and societal pathologies, ranging from alcoholism, drug abuse, depression, sexual abuse, violence, and all kinds of self-destructive paths to a frenetic search for meaning in everything from sports to nationalism to religious fundamentalism. Because the spiritual sickness manifests itself in such a wide range of ways, we often miss the underlying cause and instead think of these as separate (and usually "personal") problems.

Nowhere is America's spiritual crisis more apparent than in our high schools. Filled with the budding sexual exuberance of adolescence, teenagers face the ethically, emotionally, and erotically deadening mechanisms of high school instruction coupled with the powerful message that the only possible meaning in life is to "make it" in the materialistic rat race of the competitive marketplace. It won't take long for most kids to intuit that they are unlikely to "make it" either on the merits (succeeding in the testing game, for example) or through being part of one of the "in" crowd cliques that reward good looks, acting "cool" according to the latest fad, or special talent in sports. The result: widespread depression alternating with a manic involvement in some activity (sports, dance, sex, religion, computers, drugs) which kids take up to numb themselves from the growing feeling of isolation and despair that is likely to accompany them throughout the rest of their lives.

The public response to the murders at Littleton almost entirely ignored these kinds of issues. Instead, pundits tripped over each other looking for some foolproof scheme for controlling "dangerous elements." If only we could control people, then things would work out!

In its best manifestation, this control fantasy has led to a surge of interest in gun control. If anyone wanted to be serious about guns, they would call for banning the possession of all handguns, not just petty restrictions on the age at which or speed with which they can be purchased. But people who want to do violence can find other means besides guns for wreaking havoc. When I was in high school, two kids were arrested for a knifing rampage that sent twelve of my fellow students to the hospital. Technological "progress" is almost certain to produce bombs and other instruments of destruction that will evade the most sophisticated metal detectors in public places. Those who wish to act out their anger and frustrations will find ways to do so, and the rest of us may be their victims. Strategies of control are bound to fail.

Try meaning instead of money and power. Try loving connections between people. Let teenagers know that they live in a society that rewards loving behavior and ecological and spiritual sensitivity, and encourages a sense of awe and wonder at the glory of the universe. Nourish and reward the spirit. These are the keys to decreasing violence.

ILLUSTRATION BY ASA SHATKIN

KOSOVO...

The June accords in Kosovo will never undo the murders, rapes, and villages razed by Milosevic's willing executioners or the deaths of Serbian bystanders killed by the bombings, and they are likely to leave in power the crew of people in Belgrade indicted for crimes against humanity by the UN court at the Hague. But they could give the world an opportunity to try a new approach to peace-keeping.

Here is my proposal: Let the UN and the religious and spiritual communities of the world co-constitute an independent force of half a million nonviolent volunteer peacemakers as an International Peace Corps committed to preventing armed struggles and violence. Such a force might provide much greater protection for returning Kosovars than an armed NATO/Russian military force hampered by conflicting agendas and lacking a moral vision.

Committed to nonviolent resolution of conflict, the newly constituted Peace Corps could be used in other struggles around the world. And it should be extended to recruit another million and a half people who pledged themselves to two years of nonviolent service to help build the social and economic infrastructures of societies festering with violence and economic distress.

It should operate independently of the UN or any other political body. An international Peace Corps, understood to be independent of the political machinations of existing states and military coalitions, built on the highest spiritual and religious foundations, and affirming the sacredness of human life and a commitment to nonviolence, would quickly gain enormous moral prestige to counter the forces who seek to turn ultra-nationalist or fundamentalist excesses into violent assaults on "the Other."

What better way to enter the new millennium than with the creation of such an International Peace Corps dedicated to the nonviolent resolution of conflict and to improving each other's economic well-being?

Constituting such a force would be a powerful end-run around the cynical media and self-interested governments and corporations—a way of communicating to the world that mutual caring, altruism, and commitment to others could be the basis of a whole new way of being in the coming millennium. I'd love to hear readers' suggestions on the details of how such a Peace Corps would operate—we could make this real.

ISRAEL ELECTIONS...

Hurray for the Israeli people who, when given a choice, chose peace. We are very proud.

But don't be surprised if we need very aggressive campaigns to pressure Barak to take decisive steps for peace. With Barak, there is at least a chance of real peace and reconciliation—with Netanyahu, that chance didn't exist. But given the coalition Barak has put together, the path to peace isn't even a dim light at the end of the tunnel yet. What you and I do, reader, is going to matter. Peace is possible, but it's going to take our efforts, along with those of the Israeli peace movement, to make it really happen.

POLITICS & MEANING...

This past spring I spoke on the relationship of religion to public policy at Harvard University's ARCO Forum, sponsored by the John F. Kennedy School of Government's Institute of Politics and the Harvard Divinity School's Center for Study of Values in Public Life. The room was packed, and the news from many in attendance was that there is a growing interest in religion and spiritual concerns at Harvard.

Yet the level of spiritual understanding there remains rather shallow. The forum included a national leader of the National Council of Churches; the head of the Washington office of the Christian Coalition; Jim Wallis, editor of our sister magazine *Sojourners* (the magazine for progressive Christian evangelicals); myself; and a Harvard political scientist. The Christian Coalition and National Council of Churches presented their respective liberal and conservative agendas, but with little connection to God or spirit. Wallis and I, the politics of meaning contingent, tried to show that the role of religion and spirituality in politics is not simply to use religious or spiritual language to justify a pre-existing political agenda, but to provide a religious/spiritual foundation for a whole new approach to public policy.

Few of the Harvard policy types had a clue as to what we were talking about. "How will all this affect the New Hampshire primary?" they asked, or, "What legislation do you want in the next congressional session—and can this program win enough support among powerful lobbyists?" A narrow empiricist framework makes it difficult for many of these academics to imagine significant changes to our society's "common sense" view that we should "look out for number one." They cannot imagine the politics of meaning framework—which, for example, would redefine efficiency and productivity so that they include the degree of loving, caring, solidarity, and ethical/spiritual/ecological sensitivity being produced—as anything more than a rhetorical flourish to be cynically manipulated by politicians for the sake of personal advancement. So the forum became rather empty—little engagement with the substantial new vision that a meaning-oriented politics might entail.

It was quite the opposite the day before, when several hundred politics of meaning-oriented people assembled in Greenwich Village in lower Manhattan for the annual gathering of the New York region of the Foundation for Ethics and Meaning. Underestimating the amount of interest, the local group had rented a hall which couldn't accommodate more than three hundred people, forcing them to turn away several hundred more who sought to register. Excitement and energy filled the room as participants listened to speakers and met in smaller sessions to discuss how to bring a politics of meaning into a wide range of activities.

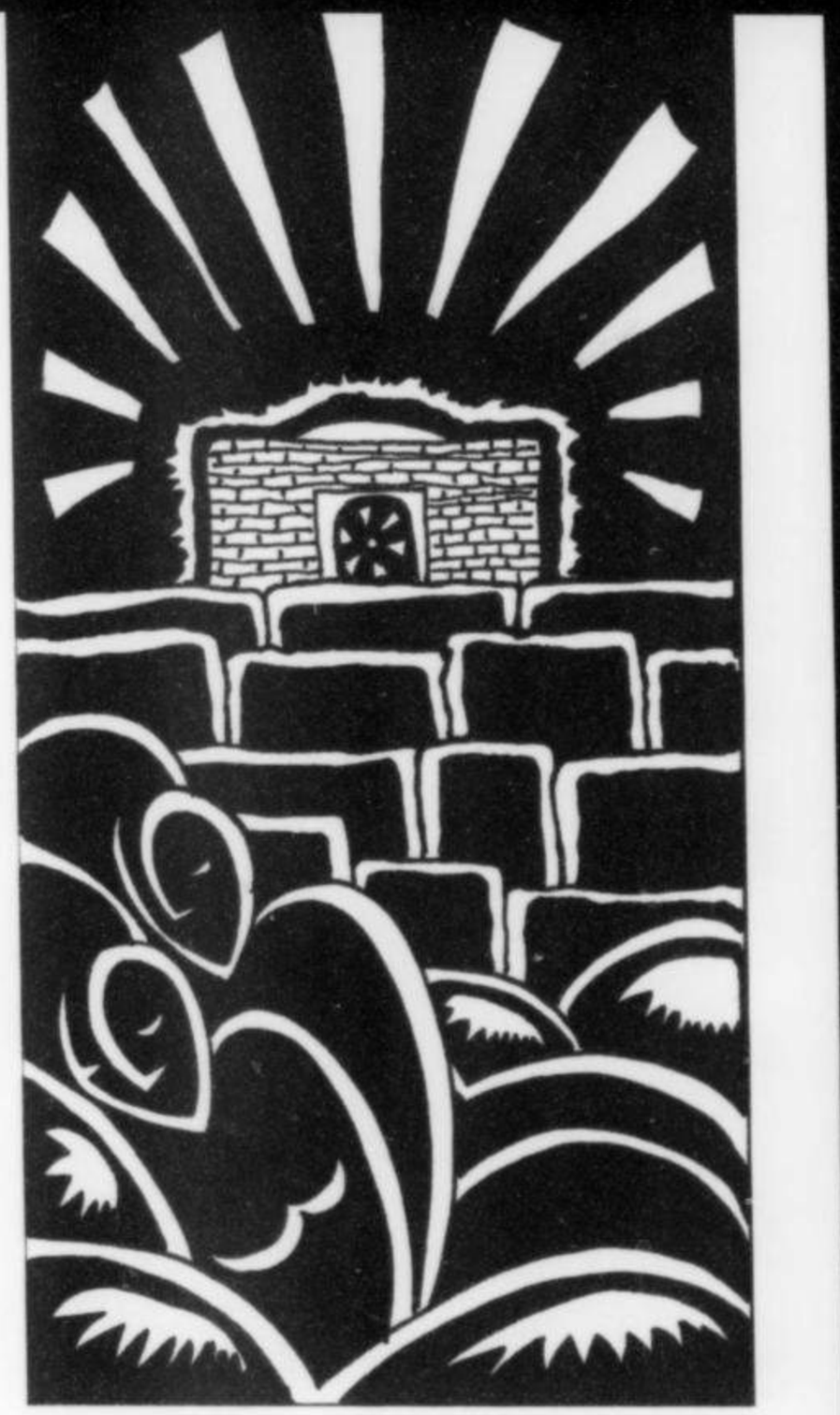
I must admit I have been somewhat absent from this scene for a while. After the founding conference, the Summit on Ethics and Meaning in 1996, I had been very hopeful that we might be able to jump-start a powerful national movement. But within a year I came to see how difficult that would be.

Most of the unions and church groups that had expressed initial interest in the ideas remain distant admirers, unwilling

JUDAISM

Eros and the Ninth of Av

Mordechai Gafni



ILLUSTRATIONS BY ASA SHATKIN

The Ninth of Av—the anniversary of the destruction of the Mikdash, the holy temple—is an intense day of mourning for Jews worldwide. An omnipresent motif in Jewish consciousness, the loss of the temple leads us not only to mourn its destruction but also to yearn for its rebuilding. And yet what is it that we yearn for? Surely another building on the bitterly contested temple mount holds no inherent redemptive promise. Further, it seems likely that mystic philosopher Abraham Kook was right when he said that the animal sacrifices which demarcated the ancient temple would hold little attraction for spiritually evolved moderns.

Three talmudic texts and an ancient esoteric mystical tradition can guide us in our search for understanding what we might yearn for on Tisha B'Av (July 22) this year.

The first text, by its very strangeness, jolts us into the realization that our intuitive impressions of the holy

Mordechai Gafni is a rebbe and scholar in Jerusalem. He serves as director of Minad and as the Melitz scholar-in-residence. Thanks to Ohad Ezrahi for contributions to this article.

to commit any serious resources. The unions abandoned meaning-oriented politics about half a century ago, and they appear to be constitutionally incapable of moving beyond narrow, material, self-interested thinking. You might suppose that the liberal churches would have meaning as a more central aspect of their thinking. But in fact, many of them believe that the sum and substance of spiritual thinking is a "preferential option for the poor," so that they see themselves as basically fighting for a social justice agenda for someone else (not their own members). In a society that values material goods, deprivation of material goods can easily be understood as oppression. But loving connection and a framework of meaning for one's life? These are not even valued in our society, so it takes a more sophisticated understanding to see how the deprivation of meaning plays out in people's lives.

I've argued through the years that a social justice agenda will continue to lose ground in America until it is tied to a deeper understanding of the way that the social system in which we live also causes pain, suffering, alienation, despair, and cynicism in the lives of the American majority—those whose deprivations are reflected in the breakdown of families, the sense of isolation, the despair about the difficulty of sustaining meaningful work, the frustration of finding oneself lonely and unable to count on friends or even family to really be there for you.

The unions don't get it, the churches don't get it, National Public Radio doesn't get it, the *New York Times* doesn't get it, and certainly the Left doesn't get it. But while these larger constituencies have proved disappointing, we have a core group which remains enthusiastic and continues to hold together the fledgling politics of meaning community. After my near-death stint in the hospital a year and a half ago, I gave up my role in the national leadership. I am happy to see that a new leadership has emerged with people like Jan Roberts, Mark LeVine, Nanette Schorr, and Rick Ulfik in key roles. I look forward to participating in their next gathering, set for May or June of 2000 in New York City. And I wish them well, hope that TIKKUN will remain the place to which they turn to find the latest politics of meaning thinking, and hope that they can navigate the difficult waters ahead.

CONNECT WITH US!

There are so many times when we at TIKKUN want to be in immediate touch with our readers and yet can't because the magazine is bimonthly and sending letters to all our readers is so expensive. For example, I or other TIKKUN writers may be on a TV show or giving a talk in a city and we want to alert you. Or something happens in relationship to Israel or Kosovo or Littleton and we want to let you know of some national action that is being taken. So we've decided to set up an email listserv. It costs you nothing to subscribe—it's free. All you have to do is send an email to tikkun-request@lists.best.com and in the body of your message, write: subscribe *your email address*. You must write "subscribe" in lower case, and there should be no other text or punctuation in your message. For example:

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If you have any problems or questions, contact us at magazine@tikkun.org. That's it! Hope you'll do it! ❑

may need fundamental re-orienting. Said R. Isaac, "From the day the temple was destroyed, the taste of sex was taken away, and given to the sinners, i.e., those engaged in illicit sex … as the verse says in Proverbs, 'stolen waters are sweet.'" In the context of this passage, illicit sex refers specifically to adultery; the "taste of sex" is an idiom meant to refer to the ultimate sexual experience. According to this eyebrow-raising passage, the difference between temple and post-temple spirituality is that after the destruction, the fullest erotic joy of sex was very difficult to access with our partners. The yearning for the temple is in effect understood as a yearning for Eros of the most intense kind.



Lest you think that this passage is anomalous, let us proceed in our investigation. The second rather shocking text is a description of the innermost sanctum of the temple. In the holy of holies, relates the Talmud, were two angelic cherubs locked in embrace. A careful reading of the Hebrew phrase indicates that they were in fact erotically intertwined. Furthermore, according to the first book of Kings, the walls of the first temple were covered with erotic pictures of these sexually intertwined cherubs. The primary image in the holy of holies—the innermost precinct of holiness in the temple—is a symbol of Eros. To realize how far we have strayed from this conception, one has only to imagine the reaction of today's congregants upon walking into their synagogue and finding the walls covered with pictures of figures in explicit sexual embrace.

To understand, however, what Eros meant in the religio-cultural context of the temple, we need to unpack a final source. The Talmud describes a mythic dialogue between the Rabbis and God. The internal reference of the text locates the dialogue historically as taking place in the Second Temple era at the close of the era of prophecy. The Rabbis entreat God to nullify the power of the drive towards idolatry. Immediately, a lion of fire emerges from the holy of holies and is identified by the prophet as the primal urge toward idolatry. The Rabbis realize that it cannot be slain, so they weaken it instead. Feeling that they are privy to a moment of grace, the Rabbis entreat God again. Allow us, they say, to slay the drive for sexuality. God grants their wish and again a lion of fire emerges from the holy of holies. When they attempt to slay this lion, however, the world simply stops. Chickens don't lay eggs, people don't go to work, all productivity and, according to the hasidic reading of the text, all spiritual work grinds to a standstill. The Rabbis understand that they have gone too far and retract their request. This drive as well is weakened, but not slain.

What is this strange and holy mythic tale trying to teach us? The underlying teaching would seem to be that the seat of Eros and the seat of holiness are one.

The first lion to emerge from the holy of holies personifies the drive for idolatry, the second the sexual drive. Both, however, are but expressions of a common underlying reality—that of Eros. Idolatry at its core is not primitive fetishism. It is, rather, a burning lust for the holy. Under every tree, in every brook, courses primal divinity. The idolater, like the prophet, experiences the world as an erotic manifestation of the God force. The symbolism of the lions emerging from the holy of holies is the text's way of teaching that Eros is holiness.

Eros in this understanding includes but is not limited to sex. Rather, it refers to the primal energy of the universe. Eros is where essence and existence meet. To experience the world erotically is to be plugged into the divine erotic essence of reality. As the tale of the lions indicates, the drive to uncover the divine sensuality of the world is not without its dangers. The erotic may overwhelm us to the point that our ethical sensitivities are swept away and our sacred boundaries overrun. And yet the need to experience the world in all of its divine Eros remains a primal human need—and according to this text, the temple of Jerusalem was organized in response to that need.

The destruction of the temple thus heralded the fall of Eros in two distinct ways. First Eros came to be limited to genital sexuality. When we seek the realization of our full need for Eros in sex, we are bound to be disillusioned. Sex cannot, by itself, sate us in our lust for essence. Sex itself cannot re-enchant our world with the magic of Eros. When we mourn the temple's destruction, we yearn to live erotically in all the facets of our lives once again.

The Talmud relates that at the time of the destruction, fruits lost their taste. Laughter vanished from the life of the polis, and the vitality of sexuality was reserved for those seeking an illicit adulterous thrill. When fruits lose their full erotic taste, when laughter becomes mechanical and only in response to sexual humor, then true Eros, the temple, has been destroyed.

The passionate yearning for rebuilding the temple is the longing to redeem Eros from its distortions. We need to move from the Eros of longing which symbolized the exile to an Eros of fulfillment. We need to experience the full intensity of erotic relationship with our partners. Put succinctly, rebuilding the temple is to touch the passion of illicit sex within the holy and ethical context of my relationship with my partner. This is the deep intent of Akiva, the mystic sage who witnessed the destruction of the temple. All the books are holy, taught Akiva, and the Song of Songs is the holy of holies. In making this statement, Akiva is doing more than extolling the virtue of the God-Israel relationship, which the Song of Songs allegorizes in terms of passion and sensuality. Akiva is teaching us that the essence of the temple, the holy of holies, is the Song of Songs; that is, the experience of passion and sensuality as the guiding force in all of our relationships with the world. It is for this that we yearn on the Ninth of Av. ❑

HEART OF THE MATTER

Maalox™ . . . & Meaning

Peter Gabel



As hospital technicians pushing carts full of medicine quickly move past each other with a clear sense of purpose and commitment on the busy first floor of a high-tech American hospital, a well-dressed young woman sweeps into view of the moving camera from screen right. The techs acknowledge her superior presence with deferential nods and smiles as they make way for the woman, whose clipboard, badge, and smart-looking suit identify her as in some way in charge—perhaps an administrator or a professional expert hired by the hospital to make sure that things are working at peak efficiency. As she sweeps through a door marked "Pharmacy" with her heels clicking on the metallic floor, moving past other technicians rapidly filling vials and important prescriptions, she turns to us and tells us what we now already know: "In hospital pharmacies, they work fast. They dispense medicines that work fast." And then she tells us what we don't yet know: "For heartburn, that means one-minute Maalox™."

As the woman opens the glass door of a refrigerated case to remove one of what appear to be hundreds of bottles of Maalox™, we cut to the familiar graphic of two side-by-side stomachs, each upset, half-filled with stirred-up liquid. As we watch a white fluid flow down the esophagi and into the stomachs, the woman's firm voice reminds us (for we already know this) that Maalox™ quickly and completely calms the stomach on the right while the competing substance is hardly noticed by the stomach on the left. As the fifteen-second clip comes to an end, we see her emerge with continuing confidence out of the pharmacy door, past the efficient technicians moving to and fro with their carts, and right up to the camera, where she looks us right in the eye. "Hospital pharmacies count on the speed of one-minute Maalox™," she says with the authority of one who has made it in today's world by knowing all about hospital pharmacies, and she concludes, "Shouldn't you?"

In one sense this commercial is designed to get us to buy Maalox™. But that is not its meaning. Its meaning is something like this: contrary to the pre-verbal desire you feel at every moment that you want to break through the pain of your isolation, break through the somehow artificial and unreal surface of reality and connect with others in a vital, passionate, spontaneous, joyful way, you must learn that the world really does correspond to this artificial, role-playing surface, and it is your desire to break through that is unreal, your private problem that you need to somehow get over. So stop hoping, viewer, because your hope threatens the rest of us with a horrible rejection by eliciting our hope, our desire for exactly what you desire.

And who is this "us" that is threatened? It is the entire society talking to itself through the "media."

It is true that it is the media bosses and the Maalox™ management and their advertising agency that actually make this particular commercial—their special interest in it is that they want to keep making more money so they can postpone as long as possible (hopefully until they're dead) having to rely on the goodwill and love of others to take care of their material needs (for food, shelter, protection from bodily illness). This is the true, fearful social meaning behind the profit motive—it's got nothing to do with the so-called economic system, which is only the collective form that this fear takes. But behind this special interest that motivates those who finance and project the commercial through our television sets, we have the deeper reality of society talking to itself. We could say that the fear of the makers of the commercial "capitalizes" on the fear of all of us, helping us to protect ourselves against the pulsion of that pre-verbal, kinesthetic desire for love and authentic recognition that is our only salvation. Thus, "capitalism."

The Maalox™ commercial works on us by removing the presence of desire from the depiction of something purporting to be a real experience. This purported "real experience"—a highly competent professional woman overseeing dedicated medical technicians in a busy hospital pharmacy—in turn refers outward to the whole world. What we see is not

ILLUSTRATION BY JAMES MICHAEL DORSEY

Peter Gabel is associate editor of TIKKUN *and president of New College of California.*

just the depiction of a discrete or isolated event, but an event we as viewers experience as an instance of the totality, a few frames of a whole movie. That biped with hair and cloth-covering is self-announcing as a "successful woman professional" and thus carries with her the entire professional world of which such women are a part and in which they are at last making their presence felt. The dedicated technicians had childhoods, have families, and buy groceries, as do all the doctors they implicitly work for and all the patients they implicitly serve. The commercial would not make an ounce of sense but for the fact that we instantly already know how this scene fits into the whole world. And therefore, by removing the presence of desire from its depiction of what purports to be a real experience, the commercial is also able to convey, in a mere fifteen seconds, that this desire *does not really exist* in the entire "real world" within which the depicted hospital pharmacy experience is occurring.

Commercials, in other words, transmit the artificiality of everyday life as though it were indeed as real as our alienating conditioning forces us to pretend that it is. In a true interaction with the woman professional who emerges from the pharmacy with her Maalox™ bottle and looks us straight in the eyes and says, "Shouldn't you?", our experience would be quite different. If we could leap from being "viewers" trapped in detachment watching this canned pseudo-event, if we could leap through the television screen and actually encounter the woman as she comes out of the pharmacy, we would have a very different experience from that portrayed in the commercial. The experience would be pervaded by *contingency,* meaning that the woman's attempt to play her highly competent professional-expert role would be somewhat awkward, somewhat undermined by her spontaneous desire to connect with you or me in a relation of true presence to each other, and we would feel her somewhat self-important and hyper-confident professionalism as an artificial attempt to deny us access to the presence she really is. The encounter would be ambiguous and would have an ambiguous outcome—she might stumble in the performance of that self-protective role; she'd probably have to avert her eyes to avoid the direct gaze that could reveal the artificiality of her allegiance to the images of her corporate hospital culture. If we could leap through the screen, *we* would be there as real others pulling for real recognition and contact, rather than being detached observers on the other side of a screen that protects her from our gaze, a screen that seals her off from our ontological presence and the pull of desire that always constitutes that presence.

The fascinating thing is that the transmission of the commercial's meaning—its attempt to convince us that we are in fact detached observers of an artificial role-spectacle rotating outside of us that we are powerless to affect—is accomplished by the intense concerted effort of actors, technicians, directors, prop managers, film editors, the entire production crew. Many takes may be required to eliminate all vestiges of the human being behind the actor's persona. The cameramen and women will work with great intensity with the director, and later the director will do the same with the film editor, to present the bustle of the hospital, or the woman's delivery of her professional advice, as a flawlessly constructed and thus impenetrable artificial reality. Unlike authentic artistic performances which try to dramatize and reveal the underlying human reality beneath the culture's surface, and which utilize the same practical ensemble of actors, directors, and technical staff to manifest the contingency and poignancy of the struggle to liberate desire from the alienated constraints we have entrapped ourselves in, the commercial aims to utilize that ensemble's talents to "reify" the alienated surface itself, to claim at a meta-level that there is no human reality behind it. Everyone involved in making the Maalox™ commercial understands that they do not want a great actress playing that hyperconfident woman professional; what's needed is someone who can be at one with the artificiality of the role, a graduate not of the Actors Studio but of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers.*

What's needed is someone who can be at one with the artificiality of the role, a graduate not of the Actors Studio but of Invasion of the Body Snatchers.

Does this mean that the actual actress, who plays the part because she needs the job, and the rest of the crew as well are somehow culpable co-conspirators on the side of alienation, working to seal us in our detachment and isolation and reinforce the denial of our desire for authentic community? It does—but only in the sense that the entire structure of the media is an alienated conspiracy of society talking to itself, as we try to convince ourselves that we do not desire the authenticity of mutual recognition and presence that in fact we most long for.

What keeps this vast, alienated wheel turning is the collective fear that the revelation of this common longing would be met with cynical rejection and lead to a devastating humiliation. By vigilantly keeping the wheel in spin, we evade becoming present to each other—the only route to salvation—because the transparency required for such a becoming-present requires a deep trust of the very other we've learned to perceive as a mortal threat. Paradoxically, it is the wheel which keeps creating the expectation of humiliation that it supposedly means to protect us from. The warning that we are the source of each other's annihilation is exactly what the wheel of alienated images intends, in each part and as a whole, to transmit.

That's why we need Maalox™. ❑



CULTURAL PATHOLOGY

The Littleton Tragedy

Svi Shapiro

The tragic events at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, broke through, if only for a few moments, the usual discourse of educational concerns in this country. Suddenly we found ourselves attending to issues that were not about academic skills and test scores, accountability of teachers, and the measurement of our state's or country's educational performance. We were now compelled to confront issues of alienation, competition and social isolation, rage and hostility, and the search for meaning in a violent and cynical world.

The question of school community looms large in the Littleton tragedy. Talk to any group of high school students and the issue of social groups and cliques in their school is a central concern for them. Likewise, for those who study the culture and sociology of schools (or make movies about it), the issue of subcultures and social divisions is a preeminent dimension of the moral and relational character of educational institutions. Yet for most others who are concerned with what schools do—legislators, policy makers, media commentators—the social milieu within which our kids live out their school lives seems like trivial stuff having little real bearing on matters of serious educational importance. How surprising then it was for them to find that the social relationships in school are the locus of so much emotion—and, for some, so much anger, bitterness, and pain.

From Columbine High School we learn that school cliques are places of privilege and power, inclusion and isolation. We learn that behind the veneer of the well-organized, efficient suburban school is a social context in which young people routinely deal with each other in ways that demean the other, and where differences of appearance or orientation become the vehicle for insults, "put downs," and threats. In the undergraduate class I taught a few days after the shootings, many of my students, themselves not long out of high school, easily recognized the environment of hostility among social groups, and readily commented upon the way such divisiveness can become degrading or dehumanizing when the student "other" comes from a racial minority, is gay, or appears or talks in ways that are outside of the cultural mainstream. While they certainly did not endorse the destructiveness and killing, they could understand how the competitiveness and intolerance of the high school environment produced intense frustration and even rage.

These students also found it relatively simple to see how our national preoccupation (obsession) with increased test scores, higher academic competencies, and the like leaves little serious space for developing relationships of care and concern among young people. Getting ahead and doing well is the preeminent agenda of high schools, not learning how we might create loving communities in which differences are

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respected and cherished. Indeed, part of the poignancy of the moment is hearing political leaders suddenly forced to attend to issues of education that are not about the value of the Internet, the information superhighway, technology, or their concern for more competitive standards and selective procedures in our schools. Education, they discover, is ultimately about something much more precious and profound. It is about the making of a world; about kids learning what it means to be human, and developing selves that have the moral, spiritual, and cognitive capacity to live in just, compassionate, and responsible communities. The Littleton disaster revealed how far many of our schools are from taking seriously such concerns.



It has been said that schools are mirrors of our society. Certainly the salience of social divisions, invidious distinctions, and cruel and insensitive behavior is the inevitable price paid for a culture where so much attention is paid to hierarchy and comparing human worth. Indeed the moral economies of schools surely cannot be separated from the relentless emphasis in the wider culture on winning and losing, becoming "someone" by distinguishing oneself from those who are left behind as "nobodies." The typical insecurities of adolescent identity are now appropriated and exploited to an unprecedented degree by the market, which powerfully and continually sells not just products to young people, but the importance of fitting in and achieving acceptance. The booming adolescent market (now the largest segment of the consumer market) is nothing if not a series of markers for what it takes to be "in" and to be "cool." And by design it is a place where such status is always insecurely held; the market ensures that what it takes to be accepted is a moving target—today's fashion rapidly becomes tomorrow's embarrassment. The inevitable awkwardness and fears of youth become the fodder for a market which shamelessly exploits these anxieties, turning huge profits by instilling an obsessive concern for how individuals measure up in comparison with their peers, reinforcing the importance of discrimination and ranking among young people.

Of course, critical social commentators have made clear that young people are not mere shills for the culture industry, passively and unquestioningly being manipulated by style elites. Indeed, as in Littleton, youngsters also rebel against the dictates of society and institutions. The so-called "trench coat mafia" is but one more in a long series of examples of kids contesting the privileges and measure of power conferred by the institution. Every high school has them—students who feel themselves alienated from the official norms of success and recognition; kids who reject and turn on its head the sanctioned and legitimized values of the school hierarchy. Such students resist the behaviors, attitudes, and appearance of the student mainstream. They create, through their own dress, language, and rituals, a "subculture" of style that resists the institutional norms. They express, sometimes aggressively, their anger and frustrations at how power and privilege are distributed in the school.

At Littleton, we know, this culture produced not just the more typical forms of non-conformity and deviance, but an explosion of rage and destruction. Yet this too could be predicted. What came together at Columbine High School was an outlook borne of intense hostility towards the pecking order of status and value at the school, together with the easy accessibility to violence that now characterizes American society. The insanity of the ready availability of guns—handguns, semi-automatic weapons, assault weapons, and so on—is apparent to more and more of us (in 1996, the last year that statistics are available, 4,643 children and teenagers were killed with guns—13 every day, the same number killed at Littleton). Yet, political influence undercuts the possibility of the kind of draconian gun legislation passed in countries like Australia and the United Kingdom after their own killing outrages. Unfortunately, accessibility to weapons is only part of the story here—one that cannot be separated from the pervasive influence and glorification of violent images found throughout our culture. Those who argue that video games, movies, newsreel images, etc., do not in themselves cause more violent behavior are probably correct. But they are right only so long as we are looking for some straightforward cause and effect influence. Human behavior is shaped in more complex and multidimensional ways. We have to see these electronic and media images as part of a cultural process that much more subtly and invisibly shapes how we think and feel (what the media scholar George Gerbner refers to as a "glacial like" process). The cultural commentator Zygmunt Bauman was probably right when he described our culture as one engaged in a process of "adiaphorization"—the steady erosion of moral sensitivity towards human suffering. It is impossible to think that kids (like those involved in the Littleton killing) who immersed themselves in hours of violent and destructive video game images were not themselves desensitized to the real consequences of violence. And this desensitization, we have learned, is more pronounced and effective the younger the age at which this exposure is begun.

The extent and nature of today's youth alienation, it seems, are of a qualitatively different character than in past generations. Social scientists and therapists argue that the disaffection of teens now is deeper and is associated with more dysfunctional problems—depression, addictions, and violence, including suicide. They argue that many of the most sensitive kids, while deploring conditions in the world, have no belief that things could be made better. Jeffrey Arnett, author of the book *Metalheads: Heavy Metal Music and Adolescent Alienation,* describes their attitude this way: "The only alternative was to live your own life the best you could. Institutions were corrupt, and the hell with it." Arnett

(continued on page 62)

Kosovo, Columbine, and Evil

Matthew Fox

It is a sad but sorry fact that the Kosovo ethnic/religious cleansing and the Columbine High School massacre bring us, at the end of this most violent of all centuries, back to the issue of humanity's complicity in destructive deeds.

It is time for us all to examine anew our potential for evil.

The earth is currently living through its most destructive cycle since the dinosaurs disappeared sixty million years ago, and it is our species and in particular our Western, technological culture, that is most responsible for that destruction. Humans are destroying twenty-six billion tons of topsoil per year, twenty-seven thousand species per year, and more than one acre of rainforest per second. Fourteen of our seventeen ocean fisheries have been essentially fished out, and our population keeps multiplying.

Psychiatrist Erich Fromm emphasizes the choice our species can make between biophilia and necrophilia (love of life and love of death). He warns us that "necrophilia grows as the development of biophilia is stunted." Is our culture teaching biophilia?

Love of life is not taught by instructing our young in how to be a perfect shopper or a perfect stock market player. It is not taught by video games that instruct kids in how to shoot down others and kill them.

Biophilia is taught through a creation story that is awesome and joyful enough to open the hearts of the young to the wonder of our shared existence.

We have such a story today from the new cosmology.

Biophilia is taught by learning that it took fifteen billion years to birth each one of us (it may take a village to raise a child but it takes a universe to make one). Sixty percent of the atoms in our bodies, which are hydrogen atoms, go back fourteen billion years and most of the others go back to a supernova explosion five and a half billion years ago. We are all related—the stars and the galaxies, the sun and all our food, our bodies and the plants, animals, birds, fishes, waterways and oceans—all made of the same stuff.

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With this new cosmology we can be inspired and inspiring, alive and loving, to all beings. We can learn from this cosmology a reverence for life and gratitude for living. But in order to bring Soul and Spirit back to learning, we need teachers who can show us how to resist the necrophilious forces which surround us, such as greed, envy, reductionism, cynicism, and resentment.

Consider, for example, resentment. This hatred, carried in our hearts from generation to generation, is central to many of the political struggles in the world today, notably in the Balkans. Spiritual traditions from Buddhism to Gandhi's non-violence, from Jesus to the prophet Mohammed, have taught humans inner technologies for ridding our hearts of resentment. Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hahn, for example, teaches that we are all born with seeds of violence as well as seeds of divine peace. Watering the seeds of peace takes effort, while powerful forces in society itself water the seeds of violence. Therefore the struggle must take place both inside each of us and also by challenging social institutions that foster necrophilia.

All these spiritual traditions teach a message of forgiveness that ought to be at the center of what is taught to every school child. We are capable of forgiving each other—but it needs to be taught. It is time our species grew up and discovered its spiritual depth, a depth which includes not only our capacity for quasi-divine creativity, beauty and compassion but also our capacity for quasi-demonic destruction. Growing up means putting aside adolescent greed and power games and learning and teaching our young the joy of living.

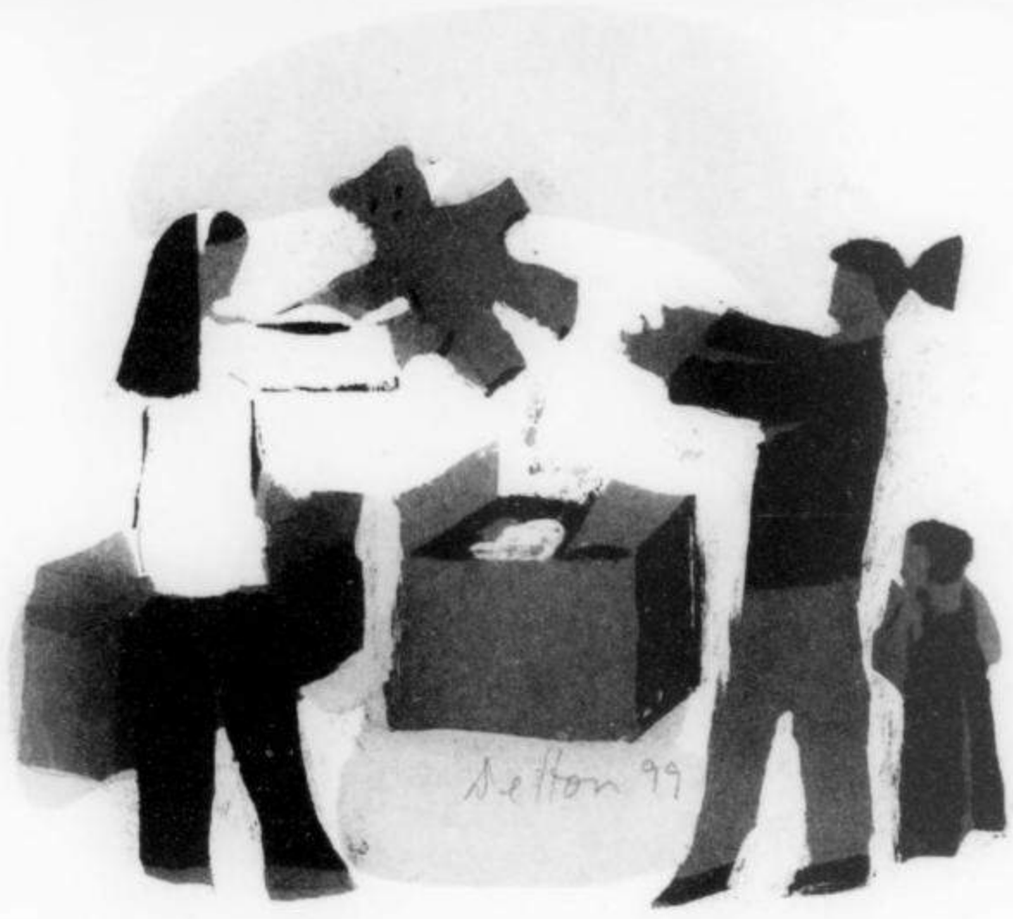
One part of this process is to reclaim the role of elders as spiritual guides and ethical role models. Melidoma Some warns that a culture that lacks such elders can expect angry and resentful youth. When the ideals of our culture center around elders hoarding money and power, real estate and decision-making, spending their time on the golf course instead of where the young congregate and celebrate, and investing in lies, bureaucratic frozenness, and human isolation, we will reap what we sow.

It is time to get on with our task and to alter our institutions to make this advance possible, an advance predicated on a return of reverence that grows from awe and gratitude. ❑

The Kids

Our Teachers in Mitzvahs

Danny Siegel



It is time to start paying closer attention to what kids of all ages are saying and doing in the world of Tzedakah and Mitzvahs. We pay lip service to them, praising them and telling them how much we admire what they have accomplished in the way of *tikkun olam,* but we need to go beyond that. Kids understand (in their unjaded view of the world) that there is a lot of *tikkun olam* that can be done simply. Let's do it according to their view of things: if it really is simple, let's do it without all of the "We can't because ..." excuses we throw at ourselves.

Some Awesome Examples

A. IT WAS A SIX-YEAR-OLD who asked her synagogue to put a Mitzvah Crib in the lobby so congregants could bring in items for babies whose families are poor: "Dear Congregation: We do have a food pantry. But some babies need more. Thanks, Jessica Sender." P.S. Baby Crib: formula, toys, diapers, food, ointment, bottles, blankets, clothes, strollers, high chairs. P.P.S. Feel free to bring items not listed.

B. IT WAS A BAT MITZVAH "KID"—Elana Erdstein—who collected twenty-five thousand soaps and shampoos (hotel amenities) to take to shelters. It was a Bar Mitzvah "kid"—David Levitt in Seminole, Florida—who got his county's schools to donate leftover food to shelters and soup kitchens, and who has made similar school donations a reality throughout the entire state. Bar and Bat Mitzvah "kids" everywhere enter Jewish adulthood with commitments to all kinds of Mitzvah projects, and commitments of some of their money to Tzedakah. And they are announcing it in their speeches from the bima, and asking others to join them.

C. IT WAS A TEENAGER—Emily Davenport—who, immediately after I conducted a leadership program, went with her younger brother to a doughnut shop and asked if she could regularly pick up the leftover doughnuts to take to shelters. The owner said, "Sure—as much as you want, as often as you want." By the time I got home, I already had an email from her saying, "Mission accomplished." (Many adults have failed because they never really tried.)

D. IT IS THE KIDS OF ALL AGES who come in hauling big bags of their stuffed animals to donate to kids who have none ... with no hesitation, including their First Teddy Bear, their dearest childhood possession.

E. IT IS THE COLLEGE STUDENTS on at least seventeen campuses who are making their universities purchase school-brand products only from manufacturers who do not employ child labor and who do not make their products in sweatshops. It is a long haul, and some of the schools are trying to skirt the issue. Some schools are offering self-policing in the industry, and some are against full disclosure of the findings. They must think the students they have selected for their high IQs and dazzling talents have a blind spot and can't see through the administration's evasive actions. The universities can't win this one. The students are on to them and will fight this battle to its inevitable, just conclusion.

Our Rebbes, The Kids

All these Mitzvah-doers are just normal kids, but they see more clearly than we do. Of course they are better at computer Mitzvot than we are, and they understand environmental and endangered species issues better than we do. It's in their kishkas from earliest childhood. But it is more than that. They are filled with visions of a better world. They just know they can make a difference. They are fearless in so many ways.

