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

TIKKUN

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HIGH HOLY DAY SUPPLEMENT

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1999 $5.95



Eco-Kabbalah Spirituality

LIVING IN HARMONY WITH NATURE & THE SACRED

Arthur Green

and

Spirituality in Schools

Charles Burack • Gregory A. Valde

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE
David Lerman

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FINDING MEANING
Nancy J. Chodorow

TRIPPING WITH COYOTE
Paul Krassner

ONLINE IN 2000
Troy K. Schneider

WHY JERUSALEM?
Yehuda Amichai

MEMOS TO BARAK

Letty Cottin Pogrebin • Azmi Bishara • David Arnow • Oren Yiftachel
Hatim & Rhoda Kanaaneh • Jerome Slater

Plus: Thomas Fitzgerald on Selling the People's Voice
Jean Bethke Elshtain on Public and Private
Daniel Singer on Realistic Utopias

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Old-Fashioned Name

One man's parents gave him an old-fashioned Jewish
name from the Diaspora.
These days only very old, very praying Jews still go by
a name like that.
His friends gave him a wild name, because he grew up
to be a big brave paratrooper, raised horses
out in the world and came back to raise them in the hills
of Galilee.
His parents own a shop of women's undergarments,
corsets for the stocky ones,
lightweight bras and little silk panties for the lean ones.
And whoever laughs at the story of a generation gap
like that,
whoever even cracks a smile, doesn't know a thing about
wild horses or the names of the land of Canaan or
Diaspora names
or the hills of Galilee or women
or women's garments, either under or over,
or the land of Israel, or the history of the people of Israel.

—Yehuda Amichai
trans. Chana Bloch and Chana Kronfeld

TIKKUN

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY VOLUME 14 NUMBER 5



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Front Cover: *One's own Roots*, 1985, by Samuel Bak. Oil on Linen. Courtesy of Pucker Gallery, Inc., Boston, Mass.

Back Cover: *Mikvah*, by Marilyn Marcus. Watercolor. Courtesy of the artist.

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Editorial Office: 26 Fell St. San Francisco, CA 94102 415-575-1200 fax: 415-575-1434
Publisher's Office: 130 Fifth Ave., 7th Floor New York, NY 10011 212-414-3232 fax: 212-414-3199

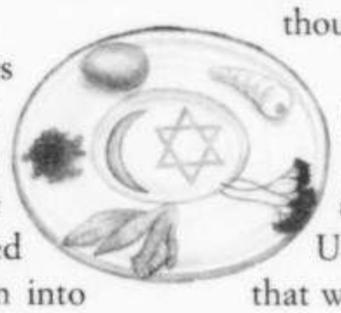
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Letters to the Editor

Seder of the Children of Abraham

To the Editor:

In her July/August letter to the editor, Judith Alexander wrote that my "Seder of the Children of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar" (March/April 1999) was "one-sided." In response, I'd like to point out that the seder highlights four contemporary stories of Israelis and Palestinians in conflict. Let's count:



In the first, an Israeli expresses her whole-hearted compassion for the Palestinian family in whose house she is living, while also expressing whole-hearted condemnation of the terrorism into which one member of that family has fallen.

In the second, compassionate Israelis stand together with Palestinians to resist destruction of Palestinian houses by the Israeli government and to rebuild them later.

In the third, seven Israeli children murdered by a Jordanian soldier are mourned by the compassionate Jordanian king.

In the fourth, compassionate Israeli women visit the family of a young Palestinian killed by Israeli soldiers.

Three groups of compassionate Israelis, only one compassionate Arab—and that one not even Palestinian. Murders of seven Israeli children, killing of one Palestinian boy. This leans one-sidedly toward showing Israelis as the bad guys? I might have easily thought the reverse.

Perhaps the writer is reacting to the fact that while plenty of Israelis are shown as compassionate, the Israeli government is not. Under the Netanyahu government, that was unfortunately true. That government showed no compassion.

And perhaps the writer equates the Israeli government with "Israel." This, thank God, is a mistake. Its propagation can only continue to blind the Jewish communities of all the world to the importance of vigorously protecting Israel by vigorously insisting its government make peace.

RABBI ARTHUR WASKOW
Philadelphia, PA

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LETTERS

Remembering Anita

To the Editor:

For the past fifty years or so, Paul Krassner has been altering reality to suit his own purposes, and I suppose I should not have been surprised by the ways that he altered it once again in "Anita and the Blow-Up Doll" (May/June 1999)—but I was indeed surprised and shocked. How Krassner could have written about Anita and Abbie Hoffman for TIKKUN and not mentioned the fact that they were both Jews, that they were married at Temple Emanuel on East 65th Street in Manhattan by Rabbi Nathan A. Perilman, that Abbie Hoffman spoke Yiddish, and that he considered living in exile in Israel after his arrest for cocaine possession is beyond me. Abbie was Jewish to the core. "I came into this world a Jew, and I will go out of this world a Jew," he said, not once but repeatedly. Everyone who met him could not fail to observe his Jewish identity, his sense of Jewish humor, all of which is not surprising given the fact that he was bar mitzvah'd and that he attended Brandeis in the 1950s, when it was almost entirely Jewish.

Aside from these glaring omissions, Krassner's article is punctuated by one factual error after another. To mention a few: Anita Hoffman did not participate in the guerrilla theater event at the New York Stock Exchange; Abbie did not have an M.A. in psychology; he did not found Liberty House; he did not divorce Anita, she divorced him; he never strung a hippie bead in his life; and Anita did not climb out of a window in Algiers to escape from Eldridge Cleaver. I was there. I watched her open the door, step over the sill, and close the door behind her. Krassner says that Anita Hoffman's plan to take her own life was "kept secret from almost everyone." Living near Anita in Sonoma County, I spoke with her frequently, saw her regularly. Most of her friends and many people in the community knew her plans to take her own life. We agreed to keep it a secret from the media.

At the start of his autobiography, *Confessions of a Raving, Unconfined Nut: Misadventures in the Counter-Culture,* Krassner offers a quotation from the humorist Don Marquis which reveals his own method: "It is quite true that I have invented for myself a good many experiences which I never really had.... On the other hand, I have suppressed a number of incidents which actually happened." If Krassner wants to invent and suppress incidents in his own life, that's his right. But to invent, suppress, and distort incidents in the lives of Abbie and Anita Hoffman does a real disservice to readers of TIKKUN and to the historical record as well.

JONAH RASKIN
Rohnert Park, CA

Paul Krassner responds:

For the past forty years as a political satirist, I have indeed been altering reality—an increasingly difficult challenge—but as a journalist, I have also been reporting what I believe to be the truth, and my article in TIKKUN *belongs in the latter category. I tried to include only what I considered relevant. I was writing about Anita's humanity, not Abbie's Jewishness.*



If I were writing about Abbie's choices of places to exile himself when he was a fugitive, I would list France, Mexico, Cuba, Nicaragua, Canada, and Ireland—where he fantasized about fighting with the IRA—as well as Israel, where he fantasized about fighting with the PLO. Paradoxically, Abbie once told me, "I feel most Jewish when I meet an anti-Semite." Mayor Vishner, coordinator of Abbie's defense committee, describes him as "passionately pro-Arab." Yippie archivist Sam Leff prefers to put it this way: "Abbie was passionately opposed to predatory Jewish tribalism and appalled by anti-Palestinian racism of the Israeli radical right." In any case, Abbie stayed in the United States and became Barry Freed, environmental organizer.

So much for omissions. Now for the facts:

- *Anita did participate in planning the guerrilla theater event at the Stock Exchange. She was not on Wall Street physically, but rather at home, prepared to call attorneys if there were any arrests.*
- *In Abbie's autobiography,* Soon to Be a Major Motion Picture, *he stated that he had an M.A. in psychology. In Larry Sloman's oral biography,* Steal This Dream, *Anita describes the day she met Abbie: "He mentioned that he had a master's degree in psychology."*
- *Ellen Maslow, who ran Liberty House, tells me, "I remember vividly, I was at Brandeis—I had one semester to graduate after I took off to Mississippi—and I was in my apartment at Harvard Square. Abbie called and said that he was going to use some money his mother gave him for dental work to start a store to sell the crafts from the Mississippi cooperatives where we had both been working. He located a place on Bleecker Street, so I came and helped. It wasn't open yet, and we were still painting and staining the pine boards on the wall. Abbie definitely was the 'founder.'" This is confirmed by Jay Levin, who had been assigned by the* New York Post *to cover Liberty House.*
- *As for the petty distinction of who divorced whom, I checked with Abbie's widow, Johanna Lawrenson. "Ah, come on," she said, laughing. "It was totally, mutually agreed. We were all there in L.A., in the same hotel—Anita, my mother too—we were seeing each other every day. We were all together that whole month—very tight, actually."*
- *Among others, I witnessed Abbie stringing hippie beads with Anita. For Raskin to declare that this never took place only reveals his arrogance. Maybe Raskin doesn't consider stringing hippie beads to be revolutionary enough, or simply cannot accept that aspect of Abbie.*
- *After interviewing Anita, Marty Jezer, in his book,* Abbie Hoffman: American Rebel, *wrote: "Isolated in the Panther compound, Anita climbed out a window, talked her way through Algerian customs, and boarded a plane for Paris." Door or window, it was a courageous act. In an unpublished article, Anita wrote, "It seemed to me that the other members of our party totally knuckled under to Cleaver, forgetting they were Yippies or Weather representatives [including Raskin, who associated with the Weather Underground], or anything other than obedient Cleaver followers. None of the other Americans ever considered for one moment standing up to Cleaver on any issue. Perhaps they were afraid or perhaps they were just better leftists than I."*
- *Anita's decision to take her own life was known in her community but, with few exceptions, not by friends in other cities. She asked that her plan be kept secret from the media until after her death. She wanted my article to serve as the model for a serene alternative to Jack Kevorkian's methodology, and requested only that I not divulge the name of the doctor who had unofficially assisted her.*

It's appropriate to disclose that, in 1996, Raskin wrote a negative review of The

Winner of the Slow Bicycle Race: The Satirical Writings of Paul Krassner, *displeased with my depiction of Abbie, Jerry Rubin, and Patty Hearst enjoying a ménage à trois. Raskin also has written a biography of Abbie,* For the Hell of It: The Life and Times of Abbie Hoffman, *and seems to maintain a proprietary interest in his image.*

PAUL KRASSNER
Venice Beach, CA

Israel's Unrecognized Villages

To the Editor:

Even as Jews, both in Israel and abroad, celebrate Barak's victory, I am not alone in noticing that over fifty thousand taxpaying Israeli Arab citizens living in some forty Israeli villages have been denied even the most rudimentary services such as water, electricity, access roads, health care, and phone service. Such sharp differences in access to government resources continue to further isolate and stigmatize Israel's ethnic minorities from the Jewish majority. This is a systematic subterfuge of true democracy.

On the brink of the millennium, it seems appropriate to agitate for a new kind of peace, aimed at transcending our ever-widening ethnic, religious, and social constraints, by counteracting inequality among dispossessed communities within Israel. Perhaps under the Barak leadership we can aspire to rectify such domestic issues and truly advance pluralism in Israel by aiming to fulfill the words that have served as the foundation of the State for over fifty-two years: "The State of Israel … will uphold the full social and political equality of *all its citizens* without distinction of race, creed or sex" (Declaration of Israel's Independence, May 14, 1948, emphasis added).

I am currently organizing a grassroots campaign to raise awareness of the issue of unrecognized villages in Israel. We are in the process of building a coalition of Israeli and Palestinian peace organizations for a series of events designed to yield tangible manifestations of peace, including a series of ecological festivals and art exhibitions to be held in unrecognized villages, as soon as proper funding is secured.

For further details, please contact me at deb2000@zahav.net.il. Tax-deductible donations may be sent through the New Israel Fund, payable to Green Action Peace Festivals.

DEBORAH BROUS
Tel Aviv, Israel

Whose Disorder?

To the Editor:

This is in reply to the article by Thom Hartmann (July/August 1999) on his view of the disadvantages of the diagnosis of ADHD. I have two serious objections to his argument that I think are worthy of consideration.

First, he ingeniously tries to establish that while ADD is disadvantageous for our culture, it would be advantageous for another, more primitive culture. It seems to me that a disposition that is disadvantageous for the surroundings in which the individual finds himself is sufficiently anomalous and handicapping to warrant a label of pathology. Most deficiencies can, with a sufficient degree of ingenuity, be found advantageous in limited but unusual circumstances. That does not alter their dysfunctionality in their current environment.



The second issue is, I believe, more important. The fact is that ADD predisposes people not only to hypervigilance, hyperactivity, and distractibility, but also to the exhibition of rapidly fluctuating, extreme moods, to a degree that often warrants a diagnosis of bipolar disorder or rapid cycling disorder. Many children who start out with ADD end up as adults with borderline personality disorder.

One of the major problems created by the ADD syndrome is extremely low self-esteem. That is encouraged by the child's difficulty in mastering school work and by his inability to control his behavior. However, it is also powerfully reinforced by the lack of control of emotions and impulses in adolescent and adult life.

It is true that many children with ADD become adults who are relatively asymptomatic, but many others are seriously disabled for at least the first half of their lives and require medication to achieve proper mood regulation.

MORTIMER OSTOW, M.D.
New York, NY
President, Psychoanalytic Research and Development Fund
Attending Psychiatrist, Montefiore Medical Center

To the Editor:

Kudos to Dr. Hartmann.

"She's coming closer—she's heading down my aisle—she's going to smack my knuckles with a ruler and everyone will know that my circles don't stay within the lines, and I'll never learn to write. What's wrong with me? I just have to try harder, my mother says so."

I did try, but those boring circles defeated me, and my mind wandered and my pencil line would just become a thin tail wagging all by itself over the paper. That was over sixty years ago, when no one spoke of ADD. Today, the Palmer Penmanship Method is long forgotten. Bottom line? (People with ADD love bottom lines and get there quickly.) A very bright, good little girl marginally got through high school and college without anybody noticing her terror and the scars brought on by her constant worrying whether she was smart enough.

At forty-eight, no longer a scared little girl, I returned to school to earn an M.S.W. By then, my condition had been diagnosed. It was not severe, just bad enough for me to have spent years redeeming lost ego about how a "smart person" could be so frightened of test-taking and school in general. But I got through, and went on to be a faculty member of two graduate schools of social work and the Daniels School of Jewish Communal Service at Hebrew Union College in Los Angeles.

I am now seventy years old, retired, and I can love my ADD. I am a committed social activist. My energy and passions run high for self-selected work and play. If I lose agendas or get lost going to meetings, so what?

A sincere thanks to the Dr. Hartmanns of the world, who are asking the right questions about cultural pathology and coming up with good answers. Given the right environments, where individuality is appreciated and narrow definitions of good working habits, linear thinking, and tidy desks are not the measure of intelligence, those of us with ADD can thrive.

RITA LOWENTHAL
Santa Monica, CA

For John?

To the Editor:

After reading Myra Soifer's article "For John" (July/August 1999), I was nearly brought to tears. Not for John, but for his helpless eleven-year-old victim, whose screams of terror and torment were never heard, not during her rape, torture, and brutal murder by John, and not in the pages of TIKKUN, where instead the relatively very, very, very, very minor pain and terror of John's execution was detailed with great drama. The victim's undeserved torment and terror is given no voice in the article, while her murderer/rapist/torturer is made into some kind of a hero by being portrayed as a "victim" of capital punishment.

I applaud Myra Soifer's prison work and her compassion for death row and other inmates, and in no way wish to denigrate either. I've been visiting prison inmates for a decade, and while I bring them a taste of the compassion many of them never experienced in their childhoods, I do not for a split second find my scales of compassion tilting in their favor over the cruelty perpetrated on their unsung victims. We need not grant the perpetrator the degree of compassion that is due the victim.

Granted, some death row inmates might actually be innocent and therefore the morality of capital punishment is questionable; no human document bears this out as compassionately as does the Talmud, where the criteria for executing someone make it virtually impossible to do so. But neither should we doubly sentence the cry of the victim by reducing her ordeal to a brief synoptic paragraph while detailing the horror of dead-man-walking.

I feel sorry for John. I feel a lot more sorry for his victim. John had a choice. No one forced him to rape, torture, and murder. But his victim had no choice. It is wrong for us bleeding-hearted mercy addicts to keep conveniently quiet about the gruesome details of her torture and terror so that we might further our political cause against capital punishment.

RABBI GERSHON WINKLER
Elk Mesa, NM

Kids and Tzedakah

To the Editor,

I read with great joy Danny Siegel's column on the things kids are doing in the world of *tzedakah* (charity) and mitzvot. I am pleased to know that my synagogue and I are right in step with people bent on bringing *tikkun olam* to mankind. I just want to take up a minute of your time to let you know what my B'nai Mitzvot class did this past year for projects in connection with their Torah *parashot*.

1. Jeremy Pavelka, after reading and studying Bereishit, became intrigued with the story of Cain and Abel, and the difficulties the brothers had in learning how to get along with each other. He has since become a big brother to a fatherless nine-year-old boy through Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Southern Nevada. Jeremy is the youngest Big Brother ever, and spends at least one day a week with Micah, his little brother.

2. Andrew Rosensweig, after reading and studying Tetzaveh and learning about the priestly vestments, went out and collected thirty-five bags of clothing over a six-week period prior to his bar mitzvah and then donated them to Catholic charities for the Kosovar relief effort here in Las Vegas.



3. Karla Katz and Jamie Dorinson, after reading and studying Bamidbar and the lesson about teaching, worked with an after-school reading program in the Clark County school district. Both read and helped first and second graders with their reading skills and homework after school.

4. Abby Rosenstein (my daughter) is studying Re'eh for her bat mitzvah in three weeks. Learning about extending a hand to the helpless has led her to raise money for "fire drill cribs" ($450 per crib, plus shipping) for the Nevada Association of the Handicapped Day Care Center. So far, she has raised enough money for one, and is halfway towards a second one.

I am proud of these young adults, but I am proud of my entire congregation. Each month, about seven or eight congregants put on a birthday party, complete with donuts, juice, balloons, costumed characters, music, and games, for the children of a place called Child Haven, a county shelter for children that are victims of abuse, or whose parents are currently housed in the county criminal justice system. We recently put on a dinner gala to raise money for them, and for us. Instead of honoring a "big donor," we honored the children for whom the event was being staged. We raised close to $15,000. Not bad for a one-year-old schul.

Keep up the good work. I suggest you make this a regular column and encourage other synagogues to give you some of their mitzvah kids.

RABBI CRAIG ROSENSTEIN
Ahavat Torah Synagogue
Las Vegas, NV

Autonomy Reformed

To the Editor:

As pleased as I was by the support for the core positions I presented in my essay on autonomy (July/August 1999) by all four respondents, I was just as perplexed by the imputation to me of views nowhere present in my essay.

I am grateful for the particularly cogent and, as usual, well-expressed views of Rabbi Eric Yoffie. If I had been allotted more space, I would have, as he correctly suggests, referred to the positive aspects of autonomy. But, as he himself implies, this is not the need of the hour. I still believe that the end of Rabbi Yoffie's statement, insisting on an absolutist view of individual autonomy, "forgets the beginning" of his statement, which speaks of the need for clear and definite guidance from rabbis to their people. But my main concern is that his words at the very end might be construed to indicate that I would support some "coercive" authority which is not only, of course, impractical, but entirely contrary to my views.

As to Rabbi Elliot Dorff's response, I can only wonder whether he was really responding to my essay. To imply that I espouse a fundamentalist or literalist reading of Torah is ludicrous on the face of it. It is obvious that, as a youth, I had already chosen the critical study of sacred texts and the application of various forms of analysis based on historic consciousness.

Rabbi Emanuel Feldman's response proves that when it comes to the centrality of Torah study, the entirety of American religious Jewry is, in fact, at one these days. I agree entirely that there should be no "bashing" of one group by the other. But at least here, in metropolitan Chicago, it has been very difficult to get Orthodox rabbis to sit down with rabbis of other groups for Torah study.

RABBI HERBERT BRONSTEIN
North Shore Congregation Israel
Chicago, IL

EDITORIALS

Greed is a Disease of Fear



Michael Lerner

For the past many years we've faced super-profits for the rich and budget cuts for the poor. Some people believe that American's current insensitivity to the plight of those less well off is *proof* that human beings are fundamentally selfish, and that a politics of meaning is hopeless because people will never care for others unless forced to do so.

I don't agree.

It's true that the Republican party's bold move to cut taxes, particularly for the rich, is the logical outgrowth of Clinton's "the era of big government is over" rhetoric. It's true that a supposedly liberal mayor like Willie Brown of San Francisco can preside over assaults on the homeless that would have shamed previous conservative mayors. It's true that at the moment of America's most secure economy in many decades, no serious political force has been willing to call for a worldwide program to combat poverty.

But when you actually speak to people, you rarely hear them dismiss the needs of others. Much more frequently you hear people talking about their own fears that prosperity won't last, that the market won't last, and that, in the current state of affairs, if something bad does happen, they can't count on others to be there for them.

Ironically, these fears are self-fulfilling. Most Americans are personally outraged at the Republican assault that gutted real health care reform and that makes any serious reform seem impossible. Yet Americans rarely give public expression to that outrage, perhaps because they see how the media has marginalized those who speak this way. They conclude that they would only make themselves look ridiculous if they said what they really feel. With a president who is unwilling to stand up and seriously fight for any principles, with a Democratic party more concerned to show that it is "responsible" than principled, most people see no public example of leaders who put principle above interests, and conclude that they themselves would be silly to take a similar risk.

Greed, then, seems like the logical stance: get what you can while you can, because once you can't, no one will care enough to take care of you. This fear is shared from person to person and each of us is continually acting upon it. Everyone fears that they will be alone and abandoned, that they can't really count on others—certainly not on some larger community beyond their immediate friends and family.

Thirty-five years ago I experienced a moment that helped me break through this fear. During the Free Speech Movement at U.C. Berkeley, I was a twenty-one-year-old graduate student who witnessed an amazing moment: a group of eight students had been suspended for violating campus rules that forbade organizing off-campus demonstrations on the campus. In response to those suspensions, 400 fellow students turned in their own student IDs and demanded that they too be suspended because they had violated the same rule. Such an act of solidarity and mutual caring did for me what the New Deal and the Second World War had done for a previous generation: it suddenly became possible to imagine that people would sacrifice their interests for the sake of their ideals.

"It would never happen today," someone recently told me. But that's what I and everyone else thought then too. It would never have happened then either—until a few people started to make it happen. We didn't know it was "the Sixties" till we made it the Sixties. It takes acts of public solidarity and caring to break through our certainty that we are alone. Until then, most of us will remain scared. And greed is a disease of fear. ❑

Barak's Distorted Path

I recently spoke with a group of Israeli peace activists. Initially they had rejoiced at the election of Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, but now they feel more than a little disappointed at his new government. They cite:

1. Barak's failure to include any Israeli Arab in his cabinet though he received 95 percent of the Arab vote. See the comments from Azmi Bishara, the Israeli Arab candidate for prime minister, on page fifty-eight of this issue of TIKKUN.

2. Barak's initial refusal to implement the Wye Accords. Implementing Wye without forcing a struggle would have assured Palestinians that Israel intended to return to the Oslo Accords subverted by Netanyahu. Wye is a very tiny step towards peace (several Palestinian authors have argued in these pages that Arafat's agreement to accept so little after the negotiators at Oslo had promised Palestinians at least 50 percent of the West Bank shows how craven and

ILLUSTRATION BY RUSS ANDO

Hungering for Community: The Kennedy Mystique

Death is always a tragedy except when it occurs at an age when life completes itself. So we mourn the deaths of John F. Kennedy, Jr., Carolyn Bessette Kennedy, and Lauren Bessette.

But the media coverage of the crash and its aftermath bore little relation to the actual tragedy of these deaths. Instead, the media hysterically inflated this real event into a national catastrophe, in which the entire country was allegedly plunged into overwhelming grief at the loss of a remarkable young man with whom we had the most profound of connections. JFK, Jr., was anointed "the People's Prince," whose death would "cement the nation" by revealing our "universal bond." Suddenly he was almost certain to have been a senator and perhaps even president had his life not been cut short. Without meaning to be disrespectful, little in his magazine *George* would have led us to imagine this triumphant future.

So why the fuss? Peter Gabel in these pages has analyzed how this kind of rhetoric creates the hallucination that we are all part of a larger something—a nation or other "imaginary community"—which gives momentary compensation for the actuality of a world in which people are employed all day by institutions that encourage them to "look out for number one" and to maximize their own self-interest without regard for the consequences to others. The pain of isolation and loneliness—the sense that we are not being fully seen, counted, loved, or cared about—which governs the lives of so many in our society momentarily recedes when they can imagine themselves part of some media-constructed moment of community.



John F. Kennedy, Jr., second from left, listens to his uncle Ted Kennedy, with his mother Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, left, and sister Caroline Kennedy at his graduation from Brown University in this June 4, 1983 photo.

Yet people do not respond equally to every such media attempt to reassure us that we are part of something. Though most of us really want to be part of some larger "we," few of us were much moved by the pageant the media tried to create around the death of Richard Nixon. The response to the loss of JFK, Jr., was overlaid by a much deeper loss—the tragedy of the murder of his father and the subsequent murders of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert Kennedy. There is a deep association between those assassinations and the loss of our hope of achieving significant social transformation in a loving and rational way which was the central aspiration of the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s. The recent outpouring of concern about Kennedy was a reminder that those hopes have never been fully extinguished and may yet play a role in countering the fears that lead to greed and selfishness. Both fear and hope remain a part of our collective psyche—and we ourselves will determine which becomes dominant in shaping the social reality of the coming decades. ❑

defeated Arafat has become). Barak's reluctance to immediately implement what even Netanyahu had agreed upon sent a very negative message. In fact, according to the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz,* Barak continues to oppose the implementation of the Oslo Accords (a position he took publicly at the time it was signed). *Ha'aretz* says he wants a one-step solution—but one that will leave all of the settlements in place (which effectively means a Palestinian state far smaller and less economically viable than the one promised by the negotiators of Oslo). After pressure, Barak is agreeing to implement Wye—but warning Palestinians that doing so will cost them much in future negotiations. A bad start.

3. The continued demolition of Palestinian homes for alleged "code violations." See Jeff Halper's article in TIKKUN (May/June 1998) to understand why these demolitions are considered a "quiet transfer" of Palestinians out of their land.

4. The refusal of the Barak government to change Israeli water policy during the extreme drought and heat wave of summer 1999. Israel hogs most of the water from the West Bank—providing adequate supplies for Israeli settlers while providing inadequate water for the basic sanitary needs of most West Bank Palestinians.

In response to these criticisms, others claim that Barak is doing the best he can under the circumstances. Here are some of their arguments, followed by responses to them from Israeli peace activists:

1. No Mandate. Barak really didn't get a mandate for peace, so he can't move precipitously toward what he originally intended, but must be more cautious. This argument is usually made in one of two ways. First, Barak defenders remind me that the prime minister did not build his campaign around peace issues, but instead argued that he was to be trusted as a tough military man (who presumably would not sell out Israeli interests in peace negotiations) and focused his campaign on social justice issues.

The peace activists respond that this defense of Barak represents the ultimate triumph of the cynical political science

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realists who advised Barak. During the election, these "realists" argued that it would be better to play down the peace issue, since everyone knew that Labor supported implementation of the Oslo accords and the key was to win over support from people who might vote on a different basis—the issue of social justice and fairness. Now these same realists are arguing that there is no mandate because Barak did what they urged him to do. Well, that may be quite a surprise to most Israelis who are unafraid to say that they believed that a vote for Barak was also a vote for implementing Oslo. In fact, say the peace activists, the key to the future is to remind Barak that most people believed that his victory would mean an implementation of Oslo, and that was the most significant factor in why most people who voted for him did (had he been the candidate of a non-peace party, e.g. the Center party, advocating the stands he now, post-election, is advocating, he would not have won).

2. No Mandate, Part Two. Barak received only 51 percent of the Jewish vote, as opposed to 49 percent for Netanyahu. Barak's 57 percent electoral victory was made possible by the 95 percent pro-Barak Arab vote. Thus, the argument goes, Jewish voters did not give Barak a mandate for peace.