We must stop merely admiring them. It's patronizing, and the underlying message is, all too often, "Wait till they grow up and they see the Real World and they have to make a living and do all those other Adult Things." We are wrong, and they are right. They see the real world and they know how to change it, more often than not, better than we.

So, when they do something awesome, let's not just say "*Yasher Koach*—nicely done." Rather, let us say, "Amen, so may you continue to do *tikkun olam* all your lives. You are right. You have taught me a great deal. How may I join you in this Holy Work? You are my teachers. Teach me the way."

Amen! ❑

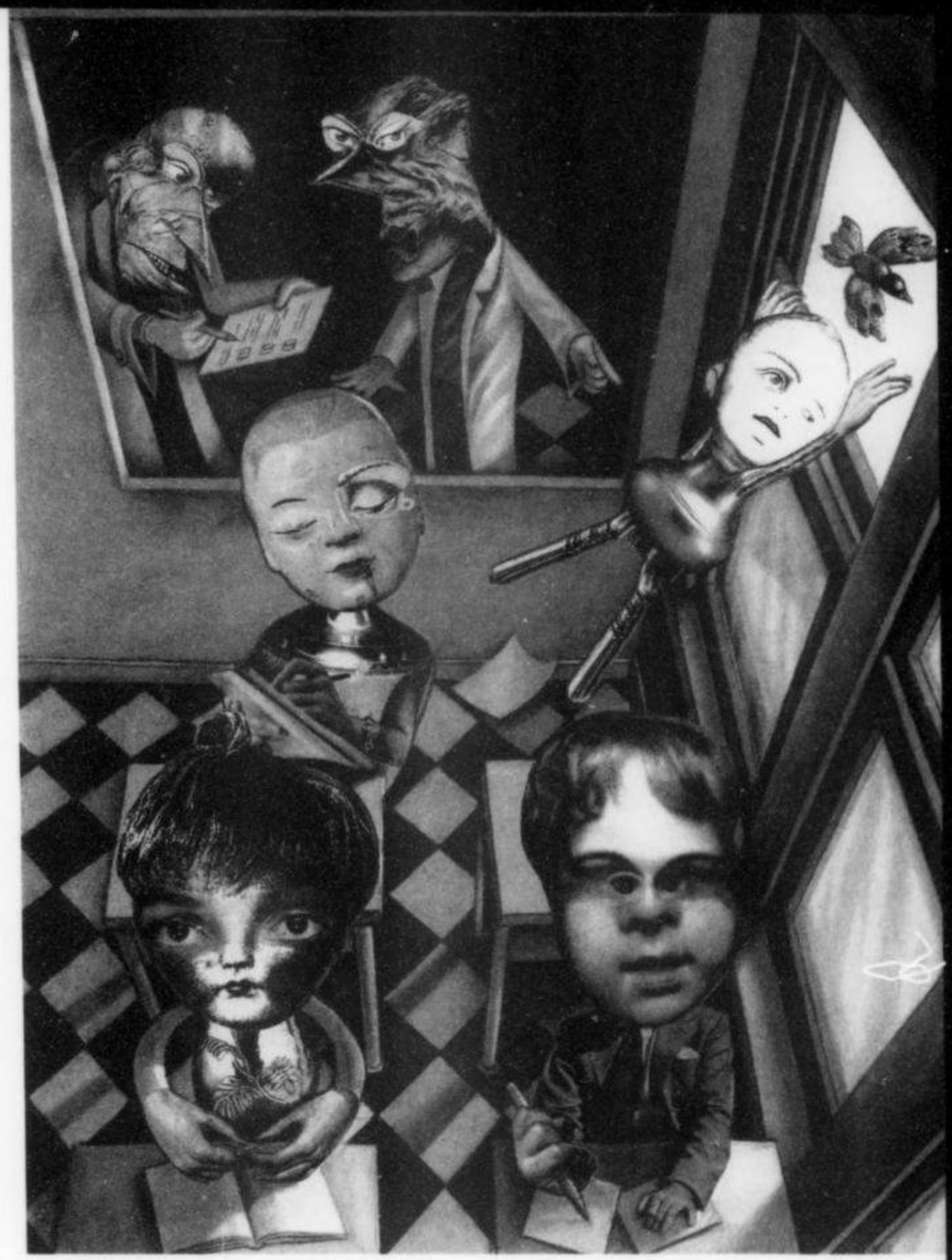
ILLUSTRATION BY JULIE DELTON

Danny Siegel is the author of twenty books including Good People, *a collection of essays about everyday people who are Mitzvah heroes and* Tell Me a Mitzvah, *Tzedakah stories for children.*

CULTURAL PATHOLOGY

Whose Order is Being Disordered by ADHD?

Thom Hartmann



A distressing trend is emerging among a group I refer to as "neo-Darwinists," who imply or state flat-out that people with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) are genetically dysfunctional, perhaps less evolved than "the rest of us," and thus have nothing to contribute to our culture whatsoever. Some have even called for ADHD adults to not have children, for fear that this "defect" will continue to spread. Others use the straw man scare tactic of threatening in professional publications that any discussion of ADHD that isn't purely "it's a genetic sickness" could lead to loss of funding for special education for ADHD children, or loss of profits to pharmaceutical manufacturers and practitioners who make their living working with ADHD children.

This trend is one that I believe is destructive to our children and dangerous to our society. Because many of these neo-Darwinists begin their work by either citing or condemning my work, I must respond on behalf of our children.

In the Seventies, when I was executive director of a residential treatment facility for disturbed children, I developed a metaphor to explain ADHD to children, a metaphor which I subsequently published in 1991. The metaphor was that hyperactive kids were actually "good hunters," whereas the very steady, stable, classroom-capable kids were "good farmers." The hunters, I suggested, would do great in the forest or battlefield: their constant scanning ("distractibility") would ensure they wouldn't miss anything; their ability to make instant decisions and to act on them ("impulsivity") would guarantee they'd be able to react to high-stress and response-demanding situations; and their love of stimulation ("need for high levels of stimulation") would cause them to enjoy the hunting world in the first place. (At its core, ADHD is diagnosed by evaluating the intensity and persistence of these three behaviors.) I told these kids, however, that they needed to learn the basic "farmer skills," because the world has been taken over by the farmers. Even our schools were organized by the farmers: schools let kids out in the summer so they can help bring in the crops. And factories and cubicles, of course, are just an industrial/technological age extension of the skill-set useful in agriculture.

The evidence that ADHD may be genetic, and my own experiences over the years visiting with indigenous agricultural and hunter/gatherer people on five continents, caused me to even think it possible that my metaphor might also prove to be "good science," although I have little certainty about whether it's genetics, culture, or both which so often causes indigenous people to fail when put into European-style classrooms. (I suspect both.)

Since the publication of this metaphor, I've presented it to tens of thousands of people at conferences on ADHD, neurology, and psychology from Australia to Israel to England to virtually every major city in the United States. During these lectures I suggested that perhaps in ancient times there was some sort of a "natural selection" process involved, to borrow a phrase from Darwin. I suggested that in hunting societies, those very risk-averse, super-methodical, check-it-five-times-before-doing-it people would not be particularly successful as hunters, and so would die off and not pass along their "farmer" genes. On the other hand, in the careful,

ILLUSTRATIONS BY DAVID BALL

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stable farming societies (such as Japan over the past three thousand years), those wild and crazy hunter-types would be weeded out, executed, or expelled, and the culture would be left with a lot of very compliant followers and worker bees but few inventors, innovators, leaders, or—well—hunters.

I now realize that I should never, ever, have used a phrase invented by Darwin.

The banner of natural selection has now been picked up and twisted sideways to justify the worldview of some in the ADHD field that people with ADHD are suffering from a genetic defect. This defect, they say, is the result of evolution—which occasionally produces "more fit" and "less fit" members of a species. (Normally the "less fit" die out or are dominated by the "more fit," according to this interpretation of Darwin's work.) This is the natural course of the evolutionary process, they say, and the sometimes-explicit and sometimes-implicit message is that those with ADHD are less evolved, and that humans who do not have ADHD are more highly evolved, Darwinianly-speaking.

The concept of variations in the quality of human evolution is the primary tenet of the doctrines of eugenics, a term coined in 1893 by Sir Francis Galton (1822–1911), the cousin of Charles Darwin. Galton derived the word from the Greek *eugenes,* which means "to be well born," and promoted eugenics as "a civic religion based on science." He wrote that one day eugenics would replace Christianity, because of eugenics' emphasis on selecting out only that which is "good, strong, and useful," while "selectively deleting" from society those genetic characteristics which tend to "weakness, physical or mental."

Eugenicists assert that nearly all human traits are inherited, including (to quote Charles Davenport, an American associate of Galton's): "eye color, hair, skin, stature, weight, special ability in music, drawing, painting, literary composition, calculating, or memorizing, weakness of the mucous membranes, nomadism, general bodily energy, strength, mental ability, epilepsy, shiftlessness, insanity, pauperism, criminality, various forms of nervous disease, defects of speech, sight, hearing, cancer, tuberculosis, pneumonia, skeletal deformities, and other traits." Havelock Ellis wrote one of the classic early texts on eugenics in 1911, *The Problem of Race Regeneration,* in which he echoed what was then termed the social Darwinist notion that genetic weaknesses or lower evolutionary status could cause people to fail in modern society. "These classes," Ellis wrote, "with their tendency to weak-mindedness, their inborn laziness, lack of vitality, and unfitness for organized activity, contain the people who complain they are starving for want of work, though they will never perform any work that is given them."

Long before the modern neo-Darwinists suggested ADHD was evidence of the genetic and evolutionary superiority or inferiority of certain humans, America had already delved deeply into experimentation with eugenics as a tool for social change and to "improve" the human race. In the 1920s we were the world center of eugenic activity: between 1907 and 1940 more than one hundred thousand Americans were involuntarily sterilized in more than thirty states. State bureaucracies determined who would be sterilized and who could breed; the banner of building national racial superiority was picked up in England, Finland, Sweden, and a dozen other countries by 1930.

By 1931, two years before Hitler seized power in Germany, twenty-seven states in the United States had passed eugenics laws including forced sterilization programs. This did not go unnoticed in Germany: in *Mein Kampf* ("My Struggle"), Hitler wrote: "I know people do not like to hear all this; but there scarcely exists anything more thoughtless, more hare-brained than our citizenship laws [which allow non-Aryans German citizenship]. There is, however, today one state in which at least weak beginnings of a better conception are noticeable. Of course, it is not our German republic, but the American Union, in which an effort is being made to consult reason." By 1936, Hitler had turned evolutionary psychiatry and eugenics into a state religion—as envisioned by Galton—and by 1940 he had produced huge human breeding farms, recruiting over one hundred thousand blonde women between fifteen and twenty-two years old to be impregnated by members of the SS, all of whom could prove their "Aryan blood" back to the mid-1700s.

Before the existence of Hitler's death camps became common knowledge in the United States in 1945, eugenics had picked up considerable steam and was a popular topic among psychiatrists and psychologists here. As in Germany, the debate had by then expanded from the wisdom of breeding better humans to include the topic of preventing or doing away with those who were evolutionarily inferior. For example, psychiatrist Foster Kennedy wrote, in a 1942 edition of *The American Journal of Psychiatry:*

> I believe when the defective child shall have reached the age of five years—and on the application of his guardians—that the case should be considered under law by a competent medical board; then it should be reviewed twice more at four-month intervals; then, if the board, acting, I repeat, on the applications of the guardians of the child, and after three examinations of a defective who has reached the age of five or more, should decide that that defective has no future or hope of one; then I believe it is a merciful and kindly thing to relieve that defective—often tortured and convulsed, grotesque and absurd, useless and foolish, and entirely undesirable—of the agony of living.

The *Journal* ran an unsigned editorial in the same issue of this official publication of the American Psychiatric Association, enthusiastically endorsing Kennedy's suggestion that useless, foolish, and entirely undesirable humans be "relieved" of the agony of living.

After World War II exposed the horrors of the endpoint of this logic, however, proponents of eugenics became



rather quiet, although there are still, today, active—albeit low-profile—eugenics societies in the United States and England. The only high-profile American scientist in the 1950s who was willing to publicly suggest that we should continue our U.S. eugenics programs was Nobel laureate William Shockley (1910–1989), a physicist at Stanford University. After winning his Nobel Prize in physics (not genetics), he openly suggested people with IQs lower than 100 should submit to voluntary sterilization. His widely published views gave encouragement to the quiet but ongoing eugenics programs in the United States which were stopped in the 1960s only with the revelation by Robert Kennedy that over one hundred thousand poor Blacks, Native Americans, and mental patients had been sterilized without their knowledge or consent, as doctors in thirty states doing the sterilizations told their unwitting patients that they were performing "a slightly painful pelvic examination," or "routine surgery to prevent later disease."

Since the first publication of *The Bell Curve* in 1995, however, it has become safer and more popular for those who believe there are evolutionarily superior and inferior humans to come out of the closet. For example, citing race as proof of evolutionary status, Michael Levin, in his 1997 book *Why Race Matters,* says, "Not one of the 1,500 discoveries listed in Asimov's *Chronology of Science and Discovery* (1989) was made by a Negroid people." Of course, this is not purely a German or American phenomenon. In Japan, there is today a best-selling book that is currently unavailable in English translation, even though it has sold tens of millions of copies in Japan. Titled *The Japanese Brain* by Tadanobu Tsunoda, the book asserts that the Japanese "race" is superior to all other Asian races, who themselves are superior to Caucasians, who are superior to the rest of humanity.

In the field of ADHD, the neo-Darwinists argue that the most evolved people are those capable of long and sustained focus and attention to boring tasks, such as would be necessary to obtain advanced academic credentials, for example. Those on the branches of the human genetic tree who didn't "evolve" sufficiently to excel at farmer-style pursuits are, according to these authors, "impaired" by comparison. The authors of one recent article baldly state: "ADHD, rather than representing an adapted evolved set of valuable qualities, reflects weaknesses in the evolution...."

The arrogance of the hypothesis that ADHD is an indicator of an evolutionary failure is breathtaking. The fact that such analysis draws on the theory of eugenics should be enough to discredit it. A less obvious criticism is that such a hypothesis assumes that the narrowly defined criteria for success or failure in our particular culture at this particular point in time are identical to those of all cultures, all humans, and for all history, both past and future.

Cloaking themselves in the respectable mantle of science, the neo-Darwinists suggest that only in a rigorous application of the scientific method to the study of evolution will we find the ultimate answers to why people with ADHD appear to perform poorly compared with their non-ADHD peers. "Serious and scholarly evolutionary thinking about ADHD" is necessary, according to one recent article in an ADHD publication, but must be constrained by an understanding of the "complexities of evolutionary theory" and "the processes of natural selection" for us to gain true insight into population genetics and whether a particular trait is adaptive or maladaptive. Nature is king, nurture is dead, and culture is irrelevant.

Even if the natural selection process with regard to the genetics of ADHD were true, the belief that ADHD represents a "defect" rests on a profoundly flawed assumption: that our culture and society are the pinnacle of an evolutionary process. This better/worse view of ADHD assumes the evolutionary process dictates that the "most fit" will be the survivors or, at the very least, the most prosperous, and that now is the endpoint time by which we must judge the fruits of natural selection.

"But Darwin says the victors must be the most highly evolved!" shout the neo-Darwinists, whether using their theories to justify why the rich "deserve" their riches, or why "defects" like ADHD should be medicated out of our population. The easy response to that is: "Was Hitler's Germany more highly evolved than Poland or Holland?" The scientific response is: "Darwin said no such thing."

David Loye, a founder of the General Evolution Research Group, points out that in Darwin's seminal book on evolution and humans, *The Descent of Man,* Darwin discusses "love" ninety-five times and "morality" ninety times, versus two times for anything about the "survival of the fittest." In one of these references to the "fittest," Darwin

ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID BALL

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says that "at the level of the human, other things become more important [than physical strength or intellectual ability or willingness to conquer or dominate], including compassion and spirituality."

As Riane Eisler has so brilliantly documented in her book *The Chalice and the Blade,* a vast body of anthropological and archeological evidence points to human cultures and entire civilizations that were not exploitative, hierarchical, male-dominated, controlled by fear and power, or engaged in warfare. Indeed, today they are still here, represented by over 1,000 different indigenous societies in remote parts of the world. Only a tiny minority of these indigenous cultures engage in warfare or have hierarchical political structures: the vast majority are egalitarian, peaceful, and quite successful in their ways of life, those ways having sustained them for tens to hundreds of thousands of years.

In other words, there are different ways to live from the way in which we live. There are—and always have been—different human cultures than our own. But, while older cultures value cooperation and security, our culture is set up to honor and support competition and domination—to feed resources to the most wealthy and powerful. Those people who are the most compliant and demur to authority figures are valued; they do not have "oppositional defiant disorder." Those people who can sit in a classroom for hours at a time, year after year, and then as adults sit in a cubicle or on an assembly line for hours at a time, year after year, are valued: they do not have "attention deficit hyperactive disorder." Those who have the ability to work easily and quickly with words and numbers are valued: they are not "retarded" and do not have "learning disabilities." Isn't it interesting that we have no diagnostic categories for "musically disordered," or "painting deficit disorder," or "creative thinking deficit"? These abilities do not produce good, compliant workers for our corporations and institutions, which are the leaders and definers of our culture. Therefore we don't even bother to measure or try to remedy deficiencies in them.

It is one thing to say, "We agree as a society that this or that trait or behavior is the best thing for our culture as it is set up, and some other trait or behavior may not be as desirable for our culture." It is quite another thing—a huge step over a very dangerous line—to say, "God or nature or science has demonstrated that this trait or behavior is absolutely good, and that trait or behavior is absolutely bad."

As we move increasingly from the realm of difference to the realm of disorder, some physicians have now come forward to suggest that people with ADHD should be encouraged not to have children, lest their "genetic weaknesses" or lower evolutionary status be conferred on future generations. One such voice is Dr. David Comings. The thesis of his book, *The Gene Bomb,* is that people of "undesirable behavior" tend to have less education and to produce children at an earlier age (they are impulsive, after all) than well-educated persons, and therefore have more children. This produces a surplus of "undesirable" people, carrying "undesirable" genes, among our population. (In his writings, ADHD is explicitly deemed "undesirable.") Comings cites and praises the writings of numerous modern eugenicists in his book, including Frederick Osborn, A. Coale, and D. Kirk.

If only we could get rid of those rabble-rousers, the neo-Darwinists suggest, then the rest of us could have a civilized life! Get rid of those who couldn't make it in school (Thomas Edison was thrown out of school in the third grade, as was Ben Franklin); get rid of those who are incompetent at factory or office work (Vincent Van Gogh never held a job for more than two months); clear our gene pool of those who have no respect for legal authority (George Washington was sentenced to death by the King of England for treason). Then we would have an orderly society, an entire nation of third-little-pigs and well-built brick houses.

Too many psychologists, writing in respectable publications, insist that people with ADHD can make little or no contribution to modern society. They have called my farmer/hunter model a "Just So Story" after the fictional fables by Rudyard Kipling. These authors and others like them flatly state: "In not a single instance of peer-reviewed, published literature have symptoms or consequences of ADHD been found to hold an advantage."

There are several problems with this assertion. The first is the word "advantage." Of course, they mean "advantage" in the contemporary cultural context of a person's ability to function in a public school or work in a factory or office cubicle. In fact, virtually all the studies that have been published in the peer-reviewed literature of psychology are looking at the ability of an ADHD child to function in a "boring/farmer" environment, as this is what society rewards and so is our current criterion for "good." Failure in this arena makes one a potential customer for the drug companies that fund such research. Few studies have ever bothered to test ADHD kids against "normal" children on, for example, their ability to outscore in one of the new, high-stimulation video games or outperform on a skateboard … yet we all know how brilliantly these "impaired" children can function in these "non-useful" areas. In the real world, if these children could survive the experience of public school, such behaviors could translate into being a competent air traffic controller or a successful entrepreneur.

Since all the studies are looking for "impairment" in a specific and narrowly circumscribed range of capabilities, it should surprise none of us that most find impairment—particularly since the children being tested were identified as having ADHD by virtue of that "boredom impairment" in the first place (by their teachers or parents, who then referred them for testing and/or medication). In a letter to the editor of *Scientific American* magazine, psychologist Russell A. Barkley says, "Some studies have shown that



ADHD can reduce IQ scores by an average of seven to 10 points." Of course, what the writer overlooks is the fact that the first thing an IQ test tests is the ability of a person to take a test: this, in and of itself, does not necessarily indicate intelligence unless one defines "intelligence" as meaning only the ability to take tests and perform in contemporary public school environments.

Few studies have looked for ADHD children who are functioning well in school, or ADHD adults who are functioning well in life (although we all know of examples of the latter, from actors to entrepreneurs to inventors to artists). Because publications of the psychology and psychiatry industries concern themselves only with pathology (there is no listing for "normal" in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* of the American Psychiatric Association, for example), it should not surprise us that they find it. Nor should it surprise us that they wouldn't bother to look for or at those who are not "failing" in society, and thus not potential customers.

Too many psychologists ... insist that people with ADHD can make little or no contribution to modern society.

Thus, people like multi-millionaire entrepreneur Wilson Harrell (former publisher of *Inc.* magazine and founder of the Formula 409 company) are completely overlooked. Harrell, in his book *For Entrepreneurs Only,* devotes two chapters to his own ADHD and his belief that ADHD is "essential" for the success of an entrepreneur. Similarly, those who don't care to look for ADHD among the ranks of the successful would overlook Harvard psychiatrists and professors of psychiatry Drs. John Ratey and Edward Hallowell, authors of the best-selling book *Driven to Distraction,* in which they state explicitly that they each "have ADD."

In fact, several studies have provided us with hints that ADHD may be useful somehow, somewhere, sometime. One of the most interesting was a Washington University study in which ADHD persons were tested against "normal" controls for their ability to handle emergencies, what the study's authors called "urgent tasks." The abstract reads:

> Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) has been proposed to represent adaptive responding to highly urgent situations in primitive hunting. In the present study, 31 adults with self-reported ADHD were compared with 33 normal adults on a newly developed, 10-item measure of urgent task involvement. The internal consistency of the scale was suitable, and the group with ADHD scored significantly higher than the control group, as predicted.

While this was the first study to demonstrate that people with ADHD had some advantage in some circumstances over others, many previous studies offer tantalizing glimpses which the researchers chose not to pursue. For example, one study found that while "normal" children's ability to read or perform tasks requiring vigilance deteriorated when they were "distracted" by high levels of external stimulation, ADHD children's scores actually improved. Another study found that boys with ADHD calmed down when they were in highly stimulating environments, whereas "normal" children would crash and burn under such circumstances. An article in *The Journal of Creative Behavior* by University of Georgia's Bonnie Cramond asks the question in its abstract: "There are so many similarities in the behavioral descriptions of creativity and ADHD that one is left to wonder, could these be overlapping phenomena?" The article goes on to suggest that a thorough search of the literature in both fields would imply the answer is yes. It concludes:

> Perhaps individuals who have trouble with verbal learning but have a very imaginative, visual manner of thinking will be considered at the forefront of innovation in our society rather than as problem learners. Taken together, the results of these studies and others like them are indicative of a childhood syndrome characterized by hyperactivity and high intelligence, in which personality variables, modes of cognitive representation and creativity are intimately bound.

Instead of trying to rid ourselves of ADHD children, our society would be far better served were we to ask, "How can we acknowledge and honor the individuality of each of our children, and provide settings in which each can develop into a happy, effective, and caring adult?" Were we to provide education that acknowledges the differences in the way people learn, we might soon be tapping a source of creativity that could be useful to our entire society. But to do that would require that we open ourselves up to the possibility that the kinds of skills we reward today may not be the only worthwhile skills—and that would open the question of whether the way we organized our society itself was the only or best way to create a society.

When such questions are on the agenda, ADHD children look much more like a symptom of a society which itself may be severely dysfunctional. If we cannot find the tools to reorganize our world immediately, we at least ought to do what we can to prevent educational and eugenic philosophies that seek to denigrate the beings of those who do not fit into this distorted reality. ❑

INTERVIEW

AN INTERVIEW WITH Al Sharpton

Jack Newfield



PHOTOGRAPH BY LORENZO CINIGLIO / IMPACT VISUALS

Reverend Al Sharpton has been a controversial activist in New York City since 1982. Sued successfully for defamation for his role in the 1987 Tawana Brawley case, Rev. Sharpton has since moderated his views and become more of a coalition leader. He was the catalyst for a civil disobedience campaign protesting the police killing of unarmed African immigrant Amadou Diallo that led to twelve hundred arrests. He is forty-four years old.

NEWFIELD: Reverend, why has the February 4 killing of Amadou Diallo sparked a mass movement in New York City and become a national issue? What was it about this killing and its context that has created both a fire storm and a coalition?

SHARPTON: I think pressure had been building up, people already were feeling harassed. And Mayor Giuliani had, in my judgment, betrayed the public by appointing a commission around the Louima case and then not doing anything. [Haitian immigrant Abner Louima was arrested and allegedly tortured by four white police officers in August 1998. The officers' trial began in April 1999.]

When the Diallo shooting happened, it was so cold, so blatant: forty-one shots, unarmed man, no criminal record, no crime in progress. I think the public was not willing to wait this time. Then the mayor sent all the wrong signals. He comes out with charts and graphs. He's talking about crime being down. Everyone wants crime down, but that was not the issue. And I think that response created the ground for a mass movement. The challenge was addressing the issue dramatically without stepping over the line ourselves. And the answer became the civil disobedience.

After the first rally (on February 7) at the site of the shooting, we rallied at city hall (on February 22), then we had thousands at a Wall Street rally (on March 3). I said to Reverend Wyatt Walker, who chairs the board of the National Action Network, that I thought it was time to go to civil disobedience. Walker opposed the idea and called an emergency board meeting, and we actually argued it out for three hours. When we finally agreed, the board said any action must be multi-racial and that we must be able to sustain it for two weeks or we shouldn't begin. [Daily protests were held in front of police headquarters from March 9 through March 29. Over 1,000 people were arrested.]

NEWFIELD: Talk to me a little bit about your political pilgrimage. When I first met you, in 1982, you were with Shirley Chisholm. In 1986, you were behind Al D'Amato's (R) campaign for the Senate. Now, after visiting the house of Adam Powell and a few other houses, you say you're in the house of Martin Luther King, Jr. Explain—intellectually, or spiritually—how you've gotten to the point you're at today, where you've successfully orchestrated a multi-racial civil disobedience movement in New York.

SHARPTON: I started out in two disciplines that both caused problems: the Pentecostal church, which is basically very conservative; then, in my early teens, the SCLC Operation Bread Basket movement under Bill Jones locally and Reverend Jesse Jackson nationally.

I was always socially motivated, and I always wanted to have a social ministry. But as you grow in a movement, you change. My age group was a lot more militant than Jesse; we were fascinated with the Black Panther party and the cultural nationalists. I'm talking about the early 1970s, late 1960s. Shirley Chisholm ran for president in 1972, which fascinated me.

NEWFIELD: You were how old in 1972?

SHARPTON: In 1972 I was about seventeen years old. As I got closer to Shirley, I realized how local politics were a lot different from national politics; local politics were closer to the clubhouse machine. But in national politics, with Shirley, I came in politics not from the clubhouse up, but from the movement over.

NEWFIELD: Do you think your early political wandering came from a search for a mentor or a father figure, which you didn't have?

SHARPTON: My father left when I was ten. On reflection, if I had had a father at home, I probably wouldn't have wandered a lot. And if Jesse had lived in New York, or I had lived in Chicago, I probably wouldn't have wandered a lot. I say openly Jesse was always my hero figure, but Jesse was a little distant. I could say now that of course I'd have wandered through nationalism, wandered through estab-

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lishment politics, and eventually entered entertainment and boxing, which by their natures have corruption.

But what I realized eventually is that even though I got involved with all of that, that was not what I wanted. I was not at peace. And yet I never tried to become an establishment political person. I could have. I could have done a lot of things. For example, Bishop Washington from the Pentecostal church got a grant for a drug program from Al D'Amato after he had us endorse him. Then the Bishop died. D'Amato's people said I could go over to the drug program, but I refused to touch the money. That kind of position was never my goal. My goal was always to emulate Jesse.

NEWFIELD: Do you think part of your early problems stemmed from becoming too visible too young, that you were immature? You were in your twenties, and suddenly you're involved in city-wide politics.

SHARPTON: I think that it was hard for a younger man who was not willing to listen. Jesse used to stay on me, and tell me that I was going too fast, that I should stay in school, that people were using me. And I didn't want to hear that. I would tell myself that Jesse didn't want to see me out there, that he was threatened by me. In retrospect, though, he was right. And my mother was right. My mother was opposed to me going too fast. She wanted me to stay under a guy like Jesse and finish college—I was at Brooklyn College.

I think a lot of it is that if you were a young, smart, black kid in the city, there were not many options, especially in the political arena in the 1970s. So, when I should have just paced myself and grown naturally, I ended up wandering, trivializing my own work, and hustling.

I can say that now because I know that how I ended up was not my intention, which is why I think guys like Jesse never gave up on me. Because they knew that that was not my program, but that was my circumstance.

NEWFIELD: How big a turning point was your stabbing in that schoolyard in Bensonhurst in 1991? I ask you that because, years later, you and I together visited the guy who stabbed you, and that was a great moment of redemption and reconciliation. But was the stabbing a turning point in your life, to see both that rhetoric could lead to violence and that you could become the victim of it?

SHARPTON: It was two things. It was seeing firsthand where violence could go; where hate could go; where loose language could go. This guy actually thought that killing Al Sharpton would make him a hero. And that was no misplaced notion in his environment. He would be a hero if he killed me. The question I had to face is, what poison am I putting in my environment? Because how could I look at his environment and not see that I was doing the same thing in my environment—making it a place where a kid feels he'll be a hero if he kills somebody else. And I had to ask myself, am I, in any way, even though I'm not advocating it, am I aggressively trying to prevent a climate where somebody else could exploit those feelings?

The question I had to face is, what poison am I putting in my environment?

So on that level it was a turning point. And it was a personal turning point because when you lie in a bed in a hospital, dealing with the question of mortality, you inevitably ask yourself, how do I want to be remembered? And I realized that I was nowhere near being the ultimate person that I would want to be—in terms of trying to fight for justice, trying to bring people together, trying to bring the King tradition into my generation. I had not done any of that in any way, shape, or form that I felt was complete. So I said, if I get out of this bed, I've got to pursue how I really want to be remembered.

NEWFIELD: You and I have talked a lot about music, about people we admire who became crossover artists, like Stevie Wonder, Lloyd Price, and James Brown. Do you think you can still become a crossover artist in politics and get substantial numbers of white votes? Or, do you think that through this police brutality movement you've found another way to have just as much influence without having to get elected?

SHARPTON: I think I can become a crossover figure. I hadn't really thought about whether or not I could become a crossover vote-getter. I don't even know if I want to pursue electoral politics. I think that the police brutality fight has taught me that there is a role that one can play, that one can help set climates and create change, and that you don't necessarily have to hold an office—i.e., a Jesse.

NEWFIELD: Martin Luther King, Jr., was just a citizen. He was never elected to anything.

SHARPTON: Martin Luther King, Jr., never was a legislator, never wrote a piece of legislation. And Martin Luther King, Jr., is the ultimate. I don't think any of us can get to his level. But I can maybe get to Jesse's level, if I try hard. I'm not as preoccupied as I was five years ago, or even a year ago, with elected office. I'm not saying to you that I'm never going to run again, but I am telling you that I'm not preoccupied with it. I'm more preoccupied with trying to build a national multi-cultural, multi-racial movement that really uses the tactics of King to address not only the problems of police brutality, but also health care, and other things.

I don't know if being in elected office I would have been in a position to do what we did around One Police Plaza, mounting daily protests for over two weeks. If I had run for Congress, I probably never would have protested the Diallo case as I did. I'm sure the case would have been protested somehow, but I don't think it would have been done the way it was done if I didn't do it. So I'm most at peace with what I'm doing now, and elected office is not necessary for me.

NEWFIELD: Isn't that one of the great lessons of the 1960s and the Civil Rights movement, that movements

make politicians, politicians don't make movements?

SHARPTON: I agree with that. I think that in our time that is true. I think that a Reverend Jackson is much more effective than most of the Congressional Black Caucus put together. I've never said this publicly, but, a guy like me, if I don't stumble and can keep going, I can help decide a mayor of New York even if I never actually become the mayor of New York.

Somewhere down the road I'm going to ask myself, do I step back for the greater good and help push someone who is more saleable to people who will never buy me? Then I could help bring others to the table. And that might be a better testimony to my real maturity and long-term contribution than to see whether I could ever be the one that they will all vote for.

I'm the one that wants to bring the King tradition into my generation.

NEWFIELD: You're saying it may be better to be the king-maker than the king.

SHARPTON: Or at least to be part of the king-making team. I think that at some point I will make that decision. I think Jesse made that decision in terms of the 1992 and 2000 elections. Whether he was right or wrong, it was a decision that he made. And, sometimes, statesmen outlast politicians. I mean, I've been at it a long time. I've seen three or four mayors come and go and I'm forty-four years old. And I'm not in a hurry to go anywhere else.

NEWFIELD: Let's talk a little bit about policing and the police. You told me, maybe two years ago, that you agreed with some of the quality-of-life theory of policing that [former] Police Commissioner Bratton brought in. Why do you think crime has gone down over the last seven years? Do you think there is a way to have both less crime and less police brutality?

SHARPTON: Yes. I think that crime has gone down for many reasons. Unemployment has gone down, a lot of community policing programs are now in place, and I think the quality-of-life policing is good. There is nothing wrong with saying that we're gonna have aggressive policing. I just think that the signal must be sent that one, the police need to work with the [community] in order to do that; and two, policemen cannot use a philosophy of the ends justifying the means.

I think that we have got to watch that we don't give cover to criminals while we're trying to fight rogue cops. The object is not to say we don't want aggressive policing; the object is to say we don't want the policeman to turn into the criminal. I support the idea of cleaning the streets and stopping gun toting and stopping drugs and stopping people who bring, in my judgment, wickedness into the neighborhoods.

NEWFIELD: You support the police arresting fare-breakers, people who urinate in public, and other quality-of-life offenders?

SHARPTON: Absolutely, I agree with all of that. I don't want my daughters to have to grow up exposed to that. People don't have the right to demand to be allowed to urinate on the street.

NEWFIELD: How would you set priorities for reforming police departments around the country? Where would you emphasize greater integration as opposed to greater monitoring and accountability?

SHARPTON: I would put diversity and accountability on equal levels. I don't think an all-black police force necessarily means you have an all-just police force. I think every cop must be accountable. To me it's not the color of the brutal cop, it's the actions of the brutal cop.

NEWFIELD: Do you think, in general, police departments are more racist than other sectors of society—the media, advertising, banking, construction unions?

SHARPTON: No. I think all those areas have levels of racism. I think the police are more in your face. People have to deal with them every day, there's more hand-to-hand combat, and so it is easier to recognize the racist elements in a police department. People don't usually see the vice president of a Madison Avenue advertising firm or the president of a bank or the publisher of a newspaper walking down the street. They see a cop. I don't think that most cops are more racist than people in other fields. It's just the nature of their job to be in more contact with the public.

NEWFIELD: What do you think is the biggest misperception of you?

SHARPTON: I think that a lot of people don't realize that I do this every day, and it's not the big cases, it's the small cases. Every day my office is open; every day we have cases. Every Saturday I have rallies with three or four hundred people. This is my life. The struggle is my life. Life is the struggle. I think a lot of people think I wait on a hot issue to come along and ride the wave. In many cases, *I am the wave!*

NEWFIELD: Sum up the ways you think you have changed since you got stabbed.

SHARPTON: I learned that you've got to stand up to all sides, including your own community, and say, "Action has to be inclusive, it has to be nonviolent." You can't tolerate sending mixed signals, mixed messages. You've got to be very clear to people at all times. If you are going to say—as I am attempting—that I'm the one that wants to bring the King tradition into my generation, that means that you've got to be very clear. That's probably the most difficult thing. I made a speech at the Million Youth March and talked about how I'm against anti-Semitism. You've got to say it. You can't say it to the reporters after the rally. You've got to say it right there in the faces of people in your own community who may not agree with you, but they will learn to respect you. And even if they don't, you will respect yourself.

NEWFIELD: Thank you. ❑

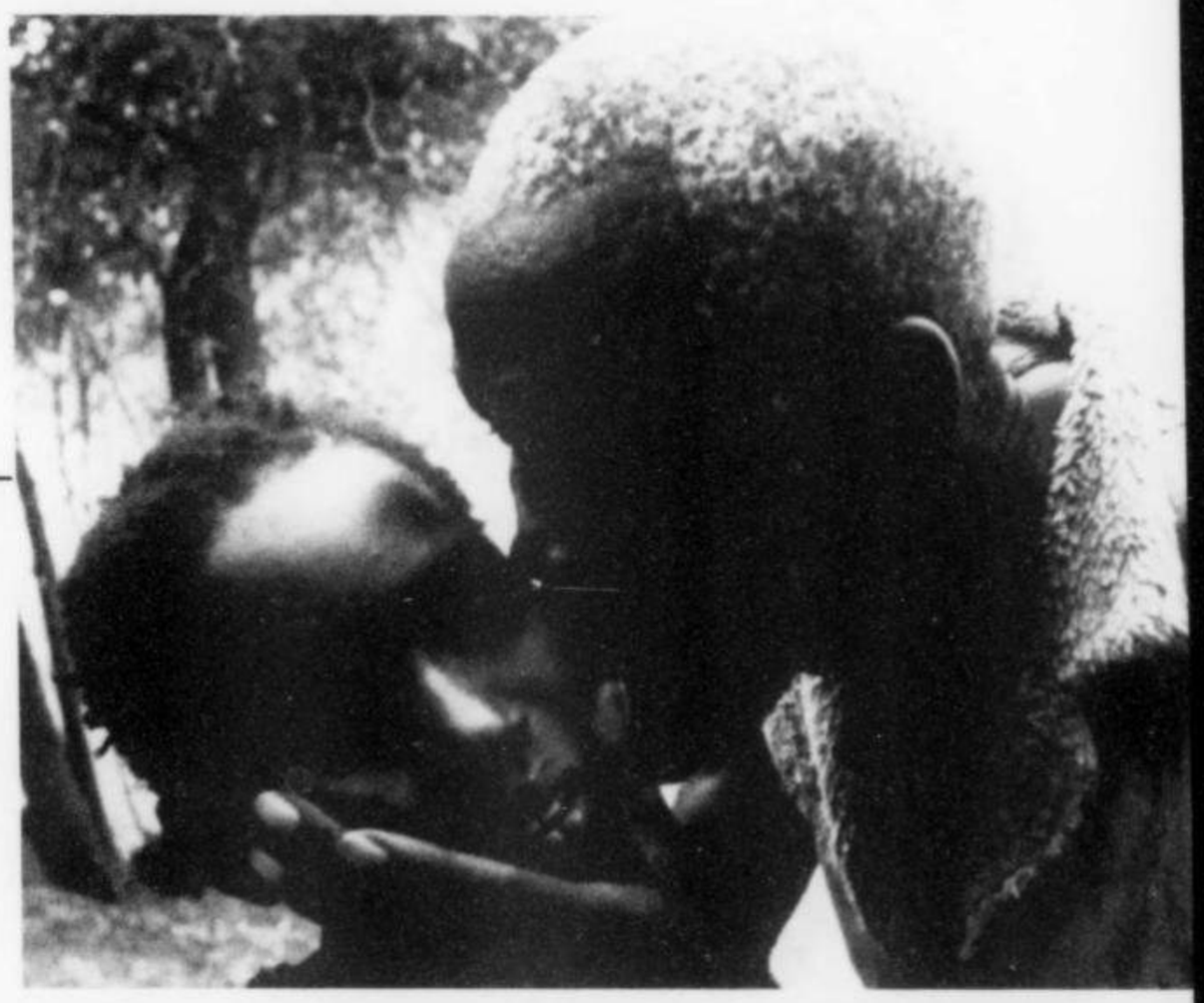
HUMAN RIGHTS

African Slavery ... Still

Charles Jacobs

"There is no commandment as great as redemption of captives: Anyone who turns his eyes away from their redemption is in violation."

—Maimonides Code







Sudanese are reunited with their families after being bought out of slavery.

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF CSI

In the summer of 1998, Abuk Deng Akuei, a young girl from south Sudan, was enslaved after armed men stormed her village. Captured as booty, she was made to live as a concubine until January 10, 1999, when an American named John Eibner set her free. Slavery, today? Yes.

In a 1989 coup, the National Islamic Front (NIF), an Islamic fundamentalist party backed by both Iran and Iraq, took over the government of Sudan. Once in power, the NIF declared a jihad, or "holy war," on those who opposed the imposition of Muslim law or Sudanese Arabization; those who resisted could be murdered or enslaved.

The regime, which rules by terror, gives its militias uniforms and arms but no paychecks. Their compensation is war booty—crops, cows, women, children. Today, tens of thousands of Africans, most of whom are either Christian or practitioners of traditional faiths, are in bondage. Likewise, moderate Arab Muslims who resist the call to religious war have been terrorized, as have the African Muslim people of the Nuba mountains who resist Sudanese Arabization.

The first detailed account of a slave raid came from two brave Arab scholars from the University of Khartoum, Suleyman Ali Baldo and Ushari Ahmad Mahmud. (Mahmud has been imprisoned twice for his anti-slavery publications.) They investigated a 1987 attack on the town of El Deien that was part of the growing Islamic fundamentalist movement that preceded the 1989 coup. There, Arab militias stormed the village on horses and in trucks. They entered the church where terror-stricken congregants huddled, and attacked them with hatchets, clubs, knives, and guns, beating and shooting people to death. The panicked survivors were convinced by Arab elders that they would be escorted out of town to safety. Lured onto rail cars that were later set afire, people were either burned, shot, or captured as slaves.