This argument, which has been cited in some Israeli newspapers, in right-wing discourse, and in many American Jewish newspapers (especially the ones that get paid for by the contributions you make to UJA/Federation) is racist and disgusting. Imagine if Southern racists had argued that the Democrats who pushed the Civil Rights Bill through Congress really didn't have a legitimate American mandate because many of them would not have been elected to office without the votes of Blacks within their districts. Wouldn't we have said: "It is precisely because they rely on Blacks that their bill is legitimate, because Blacks are part of the system and are using it to rectify wrongs done to them." Those Israelis and American Jews who say that Arab votes don't "really" count are supporting the view that "really" Israel is an exclusivist Jewish state, not a state of all its citizens. They are suggesting that Arabs' desires about the future of the State of Israel, including their desire for peace, should not be given equal weight with the desires of the Jewish citizens of that state. Accepting this way of thinking is not a neutral descriptive or analytic move—it is a political choice which reinforces the racism that many in the Israeli peace movement are committed to challenging. Barak himself, however, has not challenged this kind of reasoning, and seems to be supporting it by refusing to include Arab Israelis either in his cabinet or governing coalition.

3. Coalition Constraints. Barak won, say his defenders, but the Labor Party lost seats, so Barak was forced to form a coalition with groups that did not support the peace process. If he is to bring them along and retain control of the Knesset, he must move cautiously.

Israeli peace activists with whom I spoke were particularly incensed by this argument. They pointed out that if Barak

had not accepted the racist argument that Arab votes are less significant than Jewish votes, he would have included the Arab parties in his coalition, and they would have made that caution about the peace process unnecessary.

4. Popular Constraints. Rabin did rely on the votes of the Arab parties. As a result, he kept his coalition but antagonized a portion of the population who then not only felt empowered to actively oppose Oslo but even felt OK about murdering him. Barak is making sure he has a wider base.

In response, the Israeli peace activists point out that you don't build a base for peace when you play to the phony security concerns of the Right. Giving credence to the notion that Israel's "interests" require slow and very partial concessions to the Palestinians will only backfire, they argue, once Barak gets to final settlement negotiations and is forced to make some concessions.

Rather, these activists reminded me, the way to build popular support for peace is to talk about the virtues of peace and to create a new atmosphere of hope and possibility, not an atmosphere of caution and fearfulness. If Barak keeps on talking a language which suggests "no compromise" on Jerusalem and "no dismantling" of existing settlements, then even if he wants to make the necessary concessions, he will not have built the popular support he needs for them. The time to build support for concessions is now, when Barak is most popular, and when people are willing to listen to his thinking about how to bring peace.

Perhaps Barak imagines that a settlement with Syria, returning land on the Golan in exchange for peace in Lebanon, might give him the credibility he needs to make more serious concessions to the Palestinians. Apart from this strategy's risk (Syria is a far more serious military threat than a Palestinian state ever could be), it remains to be seen if Barak would use the prestige that such an agreement would give him to make real concessions, or whether, having made serious and risky concessions on Golan, he would be all the more likely to be overly cautious about making serious territorial concessions such as those envisioned by Yossi Beilin when he negotiated the Oslo Accords. By placing Beilin in the Justice Ministry, Barak may have sought to quiet one voice in his own party which might have been a forceful critic of half-measures that betrayed the promise of Oslo. He has not yet succeeded in quieting Avrum Burg, whose dramatic move of bringing the head of the Palestinian Council to the Knesset brilliantly pointed the way to the kinds of symbolic acts of reconciliation that should be at the center of Barak's current activities, but which are not.

What most concerns the peace activists, however, is the possibility that a weakened and dispirited Palestinian people will accept a humiliating agreement that gives them far less than Oslo promised. Such an agreement would surely guarantee that the conflict will reignite in the future, no matter how many celebrations there are lauding whatever agreement Barak succeeds in forcing down the mouth of Arafat.



PHOTOGRAPH BY OMER RASHEDI / AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

I agree with the peace activists that there is only one formula for lasting peace: give the Palestinian people the economic viability and territorial coherence sufficient to make their state a reality, and do it in a way that embodies a spirit of respect and reconciliation, including acknowledgment of the sufferings of Palestinian refugees living in camps for many decades. Use the model of South Africa, including its commission on truth and reconciliation, and not the model of the post-World War I Versailles Treaty. Let the highest values of Judaism overcome the nit-picking and mean-spirited approach of the conqueror doling out minor concessions. Short of that fundamental change in spirit, no peace agreement with the Palestinians will be worth the paper it's written on.

But I disagree with the Israeli peace activists' impatience. The Israeli populace voted for peace—and we need to celebrate that, and not focus on Barak's initial stumblings. He deserves more of a chance and more time to see that he can't get away with some "quick deal" that gives Palestinians less than any rational person would settle for under the circumstances.

It took Rabin two years of false steps before he finally transcended his rigid thinking and "got" that real peace could only be achieved through a whole new spirit of reconciliation and thinking about the legitimate needs of the other side and not just about what your own side wants. This could happen to Barak as well (but it could never have happened to Netanyahu). In the meantime, our task is not to be a cheerleader for Barak but to gently yet firmly encourage him to live up to the highest hopes of those who dared to hope for an Israeli society appropriate to the high ideals of the Jewish people. For examples of such encouragement, see our "Memos to Barak" in the following pages. ❑

Memos to Barak

Preface

We asked a variety of Israelis and American Jews to send memos to Barak. We received wonderful submissions, but space constraints have precluded us from printing many of them (they will appear on our website and be available to those who have signed up to our listserv). It's not too late to enroll in our listserv: just email us at tikkun-request@lists.best.com and type only "subscribe [your email address]" in the body of the text (for example: subscribe MaryDoe@net.com).

—TIKKUN *Editors*

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MEMO TO BARAK

Oren Yiftachel

Professor of geography at Ben Gurion University

Mr. Prime Minister:

Following your convincing and deserved victory, one of your urgent tasks, beyond the obvious need to move towards peace with the Palestinians, is to begin the creation of a new entity—an Israeli people.

Such a move would be very fitting for the name you chose for your Knesset list—"One Israel." But this is no simple task. It will require a conceptual shift, from Jewishness to *Israeliness* as the core of the country's national identity. To become a genuine democracy, the identity of the Israeli state must become Israeli.

Democracy requires equal citizenship; that is, equality vis-à-vis the law of the land.

For its first fifty years, Israel has been an ethnocracy—a political system by, and for, one ethnic group at the expense of others. In Israel's early years, this was perhaps understandable, given the legacy of past persecutions and the right of Jewish refugees to a safe haven. But in later years, the foundations of this ethnocratic regime have been extended far beyond the need to accommodate Jewish refugees to the detriment of genuine democracy.

Ethnocratic regimes aim to expand the control of the dominant group over the state and its resources. They also typically empower their own ethnic diasporas, at the expense of local minorities. Here in Israel, the policy of judaization has been the cornerstone of most Israeli governments, with the result that Jews around the world have been given more rights than local Arab citizens, especially in key areas such as immigration, citizenship, land ownership, settlement, and development.

The fact that Israel is an ethnocracy was clearly reflected in one of the most significant decisions made by the Israeli High Court of Justice in 1988. The then-president of the court, Meir Shamgar, claimed that "Israel's definition as the state of the Jewish people does not negate its democratic character, in the same way that the Frenchness of France does not negate its democratic character." But, of course, this statement harbors a conceptual distortion: if France is French, Israel should be Israeli (and not Jewish)."

Democracy requires equal citizenship; that is, equality vis-à-vis the law of the land. And it requires that the people who are governed by the law—the permanent residents of the country (and only they!)—be sovereign to change this law through political action. Genuine democratization would thus require a redefintion of the political and institutional (though not cultural or religious) role of Jewish diasporas within the Israeli polity. This should entail, for example, the withdrawal of powers now granted to the JNF and the Jewish Agency inside Israel and the cancellation of the Law of Return, except for Jews in danger or distress.

The prevalence of Jewishness over Israeliness has also resulted in the disproportional power of Orthodox Jewish groups. These groups gain legitimacy, power, and resources precisely through their explicitly Jewish agendas, and through their activity to further judaize the state, geographically and religiously. However, their political agenda is often undemocratic, as they aspire to expand religious law and limit the freedom of Israeli citizens in the conduct of their religious, personal, and leisure activities.

This is where the transformation of the state from Jewish to Israeli becomes crucial. Doing so would help democratize the state from both directions by moving its Arab citizens towards equality, and by reducing the non-democratic power of rabbis and Orthodox parties to dictate people's lifestyles.

Dear Prime Minister, your sweeping victory as the head of "One Israel" gives us a golden opportunity to begin the process of genuine democratization.

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MEMO TO BARAK

Ian Lustick

Professor and chair of the department of political science at the University of Pennsylvania and author of Unsettled States, Disputed Lands

Mr. Prime Minister:

As chief of staff you always prided yourself on seeing realities for what they were, not for what we might have wanted them to be. Facing those realities, you demonstrated an uncanny knack for smart solutions to intricate problems.

Among the intricate problems you now face is the question of Jerusalem. It is a tricky problem, but it is not unique, and can be broken down into its component parts if you remove the kind of taboos and illusory thinking you have always rejected.

The key reality about Jerusalem is that the Israeli municipality, as demarcated by the expanded municipal boundaries drawn by Israeli bureaucrats in June 1967, is neither Jewish nor Jerusalem. As it was Rabin's task to teach the nation that the Palestinians could be Israel's partners for peace and that the Golan Heights are not a necessarily inseparable part of Israel, so you must teach the nation that much of what it has been led to believe about *Yerushalayim hashlema,* united Jerusalem, is not only wrong but destructive.

Your first challenge is not to solve the problem, but to free Israeli minds from the imprisoning catechism about a "united Jerusalem, one and indivisible, Israel's eternal sovereign capital," etc. You must find a way to enrich Israeli political discourse on the future of the city, in part by being clear about the differences between what Ben-Gurion used to call *Yerushalayim haIvrit* (Hebrew or Jewish Jerusalem) and *el-Kuds* (the Holy, the Arabic and Arab name of the city).

Here are six of the realities that you must help the people appreciate:

1. In June 1967, expanded city boundaries were drawn for Yerushalayim that included the one square kilometer of the Old City, another seven square kilometers of the Jordanian municipality of el-Kuds, plus another sixty-five square kilometers of the West Bank. This large and crucial chunk of the West Bank, stretching from Bethlehem to Ramallah, had no Jews living in it and had never been part of any entity known to Jews as Yerushalayim.

2. Desiring to avoid an overt clash with international law and opinion, and not wanting to make all of its Arab inhabitants Israeli citizens, Israel has carefully avoided annexing this expanded area of the new municipality or formally declaring sovereignty. Neither annexation nor sovereignty figured in the administrative measures in 1967 or under the 1980 Basic Law: Jerusalem. Hence, unlike the recent formal cabinet decision to cede sovereign territory to Jordan, the interior minister is empowered to reduce the size of Jerusalem's border by a simple stroke of his pen.

3. Far from united, Jerusalem, as defined in its current municipal boundaries, is the most segregated and divided city in the world—even more so than Belfast.

4. Although it now includes large new Jewish neighborhoods that have become part of Jewish Jerusalem, most of the West Bank area added to Yerushalayim in 1967 is still foreign to Jews—neighborhoods such as Sheikh Jarrah, Wadi Juz, Beit Hanina, American Colony, and Silwan; the Shuafat refugee camp; and villages such as Jebel Mukaber, Um Tubba, and Issawiya.

5. Extensive polls sponsored by the Ford Foundation and conducted by the Guttman Institute for Applied Social Reseach in Jerusalem have shown that few Israeli Jews ever go to these areas or even know where they are. When Israeli Jews are asked about what they would be willing to do for peace and to reduce the number of Arabs in Israel's capital, majorities or near majorities actually favor ceding Arab-inhabited portions of expanded east Jerusalem.

6. Projects such as Har Homa, Ras El-Amud, E-3, the Eastern Gate, and Arens' expansion of Maale Adumim's borders to the Jerusalem municipal border are not manifestations of the Jewish people's love and attachment to Yerushalayim. They are savvy and ruthless measures by opponents of peace to stop the process—activists who know they have lost the argument over Nablus, Ramallah, and

ILLUSTRATIONS BY RICHARD ROSS

Gaza, but who calculate that if they can prevent a sensible solution to the problem of el-Kuds, that won't matter. Indeed, they are right, because if Israel tries to incorporate el-Kuds into itself, no Palestinian state, and no lasting peace, will be possible. The bottom line is that el-Kuds does remain, and must be preserved. These neighborhoods and villages are connected to a Palestinian governmental center in Abu Dis and have access to the Old City and the Bab-el-Sahra Arab commercial district. They must and will be the vital political and metropolitan center of the Palestinian state.

The National Religious Party will object if you speak the truth about Jerusalem. But you know you do not need that party to sustain your majority, and even the NRP knows that the situation in Jerusalem is untenable. During the Intifada its newspaper, *Hatzofeh,* advocated building physical barriers between Jewish and Arab Jerusalem for security purposes.

Only if leaders lead will the public be willing to speak and think in the categories they already feel and know to be true about Jerusalem. Israel can have united Jewish Jerusalem as its eternal capital, but it cannot have el-Kuds within it, and have peace.

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MEMO TO BARAK

Letty Cottin Pogrebin

President of the Authors Guild,
past president of Americans for Peace Now,
and a founding editor of Ms. *magazine*

Mr. Prime Minister:

Here are seven simple suggestions to enhance women's status in the State of Israel:

1. Make sure there is at least one woman on every Israeli peace negotiating team. As you reactivate the Palestinian track and open talks with Syria and Lebanon, don't let it be business as usual. Breathe some fresh air into those smoke-filled, all-male enclaves. Bring in women schooled in conflict resolution, women who are sophisticated political thinkers, women who are veterans of Jewish-Palestinian or Jewish-Arab dialogue, women whose perspective cannot help but be informed by their experience holding down the home front in Israel's past wars. If women have to live with the results of each peace agreement, they ought to have some say in formulating it.

2. Make good on your promises for fair representation—for women's sake but also for the nation's. You promised to appoint three women ministers but gave us only two—Dalia Itzak, minister of the environment, a relatively minor (though vitally important) post compared to finance, foreign affairs, defense, etc., and Yuli Tamir, minister of immigrant absorption. Tamir, a former Peace Now leader, was named only after your first choice, Maj. Gen. Yossi Peled, declined the offer. You named Marina Solodkin (Yisrael B'aliyah) as Tamir's deputy, which is fine, though it suggests you think only a woman can take orders from a woman. But even these appointments comprise a paltry number in a projected government of thirty-two ministers and deputies. Why not consider something meaningful for Yael Dayan (One Israel), Naomi Chazan (Meretz) and Anat Maor (Meretz)? And don't tell me these women aren't qualified. If qualifications mattered Israel would never have had a communications minister who didn't own a television, a justice minister who is not a lawyer, or a foreign minister who doesn't speak English.

If women have to live with the results of each peace agreement, they ought to have some say in formulating it.

3. Commit to a fifty-fifty gender distribution in all future appointments. From now on, name one woman for every man appointed to top positions. Israel ranks 170th in the world on female representation in government. The only way to normalize women's participation in public life is to create a critical mass of them in all branches of government so that one woman does not have to represent all women, so that a woman official can act on behalf of women's concerns and know that she has sister officials to rally to the cause and can thus withstand attempts to marginalize her or accusations that she is acting on behalf of a "special interest."

4. Use the bully pulpit to change attitudes. Never underestimate the power of your words and example, especially in the early months of your tenure. Take every opportunity to talk about women's equality. As you name each woman minister or deputy minister to your cabinet, educate the public about women's status. Proclaim your intention to revolutionize the role of women in Israeli society. Reclaim the early Labor-Zionist ideal of women and men building the state together. Remind people of specific women's contributions to Israel's history. Rekindle the romance of equality. Whenever possible, shine the spotlight on an outstanding female officer in the army or air force. Send a signal that you take women's organizations seriously by making an appearance at their major events. Show some Clintonian empathy for women's double burden in the workplace and the domestic sphere. Speak personally about your willingness to share household roles. By doing so—or by pledging to do more at home, or by saying you wish you'd taken on more family tasks when your children were growing up—you would single-handedly transform the image of normative Israeli masculinity to include the heroism of home duty. Putting the imprimatur of a much-decorated ex-army general on shared housework and parenting would help wives involve their husbands in domestic chores and might inspire fathers to expand their involvement in their children's lives.

(continued on page 54)

LEGAL ETHICS

Restoring Justice

David Lerman



The criminal justice system has the wrong focus. Its major interest lies in putting behind bars someone convicted of a particular crime. People believe that incarceration adds to public safety, but our current system does not adequately deal with a major consequence of crime: the destruction of trust between people that crime tends to produce. Crime leads to a generalized fear that we are going to be hurt or "ripped off" and that we have to protect ourselves against "the other," whoever that might turn out to be. The deeper we go into that fear, the more we see ourselves as an isolated "I," vulnerable to assault from every possible direction. We lose the capacity to see ourselves as part of a "we," because we suspect that trusting in others is naïve. This feeling contributes to the weakening of the bonds which weave a community together and leads to a vicious circle of spiraling crime, because, without strong communities, there is less of the informal social control which is the strongest and healthiest way to prevent crime.

The ripple effects of the social isolation caused by crime are numerous. People lose the capacity to resolve disputes on their own. The more we abandon our capacity to see ourselves as part of a "we," the less we participate in social movements composed of people who are willing to work together and trust each other. Thus, decision making in our society is left to the elites, with less and less input from average or disenfranchised community members. In this sense, crime is not just an offense against an individual, it is an offense against the whole social fabric. And the current criminal justice focus on incarceration does little to repair that.

This is one reason why progressives ought to be involved in a new movement called Restorative Justice that aims to change the direction of criminal law by refocusing it on the needs of victims and on repairing communities rather than simply jailing individuals. Where current criminal law focuses on determining which law was broken, by whom it was broken, and how to punish that person, Restorative Justice asks: who has been harmed; how they have been harmed; and how the offender, community, and criminal justice system can help repair the harm. This focus helps the major stakeholders in the event—the victim, offender, and community—focus on moving forward, using the event as a sort of "fuel" from which to re-engage and empower victims and community members towards building stronger connections. Restorative Justice is not any particular program, but a framework for viewing crime and its aftermath.

Here's an example: in Minneapolis, the Central City Neighborhood Partnership (CCNP) has begun using a panel of neighborhood residents to meet with offenders charged with soliciting prostitutes. During these sessions, the "john" learns of the effects of prostitution on the neighborhood. A sentence which takes into account the offender's background and skills is developed between the offender and the panel. Usually, some community service, a fine, and an education component are included in the plan, which usually permits the criminal case to be dismissed if the offender successfully complies with the plan.

In one case, the offender agreed to work with local residents to prepare the community garden for winter, to use his sewing skills to mend clothing for a local group home, to write an apology letter, and to contribute to an organization which helps women escape prostitution. The conference participants—including the offender, his three nephews, and four people who live or work in the neighborhood—all felt they gained from the experience, and that the outcome was preferable to the standard court process. In another conference, conducted in both English and Somali, the offender and community members worked out arrangements for educating the Somali community about the laws concerning prostitution and its associated dangers.

David Lerman has been a Milwaukee County Assistant District Attorney for eleven years. His views do not necessarily represent those of the Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office. He is a member of the Politics of Meaning Legal Task Force.

ILLUSTRATION BY JIM FLYNN

The young man who was arrested for soliciting agreed to translate and distribute an educational flier for the Somali community. He will also help the neighborhood organization conduct general outreach activity within the Somali community.

A core principle of Restorative Justice requires that you care about the needs of crime victims. But that's not been the focus of most progressive law practice. Rightly critical of the distribution of wealth and power in this society but unable to build a democratic movement to change that, progressives have tended to direct their anger at the larger system into aggressive action on behalf of specific defendants who come from the sectors of society most disadvantaged by the system. This has often been valuable work, providing people with representation that they might not have otherwise obtained, and sometimes saving innocent people from prison. But often it has a different impact: keeping perpetrators out of prison or getting them light sentences without in the slightest bit changing their consciousness, and totally ignoring the legitimate anger of people who have been robbed or assaulted. No wonder, then, that liberals and progressives are seen as caring more about the criminals than about "the rest of us," and that over time this perception has led people to move toward right-wing politics and more repressive legislation against offenders and to a decreasing openness on the part of many to social justice politics.

The fact is that about 90 percent of criminal cases in the United States result in a conviction. Yet, in the traditional system, the offender has little incentive to fully acknowledge responsibility. A cat and mouse game ensues between the powers of the state and the offender's attorney. In the interim, the victim is left stewing in the pain of the crime.

Perhaps because its focus on offenders has clearly become so lopsided, the traditional system has slowly been becoming more attuned to the needs of crime victims. For example, many prosecutors' offices now include a victim/witness unit to keep victims informed, and to assist with victims' needs, whereas just twenty-five years ago this was an anomaly. Some are also moving toward a Restorative Justice practice called Victim-Offender Conferencing (VOC). VOC allows a victim and an offender to meet in a safe setting to actively explore the impact and effect of the crime on their lives. While the conference/dialogue has a flavor of mediation—it is run by a trained facilitator—there is a difference: there is not an "even playing field." Rather, there is an understanding that one party has been wronged, and that the other is there to accept responsibility. The meetings allow the victims to ask questions which studies show they often wish to ask, but cannot in the traditional system. Thus, victims—if they choose to participate—can confront an offender with: "Why me? How did you get in?" Offenders learn the human consequences of their actions first hand, rather than through the statements of judges or prosecutors. Community members might be present to convey the moral outrage of the community most affected by the act. The victim and offender are often allowed to bring supporters with them, to assist them in expressing themselves or to convey a point about the effects of the act. Yet, the victim never is forced to participate.

During a VOC it is common for the offender to apologize directly to the victim. Sometimes a victim will end up forgiving the offender for committing the act, although this should never be expected of a victim. Generally, an agreement is reached as to how the offender can repair the harm done, and usually includes a plan for the offender to gain further competencies which will lessen the likelihood of recidivism. K.T.'s case is a good example:

K.T. is an eighteen-year-old high school graduate awaiting entry to a local college where she received an academic scholarship. She is working as a cashier at a large grocery store for the summer. Her older brother is in prison, her mother has a cocaine habit, her younger siblings at home sometimes suffer because their mother disappears for days. During one of these disappearances, K.T. was fed up and, tempted by the cash at her fingertips, manipulated the "no sale" key in a manner she thought would hide her thievery. But Barry, of loss prevention, observed K.T. pocketing $250 on her third time stealing money. K.T. was arrested and confessed to prior incidents of theft totalling $1,000.

K.T. was charged with misdemeanor theft, although the amount stolen could have brought a felony charge. In Milwaukee a conviction for this offense would have probably landed her a term of probation, with an order to pay restitution, and perhaps a jail term of ten to twenty days. Instead, K.T.'s case became one of the test cases for Community Conferencing in Milwaukee, after representatives of the grocery chain agreed to participate. Before a conviction was obtained, the community conference was held, which included K.T., two representatives from the store, K.T.'s attorney, two community members involved with the local Task Force on Restorative Justice, and two facilitators.

The facilitated dialogue lasted about an hour, and went through three stages: first, K.T. and the store representatives retold the facts of what happened. Interspersed with the facts was each party's telling of the impact of the crime on them. Finally, the parties discussed how to repair the harm caused by the act.

After the facilitator set forth certain guidelines, K.T. spoke first, expressing her remorse and embarrassment through tears. Eventually, the store representatives suggested that K.T. could help them by speaking at new employee orientation sessions about the process of getting caught. She also had to make restitution. Because of her lack of prior record, the prosecutor agreed to dismiss the case if she successfully complied with the agreement reached at the conference.

This is a great example of Restorative Justice at work.

VOC can occur at any point in the criminal justice process. Thus, a conference can be held after a plea, but before sentencing; before a plea, with contemplation of a dismissal or reduced charges upon successful completion of the agreed-upon plan; or several years after a criminal act, while the offender is imprisoned. Initial studies reveal that victims are greatly satisfied with this process.

In March, 1994, the members of Temple B'nai Jeshurun of Des Moines, Iowa awoke to find neo-Nazi graffiti and swastikas scrawled on their synagogue. Des Moines rallied around the Jewish community. Zealous investigation led to the arrest of the perpetrators: a nineteen-year-old male disciple of the Aryan Nation and his seventeen-year-old girlfriend. Neither had a prior record. They were charged with felonies for their hate crime. However, prior to trial, a Polk county Deputy District Attorney approached the Temple's Rabbi with a suggestion: would the Temple members be interested in meeting with the two perpetrators to explain to them the damage done by their act of hate and possibly to play a role in determining how the perpetrators should be held responsible for their acts? The Temple leadership agreed.

A core principle of Restorative Justice requires that you care about the needs of crime victims.

The defendants pled guilty, and sentencing was put off to accommodate the proposed meeting. A four-hour facilitated session—part of Des Moines' Victim Offender Reconciliation Program (akin to VOC)—was held, during which Temple members, including two Holocaust survivors and a former Israeli military officer, met with the offenders. It soon became clear that the two—boyfriend and girlfriend—were classic "wannabes." The boy came from a broken home, was the proverbial ninety-eight-pound weakling, and had a hearing disability. When he was sixteen, the boy ran away from home and was taken in by the Aryan Nation. He later returned to Des Moines where he hoped to become the leader of disparate groups of neo-Nazis in the area. The desecration of the Temple was his first public action against "the enemy." The young woman was extremely unsure of herself. They had been inculcated into neo-Nazi thought as just "something to do," without really understanding what it meant.

During the facilitated session several synagogue members expressed the opinion that the "book be thrown" at the offenders. Others argued that simply putting these individuals in jail would only create victims of a different sort, and these offenders would become true hard-core neo-Nazis. After much discussion, the synagogue members and the defendants agreed upon the following sentence: 100 hours of service to the synagogue under the supervision of the Temple's custodian, 100 hours of study of Judaism and Jewish history with the Rabbi, a referral to a hearing specialist for the young man, a requirement that the young man remove the Nazi tattoos on his arms, and psychological assessment of both the offenders as well as fulfillment of the requirements for a GED. After successful completion, the charges against them would be reduced to misdemeanors. Because the two offenders did in fact complete their planned activities, the charges were subsequently dismissed.

Using the criminal act as a catalyst on which to build, this VOC helped build relationships between alienated individuals and the wider community. By showcasing the human feelings of compassion, caring, and understanding, as opposed to vindictiveness, this VOC allowed the offenders to truly "learn a lesson," as opposed to being warehoused in a prison.

Storytelling is a powerful theme that runs throughout Restorative Justice principles and practices. Restorative Justice practices focus on allowing victims and offenders to tell the stories of what really happened and the impact of criminal wrongdoing. By focusing on harm, harm reduction, and accountability, as opposed to simply finding guilt followed by punishment, Restorative Justice opens the door for understanding the human consequences of crimes, and thus, for building human relationships. This is naturally empowering. An empowered victim feels less fear, transforming the cycle of fear into an opportunity for hope. The community does not lose an individual to isolation and alienation. Offenders too are empowered by the realization that they are not being treated as throw-away people.

Restorative Justice may be the first step in a larger rethinking of what the law should look like that is being energized by several groups of lawyers, including the Politics of Meaning Legal Task Force. The Legal Task Force recognizes that the focus of the current adversarial process on individual rights at the expense of the other disputant generally renders moral and spiritual dimensions of human existence as irrelevant. The current system forces litigants and attorneys to avoid opportunities for healing human relationships which become distorted because of conflict.

Restorative Justice is also being embraced by the religious right, precisely because of this focus on the personal accountability of the offender and the potential for spiritual awakening through repentance and forgiveness. While there is a danger in this development that the Restorative Justice movement needs to be wary of, progressives need to realize that Restorative Justice practices will allow stakeholders in the criminal justice system—victims, offenders, communities, and justice professionals—to move towards regaining their vitality and rediscovering their humanity. Restorative Justice brings the law back to its primary purpose of creating and ensuring the continuation of a community. It makes possible once again the human connection that makes a "we" out of each individual "I" and "they." ❑

TORAH OF MONEY

Debt Relief and the Jubilee

Lawrence Bush and Jeffrey Dekro

"Proclaim liberty thro' all the Land to all the Inhabitants thereof." These words of the Jubilee from Leviticus are inscribed on the Liberty Bell, which tolled in Philadelphia to announce the first public reading of the Declaration of Independence on July 8, 1776. The biblical concept of Jubilee (from the Hebrew *yovel,* "ram's horn") has probably had no more enduring tribute in American history—until now.