Their fate is appalling. Slaves are either kept by the individual militia raiders or sold north. According to a State

Charles Jacobs is president of the American Anti-Slavery Group.

Department report, some are sold into Libya. While in Sudan, the slaves are given Arab names and taught to speak Arabic. They are forcibly converted to Islam. Girls chosen as concubines are genitally mutilated to fit into the culture of their masters.

The resurgence of a slave trade in Sudan over the past decade has been well-documented in the West. Investigators from Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have traveled the terrain and extensively reported on the trade in black flesh. The U.S. State Department comments annually on the practice. Two United Nations special rapporteurs have issued several reports on slavery. Dozens of journalists have interviewed escaped or redeemed slaves.

Christian Solidarity International (CSI), a United Nations non-governmental organization based in Zurich, has been flying John Eibner and a few other fearless people into south Sudan for years. Bringing medicine and food, the flights are unauthorized and could be shot down. When CSI learned that families of the Dinka tribe were buying their children and women back from slavers whenever they could, Eibner helped negotiate a treaty between several Dinka communities and local Arab tribes. In exchange for being allowed to trade in Dinka markets, Arabs would send people up north to retrieve Dinka slaves. CSI announced at the start that they would never pay more than the customary price of the equivalent in Sudanese pounds of fifty dollars a slave, with the remaining fifty it collects going to cover the mission's cost as well as food and medicine.

On January 10, 1999, in an unimaginable scene filmed by CBS News and broadcast in February, Eibner handed over packets of Sudanese pounds to a slave trader for the release of 1,000 slaves. The liberated slaves, mostly women and children, were returned to their villages.

After this broadcast, a CSI spokesperson told reporters that the organization had continually asked UNICEF to initiate a slave-tracing and retrieving program. UNICEF got annoyed. Three weeks after Eibner's action in Sudan, UNICEF offered its first comment about slavery there: "The purchase of a human being," UNICEF announced at a press briefing in Geneva, "is absolutely intolerable." This comment sparked an international debate between the world's preeminent protector of children and a growing, grassroots, abolitionist movement.

Spokeswoman Marie Heuze said UNICEF's condemnation was partly based on their opposition to sending "liquid cash, especially dollars" into Sudan, which only serves to "fuel the arms trade" there. This was wrong on its face. CSI redeems slaves with local Sudanese pounds. No arms trade is fueled. I called John Eibner to ask him about UNICEF's belief that what he does is "intolerable." "What would be intolerable," he said, "would be to leave the children in slavery. That they should remain where they are beaten, raped, mutilated—that is intolerable."

In a subsequent press release, UNICEF Director Carol Bellamy elaborated on her agency's opposition: "The practice of paying for the retrieval of enslaved children and women does not address the underlying causes of slavery in Sudan, the ongoing civil war and its by-products of criminality. Until these root problems are addressed, there can be no lasting solution." Ms. Bellamy goes on to explain that "as a matter of principle, UNICEF does not engage in the buying and selling of human beings." But in its 1996 Annual Report, UNICEF proudly details how it helps mothers in villages in India redeem their enslaved daughters with cash. When a WBAI radio reporter in New York put this to Peter Crowley, he stuttered that he was not aware of the program.

There is no evidence that CSI's program has done anything but save thousands of lives and place the issue at the feet of the world.

What principle is violated when we help a Dinka mother buy back her child, but adhered to when an Indian mother is helped? Does paying for the freeing of Indian children address the root causes of slavery in the subcontinent? Surely not. I do not believe that UNICEF is a racist organization. And I do not believe that to Carol Bellamy the suffering of black children means less than the pain of lighter skinned boys and girls. Unfortunately, they have continually refused to discuss this with the American Anti-Slavery Group, as they refused to respond to this article.

It is true that some other groups copying CSI's work have caused trouble. Some have been convinced to pay more for the slaves than the standard fifty dollars. Some may even have been tricked into buying back people who were not slaves from Arabs who were not part of the formal program or cleared by Dinka elders. This has helped Khartoum attack the abolitionists, claiming CSI is causing the problem by incentivizing slavery! But there is no evidence that CSI's program has done anything but save thousands of lives and place the issue at the feet of the world. In fact, to protect the only program that has consistently and very carefully delivered thousands of their people out of slavery, local authorities in the four counties of northern Bahr El Ghazal—the slavers' main targets—recently decided to limit redemption activity to the CSI program alone.

Perhaps UNICEF has taken its cue from the human rights community in general, which also has abandoned the slaves of Sudan. Where are the clarion calls for action from Amnesty International or Human Rights Watch? Why does it appear that black slavery is so far down on their list? The fact is that while these groups have done important and courageous work documenting slavery in Sudan, their con-

stituencies are not easily mobilized to fight the oppression of blacks by non-whites.

The reasons go to the heart of Western human rights campaigning. Most members of human rights groups are white. When decent whites see white people oppress others, they respond with moral fury. While there is a laudable moral drive to improve or correct the behavior of people who look like us, whites often become paralyzed when they glimpse evil done by people of color. Action against apartheid but silence on slavery exemplifies this dynamic. The impulse to scold the behavior of one's own group—white Westerners—is an excellent catalyst, though it is only the first step towards becoming a human rights activist. If the motivation stalls there, if we do not stand up for the human rights of everyone—no matter who their oppressors are—we have failed. The relative passivity of Western rights groups in the face of evil done by "others" has them abandoning victims whose tormentors are not white. Would Amnesty International want to be known as "The Society for the Improvement of White Conduct"?

Clearly, if white people held today's black slaves, the entire human rights complex would be mobilized. We would all do our duty and emancipate the slaves—by any means necessary.

Today, because of the efforts of American abolitionists from all walks of life, we are doing just that. The wave of emancipation that swept the West will roll forward, and there will soon be a time when all who are enslaved shall be free. And, as we know, the gift of freedom is priceless. ❑

Response to Jacobs

Jemera Rone

I am certain that the (non-white) leaders of China, Iraq, and Sudan—and many other human rights pariah states—only wish Mr. Jacobs were justified in his belief that we Western human rights groups are passive in the face of evil done by non-whites. They regularly lambaste human rights groups for daring to denounce abuses ranging from quashing civil liberties to mass murder and, in some cases, to genocide. They claim that we are trying to impose "Western" values on non-Western countries.

Mr. Jacobs also wrongly blames the human rights community for "abandoning the slaves of Sudan." He even contradicts himself by acknowledging that Human Rights Watch and others have "extensively reported on the trade in black flesh." Through that reporting, I have learned that the arguments for and against slave redemptions need to be considered on their merits, for they force us to ask difficult questions that echo the ethical dilemmas raised by terrorist kidnappings. Does negotiating with terrorists encourage further hostage-taking? Is it justified to sacrifice one for many? These are not easy questions to answer.

Slavery is a terrible abuse: the stories I have heard from Sudanese children who have escaped from their masters are heartbreaking. Children are violently taken from their families, sometimes witnessing the deaths of family members. They are beaten into submission, forced into harsh labor, subjected to sexual abuse, and deprived not only of family but also of cultural heritage, language, religion, and even name. The compassion of those who redeem slaves is well-placed.

Mr. Jacob's claim that "there is no evidence" that CSI's redemption program is fueling the raiding is disingenuous. The redeemers are pouring hundreds of thousands of dollars into the hands of slavers in the poorest region in the world: it should be their duty to investigate whether such largesse causes more harm than good. Basic economics and common sense suggest that willing and wealthy buyers will attract sellers. Here the price per unit is fixed, but not the number of units the buyers will purchase. To make more money, sellers might well try to sell more "goods." The fact is that since CSI and others started redeeming slaves in 1995, the numbers of slaves redeemed by CSI alone has skyrocketed: since January 1999, CSI has redeemed 1,050 slaves on one trip,

Jemera Rone is the Sudan researcher for Human Rights Watch.

THE CLAIMS OF MEMORY

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Caroline Wiedmer

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and 1,783 on another. The total redeemed by CSI since 1995 is 7,725. Thus on two 1999 trips, CSI redeemed 36 percent of its total redemptions for the entire four years.

These redemptions are different from early redemptions achieved by families or local authorities on their own. They looked and bargained for specific people—relatives or members of the village or county. The foreign mass redemptions free people who may or may not have a village to return to, and whose family may or may not be alive or aware of the redemption.

One Virginia-based group that formerly redeemed slaves in Sudan, Christian Freedom International, examined its experience and concluded in early 1999 that the redemptions must stop because they were only causing more raids and enriching unscrupulous individuals. This group offered to refund all donations given for redemptions, relinquishing a first-rate fund-raising tool.

Why quarrel among ourselves over who is most compassionate?

Some southern Sudanese on the spot agree with these former redeemers. *U.S. News & World Report* quoted Simon Wol, a civilian commissioner in Nyamlell, a frequently-raided village, who opposes CSI's redemption program because it "is empowering some of those Arabs to continue with their acts." He said that the middlemen now strike deals with the wealthy foreigners, rather than with local southern authorities. On my recent trip to Sudan, several Sudanese (including a few affiliated with the rebels) and non-Sudanese told me that slave redemptions by foreigners, while initially useful in attracting attention to slavery, "had become a business" and promoted more raiding.

This argument cannot be settled by recourse to statistics, because there are no reliable slavery statistics, aside from numbers redeemed. It does not appear that anyone was keeping count of the numbers of raids or the numbers of abductions during raids from year to year. During the 1998 famine, some aid workers noted that raiding and slave-taking seemed to have increased. But they did not count them; they could not stop to count even all the famine victims who died, despite their best efforts.

Since the famine has subsided for now, UNICEF could usefully turn to compiling a database by conducting interviews with residents of the affected areas. UNICEF's call to address the root causes—the war—is not misplaced. If this war were easy to end, it would have ended long ago. Bringing it to a just settlement requires much greater international effort and incredible persistence on multiple tracks. One track is a church-sponsored grass-roots initiative between bordering Dinka and Nuer counties which is gaining momentum; it deserves the support of everyone, for it is the most hopeful development in the south for a long time. Those who have shown such compassion for individual victims should lead the way to ending the cause of slavery, not pick fights with potential allies.

Such unity is especially important since as vile a practice as slavery is, it is the unhappy case that slavery is not the only grave abuse in Sudan, nor is it the most prevalent. In government-controlled areas, the abuses are typical of a tyrannical government: torture, summary execution, denials of civil liberties such as free expression and association. What happens in the war-theater is even worse. The scorched-earth war tactic—a violation of international humanitarian law—is used widely, not just in the border area where the slave raids occur. Civilians throughout the south and other marginalized areas such as the central Nuba Mountains, the Ingessana Hills, and other eastern regions have been targeted for attack by government forces and government-backed tribal militias and warlords. Their huts have been burned, their livestock and other property looted, the hospitals and relief centers bombed. In 1998, famine caused by such human rights abuses threatened approximately 2.6 million Sudanese, mostly in the south, with starvation. A southern Sudanese widow who lost five children to slave raiders urgently told me, "Abductions are not our problem now. We have no food. That is our problem."

These sobering facts should move us all to action. In this context, Mr. Jacob's castigation of those who do not elevate the victims of slavery above all other Sudanese victims seems unnecessarily divisive. Why quarrel among ourselves over who is most compassionate? The real villain in this piece is not UNICEF nor the human rights movement; it is the government of Sudan.

The government of Sudan, which is responsible for the slavery, still refuses to admit that slavery exists. It is time for the government to step up to the plate and vigorously enforce its own laws against kidnapping and forced labor, to institute a missing persons bureau that could actively assist families searching for their kin, and to facilitate UNICEF and International Committee of the Red Cross, which have experience in family reunification, to do their valuable work throughout Sudan. The Baggara and the Dinka must enter into peace negotiations as before the war, to resolve the outstanding problems and to mutually agree that the raiding of human beings must stop. Only these local agreements, solidly backed by the central government and the international community, can halt slavery. We have a long way to go. ❑

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ISRAEL

The Task Ahead

David Newman



We should be delighted, but we are wary. We should be dancing with joy, but we await the outcome of the first six months of Barak—a man who used his military skills to manage a ruthlessly efficient election campaign, keeping all the real leftist and progressive parties and candidates in the background; a man who models himself on the New Labour image of Britain's Tony Blair in capturing the center ground of the uncommitted; a man who nevertheless offers a glimmer of hope after three dark years of Netanyahu.

This election has signaled what many of us have been saying for some time—that the battle for peace, while not over by any means, is not the central issue dividing this heterogeneous society. The fight by the irredentists to retain control over a Greater Land of Israel and, at the same time, to deny the legitimate rights of the Palestinians to statehood and sovereignty, has been pushed aside. Fewer than forty members of the new Knesset can clearly be identified by their right-wing nationalist ideology and they too now realize that whatever coalition Barak puts together, progress on the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations will pass with a large majority.

The battle to control Israel's public space has switched dramatically to the area of religion and ethnocracy, to the sort of society that Israel will be during its next fifty years of statehood. The dramatic growth in the power of the fundamentalist, but also ethnic, Shas party on the one hand, and the major electoral success of vehemently anti-religious former journalist Tommy Lapid and his Shinui party on the other—their mutual refusal to serve in a government in which the other serves—this is the real battle for the heart and soul of Israel, which has been thrown up even more dramatically than ever before in these elections.

Following nearly two decades during which the growth of political clericalism and the move towards theocracy has been a dominant theme in Israeli politics, secular Israel finally began to mount its fight back. Instead of sitting once again at home and bemoaning the growth of religious fundamentalism in their north Tel Aviv Friday evening salons, they came out fighting. The spontaneous outpouring of the masses in the central square of Tel Aviv following the election victory was the celebration of secular Israel in wresting power back from the hands of the Orthodox. It was also, for many, the closing of a circle in that same square where hundreds of thousands had come to celebrate peace just over three years ago and had seen their hopes shattered by the force of the assassin's bullet.

With the exception of the members of the moderate Meimad religious list who accompanied Barak to the podium, there was not a *kippah* to be seen among the tens of thousands of celebrators. In no previous election has religion been so totally identified with the right-wing cause as in this campaign. Every religious-Orthodox party (with the exception of Meimad) came out publicly in favor of voting for Netanyahu, leaving peace the sole domain of the secular and the pragmatic, rather than the supreme spiritual value emanating from the very roots of Jewish humanistic tradition and values.

As the weary process of coalition building begins to take place in the immediate aftermath of an election in which more parties than ever before were represented, the ideological battle for the public space has begun. It would appear that Barak has learned from the last eight years—from both Rabin and Netanyahu—that such a deeply divided country cannot be run by policies that are supported by only half of the population. Not because they are any more right or wrong, but because they automatically exclude the other half from the domain of collective decision-making, creating antagonism and hatred in their wake.

In one sense, therefore, Barak is right in his attempt to create an inclusive, rather than exclusive, government. It is part of a process of healing which this troubled country has to undergo. It is, indeed, time for a prime minister to try to win over the hearts and the trust of the "other" rather than automatically excluding them from the public domain. But there must be a limit to the price that any prime minister is prepared to pay in his attempt to heal the wounds. It cannot be at the expense of moving swiftly ahead with the peace process and the inevitable setting up and recognition of a sovereign Palestinian state. It cannot be at the price of allowing Orthodoxy to be the sole representative of the Jewish tradition and to receive more than its fair share in the distribution of scarce public resources. It

PHOTOGRAPH BY RIKARD LARMA / AP WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

David Newman is chairperson of the Department of Politics and Government at Ben Gurion University of the Negev.

cannot be at the expense of denying the fact that contemporary Israel is a heterogeneous society in which the dominance of military personnel in government (such as Barak) must give way to a civil society which recognizes the rights and status of the individual as a full and equal citizen.

While Barak is making every effort to broaden his coalition base among the Jewish population, nothing is being done, or even suggested, about including the representatives of the nearly 20 percent of the population that is Arab-Palestinian in the decision-making process. Will Barak make the same mistake as his predecessors from the Labour Party in automatically assuming that the Palestinian members of Knesset will support him, even from outside the government, and that he therefore does not need to bring them in? There is some logic in Barak composing a government with a majority of Jewish members who will vote in favor of all future agreements on the peace front, if only to avoid right-wing accusations that he has only managed to implement a peace agreement because of the votes of a "fifth column" of Palestinians. That was one of the arguments used by the extremists in their vitriolic attacks on Rabin; despite the fact that such an argument rejects any notion of democracy and equality, it remained unanswered by left-wing groups (who should have championed the democratic rights of every minority) and became a powerful feature of the right-wing propaganda campaign.

Those who brought Barak to power must not return to their salons.

The fact that a Palestinian citizen, Azmi Bishara, was one of the five prime ministerial candidates made an important political statement. It was obvious that he would never get more than 2–3 percent of the votes—not least because of the internal rivalries among the Palestinian population itself, most of whom would not vote for him. But the statement that a Palestinian citizen, no less than any other Israeli citizen, has the right to aim for the highest post in the country was of utmost importance. Important too was the fact that Bishara, one of the leading proponents of the "state of all of its citizens" ideology, made the first move to withdraw from the prime ministerial race, thus leaving the door open for the other candidates to withdraw and to allow Barak to take the election in the first round by a decisive majority. Unfortunately, it does not appear at the time of this writing that Bishara's election-winning tactical move is going to be rewarded by the new prime minister. Many on the Left in this country, especially among the ex-army generals surrounding Barak, still perceive the term "national unity" as referring to Jews only. The idea of "One Israel" does not extend as far as including Palestinians in the government, giving them cabinet posts and making a real effort to reduce the levels of economic, social, and educational inequality that exist between the Jewish and Arab sectors.

Will a broader based government, as some politicians argue, enable Barak to push the peace process ahead and thus bring Israel to a place where its Arab-Palestinian citizens are no longer perceived as constituting a "threat," creating the conditions for their real inclusion within civil society? Will it really make any difference, with peace or without peace, if the Israeli national anthem still contains the "yearning for the Jewish homeland," if the national flag still has the Star of David, if Palestinian national aspirations remain unfulfilled as long as they live outside of the Palestinian state itself? These realities are unlikely to change—Israel is not about to become a "state of all of its citizens" instead of a "Jewish" state—but if Israel can include non-Zionist *haredi* parties such as Shas in the government coalition because it is important "to heal the internal rifts and schisms," then there is no reason why this principle should not extend automatically to the Palestinian representatives, most of whom—unlike Shas—voted in favor of Barak as prime minister.

It is important to ensure that a broader based coalition among the Jewish population not be used as "the" reason for, once again, ignoring the rights of the Palestinian minority. Barak, as a former army chief, is not popular among the Palestinian population. He gained even fewer votes among this sector than did his predecessor Shimon Peres, who lost the 1996 election, as a larger percentage of the Palestinian population stayed at home this time and did not vote. Barak was not unduly worried because he, unlike Peres, achieved a majority among the Jewish population, one of the main strategic objectives he had set for himself at the beginning of his campaign. If, as a result, he feels less obligated to the Palestinian minority, then he will, like his predecessors in government, be showing his lack of understanding of what true healing and reconciliation are all about.

But we will give him a period of time, albeit a short period of time, to prove that his intentions are good. We must assume that worse than Netanyahu he cannot be. He must be allowed to create the coalition of his choice while, at the same time, the progressive forces of the Left must keep on his heels to ensure that he does not give in to those who would have him make no more than cosmetic changes. Those who brought him to power must not return to their salons, as they did after the Rabin victory in 1992, assuming that everything would take an automatic turn for the better without their assistance. They must, at one and the same time, give him public support for his positive changes, and not fail to criticize him when he falters or hesitates. They must continue to be active, much as the right-wing settlers were during the Netanyahu administration, to always push him one bit further down the path of peace and national reconciliation, never letting up for even one short moment. They must assist him in winning over the public space, so that any idea of a future return to power by the right wing, or the fundamentalists, will no longer be considered a serious option four or eight years down the road.

This is the post-election challenge. The task has only just begun. ❑

ISRAEL

We Won, They Lost



Hillel Schenker

Issues of peace and security have long been assumed to determine the outcome of Israeli elections. There was, of course, a decisive group of voters who voted for Ehud Barak for just this reason, and on election night over a hundred thousand of them celebrated the Barak victory in Yitzhak Rabin square. But Barak knew he had those voters anyway, and focused instead on Netanyahu's socio-economic weaknesses.

While Likud campaign spots emphasized the fact that Yossi Beilin, co-author of the Beilin-Abu Mazen plan (which recommends handing over 90 percent of the West Bank to a future Palestinian state), was lurking behind Barak, Barak sought to reassure voters by opening almost every TV spot with a reminder that he is the most decorated soldier in Israeli history. He also set the national agenda by promising to withdraw the troops from southern Lebanon within one year, a move supported by the majority of the Israeli public.

The rest of Barak's message was short, to the point, and repetitive: "If 100,000 Israelis have lost their jobs, why should he (Netanyahu) keep his?" Unlike previous Labor candidates, Barak dared to go into the heart of the outlying development towns, the centers of traditional Sephardic underclass support for Likud, to meet with unemployed workers. He promised to generate 300,000 new jobs, and expressed identification with student grievances over high tuition fees. Mocking Netanyahu's grandiose "a computer for every child" program—"Did your child get a computer from the government?"—Barak promised free kindergarten education for three-year-olds and universal tuition-free entrance into the universities.

Finally, to counteract the impression that Labor was only interested in defending the interests of the middle- and upper-middle-class Ashkenazi "elite," Barak initiated the "One Israel" alliance with Moroccan-born David Levy's former Likud-based Sephardi activists and with Orthodox moderates from Meimad. This alliance effectively symbolized Barak's desire to project an inclusive image, and he frequently took Levy with him when campaigning in traditional Likud strongholds.

Though Barak courted the Sephardi vote, the most important swing group in this election turned out to be the Russians, who had gone for Netanyahu in 1996. TV ads about Barak's military career had Russian subtitles, and sometimes even Russian voice-overs. Barak was able to take advantage of the fact that the primary issue for many Russian voters was not the prospect of a Palestinian state, but rather the discrimination they experienced on issues of personal status at the hands of Ministry of Interior officials, a ministry controlled by the ultra-Orthodox Sephardic Shas Party. Barak promised that the Ministry of Interior, which registers people as Jews, would serve the interests of all Israelis, and not just the ideological commitments of the religious community.

The result was that a majority of the Russians voted for Barak, which combined with votes from his center-left core gave him a personal mandate from the people.

Other election results:

- The left-liberal Meretz party was particularly popular among the younger generation, getting 14 percent of the soldier vote (twice its national average), almost as much as the Likud, which got 16 percent in the IDF.
- Some of Meretz's thunder was stolen by Shinui (Change) and its new populist leader, Yosef (Tommy) Lapid. The sixty-seven-year-old Hungarian-born tele-journalist and *Ma'ariv* editorial writer articulated the popular revulsion against the ultra-Orthodox attempt to challenge Israeli democratic institutions, impose their values on the general public, and extract exorbitant amounts of public funds for their private institutions while not sharing the productive labor, tax, and military responsibilities. Shinui got six seats alongside Meretz' ten seats.
- M.K. Professor Azmi Bishara, the first Arab candidate for prime minister, ran an effective campaign, then dropped out at the last moment, since he declared that defeating Netanyahu was his primary goal. Ninety-five percent of the Israeli Arabs voted for Barak. There will be thirteen Arabs in the fifteenth Knesset, the largest number in history.
- Fourteen female M.K.s were elected, up from nine in the last Knesset, the largest number in Israeli history.

Barak's problem now remains where to find additional support in the Knesset (center-left parties total only fifty-six seats) to guarantee the broad coalition and healing process that he advocates. Neither a weakened Likud, which will create obstacles for progress in the peace process, nor a newly strengthened Shas, which supports further progress in the Oslo path, but is so problematic when it comes to questions of democracy and lifestyle, is a welcome choice.

A difficult dilemma. But imagine for a moment what might have been the alternative—four more years of Netanyahu. ❑

PHOTOGRAPH BY RUTH FREMSON / AP WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

Hillel Schenker (hillels@ibm.net) is currently writing a history of New Outlook *and its contribution to dialogue and peace.*

PERSONAL ESSAY

Fix

David Mamet



The Government is preparing, once again, to fund the Star Wars program.

We citizens are told that the program will be operational at some future date, and will cost an unspecified sum; our representatives respond, "Sounds good to *me*...."

I recently flew from Boston to Los Angeles and back. On each of these flights the film concerned a plot by members of the defense community to alter or destroy information which would lessen defense spending and discredit its advocates.

These two trips to the movies were separated by a spot of business in L.A. and a bit of entertainment. That entertainment was the Holyfield-Lewis Heavyweight Championship Fight.

Now, this fight boded well to be The Real Thing. Holyfield had vowed to knock out his opponent in three, and Lewis was fighting for Unification; that is, to hold the *undisputed* title, Champion of the World. If he succeeded, he would be the first Britisher to hold the crown in one hundred years.

What possible motive, we, the fight fans, asked each other and ourselves, would either have to throw the fight? So we settled in and watched Lewis trounce Holyfield on points. And then, the judges announced the fight a draw.

Now, that fight was no more a draw than Desert Storm—why was it so ruled? For the same reasons:

In 1947 the U.S. Department of War changed its name to the Department of Defense. Since that change, the United States has yet to win any armed conflict. Yes, one might say that we won Desert Storm, but the Arch Villain got away, and his escape insured and insures, so we are told, continued conflict in the Gulf.

Why is this change in name important? *War* must have a goal: the capitulation of the enemy. The end of War is clear-cut—Victory, or resignation to Defeat. At the end of War there ensues that state of civilization previous generations knew as "peace." But *Defense* is infinitely expansible, and can be prolonged indefinitely.

If the goal of Defense is the absence of War, then anyone paid by the military or defense industries can claim credit for our enjoyment of peace and attempt to frighten us with the cessation of this blessed peace if funding is diminished. Semantically, the phrase "peace dividend" is an abomination—it suggests that military spending on a wartime basis is a fact of life, but that, given the temporary absence of qualified aggressors, perhaps *some* of the tax money earmarked for Defense might be returned to the folks from whom it was extorted. In the event, of course, the money stayed with the military, who, surprising no one, asked for more.

In this they are not unlike those other Champions of Freedom, the film studios, who manage, however much a film grosses, and however little it costs, to arrive at a deficit.

How terrible, finally, for the military to have won a decisive victory in the Gulf. How careless. Almost as if Hollywood executives had committed the unpardonable blunder and released a student film which grossed a billion dollars—how could they hide their victory?

Well, how did we hide in the Gulf? By permitting (I may not be cynical enough to use the word "contriving," though there may be those who would) the escape of Saddam Hussein. For, like the Holyfield-Lewis fight, *all engagements of the Defense Department must end in a draw*.

Why? To allow a rematch.

If there is no rematch, if there is victory, and there is no subsequent aggressor, then that particular scam (the title fight, the Defense Department) is done. They can shower and go home. There's gotta be a rematch. And however we feel defrauded, defiled, disillusioned, it is in our nature to love drama; and when the title fight rolls round again—when Clinton confects Bin Laden—we march to the sound of drums.

"No," we say, "not even *he* would be sufficiently depraved to bomb two cities full of civilians as a distraction."

"No," we say, "not even Don King would," et cetera....

But the fight was fixed, and the Defense Department's cozy and ongoing conspiracy with the Congress is fixed, and both are rotten down to the ground.

Last August, Clinton announced, from his vacation home on Martha's Vineyard, that a previously unsuspected villain, Bin Laden, had been discovered and bombed. He stressed that Bin Laden and his forces posed a serious and ongoing threat to the interest of the United States.

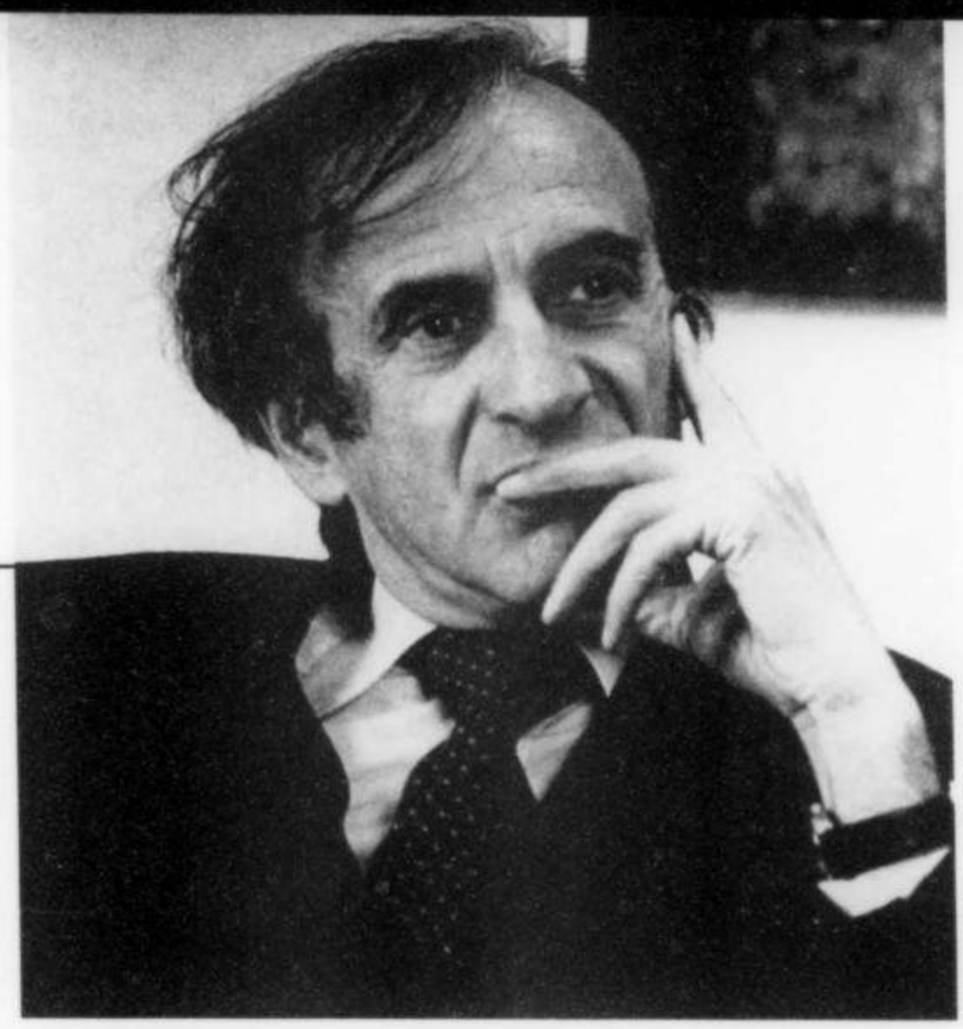
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ILLUSTRATION BY JON STRAUS

David Mamet is the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of Oleanna *and* Glengarry Glen Ross; *his films include* The Postman Always Rings Twice, The Untouchables, *and* Wag the Dog.

KOSOVO

AN INTERVIEW WITH Elie Wiesel



Nobel Peace Prize winner and Boston University Professor Elie Wiesel has worked on behalf of oppressed people for much of his adult life. His more than forty books include A Beggar in Jerusalem, The Testament *and* The Fifth Son. *The English translation of the second volume of his memoirs,* Et la mer n'est pas remplie, *will be published by Knopf in the fall of 1999.*

TIKKUN: How ought we to be reacting to the situation in Kosovo?

WIESEL: We should be reacting morally. A Jewish approach ought to be a moral approach—particularly when other people suffer. The only moral path is to show compassion and take the side of the victims.

We know who the victims are in Kosovo—and also who the victimizers are. We've known for many years about Milosevic and his capacity for evil. The Jewish community should mobilize themselves and help the victims who are now in Macedonia or Albania.

I don't think we should allow Milosevic to have his way and create a Kosovo free of ethnic Albanians. So the intervention on the part of other countries is proper—it is the moral thing to do.

TIKKUN: Some critics believe that the moral case is not clear because the United States is bombing innocent civilians, so there is moral culpability on both sides.

WIESEL: But what is their alternative? Not to do anything?

In this situation, NATO tried negotiations and compromises with Milosevic for many years. They tried every form of negotiation, reason, nonviolent approaches, and nothing seemed capable of deterring him from his determination to do ethnic cleansing. So, in that situation, were we supposed to do nothing and let Milosevic continue? That would have been the height of immorality.

I'm not for war and I'm certainly not for killing civilians or civilians who wear uniforms. But Milosevic was planning ethnic cleansing and had begun to do it before the bombing began, and then used the bombing as his excuse to immediately escalate a process that he had already intended to complete—that was his ideology.

As it turned out, we may not have been able to stop him. But to do nothing would have been to signal to the victims that we did not care. At least by our involvement we showed that there are people in this world who do care about the victims, and that is itself a significant message to be sending.

I know there have been civilian casualties. I wish NATO had better precision in its bombing and a better map of Belgrade. I wish the bombs would only fall on military equipment and not on people. But who am I to give advice to military people? I've never seen a tank from inside!

TIKKUN: What about the argument that says that this couldn't be a morally-motivated intervention, because the United States routinely ignores the actions of its own allies when they are engaged in ethnic cleansing, as in the case of recent actions by the Turkish government against the Kurds? So if the United States is involved in Kosovo, it must be because of U.S. interests, not a commitment to human rights! That's how the argument goes.

WIESEL: The only interest the United States has in Kosovo is a moral interest—there are no other interests. Of course, I don't know what goes on inside the minds of our leaders. But my perception is that this time it's only a moral consideration.

Now, in terms of our failure to intervene elsewhere—I believe we should have intervened. We should have intervened when Iraq was allowed to gas its own citizens—over thirty thousand Kurds gassed by Saddam Hussein in 1988, and we said nothing. That was morally irresponsible on our part. We could have stopped the massacres in Rwanda—why didn't we? Maybe because we didn't do it then, we are doing it now. There is a kind of regret or remorse that has set into the minds of our decision-makers.

TIKKUN: So should the United States be involved in intervening in every case in the world where there is ethnic cleansing?

WIESEL: I say "YES"—we are the only superpower in the world. I think a superpower is "super" not only when it has more weapons than others, but when it has more moral principles. In order for us to show principles, we must do something morally appropriate with our power. We should have enough military, economic, and moral power to say "stop it" to countries which may be engaged in mass murder.

TIKKUN: Do we have any moral obligation to work through the United Nations in these kinds of circumstances?

WIESEL: We should try, but the United Nations' structure

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF ELIE WIESEL

does not always provide a way for us to do that. We have to go through the Security Council, and there the five major powers have a veto. And what can you do if you bring a moral issue for intervention against genocide to the UN and Russia or China veto it? Does that mean that we are no longer morally obligated to intervene? I don't think so. I think we should intervene even if we can't get UN backing in some instances. We should intervene against the loss of human life.

TIKKUN: In 1993 you turned to President Clinton at the ceremony opening the Holocaust Museum and you asked him not to abandon the people of Bosnia. Since then the ethnic cleansing has spread. How do you feel about what has happened since?

WIESEL: I met with him afterwards and he spoke with me and promised to do something. It took him some time because he needed Senate approval, but he did eventually send military people. And now, finally, in Kosovo he is taking a moral stance. Is it too late? It's never too late, but it's late and could have come earlier. Once you link your decision to that of a huge group of countries [in NATO], it takes time. But in both instances I think he has acted morally.

TIKKUN: The settlement in Bosnia led Clinton to reconfirm Milosevic in power.

WIESEL: If the only way at that point to bring peace to Bosnia was to work through Milosevic, then he had to be worked with. I believe he is a mass murderer and should be tried for crimes against humanity. But if saving lives requires dealing with him, we should.

As a Jew, I learned from my tradition: first, save lives. If to save lives you have to deal with Milosevic, do it. But then, indict him and eventually find a way to bring him to justice. I am not ready to forget what he has done in Bosnia and Kosovo.

TIKKUN: You didn't sign the ad in the *New York Times* calling for ground troops.

WIESEL: I don't know what's best from the standpoint of military strategy. What I do know is this: we have to stop the injustice.

TIKKUN: Is there a special role for American Jews to play in all this?

WIESEL: Jews must be on the side of victims. Superficially, you might think, "Why should we Jews care about Muslims? After all, in some circumstances Muslims have been the enemies of Israel." Well, first of all, some Muslims have been our enemies, but not all. But secondly, in this case, the Muslims are victims and Jews must be on their side, whether that means giving political support to the president or money to the charitable organizations that are providing food, medicine, and shelter for the refugees.

TIKKUN: Yet Jewish sensitivity to those who are victims has not always extended to those Palestinians who have become victims of Israeli policies.

WIESEL: There were reasons in the past to see some Palestinians as victims. There is no doubt about it. But now at this moment, after Oslo and after Barak's victory, we should not think in those terms. We should be more hopeful. Israel is fed up with war, and this vote for Barak proves it. Now, I hope he establishes a national unity government and takes the good elements of Likud into his government.

TIKKUN: A national unity government in the 1980s, supposedly set up with the intent of creating the legitimacy for peace, actually became so paralyzed that it accomplished nothing.

WIESEL: There are good elements in the Likud who could be part of it. David Levi was a leader of Likud and he joined with Barak in this election. If Barak wants to do something dramatic he may need that kind of backing that a national unity government would give him.

TIKKUN: What do you see as the major task for *tikkun olam* in the coming millennium?

WIESEL: Tikkun should always start at home. We should do our own tikkun on ourselves and then go for *tikkun olam.*

My main concern for the next century is fanaticism. The group that grows fastest everywhere are fanatics—even with us (Baruch Goldstein, Amir, etc.). We need to unmask, disarm, and vanquish fanaticism.

TIKKUN: To return to Kosovo, if we cannot succeed in giving Kosovars a real return to their own country with full protection and national sovereignty, the entire intervention may generate cynicism that would prevent any future interventions even in situations where morality demands such.

WIESEL: Kosovars won't return to Kosovo until they are assured of real protection. They've seen their neighbors become killers. There has to be an international force to protect them.

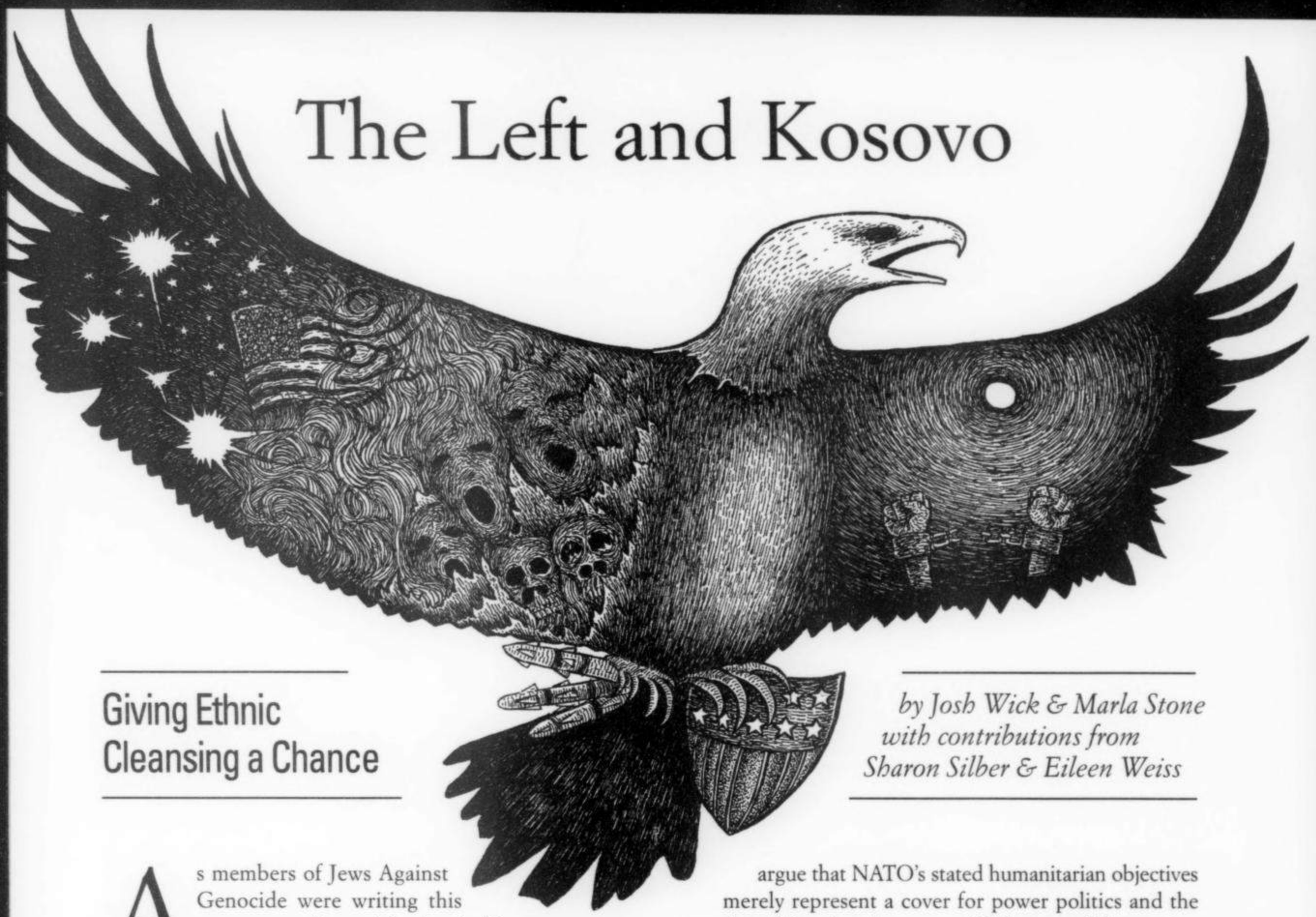
TIKKUN: What do you think of the moral stance of a country that says, in effect, "We will bomb on behalf of the Kosovars, but we will not shed American blood because it is too valuable to waste in this circumstance."