Now there is Jubilee 2000, an international campaign (202-783-3566; www.j2000usa.org) to win debt forgiveness for the forty to fifty most heavily indebted poor nations in the world. Collectively, the 700 million people in these countries owe more than $200 billion to wealthy nations, banks, and international lending agencies—a burden that impedes social investment and produces wholesale misery. "Relieved of their annual debt repayments," stated the United Nations Development Program in 1997, "Africa alone would save the lives of about 21 million children by 2000 and provide 90 million girls and women with access to basic education."

Jubilee 2000 has been endorsed by Pope John Paul II, Rev. Jesse Jackson, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, AFL-CIO president John Sweeney, and over 12 million petition signatories (in Peru alone, 2 million, or 15 percent of the population, have signed). Only two Jewish groups, however—the American Jewish World Service and MAZON—are among the official endorsers. Why so, when the campaign's inspiration comes from Torah? Leviticus 25 envisions a fifty-year Jubilee cycle of restored economic balance: slaves freed, debts canceled, land reverting to original ownership. Social balance without social upheaval—it's a classically Jewish vision, as the Torah of Money consistently counsels us to create abundance and justice by combining market-driven economics with a degree of wealth redistribution.

One obvious deterrent to wider Jewish participation is the Christian spirit of Jubilee 2000, initiated in 1997 by church groups with missionary histories that are now deeply involved in international economic development. Their view of the millennium as a globally auspicious time, and their invocation of Christian scripture, make it easy for Jewish groups to "pass" on sponsorship.

Lawrence Bush and Jeffrey Dekro are the authors of Jews, Money and Social Responsibility. *They can be reached at Shefafnd@libertynet.org.*

Behind this reticence, however, we suspect there is a fear—a fear of classical anti-Semitism of the Elders of the Protocols of Zion variety, which holds Jewish financiers responsible for worldwide suffering. With Jews currently very visible among Western "statesmen-financiers" (e.g., Robert Rubin, Alan Greenspan, George Soros), anti-Semites have already found easy targets during financial crises in Mexico, Russia, Indonesia, and elsewhere. Jewish organizations will protest such outbursts, but historically tend to maintain a low profile in campaigns that highlight the financial "big picture."

In June, the "big picture" changed somewhat, when the Group of Seven industrialized nations announced a plan that could result in a $70 billion debt reduction. At this writing, the G7 plan has received some applause and is also being sharply criticized, with Juergen Kaiser, coordinator of Jubilee 2000 in Germany, noting that "the poorest countries will still pay more than three times as much as Germany had to pay [in war reparations] after its debt relief in 1953."

Moreover, the impact of persistent, overwhelming debt is not limited to the underdeveloped world. Jubilee 2000's web page details how international debt has 1) produced global environmental destruction, as debtor countries heedlessly seek export revenues; 2) lowered wages and labor standards, prompting U.S. companies to relocate overseas; 3) stifled consumer markets, which "hurts U.S. farmers, workers and businesses"; and 4) incited "civil war and even genocidal campaigns," resulting in "costly humanitarian interventions."

Promiscuous international lending already played a major role in the American savings and loan crisis, with all its recessionary fallout: massive layoffs, corporate "downsizing," social-spending cutbacks, and a consolidated banking industry. In fact, U.S. consumers are now in thrall to the same kind of supply-driven lending that trapped poor nations in debt over the past twenty years. Inadequate household income and indiscriminate credit card promotion have produced a domestic credit card debt of more than $500 billion, while personal bankruptcy has increased 650 percent (to 1.33 million) in two decades. According to the *New York Times,* the number of payday lending companies, offering short-term loans at grossly exorbitant interest rates, has increased from 300 seven years ago to nearly 8,000 today. (The *Times* neglected to report that many of these parasitic companies are owned by major corporations.)

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POLITICS

Selling the People's Voice



Thomas Fitzgerald

Never have public opinion polls been used to greater political effect than those of the past year which asked the same question over and again, "In general, do you approve or disapprove of the way President Clinton is handling his job as president?" A second question asked if respondents thought "the country is headed in the right direction," or in its version by *Time*/CNN polls, "How well do you think things are going in the country these days?" Because large percentages of selected citizens who replied to these beguiling questions indicated "approve" rather than "disapprove," survey firms have claimed their polls demonstrate the nation's hearty affection for Bill Clinton.

Journalists and media commentators have noticed the puzzling contradiction between that reported approval and the President's repugnant behavior in office, also known to poll respondents. One might ask if media types also wonder about the content—the meaning conveyed—by these and similar polling questions that offer a capacious portmanteau into which almost any construal, however banal, can find a place. Indeed, what can be meant by "the job" of this or any president in an enormously complex political economy, and do those polled know what "handling" that so-called job actually involves? Do a majority of respondents really agree about what might be "the right direction" for the country?

But any serious criticism of the polling industry must go well beyond questions like these. Because its management can shrug them off as quibbling by uninformed outsiders, such questions will hardly deflect the polling industry from its colonizing of American political life. Its critics must reckon, too, with the industry's many friends in high places. After all, opinion polling is welcomed by government agencies, economic forecasters, lobbyists, major party leaders, and much of the daily press. It provides an ostensible People's Voice: we are letting them have their say. Polls help to smooth over populist dissent by locating unseen lodes of agreement, and the appearance of country-wide solidarity on almost any issue, no matter how difficult: physician-assisted suicide, government subsidies for artists, late-term abortion, urban land sprawl, bisexuals in the ministry, prayer in the schools, whatever.

For each of these or other issues, neat charts with confident conclusions will be paraded across TV screens and newsmag pages. They are made possible by an extensive information apparatus, built on false cognitive assumptions and shabby work, with baneful consequences for culture and politics. What follows here calls attention to three major problem areas: the methods and practices used to acquire replies from respondents; sampling techniques for selecting them and biases built into those procedures; and the reigning modernist epistemology, as described by philosopher Charles Taylor, and how his analysis can illuminate fundamental errors in polling surveys.

Although polling consultants always defend results of polls as scientifically validated, their methods require no advanced theoretical science or virtuoso mathematical skills. Techniques of random sampling, upon which the whole edifice stands, are essentially routine. After a sample base of respondents is identified by one or more demographic markers, the rest mostly involves counting the hands raised or heads nodding. Telephone interviewers in a distant city, seated before computer screens in rows of sterile carrels—

ILLUSTRATIONS BY DAVID BALL

Thomas Fitzgerald has worked in organizational research and planning and has contributed critical essays to a number of journals, most recently First Things *and* High Plains Applied Anthropologist. *Copyright © 1999 by Thomas Fitzgerald.*



hardly conducive to conversation among peers in civil society—are directed not to explore individual responses in any depth, or to dispute replies. Fixed response categories are much preferred for the questions so as to avoid additional work and imprecise codifying of ordinary talk. No use for a respondent to urge, "Hear me out!" or to worry about the possible adverse consequences of an otherwise beneficial proposal, or about a proposal's possible impact on other issues. No need either to be troubled about not having given enough thought to this or that problem. Everything can be crowded into a few offered categories ("strongly agree," "partially disagree," etc.). A hesitant "yes," a reluctant "no," an answer indifferently given just to get rid of the caller—each is equally additive, thrown in with replies based on carefully considered, informed judgments. Reflection and nuance are simply shut out.

Because polling management knows these limitations, they have employed focus groups, where recruited informants meet in a structured setting, to supplement the limited data available from phone surveys. Not long ago, I asked an old friend who does marketing research whether the focus groups he has observed have worked out as expected. No, he said, the results are often disappointing, and some consultants are beginning to question if whatever is learned is worth the effort. Given that self-conscious and deferential members are mixed in with bumptious or distracting folks to discuss a subject chosen by others, observers in the darkened booth need the fine ear and insight of a good novelist to penetrate flat, sometimes irrelevant, hesitant, and vernacular speech. My friend went on to say he felt uncomfortable about the contrast between the consultants and their invited subjects: those watching from behind the one-way glass are articulate, educated, and often smugly ironic sorts who thrive among others like themselves; while on the other side are people for whom everyday talk may not always be intended to convey rational information so much as to sustain a setting and confirm shared presence within it.

The truth is that polls grant credibility to remote others who construct and ask simplistic questions of ordinary citizens, but who cannot be questioned in turn. Contrast that with the way opinions of the elite are handled: when credentialed inviduals appear on televised panels to "discuss the issues," they are afforded time in advance to review sources, gather notes, and prepare well-considered opening statements. In their collegial exchanges with their peers, they are not restricted to the phrasing of a discussion leader's question, but are permitted to explore evaluative terms in a widening gyre. Ordinary people understand such inherent connections as well, but where is the milieu for them to interrogate a questionnaire?

Although the corporations which seek, collect, and interpret survey data will primly assert their political neutrality, their practices are hardly non-partisan or innocent. As philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre has pointed out, the act of surveying public opinion is important to liberalism because it confirms the thesis that moral issues come down to mere opinion. When, for example, the first successful experimental cloning of animals was announced, national media commissioned polls to ask (some) people whether cloning of human beings should also be attempted. The collected numerical results were soon reported as expressing majority agreement with that possibility, as if a majority of people were already saying, "Sure, why not?" Commentary by cheerful journalists suggested: "That question's all settled!" and concluded that the public has continuing confidence in the march of medical technology. By leaving out reference to possible consequences when constructing surveys about genetic, reproductive, or other interventions into human life, pollsters do a serious disservice, making citizens look shallow and insensitive, and occluding moral and ethical issues which then cannot appear in the responses. Or perhaps that is not so surprising, considering that the secular cosmopolitans who dominate the communication trades tend to view issues of morality as contaminated by religion, trying to impose its reactionary doctrines upon individual freedom.

Given pollsters' methods, it is remarkable how few, in or out of public office, whether speaking for the Left or the Right, will challenge opinion surveying practices or their influence on legislative proceedings. It is disappointing, too, that intellectuals and academics otherwise protective of their own individuality and self-determination remain uncritical of assumptions built into survey practices that permit 500 or 1,000 unconnected strangers scattered about the country, and who share no public space for discussion, to decide complicated, intertwined issues for all the rest of us.

Sampling techniques arose from sociology's preoccupation with locating empirically-valid means of encompassing the views of large populations. Such techniques already had been shown to be efficient in biological research, as well as in manufacturing armaments, where a small number of items randomly selected could stand for much larger batches, within a definable accuracy of statistical probability. They came into general approval after the famously failed prediction from a mail-in poll conducted among the conservative subscribers of a well-known magazine that President Franklin Roosevelt would not be re-elected in 1936. The built-in bias of the self-selected respondents was belatedly obvious and could be applied to other then-used practices, such as asking questions of people on a downtown street, or by going door to door in a suburb.

By conceptualizing opinion as residing in anonymous units of a population distributed across a landscape of census tracts, and by severing those anonymous units from any possible self-selecting bias (e.g., people passing on a street or living in a suburb), personal solicitation could be replaced by a mathematically random selection from name

or location lists. With this method, the size of the sample is not what makes the study reliable; that depends instead on how fully randomized are the selections. Counterintuitively then, comparatively small numbers of people polled can be taken as projections of much larger populations. (Later, various adjustments for interpretive analysis were devised by stratifying or clustering populations.)

Statistical sampling methods represented a cognitive leap, yet despite their efficiency, they introduced continuing distortion. First, merely eliminating possible predisposition or bias based on attributes (party affiliation, age cohort, etc.) and pre-empting connection between respondents, does not make those selected "representative." Put differently, because a sample carefully avoids selecting interviewees on the basis of any personal characteristics or behavior, it does not correspondingly imply typicality. Randomizing does not equate with representativeness. Avoiding any partiality in selecting respondents does not imply that those who are picked to answer may speak for all the rest of us, nor does it assure their views are in fact close to those of the many who were not selected and not asked.

Randomizing does not equate with representativeness.

Polling consultants, of course, always have claimed polls are representative, and in the past half century, that dictum has become so taken for granted among the public and elites, that seeing through it requires something like a gestalt shift. A linguistic illusion is involved here. We have come to think of a sample as in itself a comprehensive mixture, like a "sampler" package of edible goods sold in a shop. But unlike goods, there are unspecified dimensions in which people may differ, beyond arbitrary demographic markers. Their personal traits, expectations based on experience, interests and purposes, biological heritage, cultural background, and much more, are mingled in endless combinations to form each particular individual, and become constitutive of who they consider themselves to be. Sociologists have been wrong to assume that persons could be extracted from the dense settings in which they live in the same way a small sample of bolts can be picked out by a randomizing formula and inspected for compliance or variance with engineering design standards. Although all the bolts will be made of homogenous material (steel), persons differ significantly along many "dimensions." And while people's voting intentions are fairly straightforward and soon confirmed up or down, win or lose, that relative reliability cannot be generalized to other kinds of "opinion" on complex, many-sided issues. Indeed, it is difficult to say what "representative" means in regard to persons, or to show the extent of the presumptive standing-for of a "representative" respondent, especially if he or she has no connection to the supposedly represented. Instead of "sample," therefore, a less misleading term would be "assemblage," or, better still, "assortment."

Finally, selecting isolated individuals to speak apart from their fellows can also produce distortions similar to the "one person, one vote" principle for electing legislative office holders. How so? In our "one person, one vote" system, a well-established majority can always win against a minority never large enough to elect a candidate of their own, leading to a minority's permanent disenfranchisement and, in turn, feeding a hostile environment of winners vs. excluded losers. Similarly, questions in polls tend to split issues into conventional partisan oppositions and to funnel all diversity into either-or choices, while quite different understandings of the problem are filtered out and remain unheard. Examples of excluded middles are common—and discouraging. Under the headline, "Poll: U.S. Should Be Peacekeeper," a recent newspaper report from the Associated Press went on to identify the source of this supposed conviction: "The Gallup Poll said 54 percent favored committing U.S. troops to the peacekeeping force, while 40 percent opposed it." What of all our other possibilities for that most complex situation in the Balkans? Joining these excluded ideas are excluded groups. Cultural and ethnic minorities, especially those located in neighborhoods and enclaves (Amish, Hmongs, Orthodox Jews, Haitians, Iroquois, Catholic nuns, Lebanese, and so forth) may not be of sufficient numerical size to turn up in the survey sample, hence they cannot "vote" in a poll to represent their community of value and tradition. Even if one of them does get selected, his or her off-scale responses may not fit those of the question constructors; such artificially solitary voices will be neutralized within the statistical computations.

As the methods and vocabulary of science are deployed from the academy and laboratory to colonize the lifeworld, they become accepted as the correct means for describing and defining official reality … eventually to be taken up by the courts, the schools, and public administration, to be folded in turn into legislation and legal precedent. Consciousness (or spirit) and life itself are moved within their scope, while aspects not available to observation or measuring from the outside are excluded.

Behind the investigative procedures of the sciences, hard or social, lie three centuries of theory about correct knowledge, coming down from Descartes, Locke, and Hume through mainstream mechanistic physics, experimental psychologies, and computer models of thinking to form contemporary empiricism. Philosopher Charles Taylor renounces that epistemology as Hydra, "whose serpentine heads wreak havoc throughout the intellectual culture of modernity." He describes empiricism in terms of a disengaged, observing agent who sets aside his or her immersion in contextual backgrounds in order to objectify its (no longer "his" or "her") own experiences as if it were a disembodied subjectivity.



Its disembedded, atomized data are used to compose collages or mosaics of representations through computational input-output information processing. Rules for knowledge, according to this model, reductively fragment all unities, including the human, and suggest, in turn, isolation and eventual solipsism. More seriously, as Taylor puts it, the disengaged perspective is now being ontologized, so that empiricist epistemology has come to constitute the nature of mind itself and is being put in the service of ethically impoverished Utilitarian programs. Practical, everyday uses in economic exchange and bureaucratic administration strengthen its hold on us, and come to be seen as common sense, the way things get done.

This standard account of thinking and knowing—of mind itself—appears again in opinion surveying practice. Persons appearing on rosters are extracted as monads from their indigenous settings by anonymous investigators who ask precisely phrased questions formulated from unspoken interests. Whatever careful or careless answers respondents give (or would like to give to other questions not asked), only the smallest part of their saying—words which correspond to the short menu of choices—will be accepted, and everything else politely ignored. After they have their little say, their incremental "yeas" and "nays," "agrees" and "disagrees," are summed to a composite number, data points on a linear scale, thereby becoming an "opinion" of the public. This work is not seen as a fiction; in the empiricist construal, a number can acquire a reality of its own because it is a number; named and announced, it is reified as a substantial entity out-there, like Comte's objectively existing "social fact."

The official "poverty line" is one of those reified numbers that has become so real that anyone "under" that line, stated as a dollar figure, is deemed to need help. Similarly, the concept of collective "public" opinion has become hardly thinkable without reference to a number, or string of numbers, an epistemic shift which leads to a general willingness not to inquire further as to the content of the opinions themselves. Numbers have displaced the thing-in-itself. So construed, polling resembles paper-and-pencil testing of intelligence, a field where many researchers are content to define intelligence as "what IQ tests measure." Unfortunately, recognition of the superficiality and misuses of that extended effort, and the low esteem in which it is held by serious people, has not yet caught up with opinion polling.

The credibility of aggregated data about opinions across the nation depends on a simplistic notion: that we are free-standing entities passively waiting out there for enumerators to collect and convert us into sums. But holding to that line requires studied inattention to the transient and reticulated character of human thinking. Opinions are not well-bounded items we simply possess in an inventory, available for retrieval on cue. Opinions are not stored on shelves of a vast warehouse for compliant fetching and handing over. They can be elusive, and may not always be disclosed clearly and distinctly. And when an opinion is formally solicited, the questioner's question is translated, interpreted in terms of meanings from a lifeworld in which the answerer is immersed; in effect, the question changes every time it is asked. In human exchange, moreover, words themselves do not stand singly and detached, as in dictionaries, but are containers for meanings drawn from wells of practices and everyday doing. Much more than direct and unequivocal pointing, talking in words is often freighted with hard-to-say experience, and sometimes, the impulse not to say. Or the opposite: instead of being full of meaning, talk can be empty filler, comfortable blah-blah and getting by.

Polling surveys convey an image of politics as a presented buffet, a menu of individual choices to be routinely scanned for selection by citizens, without having an opportunity beforehand to identify their concerns and to deliberate publicly about them. Their averaged-out responses to questions on complex national issues will appear hasty or superficial because they have not had available the grounds of exchange—as elites routinely do—where contrasting views can be mutually examined. Nor do ordinary citizens have realistic opportunities for exchange with elites. As a result, leveled-down numbers, supposedly representing popular views, are too often heard by the upper tiers as uninformed and showing limited comprehension, hence easily discredited. But even when not, polls fail to provide citizens direct access to their stewards, in their own words, without intermediaries or instruments.

Top management of the survey industry knows all this, but says almost nothing to us. No need to; as a quasi-official arm of modern government, with staffs recruited from the same technocratic elite, it remains beyond the reach of citizen complaint or critique. To any dissent, it just plays back the standard account, while promoting fantasies among media audiences about technologies for penetrating quickly and definitively into our mentalities, meanings, valuings, dissemblings. What recourse then?

The influence and established position of the opinion marketing business should not be underestimated. Nonetheless, as a great man once said, "The voice of reason is low, but it is persistent." It may not be too much to hope therefore that the good people out in the counties, boroughs, and parishes will come to recognize a pollster's glancing contact not as a true opportunity to be heard, but as another reminder of their routine exclusion from civic conversations that count. Or suppose they were helped to see that being called by survey corporations was really an occasion for being used—and for free—by distant hierarchies they will never speak to directly, anymore than to glittering Hollywood stars? Instead of being flattered by the invitation to answer a few questions in even fewer words, might they then politely refuse to participate? What might the country's political life be like without that omniscient voice telling us what we think? ❑

POLITICS

Online in 2000

Call Off the Revolution

Troy K. Schneider



When Al Gore's campaign website was unveiled on April 6th, it included the declaration that online efforts were going to be "the most important" part of the vice president's bid for the White House. A few days (and media reports) later, that superlative had been modified to declare the website "a very important" part of the campaign; soon thereafter, the tagline was taken down entirely.

All in all, it was a fitting metaphor for online politics in general: first make change-the-world promises, then backpedal, then quietly move on.

Since at least 1996, technophiles have been promising that the Internet would revolutionize politics: that it would provide issues over attack ads; virtual town hall meetings to replace the six-second sound bite; real-time campaign-finance disclosure; cyber-coalitions; online voting; and more. In short, plugging in could offer purer, more productive politics and a more direct democracy.

And sure enough, as we prepare to elect the first U.S. president of the twenty-first century, many of these promised improvements are indeed at hand. The DNet and the Common Cause website offer detailed issue positions for political hopefuls at all levels. Steve Forbes "officially" announced his 2000 presidential campaign online. MoveOn.org—a coalition created almost overnight by software entrepreneurs Joan Blades and Wes Boyd to protest the impeachment proceedings—collected some 500,000 names for its petition urging Congress to censure President Clinton and be done with it. Pilot programs are underway to allow U.S. citizens overseas to vote online in 2000.

All well and good, but we still haven't seen that cyber-revolution—and we won't in 2000, either. The online world simply adds more tools to the political toolbox, and those tools—like television, talk radio and targeted mailings before them—play primarily into the hands of those already in power.

ILLUSTRATION BY TIM FOLEY

Troy K. Schneider is the editor and associate publisher of National Journal's Cloakroom *(www.cloakroom.com), a Washington-based online service for political professionals. He has covered the online political world since the Internet Dark Ages of 1994.*

That's not to say the World Wide Web, email, and other online avenues are not tremendously powerful vehicles for interested parties at all levels—they are. But a brave new political world will not grow spontaneously from them.

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Way back in 1997, *Wired* magazine commissioned GOP pollster Frank Luntz to conduct its "Digital Citizen Survey" and found that "digital citizens" were more politically active, libertarian, progressive, and male than their unwired peers. The survey also found that "connected" and "super-connected" Americans (those who regularly use a computer, cell phone, and/or pager and log onto email at least three times a week) made up a scant 9 percent of the population. By June of this year, however, a Nielsen Media Research/CommerceNet survey found that 92 million people over the age of eighteen are online in the United States and Canada—nearly half the North American population. The percentage of women online had risen to 46 percent.

The developing ubiquity of online activity is a good thing—it is certainly good for the AOLs and eBays of the world, and advantageous for individuals as well. But it also means that as Americans become more wired, the wired world becomes more like America. And what do most Americans do—online and elsewhere? They shop. They gab with friends. They follow their favorite teams, decide what movie to see, and track their mutual funds. Occasionally, maybe (and most likely just before an election), they check in on the world of politics.

There are, of course, politically interested citizens (if you're reading this, you're likely one of them). And for them, the online world is a wonderful place. Political headlines, government resources, like-minded discussion partners, and misguided debating opponents are ready and waiting. Want to bypass the self-important media and go straight to the source? Organizations from Handgun Control to Operation Rescue, government at all levels, and any candidate worth his or her salt will pipe updates into your inbox. Decide that a little journalistic filtration is a good thing? You couldn't stay on top of all the political news services if you tried.

But the point is that these politically interested people long predate the online world. Websites, Usenet groups, and email bulletins may make politics more available, but that's not the same thing as more appealing, nor is it the same thing as more engaging. It's one thing to subscribe to a listserv or pop into a chat room, and quite another to take action on behalf of a candidate or issue.

Consider, for example, one of my virtual communities. I own a 1954 Dodge M-37—a four-wheel drive military pickup truck that was the Humvee of its day. Every day, I log onto a discussion group for M-37 owners and aficionados. I subscribe to a listserv that caters to military vehicle buffs, which sends twenty to thirty messages my way each morning. I also frequent a site for fans of antique Dodge trucks, civilian and military alike.

It truly is a community, albeit one that is diverse and nationwide. We know each other by name; I've spoken to many directly and even met a few in person. We share hints and horror stories, swap parts, and commiserate over breakdowns. And not infrequently, someone mentions a political issue—anything from emissions controls to government destruction of surplus parts. (Not exactly the stuff of revolutions, but most of politics isn't.)

We're all online. Our elected representatives' email addresses are just clicks away, as are most of the resources to help us get active. The networks and websites are there to leverage. But without fail, the online politics go no further than comments that someone really should do something.

Of course, there are groups online that are much more politically active and motivated than my little circle of old truck owners. Type your issue of choice—however obscure—into any of the big search engines, and you will likely get hundreds if not thousands of sites. Even after sifting out the press releases, outdated links, and other online flotsam, there are probably scores of sites that could prove useful. Few of them, however, will go beyond the snippets of information the website author found useful, and fewer still will draw more eyeballs than a flyer in the local coffee shop.

More significantly, civic-oriented sites make up the cyberspace equivalent of Micronesia. Although the various web pages, discussion groups, and e-communities may share common interests and even political goals, they are too small, insufficiently coordinated, and inadequately publicized to have much influence outside their own tiny spheres. Find an online coalition that has made it onto the political radar screen, and chances are you will find a full-time organizer behind it. For better or for worse, the truly grassroots online groups tend to get lost in the weeds.

Because the World Wide Web, email, and the rest of the Internet are essentially tools, they require knowledgeable and motivated people to use them. Not surprisingly, a good number of those people are turning up on the staffs of presidential candidates, congressional leaders, political consultants, and established interest groups. Armed with real budgets, built-in organizations, and, importantly, the ability to publicize their online efforts in print and through radio and TV broadcasts, these cyber-players are quickly cornering the new political media market—or, at the very least, the lion's share of any potential audience. GOP senator and White House hopeful John McCain's first presidential television ad touted his new website calling for campaign finance reform: www.itsyourcountry.com. A healthcare industry coalition has rolled online information into its efforts to quell politicians' calls for HMO reform. And MoveOn.org, which established a political action committee and is now contributing to campaigns, is using conferences, media coverage, and the good old-fashioned press release to make sure there are ripples outside of cyberspace.

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When the voices shaping the online debate are the same ones spouting off on the Sunday talk shows, the chances of revolutionizing politics seem rather slim.

Despite the Internet's potential to simply give us back the same cast of characters, however, we should not be too dismissive of its political possibility for those outside of the mainstream. A website offers room for real substance, room that broadcast ads and stump speeches lack, and the opportunity for interested citizens to get involved. Organizing online is economical, allows for real dialogue, and obliterates the geographic barriers that can divide like-minded individuals. Writing off these new tools because the powerful can make better use of them would be a horrible mistake. We should take advantage of them and be encouraged by the prospect for change.

We should also keep in mind, however, that the United States is governed by a representative democracy for a reason. Andrew Shapiro, author of *The Control Revolution: How The Internet Is Putting Individuals In Charge And Changing The World As We Know It,* accurately noted recently that our founding fathers "could not have foreseen a day when citizens could in theory act on political measures by hitting a computer key at home. But they did know that just results most often come from having a trusted delegate interpret the will of the people. They wisely distrusted plebiscites."

For all the complaints that special interests are running the country, the real source of frustration is usually over which special interests are wielding influence. Adding online activism to the mix, no matter how effective it may someday prove, does not change the fact that politics is based on competing interests. And whether the tool of choice is a discussion group or television ad, direct mail or email, the group that puts the time, effort, and money into the battle will have the advantage.

So should we get active online? Absolutely. It's not often that a political tool comes along that is both widely accessible and (potentially) effective. Anything that can help educate, engage, and possibly motivate voters is a step forward, and those who are doing so—individuals, interest groups, politicians and the government itself—should be applauded. But with that applause should come the acknowledgement that politics is hard work; technology cannot lower the bar for dedication and motivation. And despite all the predictions of an easy, interactive, efficient digital democracy, our political system is stronger and better because that bar exists. ❑

BIO-ETHICS

The Politics of DNA's Meaning

Phil Bereano



ILLUSTRATION BY RICHARD ROSS

"*The Human Gene Project at the National Institutes of Health, also being supported in universities all across America, will one day in the not-too-distant future enable every set of parents that has a little baby to get a map of the genetic structure of their child. So if their child has a predisposition to a certain kind of illness or a certain kind of problem, or even to heart disease or stroke in the early forties, they will be able to plan that child's life, that child's upbringing, to minimize the possibility of the child developing that illness or that predisposition, to organize the diet plan, the exercise plan, the medical treatment that would enable untold numbers of people to have far more full lives than would have been the case before....*"

—President Clinton

Bill Clinton's picture of a wonderful techno-future sounds like a threatening Brave New World to many Americans. Not only does it manifest a reduced tolerance for difference, but the genetic surveillance and tracking represented by the Human Genome Project pose enormous threats to our basic rights to privacy and self-determination.

The confluence of a number of technical and social trends has greatly enhanced the capacity for genetic surveillance and tracking. Genetics is a flourishing new scientific industry nourished in large part by the federally-funded Human Genome Project. The goal of this ambitious research endeavor is to identify every gene found in the human body, approximately one hundred thousand in all. Much of the research focuses on tests designed to identify genes thought to be associated with various medical conditions. More than fifty new genetic tests have been identified in the past five years alone. Calls for mass genetic testing by researchers trade on the old image of the altruistic scientist to mask their conflicts of interest in patents, testing labs, consulting contracts, and other corporate benefits. As scientific research yields more and more information, the increasing speed, sophistication, affordability, and interconnectivity of computer systems allow the rapid monitoring and matching of many millions of records. At the same time, there's been a mad scramble for venture capital in the biotech industry, while patent laws have been altered to allow monopolies on genes. This promotion of genetic research and its purported benefits fosters the belief that genes are determinative of an individual's behavior, character, and future; in the words of Nobelist Jim Watson, "We used to believe our destiny was in the stars; now we know it is in our genes." Meanwhile, the critical role the environment plays, the complex interplay between a genome and its surroundings, is largely ignored in the media and the public discussion of genetics.

Indeed, society's fascination with genetic determinism has other social and political consequences. For example, strong evidence points to links between environmental contamination and cancer. Current research priorities, however, are skewed toward identifying genetic predispositions

Phil Bereano is professor of engineering at the University of Washington at Seattle, and an activist with the Council for Responsible Genetics and the American Civil Liberties Union.

to cancer. If cancer is cast primarily as a genetic disease, then legislators may discard efforts to clean up environmental carcinogens in favor of a search for "cancer genes."

In effect, we encourage a "blame the victim" mindset, where we condemn people with "faulty" genes. Social conditions such as poverty or environmental pollution, which correlate directly to poor health and higher mortality rates, become less important. And economic and social resources end up being diverted into finding biomedical "solutions," while societal measures get short-changed.

In the United States, differential access to wealth and power has always been a fact of life and in recent years has worsened. Because of their size, scale, and requirements for capital investments and for knowledge, modern technologies are powerful interventions into the natural order, and only those with more power can determine the kinds of technological developments that are researched and implemented. Just as the image of the altruistic scientist aids researchers, so too does the belief in objective science aid those who have the most to gain from genetic research.

Because technologies are the result of human interventions into the otherwise natural progression of activities, they are themselves imbued with intentions and purposes. Moreover, these technologies tend to be the mechanisms by which already-powerful groups extend, manifest, and further consolidate their powers. Thus, technologies become social and political phenomena. Genetic technologies reflect the power differentials in our society; they do not equally benefit all segments of society, nor are they meant to. For example, we give a lot of attention and resources to developing high-tech reproductive techniques (which are available primarily to the middle and upper classes) and fail to apply existing techniques to reducing our high rate of infant mortality (which occurs primarily among people of color in barrios, ghettos, and reservations).

The mania for genetic testing in the United States manifests class and power relationships: employers test employees, insurance companies and health organizations test patients, college officials test students, legislators pass bills to test a variety of marginalized groups (welfare recipients, prisoners, immigrants, and the like). Here are some real-life examples:

- A pregnant woman whose fetus tested positive for cystic fibrosis was told by her health maintenance organization that it would be willing to cover the cost of an abortion but would not cover the infant under the family's medical policy if she elected to carry the pregnancy to term.
- A healthy boy who carried a gene predisposing him to a heart disorder was denied health coverage by his parents' insurance company, even though the boy took medication that eliminated his risk of heart disease.
- The FBI has been promoting the genetic screening of criminals to establish state DNA identification data banks to be used in criminal investigations; recent federal legislation penalizes states fiscally if they don't participate. Yet the data includes samples from those whose crimes have low recidivism rates or don't leave tissue samples; in some states, people merely accused are forced into the program.

The American Civil Liberties Union advocates that "the decision to undergo genetic screening is purely personal"; it should not be "subject to control or compulsion by third parties" or the government. And "where a person has intentionally undergone genetic screening procedures there must be no disclosure of findings to third parties without the express and informed consent of the subject given after the results of the screening are made known to the subject and upon such times and conditions as the subject may require." Yet patients' records "are commodities for sale," according to the *New York Times*. A panel of the U.S. National Research Council warned two years ago that the computerized medical records of millions of citizens are open to misuse and abuse.

A 1994 benchmark study by the ACLU found that "concerns about personal privacy run deep among the American people." Genetic privacy, like medical privacy in general, involves notions of the dignity and integrity of the individual. We want to know if the data is accurate; if individuals can access their own files; if donors can correct inaccurate data; and so forth. But the key problem concerns the "front end" collection of the data.

For starters, data should only be collected voluntarily, using modern notions of informed consent. Mandatory testing, testing coerced by the conditioning of benefits or employment, surreptitious testing—all violate privacy notions. The scope of informed consent should specify future allowable uses of the samples. In particular, there should not be any general exemption for research uses for which one has not given consent—one's integrity is not any less compromised because a third party is wearing a lab coat. (If the argument is made that this may compromise the ability to do research, we should remember that upholding civil liberties values often leads to inefficiencies; we certainly could catch more crooks if we did away with the Fourth Amendment prohibition on warrantless searches.)

Genetic discrimination is the other major civil liberty threatened by genetics research. Scientists working with the Council for Responsible Genetics (CRG) have documented hundreds of cases where healthy people have been denied insurance or employment based on genetic "predictions." Of course, relatively few genetic diseases are deterministic—most tests cannot tell us if a genetic mutation will become manifest; if it does, when in life this will occur; or how severe the condition will be. In addition, many genetic conditions can be controlled or treated by interventions and

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LEGAL POLICY

Gun Rights

Robin West

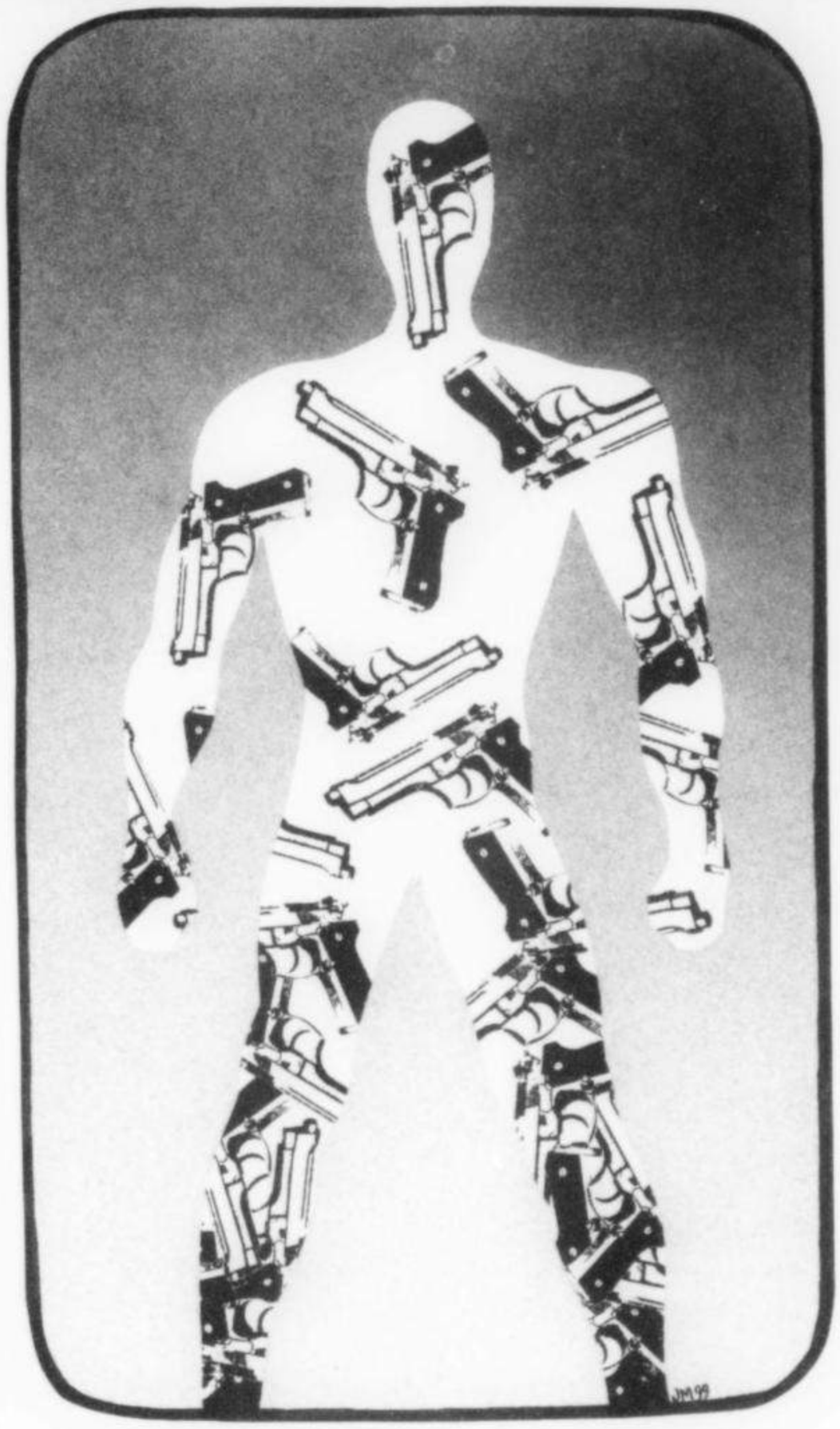


ILLUSTRATION BY JOSH MACPHEE

The NRA, right-wing militias, gun sellers, owners, their lawyers, and assorted political pundits all now quite routinely argue, and with growing success, that every individual has a constitutional right to own guns under the Second Amendment. This argument, which ten years ago was regarded as the rantings of the lunatic fringe, is now widely accepted not only by gun owners and advocates but also by a handful of respected liberal constitutional scholars and, more ominously, by at least one federal district court judge.

The claim has serious consequences. First of all, simply as a matter of law, were the courts ever to accept the proposition that an individual has a constitutionally protected right, under the Second Amendment, to possess firearms (as a lower federal district court in Texas has), such a right could invalidate even limited gun control legislation. Like all rights, the "right to bear arms," if it exists, expresses a constitutional commitment to protect the ownership of guns *regardless* of the severity of social consequences or costs: rights exist, fundamentally, to protect the rights holder against precisely the sort of emotional and political intensity occasioned by events like Columbine. Although rights are never absolute, nevertheless it is the nature of a constitutional right to "trump" laws that unduly infringe upon it, and to do so even if that law represents perfectly sound policy desired by solid majorities. In other words, if the right to own guns is pitted against nothing but a policy in favor of laws that control gun ownership, the policy will very likely lose.

But there is a deeper, less visible cost exacted by this new controversial right, and it is a cost borne directly by our politics of meaning. Asserted constitutional rights—even contested rights—create as well as rest on a cross-generational social consensus about the meaning of civic and individual life, a consensus that runs so deep that it trumps conflicting democratic judgments of policy. A claim that a right exists, then, essentially claims the existence of such a meaning, and such a consensus. The "right to bear arms" is no different. When gun advocates assert a right to own guns, and the courts, the pundits, scholars, and the public listen, something profound has occurred: gun ownership has been invested with constitutional authority, and hence constitutional meaning. The gun owner becomes, by virtue of the claimed constitutional right, the embodiment of a mythic-constitutional vision of our nature, ourselves, our community, and our state. We must protect his rights, because he has become, in essence, a symbol; he represents a way of being in the world—lone, idiosyncratic, and self-sufficient, defiantly bucking the ties of community and state control—that in our wisest and longest vision of ourselves, we can and should ideally be. The gun owner becomes an ideal, and an ideal which is constitutional. Her defiance *defines* us. Even if their legal claim ultimately fails, in other words, the NRA's depiction of our nature, and of what it means to be an American, remains, with respect to guns and gun ownership, the only constitutional story being told.

But is the NRA's the only constitutional story that should be told, or that could be told? Of course, one can without difficulty find, in American mythology and constitutional history both, support for the social vision implied by the community of gun advocates now urging a Second Amendment right to bear arms; one can find in our histories plenty of support for the proposition that we are, funda-

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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).*

mentally, a loose confederation of borderline, anti-social, and paranoid individuals, united only in our shared perpetual rage against the demands of community life, each and all of us bent on protecting our individual rights against the smothering embrace of social obligation. Indeed, as "rights critics" have argued over the past thirty years, it is fair to say that this is only a slight exaggeration of the hyper-individualistic constitutional rhetoric that monotonously repeats itself in volumes of utterly mainstream constitutional case law, scholarship, and folklore, and it is for precisely that reason that they urge us to abandon talk of individuating rights altogether, if we wish to create a world of connection. Rights talk, however, is not the only mythology, the only meaning, or the only social history compatible with our constitutional language and history. There are other stories to be told as well, and other constitutional visions to paint. Rather than abandon rights, rights-talk, and the constitution to the monopolistic rhetorical powers of free marketeers, rugged individuals, and gun zealots, we should be telling those other stories and filling in the details of the visions they suggest. The gun debate is an opportunity to do so.

We cannot ourselves connect with people, live in awe and wonder, or nourish our own spirit, when we live in fear of each other.

Rights stem, minimally, from our constitutional history, as read through the lens of our highest political ideals, and as informed by our best understanding of our human and social nature. All three sources strongly imply the existence, not of an individual right to bear arms, but, to the contrary, of a right to mutual disarmament. First, as an historical matter, the Reconstruction amendments in general, and the Fourteenth Amendment's Equal Protection Clause in particular, were written in part to ensure that *all* citizens (not just whites) received the state's protection against private acts of violence. The Amendments' framers understood that unless the freed slaves were granted a right to enjoy this "first duty of government"—the duty to protect citizens against violence—the promise of equality and liberty, given the reality of persecution, threats, and lynchings, would remain illusory. Second, that we have such a right to protection against violence flows directly from the liberal, Hobbesian, and Lockean political ideals that underlie our constitutional framework. The Leviathan exists, so said Hobbes, to protect us against the violence of others, in exchange for our agreement to give up "self help" and enter civil society. A right to that protection, then, and to the private disarmament required to achieve it, is at the very heart of even a "minimalist" understanding of the liberal state.

But most important, a right to disarmament, and the gun control legislation that would require it, would affirm something true and important about both our individual and our civic nature. We cannot forge loving connections between people, or reward ecological and spiritual sensitivity, when we simultaneously, through our shared constitution, valorize the gun owner and his "rights" and disparage the victim of gun violence. More to the point, we cannot ourselves connect with people, live in awe and wonder, or nourish our own spirit, when we live in fear of each other; many of us—disproportionately poor people and women and children—live with that fear daily. Fear destroys trust—it is its antithesis—and pervasive distrust destroys the spirit. As every battered woman, rape survivor, or harassed school child knows, one can neither spiritually grow nor form loving connections when one lives in fear of intimates, neighbors, or co-citizens: the inner self deadens, precisely so as to ward off attack. A right to the equal protection of the state against the lethal violence that triggers that spirit-deadening fear, as well as the state's affirmative obligation—indeed, its "first duty"—to legislate in such a way as to control the flow of private weapons that threatens the right's enjoyment, can be readily derived from our constitutional sources. Rather than turn our backs on these constitutional sources of political and moral meaning—as left and progressive rights critics have urged us to do—we should embrace and seek to transform them. ❑

THE POLITICS OF DNA'S MEANING *(continued from page 24)*

environmental changes, which is why they warrant not only research dollars, but media attention.

Federal legislation, the Kennedy-Kassebaum bill, limits genetic discrimination regarding certain medical insurance policies, but does not apply to life, disability, or automobile insurance or to employment—all areas of documented discrimination. Slowly, state by state, the CRG, ACLU, and patients' rights groups are trying to get legislation passed to reduce or eliminate genetic discrimination; about thirty-one states have enacted some protections.

President Clinton has voiced his support for a federal bill which would prohibit health insurance providers from using any types of genetic information for making decisions about whether to cover a person or what premium to charge. Such legislation would address some of the discrimination problems that have been occurring. But we must be vigilant. Genetic databanks are too likely to lead to characterizing some people as "damaged goods." Our technological triumphalism appears to offer enhanced control over people and events. Leading scientists have already called for programs of eugenics, labeled "genetic enhancement" to avoid any distasteful historical imagery. Jews have suffered from such labeling before. We need to oppose any ideologies that would make eugenics sound reasonable. ❑

A Realistic Utopia for the Millennium

Daniel Singer

Daniel Singer is the European correspondent of The Nation. *He has written* Prelude to Revolution: France in May 1968 *and* Is Socialism Doomed?: The Meaning of Mitterrand. *The following article is excerpted from Michael Lerner's interview with Singer about his latest book,* Whose Millennium? Theirs or Ours? *just published by Monthly Review Press.*

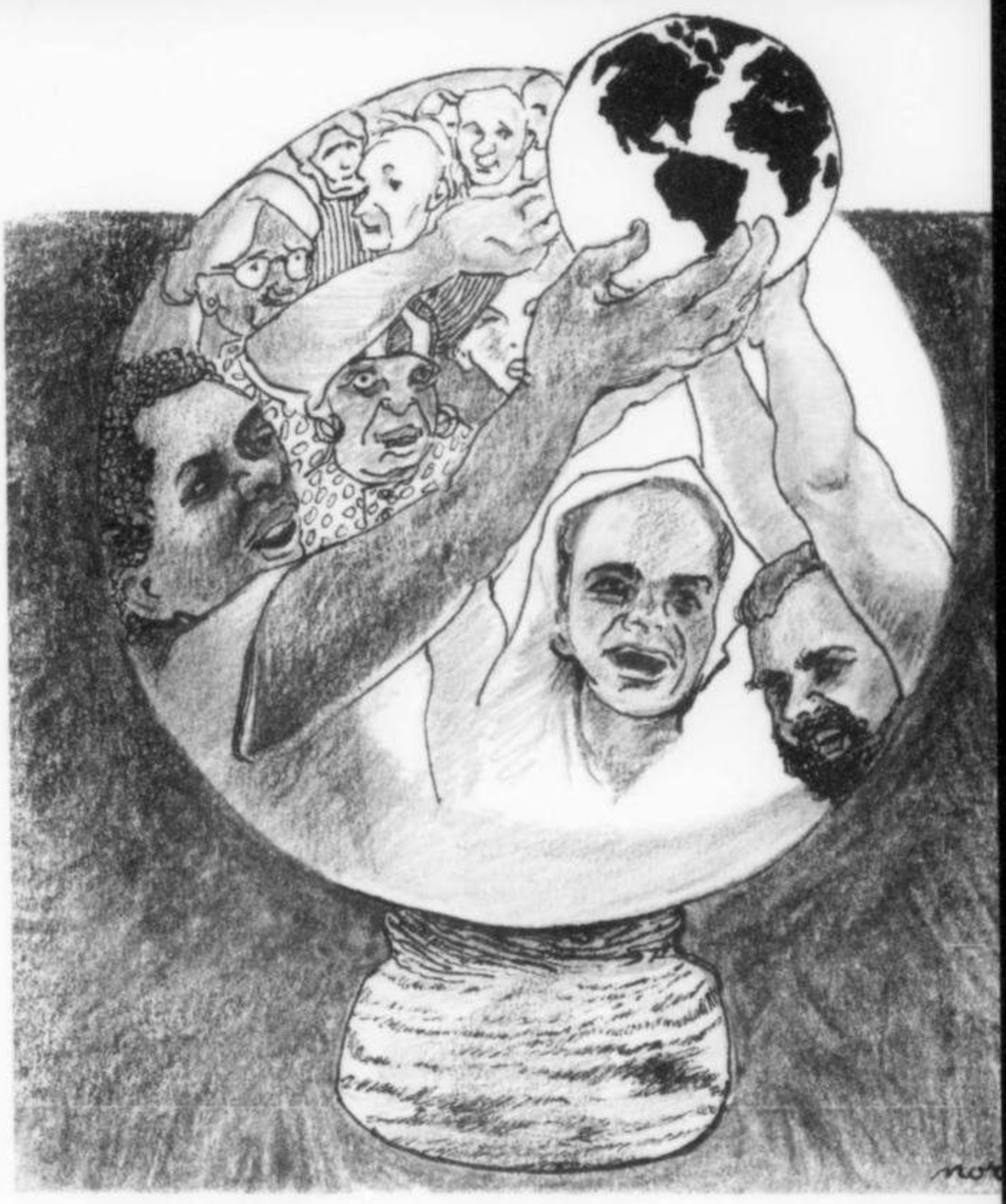


ILLUSTRATION BY NORI HELLER

Probably the most important ideology that progressives must combat today is the view called TINA—"There Is No Alternative" to the capitalist societies in which we live. This "reality" principle has been internalized not only by the Right but by the bulk of the Left, who have abandoned the formerly widespread progressive view that life can be changed through collective political action.

One reason for the decline of this progressive view was the collapse of the Soviet Union, which the establishment used as proof that socialism doesn't work. That seems to me to be a very strange argument, because for several decades many people on the Left—including Michael Lerner and others around TIKKUN magazine—have insisted that the Soviet Union was not an example of a socialist society. The Marxist tragedy is first, that the revolution happened not where it was supposed to happen—in a highly developed capitalist country--but in Mother Russia; at the time no Marxist, no socialist, believed you could build socialism in a backward country. And second, that it didn't spread to the advanced countries, to the capitalist West where it might have stood a chance of developing differently.

The Marxists of the first part of the twentieth century failed to realize that capitalism still had quite a lot of inner capacity for development and productivity. Once the Soviet Union appeared, calling itself socialist but actually exercising a dictatorship over the proletariat, many Western workers concluded that if this was the paradise being pointed to by communists, they'd rather have their capitalist purgatory. That's why, though many people stress the fall of the Soviet Union as a reason for giving up on political change, I think the opposite. Though it is true that the USSR was able to put something of a brake on American imperial power, today progressives have a much greater chance of putting forward their ideas without having them seen through the prism of the distorted realities of the Soviet Union.

If the Stalinist model has collapsed, what about the social-democratic alternative in Europe? Out of the fifteen nations of the European Union, eleven have Social Democrat governments, two have Social Democrats in the government, and only Spain and Ireland have a right-wing government. At one stage, social democratic movements were asked to take on the role of managing the reform of capitalist society for the capitalist class. But today, social democratic governments are in a very different position: they are not asked to manage reform, or even to manage society—they are asked to manage the counter-reform of society. They are being asked to use their moral authority as progressives to take back all the concessions that the capitalist class made during the post-war period of unprecedented prosperity. In essence, the Social Democrats are being asked to attack the welfare state, pension plans, the security of tenure, and so on.

Whether Social Democrat governments will actually succeed in dismantling their own programs is unclear. One reason the capitalist class turned to the Social Democrats in the first place is that right-wing governments were meeting resistance to such dismantling. Social Democrats now are in effect attacking their own electoral base, and their constituents have not been quiescent. In 1994 the Italian government attempted to cut down pensions and drove the masses into the street. In 1996 similar events occurred in Germany. The French government's attempt to attack its own welfare state led to the "winter of discontent" in 1995: Paris was paralyzed by strikes and there were mass

demonstrations in the provinces. Essentially, the protesters were saying, "If that is the future you are offering us and our children, the hell with your future."

In all of these demonstrations, people were saying "no" to the logic that had led social democratic parties to support programs that attacked their own social base. They were saying "no" to the "reality" presented to them by the capitalist class. To say "no" is vital because as long as you believe that you can't get out of the system, you are its prisoner. On the other hand, saying "no" is not enough: you still have to provide an alternative.

A model for a better society should not be something handed down to the people from above. That was the error of the Communist Party, an error progressives should not repeat. In my conception, socialism is a movement from below, by people who really develop their political consciousness in action, and who change themselves while they change society. Of course, people do need some guidelines: for example, they want democratic guarantees so that there won't be a repetition of what happened in the Soviet Union. What's needed, then, is a model for a better society which people change while they are advancing and reshaping the society in which they currently live.

One central concern that such a blueprint must address is the fact that we live in an increasingly inegalitarian world. Thirty years ago, the wealthiest 20 percent of the world's population accounted for 70 percent of the world's income; today, they account for 86 percent. Nor is such disparity only between the rich and poor nations; it is within our own population. Then there are other, equally troubling inequalities—the problem of racial inequality which is still so blatant, the situation of women which is concealed by centuries of tradition behind it.

If equality is at the heart of my project, so is democracy, and not only because of what happened in the Soviet Union. The best way to plan the self-organization of society is to re-invent democracy.

To address problems like inequality and democracy, we need a "realistic utopia." "Realistic" because it has to be inserted into the rugged reality of our current struggles—if you don't do that, if you only talk about the distant future, however beautiful, you will be only a small sect miles ahead of the movement. At the same time you don't want to limit yourself only to the struggles that accept society's framework as fixed. We have to be utopian enough to go beyond the confines of our existing society. Today, just saying that we have to go beyond the capitalist horizon can lead others to brand you as a dangerous utopian; the word is considered an insult. I argue that we should turn it into a badge of honor and say we are all utopians.

In my own utopian vision there will be no market and no private capital. But I am realistic enough not to believe in instant socialism. In the period of transition, we shall need some sort of international arrangement capable of regulating economic relationships and dealing with the world ecological crisis. If the world continues to develop along the lines of our Western model (with two-car families, etc.), the limit of the ecological resources of the planet will be reached very quickly. Advanced industrial societies can't very well keep our mode of development, while telling underdeveloped countries not to adopt it lest they destroy the world's ecological system. We will have to alter fundamentally our own pattern of production and consumption if we want to tackle the problem of survival on the world scale.

The best way to plan the self-organization of society is to re-invent democracy.

We are going to have to make that transition with ordinary people, conditioned by their circumstances. Ordinary people, as they change in their struggles to achieve some minimum economic security and democracy, will discover that their aspirations and dreams clash with the existing realities of capitalist society. And while they are going through this process they themselves will be transformed.

I admit that it is difficult to make this kind of dialectical link between realism and utopia, to show people that what they want is not just more money, but more significance and meaning in their lives and work. I can see Michael Lerner's point when he says that "deprivation of meaning" prevents people from grasping the need for a fundamental transformation of their society. On the other hand, I believe that people will only be ready for this long-term action to create a more meaningful society for themselves if they have the feeling that they are changing the material circumstances of their own lives as well. A struggle for meaning along Lerner's terms won't succeed unless we are simultaneously engaged in attacking the property relations, the corporate structure, and all the institutions that support the current social reality. I am perturbed by people who have narrowed their focus to spiritual transformation, imagining that all these other institutional and economic changes will happen "later," once these spiritual changes have taken place. We have to appeal to people's sense of injustice and inequality, *and* appeal to their sense of wanting a brotherhood and fraternity with others. The two go together. ❑

THE TORAH OF MONEY *(continued from page 16)*

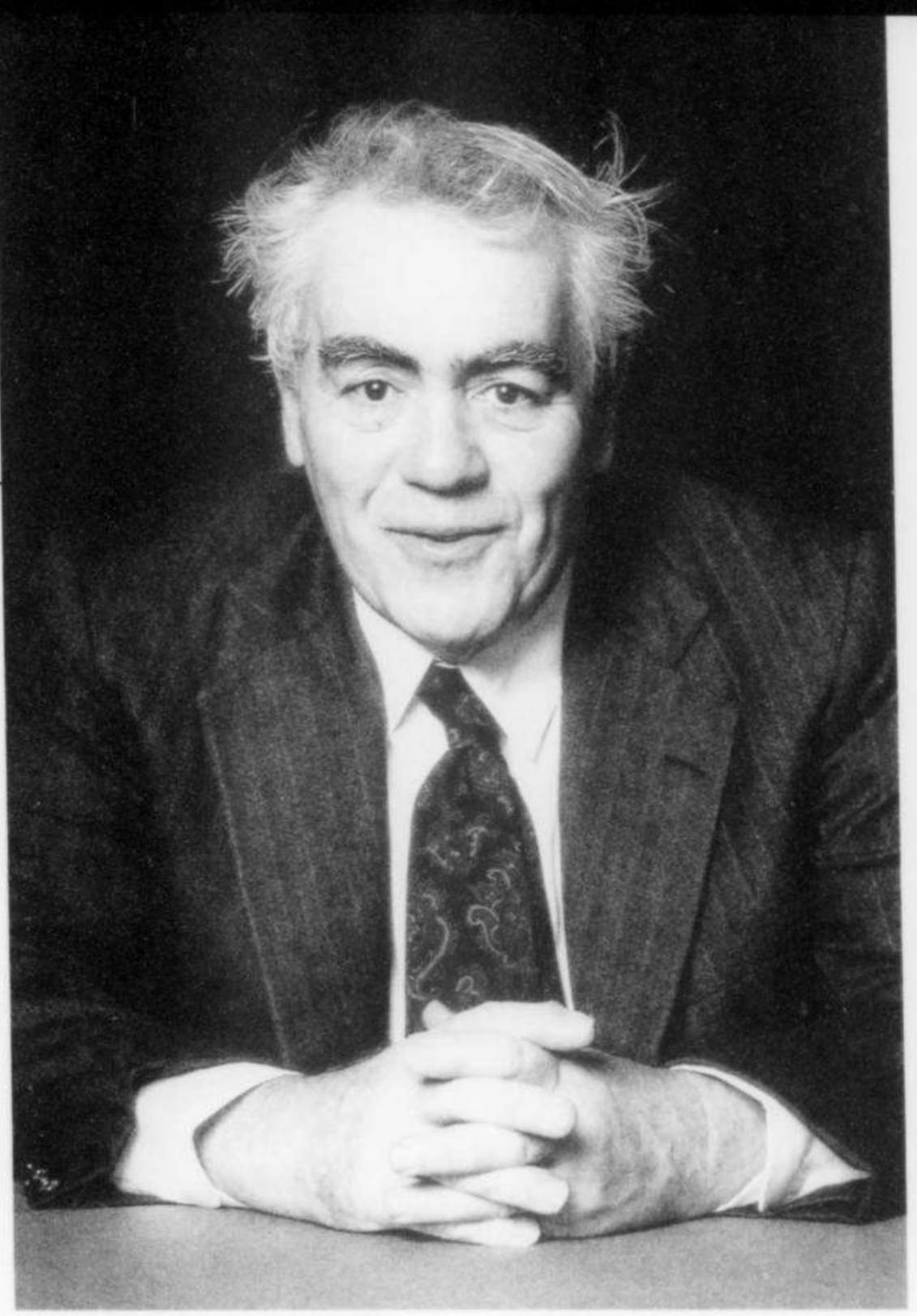
Should the U.S. economy head into recession, our domestic debt situation will explode.