WIESEL: I don't think anyone says it as bluntly as that. Using ground troops seems to mean a lot of casualties. That the United States wants to try to cripple Milosevic's military while keeping casualties at a minimum is a good thing.

I think the skepticism about America comes mostly from people born after World War II. I was born before it. In this century, America has been in two world wars and the country was totally behind those two wars. Hundreds of thousands of Americans were killed and many more were maimed. When Americans are convinced that the enterprise is a moral one, they don't say that our blood is more valuable than their blood. I think that many Americans believe that when a war is just, sacrifices are necessary.

I go all around this country. I rarely encounter skepticism about the morality of our intervention in Kosovo. Certainly many Jews remember that we should have intervened earlier in the 1930s, and had we done so we might have prevented the Second World War with all the sacrifices that it entailed. ❑

The Left and Kosovo



Giving Ethnic Cleansing a Chance

by Josh Wick & Marla Stone
with contributions from
Sharon Silber & Eileen Weiss

As members of Jews Against Genocide were writing this essay grappling with the Left's abandonment of Kosovo and its rejection of the NATO war against Yugoslavia, a concerned and isolated leftist sent the following note:

> I just left a panel on Kosovo. The analysis was the standard "U.S. imperialism is to blame for everything; we shouldn't demonize the Serbs; the KLA are no better; it is all about getting oil from the Caspian, etc." I am so discouraged. Why do people on the Left want to gloss over the fact that Albanians are getting raped and murdered? I wish people would understand that Kosovo is not Vietnam. It really depresses me that people can't see that Milosevic is a fascist and must be stopped. If the KKK were to take over this country and begin a campaign to murder people of color, I would sure want foreign countries to come rescue me. As someone who considers himself a leftist, I am saddened when leftists mindlessly act as apologists for rapists and murderers.

The NATO bombing campaign against Yugoslavia has unleashed a torrent of criticism from the American left, who argue that NATO's stated humanitarian objectives merely represent a cover for power politics and the assertion of American hegemony. While some of these voices articulate understandable anguish at facing the prospect of using military force to achieve a human rights objective, and some of the objections are understandable in light of the way that U.S. military power has far too frequently been used to advance the interests of American corporations and the military rather than the highest ideals of American democracy, this time the Left has drawn the wrong conclusions and ended up on the wrong side. *The Nation* and Pacifica radio have lost their moral compass, portraying this struggle as though their writers had no knowledge of who has been victim and who has been victimizer for the past decade. Left-inspired "teach-ins" disseminating information from Ramsey Clark or from the International Action Center often present an uncritical apologia for Serbian policy (or, at best, a passing acknowledgment of Serbian crimes) and insist that the current intervention is just another instance of America's imperial arrogance.

These voices could not be more wrong on the substance of the issues. Rather than a knee-jerk rejection of Western military action, critics on the Left should be finding common cause with the victims whose suffering demands action. Here, finally, is a case in which U.S. and NATO foreign policy is shaped not only by self-interest but by moral considerations—which is precisely why it took NATO so long to get involved, why it tried negotiations rather than

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ILLUSTRATION BY MAC McGILL

confrontation for so many years. Because the moral/humanitarian purposes of this intervention are so great, we on the Left must support forces which we are uncomfortable and unused to supporting. But by encouraging Milosevic to believe that NATO might eventually be paralyzed by a lack of will and unity, the international left contributed to Milosevic's fantasy that he could outlast the bombings and continue the worst atrocities in Europe since the end of the Second World War.

The most commonly heard arguments against the NATO war have been steeped in misinformation. First, decriers of the intervention often have suggested or assumed that the conflict between Milosevic and the Kosovars began on March 24, 1999, and that it was the NATO air strikes that caused the depopulation of Kosovo. In fact, the war against the Kosovar Albanians began ten years ago, and the air strikes only gave Milosevic the cover of war in which to complete his program of Serbianizing Kosovo.

Second, critics of the NATO intervention have argued that this is a civil war unworthy of international involvement. This argument rejects the notion that the violence in Kosovo constitutes genocide.

In Article II of the UN Convention on Genocide of 1948, genocide is defined as: "intent to destroy in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group [by]: Killing members of the group; Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part." Prior to the Serb campaign, there were 1.8 million ethnic Albanians in Kosovo. Of those, as many as 100,000 may have been murdered in Milosevic's latest purge. The UN estimates that in the first seven weeks of the Serbian offensive, more than 700,000 deportees, almost half of Kosovo's Albanian population, fled the province. Many report having faced Serbian forces or police coming to their homes and giving them a few minutes to leave, their possessions confiscated, their homes often put to the torch, those refusing to cooperate shot on the spot.

Since the beginning of the Serb offensive, the sheer volume, consistency, and shared detail of accounts of atrocities by deportees suggest to human rights groups that they are credible. The Balkan Action Council, from interviews with deportees, documented a Serb mass killing of some one hundred to two hundred men on the roadside near Djakovica. Deportees have given Human Rights Watch reports of a massacre of one to three hundred men (between the ages of sixteen and sixty) whom Serb forces took out of a convoy of refugees and shot near the village of Meja. Accounts given to the International Crisis Group (ICG) document one mass killing in which Serb forces reportedly locked up the entire male population of a village in a building and then set it aflame. The list goes on and the reports continue to multiply.

Human rights organizations have reported evidence gathered from Albanian refugees of mass executions in at least seventy towns and villages in Kosovo since large-scale deportations began in late March. They also report that three hundred villages have been burned to the ground.

The Kosovo Verification Mission of the fifty-four-nation OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe), which has interviewed six hundred refugees, found that mass executions were taking place in Kosovo, along with evidence of "rape on a wide scale" and other atrocities. Accounts of systematic killings are also substantiated by satellite photos released by the U.S. State Department of mass graves in the towns of Pusto Selo and Izbica, as well as five other sites. These are similar to photographs of mass burials in Bosnia after the Serb genocidal aggression there. Reports of mass murder in Izbica have been substantiated by clandestine videotaped footage. At the time we go to press, fresh accounts of systematic rapes are being documented.

What happened to a Left that championed human rights and unequivocally opposed fascist forces around the world?

The deportees largely consisted of women, children, and old men. Even as Kosovars return to their homes, it may take considerable time to learn the fate of many missing Albanian men (some as young as fourteen) who may have been tortured or murdered by Serbian troops. We have good reason to worry about their fate.

These reports and Milosevic's tactics suggest that the "ethnic cleansing" in Kosovo has been an orchestrated campaign by the Yugoslav government to commit genocide against the Kosovar Albanians. For instance, the militia leaders under Milosevic are the same leaders indicted by the UN Tribunal in The Hague for war crimes in Bosnia. The notorious Arkan, for example, whom The Hague indicted in September 1997, was operating his paramilitary forces, known as the Tigers, in Kosovo. The Tigers, accused of some of the most vicious rampages of killing, looting, and raping in Muslim villages in Croatia and Bosnia, have worked closely with the Serb police and paramilitary. In one incident, they are alleged to have killed hundreds of Muslim men they had locked up in a sports center in Bosnia. There are reports that Arkan, with Milosevic's blessing, recruited convicts from prisons in Serbia to join him in the pogroms in Kosovo.

It is true that the crimes of Milosevic are unlikely to reach the magnitude of those committed during the Holocaust. But the Left called the American assault on the people of Vietnam "genocidal" when the damage the United States inflicted was far less than total extermination. Does only the commitment to complete extermination warrant inter-

national intervention? If we are to learn from the Holocaust, the primary lesson ought to be intervention while people are still alive.

Another component of the argument against the NATO intervention focuses upon the destruction caused by NATO air strikes. In this line of reasoning, the NATO bombing is equated to the expulsions, murders, and rapes committed by Serb police and paramilitary in Kosovo. How can planned depopulation and destruction be compared to a bombing campaign whose goal is destruction of the Serb military capacity? It takes a cynical sleight of hand to produce such an equivalency.

The decriers of NATO intervention have stressed the difficult conditions in Serbia as a result of the NATO bombing. We have reports of Serb civilians sitting in the dark and lining up for water. But where were the similar cries of outrage for the past nine years when the victims of Milosevic's wars spent much of the 1990s in similar or worse conditions? No one wants to see innocent civilians suffering. Yet it may be that a lack of electricity and water might push some Serb citizens to rethink the cost of having Slobodan Milosevic as president, a rethinking they were unwilling to do when it was "merely" world opinion and UN declarations that confronted them. Here, again, it is the lack of balance and the obliteration of the historical context that makes us wonder what has happened to a Left that once championed human rights and unequivocally opposed fascist forces around the world.

Certainly the Left's distaste for American exploits abroad has solid foundation in the history of the past several decades. But, intelligent and moral people must look at the Kosovo war on its own terms: it is not Vietnam and it is not Central America. If its "teach-ins" would move beyond a ritual recounting of the distortions in past American policy, the Left might begin to look at Kosovo in historical context. What the Left badly needs is a brief review of the facts of the case.

Kosovo: A History

In the opening days of the NATO strikes, there was talk on the Left that the killings in Kosovo and the mass exodus were as much a result of the bombings as they were a result of Serb forces. Why had we rushed to use force—why not negotiate?

The fact is that Serb forces, in the year prior to the NATO action, had been steadily escalating the magnitude of their atrocities against Kosovar Albanian civilians. Far from rushing to intervene against Serbian aggressions, NATO and the United States have spent eight years in negotiations, appeasing Milosevic in the hope of avoiding a military confrontation.

Serbian nationalists have long sought a "final solution" to the problem of Muslims in the Balkans. An outline for a "final solution" of the Kosovo Albanians had been discussed as early as 1937, in a paper titled "The Expulsion of the Albanians" by Serbian nationalist V. Cubrilovic. This "solution" was given intellectual benediction by a memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Sciences in the late 1980s, which called for the ethnic purification of Serbia. Milosevic rose to power in 1989 by promising to restore the Serbian hold over Kosovo.



PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID BRAUCHLI / AP WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

In 1989, following through on his campaign promises, Milosevic revoked Kosovo's autonomy. A lengthy period of brutal oppression against ethnic Albanian civilians followed. Albanians were dismissed from their jobs, had their cultural institutions banned and destroyed, had their leaders imprisoned, and were effectively cut off from all civic institutions, professions, and university life. In other circumstances, this would have been enough to mobilize the worldwide Left into action against oppression.

Government security forces began to organize attacks on Albanian civilians, particularly those with any political or professional status. Human Rights Watch (HRW), in a report in 1993, documented massive human rights violations in Kosovo and included, on its cover, a picture of a Kosovar Albanian man who had had a Serb cross carved into his chest by police forces in Kosovo. More recently, the Serbs have also used food as a weapon in ejecting Albanians from Kosovo. In an October 1998 report, HRW documented that Serb forces in Kosovo had systematically destroyed food stocks, burned down silos and haystacks, and killed livestock, so that by the end of that year Kosovo was dependent on food assistance from international aid organizations.

Since 1991, in reaction to Milosevic's predations, the West has brokered eleven cease-fires with him, all of which he has violated. As early as December 1992, President Bush warned President Milosevic that the United States was prepared to take unilateral military action if the Serbs sparked a conflict in Kosovo. President Clinton repeated the warning only weeks after his inauguration. Usually, Milosevic could ignore the warnings by performing his usual dance: agreeing to the demands, then violating whatever he had agreed to.

In 1995, when NATO finally did intervene in Bosnia, it was three years into the war, after almost a quarter million people were killed, and after the Serbs had wiped out two of the UN "safe havens" established to protect fleeing Muslim civilians. The Clinton administration, unwilling to commit ground troops to intervene against Milosevic, had consistently quieted attempts to indict him as a war criminal in order to pursue negotiated settlements to his wars in the Balkans. This inconsistency on the part of the United States was motivated by a sense that the U.S. had no economic or military interests in the region (as one member of the governing elite put it, "We have no dog in that fight"); the major pressure to intervene was ethical, and most NATO leaders felt that they could ignore more pressure. So what if a few Jews, remembering our own Holocaust, sounded off about all this—most people seemed not to care that much, and for that reason the Clinton administration could see that the easiest way out was to try to make accommodations with Milosevic, unwilling to acknowledge quite how determined he has been to achieve full "ethnic purity" for a "Greater Serbia."

By the early months of 1998, the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), reacting to the increase of attacks on ethnic Albanian civilians, began sporadic guerrilla actions against Yugoslav security forces. In response, Milosevic used the growth of the KLA as a rationale for increasing the brutality of his attacks on Kosovar Albanian civilians. The defenders of the Muslims were termed "terrorists" and Milosevic expected that the West would remain passive if he could convince them he was merely involved in a war against terrorists. As early as February 1998, more than a year before the NATO bombing, Yugoslav government forces massacred civilians in the Drenica region of central Kosovo (a stronghold of the KLA), as HRW documented in its October 1998 report. In the attack, Yugoslav Special Forces reportedly used artillery, helicopters, and armored vehicles to kill at least eighty-three people, twenty-four of whom were women and children.

The police attack was a turning point for many of the ethnic Albanians who had once been committed to the nonviolent politics of Ibrahim Rugova. Early in the summer of 1998, the KLA freed an estimated 40 percent of the country from Milosevic's regime. At the same time, however, Yugoslav forces were attacking a swath of towns along the Albanian border with the specific intent of depopulating the region, according to HRW. Some forty-five thousand people fled as the government forces reportedly shelled civilians and, in at least three cases, fired upon them in helicopters marked with the Red Cross emblem.

Slowly, the outside world began to shake off its paralysis. In June 1998, the Contact Group on the former Yugoslavia (consisting of America, Russia, Italy, France, Britain, and Germany) warned Milosevic that he could not count on the West being as indecisive as it had been in Bosnia. Milosevic promised that the advance had stopped. Yet, it was clear on the ground that government forces had actually intensified their offensive from July through September 1998. By mid-August, the government had recaptured most of the territory held by the KLA. According to Physicians for Human Rights, the Serb summer offensive left hundreds dead; Western aid groups estimated it also produced a quarter-million Albanian refugees within Kosovo, fifty thousand of whom, they warned, were hiding in the woods and in danger of freezing to death from the snows of the coming Balkan winter.

In what was by now a familiar pattern, NATO drew up plans for military action, Milosevic promised concessions, and NATO threats soon languished. As the massacres of Kosovar Albanian civilians continued through the fall, however, the UN Security Council was outraged enough in September 1998 to pass a resolution demanding an immediate end to attacks on civilians by the Yugoslav army. Milosevic simply ignored it. Three days later, two separate massacres of civilians in the Drenica region by Serb forces shocked the world community. The killing of eighteen women, children, and elderly members of the Deliaj family, in the village Obrinje, was particularly horrific. Included among the victims were a ten-year-old boy, his throat slit from his jugular to his lip, a baby girl, and a young woman whose belly was gouged out.

The October Accord

The pattern of Serb atrocities, initial international outrage, swift and fleeting calls for action, followed by a gradual accommodation to Milosevic's continued defiance, is well illustrated by the failure of the October accord.

In the fall of 1998, international pressure to stop the Serbian atrocities was growing. With the UN Security Council, the six-nation Contact Group, and renewed threats of NATO action behind him, U.S. special envoy Richard Holbrooke met the Serb leader and pushed him to meet some of the concessions laid down by the Security Council. Milosevic agreed to halt his crackdown against the Albanian population and to allow the presence of some two thousand observers from the OSCE to monitor the cease-fire in Kosovo. In return, Milosevic was able to win a concession from the West that he would reduce his forces only to levels prior to the campaign of the summer.

There was little expectation in the West that the accord would last. Milosevic was betting on the fleeting attention of the Clinton administration, embroiled as it was in trying to contain the Lewinsky scandal. After only token reductions of Serb forces, Milosevic stopped his withdrawal. NATO, with no will to carry through on its threat of air strikes, first extended its deadline for withdrawal ten days, and then, predictably, let the deadline slip quietly without consequence.

For the besieged White House, Kosovo was quickly forgotten as President Clinton moved closer to an impeachment



PHOTOGRAPH BY PETER DEJONG / AP WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

trial. Milosevic, meanwhile, taking advantage of Washington's distraction, gradually began to build up his forces in Kosovo. By the late fall, Western intelligence officials, particularly the Germans, began to warn of a Serb troop build-up that could be the backbone of a military operation to push hundreds of thousands of Albanians out of Kosovo. Its code name was Potkova—in Serbian, "Horseshoe"—and it alluded to the amassing Serb troops who were positioning themselves to encircle the central Kosovo region of Djakovica, the stronghold of the KLA. According to the International Crisis Group, Operation Horseshoe was devised to leave open escape routes between Serb forces for fleeing deportees who survived the assault. In this way, Milosevic predicted he would direct the flood of refugees into neighboring Macedonia and Albania.

As Milosevic grew bolder, NATO increasingly sought to accommodate his campaign in Kosovo. By the end of 1998, the fighting that had caused the deaths of two thousand people continued unabated. Serbs, meanwhile, were routinely blocking the passage of the unarmed monitors to villages where Serbs were carrying out offenses, and the number of incidents of violence against OSCE monitors by Serb security forces escalated. The tenuous October cease-fire had collapsed.

Meanwhile, as NATO civilian leaders agonized over what steps to take, if any, the massacres of ethnic Albanian civilians mounted. The most dramatic was a killing spree by Serbian forces on January 16 of forty-five Albanians in the village of Racak. Some of the victims, later discovered by OSCE verifiers, were found with their eyes gouged out and their heads caved in—one man was even decapitated. The victims, all dressed in civilian clothes, included a twelve-year-old boy, a young woman, and many elderly men.

Rambouillet

The world community was finally galvanized by the barbarity of the massacre at Racak. Kofi Annan, the UN secretary general, was quoted by the *New York Times* as saying that the threat of force was justified to get the Serbs to the bargaining table. This was the impetus NATO civilian leaders needed—united and determined more than ever to end Kosovo's killings—to back a new accord with a genuine threat of force.

The nations of the Contact Group (which included Russia) drafted a new set of five principles for both sides. They included: the withdrawal of all Serbian forces; the effective return of an autonomous self-government in Kosovo; a referendum in three years to decide final status for the province; the presence of armed NATO troops to verify the accord and protect the Albanians; and the gradual disarming of the KLA.

But Rambouillet proposals were not accepted by the Serbs. By the time the Paris talks fell apart, Serb tanks and troops had already begun to move well into the Drenica region. Serb forces destroyed homes and set villages ablaze.

In the week of Rambouillet's conclusion, six days prior to the NATO strike, the office of the UN high commissioner on refugees estimated that forty thousand people had

fled their homes in Kosovo—twenty thousand of whom had fled in the two days after Rambouillet's collapse. The Serb spring offensive had begun.

As NATO's deadline drew near, OSCE quickly evacuated its monitors and Serb military leaders gave the order to prevent journalists from reaching the Drenica region. In the vacuum left by the absence of the verification team and Western reporters, Serb forces let loose a bloodbath. Serb police attacked the ethnic Albanian suburbs on the southern edge of Pristina. They raided houses, beat people, and smashed cars and windows. The suburbs' five hundred houses were emptied in minutes. By March 21, the village of Prekaz was emptied and burning. Scbica was torched. In the four days leading up to the NATO deadline, the UN high commissioner for refugees estimated a further twenty-five thousand people were forced to flee their homes.

On March 24, after a year of delays and appeasement, the nineteen nations of NATO were finally pushed to launch air strikes in the hope of halting the Serb killing machine in Kosovo.

The June Accords

As we go to press, the intervention appears to have succeeded in creating conditions which may allow many of the refugees to return to their homes.

However, it is far too early to celebrate the June accords. There has been a long history of Milosevic entering into agreements under pressure, then later reneging when the world's attention shifted elsewhere. Nor does the accord resolve the issue of Kosovar independence, which is vital to ensuring Kosovar Albanian human rights. Though the NATO presence in Kosovo is likely to bring a temporary respite, we doubt that the Balkans will see any lasting peace until Milosevic and his "willing executioners" are removed from power.

Under the sway of a racist and pervasive Serb media, Serbs continue to deny the true horrors of the Serbian campaign in Kosovo. Sonja Biserko, the former head of Helsinki Watch Belgrade and currently in exile in Sweden, has called for an occupation and the "de-Nazification" of Serbia.

Any new Milosevic-inspired atrocities should require a ground war, yet the politics in Western countries have dictated that only the Serb forces, the Kosovo Liberation Army, and the Albanian civilians should shed blood—not anyone from NATO. It may be true that the philosophy of "no casualties" made it possible for Clinton and others to fight the war without much political risk at home. But it has also ensured that the clique around Milosevic, determined to use Serbian nationalism to maintain power, will continue to infect the Serbian population with an ideology which portrays them as innocent victims whose only recourse is genocidal policies against non-Serbians in the Balkans.

A ground force that enters Kosovo as peacekeepers under the arrangement negotiated by the Russians and with Russian troops involved will have no mandate to intervene should Milosevic turn his genocidal attentions to other parts of the Balkans. In Montenegro, a weak government can not long protect Muslim civilians from the quiet amassing of Serb troops loyal to Milosevic. Muslims in Sandzek and Hungarians in Vojvodina—both provinces of Serbia itself—are likely candidates for Milosevic's next mass murder.

The Left has rendered itself incapable of imagining a moment in which America could possibly be on the correct side.

The bombing almost certainly cost Milosevic some of his ability to maneuver in the short run. Yet the fundamental pattern may remain in place: Milosevic making concessions to momentarily stop the momentum of the war, only to be followed by renewed attempts at genocidal ethnic cleansing.

And if Milosevic does get a chance to rebuild his apparatus of domestic repression and ethnic assault, it will be in part because of the space and moral legitimacy being given to him by the Left. Locked into a shallow and outdated understanding of American imperialism, unable to distinguish between this war and Vietnam, the Left has rendered itself incapable of imagining a moment in which America could possibly be on the correct side. The international left will continue to portray Serbia as the victim of U.S. aggression, thus strengthening Serbians' ability to refuse responsibility for their own crimes against humanity and to dismiss the Hague indictment against their leaders as merely "propaganda," and giving new energy to the "willing executioners" who may within the next decade be involved in new genocidal attacks.

In the midst of the Left's confusion, it is only the Jewish left, sensitized to these issues by our own experience with the Holocaust, which managed throughout the 1990s to keep its moral compass and remain faithful to the needs of the besieged Muslims of Bosnia and Kosovo. The Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, Jews Against Genocide, TIKKUN, and other voices of Jewish liberal and progressive life have rejected the Left's anti-interventionist approach. We can only hope the larger Left will follow this lead as new information about Serbian atrocities in Kosovo come to light. ❑

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Mitzvah and Autonomy

The Oxymoron of Reform Judaism

Herbert Bronstein





No one knowledgeable about Judaism will deny that the terms "Torah" and "mitzvah" are central to its lexicon, or their role in defining the relationship between God and the community of Israel, the Covenant *(B'rit)*. This interrelated cluster of terms (Torah, mitzvah, b'rit) implies a spiritual mindset that assumes an authority which transcends the individual ego and personal choice, fostering a sense of obligation to an "Other" beyond the individual self. Torah, mitzvah, and b'rit, therefore, imply not only a strong sense of obligation to God, but, since God's covenant is with the community of Israel, a communal consciousness as well, a sense of "we" which transcends the individual self.

Yet the very opposite of this Judaic mindset has risen to the position of a central credo, if not defining mark, of Reform Judaism: the principle of autonomy, personal choice in matters of religious practice. "Autonomy" has become a "given" of Reform Judaism, a litmus test for Reform Jewish doctrinal acceptability. Although little else is authoritative in Reform Judaism, without at least giving lip service to the authority of autonomy, one might be considered "outside the pale" of Reform theology.

Increasingly, there has been widespread unease within the Reform community over the tension between autonomy on the one side and the historic Judaic sense of obligation *(chovah)* to a transcendent authority beyond the self and its individual choices on the other. This tension was already reflected in the opening address Eric Yoffie made as president-elect of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (Atlanta 1995). "My goal," he said, "is a movement which is thoroughly Reform … grounded in the principles of autonomy and pluralism." At the same time, however, Rabbi Yoffie called for "a movement also willing to talk of obligations, to call for observance that is regular and consistent, and to assert that our actions need not always begin with our own impulses." Though he never used the word "authority," at least some degree of authority is implied by his words.



We need to follow up on the tension Yoffie hinted at. Why should we be afraid to subject autonomy as a religious doctrine to as thorough a critique as Reform Jews pride themselves in applying to any other doctrine? Why not consider it in balance with other religious values which might impose upon personal autonomy limitations beneficial to the community and perhaps to personal growth as well? Autonomy is a doctrine salutary for Judaism, for religion, and for human well-being, in my view, *only if we understand autonomy as a choice against idols,* a modality of autonomy rooted deeply in the Jewish tradition.

Obligation and Authority

In traditional societies, however else the "self" was conceived, it was constituted first by a web of relationships embedded in the ongoing life of a community. This web included a relation between the self and a transcendent wholeness beyond the atomistic individual, whether a world-soul, a web of life, or a life process. In primordial religious traditions, self-fulfillment was realized by the identification of the individual self with this purpose or reality beyond the self.

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY DAVID BALL

In contrast, in our time the individual self is thought of as a cluster of claims of individual rights and privileges (see, for example, Charles Taylor's book, *The Sources of the Self*). Self-fulfillment, it follows, is viewed as fulfillment through one's own individual preferential pursuits on behalf of one's individual self. The pride of place that Reform Judaism today gives to autonomy as personal choice reflects this contemporary concept of the self.

Indeed, many a Reform Jew who is perturbed by the notion that Reform Judaism might teach *any* set of requirements based on religious obligation might be surprised to learn that the doctrine of autonomy initially came into liberal Jewish thinking heavily weighted with a sense of obligation to a moral law that is universal and beyond the self. The philosopher who had the most influence on exponents of Reform Judaism in this respect was Immanuel Kant (1724–1804). Kant admirably articulated the essence of the Enlightenment as a morally principled movement which was to struggle against the oppressive rule of others, particularly institutions and power structures, over individual thoughts, wills, and actions. For Kant, autonomy was based on the premise that, through reason, the individual person would discover a moral law applicable everywhere and equally to the behavior of all people; it followed for Kant that the individual would then become morally obligated to that universal law. Just as in Kant, so in early Reform Judaism, autonomy and morality *in the religious sense were linked indissolubly to a strong sense of obligation.*

Especially because of the totalitarianism of our century and the ongoing struggle for freedom and human rights, Kant's formulation of autonomy and morality still resonates strongly with us. European Jews of the nineteenth century were particularly enthusiastic about Kant's clarion call to autonomy, bound up as they were with their own emancipation into the civil, social, and economic order. Because the link between reason, autonomy, and morality was at the very core of what the Enlightenment called "civilization," Reform Jewish advocates could present Judaism as among the most rational, enlightened, and moral of all religions and therefore worthy of a place in progressive Western society. It is no wonder that many educated German Jews taught Kant to their children as if it were catechism.

How different the situation is today. Our people do not live in an overly repressive, morally forbidding, or socially restrictive culture. On the contrary, our culture is one in which many boast of decadent behavior. In the most sensationally prurient "wash your dirty linen in public" television talk shows, many regularly and passionately defend the most outrageous behavior—hurtful not only to others but to the participants themselves—with a sententiously proclaimed dictum that seems to quell all and every objection: "This is my personal choice; you do what you want, I do what I want, and who is to judge me?"

"Freedom" is the emblematic blazon of the United States, and it is thus not surprising that American Jews too have embraced freedom as the key to Judaism. Jews today, for example, speak of both Chanukah and Passover as "Festivals of Freedom." But the scriptural text does not say "Let my people go that they may be free," but rather "Let my people go *that they may serve me.*" The divine call is not to freedom per se but away from servitude to Pharaoh (a god) to the service of God. The service of God necessarily implies a sense of obligation and duties as well as autonomy—all are choices against the service to idols.

The scriptural text does not say "Let my people go that they may be free," but rather "Let my people go that they may serve me."

Intellectual Credibility

Now that the Enlightenment has reached its end, is autonomy based on reason still an intellectually credible position in our time? One crucial aspect of modernity which Reform embraced is the scientific approach which endeavors to establish factual verity about the material dimension of existence. Through such a scientific approach to the study of history and the social life of human beings, we have become aware of how social, economic, political, and cultural influences on Judaism over the course of time have affected Jewish religious practice. But now we must apply the same critical methods to such principles as autonomy, showing how such principles can be products equally of historical forces and of horizons.

In his time, Kant, believing that freedom was an attribute of reason, believed that reason could rise above the pressure of events and material circumstances in which we live. We too still must and do expect moral choices of people. We know, however, that social and cultural conditions, our own emotions, or group psychology all affect our thinking, our ideas, our reasoning. We now have a huge body of documentation, particularly from the Nazi period, on the devilish ways that so-called reason deteriorates into rationalization for the most despicable of purposes. Further, through depth psychology, we have become aware of the role of the unconscious in these rationalizations. As a result, the notion of a sure bond between reason and autonomy has been discredited. The idea of a free, untrammeled, above-it-all, disinterested reason, fully autonomous, has been revealed as an illusion, not only to be distrusted but methodically so, because of motivations that in large part have little to do with rationality or "noble principles" or morality itself.

Idolatry

The history of the concept of Enlightenment in Reform Judaism is itself instructive to understand autonomy as a choice against idols. In its early history in Europe as well as in the twentieth century in America, Reform Judaism adopted the categories of the "rational," "civilized," and "enlightened" as criteria not only for Jewish social or public behavior in dress and manner, but also for the content and form of Jewish religious expression. Changes were made in Jewish forms of worship, in the physical structure of the synagogue, and in prayer texts, not only for the purpose of aesthetic refinement, or out of greater commitment to prophetic moral ideas which early Reformers considered to be the core of Judaism. In many cases changes were made to conform to the aesthetics and forms of Western European civility because of the drive for Jewish social and economic acceptance and advancement. A number of particular Jewish religious practices then considered to be embarrassing because they were "different" were radically changed or eliminated in deference to the prevailing culture. Sacred texts like the Kabbalah and halachic commentaries, which had been cherished by generations of Jews, were deemed "backwards," "superstitious," and "benighted" and therefore to be cast aside.

Modernizing Jews unconsciously absorbed the ideology of the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon West over the "native East," a view that justified colonial conquest and economic exploitation of lands and people. Some Jewish scholars adopted the very words used by Western scholars used to describe the "savage" cultures of native peoples in order to dismiss many Jewish religious practices and texts which Jewish reformers considered noxious accretions to the original, pure, moral, and enlightened rational core of Judaism. Studies produced by Jews under the aegis of the Enlightenment and even taught in liberal rabbinic schools well into the twentieth century treated hallowed Jewish practices such as the use of the *shofar*, breaking the glass at a wedding, and *Havdalah* as if they were Western scholars analyzing the relics of ancient barbarous superstitions. Some Reform rabbis even claimed to have "led their congregations out of orientalism." The endeavor by German or Western Jews to make clear-cut distinctions between themselves and their Eastern European counterparts, describing the latter as *Ostjuden* (Eastern European Jews), may have been tainted with the same mentality. Since Judaism itself and Jews are in fact from "the East," this was a form of unconscious Jewish self-hate absorbed from non-Jewish, anti-Semitic, Anglo-Saxon Western culture.



All idolatry is ultimately reducible to the worship of self, or to an aspect of one's self no longer connected to anything beyond the self. Autonomy, when raised to the level of a religious principle and detached from the limitations imposed by any consideration of other religious values or of any authority beyond itself, is no exception. Sacrifice of identity out of the desire for acceptance and inclusion falls within the shadow of idolatry. It is all the more compelling, then, to recall that throughout Scripture, personal choice in religious matters (what we would call the exercise of autonomy) is linked to the struggle *against* idolatry:

> Behold I set before you this day a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you hearken to the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day, and the curse, if you will not hearken to the Lord your God but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods. (Deut. 11:26–28)

According to this and numerous other texts, the more we transcend our own self-interest, the more we are free to choose—or, using our term, the more autonomous we become. As Chanoch of Alexsandrow (1798–1870), an early Hasidic rabbi, said: "Others gain control over you only to the extent that you have a will other than God's." According to the faith of modernity, reason itself would inevitably bring about the spiritual and moral refinement of human beings and make us more free to choose. According to Rabban Gamliel, the spiritual refinement of humanity derives from the practice of mitzvot.

Finding a Path

Many years ago, as a young man, I liked to say that the situation of many Reform Jews in the face of Reform rabbinic refusal to give our people the guidance they are seeking is very similar to the *New Yorker* cartoon in which a nursery school child looks up at her teacher and says, "Do I have to do today whatever I want to do?"

Judaism is a *halachically* structured spirituality; that is, a body of practices that constitute "a way of living." But *halachah* is a word that is quite foreign to liberal Judaism, and to some spokespersons of Reform, it is anathema. No doubt this is because Orthodoxy has seized and occupied both the word and concept *halachah* and some sectors have turned it into a static and oppressive regimen. Once I suggested that the new Reform Rabbis' manual be entitled *Halichot,* meaning "Pathways." An older rabbi reacted in sheer dismay, "It sounds too much like halachah," and that, he implied, would have been totally out of the question. But we see nothing objectionable in the fact that adherents of Hinduism call their religion *Dharma,* which means "way." And, though Buddhism is a remarkable thought-system, its founder began his foundational message at Benares not with his theoretical formulations on the nature of existence or our experience of existence, but with specific authoritative directions: the Eight-fold *Path* with which the seeker is taught to align himself/herself. Islam also speaks of religion not only as Islam (total self-commitment) but also *Al-Din* (the actual body of deeds and practices that constitute the religious life). Both the rational, socially-focused aspect of

Chinese religion and its highly individualistic mystical manifestation speak of the *Tao,* "the path."

Many today, hungry for a way of life, are indeed seeking "a way" among these very spiritualities. Their teachers do not say to them as those of Reform Judaism have been apt to do, "You might like to *choose* this *option* or that; you might find this worthwhile, etc." They do not speak, as we have, of personal benefits that might accrue to the individual. In doing so, we feed the very narcissism and emphasis on personal satisfaction which so drains our common life of coherence and the individual soul of a purpose beyond the self.

Balancing Autonomy

Short of abandoning the principle of autonomy, what countervailing measures can we apply to avoid a self-indulgent form of idolatry? It is the commendable anxiety of this question that I believe is behind the discussions among liberal Jews around the question of "limits," "boundaries," and the sources of authority in liberal Judaism itself. It is sincere grappling with this issue that has led Eugene Borowitz to speak of a Jewish covenantal, *communal* self.



Because Dr. Borowitz is well aware of the dangers to human well-being everywhere of rampant anarchic individualism, as well as the breakdown of "secular messianisms," he endeavors to resolve the tension between personal choice and the stance of obligation characteristic of Judaism by evoking the needs and aspirations of the Jewish people as a community with purpose and continuity. On this basis, for which he is indebted to Mordecai Kaplan, he asserts that his theological "move" is "postmodern," a contention that we must challenge because he ultimately comes down to the bottom-line primacy of personal autonomy: "For even in the postmodern vision of covenant with its strongly contextualized view of personal individuality, each Jewish self ultimately stands alone before God" *(Choices in Modern Jewish Thought).*

Can any system of thought be called "postmodern" which gives such pride of place to a principle or construct, autonomy, so integral to the other elements of modernity such as the belief in universal progress through reason? Thinkers as diverse as Charles P. Taylor *(The Sources of the Self),* Roger Shattuck *(Forbidden Knowledge),* and, more popularly, John Ralston Saul *(Voltaire's Bastards)* have demonstrated the connection between personal autonomy and moral relativism, with its atrophy of the sense of regard for other human beings and the diminution of a sense of community, which together threaten us, to give examples, with escalating social violence, environmental deterioration, and the deterioration of civility.

Even if we took Borowitz' emphasis to be an implied obligation to the Jewish *people,* so that obligation to community would decisively balance autonomy, we would find a problem. If we are not to fall into the idolatry of the "voice of the people as the voice of God," we cannot literally or easily in our current situation accept that the Jewish people "will know what to do." How can we be certain that our communal choices are made more on the basis of living on behalf of the sovereignty of God than out of convenience or lack of knowledge or other reasons that are self-serving and therefore idolatrous? Considering the cataclysmic breaks that have taken place in the continuities of our religious heritage in the twentieth century, and the low level of Jewish knowledge and observance among liberal Jews at present, communal decision-making is a weak reed on which to lean in walking the path of God.

One can understand this turning to community in our situation as a source of authority. But in the absence of a religious, a Torah, core to Jewish identity, this current form of Jewish identity structure has become in many ways detrimental to Jewish continuity in the United States. Autonomy as the struggle against idols can be found only in a covenantal community which is immersed in Torah, our religious heritage known and lived. If our autonomy can only be considered within a communal covenantal relationship with God, then we must recall immediately that it is in Torah alone that Jews over the ages have found the divine encounter and divine guidance. One of the great benefits of Torah as a way of informing autonomous choices against idolatry is that Torah has emerged over many centuries in so many different cultures and climes that it can become a way *par excellence* of testing our current culture, helping us to think less reactively and subserviently to current culture, and to become far more critical of it.

What is required is that our community regularly, as a way of life, study Torah and practice mitzvot in a conscious and conscientious manner. Particularly in Reform Judaism, however, this is in no way a tenable practical condition at the present time. In fact, catering to current cultural values and then looking for sources in our texts which seem to accord with them, much liberal Jewish scholarship and many rabbinic sermons have been devoted to showing the compatibility of this or that element in the Jewish heritage with whatever has been the current "leading edge." They have made current culture the standard by which Judaism measures itself instead of using Torah as the standard to which current culture should adhere.

It's time to stop defining the center of Jewish life as a geographic location, as some central office, as communal fundraising, or as the collected impulses of "autonomous" individuals, and to return to what has been the center of the people of Israel through the ages, our bond, our reason for being and the means and purpose of our continuity, namely, Torah, our religious heritage known and lived. ❑



Jewish Moral Autonomy

Responses to Herbert Bronstein

Rabbi Eric H. Yoffie

President of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations

Rabbi Bronstein is correct to warn Reform Jews against "rampant, anarchic individualism." He is right that the principle of autonomy can easily become a cover for indifference to Jewish practice, for the naked pursuit of self-interest, and even for the embrace of immoral, decadent behavior. He is right that no legitimate form of Judaism can permit itself to be judged solely by the standards of contemporary culture.

He is right as well when he refers to the obligation of Reform rabbis to give clear direction to Jews who are desperately in search of guidance and meaning. When Reform Jews ask us rabbis, as they often do, "What is expected of me?" it is not sufficient to respond with the language of autonomy, choice, and individualism. Reform Jews do not need to be told that they are autonomous individuals and that they have choices; they know this already. What they need to be told, in the clearest terms, is how their rabbis understand the teachings and values of Torah.

But there are passages in the article which seem to imply that we are in need of a Reform Halachah and that we should urge Reform Jews to accept an external source of obligation and authority that will supplant individual choice. On this point, I believe that Rabbi Bronstein is wrong. Yes, Reform Jews should immerse themselves in the study of Torah and the practice of mitzvot, but such behavior will not resolve the dilemmas of autonomy to which Rabbi Bronstein refers.

Rabbi Bronstein writes convincingly of the dangers of autonomy, and the widespread misuse of the principle. But he seems insufficiently aware of its positive dimensions and of the opportunities it represents. Let it be plainly said: individualism and autonomy need not be a barrier to increased Jewish commitment. In many ways, in fact, they enhance the search for Jewish engagement.

Speaking personally, I believe in a God who gave Torah to the people of Israel in a process of revelation beginning at Sinai. But I know that the Torah in its current form is a compilation of both divine command and human response: it is a record of God talking to Jews and Jews talking to God. When I examine the writings of Torah, how then do I know what is divine revelation and what is human interpretation?

As a Reform Jew, the only option that I have is to decide for myself what binds me. I will study Torah and seek guidance from my rabbis and teachers, but ultimately the decision rests with me alone. The autonomous individual deciding for himself or herself is both a central precept of Reform Judaism and also an objective description of reality in American Jewish life. For us and the great majority of American Jews, there is no leader or institution with the authority to impose Torah upon us; we can only impose it on ourselves.

The burden of making such a choice is often intimidating, but it is also exhilarating. I cherish the freedom that my tradition extends to me. Indeed, that is precisely why I am a Reform Jew.

I realize, of course, that I am a good deal less free than some might suppose. I am a product of my upbringing and my education, of my family and community. I have learned from them that nothing in Torah must be foreign to me; I must study it all and try it all. And whenever I study Torah, I am drawn toward a sense of obedience to the divine word. Whenever I perform a mitzvah, I feel awe and humility in the face of mystery. Whenever I am immersed in the work

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of the Jewish people, I experience, on some level at least, the sacred energy of Sinai. A feeling of obligation overcomes me at these times, limiting my freedom, almost against my will. And as a Reform leader I do my best to involve the members of my movement in these same experiences of Jewish learning and doing, hoping that this involvement will shape and constrain them, just as it has shaped and constrained me.

But in the final analysis, I insist on freedom for myself and for them. I will not forego my autonomy, and neither will they. I insist on the right to evaluate each and every mitzvah and to accept or reject it, according to my understanding of Torah. Because, as anxious as I may be for the advice and guidance of others, there is no coercive power in Jewish life that can make our Jewish decisions for us. ❑

Rabbi Elliot N. Dorff

Rector and professor of philosophy at the University of Judaism in Los Angeles

As a committed Conservative Jew, it clearly pleases me that Rabbi Bronstein argues against the classical Reform principle of individual autonomy and instead for a Torah-centered approach with explicit duties. But I worry that he has jumped from one extreme to the other.