Fortunately, progressive alternatives to usury are also on the rise, in the form of community development banks, credit unions, and loan funds. These lending models are, in part, a successful export of the underdeveloped world—and are deeply rooted in American Jewish history, as we will explore in our next column. ❑

INTERVIEW

AN INTERVIEW WITH Jimmy Breslin

Jack Newfield



Currently a columnist for Newsday, *a New York City tabloid, Jimmy Breslin created the model for a whole generation of tabloid columnists who followed him. He has won the Pulitzer Prize for journalism and has published a dozen books, including highly acclaimed novels like* Table Money *and* World Without End, Amen.

NEWFIELD: Jimmy, do you think newspapers have gotten better or worse since you started at the *Long Island Press* in the 1950s?

BRESLIN: They're much less exciting, and they don't read as well at all. The writing is down a full percentage point. I think it's because of the computer. In the old days, when I started, there were typewriters and noise and smoke in the city room at 5:30 at night. I think words for a newspaper are a product of nervous energy; a deadline is the best time for them to get thrown out of you. Henry Lee of the *New York Daily News* was the best writer we had in this city. Once he saw me beginning to turn in my column at three in the afternoon. He said, "What are you doing that for? You can't start writing until four if you're really going to do this business." He was right; you need the nerves. Today, they sit at these computers without the noise and just tap it out. It seems a passive operation, and the verbs don't have any life to them.

NEWFIELD: But this generation of journalists are a lot better educated than you and I are. You think that despite Ivy League educations and graduate schools, the content of newspapers is less well-written and less realistic about what goes on?

BRESLIN: They don't take chances. They don't want to fight with anybody. They don't want any trouble. They come out of the Fletcher School of Diplomacy, and they sit down and want to pontificate. If there's anything going on that might summon your wrath, they don't bring it up. They're not angry.

They don't go out and have a drink and congregate all together and trade stories and talk to some old guy at the bar who's been in the business a long time who can remember things that no computer ever can tell you. They go to a health club and then they go home and have a glass of wine or something. I think they miss a whole side of the business, a whole side of life.

NEWFIELD: Do you think the fact that very few columnists today have come out of the working class—like me and you and Pete Hamill and Mike Royko did—is one reason for the absence of any real resentment of authority?

BRESLIN: Most columnists today that I can see have no resentment of authority. If they have, it's very small and very muted. I don't know where they come from, but wherever they're coming from now, it's no good for them. Maybe they ought to forget these journalism schools.

NEWFIELD: You think journalism schools are a bad influence on our breed?

BRESLIN: They're good to get a job, but I don't know what else they are good for. I don't like the word "journalism" to begin with. It's news reporting, and that consists of using your two feet. The only lesson, then, that you could give people is how to climb stairs, because there are no stories on the first floor. Anything you're looking for is four and five flights up.

NEWFIELD: Do you think people like you and me are dinosaurs? That the era of the tabloid populist columnist, who went out and defended neighborhood underdogs, is over?

(continued on page 64)

PHOTOGRAPH BY FRANK CAPRI / SAGA / ARCHIVE PHOTOS

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

REFLECTIONS

Finding Personal Meaning

Nancy J. Chodorow

Dr. Nancy J. Chodorow is known for her path-breaking work in feminism and psychoanalysis, The Reproduction of Mothering. *She is a psychoanalyst in private practice and a professor of sociology at U.C. Berkeley. The following essay is excerpted from an interview with Chodorow about her new book,* The Power of Feelings *(Yale University Press, 1999).*

My new book, *The Power of Feelings*, explores what we learn from clinical psychoanalysis about personal meaning. Emotions are not only culturally constructed, selves are not only culturally constructed, gender is not only culturally constructed. Meaning as it is lived doesn't come only or mainly from culture, or through language or society. From birth, we create meaning from within. Through unconscious processes, through our creation of non-narrative, non-linguistic images of ourselves and the world, we create meanings that get more elaborated as we grow up. All of our experiencing is filtered through these internal, emotionally charged stories, in what psychoanalysts call transference.

When something grabs us, it's because we infuse it with unconscious meaning: the movies we like, the books we like, the people we fall in love with. If four people go to the same movie, each one will experience a different movie, because whatever they see and hear will be filtered and transformed through their own way of being. A cultural determinist—or a postmodernist—would probably also say that four people going to a movie will have four different experiences, but for them, the reasons for these differences would come from without—a meaning may be particular to you, but it's because you are a product of all the multiple places you are in the world. I agree that there is a social reality out there, but from the point of view of the individual, social reality is created in particularized ways each time it is experienced. I'd reverse Marx back to a psychoanalytically-derived Hegel here, and say, "Consciousness determines life; life does not determine consciousness."

That means that when we talk about the relation between social or cultural reality and the individual, we can't predict what a particular event will mean for any given individual, though we can notice patterns of meaning. For example, in my chapters on gender in *The Power of Feelings,* I argue that each person creates his or her own particular gender. There are prevalent ingredients that go into each person's gender, beginning with a dominant psychological definition of gender—is your gender mainly constructed around your sense of your body and sexuality, your pleasures and passions, your sense of your gendered parents or one gendered parent? Another ingredient is the overall emotional tonality—is your sense of being male or female largely depressive, or filled with anger or envy, or resigned, or excited? Both of these ingredients depend partly on your overall makeup and partly on the unconscious message you may have gotten from important others who themselves are gendered, a message that you interpret as connected to their gender or that they do.

Everyone's unconscious sense of gender also makes something of cultural meanings that are transmitted, and also of feelings and fantasies about the gendered and sexual body, reactions to desires or fears of one's desires. What they make of culture, or of anatomy and sexuality, however, cannot be predicted and does not flow directly from the content of cultural meanings or the physiology of bodies.

Each person creates his or her own particular gender

Everyone's sense of gender also makes something of the gender of others. Some people experience gender as part of a rigid male-female divide, in which all good resides in one and all bad in the other, while others experience the gender division as between little girls and grown-up women or between boys and men, rather than between male and female. For others, the gender divide isn't so important to their overall life and isn't felt as rigid and split. All of these meanings are unconscious meanings, not things you could interview someone about, for instance, or that would be immediately accessible to them. But each person will put the ingredients together a little differently, and each person will tie these into other aspects of their being and experience differently.

Because psychic reality is central, psychoanalysis is the best tool we have for understanding personal meaning. I believe that psychoanalysis gives us a set of concepts embedded in the *practice* of psychoanalysis (not free-floating theory) that define for us what it is to have a meaningful existence, just as some TIKKUN readers might say that religion gives us some concepts that define a meaningful existence. The difference, perhaps, is that with religion you find meaning, whereas for psychoanalysis you create it. The

(continued on page 63)

GENDER POLITICS

Thinking about Public and Private

Jean Bethke Elshtain

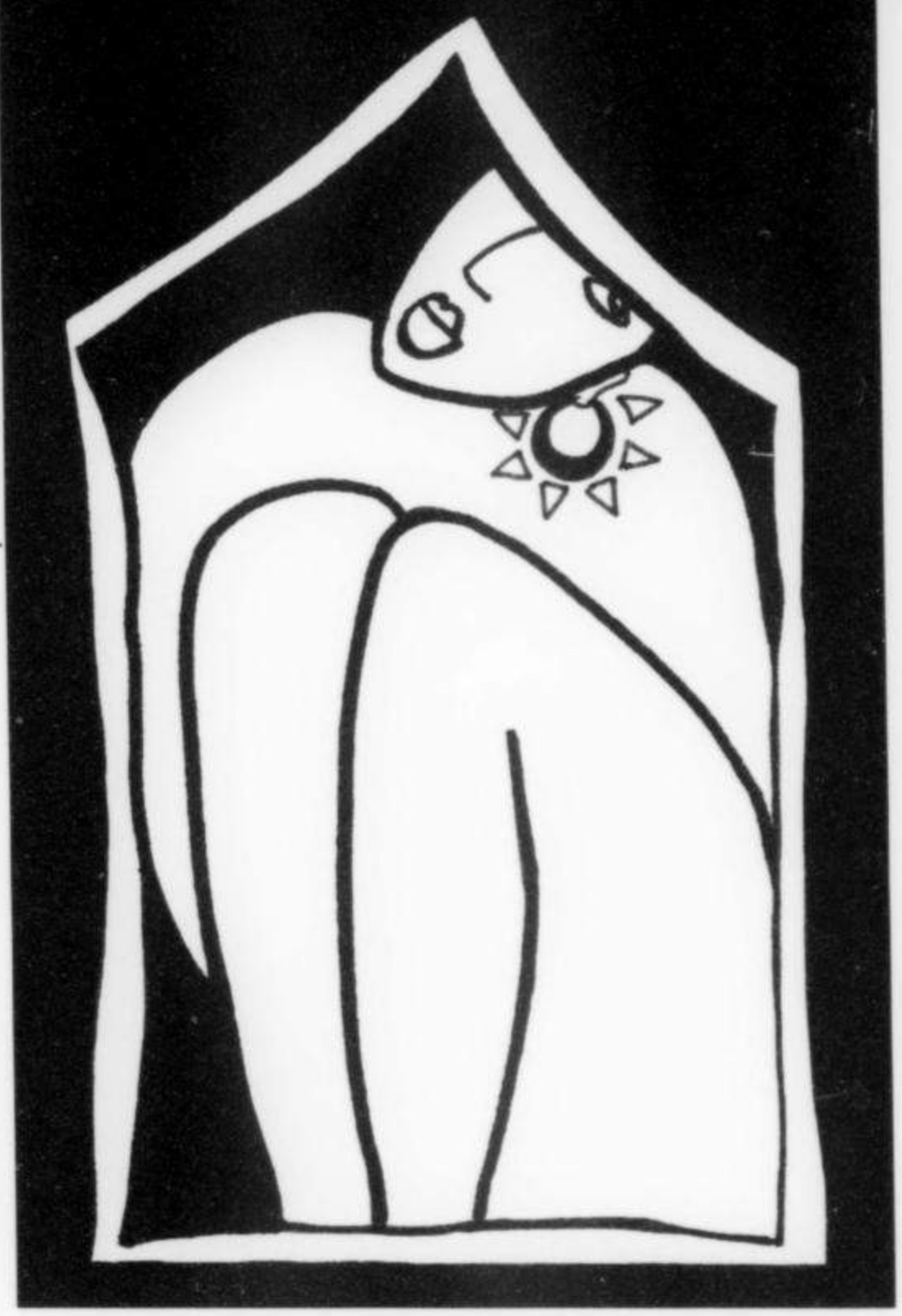


ILLUSTRATION BY NADINE EPSTEIN

To point out that no hard and fast line separates the public from the private is to state the obvious. Take the Clinton impeachment imbroglio: a major and continuing controversy turned in large part over whether the president's behavior was entirely within the "zone of private life," hence off-limits to public scrutiny and adjudication; or whether it was public, the events in question having occurred in a very public and very civic site--the Oval Office; or whether some combination of private and public was involved.

Why are public and private so tricky to deal with? Surely, in part, because these categories have a way of bleeding into one another and because what one era declares private another might open up to public view. The Clinton scandal, however, highlighted a further, more troubling complication, which is that a distinction like public and private can collapse under the weight of other cultural categories and stereotypes. With the Lewinsky affair, civic language disappeared entirely, and we were stuck with the sort of hoary images that still retain much of their power to provoke either sympathy or condemnation.

The particular images that obscured our recently failed public discussion were drawn from another cultural divide, this one between men and women. The particular arena in question was the realm of "emotional labor." Even as the distinction between men and women in most human activities in American society dissolves (particularly in the worlds of education, where more women now complete higher education than do men, and work, where workers of the same age cohort make comparable wages), a gender division of emotional labor between men and women yet pertains.

Let's return to the impeachment scandal psychodrama as a case in point. Consider that women consistently "went easier" on the president in polls and surveys and were readier to "forgive" President Clinton for his misbehavior than were men. Mrs. Clinton benefitted from this attitude as well. Hillary Clinton's approval ratings soared. As a wronged wife, rather than an activist first lady, Clinton captured public approval—especially among women. She was publicly betrayed, yet she stood by her man—a stance Mrs. Clinton had sarcastically derided in the famous interview she and her husband did in 1992.

Mrs. Clinton was the direct beneficiary of the fact that what might be called "private" categories more readily and insistently come into play where female behavior is concerned, so "wronged wife" trumped the negatives generated by her (admittedly rather maladroit) handling of such a hot political issue as health care reform. And ironically on the latter front, the fact that Mrs. Clinton was an unelected *spouse* weighed heavily in critical comments—she wasn't the public figure of the pair so how could she legitimately take on such a task?

Men, interestingly, criticized the president for recklessness, precisely because he had drawn a young woman about the same age as his daughter into a forlorn sexual adventure. He, father and leader, should be protecting young women, not using them for sexual servicing. Here one sees remnants of traditional male emotional labor kicking in. But men didn't dominate this emotional drama: women did. Sexist stereotypes abounded, nearly all of them embodying highly negative images of men ("They all lie about sex," "He couldn't help it, he's a guy"). Mrs. Clinton benefitted from each of these and the president drew sympathy as a guy who just couldn't help himself.

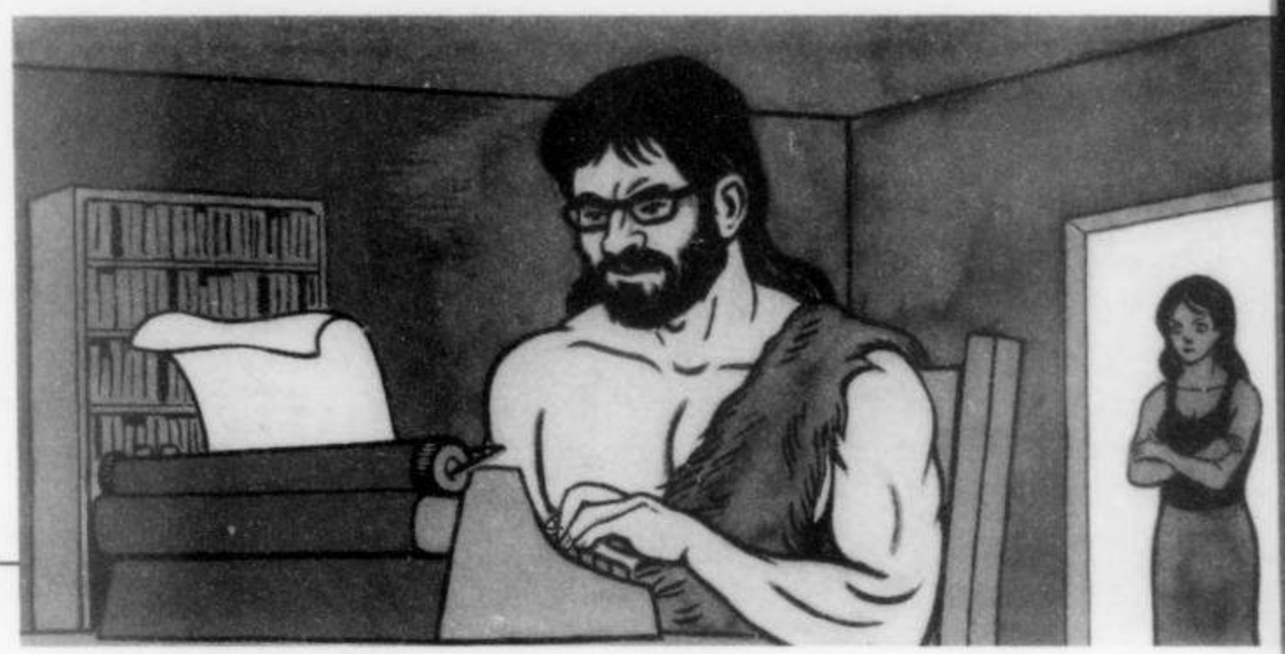
Because this pop-therapeutic idiom triumphed in the popular discussion, an idiom that women, as the "more emotional" of the sexes "feel comfortable" with ("you must

(continued on page 61)

Jean Bethke Elshtain is the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Professor of Social and Political Ethics at the University of Chicago and the author of many books, including Real Politics: At the Center of Everyday Life *(Johns Hopkins, 1998).*

PERSONAL ESSAY

Samson, *or* Homage to Shel



David Mamet

The story of Samson can be seen as that of the writer, grown old, betrayed into domesticity. For, finally, what is the difference between "Where does your strength lie?" and "Tell me, where do you get your ideas?" Samson takes a wife, and she is jealous of his powers, and seeks to subvert them.

He fends her off with falsehoods until, "vexed unto death," he reveals to her the secret of his success.

The secret is that he is a Nazirite. He was promised, at birth, to God, and his hair cannot be touched—for to cut it is to break the bargain, at which point his strength will disappear. (This is a turn on the story of Achilles, in which the fatal flaw comes from an *oversight* on the part of the mother.)

Now, Samson has married outside his tribe. What import has this for the story? A member of his tribe, a Jewish woman, would, of course, recognize him as Devoted. She would understand the long hair as a symbol and would know the source of his powers.

But Delilah does not. Or, perhaps she does.

For Samson surely stood out in a crowd—he's never had a haircut.

If we assume that Delilah might have a *clue,* if not to the source of his strength, then at least to an obvious avenue of investigation, why was it important for her to extract an answer *from him*?

Perhaps she sought from him not information, but *denouncement*—she wanted him *to say the words,* to betray the religious or, say, superstitious, sanctity of his primal bargain.

For whether it was the essence of the bargain (religion) or his *understanding* of the bargain (superstition), his power, of necessity, had an element of the psychogenic in it. He could only perform given certain pre-existing conditions, one of which was to *believe he could perform.*

Having confessed, Samson was set upon by the Philistines and blinded.

Psychoanalytically, we might say that the blindness *preceded* the capture, that Samson was blind to his domestic situation, to the cause of his unhappiness. He had made a bad bargain with Delilah, he had married outside his tribe, to someone who could or would not understand him, who loathed that very strength which, we may assume, was at least part of what attracted her to him in the first place.

Now blinded, he is led by a little boy (a powerless, pre-sexual version of himself), taken into captivity, chained, and displayed for the amusement of the Philistines.

But, as he is removed from the site of his temptation (his home with a shrewish, jealous wife), his power begins to return—his hair begins to grow, and he brings down the hateful edifice. It's the dream of a writer in a bad marriage. For we are so superstitious. "Talent" means "mystery"—forces so beyond our control, so jealous, *we may never even admit that we know their names.* For we know if we utter their names they will vanish. Which is precisely what happens to Samson. His numerous antagonists—his fears about money, fame, diminution of power—are never far from him (in this story they are called Philistines), but he knows they exist only as *goads,* as suggestions that he walk the straight and narrow. They are straw men, helpful figments of his imagination but powerless.

Powerless, that is, until he transgresses and utters the Name, at which point they become real, and his *gift* the fantasy.

"Delilah" here may stand for *lust.* In this story it is sexual, but we can understand it as any unchecked, overpowering envy, greed, or dissatisfaction—for Samson has been given a great gift.

It is only when he is drawn to that which is *outside of his power to award himself* that he becomes unhappy.

Did Delilah make him unhappy? He made himself unhappy. He chose her. Only at the end of the misadventure (at the advent of his pre-sexual, the little boy) can he (the writer of the tale) announce: "I must have been blind."

And then, again, "oh, the *hell* with it," he screams, and kills all concerned, himself included, in a fantasy of revenge: "*This'll* show 'em!"

As, indeed, it has, having endured five or six thousand years. Read as a cautionary tale, perhaps we'd sum it up as, "You can't have everything."

My friend Shel always said: "There are three things—work, fun, and home—and one can, at any time, have at the most, two out of three."

He was always precise, and careful not to utter the unutterable. ❑

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.

DETACH AND SAVE

בְּרֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה יִכָּתֵבוּן. וּבְיוֹם צוֹם כִּפּוּר יֵחָתֵמוּן.

Taking Spiritual Transformation Seriously

High Holiday Supplement 5760

As much of the secular world approaches its celebration of a new millennium, we in the Jewish world renew our yearly practice of assessing how close we have come to actualizing our potential as partners with God, and in what ways we have missed the mark and need to realign ourselves so that we may return to our highest spiritual mission.

God is the Force of Healing and Transformation. On High Holy Days we joyfully celebrate one of the central consequences of living in a universe governed by such a God—namely, that we are *not* stuck in our negative patterns, but can fundamentally change ourselves and our world. The fact that we can change, that we are not stuck, is the reason why many Hasidic and neo-Hasidic groups in Judaism approach the High Holidays with *joy*—because it's a wonderful blessing to be able to participate in the transformation of the universe by transforming ourselves.

We invite you to make the High Holidays *real* this year—by using the period from the eve of Rosh Hashanah (September 10th) through Yom Kippur (September 20th) as a period of profound personal transformation.

Rabbi Lerner has developed this workbook as an aid in the process of *teshuvah* (repentance or returning to our highest selves).

In many synagogues it's a bit difficult to find a place for inner spiritual work. In some synagogues energy goes to catching up with friends, sharing gossip, talking about one's business or profession, speculating about politics or the economy or even about what others are wearing or what's happened in their personal lives! In other synagogues, an obsessive focus on saying every prayer (often by speeding through) can cause spiritual indigestion—as though saying the prayers could be a substitute for actual introspection and transformation. Outside the prayer service, holidays can get filled up with social obligations, and before you know it they are gone without anything serious having taken place inside.

That's why we present you with this workbook. We invite you to bring it to Rosh Hashanah services, use it in the period between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, and bring it with you to review on Yom Kippur.

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

If you follow this outline seriously, you'll find that the High Holy Days become a truly joyful and uplifting occasion each year.

Spiritual Transformation: The Teshuvah Process

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

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

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

DETACH AND SAVE

World of Work

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

PROBLEM	WHAT YOU CONTRIBUTE TO IT

Relationship to Co-Workers?

Relationship to Supervisors or Supervisees?

How healthy were your coping mechanisms with stress at work?

Did you inappropriately blame yourself, or dump anger inappropriately on others?

What kind of political action did you take in relationship to work?

Respect for Your Body

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

Eating

Exercise

Vacations

Clothing and Appearance

Self-Presentation

Quiet Time or Meditation

Respect for Your Soul

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

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

In what ways did you neglect your soul?

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

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

DETACH AND SAVE

Spiritual Nourishment

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

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

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

Tikkun Olam: Healing and Repairing the World

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

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

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

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

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

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

Judaism and the Jewish World

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

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

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

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

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

Through much of the past year, Israel has continued its policy of demolishing Palestinian homes, even under Barak. What have you done to indicate to the new government that you want a change in policy?

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

Personal Traits

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

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

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

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

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

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

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

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

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

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

DETACH AND SAVE

DETACH AND SAVE

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

Teshuvah "Partner" or Support Group

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

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

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

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

Home Phone: _____

Work Phone: _____

CHECKING IN WITH EACH OTHER

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

CONFIDENTIALITY

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

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

Teshuvah partner or group members sign here:

_____

For Our Sins

A Supplement to the High Holiday Prayerbook

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

FOR OUR SINS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

DETACH AND SAVE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

For the sins of withholding love and support;

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

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

For the sins of not recognizing the beauty within ourselves;

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

For the sins of not allowing ourselves to play;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

For the sins of not having compassion for one another;

And for not taking care of one another;

For the sins of not sharing responsibility for childrearing;

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

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

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

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

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

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

Composed by Michael Lerner, editor, TIKKUN *magazine, for Yom Kippur 5760; September 1999. Make copies of these prayers and workbook—send them to friends and family. And urge them to help* TIKKUN *by subscribing (send a check for $29 to* TIKKUN, *26 Fell Street, San Francisco, CA 94102).*

SPIRITUAL PATHS

A Kabbalah for the Environmental Age



Arthur Green

A longing for Kabbalah is abroad in the land. Even people with little connection to Judaism, no knowledge of Hebrew, many of them in fact non-Jews, are seeking initiation into the secret chambers of Jewish esoteric knowledge. Differing from the interest in Hasidism that centered mostly around Chabad in the preceding decades, this turn to Kabbalah has rather little to do with Jewish observance or with nostalgia for a romanticized shtetl past (a past that many denizens of "Kabbalah centers" in fact do not share). The Kabbalah seekers are after the Truth, with a capital *T*. That this truth might also help them to solve personal problems, to predict the future, and to win fame and fortune are claims made only by the sleaziest part of the Kabbalah sales force.

Like all the waves of spiritual search that have struck our shores (the Pacific being hit with greater force than the Atlantic, for some reason), the contemporary interest in Kabbalah contains a wide range of seekers. The most serious spend long years at it, realizing that mastery of a complex teaching and way of thought does not come easily. Eventually, they realize that they have to study Hebrew. More than any other of the world's mystical teachings, Kabbalah is itself a language, constituted by wordplays, numerical computations, and meditations on letters, on names of God, and on strange readings of biblical verses—all of them rooted in the Hebrew. Others, who lack the time or patience to master the language as well as the secret doctrine, look for teachers who will distill the wisdom of the ancients in this unique Jewish garb.

Most of these seekers discover that we are no longer really Kabbalists. The old system, qua system, does not work for us. The mythic universe of Kabbalah, for all its beauty, belongs to another age. Whether we look at the hierarchical structure, at the Jewish spiritual superiority implied by Kabbalah, or at the passive-subject role assigned to the feminine, I for one do not believe that a return to the mentality of the ancients is the proper solution to our current woes. Instead, our age is very much in need of a post-Kabbalistic Jewish mysticism, one richly nourished, but not dominated, by the old language and structure. Most importantly, we need a new sort of Jewish piety, a religious attitude fitting to an environmentally-concerned future that is already upon us. Among the elements I seek is a Judaism unafraid to proclaim the holiness of the natural world, one that sees creation, including both of the world and of the human self, as a reflection of divinity and a source of religious inspiration. It is in this spirit that I turn to Kabbalah, seeking to learn from, but also to adapt and transform, its vision. The insight that God and universe are related not primarily as Creator and creature, but as deep structure and surface, a central insight of the mystical tradition, is key to the Judaism of the future. But the ways in which we develop and act upon that insight will have to be appropriate to our own age.

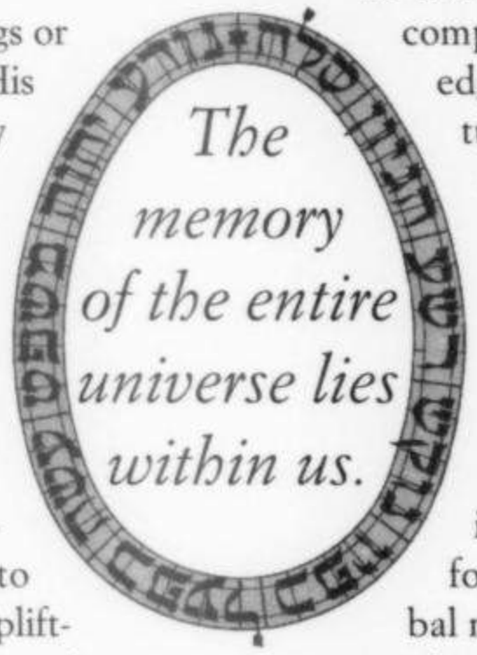
The magnificent architectonics of the kabbalists' vision cannot be fully articulated here. Their grand picture of the inner universe, in which the One that encompasses all being opens up to reveal itself as ten, is the beginning of the kabbalistic system. The ten *sefirot* (literally: "numbers") are stations in the flow of energy from the One into the many. The ten-in-one cosmos is a way of responding to the eternal mystical question, "How do the many proceed from the One?" The kabbalists say: "Very slowly and subtly. Let us show you the process." As one gets further into Kabbalah,

ILLUSTRATION BY MICHAEL J. BERKOWITZ

Arthur Green, Philip W. Lown Professor of Jewish Thought at Brandeis University, is currently a fellow at Hebrew University's Institute for Advanced Studies.

it turns out that each of the ten sefirot contains all the other nine and the whole process of tenfold manifestation repeats itself four times as one journeys through various upper or inner "worlds." There is thus a basic "grid" of four hundred rungs, each discussed with great finesse in the highly refined symbolic language of Kabbalah. Other versions of the kabbalistic "map" have the ten sefirot open themselves further to reveal more decades, becoming hundreds, thousands, and so forth.

For the initiate, the sefirot also serve as rungs or marking points of the mystic's inward journey. His goal (it only also can become "hers" in very recent times) is to reverse the journey of God from unity into multiplicity, going back to make the many into one again. The kabbalist who "ascends" those rungs ideally "uplifts" the lower worlds, taking them along on the journey back to oneness. In this way they, along with the mystic's own soul, may be reincluded in the one. This is the kabbalistic concept of *tikkun,* the restoration of the worlds to their original harmony as carried out in this "uplifting" activity of the mystical life. Each person is a microcosm, also built in the same pattern of the sefirot, so that cosmology and psychology, our ways of understanding life's origins and our own innermost selves, are quite identical. God's cosmic journey into multiplicity and your inward journey into unity are mirror images of one another.



This "great chain of being" approach to spirituality can be appreciated more than ever today, not only for its beauty but for a certain dimly perceived accuracy as well. Each human being contains the entire universe, claims the ancient myth. All the rungs of descent (and potential ascent) are contained in each soul. But that is true, even in de-mythologized form: all of our ancestors, each stage and mini-step in the evolution of life that brought us to where we are today, are present within us. The DNA that constitutes the life-identity of each of us exists indeed *zekher le-ma'aseh bereshit,* "in memory of the act of Creation," linking us back to our most remote origins.

Part of our work as self-aware, articulate beings is converting that biological "memory" into consciousness and building a holy structure (i.e., a religion or a civilization) that articulates and sanctifies those links. In this way, the actual fact of all our past's presence within us is converted into a basis for meaning, for expression of our deep rootedness in all that is and has come before us. The memory of the entire universe lies within us. Hopefully, the values represented by that ongoing project of civilization-building will lead us forward as well, helping us realize that we must be faithful transmitters to all the many future links in the evolutionary chain, just as we are the grateful recipients of the efforts of all those who have fought the ongoing life-struggle to bring us to this moment. All of the upper and lower "worlds" of the kabbalist here become manifest in human terms, as generations that lie before and behind us but also as multiple layers of human self-awareness that we seek to peel back in search of our deepest and truest selves.

But in order to constitute Judaism, the single structure of cosmos and mind has to constitute the inner structure of Torah as well. The old rabbinic version of correspondences claimed that the 613 commandments of Torah stand parallel to the 248 limbs and 365 muscles or sinews that comprise each human body (based on the knowledge of anatomy current in fourth- or fifth-century Babylonia!). The human being is thus a microcosm of Torah, itself the blueprint through which God created the cosmos. This structure is overlaid on the tenfold sefirotic structure of Kabbalah. Torah itself, according to the kabbalists, is an elaborate construction, a cosmic weave of letters drawn wholly out of the four simple letters of the name of God. At its heart lies the barely whispered breath of the four semi-consonants Yod He Waw He, the verbal noun that tries to express the divine Self. This name is an impossible conflation of the verb "to be"; hence the God of Exodus, where the name is introduced, says: "I shall be whatever I shall be," meaning that the elusive Self of the universe will ever escape definition. Those four letters are a term for being—HaWaYaH—itself. But because they are mere breath, they also stand for the birth of language, the emergence of the word from the universal silence beyond, from what we Jews call the eternal Torah of God, the wordless truth that "was" before Creation.

God *is* Being—Y-H-W-H—when existence is seen from a fully unitive, harmonic, and all-embracing point of view—a perspective that ever eludes us mere humans, located as we are in particular identities of time and space. The small self and its limitations keep us from seeing the great Self at work both within and around us. But then the letters, like pieces in a puzzle, are mysteriously re-arranged and HaWaYaH, existence itself, reveals itself to be none other than Y-H-W-H, the great and powerful name that could be spoken only by the high priest on Yom Kippur, alone in the innermost holy chamber of the holy Temple.

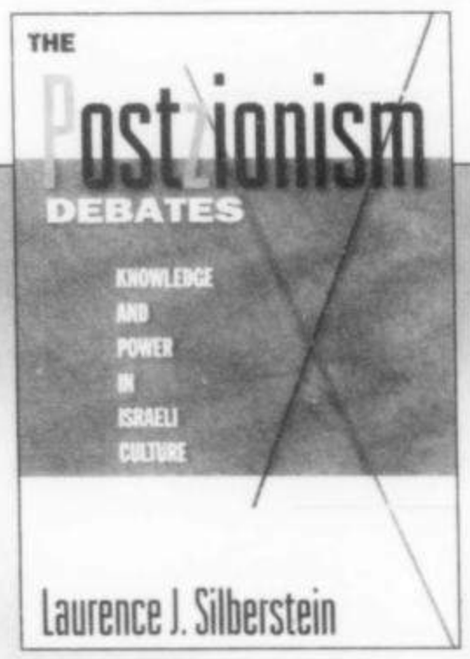
To create a Kabbalah for our times, we have to reach beyond the historical Kabbalah, back to the biblical tale of origins. The kabbalists' universe depends entirely on the much older biblical creation tale, the ingenious opening chapter of Genesis that for nearly twenty-five hundred years served as chief source for the West's understanding of natural, including human, origins. The account of how God in six days spoke each order of existence into being is now of only antiquarian interest as an actual account of how the world came to be, though it remains alive for us as a liturgical text and a source of mythic creativity. But I would like to lift the veil behind Genesis 1 and ask just what it was

that this magnificently penned single chapter managed to accomplish.

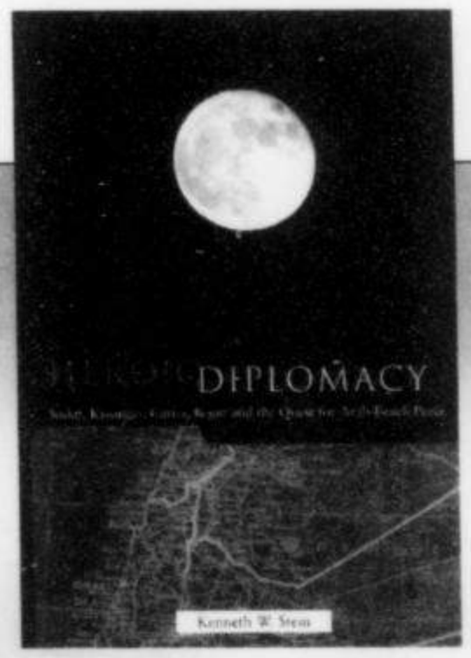
The old Mesopotamian and Canaanite creation myths, now barely recalled, were well known to the biblical authors. They include the rising up of the primal forces of chaos, represented chiefly by Yam or Tiamat, gods of the sea, against the order being imposed by the sky gods. The defeat of that primordial rebellion and its bloody end is well documented, as scholars have shown, in a number of passages within the Bible: in the Prophets, Psalms, Job, and, by subtle implication, even in the Genesis text itself. That tale of origins was a part of the cultural legacy of ancient Israel. The fact that it is reflected even in post-biblical midrashic sources shows that it had a long life, continuing even into the Zohar of the thirteenth century. The original readers/hearers of Genesis 1, in other words, knew of another account of creation, one of conflict, slaughter, and victory, "the survival of the fittest" among the gods. What is striking about this account is precisely the absence of those elements of conflict: Genesis 1 offers a purely harmonistic version of the origin of creatures, one where everything has its place as the willed creation of the single Deity and all conflict has mysteriously been forgotten.

Our civilization has been transformed over the past century and a half in no small part by our acceptance of a new tale of origins, one that began with Darwin and is refined daily by the work of life-scientists and physicists. Scientists are the new kabbalists of our age, claiming even to know the black hole out of which being itself came to be, speculating on the first few seconds of existence as our ancestors once did on the highest triad of the ten sefirot, or rungs, of divine Being. The history of living creatures is again depicted as a bloody and violent struggle, the implications of which for human behavior—even for the possibilities of human ethics—have hardly gone unnoticed. We too are urgently in need of a new and powerfully harmonistic vision, one that will allow even the weakest and most threatened of creatures a legitimate place in this world and protection from being wiped out at the careless whim of the creature who stands, for now, at the top of the evolutionary mound of corpses. A beautiful attempt at articulating such a vision was made by Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry a few years ago in their *The Universe Story.* Such a vision more willing to base itself in part on the biblical/Judaic mythic legacy would also be a welcome contribution.

But let us return for a moment to the biblical Creation tale. While I no longer believe it in any literal sense and do not look to it, even through reinterpretation (each "day" is a geologic era, etc.) as a source of information about geohistory, I claim it still as a religious text for me as a Jew and for us as a people. We still read it in the synagogue and its closing section is the introductory rubric for our most



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SARAH SOLIE

We started TIKKUN because we wanted to read a magazine that embraced the tradition of Jewish social justice; a publication with a commitment to progressive politics *and* spirituality that could take on right-wing cultural demagogues; a voice that spoke to our hunger for meaning and our desire to live in communion with each other, the earth, and God. Today, TIKKUN *is* that magazine.

TIKKUN features the most prominent voices in contemporary American spirituality—writers like Ken Wilber, Sharon Salzberg, and Daniel Berrigan—who look beyond narcissism towards a spiritual commitment that is socially and politically engaged.

TIKKUN takes a compassionately critical approach to Israel, with authors like Amos Oz, leading Palestinian intellectual Rashid Khalidi, and Letty Cottin Pogrebin weighing in on the state of peace, the process of full reconciliation between Palestinians and Israelis, and the issue of religious pluralism.

If you've been with us, you've read TIKKUN editor Michael Lerner debating Noam Chomsky on our role in Kosovo; TIKKUN publisher Danny Goldberg taking on pop culture's critics on the Right *and* Left; David Mamet contributing his thoughts on our cultural condition; Mary Gordon evaluating the canonization of Edith Stein.

But for TIKKUN to continue to grow, we need your support. A commitment to joining the TIKKUN community is a commitment to supporting TIKKUN's voice in the world. As a member, you will become part of a TIKKUN Community online discussion, and be the first to know about special TIKKUN events.

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precious and best-beloved sacred form: the observance of the Sabbath. "Heaven and earth were finished, and all their hosts...." What then does the text mean to me? What underlies the myth, or what truth or value am I implying by so privileging this ancient text?

The text says that before there were many, there was only the One. Before the incredible variety and richness of life as we know it could come to be, there had to exist a simple Self, a source from which all the many proceeded. I refer not to some single-celled amoeba that existed in the ocean hundreds of millions of years ago. I read the text on a different level by asserting that the primacy of the one to the many is not necessarily temporal in meaning. Sacred myth describes a deep and ineffable reality, one so profound that it is not given to expression except through the veil of narration, through encapsulation in a story. And stories, given the need for a sequential plot, require time. So the precedence of the One over the many, placed into story form, comes out sounding like: "In the beginning God created...." Its meaning, however, is that the One *underlies* the many, then, now, and forever. A dimly perceived but awesome, deep structure links all things and ties them to the root out of which they all emerge. Multiplicity is the garbing of the One in the coat of many colors of existence, the transformation of Y-H-W-H, singularity itself, Being, into the infinite varieties of H-W-Y-H, being as we know, encounter, and *are* it.

The Genesis "creation" story is really a tale of the origins of multiplicity, a biblical attempt to answer that eternal question of mystics to which the later account of the sefirot was also addressed: "How do the many proceed from the One?" This reality is symbolized by the beginning of the Torah with the letter bet, long a subject of speculation within Jewish tradition. Bet is numerically "two"; its position at the beginning of Torah indicates that here is the beginning of duality. From now on there is not just "God" but "God and...." This meaning is dramatically reinforced by the emergence of Creation in what are repeatedly described as pairs: light and darkness, day and night, heaven and earth, upper and lower waters, sun and moon, male and female, and all the rest. Behind all these twos, however, behind the bet of *bereshit bara'* ("In the beginning God created") lies the hidden, singular, silent aleph. This One, representing the absolute oneness of being, the One after which there is no "two," is to be proclaimed at Sinai in the opening letter of *anokhi,* "I am," the very heart of revelation.

This One, I believe, is the only Being that ever was, is, or will be. It is the One that undergoes the only sacred drama that really matters: the bio-history of the universe. I believe that it does so as a conscious and willful Self. From those first seconds of existence, through the emergence of life in its earliest manifestations, and along every step, including the seeming stumblings, missteps, and blind alleys along the way of evolution, it is this single Being that is evolving, entering into each new life form, ever carrying within itself the memory of all its past. The evolutionary process is here re-visioned not as the struggle of creature against creature and species against species, but as the emergence of a single life-energy, a single cosmic Mind that uses the comparative adaptabilities of all the forms it enters as a means of ongoing striving ever forward into richer and more diverse forms of life. The formless Self, which we call in Hebrew Y-H-W-H, searches out endless forms, delighting to rediscover its own identity anew in each of them. That constant movement of the One, expansive in all directions at once, is at the same time directed movement, pointing toward the eventual emergence of a life-form that can fully know and realize the One that lives in all beings. This creature, the one in whom the self-knowledge of Being can be ultimately fulfilled, is thus the telos of existence.

In this process, the emergence of humanity with its gifts of intellect, self-awareness, and language is indeed a major step forward. Judaism has always taught a distinction between humans and other forms of life, a sense in which the human stands beyond the vegetative and animal realms out of which we emerged. Each creature embodies the life-energy and hence the presence of the One, but only humans are called "God's image" in our tradition. This means that we are the first to have the mental capacity to recapitulate the process, to be self-conscious about our roots within the One.

"[A]n intellectual feast, soup to nuts."
—Joseph Epstein, Former editor, *The American Scholar*

The Hungry Soul

Eating and the Perfecting of Our Nature
Leon R. Kass, M.D.



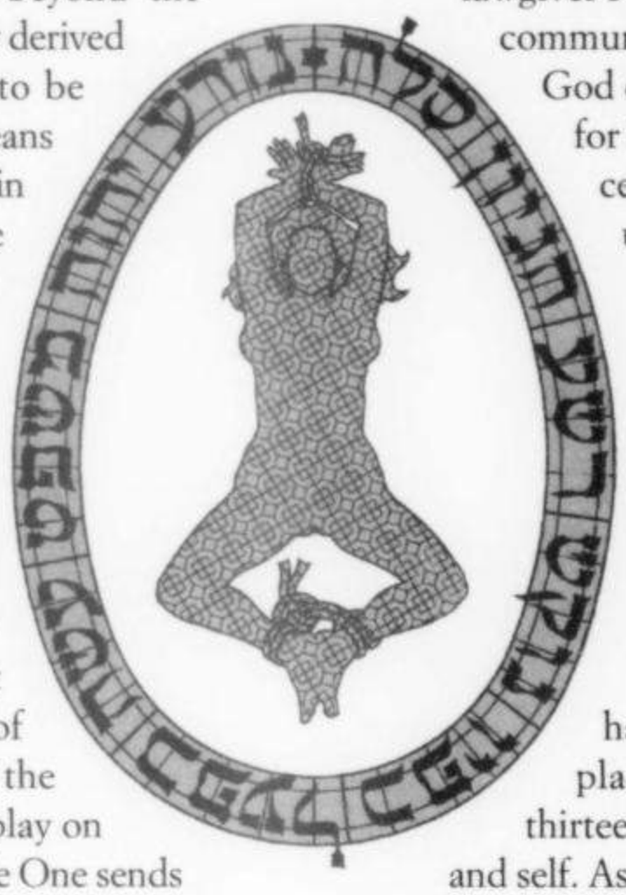
The Hungry Soul is a fascinating exploration of the natural and cultural act of eating. Kass brilliantly relates how the various aspects of this phenomenon, and the customs, rituals, and taboos surrounding it, reveal universal and profound truths about the human animal and its deepest yearnings.

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Exactly what the implications are of that potential can indeed be debated, but surely I do not mean to say that being in the Divine image gives us license for the rapacious destruction of all so-called "lower" forms. God forbid! Of the options provided within the Bible for defining humanity's role, I much prefer Psalm 148's vision of us as part of the universal chorus of praise over Genesis 1's version of us as the final creation of Friday afternoon, with the message of "stewardship" that accompanies it. A true understanding of the unitive vision being proclaimed here would lead us beyond the demands of "stewardship," the ethic usually derived from the biblical tale. Life's meaning is to be found in discovering the One, and that means realizing the ultimate unity of all being. It is in *yihud,* discovering and proclaiming the underlying oneness of all existence, that our humanity is fulfilled.



We are of the One; each human mind is a microcosm, a miniature replica of the single Mind that conceives and becomes the universe. To know that oneness and recognize it in all our fellow beings is what life is all about. But that recognition leads us to another level of awareness. The One *delights* in each of the infinite forms in which it is manifest. To play on that lovely English verb, this means that the One sends its *light* into each of these forms. Vegetative forms indeed experience this gift most in sunlight, stretching toward it as they grow. We humans are privileged to experience that same radiating light-energy as delight or love.

The One loves the many. The coat of many colors in which Being comes to be garbed is a garment of delight. We, as the self-conscious expression of Being, are called upon to love, as well as to partake in and give human expression to, the delightfulness of existence. This is expressed in Jewish liturgy in the order of daily blessings. The blessing of God as the source of nature's light is directly followed by a blessing for God's love. The One does nothing different in the interim between these blessings. It shines in delight at the eternal procession of "creatures" it comes to inhabit. Nature experiences this shining as light; we humans receive it as love. But as recipients of love we are called upon (dare I say "commanded?") to love as well.

I am also fully willing to admit that we may be at but an early stage in an ongoing evolution of aware beings. Perhaps our period will be looked upon in the distant future by creatures no more willing to demean themselves by the word "human" than we are comfortable being called "ape" as a primitive life-stage. Surely they will not be wrong, those wise beings of the future, in seeing our age as characterized by nothing so much as pretentiousness and self-glorification on the one hand, and wanton consumption and pillage of the earth's resources on the other. Let us hope that we leave room for that wise future to emerge.

Discovering the presence of the One within the natural order and therefore the sacred quality of existence itself is exactly what our father Abraham did, according to Philo of Alexandria, the hidden grandfather of all Jewish philosophy. This One manifested itself to him in terms of law: Abraham felt that he was being taught how to live in harmony with the forces of nature. Moses' Torah, according to Philo, is the lawgiver's attempt to legislate for a whole human community the life of harmonic insight with the God of nature that Abraham had already found for himself. I have tried to show elsewhere that certain writings of the Hasidic masters, unaware of the ancient precedent, continue this trend. Levi Yizhak of Berdichev, the eighteenth-century Hasidic master, introduces his treatise on hidden miracles, or the miraculous within nature, with precisely this claim: Sinai allows the entire people to apprehend that which wise old Abraham had already long earlier discerned on his own.

The law that teaches us how to live in harmony with the natural world stands in place of the old system of six hundred and thirteen specific correspondences between Torah and self. As Torah, it too should be one of eternal principles and countless new applications. Its most basic teachings should demand of us that we live ever at the cutting edge of sensitivity toward the suffering we cause God's creatures. We need be aware of the rest and reinvigoration that we give to the soil, the waste of living resources, for each is the embodiment of divine presence. We may not take the endless material gifts with which we are blessed any more casually than we would take God's name in vain. We may not take the One's great gift of holy water in vain. Or air, source of *nishmat kol hai,* the sacred breath of life.

To rest on the laurels of forms our ancestors created long ago or boast of their progressivism in the tenth or sixth century BCE is very much not to the point. What is the point of observing *shemitah,* the sabbatical year, but using earth-destroying pesticides? Of insisting on the humanity of *shechitah,* kosher slaughter, but hoisting and shackling and refusing to stun animals to lessen their awareness before they die? Of washing the bugs out of our lettuce while investing our greenbacks in multinationals that daily destroy entire forests? The challenge before us is to be as aware and insightful for our times as the Torah was in its day. How can we today create a civilization and a law that will be such a *torat hayyim,* a teaching that enhances life? And what will it demand of us? Surely a return to the reverence for air, water, fire (by limiting the amount that we, including our automobiles, burn!), and soil would be a good place to start.

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

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Information
Holocaust Victim Assets Litigation
P.O. Box 8300
San Francisco, CA 94128-8300
USA

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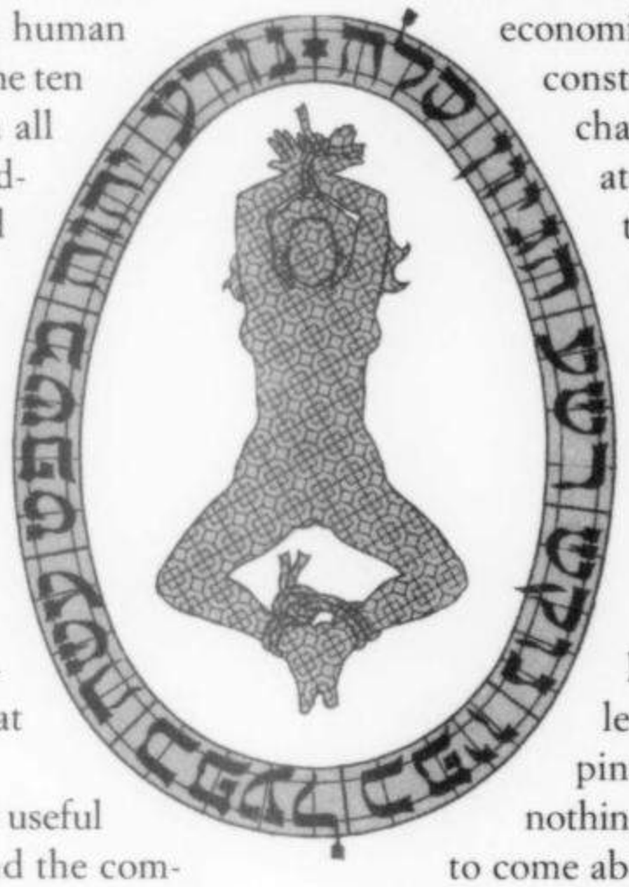
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Scope of Release

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.

Another potentially useful rubric within tradition for proclaiming this insight is the parallel between the ten divine utterances (of "let there be …") in Creation and the ten "commandments" (the Hebrew might be better rendered as "speech-acts") of Sinai. The presence of the One that underlies all being is depicted as pure verbal energy: God is the One who ever, unceasingly, says *"Yehi!"* ("Let there be!"), speaking the world into being. At Sinai, those ten yehis are translated into imperatives for us; the inner "law" of God's presence in nature is now manifest in the form of imperatives that can govern human existence, bringing us into harmony with the ten words within ourselves as well as within all creatures. And since the ten "commandments" are the basis of all the six hundred and thirteen yeas and nays that comprise Torah, all of it is tied through them to the ten cosmogenerative utterances of the One. This parallel is a great favorite of certain mystical teachers. Creation and revelation are two deeply interrelated manifestations of the same divine Self, one showing us that all existence is fraught with holiness, the other instructing us on how to live in the face of that awareness.



Here the language of Kabbalah may be useful again. These two tens, the utterances and the commandments, are both versions of the ten sefirot, those primal numbers that allowed us deeper entrée into the "secret" of existence. The sefirot may still serve as a vehicle for meditation and as a channel for uplift and integration, as we seek out the hidden One within all existence. We manifest that secret by turning outward and inward toward the world around us, seeing it in all its awesome beauty and recognizing how deeply we are a part of all that is. We then ask (in good Jewish fashion): "What does this awareness demand of us?" Here we have the beginning point of a new Kabbalah and a new Halachah ("path" of religious practice) as well. This praxis, one using and adapting the rich forms of Jewish tradition, should be one that leads us to a life of harmony with the natural world and maximum concern for its preservation.

All this talk must seem terribly mythical to readers of a more scientific bent of mind. Perhaps it also seems obscure and irrelevant to some of those most keenly aware of the several immediate threats to global existence. Let me assure you that I share that sense of urgency. Life has so evolved that the fate of the biosphere itself is now determined by human actions. We are masters not only over our own species but also over those we consume, as so many others have been. The very existence of our planet as a fit habitat for any living thing has now fallen into human hands.

With this increase in human power comes a manifold increase of responsibility. It is the future not only of our own offspring that we threaten each day with a million decisions weighted with political, economic, and competitive baggage. The land itself, the *adamah* from which we humans derive our name, is threatened by us, the earth and all that is upon it. The changes needed in collective human behavior in order to save us from self-destruction are stupendous. Belief in their possibility stretches our credulity as much as it is demanded by our need for hope. Our economic system, including the value we place on constant expansion and growth, will have to change. The standards of consumption, created by our wealthiest economies and now the goal of all others, will have to be diminished. Effective world government, perhaps even at the cost of some of our precious freedoms, will have to triumph over the childish bickerings and threats that currently characterize world affairs.

Hardly believable, indeed. But consider the alternative. If any of this deep-seated change is to come about, religious leaders and thinkers need to take an early lead. A seismic shift in the mythical underpinnings of our consciousness is required; nothing less will do the trick. That shift will have to come about within the framework of the religious languages now spoken by large sections of the human race. Experience tells us that newly created myths do not readily take hold; they usually lack the power to withstand great challenge. But a re-routing of ancient symbols, along channels already half-cleared by the most open-eyed thinkers of earlier centuries, might indeed enable this conversion of the human heart of which we speak.