Rabbi Bronstein wants us to replace individual autonomy with the will of God as expressed in the Torah. *But how are we to know the will of God?*

Even the Orthodox would tell you that we cannot simply read the Torah: we must, to be Jews, read it through the lenses of the rabbis over the centuries. But no rabbi can be assured that his or her opinion is anything more than that. Thus the only way that we can even hope to know God's will—the way that the rabbis of the Talmud devised a long time ago—is that the rabbis as a group in each generation must apply the Torah and tradition to their generation's concerns. This will most often mean carrying on the tradition as it has been, but sometimes it will mean applying it in new ways, and sometimes, contrary to the Orthodox, it will even mean challenging its forms, concepts, or values, just as the rabbis of the Talmud themselves did.

Groups of people, including rabbis, can err. The Jewish tradition therefore encourages vigorous debate among the rabbis and places significant authority in the individual rabbi acting as the teacher for his or her community *(mara d'atra)*. Moreover, the laity themselves influence the content of Jewish law through their own customs and through their own reactions to rabbinic decrees, sometimes downright ignoring them. These factors in traditional Jewish law make, in my view, for a healthy balance of perception and power. That might be logically messy and theologically unsatisfying; one hankers after a clear, divine mandate. The wisdom of the Jewish tradition, though, is that we human beings are not privileged to that information, that after the destruction of the First Temple God wants us to discern the divine will through arguing about how the Torah and tradition should be applied (see, for example, J. *Sanhedrin* 22a).

Thus Rabbi Bronstein is right in refocusing us on the Torah, but we must not do that as fundamentalists. We must instead understand that proper use of the Torah to govern our lives requires knowledge, methodological and philosophical sophistication, communal debate, and, yes, even individual conscience.

While I applaud the direction in which Rabbi Bronstein and other traditionalists within Reform Judaism would take it, I think that any talk about post-denominationalism among the non-Orthodox forms of Judaism is neither desirable nor real. One of the real strengths of American Judaism compared to that of Israel is the pluralism that we have. Jews need to find their own ways to their heritage and to God; one size definitely does not fit all. Moreover, although surveys indicate that Reform and Conservative laity are not far apart in some parameters of thought and action, the institutions they choose to create and support are very different. Compare Conservative and Reform institutions on, for example, the amount of Hebrew in services, the *kashrut* of the synagogue's kitchen, and the sheer number of hours of Jewish instruction. Rabbi Bronstein's call for more tradition within Reform Judaism is to be lauded, but it does not represent in any way a post-denominational reality or ideal. ❑

Rabbi Emanuel Feldman

Editor of Tradition *magazine*

Rabbi Bronstein's questioning of the "authority of autonomy" within Reform is an important step back from the precipice. Our people cannot afford the loss of more Jews—this time to the self-inflicted destruction perpetrated by our love affair with anything that is in step with the prevailing culture. We have seen where this has led. So the Bronstein statement is courageous, helpful, and welcome.

Several caveats, however, are in order. To step back from a precipice is instinctive; only a fool willfully self-destructs. But this does not, on its own, represent a conscious intellectual and spiritual decision. The wise man is not satisfied with a narrow escape. Instead, he turns around and sets off in a new direction, one that leads not to the pit but to renewal. Are we seeing here the first movements of a new direction within Reform? The answer will come in the fullness of time.

A nagging doubt, however, keeps surfacing, and I trust that my articulation of it will not be considered petulant. Reform, from my perspective, has historically demonstrated an inability to resist the seductiveness of Western culture. Thus, when autonomy was king, Reform found itself on that bandwagon. And now that the culture around us is reassessing autonomy and its handmaidens of personal freedom and rejection of authority, we find Reform stirrings in that direction as well.

One hopes against hope, therefore, that what we are reading here is more than just another shibboleth borrowed from the contemporary catalogue of goodies; and one prays that in another generation, when the cultural wheels of society turn ever so slightly once again, that Reform will find the will to resist yet another bandwagon.

Reform leadership would do well not to dismiss Rabbi Bronstein's words, but instead to drop anchor, and, no matter what the swirling waters do, to remain fettered to certain immovable principles. And to drop anchor means to move beyond the terminology of mitzvah, Halachah, authority, and covenant—as welcome and refreshing as it is to hear such terminology from Reform thinkers—into deeds like mitzvah performance, observance of Shabbat holiness, intense and regular prayer, and a return to the study of classic Jewish texts. To be content with words alone is to guarantee that before very long the anchors will be pulled up again.

Enough of theological cant and mantras and slogans that emanate from lexicons not our own. Let us use new words that are old words—discipline, *avodat haShem* (service of G-d), study of Torah—and, using them, let us try to live with them. And, after living with them, let us see if we can live by them.

And if theological cant grinds to a halt, can political sloganeering be far behind? Perhaps the time is also approaching when Reform leadership will re-assess the Orthodox-bashing that has become de rigueur in its circles.

A Reform Jew once told me that he would rather his daughter marry a non-Jew than have her bring home a Hasid with peot, black hat, and long black coat. As long as such deep anti-Jewish prejudice informs our communities, as long as Reform leadership aids and abets such attitudes by its Orthodox-bashing, words such as Bronstein's, while welcome, remain only words.

Perhaps Reform leadership should consider that it is precisely to the Orthodox—especially to the "ultra" whipping boys—that Reform owes a great debt. For it was this type of Jew who historically has kept alive the concepts of discipline, mitzvah, Torah study, Halachah, and covenant so that Reform would have something to return to ultimately. The next time these Jews are referred to in the most horrific negative stereotypes, it would be most becoming if Reform leadership would rise up to protest the name-calling and would express some thanks to these Jews for preserving the sacred heritage that most Jews had tossed overboard. ❑

Sylvia Barack Fishman

Co-director of the International Research Institute on Jewish Women established at Brandeis by Hadassah

Herbert Bronstein convincingly argues that our very concept of Judaism has been transformed by sustained intimate contact with Western values. The Kantian critique of historical Judaism—that the prescriptive "yoke of



the Kingdom of Heaven" should be rejected because it robs Jews of moral autonomy—has long since been subsumed into the belief system of most American Jews.

Conducting focus group discussions with U.S. Jews, I found that free choice, that birthright of individualism, is not perceived as being in any way a departure from historical Judaism. Instead, across denominational lines, Jews see autonomy as the intrinsic axiom of Judaism itself. As one Reform woman in Atlanta declared:

> The best part about being a Reform Jew is that it stresses the most important part of Judaism. It stresses free choice. Free choice is the basis of Judaism. Who Maimonides was, or what little rituals people choose to perform, those are just little details. You can always pick those up later.

For this reason, the challenge which Bronstein has posed to the Reform movement is even more difficult than he suggests.

American individualism has been thoroughly coalesced into the value systems of many American Jews. Liberal Jews continue to worry that they not be ghettoized. In my research I encounter Midwestern Jews, sprinkled lightly throughout a so-called "Jewish" neighborhood, worrying that they may be perceived as "clannish" if the new Jewish community center is built in the general proximity of their homes. Similarly, I frequently hear accusations that Jews work too hard for Jewish causes and not enough for non-Jewish causes, for what one woman called the "whole world and global group." Ironically, statistical studies such as the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey demonstrate resoundingly that the opposite is true: Jews today are much more likely to work for non-sectarian than for Jewish causes.

Bronstein's challenge is also formidable because piety is often derided in liberal American culture. Jews have been deeply affected by what Stephen L. Carter calls "the culture of disbelief," a kind of reflexive suspicion of religious devotion, leading to the idea that piety of any kind is irrational and irrelevant. Non-observance, for many American Jews, is confused with modernity, because they see religiosity as tantamount to backwardness and fundamentalism. Many fear even excellent Jewish education, worrying that increased knowledge levels lead to increased Jewish practice and from thence to a fundamentalist mindset.

This bias against Jewish education and a "too Jewish" lifestyle creates a tragic situation. My recent research

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FICTION

The Slow Mirror

Richard Zimler

Pedro was from Buenos Aires.

Yet it was only after his death that I stopped to consider what that might mean. I was in Argentina for the first time, attending an ornithology conference, and I was walking down the Avenida Santa Fe when it suddenly occurred to me: so this is what he saw and heard while growing up. Did he think of this place often after making love with me?

There was an accompanying vision of oncoming black taxis and wide, endless boulevards, a sense of strolling through perfumed breezes toward obelisks and military monuments. But the important thing was not the actual character of Buenos Aires. It was only vital that the city was real, that it was always present whether or not I was aware of it, and that Pedro had come from there.

I was on my way to the address of his childhood (torn down to make way for a utilitarian concrete monster) when all this condensed inside me as if from the cloud of a forgotten dream. I stopped as if confronted by a riddle. And when I looked around again, I found myself in front of an overcrowded antique store. I entered to think my confusion out, nodded to the owner and walked to the back to get out of the light. There, past a shelf of books and numerous hat racks, I discovered the mirror. It was sitting on top of a dusty seventeenth-century Portuguese dresser in the twisted-and-turned style made popular following Vasco da Gama's first trip to India, and it caught my attention because it was shaped like a lyre. I am a professor of ornithology by trade—with a specialty in North American seedeaters *(Passeriformes Fringillidae)*—but an amateur lutanist at heart. And I am fascinated by antique instruments. Naturally, then, I approached this lyre-mirror and brushed my hand along its frame. And when I stared into its reflection, I discovered a Chinese camphor-wood trunk whose front was carved with a serpent brandishing a lantern in its mouth. The trunk sat directly opposite the mirror, atop a curious English desk with handles made from lapis lazuli. It was the magical alliteration of lapis lazuli, lantern, lyre and lute that finally impelled me to obey my original instincts and make an offer for the mirror, and I was able to bargain the dealer, an ancient Uruguayan from Paysandú smelling of pistachio nuts and brandy, down to a reasonable price.

That evening, back in my tiny room at the Hotel Estrella, I noticed, for the first time, the mirror's singular powers of retention. Following a shower, I had taken out my brush with the intention of combing my hair into a semblance of reason. I lifted the mirror out of its wrappings and discovered that the camphor-wood trunk and the surroundings of the antique store—and not I—composed the entirety of its reflection. From all angles, no matter whether I moved to the side, knelt or stood on the hotel's monstrous desk chair, the silver surface of the mirror still gave to me the various surroundings of the Uruguayan's store.

After a momentary fright during which I made an aborted call to the desk clerk, I watched the reflection for quite some time, coming to two possible conclusions: the first (and more obvious), that this was not a normal mirror; the second (and, naturally enough, more disturbing), that I might very well be going mad.

I dreamed of the mirror that night, imagined that it reflected the image of a rose-breasted grosbeak—the bird on which I did my dissertation at Cornell University and after which my daughter, Rosalie, was named—flying through green clouds evaporating from giant oak trees. This bird was a messenger, had been sent by Pedro to pick Rosalie up and carry her to heaven.

In the morning, I fully expected to see a reflection of the bird or even my face, but found once again the antique store. In consequence, I cut short an appearance at a symposium on tone displacement among wood warblers and went back to the Uruguayan dealer. I informed him of my two possible conclusions.

"Let me assure you, *Señora,* you are not going insane," he said with a smile of solidarity. "There is indeed a time lag. The mirror seems to retain images. They seep in and take a long while coming out. I call it the 'slow mirror.'" (In Spanish, he referred to it as the "*espejo atrasado.*")

"How long does it take for the mirror to give its images back?" I asked.

The dealer shrugged. "I took over the store four years ago from another Uruguayan, a man from Punta del Este, and the mirror has yet to reflect anything but the Chinese trunk," he said. "Of course, it has also given back the images

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Richard Zimler's current novel is The Last Kabbalist of Lisbon *(Overlook). His next novel is* The Angelic Darkness *(W.W. Norton), due out in September.*

of some people who have lifted it up and passersby who have headed toward other antiques." He laughed and twirled his mustache. "But the selfish thing has not yet given my image back. So it must be slow by at least four years."

"And do you know where it came from?"

"Brazil, I believe. Of Portuguese craftsmanship, perhaps. Although maybe it's Japanese. Might have come over with the immigrants. I was told by a Korean agronomist that the wood forming the lyre frame is Japanese maple."

The antique dealer generously offered to buy the mirror back if I were disappointed with its slow reflections. But I assured him that I still wanted it, thanked him for his help and returned to the hotel.



The mirror, although perched on a simple writing desk by my bed, still insisted, of course, on reflecting the Chinese trunk and the antique store. And by standing far to the right, I could now see the first Uruguayan dealer from Punta del Este, a small, withered man with eyeglasses held together by tape. He sat behind a table centered by a baroque candelabrum with the sinuous arms of a Hindu goddess. A strong sunlight that seemed to be distilled through billowy clouds shone in through a window on which a gilded Byzantine crucifix was hung. I watched, mesmerized, and after some time a tall woman in black entered the store, toured and left without making a purchase. The dealer ate lunch from a white bag as if the contents were to be kept secret. He read a large book bound in leather. Later, hard-edged shadows from unseen furniture crept across the floor as if seeking the night. A man in a brown fur coat entered, admired an azure-glazed Persian vase and wrapped it in white handkerchiefs from his pocket before letting the Uruguayan package it. Just prior to the store's closure, two large women holding bursting packages came in to ask directions.

And it was then, alone with the antiques, that I felt a sudden tremor of joy. It was as if, while watching the store, I'd left my body behind for a time. And now I had returned to discover the wonder of fingers, hands, lips, of a woman who could touch the world, feel her place at the center of life, breathe, kiss, talk. I picked up my phone to share this discovery with Rosalie. Yet upon hearing her quivering voice, I decided it best to simply inquire about her health.

"But where are you?" she asked.

"Buenos Aires."

"Still there … then why are you calling?"

"To see about you. I'm sorry if I woke you."

Rosalie was silent. I imagined her tears reflecting a sepia world leached of color, pictured a lone child facing a German fairy-tale forest. Without an answer, she let the phone down. Our line disappeared. I sat with my head in my hands. Regretting so much. Watching the antique store submerged in night. Finding the mirror now quite normal—an impossible artifact to be sure, and certainly a gift, but just one of many impossible objects all around me. I imagined it had been pulled through a magician's hat from the same invisible land that had given rise to Rosalie's leukemia and my own helplessness.

Time crept very slowly to me that night. I slept in and out of cold, endless dreams bordered by water. And when I woke in the morning, it was with the great energy of escape. I was gripping the silver Star of David which Pedro had hung around my neck when we were engaged. Dressing madly, I ran out of my room to catch a lecture on male incubation.

Two days later, when the meeting's concluding cocktail party had finished, I packed up the mirror, boarded my nighttime plane and headed back to San Francisco.

There, inside our Richmond District home on 12th Avenue, I placed the slow mirror atop my rosewood dresser. When Rosalie had awoken from a nap, I showed it to her. "From your father's city," I said. She returned my smile absently, stared into the reflection for a few moments following my explanation and said: "It's too slow." She patted my arm, refused to elucidate on her comment and returned to bed.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ERIC FIELD

Only later did I understand what she meant: *I haven't enough time left to wait for the mirror to return my reflection.*

Despite the dark canal of dread this realization cut through me (or perhaps because of it), I began to follow the life of the antique store avidly, compulsively I must say, becoming an expert on the habits of the Uruguayan from Punta del Este and the lascivious tastes of his Saturday store manager, a weedy looking man with a penchant for atavistic blonds in elastic clothing. I also came to enjoy the idiosyncrasies of several regular visitors, particularly those of an elfin Native American woman living in La Boca who came in once a day to sniff the camphor-wood trunk because of her sinus problems (I read her lips once while she discussed her misery with the Uruguayan).

Often, I would watch the tale of the mirror upon waking and just before going to bed, and for some time it took the place of reading, lute-playing and films for me. And yet, as one can well imagine, after a year of the store and customers—and the Chinese trunk in particular—I grew decidedly bored with the life of a Buenos Aires antique store and moved the mirror to the floor by my linen closet where I could check on it from time to time but rarely be encumbered by its constant story.

Rosalie was growing weaker at the time. And she was in more pain. Chemotherapy was helping very little, if at all. Often, she spoke to me in the voice of the tiny, winged being I imagined trapped inside her limp body. I realized at such moments that it would not be long before this entity would fly free from her and disappear from both our lives like a Thomas Campion sprite. Although I am frightened even now to admit it, I surely hoped for this to come to pass quickly.

Soon after I had put the mirror away, Rosalie asked me in a trembling voice if I would hang the mirror on the wall directly opposite her bed. "Something impossible I saw in it," she said. She refused to say more, showed me by way of explanation a book from her childhood that she must have hidden away. It was Italian, with illustrations of birds by Bruno Munari in reds and blues and yellows that seemed distilled from actual feathers. It was the only book Pedro had brought with him from Argentina when his family had fled the persecution of an anti-intellectual, anti-Semitic dictatorship. All the others had been left behind and had perhaps gone up in smoke. When Rosalie was a child, Pedro used to sit with her for hours and show her the pretty pictures. "What did you see?" I asked again.

Rosalie put her finger to her lips in a gesture of silence, smiled as if to comfort me and squeezed my hand.

Two days later, she was dead.

I found her holding the lyre-mirror to her chest, face down, as if she were seeking to incorporate the silver reflection in her body. Underneath was her children's book. How she found the strength to take the mirror down from the wall I had no idea.

The past recedes from me after that, as if my personal history were pulled out to sea for a period of years. I know I must have worked and eaten and talked with people—done all the things one is expected to do in order to survive. But my thoughts from that time are bounded by the impenetrable black ocean of an ancient epic. When my history finally does emerge up through this dark landscape again, it is with Rosalie's face as its masthead; a week ago, almost four years to the day after her death, I saw her reflected in the slow mirror. From her surroundings, I could tell that she was standing in the doorway of my linen closet. She was staring straight ahead with what I can only call the face of a woman adoring a child. After some time, she kneeled down and kissed the surface of the looking glass.

I watched all this in her room. From inside a warm ether that seemed to be composed of tears. From under her blankets. For I had re-hung the mirror on her wall after her death and begun to sleep in her bed.

The next day, I watched myself in the reflection carrying the mirror to her room and hanging it on the wall, exactly as I had done nearly four years earlier.

After that, I lived Rosalie's final hours without pausing for sleep. I believe it was peace I saw in her face more than anything else. Was it simply the antique store that was helping her so? I hadn't a clue until I saw her rise from the bed with the childhood book she was keeping on her night table and glide with the ease of a specter across the floor. She stopped to the right of the mirror and stared for quite some time, then climbed onto the dresser and took it down. She brought it into bed with her and gripped it as one might hold a sick child.

A few moments later, there was only the darkness of her unwavering chest. On the evening I witnessed all this in the mirror, I flew down to Buenos Aires. Upon my arrival, I took a taxi directly to the antique store. The ancient Uruguayan dealer from Paysandú was still there. *"El espejo atrasado, no?"* he asked when I entered.

"*Si,* may I look around?"

"Please."

The Portuguese dresser in the twisted-and-turned style was still at the back of the store. Another mirror was resting on it now, a normal one which reflected my hand when I held it up as an experiment. I stood where Rosalie had and stared. From my angle, I could see a bookshelf. It seemed clear that whatever she had seen, she had spotted there.

I passed over the books as quickly as I could till I was stopped by the name Munari. It was another of his children's books. On the cover, a scarlet finch perched on a sunflower. I pressed it to my chest and closed my eyes, was suddenly dizzy with a mixture of amazement and fear. My booming heartbeat was swaying me from side to side. My feet felt rooted at the very center of the world. I gripped the Portuguese dresser in case I sensed myself going faint.

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For John

Composed July, 1997

Myra Soifer

Yitgadal v'yitkadash sh'mei rabbah ... (Kaddish)

Our Rabbis taught: Seven things are hidden from human knowing. These are they: the day of death....
(Pesachim 54b)

ANGOLA, LA—"God bless y'all," a very pale John Brogdon said moments before his execution early Thursday morning [July 30, 1987].... He was pronounced dead at 12:12 AM. He became the fourteenth man to die in the state's electric chair.... Looking on from behind a glass window, Brogdon's spiritual adviser, Rabbi Myra Soifer, clenched her Bible and cried. *(New Orleans Times-Picayune)*

• • •

John Brogdon was executed for a heinous crime. On October 7, 1981, he and an accomplice raped, tortured, and finally murdered an eleven-year-old girl, Barbara Jo Brown.

John's troubled history—his mother's early death, the childhood beatings at the hands of his father, his borderline IQ combined with serious psychological dysfunction, his heavy use of alcohol and drugs—may explain his uncontrolled violence. Nothing can justify it.

And nothing can bring back his victim. From the ashes of John Brogdon's execution, Barbara Jo Brown will not rise to life again. The state of Louisiana had no better welfare program than the electric chair. Two young lives were needlessly ended.

Baruch atah Adonai ... m'chayeh hametim.
Blessed are you, Adonai ... who gives life to the dead.
(Amidah)

It has been a decade since John Brogdon was electrocuted before my eyes. It is past time to tell of his last day ... of life's sacred shine dimmed demonic.

• • •

Modeh ani l'fanecha ...
I give thanks before you ... (Morning Prayers)

Myra Soifer is a rabbi at Reform Congregation Temple Sinai in Reno, NV and is presently working on a Doctor of Ministry degree at Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, CA.

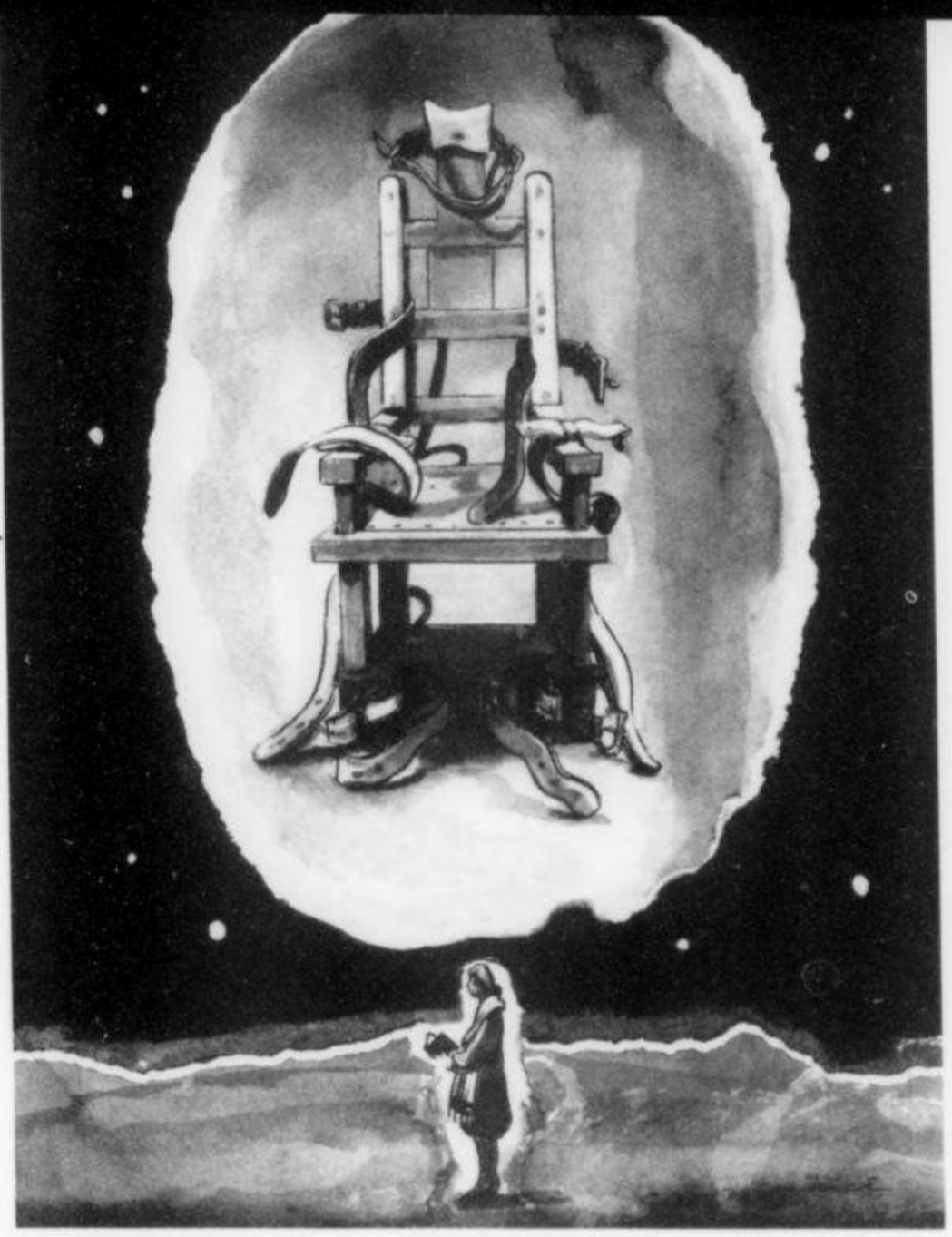


ILLUSTRATION BY CYN MAURICE

We who were to be John's last earthly companions began our day early. His attorney, Silas Wasserstrom, and I began the four-hour drive from New Orleans before the sunrise. Even so, it was nearly noon before we'd completed the trip, passed through the penitentiary's bureaucratic red tape, and made our way to John.

John had been moved from death row to the "death house," a small building away from the rest of the prison facility that contained the electric chair. His morning was spent with his step-sister, the only relative he had who cared enough to bid him farewell. Her toddler son played happily on the floor, crawling guiltlessly among John's leg irons.

Baruch atah Adonai ... matir asurim.
Blessed are you, Adonai ... who sets free the bound.
(Morning Prayers)

At noon, the rules demanded that visitors depart. John's sister and nephew left. For the rest of the day—until midnight, the appointed hour of death—Silas and I and a few prison guards and officials would be John's only companions.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of death ...
(Psalms 23:4)

I scarcely remember how we passed that afternoon. There were endless cups of coffee and candy bars from the death house's lone vending machine. Silas attended to the obligatory final appeals. John and I just talked ... though I no longer recall about what.

Dinnertime. Like a bad B-movie, the moment of the condemned man's final meal. "For his final meal, Brogdon

asked for cracklin' cornbread, a cheeseburger, French fries, and a Coke" *(Times-Picayune).* I mused ironically that John's choice reflected my own unhealthy penchant for greasy burgers and fries. Except for the pork-seasoned cornbread, John's last meal could have been mine. And suddenly, my stomach remembered that I hadn't eaten more than a candy bar since early that morning.

In an act of perverse kindness, the prison cook had made John's last meal in quantity enough to feed a man for a week. Perhaps sensing my hunger, or perhaps simply unable to consume such abundance, John offered me his unfinished french fries.

I froze. I wouldn't move my hand toward those greasy potatoes. They were the food of death. For a moment I stepped outside my person, ordering myself to take the french fry. I ate it and many more.

Baruch atah Adonai … hamotzee lechem min haaretz.
Blessed are you, Adonai … who brings forth bread from the earth.

Finally, the closing stages of the day's ritual began. John was moved to a holding cell. No longer "free" with only his hands and ankles shackled, he would spend his last hours again behind bars. I sat in the hallway—barely wide enough for my single folding chair—in front of John's cell and held his hand through the cell bars. We played tic-tac-toe and talked.

Silas moved uneasily, unsure what to do. By 7 PM, word came that the Supreme Court had denied the last possible appeal. There was no more legal recourse. Should we tell John? We hesitated, but for only a few minutes.

Silas told John. We weren't sure his simple mind fully understood, but he thanked Silas for all his efforts. I glanced at the clock on the wall.

John's execution was a *fait accompli.* But the moment of death was appointed by statute. We had nearly five hours to wait.

… v'heegeeyanu laz'man hazeh.
… who has brought us to this special time.
(The Shehecheeyanu)

There was nothing left but conversation. John and I talked. This time, I remember the content and especially the form. Our grammar reflected the limits of John's life. There was, in our talk, no future tense. There was very little present tense. We spoke only of the past, John forgiving or explaining away his abusive family and the cruelties of his childhood.

And then, final procedures began with ritual precision. First John exchanged his personal clothing for prison-issue garb.

Baruch atah Adonai … malbish arumim.
Blessed are you, Adonai … who clothes the naked.
(Morning Prayers)

Then John began to bequeath his few life's possessions. A letter to his sister. Would I mail it? His jeans and tennis shoes. Would I give them to some agency that clothed the poor? His asthma inhaler, the same prescription as mine, and his one earring, a silver shooting star, were gifts to me.

Who is rich? He who is happy with his lot …
(Pirke Avot 4:1)

Next they took John from the cell to some more private place. They shaved patches of his body hair so that the electrical connections would be securely made. They "changed him" into an adult diaper for the release of bodily substances that would pour forth with that first jolt of electricity.

N'kaveem n'kaveem … chalulim chalulim …
Who has created in man passageways and openings.

Ten minutes before midnight. We began the short walk to the electric chair.

John in front, with guards on either side. Silas and I walked behind.

Baruch atah Adonai … heicheen metz'adei gaver.
Blessed are you, Adonai … who makes steady the steps of man. (Morning Prayers)

We parted. John entered one room to be strapped to the electric chair. I entered an adjacent room to become the tenth in the *minyan* (prayer quorum) of witnesses, separated from John by only a window of glass. The others were disinterested observers—members of the media pool and state officials.

Mine would be the only pair of caring eyes to see John depart this world. I had promised him, from the beginning of my work as his spiritual adviser, that I would be there. I had promised him I would witness.

"Looking on from behind a glass window, Brogdon's spiritual adviser … clenched her Bible and cried" *(Times-Picayune).* I had no idea why I'd brought a Bible. It felt like a stupid, empty prop. I clutched it anyway.

I'd sworn I wouldn't cry. Not with reporters watching. I cried anyway. "Brogdon winced several times and was hit with four jolts of electricity beginning at 12:06 AM. A minute later, the electrocution was completed" *(Times-Picayune).*

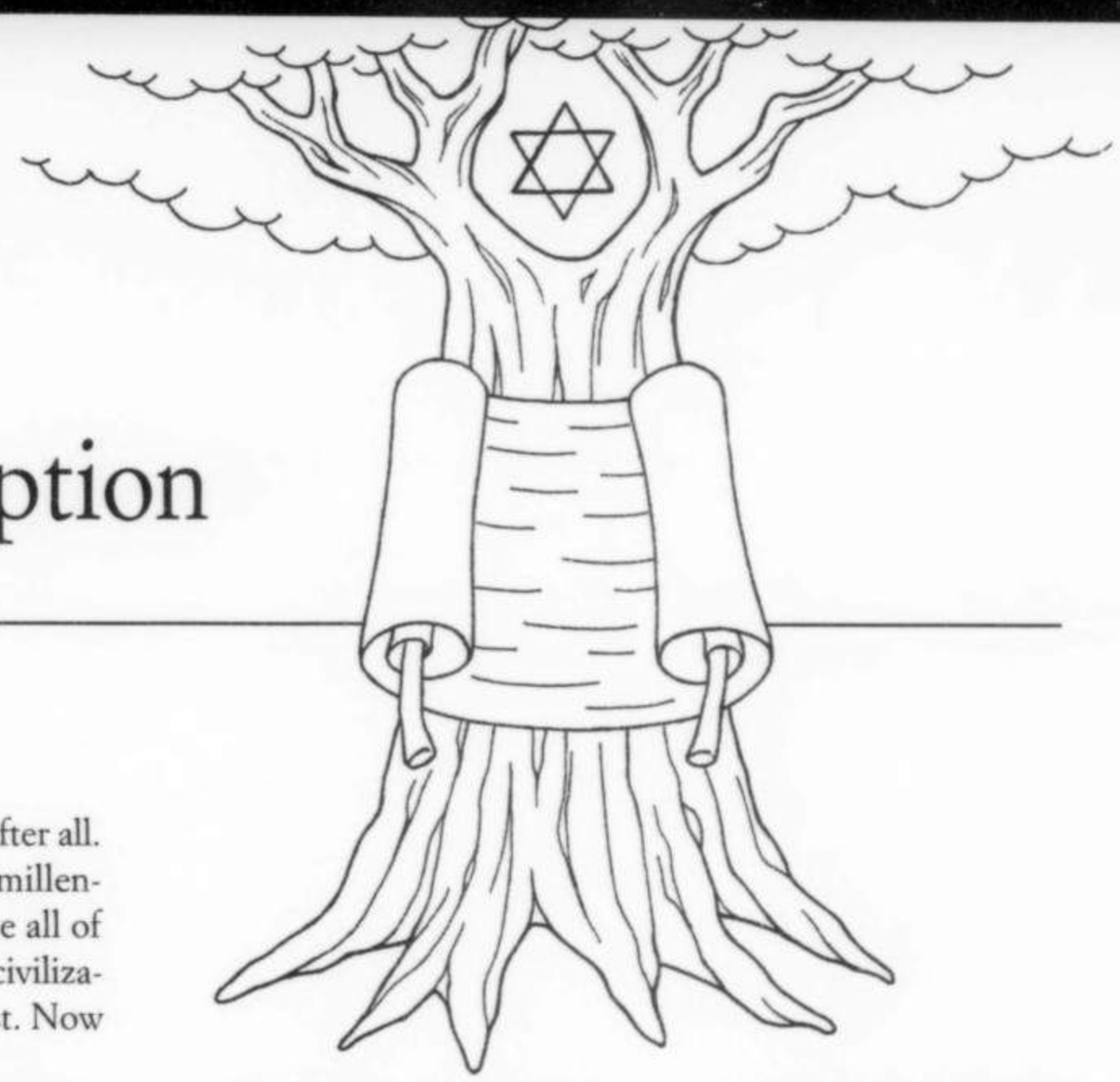
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Weeks later, a box boldly labeled "cremains" arrived at my local post office. Without a caring family or any other supportive community, John's ashes, and the final arrangements for them, were left to me. In wistful moments during his six years of prison, John had imagined finding an isolated home in the desert—somewhere that, if he ever got out of prison, he could live reclusively without fear of harming anyone. My new home in northern Nevada seemed a close match to his dream. So I took his ashes to a place in

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JEWISH ECOLOGY

Y2K *and* Ecological Redemption



Matt Biers-Ariel

So it turns out that God has a sense of humor after all. January 1, 2000, the first day of the new millennium, the day when the Y2K virus will cause all of our machines to fail thereby bringing world civilization to a halt, falls on Shabbat, the Jewish day of rest. Now that is irony.

Truth be told, Y2K will probably not wreak the predicted global havoc. Instead, it will be a minor blip in the march of civilization, a small and curious footnote future historians will write regarding this age. However, looked at from a different angle, Y2K is not a technological problem to be solved through updated computer software. Rather, Y2K symbolizes and perhaps is the culmination of a historical shift regarding the connection between the human species and the natural world. Simply put, we are rapidly becoming less and less connected to the elemental world of dirt, water, and air, while becoming more and more connected to and dependent on the virtual world of ram, bytes, and modems. While this shift certainly predates the quagmire of Y2K, we are now witnessing its acceleration. We are at the point when a seemingly insignificant computer glitch poses the possibility of disrupting our food supply, destroying our banking system, and launching a thermonuclear attack.

As we move from the real to the virtual world, we come to identify the Earth not as "Our Mother," but rather as "The Other." By relating to the Earth as Other, for example, we allow the unbridled destruction of the biosphere to take place with only minor feelings of shame, guilt, and remorse.

At its core, Y2K is a religious question. How can we humans re-learn to see ourselves as part of Creation, rather than apart from Creation?

Ecologically-minded thinkers have wrestled more or less unsuccessfully with changing the zeitgeist of our modern world. Yet, the wisdom needed to address this twenty-first-century issue is found in the Torah. Commandment Four, to be exact: Shabbat. I won't attempt to make the poetic and prophetic case that Shabbat is the day where we "go beyond civilization." Abraham Joshua Heschel does that in his little masterpiece, *The Sabbath*. I will, however, make the case that Shabbat is one of the best hopes we have to transform our way of interacting with the natural world. At its most basic level, Shabbat commands us to stop our assault on Creation. Lock up the car and go for a walk. Turn off the TV and watch the sunset. Instead of being economic consumers and producers, we are commanded to stop and smell the roses.

The benefits of Shabbat are twofold. First, we re-connect with Creation, and experience the healing and spiritual growth that comes from interacting with the natural world. As we become more connected with the natural world, that connection will create an atmosphere where we will have a greater desire to preserve and protect Creation. The second benefit of Shabbat allows us to reflect upon our individual and collective life paths. Perhaps more than anything else, our particular civilization needs to take the time to reflect on our frenetic lives. Think about it. Every day at work, at home, and even at play we complain about the rush, rush, rush of our lives. Who takes the time to stop and think about where the march of civilization is actually marching to?

In this light, January 1, 2000, is no longer a global train wreck to be avoided at all costs, but rather something pleasant to look forward to, a day to rest. Y2K is our opportunity to get off the global treadmill, if even for a single day. January 1, 2000, can be the day when civilization re-boots.

Imagine the entire world celebrating Shabbat on January 1, 2000. Six and a half billion people resting for twenty-four hours? It would seem like we had been transported to the Garden of Eden. A giant sigh would issue from the Earth. The damaged relationship between the human species and the rest of Creation would begin to mend. The Messianic Age might truly be upon us.

Yet, regardless of whether or not the trumpet heralding the coming of the Messiah will sound, Y2K presents the Jewish world with an opportunity to plant a seed that will push humanity to grow just a little further towards a healthier relationship with God's Creation. ❑

ILLUSTRATION BY RUSS ANDO

Matt Biers-Ariel is education director at the Marin JCC and co-author of Derech Eretz: A Jewish Naturalist's Guide.

SIMPLY JEWISH

The Place of Jewish Meditation

Rami Shapiro



Meditation as I use the term refers to a variety of spiritual technologies that hold out the promise of *d'vekut,* awakening to the fundamental unity of God, woman, man, and nature. Jewish meditation is the subset of these technologies that is rooted in the text and context of Judaism.

When I sit and chant "Ribbono Shel Olam," am I doing something fundamentally different from my Pure Land Buddhist neighbor who sits and chants "Namu amitabha butsu," or my Catholic neighbor who chants the "Hail Mary"? I don't think so. We are each sitting in the midst of our historical-cultural context seeking to awaken to that which is radically free of history, culture, and context.

Jewish meditation is a tool. Just as there are Phillips screwdrivers and flat head screwdrivers, so there are Jewish meditational tools and Hindu meditational tools. And just as one screwdriver is suited more to a task than another, one meditational tool may be suited more to one person than to another. I am a Jew because the tools of Judaism work for me better than the tools of Islam, Taoism, Zen, or any of the other great spiritual traditions of the world. But once I have used the tool effectively, that is to say once I have unscrewed the boxes that keep me from realizing the unity of all things in and with God, I am no longer in need of a cultural tool or label. Do not think that Jewish meditation makes you a better Jew. If it works, it makes you nothing at all.

Meditation is never the norm in any culture. It is too demanding to attract any but the most dedicated spiritual seeker. Meditation is not a five-minute exercise you slip into a congregational service. Meditation is not a hobby you do on weekends. Meditation is not an experience you collect by going on periodic retreats. Meditation is a serious discipline that takes priority over almost everything else in your life. And most people will not adopt it. Most people do not want or need that kind of discipline. And that is fine.

But Judaism needs it. Judaism needs the spiritual depth that meditation can bring to a tradition. Judaism needs the energy of people who are devoted to meditative practice in a Jewish context. I see the impact of those devoted to Jewish meditation to be similar to that of Hasidim. Most Jews will never be Hasidim, but Judaism would be so much poorer without them.

Jewish meditation should play an important role in the future of Judaism in America. In particular, we need to pursue three programs for enhancing Jewish meditation in a very practical and robust manner. First, we need to increase the number of serious centers for Jewish meditation around the United States and Canada. These should be residential communities with permanent teachers and students who come to stay and learn the disciplines of Jewish meditation and Jewish life as the teacher understands them.

The purpose of these centers is threefold. First, to deepen our exploration into the possibilities of Jewish meditation through serious study of text and techniques. Second, to provide people with a place to go to study with real meditation masters, people who have some realization of the unity of God in, with, and as all reality. And third, to be a resource for rabbis and Jewish educators who wish to bring the perfume of Jewish mystical practice into their communities, either by bringing people to the centers or by bringing teachers from the centers into their communities.

Second, we must expand the definition of synagogue to

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY SARAH SOLIE

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The Synagogue Dues Problem

Lawrence Bush and Jeffrey Dekro

During the High Holy Days, millions of American Jews, including thousands of unaffiliateds, will be drawn to synagogue thresholds—and asked if they have a ticket. The membership dues system has changed only slightly since d. a. levy (1942–1968) wrote a painful poem about it three decades ago:

> it was sometime afterward
> my father and i
> went to a temple …
> sat down in time
> to hear that haunting
> language for just a moment
> when someone told us we had to stand in the
> back—we had chosen 'reserved seats'
> seats that had been paid for
> we left & it was thus i completed
> my external jewish education
> …
> my father with his lonely eyes
> trying to return home
> only to have the american god of money
> slapped in his face …

According to the *American Jewish Year Book, 1997 (AJYB),* "Jewish religious institutions charge membership dues, fees for seats, and tuition; by contrast, churches do not have formal dues structures." As a result, "giving to Christian institutions is widely regarded as philanthropic," while synagogues suffer from the resentment and consumerist mentality that arise from obligatory dues. How did the Jewish community come to be burdened by such a system? We see it arising as follows:

Step one: The realities of oppression and autonomy experienced by Jewish communities of the fourteenth to eighteenth centuries brought a governance role to synagogues that included collecting and distributing tzedakah funds. "The minutes of the early synagogues," writes Samuel C. Kohs (*The Jews: Their History, Culture and Religion,* ed. Louis Finkelstein), "read like the minutes of some present-day Federation.... The synagogue board was interested in every phase of Jewish communal life, secular as well as religious."