In the emergence of a new tale of origins, we Jews, who have for so long been bearers of the old tale, have a special interest. The new tale will need to achieve its own harmony, summarized with no less genius than was possessed by the author of Genesis 1. It will need to tell of the unity of all beings and help us to feel that fellow creaturehood with trees and rivers as well as with animals and humans. As it brings us to awareness of our common source, ever present in each of us, so must it value the distinctiveness and sacred integrity of each creature on its own, even the animals, or fish, or plants we eat, even the trees we cut down. If we Jews are allowed to have a hand in it, it will also speak of a human dignity that still needs to be shared with most of our species and of a time of rest, periodic liberation from the treadmill of our struggle for existence, in which we can contemplate and enjoy our fellow feeling with all that is. This sacred time also serves as a model for the world that we believe "with perfect faith" is still to come, a world of which we have never ceased to dream. ❑

Returning Meditation to Education

Charles Burack

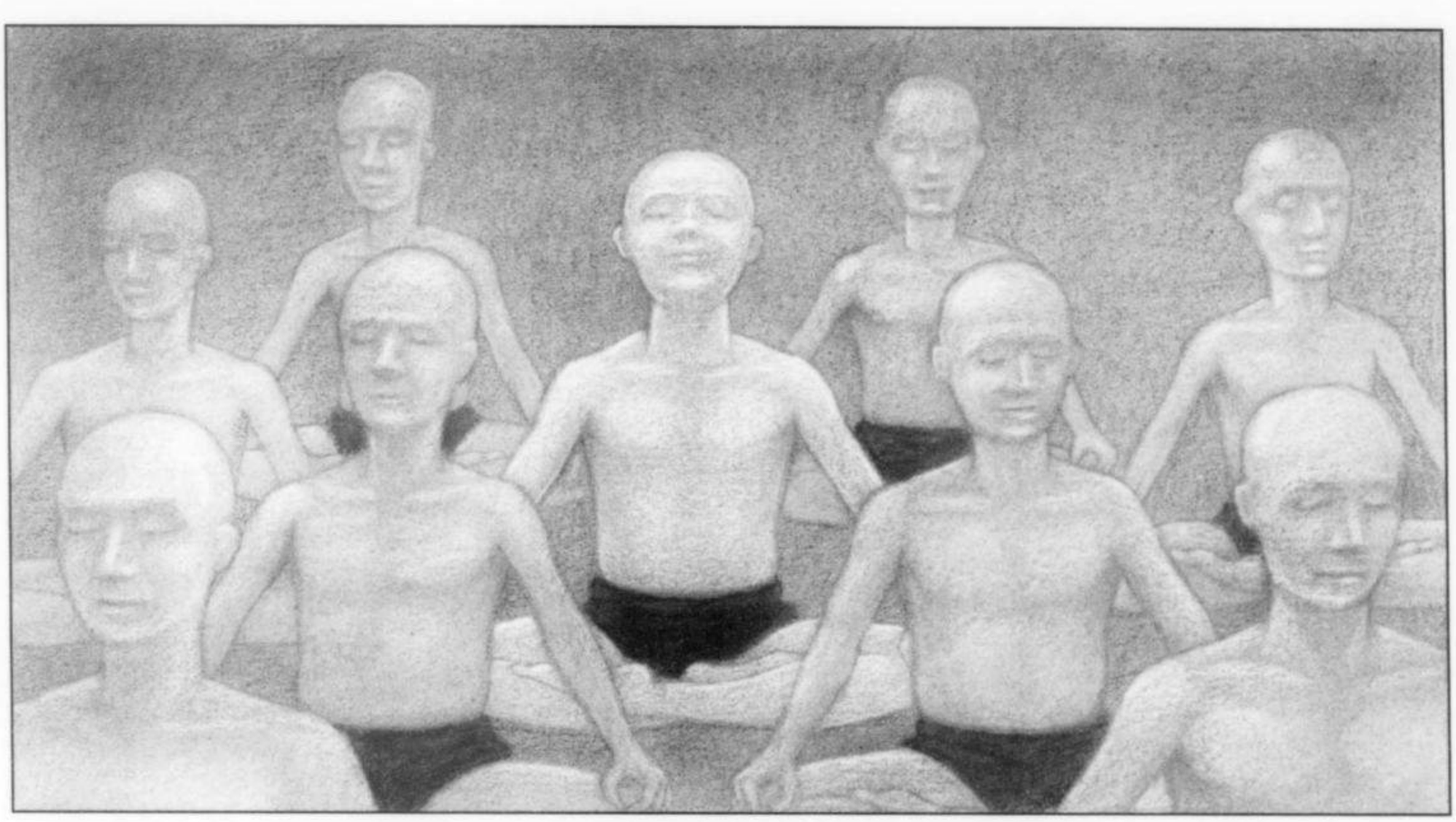


ILLUSTRATION BY RUSS ANDO

In our schools and universities we teach our children—and each other—to separate mind from body, politics from spirituality, male from female, black from white, West from East, art from science, human from nonhuman. Students learn how to categorize and characterize, number and name, measure and manipulate. Rarely do they learn to intuit and integrate, contemplate and create, heal and hallow. Several years ago, I felt that a radical change in educational methods was needed to help transform our fractured selves, communities, and ecosystems. I began experimenting with meditation techniques in my university courses on writing and literature as well as in more informal workshops on poetry, psychology, and spiritual development. As a longtime practitioner, I knew the powerful transformative effects of meditation and felt sure that contemplative practices could help heal the painful divisions I saw everywhere in contemporary life, particularly in education and business. Today, I am more convinced than ever that we urgently need to recover as well as invent meditative approaches that tap our complete powers of awareness, expression, and compassionate action.

Charles Burack is founder of the Center for Sacred Arts and a core faculty member at Naropa University in Oakland, California. He also teaches at the University of Creation Spirituality and California State University, Hayward.

In exploring the educational uses of meditation, I've worked with a wide range of techniques: breath meditations, visualizations, word contemplations, insight meditations, mantra meditations, and chants. Over the years, I've had the privilege to witness many amazing learning experiences and transformational moments. I hope that my descriptions of a few of these techniques and experiences will inspire other educators—teachers, trainers, group facilitators—to experiment with contemplative practices in their own classrooms. Some of the techniques come out of ancient contemplative traditions from around the world. Others were created in the course of my own experiments. Often, I modified standard approaches in order to meet student needs and school/course/time requirements. These adjustments are essential if meditation is to be effectively integrated into current and future curricula.

Breath Meditation

Nearly every contemplative tradition makes use of the breath. I've discovered that simple breath meditations can transform students' fundamental relation to themselves and the world. In one meditation, I ask students to simply

focus on their breath. Here are the instructions: *Close your eyes and take several deep, slow breaths. Now allow yourself to breathe naturally, and begin to focus on your inbreaths and your outbreaths. Be present with your breath in the region of your body where you observe it most clearly and distinctly. It can be the in and out at the nostrils, or the rising and falling of the chest or the belly. Don't look for anything in particular. Just observe whatever sensations and feelings are actually occurring moment to moment. The breath may be slow or quick, regular or irregular, deep or shallow, steady or unsteady, warm or cool, moist or dry. And the pauses between breaths may be long or short, regular or irregular. If your mind wanders, which it naturally will, simply bring your attention back to your breath. Be gentle with yourself. It is natural for the mind to wander and to chatter, so each time you notice it wandering or chattering, simply refocus your attention on your breath.*

This bare attention meditation, which can be conducted for as few as two minutes, helps to clarify and concentrate attention and relax the mindbody. It is called a "bare attention" technique because it requires the practitioner to simply observe the breath as it is—without imposing ideas, visualizing images, projecting wishes and aversions, or making judgments, assumptions, and evaluations. Nearly all students become aware of the busyness of their own minds—of the insistent mental chatter. For some this is a surprise; for others, it is a fuller realization of a familiar phenomenon. The first time the meditation is done, some students will notice that the chatter diminishes as the exercise proceeds.

Repeating and lengthening the meditation on subsequent occasions will deepen its effects, and more and more students will benefit. The continual bringing back of the attention to the breath gradually builds concentration. Students also discover powers of inner perception they didn't know they had. Many, for the first time, are able to experience subtle and complex bodily sensations, such as the movement of their nasal hairs, the blockage or free flow of air through their sinuses, the expansion and contraction of their chest muscles, the elasticity or tightness of their belly muscles, or the changing rhythms of breathing. This meditation is quite powerful when practiced for ten or more minutes.

After the meditation, I often ask students to share what they experienced. This sharing can be done after any of the meditations. It gives students an opportunity to express their observations, concerns, insights, questions. Initially, many will say they had a hard time concentrating and had many distracting thoughts. I reassure them that this is natural and that they only need to be patient and gentle with themselves and to continually refocus their attention.

Breath meditation is also an excellent preparation for brainstorming and freewriting—two techniques that help students deepen their reflections on a text and develop their essay ideas. The meditation expands the range and depth of mental associations by dissolving blocks and relaxing conventional connections and logical linkages. Some of my students also use the breath meditation before studying or going to sleep. Because of the paradoxical effects of meditation, it can stimulate the alertness and concentration needed for active study, or induce the relaxation needed for falling and remaining asleep. Some students use the technique to calm themselves during finals week.

Sometimes, I follow the breath meditation with the reading or discussion of a literary text. I may even read a poem to the students while they are still meditating on their breath. In both situations, students usually listen more attentively and deeply and so experience new dimensions of the poem or receive new insights into how the poem applies to their lives. This is because meditative awareness allows increased access to the forgotten details of past experiences that are stored in the brain/body and to the unnoticed details of current experiences that are continually registered subliminally.

For example, I've found it effective to lead a breath meditation before or during a reading of Denise Levertov's poem "Flickering Mind." As the students observe their own "flickering mind," they will appreciate the speaker's observation that her "mind … like a minnow darts away" and that her "self [will not] hold still, but wanders anywhere." The poem emphasizes the value of being fully aware and present in one's life. Indeed, the speaker declares twice that "Lord, not you, / it is I who am absent" and concludes with the question, "How can I focus my flickering, perceive / at the fountain's heart / the sapphire I know is there?"

One of Rainer Maria Rilke's *Sonnets to Orpheus* (translated by Stephen Mitchell) reveals the experiential fruit of being fully present to one's breath: "Breathing: you invisible poem! Complete / interchange of our own essence with world-space. You counterweight / in which I rhythmically happen. / Single wave-motion whose / gradual sea I am; / you, most inclusive of all our possible seas— / … / How many regions in space have already been / inside me." By focusing on the breath, Rilke experiences the nonduality of self and universe. The breath links inside with outside, or, rather, shows the artificiality of that distinction. Breath is but a part of the life-giving air that encompasses us all. In many languages, the word for *breath* also means *wind* or *soul* or *spirit*.

The pairing of the breath meditation with the Levertov and Rilke poems enables students to have an informed discussion of the inner and outer realities they miss because their minds are continually darting and wandering. They can also discuss the psycho-cultural causes and consequences of mental busyness. Those who are mentally distracted, overwhelmed, and preoccupied—namely, all of us!—can be easily manipulated by self-serving elites who offer temporary, superficial solutions that in effect say, "Do what I tell you to do, and your life will be happy, meaningful, and prosperous." Bare attention meditation is a

nonideological, nonauthoritarian, and nonconsumerist means of self-empowerment because it puts individuals in touch with their own deep, vital self, which is the living source of strength, wisdom, and kindness. This self is not selfish; rather, it is highly sensitive and responsive to the real needs and worth of the surrounding universe. It is a primordial, preconceptual self free of social, political, and economic ideologies.

Insight Meditation

Insight meditation, also known as *vipassana* meditation, is a powerful bare attention technique and one of the central practices of Theravada Buddhism. Despite its Buddhist origin, it in no way requires adherence to Buddhist beliefs. All that is required is a willingness to pay attention, observe, inquire. Here are the instructions: *Close your eyes and take several deep, slow breaths. Now allow yourself to breathe naturally, and begin to focus on your inbreaths and your outbreaths. Be present with your breath in the region of your body where you observe it most clearly and distinctly. It can be the in and out at the nostrils, or the rising and falling of the chest or the belly. Don't look for anything in particular. Just observe whatever sensations and feelings are actually occurring moment to moment.* [Focus on the breath for about two minutes.] *Now begin to focus your attention on whatever body sensations predominate in your consciousness. They may be sensations of pressure, pain, tightness, warmth. Don't look for sensations, just observe them as they arise spontaneously. When a sensation disappears, bring your awareness back to your breath. Use your breath as the primary object of attention. When you notice your mind wandering, bring your attention back to your breath.* [Focus on body sensations for at least three minutes.] *Now begin to focus your attention on whatever thoughts predominate in your awareness. Don't search for them; just observe them when they spontaneously arise. They may be words, pictures, stories, memories, anticipations, fragments of conversations. Watch them as they arise and pass away. Don't try to analyze them; merely bring an alert but gentle attention to them. When a thought passes away, return to focusing on your breath. Use your breath as the primary object of awareness.* [Focus on the thoughts for at least three minutes.] *Now focus your attention on the sounds that predominate in your awareness. Bring an alert, interested attention to them as they arise and pass away. Again, use your breath as the primary object. Whenever a sound arises in your consciousness, be present with it, observe it for as long as it occurs.* [Focus on sounds for at least three minutes.] *Now turn your attention to the feelings that pass through your consciousness. They may be feelings of sadness, anger, joy, happiness, frustration, fear, anxiety. Don't analyze the feeling. Merely observe it. Notice where it's located in your body. Notice the bodily sensations associated with the feeling. When a feeling disappears, bring your attention back to your breath.* [Focus on feelings for at least three minutes.] *Now allow your attention to focus on whatever sensation, thought, sound, or feeling predominates in your consciousness. Follow that mindbody state as it arises, changes, and disappears. If you wish, you may make a mental note of it by silently saying to yourself, "thought" or "feeling" or "sound" or "sensation." The important thing is just to be present with whatever passes through your consciousness. Don't try to change or interfere with it. Just observe it as it passes through your consciousness. Again, use your breath as the primary object.*

It is the final phase of this meditation—the focusing on whatever mindbody state spontaneously predominates in consciousness—that is insight meditation per se. Indeed, for the sake of truncating the instructional process, I've actually combined several meditations into one. Ordinarily, separate meditations can be carried out for body sensations, thoughts, sounds, and feelings. There can also be meditations on smells, intentions, and other mindbody states. These selective meditations are valuable in their own right, but are usually understood as preparations for insight meditation per se, which does not single out a single type of mindbody phenomenon. This truncated approach can give students a sense of what insight meditation is, but the most effective way to teach insight meditation is to do the selective meditations first and then gradually introduce the students to the nonselective practice. It is usually not advisable to introduce insight meditation without some preparatory work because students are easily overwhelmed and confused by the plethora of mindbody phenomena that pass through their consciousness. The graduated approach enables students to slowly learn to identify and concentrate on particular types of phenomena. It is often useful to precede insight meditation with a discussion of the distinctions between sensations, feelings, and thoughts. Indeed, students will come to realize the constructed nature of these—and all—experiential categories. Distinctions exist, but our cultural conventions determine which distinctions we notice and how we categorize them. Categorization in turn determines how distinctions are valued and used. Valued

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distinctions are enshrined in our words, symbols, stories, rituals, and roles. Like the deconstructive practice of the philosopher Jacques Derrida, meditation exposes the pseudo-certainty, stability, and clarity of language. But unlike deconstruction, which is still caught up in and dependent upon language, meditation enables a profound prelinguistic experience of the world.

In practicing insight meditation, students discover the ever-shifting nature of their consciousness. Some come to realize that their very being is constantly changing. Indeed, they realize they cannot distinguish between their consciousness and their being because their only access to the latter is through the former. The world exists to them as an experiential phenomenon. With continued practice, some will begin to perceive the relativity of categories like inner and outer, you and me. What is called "the world" is that part of our field of experience which surrounds the part we call "my body." Indeed, our field of awareness, and the knowledge we derive from it, is neither subjective nor objective. As we observe the dynamic contents of our consciousness, we discover that these phenomena are simultaneously inner and outer. That is, both "the external world" and "the inner world" exist within one field—the observer's field—of awareness. Emily Dickinson conveys this idea when she writes that "The Brain—is wider than the sky— / For—put them side by side— / The one the other will contain / With ease—and You—beside." The world does exist, but we can only know of its existence through our experience. Observer and observed cannot be strictly separated; awareness and reality are inextricable. The true meaning of "objectivity" is that observers agree that the contents of their fields of awareness correspond.

In practicing insight meditation, students discover the ever-shifting nature of their consciousness.

Insight meditation will deepen students' understanding of writers who emphasize the experiential foundation of our relation to reality: e.g., Coleridge, Emerson, Whitman, Hardy, Joyce, Woolf, Lawrence, Lessing. And because the technique enables students to move beyond dualistic thinking and experience a greater sense of community with each other and with all beings, it is effective when used just before psychological discussions of love and individuation and political discussions of multiculturalism and community. Greater awareness of interconnection, and of the pervasiveness of suffering on the planet, can motivate students to greater acts of compassion, love, understanding, and healing.

Visualizations

Visualization techniques also have powerful applications in the classroom. When teaching poetic imagery, I sometimes ask students to concentrate on the images that arise spontaneously in their minds as the poem is being read by myself or by a student. This technique helps to fortify the students' powers of mental imaging. Here are the meditation instructions: *Close your eyes. Listen carefully to the poem as I (or a student) read it. Observe the images that arise in your mind. Some of these images will be from the poem; others will be from your own life experience. Just allow the images to arise spontaneously, of their own accord.* After the meditation, the discussion focuses on: the meanings of individual images; the sequencing and interrelations between images; the feelings and sensations that the poet intends to evoke with the images; the actual feelings and sensations evoked in the students; and the interrelations among the students' experiences, the experiences of the poem's speaker, and the poet's implicit attitude.

Recently, I had students meditate during a reading of Mary Oliver's poem, "The Sun." The poem begins by describing the wonderful way the setting sun moves in the evening sky, "relaxed and easy." Gently drawing readers into the poem, the speaker asks us to imagine how the rising sun looks ("like a red flower"), and to consider our feelings towards the pleasure given by the sun's warmth. She asks, "have you ever felt for anything / such wild love— / do you think there is anywhere, in any language, / a word billowing enough / for the pleasure ... / as it warms you." But this appreciative poem ends with a direct confrontation to readers—if we don't share the speaker's gratitude towards the sun, is it because we have "gone crazy / for power, / for things?"

Students often report experiencing a slow parade of clear images and soothing feelings evoked by the representation of the sun's daily cycle in the second, third, and fourth stanzas of Oliver's poem. The next three stanzas, which describe the speaker's wild love and indescribable pleasure for the sun, tend to produce more exuberant feelings and a greater variety of mental images, probably because the poem's images are less distinct and so allow more personal projection and construction. One recent student experienced the sun that "reaches out, as it warms you" as a benevolent parent. Some students report that their experience of the poem nearly matches their own experience of the sun on special occasions. Others say their experience of the sun is nothing like the one Oliver tries to evoke. These students generally find the nature and intensity of the speaker's response to be quite odd. We then consider why different individuals experience the sun differently, and how cultural and familial attitudes shape our experience of the natural world. We also examine how Oliver's use of imagery, syntax, and line length channels the reader's literary experience of the sun. Indeed, meditation sensitizes students to a "reader response" approach to

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poetry: one that examines how textual devices shape a reader's ideational and emotional reactions. Finally, we discuss the shift at the end of the poem, when the speaker seems to turn on readers and question if they too have "gone crazy / for power, / for things?" We consider how this accusatory question affects the overall experience of the poem. Many students feel interrogated and assaulted by the question; for some, it ruins the entire poem. A few students feel they were "set up" by Oliver: she draws them into having a wonderful vicarious experience of the sun and then accuses them of being materialistic and power-hungry and of neglecting the sun in their everyday lives.

I sometimes introduce a more active visualization after a discussion of a poem in order to help students relate the poem more intimately to their own lives. For example, after discussing a poem like Oliver's, I ask students to visualize a powerful experience they had in nature: *Close your eyes and take a few deep, slow breaths. Recall an occasion when you had a powerful experience while alone in nature. Try to remember a time when you felt extremely connected or alive or peaceful or filled with wonder and awe. Where were you? Try to see in your mind's eye exactly where you were. Was it in the forest, at the seashore, in the desert? If you were in the forest, try to see and smell the trees, to hear and feel the wind, to see and feel the sun. Use all of your senses to reexperience the event. Were you walking or sitting? Were you silent or singing or talking to yourself? How did this powerful experience come about? What event seemed to trigger your experience? What sequence of thoughts, feelings, sensations did you experience? How does this experience continue to affect you to this day?*

After students meditate for three to five minutes, I ask if anyone would like to share his or her contemplative experience. The ensuing discussion of personal experiences is illuminating in its own right and also serves to shed new light not only on the previous poetry discussion but also on our complex relationship to the world. This particular meditation, for example, allows students to consider the difference between their original experience in nature and their reexperiencing of that encounter in the present.

Contemplating Questions

One method for strengthening students' contemplative and creative powers is to have them meditate on a question. In a psychology course on interpersonal relations or a literature course on romantic poetry, students can be asked to contemplate questions like "What is love?" or "Who am I?" Here are the instructions: *Close your eyes and take a few slow, deep breaths. Now focus your attention on the question "Who am I?" Don't force any answers. Just allow your thoughts to form spontaneously. Observe the ideas and images and feelings that arise of their own accord.* Students can also pair up and repeat the question out loud to each other. Through this exercise, students become aware of their covert role identifications and self-images. They come to realize the multifarious ways in which early cultural conditioning and ongoing social pressures shape their experience of themselves. They also come to realize how their own self-judgments diminish their personal well-being and constrict their powers of love and creativity. As the meditation is extended for longer periods, some students begin to tap more expansive senses of identity that lie beneath the dense web of socially constructed identities. I have heard students say, "I am the earth," "I am the sun," "I am an ocean of energy," "I am the cosmos," "I am a child of God." When students become aware of these broader and deeper identifications, they are more likely to feel real responsibility for the well-being of others and to act on that sense of responsibility. This exercise can be followed by a discussion of how internalized images and ideas affect—extend, contract, clarify, cloud, distort—our sense of who we are and what we can do.

Meditation should not be taken on faith.

In closing, I want to emphasize that what meditation can do is not speculative and should not be taken on faith. Meditation is an empirical art and science. Students need to experience for themselves what contemplative awareness is. Once they've had this experience, they'll understand that all conversation about meditative consciousness is metaphorical and approximate. They'll also realize they can observe their experience more truly than they can possibly say or picture. Indeed, meditative experience gives students powerful evidence of the limits of language, logic, representation, and expression. They come to realize the artificiality or conventionality involved in imposing ideas and images on experience. They start to see that their own words and pictures are static, approximate renderings of the dynamic, complex flux of reality as it is experienced by a human being.

Meditation also gives students more time to reflect with their full powers of awareness. And that is what is most needed in the classroom: sufficient time to contemplate deeply. As educators, we need to resist the pervasive societal—indeed, global—emphasis on speed because it guarantees partial, superficial, or distorted understanding. No depth of comprehension can come out of rushing, scanning, skimming.

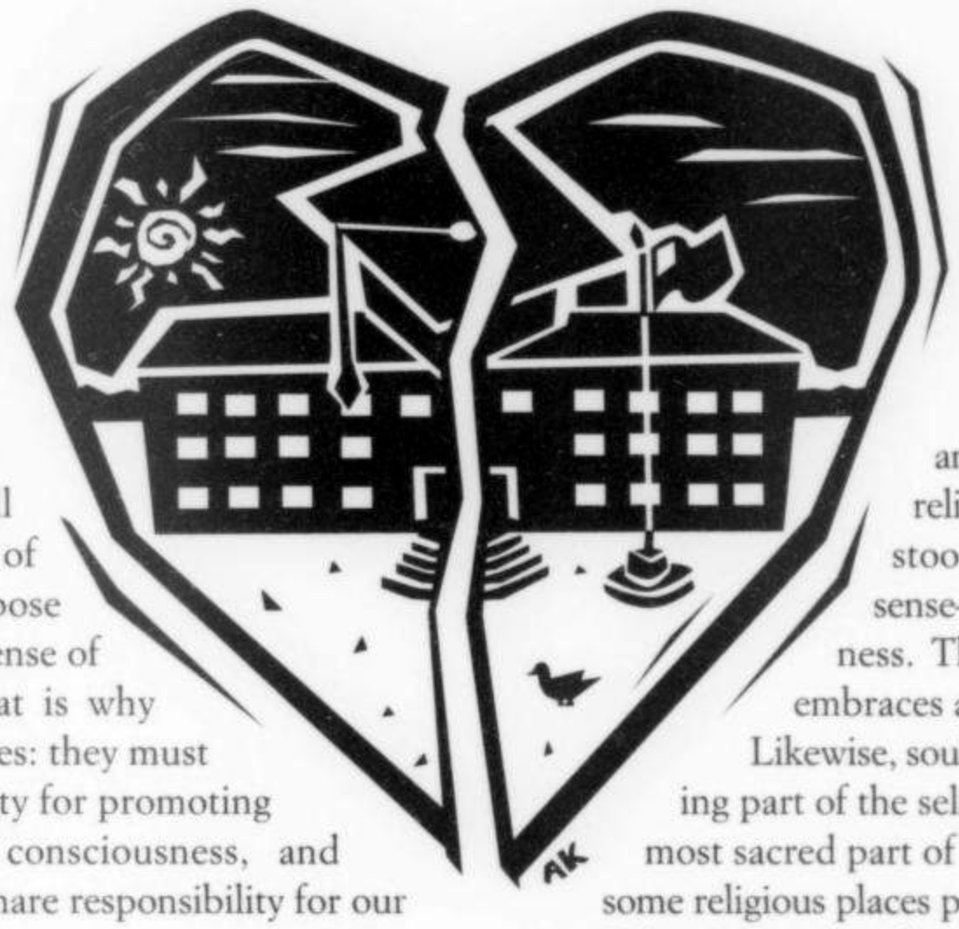
We have seen that contemplation helps to heal inner splits and outer conflicts by accessing our most expansive and integrated powers of awareness and action. Through meditative awareness, we become more deeply responsive to ourselves and our fellow living beings. Through contemplation we reach the source of our of greatest compassion, creativity, tranquillity, and joy. So while meditation is not a panacea, it does powerfully transform our lives and the lives of all other beings inhabiting this planet. ❑

CURRENT DEBATE

Schools Without Souls

Moral Community & the Public School

Gregory A. Valde



Schools, by accident or design, have become the linchpin upon which the futures of so many of our children rest. It is children's daily experience in schools that will provide much of their vision of community, their sense of purpose or purposelessness, and their sense of connection or alienation. That is why schools cannot be neutral places: they must either accept their responsibility for promoting genuine community, moral consciousness, and spirit—or, even if unwittingly, share responsibility for our society's moral decay.

Unfortunately, though for a variety of understandable reasons, public schools have increasingly steered clear of these matters of the soul and instead have elevated values of achievement and efficiency to primary status. In doing so they have undermined the possibility that schools will ever be genuine communities where children can develop moral and soulful consciousness. Such concerns have led me to turn to some version of school choice as perhaps our best chance at creating the kind of soulful schools that we need and children crave.

Soulful Schools?

Trying to define soul is a murky business, particularly when referring to institutional soul (something one may reasonably consider oxymoronic). When I speak of schools with souls I am referring to places that foster a sense of depth, purpose, and connection. They are places with a moral center. People who work and study there feel and move around that center. They refer to it, respond to it. It resonates with them and between them. Conversely, some places lack soul. They are hollow; the center is one that we experience as an idol—like efficiency, prestige, or money. They stand for things that do not move us. Soul is a bit like love: it's difficult to define, but you know it when you feel it.

It should be clear that soul and spirit, for me, are not narrowly religious terms. Spirit can be understood more in the psychological sense—as awakeness, aliveness, wholeness. The person of spirit is one who embraces and celebrates life's possibilities. Likewise, soul is not meant to refer to a surviving part of the self after death, but to the deepest, most sacred part of self while one is alive. Certainly some religious places promote soulfulness; and some do not. Likewise secular places could concern themselves with care of the soul, although it may be that fewer try.

Public schools in particular neglect or undermine matters of the soul in three ways: (1) by omitting moral and communal topics and language; (2) by elevating other concerns to primary status; and (3) by failing to confront moral controversy in moral terms. Schools, in short, avoid the topics that matter most—how to live and what makes life worth living.

By trying to be all things to all people, or at least nothing of offense to anyone, schools end up standing for and celebrating things that send the wrong messages to our children. While schools frequently claim to value morality and community, they have increasingly come to be organized first and foremost as "achievement communities." Their values, like efficiency and competition, promote quantitative development over and at the expense of the development of character and community.

Where achievement once may have been valued because it could benefit society, it is now an end in itself. Where prosperity once was valued because it could improve the quality of life, it is now *equated with* the quality of life. Are the schools culpable here? To paraphrase Plato, what's honored in a culture will be cultivated there. Witness the activities and students who are honored in our schools and the awards that are granted. Or the rituals and traditions passed from one generation to the next. Consider the values imbedded in those sacraments of public education, football, cheerleading, and the prom.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ANDREA KASSOF

Greg Valde has been an English teacher, treatment center counselor, school psychologist, and college professor. Currently, he is a father and an associate professor of educational foundations at the University of Wisconsin, Whitewater.

This is not an argument against high performance, only that high performance should serve some central values and be evaluated in the context of those values. Likewise, this is not to suggest that test scores and athletics do not have their places, only that elevated to primary status they become both disproportionate and unconvincing. When children (or adults) value winning more than fairness, owning more than caring, or efficiency more than celebration, we have failed to engender the most basic of moral principles. When children see each other more as rivals than companions, we have fallen far short of community. When self-esteem becomes a national mantra and self-help books sell like cookbooks, it is self-evident how tragically we have failed to nurture the human spirit.