Step two: Also institutionalized in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were rabbinic salaries, as anti-Semitic persecutions and expulsions expanded the rabbi's role from teacher and interpreter of Torah to spiritual and political leader—even as they were cut off from outside means of earning a living. (The first known salaried rabbi fled from Spain to Algiers in the fourteenth century. Since Jewish law forbids profiting from teaching Torah, he was contracted to receive *sekhar battalah,* compensation for the loss of time associated with his duties—which became the halachic basis for rabbinic salaries. See Murray Polner's *Rabbi.*)

Step three: The establishment of Reform Judaism's tripartite national infrastructure in nineteenth-century America created the need for major synagogue financing—and was emulated by each emerging denomination.

Today, according to the *AJYB,* the "annual budgets of synagogues, denominational organizations, and other religious institutions top $1 billion"—while the dues system that sustains these budgets has become a major barrier to affiliation. "For synagogue activists," observes Rabbi Sam Gordon of Sukkat Shalom (Reform) in Winnetka, Ilinois, "the dues system might be okay, but for the marginal people it's a fee for service that makes belonging into a marketplace transaction." Sukkat Shalom uses a voluntary pledging system. "If the community is working and people care about it," Gordon reports, "they will voluntarily contribute as much—without the resentment."

Rabbi Brian Walt of Mishkan Shalom (Reconstructionist) in Philadelphia agrees, but says that "it takes a lot of thoughtful budgeting and educating." Mishkan Shalom honors Jewish economic principles that seek to sustain communal, as well as individual, well-being. "There are no tickets or financial appeals on the high holidays. Dues are confidential; a higher rate does not win greater influence or acknowledgment."

But Mishkan Shalom has a high degree of ideological coherence, while Sukkat Shalom has a wealthy membership base. Can financial practices be successfully modified in a more "typical" Jewish community? Yes, according to Rabbi Robert Davis, executive director of Temple Beth Sholom (Reform) in Miami Beach. The 1,000-member congregation has been striving to overcome debts that brought them to the brink of bankruptcy several years ago. Their strategy is

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Lawrence Bush and Jeffrey Dekro are co-authors of Jews, Money and Social Responsibility. *Dekro is a member of Mishkan Shalom. They can be reached at shefafnd@libertynet.org.*

Simply Jewish *(continued from page 54)*
include meditation and healing modalities within the context of congregational life. Just as every synagogue has a school for its children where they can study toward b'nai mitzvah, so every synagogue should have a school for adults to train them in basic Jewish meditation and healing techniques. The level of teaching and practice in these schools would be far less intense than in the residential centers, but they could provide most Jews with the level of guidance they desire, and function as a conduit to the residential centers for those who desire more. The teachers working in these synagogue programs should be students of the meditation masters, but need not be at the same level of spiritual attainment.



Third, we must train interested and psychologically qualified rabbis, cantors, Jewish educators, and others in the art of spiritual mentoring. The role of a spiritual mentor is to help people develop and maintain a personal prayer life and meditation practice, and to guide people in exploring the role of the divine in their lives. This is very different from pastoral counseling, which is essentially psychotherapy with a twist of Torah. Spiritual mentoring does not deal with personal psychological problems except insofar as they directly impact ontological questions of meaning and life purpose. Spiritual mentors focus on prayer and meditation as a means for recognizing the presence of God in you, around you, as you.

Training in spiritual mentoring can be done through existing rabbinic seminaries, through the residential meditation centers, or through independent programs created specifically for that purpose. Spiritual mentors must be licensed and must renew their license regularly as a means of protecting people from egomaniacs and messianic pretenders. Spiritual mentors could be hired by synagogues to enhance their offerings to their members, or could work independently in the Jewish community, helping those who wish to find God's presence in their lives.

If we honor Jewish meditation's demand for serious commitment and support regional centers; if we then seed communities with the taste of meditation, drawing upon these regional centers for authenticity and depth of experience; if we add meditation and healing to the agenda of the synagogue, shaping programs to meet people's needs and not expecting them to commit to full meditative discipline; if we provide those Jews who desire more with a place to learn more; and if we add spiritual mentors to our list of Jewish professionals, then the future of Jewish meditation is rich, for it will enrich the lives of the Jewish people who, in turn, will see to its survival into the future. ❑

Torah of Money *(continued from page 55)*
to "try to raise all decision-making regarding money to the highest Jewish ethical level." Rather than "borrowing" from vendors by delaying payments, for example, the synagogue paid its debts with a bank line of credit, and the board made real its policy of not excluding anyone from membership based on inability to pay. By enlarging its stakeholder boundaries, the community has regained its pride.

Davis concludes: "By becoming unbalanced in our concern about financial obligations, we can forget the community aspects of belonging. And the more we forget, the more estranged we become, which further distances us and our resources from Jewish institutions." ❑

Fix *(continued from page 32)*
He then flew posthaste back to the White House, and made basically the same speech upon his arrival. On Martha's Vineyard, he covered his mouth. At the White House, he coughed. Any psychologist or, better, any cop will tell you that these are pretty good signs of a man telling a lie.

Nothing will change in boxing, and we go on with our illusions: "Yes," we say, "it surely looked fixed to *me*—but surely the *fighters* couldn't have known." Nothing will change in the Defense Department; we will fund yet another useless, pointless behemoth program.

We may scream "fix," "infamy," and "Blue Ribbon Panel," but we love, or must love, the pageant—of which the perfidy and corruption is not an unfortunate, exciseable infection, but the motive force. ❑

Jewish Moral Authority *(continued from page 47)*
demonstrates that Jewish formal and informal educational experiences are both critical in enabling American Jews to access their own cultural heritage. Ethnic memories fade with the passing of the generations. Spiritual questions, in contrast, feel fresh to each new generation of individuals facing life's existential mysteries.

As an Orthodox Jew who finds profound meaning and joy in the demanding dailiness of Jewish living and learning, I hope that Herbert Bronstein convinces his readers to approach the concept of obligation and commandedness earnestly and—quite literally—in good faith. However, as a Jewish feminist, I would sound one word of concern, as regards the role of women in Jewish life. Jewish feminists have struggled to insure that within our communities today, and within the imagined community of the past, Jewish female matriarchs, heroines, and role models play meaningful and equitable roles. As liberal American Jews rediscover the deep value of traditional Judaic texts and rituals, one "traditional" attitude which does not need to be revived is the tendency to marginalize our girls and women. Reform Judaism has led the way in bringing women to the center of Judaism, and bringing Judaism to the center of women's lives. This too is a precious legacy, and not one to abandon. ❑

LEGAL NOTICE BY ORDER OF THE COURT

To victims of Nazi persecution and their heirs who may have claims against Swiss Banks or other Swiss entities relating to the Holocaust:

Swiss banks agreed to pay $1.25 billion U.S. dollars to settle legal claims relating to the World War II era conduct of Swiss banks, Swiss businesses, and the Swiss government ("Swiss Entities").

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of New York (the "Court") will hold a hearing on November 29, 1999, to decide whether the Settlement should be given final approval.

Note that you may be included even if you did not have a Swiss bank account, and that this Settlement is different from the Swiss Humanitarian Fund.

Who Is Affected by the Settlement

You are affected by the Settlement if you fit into one of the following five Settlement Classes. Four Classes consist of "Victims or Targets of Nazi Persecution" (any individual, business or group persecuted or targeted for persecution by the Nazi Regime or its agents, because they were or were believed to be **Jewish, Romani, Jehovah's Witness, homosexual, or physically or mentally disabled or handicapped**), AND who:

1. Had assets on deposit with any Swiss bank, investment fund, or other custodian, prior to May 9, 1945, OR
2. May have claims against Swiss Entities relating to assets looted or taken by the Nazi Regime*, OR
3. Performed slave labor for entities that may have deposited the revenues or proceeds of that labor with or transacted that profit through Swiss Entities, OR
4. Unsuccessfully sought entry into Switzerland to avoid Nazi persecution, or after gaining entry, were mistreated, and may have related claims against any Swiss Entity.

The fifth Settlement Class includes any individual, whether or not a Victim or Target of Nazi Persecution, who performed slave labor in a work site, wherever located, owned or controlled by a Swiss Entity.

All Settlement Classes include heirs and successors of the persons and entities described above.

Even if you're not sure whether you are a member of one of the Settlement Classes, you should request a Mailed Notice and Initial Questionnaire. For example, if you performed slave labor, you may not know whether revenue or proceeds of that labor were deposited with Swiss Entities; you may still be a Settlement Class member.

How and When Claims will be Paid

No claims process or Plan of Allocation has yet been established. The Mailed Notice explains how you can make suggestions.

To receive further notice of a claims process, and ensure that you are able to file a claim, you must either mail a request for such notice to the address below, or complete and return the Initial Questionnaire attached to the Mailed Notice.

If the Court gives final approval of the Settlement, a Plan of Allocation will be adopted and the Fund will be disbursed. **Not all Settlement Class members who apply will be eligible to receive payments.**

If You Do Not Want to Participate

If you do not wish to participate in or be bound by the Settlement, you must exclude yourself by writing a letter so indicating, to the address given in the Mailed Notice, by October 22, 1999. If you do not, you will be barred from prosecuting any legal action against Swiss Entities relating to the settled disputes. If you exclude yourself, you will NOT be able to claim a portion of the Fund.

How to Comment or Object

You may comment on the terms of the Settlement by October 22, 1999. The Mailed Notice describes how to submit comments or objections. You have the right to appear at the November 29, 1999 hearing in person or through counsel, although you do not have to.

Who Represents You

The Court appointed attorneys as Settlement Class Counsel, and appointed Settlement Class Representatives, including Holocaust survivors, the World Jewish Restitution Organization ("WJRO"), and the World Council of Orthodox Jewish Communities. You do not have to personally pay the Court appointed attorneys. Certain attorneys will apply to the Court for reimbursement of their costs, up to about .2% of the Fund. Certain Plaintiffs' attorneys will also apply for fees, up to at most 1.8% of the Fund. The Court may award a lower amount. Most attorneys will not apply for fees, and counsel for the WJRO will not apply for fees or costs.

Getting More Information

To learn more, fill out the request form below, call toll free 1-888-635-5483, or visit the website http://www.swissbankclaims.com

Send me the Mailed Notice and Initial Questionnaire.

Name _____

Address _____

_____

City _____

State _____ ZipCode _____

Country _____

Preferred Language _____

This is NOT a Claim Form. Please mail this to:

Holocaust Victim Assets Litigation - Information
P.O. Box 8300
San Francisco, CA 94218-8300

US-ENG-TIKK

1-888-635-5483
www.swissbankclaims.com

Scope of Release

The Settlement of this case (In re Holocaust Victim Assets Litigation, Master File No. CV-96-4849) concludes all legal actions and disputes against Swiss Entities relating to the Holocaust, World War II, Victims or Targets of Nazi Persecution, the Nazi Regime, treatment of refugees, or any related thing. The term "Swiss Entities" (or "Releasees") includes Credit Suisse and UBS AG (successor to Union Bank of Switzerland and Swiss Bank Corporation), and their former and current corporate parents, subsidiaries, affiliates, and branches; the Swiss National Bank; other Swiss Banks; the Swiss Bankers Association; the Swiss Confederation (including the Swiss government); all business concerns headquartered, organized or incorporated in Switzerland as of October 3, 1996; and certain other affiliates of Swiss concerns described in the Mailed Notice. Certain claims against various Swiss insurance companies listed in the Mailed Notice are not included in this Settlement.

* The second Settlement Class also includes claims against Swiss Entities relating to "Cloaked Assets," which are assets disguised by a Swiss Entity for the benefit of an Axis company or person associated with the Nazi Regime, between 1933 and 1946.

The Mitzvah of Tzedakah

Bradley Shavit Artson

On the surface, the mitzvah of *tzedakah* (the commandment to give) is a very simple one. The Book of Deuteronomy says, "If there is a needy person among you don't harden your heart, don't shut your hand against your needy kin. For there will never cease to be people with need in your land which is why I command you to open your heart to the poor and to the needy kin in your land." According to the Torah, there simply are people in need out there, and our job as human beings and as Jews is to help them to meet their needs, to help them live lives of dignity and fullness. It is our sacred privilege to provide sufficient food, shelter, education, and care so that children grow up to be productive and healthy adults, so that healthy and productive adults are able to keep the community and their families together, and so that seniors are able to reap a rich harvest from all the years that they have already striven to make our world a possibility.

On the surface, the Torah is very simple. I am struck, however, by its choice of terms: twice the verse in Deuteronomy essentially says, "don't harden your heart." Ask yourself: in the Bible, whose heart is hardened? Let's recall that Moses goes into Egypt and says, "Let my people go," and Pharaoh's heart is hardened. Any Jew who can look at a human being in need and not hear God's call to "let my people go," to do something, becomes a Pharaoh. You don't have to be evil to be on the side of evil. You simply have to remain indifferent. All that it takes for goodness to be vanquished is for us to ignore the suffering and desperation of our fellow human beings. To fail to act is all it takes to create a society of inequity and of callousness. Refusing to lend a hand, we become the Pharaohs of our age.

The Midrash (ancient rabbinic commentary) notices there is a contradiction between two biblical verses about poverty. The Book of Deuteronomy says that there will not always be poor among you (15:4); a few verses later it says the very opposite: there will always be poor in your midst (15:11). The rabbis say that determining which verse applies to our community is in our hands. When we live our lives in a godly way, when we go out, roll up our sleeves, and make the world a better place, then we make sure that there are no needy among us. But if we harden our hearts, if we shut ourselves off to what God would have us do with our lives and our resources, then, indeed, the poor will never go away.

You don't have to be evil to be on the side of evil.

In truth, tzedakah is not about giving; tzedakah is about being. The Torah begins by telling us that we are *b'tzelem Elohim,* made in God's image. What a striking phrase! None of us look alike, so the image of God can't be a physical likeness. What, then, is the essence of God's image? What does it mean to be God's image in the world? Jewish tradition teaches that what is essentially divine about God is that God loves unconditionally and that God's giving is free. We don't earn God's bounty; God gives simply for the joy of giving. To be God-like means to give. We are reflections of that divine image, which means that when we rise up in our freedom and we offer gifts of love, caring, and support, then we are most God-like. That is our mission in life: we are placed in this material world to bring that divine spark into the world and to share it among each other. A person who doesn't give isn't whole; a person who doesn't reach out is, in some ways, not fully human.

One other level of tzedakah: in the Torah, the first thing God says or does after the creation is to become a tailor. God expels Adam and Eve from the Garden, but the next thing God does is to sew clothing for them. That gift is itself unearned. Adam and Eve had disobeyed the Lord's command. They had rebelled against God and eaten of the fruit even though it was the only thing God told them not to do. So it's particularly remarkable that even though God insists they have forfeited their right to live in the Garden, God's love doesn't rest. God makes them clothes because God sees their shame at being naked. That first act of caring is consistent with God's last act in the Torah. The last deed that God performs in the Torah is to bury Moses. Moshe is not capable of burying himself. He can't rely on his own resources, so God does it for him.

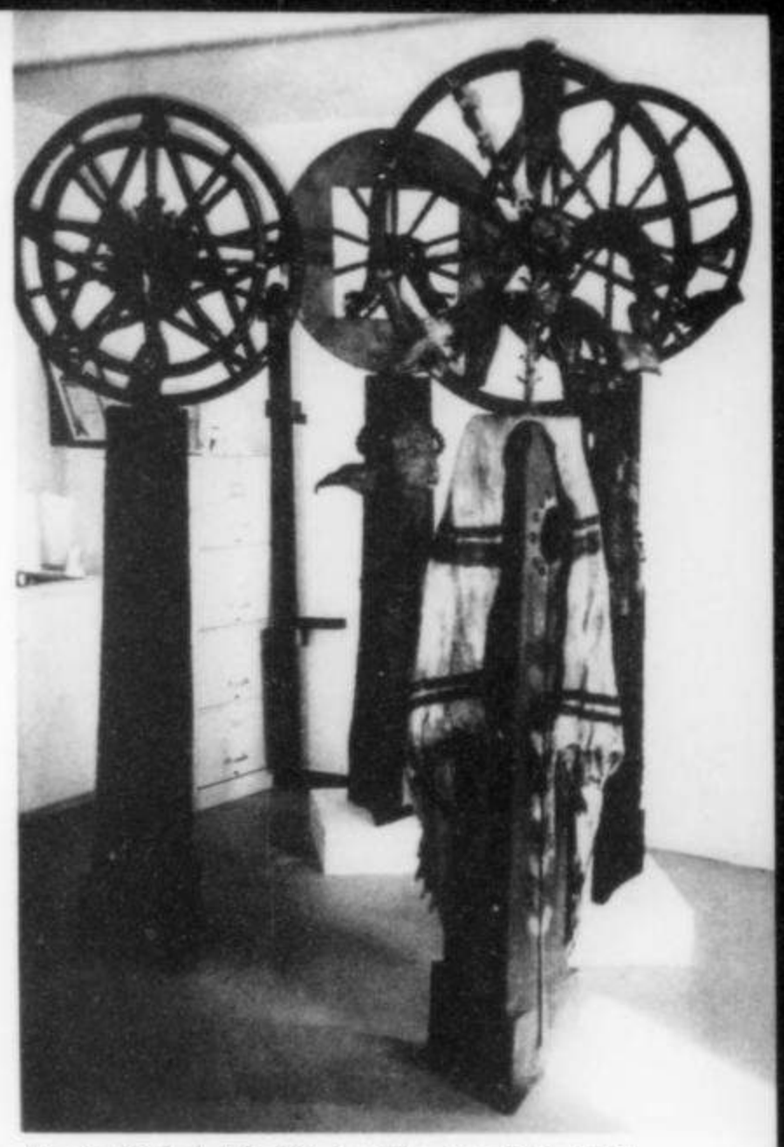
The Torah begins and ends with what our tradition calls *gemillut hasadim,* acts of loving-kindness. Those engaged in the mitzvah of tzedakah are the shimmering lights of God in our community. Through the work that we do now and through the year, we will persuade this hard and callous world that there is a God who rules, that this God insists on justice and love, and that the sovereignty of God is best demonstrated when human beings help each other. ❑

Rabbi Bradley Shavit Artson is vice president of the University of Judaism and dean of its Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies.

ART AND SPIRIT

Kabbalah and Jewish-American Artists

Matthew Baigell



Bruria Finkel, *The Divine Chariot.* 1985–1997, bronze, 8' x 31" x 16". Courtesy of the artist.

Check out the Judaica section in any bookstore. You will be surprised at the number of books concerned with Kabbalah, or Jewish mysticism. Some are feel-good, New Agey; others are rigorous academic and religious studies. All reflect what seems to be an unquenchable desire for spiritual fulfillment as well as for a deeper connection to a Judaism that exists outside of the synagogue, the shtetl, and old traditions. Jewish-American artists have also responded in kind, turning to Kabbalah as a source of inspiration. In effect, and in an odd turn of events, non-mainstream Jewish religious concerns have replaced Jewish communal culture as a way for artists to identify as Jewish.

Current curiosity about Kabbalah surfaced in the 1960s as part of the general interest in spiritualism and spiritual systems generally Eastern in origin, such as Zen, Yoga, and Buddhism. By the 1970s, Kabbalah and those aspects of Jewish history and religion found in the Torah and Talmud informed the works of an increasing number of artists. Like the general public, the artists' range of commitment has varied from "grazing" through various books, as one artist described the way he obtains information, to serious study with mystics and Hasidic rabbis, from California Kabbalah concerned with obtaining cosmic energy, good health, and good sex to the serious task of translating kabbalistic materials into English. Using a variety of styles, artists have not necessarily illustrated particular passages, but rather found in them points of departure for their visual meditations. As such, their work is not an isolated instance of Jewish mystical art in modern times, but part of the largely unstudied history of mysticism (Jewish, Christian, Zen, etc.) in recent American art.

Clearly, there is no single point of view, let alone a school or even representative figures in this recent Jewish mystical art, as each artist finds his or her own way in this vast and often contradictory literature. For the artists, mysticism is really a form of self-assertion, a coming to terms with the forces of the universe. In their differing ways, they use canonical texts to help them convert religious encounters from received dogma to living experience. They seek an immediate awareness of a relation with God, an awareness of the Divine Presence in the world, avoiding the intermediate step of synagogue worship. Old-fashioned objections, voiced by the ultra-religious, about the very fact of women artists exploring this subject matter or of images which approach too closely the Second Commandment restrictions concerning graven images, are of little relevance to these artists. Although Kabbalah is the source, the artists are post-traditional in their ways of thinking.

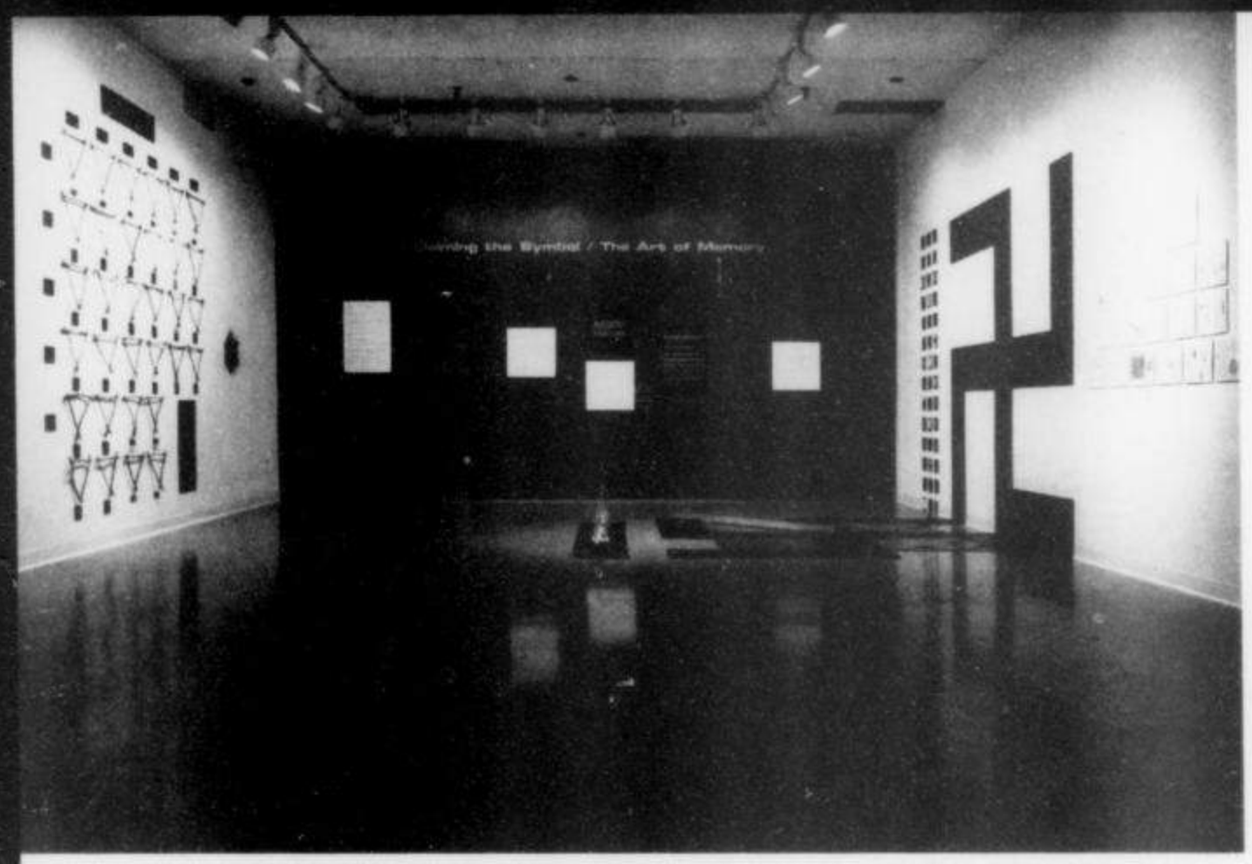
A case in point. California-based Bruria Finkel has been using kabbalistic imagery since 1966, when she was introduced to the writings of Abraham Abulafia, a thirteenth-century Spanish kabbalist. Since the mid-1980s, she has been making a series of wheel-shaped sculptures which contain Hebrew lettering and human hands. The wheels refer both to Ezekiel's vision of the chariot which supports the throne of God (I:4–15) as well as to the interpretations of Ezekiel's vision by Abulafia, who, in order to contemplate the presence of the chariot, and therefore the Divine, developed a method of meditating on the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet to invoke the proper ecstatic mood.

Finkel, who has been translating Abulafia's writings into English since the late 1960s, insists that her work is humanistic rather than religious in a ritualistic sense. For her the bronze wheels "represent time, place, and function as a bridge into ancient philosophies. The chariot, considered by the Kabbalah to be a symbol of the highest form of human attainment towards peace and divine influx, is configured by the four wheels and their pedestals." In effect, she visualizes what Abulafia might have imagined during his (and now her) meditations, a way to grow nearer to the cosmic stream of life, or at least to the power of the human spirit to evolve into higher reaches of contemplation.

Edith Altman's spiritual quests are, by contrast, more activist than meditative. The kabbalist, or mystic, is supposed to remain active in the community as a source of inspiration, information, and leadership, and ideally should not

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Matthew Baigell is professor of art history at Rutgers University in New Brunswick. His most recent book is Jewish-American Artists and the Holocaust *(Rutgers University Press, 1997).*



Edith Altman. *Reclaiming the Symbol/The Art of Memory.* 1988-1992, mixed media installation, dimensions vary. Courtesy of the artist.

isolate him or herself with other mystics. In keeping with that ideal, Altman and Finkel want their art to contribute to spiritual growth and development. No doubt, Altman would agree with Finkel, who feels that Kabbalah can be invoked as a salutary presence in the world, that the purpose of her work "is to create a healing moment that carries across time and space, both as metaphor and as a real experience."

In fact, these words well describe Altman's intentions in her "Reclaiming the Symbol/The Art of Memory," an installation begun in 1988. A student of a Lubavicher rabbi in Chicago, Altman is strongly motivated by the concept of *tikkun olam,* or repair of the world. "Reclaiming the Symbol" concerns restoring the swastika to its pre-Nazi configuration and meaning as a symbol of growth, or, more universally, the triumph of good over evil, of sustenance and renewal, a subject treated in many kabbalistic texts. Altman has added several kabbalistic references to the work, including a gold swastika, configured in the pre-Nazi way, representing base matter transformed into spiritual gold which draws on the energies of the upper spiritual world. The lower spiritual world is symbolized by the black swastika on the floor (configured in the Nazi way).

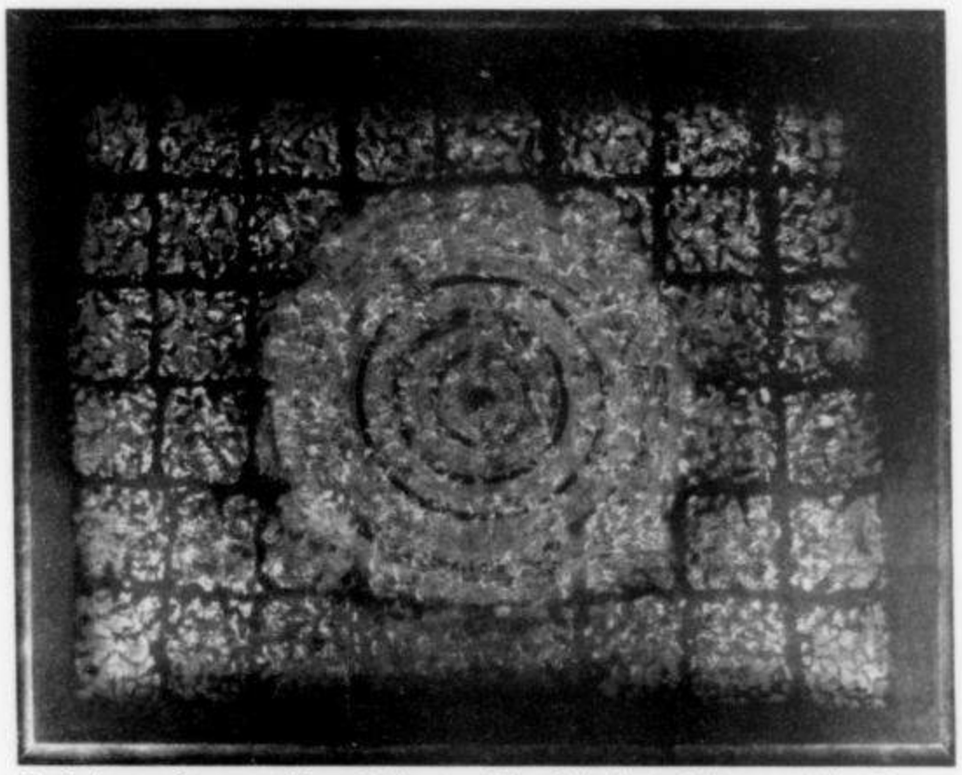
Having experienced Krystallnacht as a child in Germany, and with the spiritual support offered by her readings in Kabbalah, Altman wanted to face the hated symbol directly, to neutralize it, and to subdue residual fears it still evokes; that is to say, to spiritualize it and to reinvest it with archaic and mythic meanings once again. To say it in more polemical words: to invoke Jewish mysticism rather than the rationality of the rabbinic tradition and traditional orthodoxy. Of works such as this one, she has said that

> everybody has a function. I see mine as healing. The idea of *tikkun* is part of Kabbalistic thinking; it shapes a way of looking at your lifetime. The idea of *tikkun* is that we are here to repair ourselves and in doing so to help repair the world, helping to bring it back into better harmony.

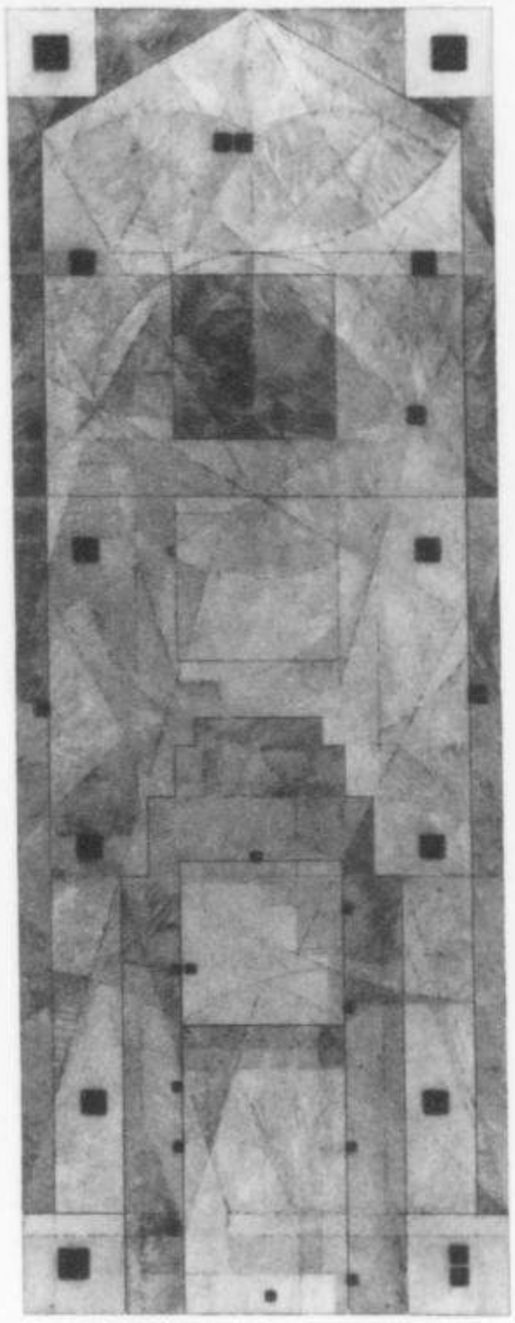
Other artists who use kabbalistic sources for personal reasons can be equally, if differently, socially-minded. Beth Ames Swartz, who lives in Arizona, bases her interest in Kabbalah on political activism, feminism, and a high regard for the sacredness of the earth. Her interests in Kabbalah began after a trip to Israel in 1976 when she realized that she could no longer ignore her Jewish heritage. Even as Kabbalah began to play an important part in her life, however, she continued to be interested in other mystical systems. This is not to say that she shops around for mystical insights, but rather to raise some serious questions: What is the Jewish commitment of artists whose main concern seems to be spiritual enlightenment as much as, if not more than, Jewish identification? Except in the most generic sense, can such works be called Jewish, whatever that term might mean in this context? Further, in a multicultural age, what does Jewish identification mean, anyway? For the artists, answers to these questions depend on the observer's degree of religious and cultural commitment.

But Swartz sees herself operating within a Jewish ambience. I do not think anyone could seriously question Swartz's Jewish identification in the series of performances she enacted in Israel in 1981. In that work, Swartz visited ten sites associated with women (such as Rebecca and Rachel) and performed rituals in their honor. In the process, she created flattened, relief-like forms made of paper, various media, and the earth (literally) which were then hardened by a firing process. Some objects were formed so that Hebrew letters could be discerned in their overall shapes.

Swartz's most recent efforts, several paintings brought together as the "Shen Qi Series: The Cabalistic Scheme of the Four Worlds," is based on the Chinese healing tradition of Qi Gong as well as the Kabbalah. The four worlds of the title refers to the four interrelated levels of creation, from the spiritual to the physical, adumbrated in one of the earliest kabbalistic texts, the *Sefer Yetzirah* or *The Book of Creation*. In the paintings there are layers composed of mandorlas and lines based on the Tree of Life or the Sefirot,



Beth Ames Swartz. *Shen Qi Series: The Cabalistic Scheme of the Four Worlds, #5.* 1998, mixed media with gold leaf on canvas, 48" x 60". Courtesy of the artist.



Robert Kirschbaum. *Kidroon Valley, #3.* 1991, oil on wood, 80" x 30". Courtesy of the artist.

squared areas of gold leaf to symbolize purity of the soul, and still other lines to suggest the transmission of energy through the various levels of spiritual and physical being and good health. For Swartz, each painting is not merely a pictorial synthesis of some mystical material she has read, but a living document which she feels gives off energy a sympathetic viewer can feel.

Robert Kirschbaum's architectural studies, begun in 1977, have equally complex layers of meaning, but are not meant to engage the viewer so aggressively. Rather they might be considered intellectual exercises in exploring the various mystical states of mind evoked by contemplating the Temple in Jerusalem. Motivated, in part, by sacred temple sites he had seen in India, Kirschbaum, a Connecticut resident, has explored a variety of images of his chosen subject since the late 1970s. Usually they consist of vertical paintings of architectural forms, often overlaid with geometric elements; their colors are usually bright for a very precise reason.

He chose architectural work because it is "the single most potent image in a religion that eschews representation." For Kirschbaum, the vertical image becomes an archetypal doorway that suggests not only the poetic idea of passage, but specific biblical and kabbalistic references. Kirschbaum likens his artistic creation to the symbolic rebuilding of the Temple, while its overpainted grids invoke, for him, the tent-like structures he associates with the Tabernacle. At the same time, his vertical forms conjure up the notion found in the Zohar of the Torah as being like both a human body and an entire building. In this view, the complex grids superimposed on the designs symbolize the primordial and still unsettled world of points which expand during the process of creation, according to the kabbalistic interpretations of Isaac Luria.

The bright colors, particularly the yellows and golds, recall the many images of light to be found in Kabbalah, symbolizing a variety of aspects up to and including the Ein Sof, the unknown and unknowable force at the center of Kabbalistic thought. Kirschbaum has singled out one passage in the Zohar as key to the meditative qualities with which he imbues his work (in Gershom Scholem's translation): "The primal center is the innermost light, of a translucence, subtility [sic] and purity beyond comprehension. That inner point extended becomes a palace, which acts as an enclosure for the center and is also of a radiance translucent beyond the power to know it."

In a way similar to Bruria Finkel's meditations on the meaning of the chariot wheel, Kirschbaum suggests that reflecting upon the Temple and entry into it symbolizes transformation, revelation, rebirth, and, not least, hope.

There are yet other artists who find inspiration in Kabbalah. In broad artistic terms, they share with the artists mentioned here a desire to add spiritual content to their art. To a greater or lesser degree, their art is meditative, descriptive, or a combination of both, and they would like their art to be in dialogue with the viewer. As Jews, their art is part of their search for Jewish identity in ways that can link them to ancient religious traditions rather than to changing contemporary Jewish cultural conditions. They are less concerned with community, as basic as that is to Jewish modes of worship and group activities, than with a few core ideas that define Judaism for them. These include, as considered above, passages from the Torah, kabbalistic interpretations of these passages, and the actual locations mentioned in the Torah and their resonances through history. Perhaps most important for the artists, they want to define their Judaism on their own terms. The Kabbalah is fluid enough for them to do so. ❑

FOR JOHN *(continued from page 52)*

the heights of the Sierra Nevada. I spread them near a spot where my congregation worships and celebrates creation every Rosh Hashanah.

Twice a year, I am sure to remember John. On his Yarhzeit. And as a new year begins.

Yitgadal v'yitkadash ...

I mourn John's life, ended in Louisiana's electric chair at the age of twenty-five.

I mourn too John's victim, Barbara Jo Brown, her life ended violently on a levee in Luling, Louisiana, at the age of eleven.

Yitgadal v'yitkadash ...

Ten years later, little in our justice system seems changed. I remain the committed opponent of capital punishment that I was then. I know the arguments on both sides. I doubt that positions on this horrible matter will be swayed by any of them.

I know though, with a certainty, that I have seen the demonic incarnate in this world. Firmly grounded in a tradition that holds life's sanctity above all else, I know clearly when life's holiness has been upended by state-sanctioned murder.

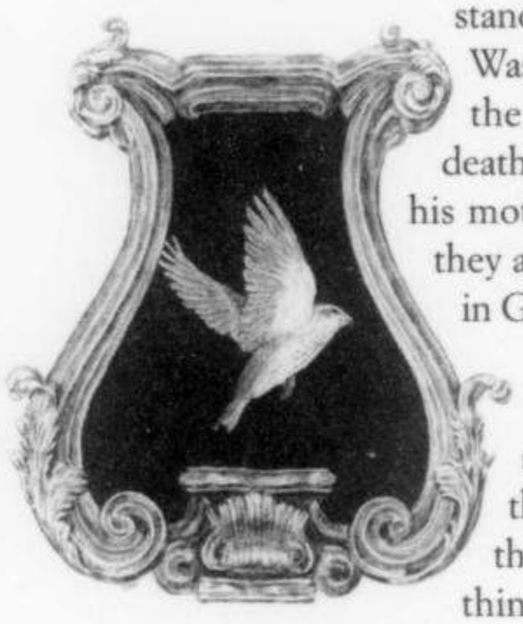
Yitgadal v'yitkadash ...

I know no way to say "Amen." ❑

THE SLOW MIRROR *(continued from page 50)*

When I gathered the courage to caress the book open, I found an inscription in Ladino to Pedro from his mother dated: Purim, the 14th of Adar, 5707 (1947). I sounded out the message in a whisper: *"Para mi pequeño pájaro con amor. El imposible es la prueba."* (For my little bird with love. The impossible is the proof.)

The strange sensation that these words were meant for me seemed to suspend my breathing. From deep inside an armor of body, I felt as if I had happened upon an understanding of the world grounded in belief. Was it this belief that had given Rosalie the serenity she possessed before death? Pedro must surely have passed on his mother's words to her years ago. Did they assure her that she'd be joining him in God?



When the movements of another customer tugged me back into consciousness of the store, I paid for the book. The dealer said, "Isn't that the mystery of life. We had this lovely thing displayed prominently for many years and no one bought it. Now that it's hidden away, you come in and find it. You figure it out."

"Maybe this has something to do with it," I said, showing him the book's inscription. To his wide-eyed look of bewilderment, I said: "It's Ladino. A Jewish Spanish written with Hebrew letters dating from before the Inquisition." I read him the message from Pedro's mother.

"What do you think it means?" he asked.

I unfurled my arm to indicate the store, the street, the antiques. I pointed at him, then at myself. "Has the unlikeliness of the world itself … or something absolutely impossible that's occurred never made you feel that there's more to this than meets the eye?"

"Ah, I understand," he said. He puffed out his lips and held up his hands in a gesture of passive skepticism. As he started to speak, I raised my index finger to my lips and offered him Rosalie's soft smile of silence.

On my return to San Francisco, I took the mirror down and sold it to a Chilean antique dealer in the Mission District with brilliant blue eyes. And flew to Cornell. I walked in the woods during several days, holding the children's books, not knowing what I was after, until an arrow of pastel pink streaked by in front of me. It was a rose-breasted grosbeak, a female, and she had alighted on the branch of a gnarled oak tree directly above me. She was staring at the ground. When I looked down, I discovered a puddle of water atop a bed of moss. It was reflecting the face of a tearful old woman, a sudden winged shimmer of pink passing through green clouds into a sunlit sky. And I thought: *Dreams, too, are impossible.* And: *Whether I know it or not, this woods, this place, is here all the time.* ❑

THE LITTLETON TRAGEDY *(continued from page 14)*

adds that such kids have no sense of a purposeful future that contained the possibility of meaningful commitment and action. Wayne Wooden, whose book *Renegade Kids, Suburban Outlaws* explores the lives of suburban middle-class teens, says, "Today's group is full of gloom and doom, and nothing is worth saving. Some have so internalized their bleakness that they strike out and back, using the very instruments of rage and power that the broader culture is using." These views are supported by other surveys of teens which show an absence of hopeful vision, or a sense that their lives can purposefully affect and improve the quality of our nation or world. It is in this context of disbelief and nihilism that one can understand the appeal of dark and fascistic imagery and ideology to at least some kids. In the absence of any inspiring vision of human possibility, such ideologies, especially with their emphasis on the loathsomeness of particular categories of people, offer powerful and—through the Internet—easily available images that speak to the isolation and rage of many young people like those at Columbine. These images connect both their sense of impotence and their desire for action with the promise of destruction and mayhem unleashed on a world that seems to offer nothing but hurt and pain. Its promise is not of social change or amelioration—seen as futile—but only of the catharsis of hitting back and a twisted version of connection and solidarity. In the face of an institution in which there is no truly inclusive and loving community, ostracism, ridicule, and marginalization produced their own tragic version of communal identification—one built around hate and the fantasies of revenge.

Of course the psychological pundits will point to the usual culprits in explaining this tragedy: the lack of time and involvement of adults, especially parents, with kids; the lack of open and honest dialogue between kids and adults; the easy availability of drugs and alcohol; the stress that teens feel because of overly scheduled or academically pressured lives, or their isolation from others; physical abuse and poor supervision by parents. Certainly all of these are important and worth worrying about. Yet we must be careful that we don't end up with what Russell Jacoby once called "social amnesia"—that peculiarly American tendency to avoid or deny the distinctly social lessons of what is happening. Littleton speaks to the kind of cultural world inhabited by our children—a "socially toxic" world which is thrilled by violence, where compassionate, caring relationships take a back seat to the quest for individual success and status, and where the values of materialism and consumerism far outweigh any commitment to lives of ethical purpose and spiritual meaning. To "remember" the social context of this tragedy means to confront what is really at stake in a politics that goes beyond the usual agendas—a politics that seeks to address the abyss of meaning that torments so many of us, including, so tragically, our children. ❑

Short Takes

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

Harper's

In *Harper's* May issue, Joshua Wolf Shenk probes the arbitrary divide between legal and illegal drugs. Shenk argues that our culture designates drugs produced by pharmaceutical companies as "good" and drugs that can only be procured illegally as "bad." The icing on this capitalist-drug-cake is the stigma we attach to admitting psychic pain. Since we are loathe to accept that our feelings are inside of us and not inside of a pill and that difficult feelings do not mean we are weak, many turn to cocaine or some other kind of stimulant to ease their suffering. But, Shenk asks, how different are they from the many who opt for "legal" drugs?

Doubletake

The spring issue of *Doubletake* brings us Nicholas Dawidoff's "The Last Harpist," about the almost-male-only Vienna Philharmonic. Dawidoff draws us into the grand, creaky tradition of this most accomplished musical group, whose sound is "simultaneously sweet and somber," "more lush ... than romantic," and, for many, the direct result of its male-only players. A good number of its musicians and fans believe women incapable of producing the full, mellow sound that the Philharmonic's tradition and reputation demands. Since the Philharmonic is self-regulating, with all decisions made by member vote, that particular belief was not tested until recently. After playing with the Philharmonic—offstage or off to the corner—for over twenty-five years, the group's woman harpist finally became a full member in 1997, after a summertime scandal about the orchestra's male-only policy. Today, however, she is still the sole female member. The story shows not only the passions that erupt when tradition is challenged, but also the inertia that sets in right after the dust settles.

Lingua Franca

In "Lost Tribes," the cover story of *Lingua Franca*'s May/June issue, Peter Beinart charts the background and conflicts of the Branch of Acknowledgment and Research, the office of the Department of the Interior that confers government-recognized status on American Indian tribes. Beinart points out that American Indians are faced with the same dilemmas other ethnic groups have encountered in America: "Will relaxing the standards for membership lead to strength in numbers, or will it weaken group identity?" But unlike other groups, the government decides whether or not a tribe is legitimate, and the stakes are tangible economic and political rewards, including benefits like health care, business loans, and subsidized housing. Academics have clashed with government anthropologists over the legitimacy of the entire recognition process. The academics say the government's assumptions are racist, while the government claims its opponents have no commitment to truth.

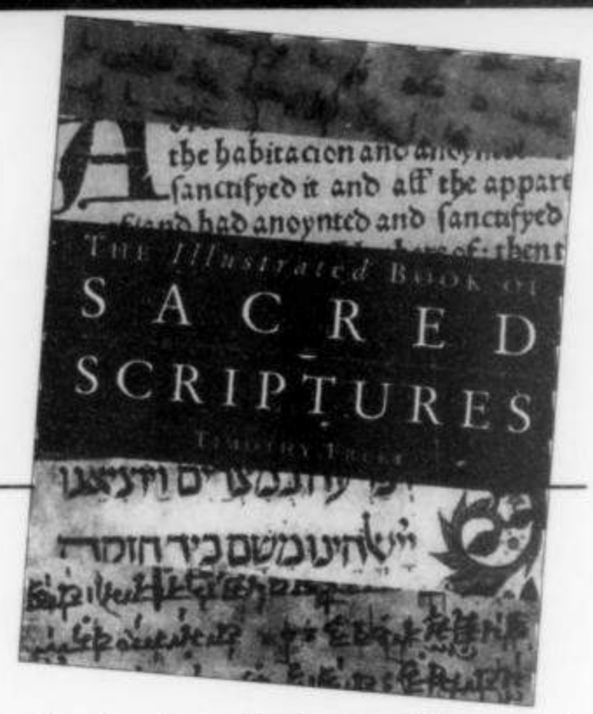
Utne Reader

Utne's May/June issue is graced with a seasonal collection of wedding-related tales. Marjorie Ingall describes how she, a tattooed, purple-haired, Eeyore-loving girl, managed to marry her cooking, dancing, Eeyore-loving boy by tackling Jewish traditions head-on and making them her own. E. J. Graff goes through the altogether predictable history of marriage, and ends with her own same-sex wedding. For Graff, late twentieth-century American marriage is all about choice. She writes: "Our marriage ... has been bought and paid for with our society's common cultural currency: love." *Utne*'s editors then juxtapose two stories of arranged marriages; one in India in 1979, and the other in Queens in 1998. Choice and happiness, it appears, are in the eye of the beholder.

Mother Jones

In the May/June issue of *Mother Jones,* William Saletan maps Elizabeth Dole's chameleon-like self-representations in "A Tale of Two Liddys." As others (most notably Maureen Dowd) have noted, Dole is playing all roles of Woman to set herself up as anti-Clinton and anti-establishment. While Bill Clinton is a philanderer, Dole has been faithful. While congressional Republicans bicker, she, the soothing woman, reconciles. While Hillary Clinton won't bake cookies, Dole is a feminist who nonetheless knows that "The most important career for a woman is that of mother." She presents herself as able to devise "creative solutions" with her "unique skills." You see, she seems to say, I'm a woman, so I speak in a different voice. Yet Saletan concludes that all this play with gender stereotypes is really a cynical move to better position Dole for the campaign; it demonstrates, in short, just what a stereotypical politico she really is. ❑

Religious Eclecticism



Roger S. Gottlieb

- *The Illustrated Book of Sacred Scriptures,* by Timothy Freke. Quest Books, 1998.

This is a lovely collection of selections from a wide range of the world's scriptures, superbly illustrated with exquisite religious artwork, and intelligently grouped and introduced by the editor. Timothy Freke divides religious concerns into fourteen major groupings (God, the Path, Love and Service, etc.) and for each category offers thirty to forty excerpts from virtually all of the "major" world religions, some mystical sects, and a few indigenous traditions.

While the splendid quality of the presentation makes this book a delight, Freke's orientation to the world of the spirit raises some perplexing questions. His position—that "at the core of" their seeming differences, world religions share a common set of beliefs, values, and experiences—is common nowadays, but too often unexamined.

The great virtue of such religious eclecticism is that it allows people of different faiths to stop murdering, envying, or looking down on each other. It helps people to learn not only what is different about each faith, but also how what is different might be of value. The Christian-Buddhist dialogue of recent years has enabled the West to profit from the sophisticated concepts of Buddhist psychology; the Dalai Lama has studied Judaism to find out how religious traditions can be maintained in exile.

Freke's own suggestion that we try to interchange religious idioms is creative and engaging. Reading "God" for "Way" in the *Tao Te Ching*'s signature claim that "The Way that can be spoken of is not the true Way," for instance, is provocative to both classical monotheists and non-theistic Taoists. Similarly, to suggest that all religions reflect a universal human situation can help us appreciate that Sikhs and Buddhists, just like Gnostic Christians or Moslems, utilize their traditions to face birth and death, ethical problems, and the search for spiritual truth.

Yet religious eclecticism is not without its pitfalls, and *Sacred Scriptures* exemplifies some of them. For instance, in the attempt to characterize the "core" which all traditions share, one or two religions are typically taken as normative and used to define what "sacred scriptures" say in a given area; ways in which non-normative religious perspectives fail to conform are glossed over. Thus Freke's assertion that the "ultimate" religious question concerns the nature of God simply misses how Buddhism centers on the psychological problem of human suffering. Similarly, Freke's assertion that the point of the spiritual path is to have an experiential encounter with God is contrary to many aspects of traditional Jewish teachings, in which the primary goals are not "having experiences" but fulfilling God's commands, sanctifying everyday life, and transforming the world in accordance with a spirit of justice and care.

The point is not that Freke's version of religious eclecticism is mistaken, but that *any* attempt to summarize, conflate, and join "all" of human spirituality is liable to similar errors. Simply put: religious traditions were not developed for the "universally human" because it is only in a drastically contracted world of colonial conquest, global travel, and Internet hookups that we can begin to think of all these seemingly very different folks as really "universally human." In ignoring differences and stressing similarities, or by examining religions from such a conceptual and emotional distance that he necessarily misses a great deal of what is living, vital, passionate, and terrifying in them, Freke (and others like him) is constructing a distinct perspective—and not simply cataloging what exists already.

One problem with the perspective of religious eclecticism (and I speak as something of an eclecticist myself) is that it tends towards a mild-mannered blandness. Would the Chinese student of Buddhism who, legend tells us, cut off his arm to get the sage Bodhidarma to teach him, reflect that Sufi dancing or going to midnight Mass would be just as enlightening? Whatever our interpretation of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, can we see him as able to switch over to a non-theistic perspective on his spiritual dilemma? When we face that life and death struggle between faith and doubt, discipline and temptation, the dark night of the soul and the morning in which God and our own soul rise from death, the thought that "all these other paths might do as well" has no place.

Religious eclecticism is wonderful for an anthology, a conference, or a course in world religions. We should all be eclecticists when we determine which books to have in libraries, whose religious schools to license, and who should have the right to vote. But eclecticism may be inappropriate for the madness and ecstasies of actual spiritual life. ❑

Roger S. Gottlieb teaches philosophy at Worcester Polytechnic Institute. His latest book is A Spirituality of Resistance *(Crossroad).*

BOOK REVIEW

Seeing Haiti with U.S. Eyes

Catherine Orenstein

- *The Immaculate Invasion,* by Bob Shacochis. Viking Penguin, 1999.



PHOTOGRAPH BY JACK KURTZ / IMPACT VISUALS

In September of 1994, with an international show of bravado and heroism, President Clinton sent twenty thousand troops to oust Haiti's military thugs and restore Haiti's democratically elected president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide. At the time, the American invasion was seen as Clinton's foremost foreign policy success, designed not only to Uphold Democracy (the name of the military operation) but also to stem the tide of refugees arriving on the beaches of Miami, to whom Clinton the presidential candidate had once promised safe haven. Now, as the fifth anniversary of that invasion approaches, Haiti's democracy, justice system, and economy lie in tatters. A wave of crime and police brutality have swept the capital, where politicians are still struggling to restore the government after a twenty-two-month political impasse, and few would claim anymore that we solved Haiti's problems. But what went wrong? Bob Shacochis' new book, *The Immaculate Invasion,* chronicles the American intervention from the inside, shedding light on the presumptions, misunderstandings, and outright fallacies which characterized our efforts—a case study well worth revisiting as our humanitarian and military intervention in the former Yugoslavia expands.

Assigned to cover the invasion for *Harper's* magazine, Shacochis arrived in Haiti alongside American soldiers in the fall of 1994 and became a firsthand witness to the malleable nature of geopolitical truth. Overnight, tens of thousands of economic refugees were transformed into political refugees. General Raoul Cedras, whom the White House had long portrayed as a diplomatic man of reason, was suddenly a murderous thug. It was a clear-cut case of good guys and bad guys, Clinton assured the American people on television on September 15, as our soldiers prepared for battle. But when Jimmy Carter, along with Senator Sam Nunn and Colin Powell, arrived in Port-au-Prince to cut a last-minute deal with the generals before any of our planes had landed, that clarity dissolved. During the exchange, Carter invited Cedras to teach Sunday School at his church in Georgia, joked with high commander Colonel Carl Dorelian about getting cooties from shaking Aristide's hand, and managed to finesse a friendly or "soft" entry to the rogue-run country: a bloodless, sinless, immaculate invasion. So, at the eleventh hour, our GIs, pumped up to fight the bad guys, were told instead to hold their hands.

The setting of Shacochis' narrative is Limbé, a small town six hours north of the capital, where Shacochis arrives on the very day that the U.S. Special Forces hit town. The author and his future subject matter meet up at the Limbé army caserne, where he and two other journalists are meeting with the rather unpopular local chieftans. At that moment, the U.S. Special Forces drop their helicopters and surround the premises. As the Haitian military flee (from rock-throwing citizens, not the U.S. forces), Shacochis exits the caserne hands up, gratefully surrendering himself to his ethnic familiars and taking his first step into a bizarre, semi-professional relationship that belies the notion of journalistic objectivity. Shacochis shacks up with the American soldiers, entering into a symbiotic relationship where he feeds them information and they give him his story. As he comes to see the landscape through their eyes, he picks up their slang, their style, and (unfortunately) their numbing stream of cryptic military acronyms. He also absorbs something of their macho viewpoint: by mid-book Shacochis cannot resist pointing out a pair of bare breasts wherever they turn up, even once at the precipice of a mass grave being excavated at Fort Dimanche, the notorious Duvalier torture chambers.

What is fascinating, however, is that as he comes to see Haiti through the American forces' eyes, Shacochis remains enough of an outsider to discern and document, in alternately comical and banal detail, the distance between the Americans' worldview and the Haitian perspective. For one thing, the special forces separate themselves from the locals with symbolic barriers that

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are all but impermeable: from their language to their regulation haircuts to the "dream latrine" (an outhouse with a light and a small library of porn which the Haitian soldiers are not permitted to share), they forge a canton city in the midst of Limbé. From their walled-off vantage point, Shacochis quickly perceives that the best and brightest of our soldiers are comically unprepared for their job. Colonel John McGyre arrives in Cap Haitian, the largest neighboring city in the north, with a telephone book from his home town as a guide for what the city needs in the way of services: Water Department, Sanitation, Fire Department, Sheriff, and (but of course!) a Dogcatcher.

Shacochis, an award-winning writer and experienced travel/adventure-journalist, is too well versed in the pitfalls of cultural presumption to discount such foibles in evaluating the mission's success. (I couldn't help but smile along with him at the thought of using a telephone book to rehabilitate a country where only one person in eight thousand has a phone line.) But in spite of their blunders, Shacochis knows that the real problem with the American intervention is not our soldiers. In fact, as their experiences in Haiti add up, the soldiers begin to see Haiti with different eyes and even begin to question conventional American military wisdom—Captain Lawrence Rockwood defies a superior's orders, for example, and heads off to investigate rumors of human rights violations at the Port-au-Prince penitentiary. He will eventually be court-marshalled for this act—in essence for seeing things, just for a moment, from the Haitian angle. As if in recognition of this, a Haitian woman attending his trial prays for him in turn, "Let the judges see this man through the eyes of a Haitian."

In Shacochis' eyes, blame for the mission's ultimate failure falls squarely on Washington, where the American solution to the crisis flatly, if covertly, contradicted the internationally recognized terms of Haitian democracy. Shacochis reports how official lip service to President Aristide is undercut by U.S. support for the rogue military regime and by direct orders passed down to the American soldiers from the highest levels to cooperate with Haiti's paramilitary death squads. "Don't forget our relationship with FADH [the Haitian army]. We are not here to disarm them. We are here to work with them," writes field commander Colonel Mark Boyatt in his notes of October 7, 1994 (which for some reason he actually allows Shachochis to review). The American GIs are also told that FRAPH, a violent paramilitary group led by then-CIA agent Emmanuel Constant and credited with thousands of deaths, rapes, and tortures, is a legitimate political party: "We cannot close FRAPH facilities or organizations," Boyatt notes, and then adds, incredibly: "We must support the democratic principle of a nonviolent loyal opposition." Shacochis later interviews Boyatt's superior General Dick Potter, in charge of the Joint Special Operations Task Force, who confirms that Boyatt's directives came through him from the White House. Not surprisingly, the Special Forces find themselves increasingly uncertain of who the good guys and bad guys are. The contradiction between their mission—to Uphold Democracy—and their instructions—to cooperate with the repressive forces—all but guarantees their inefficacy.

Overall, Shacochis' version of the American intervention is characterized by our both inadvertent and willful disregard for the Haitian perspective: speaking a different language both literally and figuratively, we prescribed a solution without thought or care for local truths. His title suggests the divine American paternity of Haiti's stillborn democracy—we engendered a solution without ever really knowing Haiti, without real contact. Our soldiers came as mighty saviors, but left in bewilderment, unfinished, impotent. The gap between so-called heroes and the Haitians we presumed to save—and viewed from the vantage point of the former—is at the crux of Shacochis' testosterone-driven, but nevertheless well-reported, often sharply insightful, and sometimes even lyrical book.

But there is a broader lesson in these pages. Shacochis' preface tells us that this is a story about "an illusion called peacekeeping, and an illusion called democracy—the artifice of order, a thin icy surface layer of rationality earnestly manufactured by presidents, ministers, advisers, spies, admirals, generals, colonels, captains, sergeants, cameramen, producers, editors, and writers." Shacochis is right about that; our culture clash in Haiti is not restricted to the military realm. As he lucidly observes the American soldiers' mistakes, Schacochis' own prose can inadvertantly lapse into the same presumptions and misunderstandings that doom the Special Forces. Like the U.S. military, Shacochis is little concerned with the Haitian perspective. He repeatedly misspells Kreyòl words, for example (does he not know that there is a standard orthography for this language?) and he pokes fun at Haitians' accent, particularly at their pronunciation of "pwobwen"—problem—as if they were mispronouncing an English word, and not correctly pronouncing a Kreyòl word. He constantly registers astonishment at things that, had he spent more time with Haitians, might seem unremarkable. Shacochis' vision of Haiti is so altogether American that it prevents him from seeing Haiti in its own terms, a normal place, just with its own standards of normalcy.

"This is a book about America," Shacochis offers as an explanation in the first line of his book. Indeed, the same could be said about much of our approach to this nation, and that is part of the problem. It is this overwhelming America-centric view that characterizes many of us foreigners—policy makers, soldiers, and journalists like myself—in Haiti (and elsewhere) and keeps us from realizing the extent of our misunderstandings, or anticipating our failures. ❑

BOOK REVIEW

Achieving a United Left

Michael Bérubé

- *Achieving Our Country,* by Richard Rorty. Harvard University Press, 1998.



Achieving Our Country *is most divisive precisely when it's most concerned with repairing the rift within the post-Vietnam American left.*

Richard Rorty's *Achieving Our Country* is a much richer and stranger document than many have taken it to be. In one sense it represents the clearest combination to date of Rorty's philosophical pragmatism and his recent defenses of patriotic nationalism; in another sense it is a blueprint for nothing less than the renewal of the American left, a provocative challenge to left sectarianism of the past and present. Despite its brevity (three lectures, one hundred pages), the book is broadly ambitious and deeply conflicted. Appropriately, both its ambitions and its conflicts find their strongest expression in Rorty's analysis of (and attempt to repair) the schism that has produced the "two lefts" of American politics in the 1990s—the left that aspires to analyze culture (Rorty's "cultural left") and the left that aspires to carry out public policy (Rorty's "reformist left"). Unlike all too many books that simply blame academic cultural-left elites for the decline of the Left since 1968, *Achieving Our Country* does its best to give the cultural left its due; but since Rorty tends to see cultural politics simply as a distraction from "real" politics, the book's rhetorical strategies sometimes run counter to its explicit political goals, and Rorty thereby repeatedly runs the risk of exacerbating the divisions he had sincerely set out to transcend.

Rorty's first lecture attempts to revive a pragmatic patriotism in the spirit of Whitman and Dewey, not because patriotism is self-justifying but because "the government of our nation-state will be, for the foreseeable future, the only agent capable of making any real difference in the amount of selfishness and sadism inflicted on Americans." The second lecture, "The Eclipse of the Reformist Left," offers a very brief, very idiosyncratic "history" of the twentieth-century American left, one purpose of which, oddly enough, is to persuade us to forget much of the history of the American left. The third lecture is as conflicted as the second, at once rueing and recuperating the rise of the academic left of the past few decades. No one will like the third lecture who doesn't like the second, since Rorty's analysis of the Left's future follows directly from his series of proposals for what we should forget about the Left's past. And the success of Rorty's enterprise will rest largely on how his readers respond to those two lectures, insofar as the prospects for egalitarian social justice will depend less on our ideas about Whitman and Dewey than on whether leftists, progressives, and liberals can form broad-based coalitions to oppose the forces of privatization, pirateering, and plutocracy.

Unfortunately, though, *Achieving Our Country* is most divisive precisely when it's most concerned with repairing the rift within the post-Vietnam American left. The problem with the discourse of the "two lefts"—the phrase is Eric Alterman's, but the analysis is ubiquitous—is not only that it obscures from view everyone who, like myself, has applied for membership in both parties, but also that it construes leftist thought as a zero-sum game in which the academic/cultural left is not the counterpart to the public-policy left but

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY DAVID REGAN

its antithesis. Reading polemics on the two lefts, one is sometimes tempted to think that the United States would have passed a national health-care plan, implemented a family-leave policy, and abolished "right-to-work" laws if only we left-liberals in the humanities hadn't been wasting our time writing books on cultural hybridity and popular music.

And Rorty is often tempted to think this way, as the opening salvo of *Achieving Our Country* suggests: "Leftists in the academy have permitted cultural politics to supplant real politics, and have collaborated with the Right in making cultural issues central to public debate. They are spending energy which should be directed at proposing new laws on discussing topics as remote from the country's needs as were [Henry] Adams' musings on the Virgin and the Dynamo." The passage features everything that's regrettable in the discourse of the two lefts: the disparagement of cultural politics as unreal politics; the dismissal of abstract intellectual "musings" on things like symbols of historical change (which is what that Virgin-and-Dynamo blather was all about); and, not least, the incendiary accusation that the members of the cultural left have been "collaborating"—unwittingly, one hopes—with their opposite numbers in the Christian Coalition. The charge is almost certain to provoke the counter-allegation that the *soi-disant* "real politics" left simply discounts every form of cultural activism that doesn't pertain to white men, and thus we will be back where we started, with two polarized lefts.

But despite all the nastiness that's defined the "two lefts" discourse, I'm not convinced that good, public-minded, left-leaning American citizens can't work both sides of the street, just as the Heritage Foundation works both sides of *its* street, marking or making the connections between cultural politics and public policy. The work of Nancy Fraser is exemplary in this regard (likewise, it's telling that there's no mention of Fraser in *Achieving Our Country*), and her distinction between "the politics of recognition" and "the politics of redistribution" certainly offers a better way of grasping the problem than does the distinction between cultural politics and "real" politics. For as Fraser has repeatedly argued, while the politics of recognition always have an economic component, they are not *reducible* to the politics of redistribution, and not categorically less important than redistributive politics, either. To put this another way, the cultural conditions in which gays and lesbians, or people with disabilities, or ethnic minorities live in the United States can be dehumanizing in ways that have nothing to do with taxation, federal spending, private investment, and the minimum wage, even though strategies of dehumanization may have broad implications for the distribution of goods; and surely any Left worthy of the name should mount opposition to strategies of dehumanization without regard to their economic implications. Indeed, there need be no contradiction between "passing laws" and "making cultural issues central to public debate," as our national debates over abortion, gay marriage, and hate crimes legislation amply demonstrate.

Rorty gives the cultural left high marks for its successes in fighting social stigmata and sadism.

In his best moments, Richard Rorty knows all this perfectly well, and even tries valiantly to imagine a set of terms that will reconcile redistributive politics with recognition politics. In his third lecture, especially, he speaks of the necessity of opposing both selfishness (through what Fraser would call a politics of redistribution) and sadism (through Fraser's politics of recognition). Where the opponents of sadism talk about stigma, says Rorty, the opponents of selfishness talk mainly about money. This is a fair enough description of the two fronts on which an activist left should work, and on these fronts Rorty gives the cultural left high marks for its successes in fighting social stigmata and sadism:

> The American academy has done as much to overcome sadism during the last thirty years as it did to overcome selfishness in the previous seventy. Encouraging students to be what mocking neoconservatives call "politically correct" has made our country a far better place. American leftist academics have a lot to be proud of. Their conservative critics, who have no remedies to propose either for American sadism or for American selfishness, have a great deal to be ashamed of.

The distance between this characterization of "political correctness" and that of Rorty's nearest political colleagues, Paul Berman and the late Irving Howe, is quite striking—and is one important instance of Rorty's attempts to reconcile the two lefts while maintaining primary allegiance to a politics of redistribution.

The olive branch thus extended to the contemporary cultural left has its counterpart in the second lecture, where Rorty nearly endorses, then subtly modifies, Todd Gitlin's account of the 1964 Democratic National Convention. In *The Twilight of Common Dreams,* Gitlin had written, "This was a time when cross-racial alliances for civil rights were proving unmanageable," citing the challenge posed to Mississippi's "official white supremacist regulars" by Fannie Lou Hamer and the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP). To the MFDP, Lyndon Johnson wound up offering two seats on the convention floor; as Gitlin puts it, "The MFDP refused the compromise." In phrasing LBJ's offer as a "compromise" rather than as an "insult," this account seems to suggest that groups like the MFDP, far from being the kind of radical democrats any American leftist should honor,



actually helped to make cross-racial alliances "unmanageable." Rorty, by contrast, steers clear of these waters altogether, refusing even to pass judgment on either LBJ or Hamer; seconding Gitlin's sense that the 1964 convention was a "last straw" for the New Left, Rorty quickly adds, "There had to be a last straw sooner or later if American leftism was ever to be revitalized.... By saving us from the Vietnam War, the New Left may have saved us from losing our moral identity." This is not only a significant break from what like-minded writers of Rorty's generation tend to say about the past thirty years; it is also a significant revision of the account of post-Vietnam politics Rorty himself offered in his address to the John Sweeney-inspired intellectuals/AFL-CIO conference at Columbia University in October 1996, when he simply blamed the New Left for labor's lurch to the right in the 1960s.

In one sense, then, *Achieving Our Country* marks a slightly cultural-leftward move on Rorty's part with regard to how Rorty-affiliated writers (including Rorty himself, one imagines) might hereafter write about the recent history of the American left: the politics of money are the real politics, but don't forget to give the politics of stigma their due. And the reason to hew to real politics, Rorty reminds us, is that since 1973, as casual sexism and stigmatization have declined in American life, economic inequality has dramatically increased. Our liberal campuses, too, have not been immune to the country's general redistribution toward the rich, as Rorty notes when he cites a remarkable 1997 study by the National Council of Educational Opportunity Associations showing that the percentage of degree-earning college students from the wealthiest 25 percent of the population jumped from 31 percent in 1979 to 79 percent in 1994. "It is as if the American Left could not handle more than one initiative at a time," Rorty notes, "as if it either had to ignore stigma in order to concentrate on money, or vice versa." If Rorty is right about this, it would seem to follow that a cogent and capacious American left should handle both initiatives at once; but only eight pages later, Rorty reverts once again to zero-sum thinking, advising that the cultural left will "have to talk much more about money, *even at the cost of* talking less about stigma" (my emphasis).

This is an important impasse, which is why it's worth emphasizing how Rorty's book positions itself in current Left debates about the relative importance of stigma and money, sadism and selfishness, recognition and redistribution. And yet the terms in which I've discussed the book so far—friendlier to the cultural left than most "policy-oriented" writers, not as willing to think beyond the "two lefts" as people like Fraser—amount almost to a betrayal of the book's larger rhetorical purpose, which is precisely to *elide* differences among leftists, progressives, and liberals.

It is in the service of this elision that Rorty's second lecture asks us not only to drop Marxism altogether as a god that failed, but also to stop assessing the behavior of members of the Left in recent history. His complaint about the current Left is not only that it is "spectatorial" but that it is "retrospective." Indeed, history is in one sense quite beside the point Rorty wants to make. "Stories about what a nation has been and should try to be are not attempts at accurate representation," Rorty writes in a passage that may be the key to reading the book as a whole, "but rather attempts to forge a moral identity. The argument between Left and Right about which episodes in our history we Americans should pride ourselves on will never be a contest between a true and a false account of our country's history and its identity. It is better described as an argument about which hopes to allow ourselves and which to forgo."

Rorty's housecleaning amounts to what I call his General Amnesty Platform (so, vis-à-vis Vietnam, amnesty for Daniel Berrigan and everyone who evaded the draft then, and also amnesty for Robert MacNamara and everyone who came out against the Vietnam war more than a decade after it ended); in addition he proposes that "we should abandon the leftist-versus-liberal distinction, along with the other residues of Marxism that clutter up our vocabulary—overworked words like 'commodification' and 'ideology,' for example." If the Marxists agree to come in out of the cold and stop speaking their dead language, in other words, they will be admitted to the Popular Front. And that Front will be capacious indeed: it will drop the term "old left," replacing it with "the term 'reformist Left' to cover all those Americans who, between 1900 and 1964, struggled within the framework of constitutional democracy to protect the weak from the strong."

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The value of Achieving Our Country *lies in its willingness to throw down gauntlets for the formation of a future Left*

"To bring this about," Rorty writes at the end of his plea for general amnesty, "it would help if American leftists … emphasized the similarities rather than the differences between Malcolm X and Bayard Rustin, between Susan B. Anthony and Emma Goldman, between Catharine MacKinnon and Judith Butler." The only important division will be this: that "from 1909 to the present, the thesis that the state must make itself responsible for [what Herbert Croly called "a morally and socially desirable distribution of wealth"] has marked the dividing line between the American Left and the American Right." When Rorty asks what side you're on, here are the teams he has in mind, *sub specie aeternitatis:*

> A hundred years from now, Howe and Galbraith, Harrington and Schlesinger, [Woodrow] Wilson and Debs, Jane Addams and Angela Davis, Felix Frankfurter and John L. Lewis, W. E. B. Du Bois and Eleanor Roosevelt, Robert Reich and Jesse Jackson, will all be remembered for having advanced the cause of social justice. They will all be seen as having been "on the Left." The difference between these people and men like Calvin Coolidge, Irving Babbitt, T. S. Eliot, Robert Taft, and William Buckley will be far clearer than any of the quarrels which once divided them among themselves. Whatever mistakes they made, these people will deserve, as Coolidge and Buckley never will, the praise with which Jonathan Swift ended his own epitaph: "Imitate him if you can: he served human liberty."

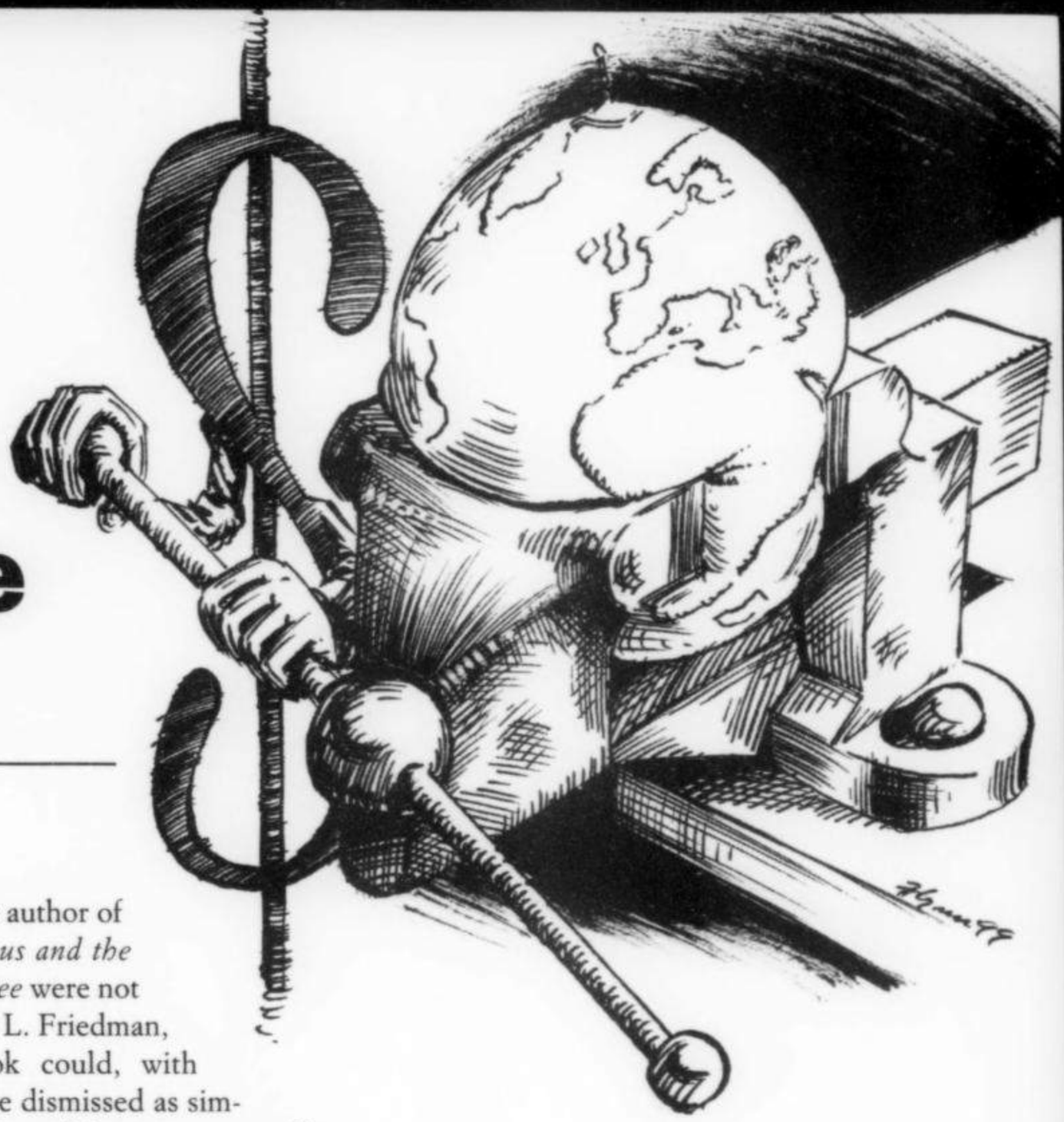
This is perhaps the most eloquent and generous passage in *Achieving Our Country*—and one of the most problematic, for pretty much the same reason that Swift's self-designation as a servant of human liberty is problematic. For on the one hand, Rorty couldn't be more accurate about the Left's sectarian purity rituals, particularly in academe; it's as if he's thumbed through the big rolodex on every good leftist's desk that catalogues the many toadies, finks, informers, stooges, turncoats, and objective reactionaries *on the Left*, and decided to ask everyone to bury their rolodex. Yet on the other hand, it seems shortsighted, to put it generously, to ask the Left to stop trying to learn lessons from its own past. Take 1964, once again. The seating of the all-white Mississippi delegation may have helped Johnson to secure passage of the Voting Rights Act the next year—the most progressive (and federal-interventionist) piece of law to hit the South since Reconstruction. It's worth debating. But if Johnson and his supporters (including Walter Reuther, for whom Rorty also proposes amnesty on this and on Vietnam) were motivated by the desire to keep the South voting Democratic, then (a) Rorty himself notes that this thinking undermined Roosevelt's New Deal thirty years earlier and (b) it didn't even work in 1964, as the Mississippi delegation endorsed Goldwater and the South bolted rightward to Wallace and Nixon in 1968, never to return.

I happen to agree with Rorty that the contemporary Left should be less spectatorial and retrospective than it is, so I'm not altogether hostile to the notion that we should be more worried about the state of the Left in 2032 than in 1968. But I am skeptical of reading American history as Rorty asks us to, as a repository of stories about what we might become; though this is surely one of the functions of history, I think, it is just as surely only *one* of those functions. For when you lose sight of those other functions, you stop asking grainy-details questions about whose history is more accurate and plausible and capacious than whose, and why. The result, in this case, is that *Achieving Our Country* reads as if it were designed (as it was) to defeat questions about the accuracy of its account of the Left. I would suggest, instead, that it be read as something of a performative utterance, seeking not to describe the past but to dictate the terms for the future: we should see Malcolm X and Bayard Rustin, Jane Addams and Angela Davis as engaged in a common enterprise of expanding human liberty not because it would be objectively true to do so, but because it would be pragmatically useful.

About the utility of the argument I have little doubt, convinced as I am that nothing will resist the growing corporatization of the world save for a very broad coalition of anti-corporatization folks on the Left, all the way from the mealiest-mouthed of liberals to the stark-ravingest of Marxists. But I have grave doubts about whether Rorty's "two-lefts" analysis of the contemporary scene will further the creation of that coalition; for unless we can see the politics of redistribution and the politics of recognition as the double helix of leftist thought—and we should think especially here of issues like immigration, disability, reproduction and motherhood, and criminal justice, where cultural politics and public policy are woven as tightly as any strand of DNA—no amnesty program for the sectarians of the past will suffice to remedy the two-lefts sectarianism of the present. The value of *Achieving Our Country,* then, does not lie in its accuracy about the past and present state of the Left; it lies, instead, in its willingness to throw down gauntlets for the formation of a future Left—one that can think beyond the impasses with which *Achieving Our Country* itself would leave us. ❑

BOOK REVIEW

We Are the Capitalists. You Will Be Assimilated. Resistance Is Futile.



David C. Korten

- *The Lexus and the Olive Tree,* by Thomas L. Friedman. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc., 1999.

Economic globalization is without question the defining reality of our time. Edward Luttwak, a longtime fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington, D.C., think tank, observes in his book *Turbo Capitalism: Winners and Losers in the Global Economy* that "elite Americans do not merely approve of globalization. They treasure it as their only common ideology, almost a religion." Margaret Thatcher gave globalization the nickname TINA, the acronym for her trademark exhortation "There Is No Alternative." Thomas L. Friedman, international columnist for the *New York Times,* has long been among TINA's leading exponents. Indeed, his constant repetition of the TINA mantra in his new book, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree,* will remind fans of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* of the mantra of the Borg, the most dangerous alien species encountered by the crew of the Enterprise: "We are the Borg. You will be assimilated. Resistance is futile."

If the author of *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* were not Thomas L. Friedman, the book could, with cause, be dismissed as simply another elitist corporate puff piece extolling the virtues of deregulation and the elimination of economic borders in the idolatrous pursuit of money. Friedman, however, has often been on the side of progressives, especially in his writing on Israel. His current book has its use, not because it offers any new insights into globalization—it does not—but rather because it reveals so much of the mindset of those self-proclaimed liberals and "new" Democrats who, like Friedman, have uncritically embraced economic rule by currency speculators and mega-corporations as the inevitable and beneficial future of humankind.

Friedman begins his book by telling us that he views globalization much as he views the sun coming up each day:

> Generally speaking, I think it's a good thing that the sun comes up every morning. It does more good than harm. But even if I didn't much care for the dawn there isn't much I could do about it. I didn't start globalization, I can't stop it—except at a huge cost to human development—and I'm not going to waste time trying. All I want to think about is how *I* can get the best out of this new system, and cushion the worst, for the most people. [Emphasis added.]

From the start, Friedman admits that he is a realist rather than an idealist. Instead of seeking a more transformative vision of society, he accepts the classic liberal compromise, embracing corporate rule in the name of the free market while promising to "cushion the worst" for those who fall through the cracks. But a global economy is not like the sun (if the sun doesn't come up we die; humankind, on the other hand, has survived rather well up to the last twenty years or so without what we now call the global economy), and the worst is, as Friedman himself admits, hardly ever cushioned.

To "get the best" out of the global economy, Friedman advises nations to adopt a one-size-fits-all "Golden Straitjacket," his shorthand for the

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neoliberal agenda of shrinking government and social safety nets to balance public budgets, keeping wages low to minimize inflationary pressure, privatizing all public assets and putting them into play in the global securities markets, deregulating commerce to give free reign to market forces, eliminating tariffs and quotas to allow goods to move freely across your borders, giving priority to export production, and opening everything to foreign ownership. Bridling the government like this gives free rein to what Friedman calls the "Electronic Herd," the high-rolling financial speculators who will run your way and drop billions of highly leveraged dollars into your economy.

When the herd arrives, quickly grab as many dollars as you can before it senses weakness, wipes out the value of your currency, and stampedes away in search of new pastures. We mustn't, Friedman cautions, be distracted by the inequality, environmental destruction, joblessness and economic insecurity, and loss of community and cultural identity the Electronic Herd brings. This is simply capitalism's "creative destruction" at work. Mourn not if your neighbor stumbles and falls, for he is now your competitor—his misfortune your gain. Just run faster: "Think of participating in the global economy today like driving a Formula One race car, which gets faster and faster every year. Someone is always going to be running into the wall and crashing, especially when you have drivers who only a few years ago were riding a donkey."

Friedman doesn't offer the losers much of a "cushion": be a winner or be road kill, those are your options. Lose your job in Maine? Look for another in San Diego. What about the family and friends left behind? Tough. The Golden Straitjacket is a harsh taskmaster. Can't find a job in San Diego? Then borrow a few million dollars and place some bets in the global financial markets. Make a bad bet and lose it all? Declare bankruptcy and try again. You weren't born a multi-millionaire with a line of bank credit? Then get a bathroom scale and offer to weigh people on the street corner for a fee.

I did not make this up. Friedman tells us that when visiting Hanoi he paid a dollar each morning to be weighed by a tiny Vietnamese woman who crouched on the sidewalk with her scale. He did it, he assures us, not to find out his weight, which he already knew, but as "my contribution to the globalization of Vietnam. To me, her unspoken motto was: 'Whatever you've got no matter how big or small—sell it, trade it, barter it, leverage it, rent it, but do something with it to turn a profit, improve your standard of living and get into the game.'"

Be a winner or be road kill, those are your options.

To Friedman's eye, even the most desperate survival efforts of globalism's decrepit, excluded poor are an affirmation of his capitalist faith—evidence that the most common of people love globalization and embrace the entrepreneurial opportunities it offers. Impressed by the resilience of the poor in conditions of extreme adversity, he assures us that "globalization emerges from below, from street level, from people's very souls and from their very deepest aspirations." It is driven by "the basic human desire for a better life—a life with more choices as to what to eat, what to wear, where to live, where to travel, how to work … and what to learn. It starts with a lady in Hanoi, crouched on the sidewalk, offering up a bathroom scale as her ticket to the Fast World."

While people who have been deprived of the most basic means of a decent life will struggle to survive down to their last breath, it is perverse in the extreme to interpret these struggles as an endorsement of an economic system that is in fact limiting their options by eliminating their sources of livelihood and downgrading the terms of their employment, destroying the environment, and destroying local cultures and communities all to the end of further enriching the already rich. When exactly did these people cast a vote for a world of grotesque inequality that leaves the majority struggling in desperation to survive while directing the major economic rewards to renters and speculators?

One might well wonder what planet Mr. Friedman lives on. Most of the people living on planet Earth dream not of the fast cars and Internet connections globalization brings to the few, but of the secure livelihoods, families, communities, and healthy environments which, by Friedman's own admission, economic globalization increasingly places ever further beyond reach.

Ignoring this most basic insight into the actual priorities of the vast majority of the world's people, Friedman goes on to describe what he considers to be globalization's democratizing power. He is particularly enthralled by the idea that anyone with a computer and a few thousand dollars can join the Electronic Herd and fancy themselves to be a player in the making and breaking of errant governments that seek to preserve a degree of cultural or economic sovereignty. He even tells of his own proud boast to the prime minister of Thailand in the winter of 1998 of how he personally helped to bring down the prime minister's predecessor.

> Mr. Prime Minister, I have a confession to make. I helped oust your predecessor—and I didn't even know his name. You see, I was sitting home in my basement watching the Thai baht sink (and watching your predecessor completely mismanage your economy). So I called my broker and told him to get me out of East Asian emerging markets. I could have sold you out myself, via the Internet, but I decided to get my broker's advice instead. It's one dollar, one vote, Mr. Prime Minister. How does it feel to have Tom Friedman as a constituent?



In addition to revealing Friedman's arrogance—the real action is in the hands of the large hedge funds that gamble with hundreds of billions of dollars of borrowed money—this also exposes his elitist belief in a democracy of money (one dollar, one vote) rather than persons, in which high stakes international gamblers use borrowed money to bring down the governments of other people's countries.

For all his talk about democracy, Friedman knows full well where global capitalism actually came from, and it wasn't from the rising of the sun, the communications revolution, or the aspirations of the world's street sweepers and taxi drivers. In his *New York Times* column he has been a persistent cheerleader for the policies and practices of the World Bank, the IMF, NAFTA, GATT, the World Trade Organization, APEC, the Multilateral Agreement on Investment, and every similar assault on democracy and the general welfare by financial speculators and global mega-corporations seeking to escape the burdens of public accountability and to extract as much of society's wealth as possible. The global economy is a consequence of intentional choices made by the elites who embrace globalization as their dominant religion. The fact that most of these decisions were made behind closed doors beyond public scrutiny and debate does not make them any the less intentional.

Few would disagree that international commerce and exchange have made substantial contributions to human well-being over the nearly six hundred years since the onset of the commercial revolution. The processes of deregulation and the removal of economic borders that define Friedman's beloved globalization, however, are largely a phenomenon of the past twenty years. While this twenty-year period has produced impressive economic growth and swelled the ranks of the world's billionaires, for most people it has brought absolute declines in real living standards, unconscionable inequality, environmental devastation, and social breakdown—contributions most of us could easily live without.

Most of the positive accomplishments of capitalism came during the period from the end of World War II through the 1970s when national borders were strong, national economies were regulated, and international trade and finance were managed to serve national interests. Edward Luttwak calls it the period of "controlled capitalism" and documents how for most people the prosperity it brought is now being destroyed by the unrestrained "turbo capitalism" of the 1980s and 1990s that Friedman so adores. The nearest historical equivalent to the capitalism of the 1990s, as Friedman himself notes, is the capitalism of the 1920s—which brought us the Great Depression and World War II.

Indeed, as Friedman observes, the financial meltdown that recently swept through Asia, Russia, and Latin America has already turned many of capitalism's much-touted successes into economic road kill. Undaunted by such failures and apparently unconcerned for the pain of the millions of innocent people whose lives have been disrupted, Friedman tells us that these devastating failures are a further positive demonstration of capitalism's creative destruction at work. "I believe globalization did us all a favor by melting down the economies of Thailand, Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia, Mexico, Russia and Brazil in the 1990s, because it laid bare a lot of rotten practices and institutions in countries that had prematurely globalized."

While Friedman is most certainly correct that these unfortunate countries were not ready for the stresses of economic globalization—if any country ever is—he seems to forget why they "prematurely" globalized. What about the rotten practices of institutions such as the World Bank, the IMF, and the U.S. Treasury Department, whose officials, like Friedman, told these and other countries even less prepared that they had no alternative to putting on the Golden Straitjacket and binding it up tight? Ready or not, the IMF imposed structural adjustment programs on their economies, while the GATT and the World Trade Organization subjected them to trade, investment, and intellectual property rights rules written primarily to benefit the world's largest corporations. So long as each country's stock bubble was expanding, it was held up by Friedman and his soul mates as an exemplar of economic wisdom and virtue. The next day, when the bubble burst, it was vilified as an economic pariah that suffered the just fate of all who mismanage their economies.

This sort of flip-flop often leaves public officials, such as Enrique del Val Blanco of Mexico's Human Services Ministry, baffled as to what the Electronic Herd expects of them:

> We thought we were on the path to the First World and suddenly something went wrong. One minute the World Bank and IMF were saying Mexico was the best example. Now we are the worst example. What did we do? We are losing control. If we don't find another type of development, we are finished. We surrender.

When confronted with such questions, Friedman can only repeat his mantra that the unfortunate losers simply didn't bind the straps on their Golden Straitjacket tight enough.

Thailand is an instructive case of what actually happens when a country puts on the Golden Straitjacket to entice the Electronic Herd to visit. Through the 1980s the Thai economy

was fueled by direct investment from Japanese corporations building production facilities there to produce goods destined for export to the United States. As the inflow of direct investment began to level off, Thai economists came up with a scheme to keep foreign money flowing in to maintain Thailand's high economic growth rate. They set a domestic interest rate above that of the U.S. dollar and guaranteed a fixed exchange rate between the dollar and the Thai baht. This created a powerful incentive to borrow in dollars and invest in baht to reap a profit guaranteed by the Thai government.

Just as the Thai technocrats intended, foreign money poured in and the country's foreign debt predictably escalated from $21 billion in 1988 to $89 billion in 1997—$66.2 billion of it private. Most of the baht found their way into the purchase of real estate and existing stock shares in Thai companies, while the foreign exchange reserves created by the inflow of dollars financed a sharp increase in spending on imported goods. As the economy boomed and real estate and share prices headed for the sky, fortunes were made and the money poured in even faster to get in on the action. U.S. and other foreign banks eager to profit from the Thai money machine competed with one another to lend to anyone who wanted to borrow. The Thai government even invited the foreign banks to open branches in Bangkok to speed borrowing of dollars and other foreign currencies.

The agricultural and industrial sectors, Thailand's real productive sectors, couldn't compete for funds against the quick and easy high returns being generated by investments in stocks and real estate. Instead of upgrading their production facilities to maintain their internationally competitive position, industrialists and agriculturists diverted the cash flows from their industrial plants and farms to more lucrative real estate or portfolio investments. This resulted in the seeming paradox that the faster foreign money flowed into Thailand, the faster the productive sectors decapitalized in favor of speculation. The country's actual productive base began to decline, and exports, which previously had grown vigorously, began to level off—undermining the country's ability to repay its rapidly growing foreign debt. Meanwhile, imports of luxury goods—paid for with borrowed dollars—continued to rise unabated, fueling continued economic growth and creating an illusion of prosperity.

Friedman tacitly admits that the global economy is about rule by an elite cadre of global gamblers and corporations.

In the early stages, payments due on foreign loans had been easily covered by new inflows. In its 1996 World Development Report the World Bank cited Thailand as "an excellent example of the dividends to be obtained through outward orientation, receptivity to foreign investment, and a market-friendly philosophy backed up by conservative macro-economic management and cautious external borrowing policies."

The financial pyramid began to unravel at the beginning of 1997, when the consequences of the real estate over-building and a glut of unoccupied buildings and uncollectible loans forced two of Thailand's premier finance companies to default on interest payments to foreign lenders. Sensing weakness, financial speculators attacked the Thai currency by borrowing huge quantities of baht and presenting them to the Central Bank for exchange to dollars. The more astute portfolio investors started pulling their money out of the country. Concern turned to panic and stock prices plummeted. The Bank of Thailand, which committed $9 billion of the country's foreign reserves to maintaining the guaranteed exchange rate, found its efforts were futile and watched in horror as the baht lost nearly 50 percent of its former value. The speculators who had helped to precipitate the crisis by using borrowed baht to sop up the government's foreign exchange reserves repaid their loans with deflated baht. The government announced that as many as a million Thais would lose their jobs in three months' time, negotiated a $17.2 billion emergency loan from the IMF, and announced that the IMF funds would be used to guarantee the foreign debts of the Thai finance companies, local banks, and enterprises that were in default—thus converting private debt to public debt and protecting the reckless foreign banks and investment funds from the consequences of their folly with money borrowed by the IMF with government guarantees from the very same foreign banks.

This is not an economic policy designed to direct savings to investments that increase productive capacity. In short, it's not the market envisioned by classic Adam Smithian economists at all. Instead, it's a worldwide casino where high-stakes gamblers and monopolists play for the chance of garnering as much of society's wealth as possible. Friedman himself marvels that "the cornucopia of stocks and bonds, commodities and futures contracts, options and derivatives being offered from scores of different countries and markets around the world mean that you can make a bet on almost anything today." The stakes are winner-take-all: this Electronic Herd "doesn't play chess. It plays Monopoly." Indeed, for all his rhetoric about markets and democracy, Friedman tacitly admits that the global economy is about rule by an elite cadre of global gamblers and corporations intent on replacing global markets with global monopolies.

Furthermore, after endlessly repeating the TINA mantra and assuring us in eloquent prose that economic glob-



alization arises out of the aspirations of the world's common people, Friedman ultimately admits to what most of the world already knows. Globalization is a made-in-America product imposed on the world using every instrument of power at America's command.

> The Golden Straitjacket was mostly made in America. The Electronic Herd is led by American Wall Street bulls, and the most powerful agent pressuring other countries to open their markets for free trade and free investment is Uncle Sam. Our recruiting poster reads: UNCLE SAM WANTS YOU (for the Electronic Herd)....
>
> In most societies people cannot distinguish anymore between American power, American exports, American cultural assaults, American cultural exports and plain vanilla globalization. They are now all wrapped into one.

Friedman tells us that most of the world sees globalization as

> twenty something [American] software engineers who come into your country wearing long hair, beads and sandals, with rings in their noses and paint on their toes. They kick down your front door, overturn everything in the house, stick a Big Mac in your mouth, fill your kids' heads with ideas you've never had or can't understand, slam a cable box onto your television, lock the channel to MTV, plug an Internet connection into your computer and tell you: "Download or die."
>
> That's us. We Americans are the apostles of the Fast World, the enemies of tradition, the prophets of the free market and the high priests of high tech. We want "enlargement" of both our values and our Pizza Huts. We want the world to follow our lead and become democratic, capitalistic, with a Web site in every pot, a Pepsi on every lip, Microsoft Windows in every computer, and most of all—most of all—with everyone, everywhere, pumping their own gas.

Consumed with pride in America's trashing of the world's cultures, economies, and democratic institutions, Friedman seems not to notice that the agenda America is imposing on the world is purely an agenda of a handful of American corporations, not America's people. In fact if he took a closer look, he might find that most Americans are as sick of having this agenda pushed down their own throats as are our counterparts around the world.

Friedman moves farthest from traditional liberalism in his final chapter, in which he reveals that the success of globalization depends on America's willingness to use its military power to impose the globalization agenda against any "who would threaten the system of globalization—from Iraq to North Korea." He continues:

> The hidden hand of the market will never work without a hidden fist. McDonald's cannot flourish without McDonnell Douglas, the designer of the U.S. Air Force F-15. And the hidden fist that keeps the world safe for Silicon Valley's technologies to flourish is called the U.S. Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps....
>
> With all due respect to Silicon Valley, ideas and technology don't just win and spread on their own. "Good ideas and technologies also need a strong power that promotes those ideas by example and protects those ideas by winning on the battlefield," says foreign policy historian Robert Kagan.

So much for Friedman's earlier claims that economic globalization is an inevitable and self-propelling force arising out of the dreams and aspirations of every man and woman.

There are a few brief passages in which Friedman laments the loss of cultural diversity, destruction of the natural environment, and the disempowering of the poor that have been the hallmarks of globalization. In these passages, he attempts to position himself as a kinder, gentler globalizer. He divides the world into those who are for and against globalization and those who are for and against safety nets—claiming that he and Bill Clinton both fall in the pro-globalization, pro-safety net category. He is saying, in effect: let's pick up a few of the pieces caused by the explosive damage of globalization—just enough so that American hegemony is not seriously questioned. Do nothing, however, he cautions, "that would violate the economic rules of the Golden Straitjacket," such as imposing burdensome taxes on the rich or restricting the freedom of the Electronic Herd.

Friedman's articulation of this "new" Democratic line is enormously helpful, because he is so explicit about the internationalist agenda being advanced by a coalition of New Democrats and Old Republicans: a combination of the iron fist of the military with a little trickle of compassion, just enough to placate the downtrodden but not cost too much, and to isolate those who are talking about real change—all to ensure American-led global hegemony! He even cautions us to be prepared for a rough ride ahead as globalization brings ever faster and more violent cycles of boom and bust:

> Global financial crisis will be the norm in this coming era. With the speed of change going on today, and with so many countries in different stages of adjustment to this new globalization system, crises will be endemic. So, dear reader, let me leave you with one piece of advice: Fasten your seat belts and put your seat backs and tray table into a fixed and upright position. Because both the booms and the busts will be

ILLUSTRATION BY JIM FLYNN

> coming faster. Get used to it, and just try to make sure that the leverage in the system doesn't become so great in any one area that it can make the whole system go boom or bust.

With such gloomy advocates, globalization hardly needs critics. Why exactly should America use its money and military power to impose on the world a regime that by Friedman's own words will bring massive economic instability and require that we each run ever faster simply to survive? Why not seek some more viable and humane alternative?

Friedman's unconvincing answer is that "if you put sand in the gears of such a fast, lubricated, stainless-steel machine, it might not just slow down. It could come to a screeching, metal-bending halt." To use Friedman's own analogy in answer—if you find yourself in a Formula One racing car with no brakes that is running ever faster and faster out of control toward a precipice, wouldn't putting sand in the mechanism to bring it to a screeching halt be a rather good idea?

You may wonder why I seem so angry at the likes of Thomas L. Friedman. Pretensions aside, he commands far too few financial assets to in fact bring down governments. Nor is he heading a global mega-corporation engaged in profiteering from sweat shops and the rape of the earth. True to his own disclaimer, he didn't create the unjust and dehumanizing world of which he writes. He is, after all, only a newspaper reporter and columnist whose job is to provide readers of the *New York Times* with observation and commentary on the world that is.

I take offense at Friedman's ongoing rant in support of globalization because we know from recent history that seemingly overpowering and inevitable forces (e.g., racism, sexism, and environmental destruction) can be overcome or dramatically limited when idealistic social movements arise to challenge them. Perhaps the greatest obstacle facing such movements is the disempowering belief, stridently propagated by the Friedmans of the world, that any rational person will surely recognize that nothing can possibly be changed and the only prudent course is to accept this reality and find ways to profit from it.

While the idealists who shape transformative social movements to advance freedom, equality, and a healthy environment look to a world that might be and seek a path to its attainment, Friedman is a classic realist. He accepts unjust and destructive institutional structures as immutable givens and focuses on how to gain the greatest personal or national advantage. Intentionally or not, people like Friedman serve as cheerleaders for injustice when they ridicule all who dare to dream of the world that might be. In the name of realism, he contributes to a sense of powerlessness among those inclined to work for change—thus making it possible for a small elite, acting in secret beyond democratic accountability, to shape the institutions of power to serve their narrow and exclusive ends. This is the same point made by Michael Lerner in *Jewish Renewal* when he argues that for Judaism the primary meaning of "idolatry" is "realism," and the primary meaning of God is the Force of Healing and Transformation that allows us to transcend that which is and move toward that which should be.

With such gloomy advocates, globalization hardly needs critics.

If we draw but one lesson from Friedman, it is that we will never resolve the global crisis of inequality, social breakdown, and environmental destruction that increasingly threatens our very survival by listening to Friedmanesque realists. We must look instead to idealists who dare to challenge the status quo and to empower us with visions of the world that might be.

Instead of using our power to impose the dark vision of turbo capitalism on the world, why not bring our wisdom and compassion to bear in creating economic institutions for a world of rich cultural and biological diversity in which everyone is assured access to an adequate and satisfying means of livelihood, individual freedoms are guaranteed, family and community are strengthened, productive work, cooperation, and responsibility are rewarded, and a sustainable relationship is maintained between humanity and the life-support systems of our planet? There are at least two familiar options. One is the controlled capitalism of the post-World War II years that created mass affluence by balancing the power of big unions, big government, and big business.

The second is a more populist, community-oriented alternative outlined in my recent book, *The Post-Corporate World: Life After Capitalism,* that I call the mindful market economy. It combines the principles of one person, one vote democracy, a properly regulated market economy comprised of local stakeholder-owned, human-scale enterprises, and an ethical culture. Nothing radical or exotic. Drawing inspiration for the design of its structures and processes from the study of healthy living systems, it actualizes the traditional liberal ideal of democratic, self-governing, self-organizing societies based on the values and institutions to which most of us already profess allegiance.

The next time a Friedman-style realist starts ranting at you about the need to accept reality and tighten up the straps on your Golden Straitjacket, tell them you have no interest in his or her dark and soulless vision of a winner-take-all-world divided between speed mongers and road kill. And by the way, you place a great stock in human freedom and democracy. Straitjackets—golden or otherwise—are only for escape artists and the criminally insane. ❑

BOOK REVIEW

Law in Vichy—and Today



Robin West

- *Vichy Law and the Holocaust in France,* by Richard Weisberg. New York University Press, 1996.

During the years of Vichy France, some seventy-five thousand French Jews were legally defined, stigmatized, barred from government service, stripped of their property, deprived of their livelihood, and eventually prepared for deportation to Nazi death camps. The legal persecution of these French Jews was neither designed nor implemented by German Nazis. Nor was it accomplished in a reign of terror by ill-spoken, anti-Semitic, lawless thugs. Rather, the persecution of the Jews in Vichy France, whatever was the case in the rest of Europe, was accomplished through the polite and civilized forms of home-grown, domestic, French law.

Richard Weisberg's deeply disturbing but beautiful book, *Vichy Law and the Holocaust in France,* tells the story of the central—indeed constitutive—role of law, and more specifically the role of lawyers, judges, and law professors, in the peculiarly legalistic French Holocaust. Drawing on meticulous documentary research into the legal archives, and numerous personal interviews with descendants of the primary legal actors, Weisberg paints a detailed and shocking record of the enthusiastic engagement with evil laws by all levels of French legal professionals. For example, the legislated definition of a "Jew" under the laws of Vichy France was broader than anything urged upon them by their Nazi conquerors. More surprising still, the eventually dominant interpretation of those laws, achieved through lawyers' meticulous arguments and scores of carefully crafted judicial decisions, was more far-reaching than it had to be, condemning more people to ostracism, exclusion, and then to death than the logic of those laws required.

Most disturbing, however, in Weisberg's tale, is what the Vichy lawyers failed to do. Nowhere did these Catholic and liberal lawyers, judges, and academics pose a concerted, sustained, constitutional challenge to the validity of these laws. Nowhere did these lawyers, steeped in a liberal constitutional tradition, invoke the majestic guarantee of "equal protection of the laws" to protest the delineation and persecution of a group of citizens defined by religious convictions and immutable characteristics. At no time did they collectively protest the departure from fraternity, equality, and liberty which the religious laws vividly occasioned. Rather, Weisberg shows, these extraordinary laws slipped easily—with virtually no moral, political, legal, or constitutional challenge—into the seamless web of French jurisprudence, providing subject matter for the theoretical musings of the lofty academician as well as a made-to-order, bread-and-butter case load for the practicing bar. The religious laws became, simply, further grist for the lawyer's mill, in an already law-abiding albeit litigious society.

Why was the Constitution ignored? Why was there no outcry, no expression of outrage, from the French legal community? Weisberg's answer to this question, which forms the thesis of this book, is subtle and original. It was not, he argues, because the French lawyer feared his own persecution, or even professional reprisals: Weisberg convincingly shows that had lawyers voiced constitutional objections to the religious laws, they would have faced no adverse repercussions. Nor was it owing to covert or overt German pressure: neighboring countries such as Italy and Belgium, even without constitutional traditions, and with similar religious laws on the books, simply ignored them until forced to do otherwise by German invasion. Furthermore, Weisberg argues (apparently contrary to the view of a number of other Vichy scholars), the French Bar's admittedly virulent (albeit polite, and in their own mind even non-racist) anti-Semitism, standing alone, could not have been sufficient to blind the liberal French legal establishment to the constitutional grotesquerie in their midst. Constitutions, after all, and the French one in particular, speak in the broadest universal terms imaginable of the shared human rights of all; furthermore, they exist in large part to protect the most despised, and that was as true, and as understood, then and there as it is here and now. Nor was it, finally, simply an unduly positivistic fidelity to written legal texts, as other Vichy scholars have argued: it was, after all, the French lawyer's disregard for, not his undue fidelity toward, his own positive constitution that requires explanation. Something other than fear, pressure, anti-Semitism, or legal positivism had to be at work to so blind these lawyers to their own constitutional ideals.

PHOTOGRAPHS OF KARL SCHWESIG STAMPS COURTESY OF THE LEO BAECK INSTITUTE / JIM STRONG

Robin West is professor of law at Georgetown University Law Center. She is the author of Caring for Justice *(NYU Press) and* Narrative, Authority and Law *(Michigan University Press).*

What was it? Underlying and accompanying the French lawyers' anti-Semitism, Weisberg argues, was a professional attachment to a particular method of reading and interpreting texts, or what Weisberg calls a "French-Catholic interpretive hermeneutic." That hermeneutic counseled two things. First, it counseled a flexible method of reading and interpreting foundational texts, such as the French Constitution, rather than an overly rigid, cramped, or positivistic method. Such a flexible, free, and ecumenical reading of the Constitution permits an interpretive community to re-tell the constitutional narrative in a way that is true to the spirit of the document but that also fits the pressing needs of the moment—and the pressing need of the moment in Vichy France was to excise the unassimilable Jew from the fabric of French law and society. Thus, the French Constitution rigidly read seemingly required respect for the rights of all French citizens, but flexibly read, the spirit of the French Constitution required only a recognition of the constitutional rights of those French who had formed a clear and exclusive allegiance to the French state and French soil. The Jew, precisely by virtue of his stubborn but freely chosen allegiance to the legalistic Talmud and the earthly practices that it governed, lacked just such an allegiance. The flexibly read Constitution, then, rendered the "talmudic Jew" "other"—no longer "French"—and hence invisible to the legal-constitutional mind. His murder, and French legalistic complicity in it, no longer constituted a constitutional monstrosity.



Second, Weisberg shows, the Vichy lawyer, while insisting on flexibility regarding foundational texts, simultaneously if somewhat paradoxically embraced a rigid, fastidious, and amoral formalism regarding the interpretation and application of lower level legal texts, such as the religious laws themselves. When faced with statutory law, the lawyer's (and judge's) duty was to absent himself, not arrogantly insert his own conscience. The lawyer qua lawyer was to read and apply statutory laws meticulously and indeed mechanically, without reference to the moral merits of the matter. His job was not to creatively (or flexibly) interpret the law so as to save as many people as possible; rather, his job was to allow the law—the voice of the sovereign people—to work its way through him.

The impact of this hermeneutic upon the French lawyer faced with grotesque and state-sponsored evil, Weisberg shows, was morally catastrophic: flexibility regarding the foundational text permitted those seemingly universal guarantees to be re-read in a manner excluding the "other," while rigidity regarding the low-level persecutory laws themselves permitted and indeed required the lawyer to abandon conscience in the name of professional duty when applying them. The lawyer-as-professional was morally unhinged. Precisely because of his professional, legal identity, he was responsible neither to any overarching moral ethic, whether of friendship, compassion, or justice, nor to any particular constitutional commitment, whether of "due process of law" or "equal protection of the law." He was responsible, ultimately, as a professional, to nothing but a logical, formal, "value-free," and intentionally wooden application of the toxic texts themselves. The hermeneutic of reading that Weisberg articulates ultimately permitted, and perhaps even required, precisely legal engagement without moral restraint.

If Weisberg's book and argument are accorded the serious regard they deserve, it ought to shake both progressive and liberal American legal education to their postmodern and deconstructive roots. I am not suggesting that there exists a strain of anti-Semitism, or even of racism, in the United States comparable to the anti-Semitism that had infected the French Vichy legal community. But the hermeneutic that Weisberg has identified as central to the professional identity of the Vichy lawyer of the 1930s and 1940s—a sophisticated, ecumenical, and decidedly learned flexibility regarding foundational texts, and an amoral, relativistic, formal, and studiously neutral mechanism regarding lower-level texts—is precisely the hermeneutic now central to the taught professional identity of the liberal American lawyer at the turn of the millennium.

First—on constitutional flexibility. Liberal American lawyers have reached a broad consensus over the last half-century on the need for flexibility in reading our constitutional documents. The Constitution, according to many (not all) of our preeminent liberal constitutional lawyers and judges, must be read "pragmatically," accommodating the needs of the present, rather than "rigidly," to give voice either to the moral ideals it expresses, or to the original intent of its authors. This pragmatic accommodation obviously requires considerable interpretive flexibility. Even more striking, however, the progressive and left wing of the legal academy—in part because of the influence of the French Deconstructionist movement that is the contemporary legacy of the hermeneutic Weisberg decries—goes considerably further than liberal pragmatism, looking askance at any claimed interpretation of the Constitution, embracing instead the radically destabilizing credo that our Constitution has virtually no determinant meaning whatsoever, flexible, rigid, or otherwise. Similarly, Left legal academics have, for nearly thirty years, mounted a critique of "constitutional rights" and of "constitutional rights-talk"—out of the concern that constitutional rights so overwhelmingly favor the privileged and propertied, rather than the down-trodden, that it is useless or worse to try to reinvigorate them. That critique has taken

its toll: we now have only a threadbare, dispirited, left-wing rights tradition remaining, with little to counter the regressive calculation of "costs and benefits" that increasingly dominates virtually all mainstream legal analysis.

In a related move, liberals and progressives in legal education have abandoned, again at least in part because of the influence of deconstructive literary and philosophical traditions, all attempts to tie our constitutional convictions to a compelling, inclusive, egalitarian, and communitarian historical narrative. The "critique of narrativity," no less than the more articulated "critique of rights," has severely undercut the ability of liberal or progressive lawyers to sustain a story of the Constitution that might anchor universalist, humanistic, and communitarian moral commitments. Our foundational documents can no longer be read as having egalitarian, communitarian, or universalist moral content, not because the words of the Constitution or the Declaration of Independence won't sustain such a reading—they clearly do—but, rather, because they cannot be read as having any content at all. Our studied, postmodern flexibility regarding the Constitution's meaning has left it meaningless. The result has not been a victory for the party of humanity.

At the same time, our skills courses, the bar exams our graduates sit for, the logic of the legal discourse we teach them, and most importantly, perhaps, the codes of ethics that will govern their behavior as lawyers, all counsel precisely the formalism, mechanism, and studied value-neutrality toward the merits of law that Weisberg found so constitutive, and so disturbing, in his study of the Vichy lawyers. The American lawyer is explicitly and repeatedly instructed by academic teachers and professional mentors both to put his "ordinary" ethics, his lay morality, his sense of right and wrong, and indeed any and all moral obligations to one side, and to zealously pursue his clients' interests, bound only by the positive language of controlling law.



His ethical direction, once he has accomplished this self-cleansing of pre-existing moral commitments, is not to come from an educated understanding of the requirements of "justice," or from any other moral value that might be fairly implied from a professional commitment to the Rule of Law. Rather, his ethical direction, as a professional, comes entirely from the positive law itself. His sense of professional pride comes not from a self-understanding or a conviction that he is furthering justice, but rather from a sense that he is furthering his clients' interest through the skillful but faithful manipulation of legal texts.

Of course American, professional moral relativism, whatever the modern boost it has received from postmodern intellectual fashions, is not a product of them. Rather, the American lawyer's moral relativism echoes a century-long (at least) disdain, in American legal thought, for the uncertainties of ethical deliberation. "I hate justice," Justice Holmes remarked to a friend at the turn of the century, for "whenever a man speaks of justice I know that for whatever reason he has foregone speaking of law." Writing in the *Harvard Law Review* this month, and almost a century after Holmes' dictum, the conservative jurist Judge Kozinski of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals argues (in the course, no less, of a fictional opinion in which he upholds a dramatically unjust fictional law, and an equally unjust execution carried out under that law, in a fictional case posed to him by the student editors of the *Harvard Law Review*) that justice "is too elusive a concept to be addressed by judges," and that judges have no greater understanding of the demands of justice than do citizens or their representative legislators. The educated American lawyer, following Holmes, "hates justice" as well, and "prefers to speak of law"; and following Judge Kozinski, sees no reason to think that justice ought to be the work of courts, judges, or lawyers. Clearly, if justice is not the work of courts, judges, or lawyers, then the legal academy need not bother to teach it. And—we don't. The meaning of justice, or even multiple and contested meaning(s) of justice, is simply nowhere to be found in the traditional law school curriculum. It hasn't been, for at least the last hundred years.

Whatever its source, though, what good can possibly come from this explicit disavowal, by the profession of law, of its defining virtue? There may be some good: we are all saved the discomfort of lawyerly moralistic posturing. But this is a small gain, and we are courting disaster as we reap it. When the bench, the bar, and the legal academy all aggressively deny the relevance of justice to our work, we diminish, rather than heighten, the lawyer's ability to spot, and respond to, state-sponsored evil. The lawyer becomes, by virtue of her professional identity, less capable, not more capable, than the lay citizen of even recognizing, much less protesting, an unjust law. Weisberg's complex historical study of the lawyers of Vichy France—which is a jurisprudential inquiry into law and lawyers, as well as an examination of situated anti-Semitism—has one simple lesson, and that is that such a professional identity can have profound consequences. By endorsing both a pragmatic flexibility regarding our constitutional foundations, and an aggressive amoralism as central to the lawyer's role, we leave the lawyer, the legal community, and the society under law with little but a hope and a prayer: that the anti-Semitism, the racism, or the hate that gripped France and Europe at mid-century will not take hold—and will not take legal form—here and now. A legal community professionally defined by a sophisticated flexibility toward its core constitutional commitments, and a studied moral neutrality regarding its positive law, will not be well equipped to respond, should such a day come to pass. ❑



BOOK REVIEW

Seeking Prison Madness

Corey Weinstein

- *Prison Madness: The Mental Health Crisis Behind Bars and What We Must Do About It,* by Terry Kupers, M.D. Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1999.

When you visit a prison in California, you quickly realize that you've entered a world with a different reality.

In order to get into the visiting area we remove our belts and shoes, empty our pockets, and walk through a metal detector designed to prevent weapons from being smuggled in. Then we do what Jack, our attorney, calls the Egyptian dance, revealing every inch of our body surface—including armpits and groin—to a scatter X-ray machine intended to detect drugs taped to our bodies. As we watch the babies in their mothers' arms subjected to this untested high energy device, we look across the counter to see guards and staff enter and exit with only a cursory glance at their large day packs and lunch boxes. Everyone knows it is staff, not visitors, who sneak the bulk of the drugs into prison.

Sure we get mad, but we have to swallow it to get inside. Does swallowed anger breed madness?

Questions like mine are addressed in psychiatrist Terry Kupers' excellent new book, *Prison Madness*. Kupers is a correctional psychiatric expert who writes with clarity and humanity about the madness endemic to prisoners—and to prisons. Each issue he presents is framed through case reports that give us first-person accounts of real, suffering people.

I'm familiar with the types of cases Kupers writes about because I see them myself. On the day of the prison visit I described above, I was coming to see David. David came to Judaism as an adult, studies the Torah, and writes to me about Bible stories. He wants to get a kosher-style diet as an expression of his religious conviction. He has been diagnosed with a serious mental disorder and he studies religion to balance his mind and order his life. David is black.

The guards have decided they won't accede to his request for no dairy and meat on the same meal tray, and won't schedule a visit with a Jewish chaplain. Some tamper with his food to rile him. A high-ranking officer counseled him that Jews hate blacks, and that he is a traitor to his race. Another guard loudly announced David's religion to Black Muslims in his living unit, with predictable results.

David first went on a hunger strike, but was brutally extracted from his cell for his efforts. While recovering in the hospital, he got his kosher-style diet. But back in his cell block it started all over again. Finally he just shoved his food tray back through the food port of his lock-down cell. The meal hit the leg of the guard, and David got more punishment time in the hole for assaulting a guard with a cheeseburger.

David's story is one that is all too frequent in U.S. jails and prisons, albeit an oddly kosher-style one. Our nation's lockups have become the dumping ground for the mentally ill. For example, the single largest mental health facility in the United States is in the Los Angeles County Jail. The biggest provider of psychiatric services in California is the Department of Corrections, which has been ruled maliciously negligent in its delivery of services to the insane. Prisons are the sinkholes for the woes of society, and it is the mentally ill and deficient who are sucked in, just like black and Latino petty drug sellers and the despairing destitute. Once inside, staff and prisoners alike abuse the psychiatrically and mentally disabled.

Kupers' recommendations for improving mental health care in prison start with the development of comprehensive services, including inpatient, outpatient, and protective services, as well as suicide prevention and special programs for the disturbed, disruptive prisoner. But he asserts that no change is possible unless rehabilitative and educational programs are renewed in prisons, and visiting programs and community involvement are bolstered. Social welfare policy and law must also be changed to reverse the arrest and incarceration of people suffering serious mental disorders, and to provide alternative punishments for the mentally disturbed people who do break the law.

I hope corrections officials and politicians read and listen to Kupers. After all, 90 percent of prisoners get out, and we have to wonder what kind of neighbors they will be able to be. ❑

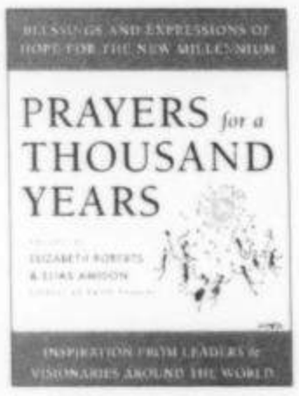
Dr. Corey Weinstein is one of the founders of California Prison Focus, which works with and for the twenty-seven hundred people in California's super-maximum Security Housing Units, many of whom are psychiatric patients.

ILLUSTRATION BY JOSH MACPHEE

Sikkum: TIKKUN RECOMMENDS ...

Prayers for a Thousand Years

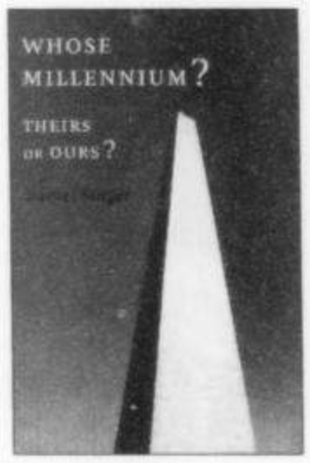
Edited by Elizabeth Roberts and Elias Amidon
HarperSanFrancisco, 1999



Though framed as "blessings and hopes for the new millennium," this collection of poems, prayers, and articles presents a cornucopia of very short but often powerful spiritual approaches to the future. Among the over two hundred seers selected from around the world are Thomas Berry, Tony Campolo, the Dalai Lama, Ram Dass, Annie Dillard, Riane Eisler, Vaclav Havel, Hazel Henderson, Hans Küng, Ursula Le Guin, Michael Lerner, Joanna Macy, Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu, Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, and Alice Walker.

Whose Millennium? Theirs or Ours?

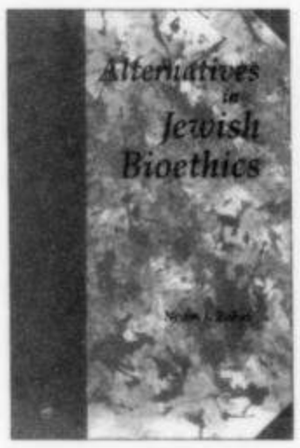
Daniel Singer
Monthly Review Press, 1999



Daniel Singer is the single most brilliant leftist journalist in the contemporary world. His analysis of the uprising in Paris in May 1968 *(Prelude to Revolution)* is now matched by his latest book, a stunningly insightful account of contemporary history from the collapse of allegedly socialist regimes in Eastern Europe a decade ago to the current crises of globalization in 1999. Singer is able to present a coherent account of the contemporary world that should be required reading for every college freshman and every elected official and media pundit.

Alternatives in Jewish Bioethics

Noam J. Zohar
State University of New York Press, 1997

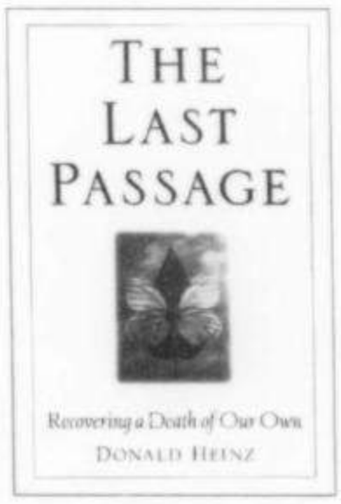


Noam Zohar teaches philosophy at Bar Ilan University and his halachic thinking is deeply imbued with philosophical sophistication. Through a close reading of classical and modern Jewish texts, Zohar reaches some important conclusions, among them that Jewish law does not have an absolute ban against euthanasia or assisted reproduction. Zohar also provides an initial foundation to explore how to allocate scarce medical resources. Most importantly, Zohar's creative use of halachic categories demonstrates that there really is an intellectually rigorous "alternative" to the narrow orthodoxy that has dominated discussions of medical ethics in the Jewish world.

The Last Passage

Recovering a Death of Our Own

Donald Heinz
Oxford University Press, 1999



As the modern world has emptied daily life of meaning, so too has it emptied death of any connection to the sacred. Donald Heinz sets out to recover how we might build meaning into the process of death and dying. Though ostensibly written for those who do not have the rich wisdom of the Jewish tradition to draw upon for ritual inspiration, Heinz' book is useful for deepening the Jewish *Vidu'i* (last prayers on the deathbed) and drawing upon other ritual systems to give us insights into how to make our last passage a more humanly satisfying process. The sting of death can be mitigated by the relevant framework of meaning.

Off The Map

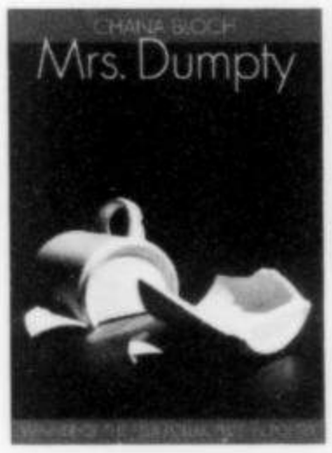
Chellis Glendinning
Shambhala Publications, 1999



Chellis Glendinning is an imaginative writer as well as an impressive activist for cultural preservation and environmental justice in northern New Mexico. Weaving personal stories and childhood memories with an acute sensitivity to the details of daily life, Glendinning shapes for us a map of the contemporary world that becomes a powerful account of the way imperialism and the global economy shape and reshape our lives.

Mrs. Dumpty

Chana Bloch
University of Wisconsin Press, 1998



Selected by Donald Hall for the 1998 Felix Pollak Prize in Poetry, poet and translator Chana Bloch's third book of poems chronicles the breakup of a marriage with honesty, irony, and a complicated passion that effectively mixes ruefulness and regret, rage and analytical cool. Emotional precision of the image and a tightly strung web of figurative language give Bloch's poems a rich psychological life that stands as a hard-won testament to love and survival.

תיקון

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

CHOOSE PEACE. CHOOSE LIFE.

Mazel Tov to the People of Israel!



Israelis crowd into Tel Aviv's Rabin Square carrying portraits of assassinated Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin early Tuesday, May 18, 1999, after Benjamin Netanyahu conceded victory to Ehud Barak in Israel's general elections.

TIKKUN ... a spiritually alive and progressive voice for those who wish an alternative to materialism and selfishness.