It is self-evident how tragically we have failed to nurture the human spirit.

Not only do schools undermine morality by failing to honor a grander central purpose, ironically they undermine achievement as well. Elevated to an end rather than a means, schoolwork rings hollow. Students know that biology or algebra is not the most important thing, and when a school implies that it is, it loses its credibility and student allegiance to its vision. One does not have to look far to find students who find school an empty challenge. Without a moral or spiritual center, standards and work become games of beating the system. Conversely, when schools elevate character or community to primary status, doing one's work or behaving humanely may assume a different tone. In the long run, doing one's best, finding one's self, or developing compassion for others hold up a lot better in student's hearts and minds than achievement for its own sake.

At minimum this means that students should be challenged by a moral vision. It means re-introducing the language of right and wrong and good and evil into our discourse, and proclaiming that right and good are preferable. It means challenging the extremes of moral relativism which assert that all value systems are equal and the internally inconsistent notion that educators *ought* to be value neutral. It means that teachers' questions to students should include: "Is that the right thing to do?" "Is that the kind of person you want to be?" and "What are the implications for others of that idea?" It means identifying core values (like kindness, honesty, and responsibility) to model, teach and apply. (Yes, it means that teachers will and should make and share value judgments.) And, at best, it means that teachers will find a way to create a caring community that nurtures the individual human spirit.

What About Katherine?

As I contemplate my four-year-old daughter beginning school next fall it is increasingly clear what I wish for her. I want her to learn and grow in a caring community that challenges her to value honesty over achievement, kindness over popularity, and inspires in her a sense of wonder, connection, and creativity.

I do not say this as someone who only wishes that the rest of the world would catch up with me. Instead, I say this as someone who, having spent some years in soulful communities (enough to know what they are and that they might exist), has spent many more years in soulless ones. I have watched my own spirit suffer. I have seen my sense of community decay and felt my moral consciousness wither. I have seen how institutions, cultures, and colleagues have helped me to place achievement over celebration, intelligence over morality, and wealth over compassion. I have learned values from my communities, but they are values I do not wish to pass on to my daughter or her generation—for they have little to do with fostering a soulful life.

Of course I want my daughter to learn to read and write and calculate and understand history and science, but only in a context that honors effort, kindness, integrity, laughter, and balance. I do not want her to spend her days in a place where love is rarely mentioned and achievement is an end in and of itself. I want her to learn to write because she finds in it a way to connect to others and explore her self. I want her to read difficult things because she seeks to understand and believes in facing and meeting challenges. And I want her to study government because she feels a sense of responsibility to build a better society. That is, I want her achievement in school to follow from her spirit and character. I do not think it works the other way around.

Don't all parents want their children to go to schools that are caring communities that support the development of courage and a sense of fairness? Don't all parents want their children to develop moral consciousness and a sense of relatedness and aliveness? Don't all parents want their children to celebrate who they are and might become? I suspect they do. Then why does it seem so difficult for public schools to provide this kind of experience for our children? Is it because teachers and administrators don't care about morality or community? I don't think so. Certainly there are many teachers and principals out there trying to create communities, lift spirits, and nurture moral consciousness. Then why is it that I find most schools and most classrooms that I have been in so unsuitable to the development of spirit, morality, or community? Why do so many public schools seem like such soulless places?

Barriers to Soulful Schools

There are several critical barriers to schools becoming more soulful places:

1. Size. As class size, school size, and staff size increase, the likelihood of closeness and connection diminish. The larger the bureaucracy, the more an organization tends to

be driven by increasing numbers of regulations and specialized functions, rather than principle or knowledge of the needs of its constituents.

2. Organization of students. When students move around all day (as they do in most secondary schools), traveling from stranger to stranger without having any adult know them well, when students don't know their fellow students as individuals, it becomes easier for them to respond to each other, students and teachers alike, as impersonal objects.

3. Fear of controversy. In their desire to avoid conflict or taxpayer revolt, school boards and administrators seem more motivated by economic efficiency and political expediency than by a desire to build character or real community. This leads to curricula and structures that are the least controversial rather than a search for content and structures that may engender depth and meaning.

4. Diversity. As schools increasingly are run by community-based boards and as those boards frequently represent more diverse individuals and factions, it becomes increasingly difficult to create consensus about primary mission. State and federal government expansion into the realm of education further complicate the problem.

5. Separation of church and state. Much of what is written here, while not denominationally religious, is rooted in the American Judeo-Christian tradition—and accordingly likely to raise objections by those who legitimately fear government interference in religious life or religious interference in the public sphere. Continuing concern about church-state separation adds another barrier to designing schools as moral communities.

6. The prevailing objectivist world view. In a society where reality is defined by the material and measurable, standardized test scores, the number of computers, team wins, and per-pupil spending are considered more legitimate measures of school success than a nebulous concern for community or commitment. Of course we could measure the students' subjective response to the school setting or their capacity for wonder, but we rarely do. These are more difficult to measure and concepts like spirit and moral sensitivity are too murky for most social scientists and school boards.

Regardless of the reasons, it seems clear that it is difficult for public schools to become principle-centered, soulful communities, that schools have increasingly steered clear of an overt moral or spiritual focus, and that in so doing they have elevated values of achievement and efficiency to primary status. Public schools, unwilling or unable to maintain or develop a broader vision and purpose, have become institutions unlikely to challenge the higher angels of our nature.

So, what can be done? Could public schools reorganize to become moral and soulful communities? Could each public school define for itself a soulful vision without incurring the wrath of some members of the community? Could public school teachers be hired and fired partly based on their ability to model and foster a moral community and exhibit

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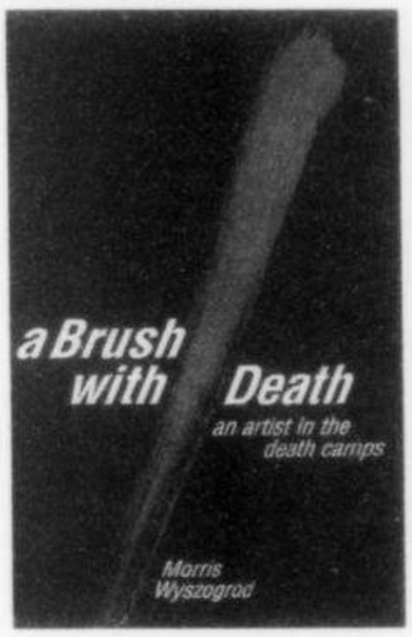


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spirited soulfulness without problems with the labor union? Could public school children be instructed not just in "subjects" but challenged with ideals and virtues and the language of the spirit without parents claiming a violation of the separation of church and state? Could children receive feedback partly on their relationship with the community and be engaged in discussion of their sense of spirit?

Frankly, I have my doubts. I know many who have tried (including myself), only to be stifled by cultural or political forces from one side or another. And I certainly doubt that we could create a vision of soulful schools acceptable to all. But I am also unwilling to accept the suggestion of others, that we make schools amoral places. Trying to remake schools as moral communities may be a daunting task, but it is socially self-destructive to allow them to be anything else.

It is time to let parents send their children to schools that they can embrace.

A Liberal Contemplates School Choice

I am not yet ready to give up on the ideal of the common school. But I am getting closer to relinquishing our current version of the common school. I have also begun to consider the possibility that it is somehow inherently contradictory to ask an institution to serve a variety of interests while concurrently maintaining a clear vision and focus. No doubt some public schools are soulful places—caring communities enhancing the human spirit while challenging moral sensitivity. No doubt many private schools are as well. Some schools probably organize around visions or principles I embrace; others around principles that I find more troubling. But, I suggest, principle-based communities are more likely to foster sensitivity to issues of community and morality. Good liberals like me have to admit that some good things occur in conservative, Christian schools. And my conservative friends acknowledge that they prefer my convictions to the moral neutrality of others. Morality-centered education has certain merits, even when organized around a vision somewhat different than one's own. At least that is the proposition I am beginning to consider.

All of this has led me to consider that American public schools, as currently organized, are approaching the limits of their moral possibility, and that the development of soulful community may be reserved for institutions more specifically conceived. I only hope that liberal appreciation of diversity is broad enough to tolerate diversity across schools, not just within them. Perhaps it is time to let a thousand schools bloom and to let parents send their children to schools that they can embrace—to schools that stand for something that they care about deeply. This is not to say that all value systems are equal or that all schools that might emerge would be acceptable, only that we may be wise to tolerate some diversity of vision to allow for the development of schools that are designed to foster character and connection.

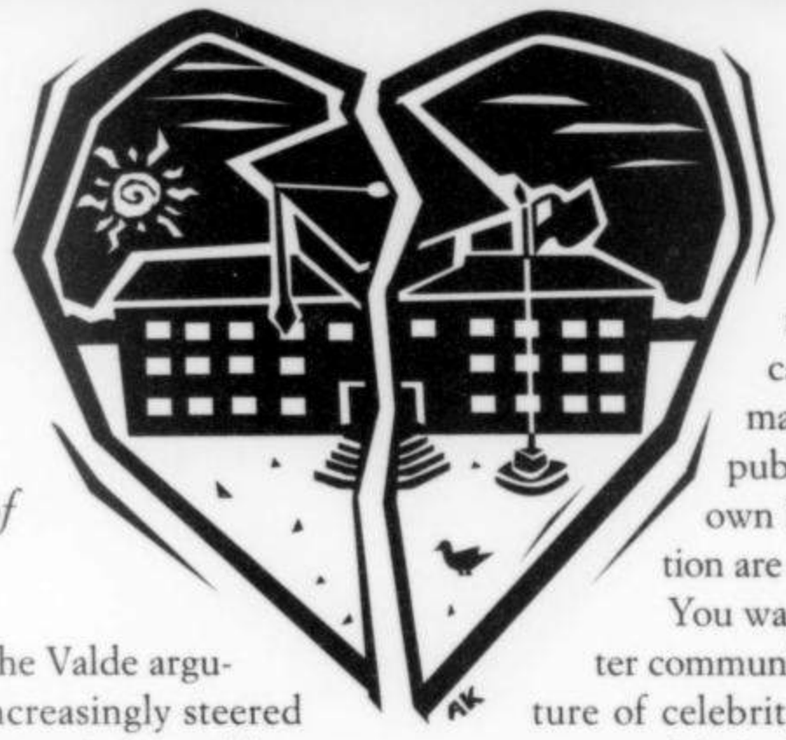
It is certainly plausible that this could be done within some kind of public context—perhaps a combination of real site-based management, charter schools, and public school choice. I know many teachers and principals who, given the opportunity, would love to try to create their own vision of soulful education. I know others who avoided teaching because they could not become the "gray men" of public bureaucracy, people who would offer much to children if they could do it their way. Or at least they could try, and children and parents could decide whether they deserved to continue—that the so-called "marketplace of ideas" may be the best place to decide what kinds of schools will continue to exist and what kind will wither away.

There are many reasons to oppose school choice: the legitimate concern that such choices will result in racial or economic segregation (something others point out already exists), that those "left behind" in public schools will suffer even worse neglect, that America will lose its "melting pot." But the threat of continuing with the soulless status quo is enough to convince me that school choice in some form is an experiment worth pursuing. Perhaps all schools should become "private," with government maintaining only regulatory, accrediting, and funding functions (for any schools accepting public funds). It strikes me as odd that a position considered too liberal regarding health care (offering universal vouchers to take to the service provider of one's choice), is considered too conservative regarding education.

Regardless, schools and school personnel must find the freedom to pursue a meaningful path. Teachers must be allowed to make education a noble pursuit of personal and social excellence, a pursuit of meaning, purpose, and connection. To do otherwise is to doom a generation of students to too many colorless, groundless, disheartening days in too many large, soulless educational bureaucracies.

Others have advocated school choice in order to improve student achievement. Many would follow that star. But I am suggesting that another reason may be even more compelling. It may be that some version of school choice, allowing children and their parents to select a school from an array of meaningful alternatives, represents our best hope for having children experience what it means to be a member of a real community, and for allowing institutions to emerge which celebrate the human spirit and challenge moral complacency. It may be that we could afford another generation of mediocre academic achievement. But can we afford another generation of children who never felt part of a community, who found little to celebrate, and discovered little compassion in their hearts? Mine is a vision of thousands of teachers creating thousands of small schools offering to families their versions of soulful education and moral community. I find myself trusting what might emerge and I feel my spirit stir. ❑

Response to Valde



Leonard Fein, director of the Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism

The largely implicit nostalgia of the Valde argument—"public schools have increasingly steered clear of soulful purpose"—calls to mind the old saw, "Things today aren't what they used to be—and they never were." The public schools I attended, just as the public schools of which Paul Goodman and Edgar Friedenberg and a host of others wrote, were about as unsoulful as my living room couch. In fact, there's dramatically more attention given to "character, spirit, and community" today than was the case in earlier decades.

Which is not to say that other and important things haven't changed, adding immensely to the burden of the public schools, and to the widespread disappointment in their performance. Of these, surely the most weighty is the fracturing of the consensual morality that informed the nation once upon a time, that rather snotty and decidedly WASPish morality that was mocked in the 1950s, assaulted in the 1960s, and that collapsed in the 1970s. How can we ask the schools to embody a "moral awareness" that is absent in the society in which the school is embedded? Do we really want to ask a population of underpaid and often undertrained teachers, often inadequate to their own academic subjects, to deal with such questions as "what makes life worth living" and "what ultimately matters?" I cannot bring myself to welcome such intervention by the schools.

There's dramatically more attention given to "character, spirit, and community" today than was the case in earlier decades.

But let us suppose that Mr. Valde was simply carried away, that he does not really want our schools to become mini-movements, that he will be pleased, even if not entirely satisfied, if they emphasize cooperation more than competition, fairness more than winning, caring more than owning, celebration more than efficiency. Begging his pardon: On what conceivable basis in an obsessive consumer society can one imagine such schools? Here and there, a wonderful teacher; now and then, an extraordinary school. But surely we know that our teachers are products of—Mr. Valde would likely say, "victims of"—the society that promotes the very values he laments.

He urges that teachers "be allowed to make education a noble pursuit of personal and social excellence, a pursuit of meaning, purpose, and connection." Forgive me; not only have many of my best friends been teachers, but both my parents, my brother, one of my sons-in-law, and I have been teachers, and I defer to no one in my appreciation of the nobility of the calling. But bloated rhetoric cannot mask the mediocrity of vast numbers of public school teachers, people in whose own lives ideas of meaning and connection are stunningly absent.

You want to teach values? You want to foster community? Then insist on an end to the culture of celebrity, or insist that no one be granted access to celebrity who is not in all relevant respects a role model. How to determine such a slippery thing? Why, it is no more difficult than developing the system Mr. Valde recommends, a system in which our teachers would be "hired and fired partly based on their ability to model and foster a moral community and exhibit spirited soulfulness"—whatever that means. And no less an irresistible invitation to abuse.

Or: If you want our kids to know how serious we are about education, how much the nourishing of intellectual capability matters to us, or even how seriously we take the moral mission of the schools—then repair the leaking roofs and stock the barren library shelves and pay teachers twice what they now get. Every time one turns around these days, there's another evasion of the elementary repairs and reforms that are so urgently required.

A few weeks ago, I watched in delight as seventy-two eighth-graders from the Solomon Schechter Day School of Newton, Massachusetts, descended upon an inner-city school, as they have been doing every Friday morning throughout the school year, to tutor second-graders (under the aegis of the National Jewish Coalition for Literacy). The kids, both sets, were having a grand time, and I thought to ask the teacher whether there was actual learning taking place. "How can you ask such a thing," she replied. "How much one-on-one time do you think I can give these children when there are twenty-eight of them in my class?" "Twenty-eight?" I replied, in shock. "Well," she smiled pleasantly, "we think we may get down to twenty-five by next year."

Just about every piece of research on the matter proves—and "proves" is a strong word to use in the social sciences—that optimal class size is in the fourteen to seventeen student range. Yet when I related this episode to some friends in Los Angeles days later, they looked at me blankly. "Twenty-eight, and you're complaining? We've got classes of forty all over town."

Smaller schools, smaller classes, better-paid teachers. Let's start with what we know, and see how far that takes us, before we demand that the schools compensate for the far larger deficiencies of our society. ❑

POETRY

Amichai's Jerusalem



Yehuda Amichai is Israel's leading poet and a literary figure of international stature. His magnum opus, *Open Closed Open,* was on the Israeli best-seller list for eight weeks; it will be published in English translation by Harcourt later this year. *Open Closed Open* is a verse narrative of some three hundred poems, arranged in twenty-three closely structured cycles, that distill from his life story a poetic biography of our century.

The selection here comes from a cycle of poems about Jerusalem, a subject Amichai has returned to repeatedly. He has lived in Jerusalem for over sixty years, and now lives with his family in Yemin Moshe, looking out over the Valley of Hinnom onto the wall of the Old City. What interests him are not the sanctified myths about the celestial Jerusalem, nor the boilerplate pieties of the Tourist Bureau, but rather the complicated realities of the earthly Jerusalem with its terrors and burdens—the daily grind, the exalted moments. Amichai's poems tell us what it means to make one's home in a place where three world religions jostle against one another, a city on a hill which the wrangling of centuries has turned into a site of bitter contention.

The Jerusalem poems are enlivened by their dialogue with the traditional Jewish sources, particularly the Bible. The first poem, for example, personifies Jerusalem, comparing its changing masks to David's pretended craziness when fleeing from Saul. And the refrain "Why Jerusalem?" is a tongue-in-cheek reprisal of the traditional argument with God about chosenness and victimhood, "Why the Jews?" Amichai's argument is with the forces of history and geography. With acerbic wit, he advances the candidacy of New York, Paris, London and San Francisco for the dubious honor of Chosen City. In the Jerusalem cycle, we hear the voice of many of Amichai's greatest poems—a mixture of rage, irony, humor, and weary acceptance that culminates in the self-mocking "Why Jerusalem, why me?"

—Chana Bloch and Chana Kronfeld

Prof. Chana Bloch's new book of poems, Mrs. Dumpty, *won the 1998 Felix Pollack Prize in poetry. Prof. Chana Kronfeld's* On the Margins of Modernism *won the 1997 MLA Scaglione Prize. They received a 1999 NEA Fellowship and a Marie Syrkin Fellowship for their translation of* Open Closed Open.

From "Why Jerusalem?"

1

Jerusalem is forever changing her style, like King David
who put on a crazy face to escape from death. The dead
    pretend
to be resurrected, the living pretend to be dead,
peace puts on a scary mask of war, and war
changes its style to peace. And we who dwell within her
are displayed in the shop-windows of history with a wardrobe
of peculiar fashions and frozen gestures,
a heavenly expression on our faces for pilgrims and tourists
and the exalted angels. But what we really wanted
was to go wild in dark storerooms with an untamed joy
as in the Garden of Eden: "They were naked and were
    not ashamed."
And the saints who ascended to heaven in the distant past
and the astronauts who will ascend from Jerusalem in the
    distant future—
it's as if they are running away from her to heaven.
For compared to Jerusalem, even the outer space of infinity
is safe and protected, like a true home.

7

In Jerusalem, everything's a symbol. Even two lovers there
become a symbol like the lion, the golden dome, the gates
    of the city.
Sometimes they make love on too cushy a symbolism
and sometimes the symbols are hard as a rock, sharp
    as nails.
That's why they make love on a mattress of six hundred
    thirteen springs,
like the number of precepts, the commandments of
    Shalt and Shalt Not,
oh yes, do that, darling, no, not that—all for love
and its pleasures. They speak with bells in their voices
and with the wailing call of the muezzin, and at their bed-
    side, empty shoes
as at the entrance of a mosque. And on the doorposts of
    their house it says,
"Ye shall love each other with all your hearts and with all
    your souls."

ILLUSTRATIONS BY OENONE TERRILL



8

Why, of all places, Jerusalem? Why not New York
with its houses on high and its burrows down below
and its tunnels and lower depths
from which to call out: God, *de profundis* have I cried
unto thee.
Why Jerusalem, why me,
why not Athens, Egypt, Mexico,
India, Burma—the temples are already there,
the domes gilded, the pillars already in place.

12

Shirts and dresses hung up to dry—right away you know
it's a holiday. White panties and undershirts mean peace
and quiet.
But when flags are flying, you can never tell if it's a
sign of peace
or war, if they're left over from a festival
or a memorial for the dead. War and peace look the same
from a distance, the way galaxies of new-formed stars
resemble
stars that exploded and died.
We can be fooled. No, we can't be fooled.
And what summons us to prayer? The wail
of the fire engine, the police car, the ambulance.
And when prayers ascend on high, they fall
back down again like shrapnel from anti-aircraft shells
that have missed their mark. Then once again, a siren
summons us to prayer.

13

"How doth the city sit solitary," the prophet lamented
over Jerusalem.
If Jerusalem is a woman, does she know
desire? And when she cries out, is it from pleasure
or pain? And what's the secret of her appeal?
When does she open her gates willingly and when
is it rape?
All her lovers abandon her, leaving her with the wages
of love—necklaces, earrings, towers and houses of prayer
in the English, Italian, Russian, Greek, Arab styles,
wood and stone, turrets and gables, wrought iron gates,
rings of gold and silver, a riot of color.
They all give her souvenirs, then abandon her.
I would have liked to talk to her again, but I lost her among
the dancers. In the dance everything gets lost.
Jerusalem sees only the skies above her
and whoever sees only the skies above,
not the face of her lover—she truly lies solitary
and sits solitary and stands solitary and dances all alone.

18

Two lovers talking to each other in Jerusalem
with the excitement of tour guides, pointing,
touching, explaining: These are my father's eyes you see
in my face, these are the sleek thighs I inherited from
a distant mother
in the Middle Ages, this voice of mine travelled
all the way here from three thousand years ago,
this is the color of my eyes, the mosaic of my spirit,
the archaeological layers of my soul. We are holy places.
In ancient caves we can hide and write secret scrolls
and lie together in the dark.
Once in Ein Kerem in an abandoned cave I saw
rooster feathers and the torn dress of a woman
and I was filled with a great fury, my wrath was almost
biblical.
In the courtyard of the orphanage, in the convent beside
that cave,
there was suddenly a great commotion and a rushing
about
of young girls and nuns, a crazy she-goat, barking dogs.
Then stillness and a worn brown wall.

19

Sometimes Jerusalem is a city of knives.
Even the hopes for peace are sharp, to cut through
the hard reality. After a while, they grow blunt or brittle.
Church bells keep trying to ring out a calm round tone
but they grow heavy, like a pestle in a mortar pounding
artillery shells—all muffled, leaden, trampling sounds.
The cantor and the muezzin want to sweeten their tune
but in the end, their piercing wail cuts through the din:
The Lord, God of us all, the Lord is
one, one, one.

26

Why Jerusalem, why me?
Why not another city, another person?
Once I stood at the Western Wall
when suddenly a flock of startled birds soared up,
shrieking and flapping their wings like bits of paper
with wishes scribbled on them, wishes
that flew out from between the heavy massive stones
and ascended on high.

—*from* Open Closed Open
translated by Chana Bloch and Chana Kronfeld



MEMOS TO BARAK *(continued from page 12)*

5. Listen to women. You are obviously a careful deliberator, someone who gathers a great deal of information and maps his strategy before he acts. Do the same on women's issues. You met last July 12 with a consortium of women's groups organized to promote women's political representation, a group which included Na'amat, Wizo, Emunah, and Hadassah, as well as the more feminist Israel Women's Network and Ezrat Nashim. I'm told you disappointed them. Don't let that disappointment fester. Ask the group organizers to expand their numbers and pull in a wider range of women's organizations, the grassroots groups as well as the national players. When you have a fully representative spectrum, constitute the leaders of these groups as your Prime Minister's Advisory Commission on Women's Issues. Then keep in touch with them on a regular (perhaps bimonthly) basis. For openers, ask them to formulate a National Agenda for Progress. There are plenty of problems to work with: more than 70 percent of Israeli workers earning minimum wage are women; the average woman earns $930 per month to the average man's $1,730; there has been an alarming increase in rapes in the first six months of 1999; new studies show women are discriminated against in the courtroom whether they are plaintiffs, defendants, or lawyers; and on it goes. You needn't be bound by every recommendation they come up with, but you should welcome the best thinking of those who are experts on their own circumstances and have been dedicated to women's concerns for decades. After considering which items on the agenda can realistically be achieved in four years, pledge yourself to make four highly visible improvements happen, and commit to tackling one each year. Be courageous. Show yourself willing to risk failure for the possibility of victory.

6. Make Alice Shalvi your special assistant for women's affairs. Dr. Shalvi—an observant Jew, strong feminist, former professor at Hebrew University, and former principal of a religious girls' high school—is the founder and president of the Israel Women's Network, a multi-partisan, multi-ethnic, multi-issue organization that has been monitoring women's legal, economic, and social status for the last fifteen years. Make her your personal advisor on women's issues. Let her also serve as the government's liaison to the aforementioned Prime Minister's Advisory Commission on Women's Issues, which in turn will be a conduit to the entire organized women's community.

7. Name Colette Avital ambassador to the United States. She's eminently qualified. And you owe her one. Israel's highest ranking female diplomat, Avital is a natural for the job, having distinguished herself as consul general in New York for more than four years under Prime Ministers Rabin and Peres, and even having survived a few months under Netanyahu. She is respected by American policy makers, well-known to the U.S. press and public because of her many television appearances, an eloquent representative of Israelis' best interests, and a past master at getting along with adversaries (including the most virulent of extreme Orthodox). During the recent election campaign, in order to entice needed constituencies to join One Israel, you bumped Avital down on the One Israel list from seventeen (the slot to which she was elected in the party primary) to twenty-seven. In the end, your party got only enough votes to send twenty-six members to the Knesset. Maybe this was God's way of keeping her available so you could give her a plum position. Naming Colette Avital Israel's ambassador to Washington would be the grandest of dramatic gestures as well as being an utterly logical, eminently well-earned appointment. As ambassador, she would not only be a credit to her country, but would instantly become this generation's Golda. As much as Israel needs Ambassador Avital, Jewish girls and women need her. This is an easy one—don't let us down.



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MEMO TO BARAK

David Arnow

Director of Jewish Communal Relations for the New Israel Fund, which promotes democratic values in Israel, including advancing the status of Israeli Arabs

Mr. Prime Minister:

We both know how upset many people were when you failed to include an Israeli Arab among your original cabinet appointees. Israeli Arabs represent 16 percent of the population. You won 95 percent of the Arab vote, which contributed three-quarters of your 12 percent margin of victory. By the time you read this, you may have expanded the cabinet and rectified that error, but the issue it raises goes beyond any specific appointment.

Your government's basic guidelines on the Arab sector promise all the right things: "correcting past inequalities in the allocation of resources and available public services"; creating jobs, improving education, and appointing Arabs to "the highest levels of government and civil service"; easing the dreadful housing shortage by "accelerated approval of master plans"; finding solutions for the scores of villages that have been classified as "unrecognized" (and therefore entirely lack government services from electricity and water to schools); and addressing the problems of the Bedouin, Israel's most disadvantaged population.

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Is the return to tradition the Jewish answer for non-traditional Jews?

Have the Reform and Reconstructionist movements betrayed their founding vision?

What happened to the secular vision of the Zionist movement?

Can Jewish feminism find its roots in Jewish tradition?

How do we establish an appropriate balance between tradition and innovation, between continuity and creativity?

Is Jewish survival the most important value of Jewish life?

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You must, of course, honor these commitments. But you also must challenge the larger society's attitudes toward Israeli Arabs. According to a Guttman Institute survey, 90 percent of Israeli Arabs perceive themselves as strongly loyal to the state, a view shared by only one-third of Jews. Ninety percent of Arabs would like to see an Arab mayor elected in a mixed municipality, a view opposed by two-thirds of Jews. And a 1998 Hebrew University study found that 72 percent of Israeli Jewish high school students would deprive Arabs of the right to representation in the Knesset.

In light of these attitudes, your initial policy of exclusion sent a terrible message to both Arabs and Jews: that you were not serious when you said in your victory speech that Israeli Arabs "are part of the Israeli people." That message won't be turned around by quietly providing services to Arab villages. It will take powerful leadership from you to confront this problem directly.

You can start by immediately beginning to spend time in the Arab community. See the problems with your own eyes and listen to the mounting frustration. This will help to convince the Arab community that you really want to be their prime minister, that you care about them, even if you didn't take an Arab party into the coalition and even if you can't snap your fingers and create instant progress. Israeli Arabs are used to political candidates making pre-election campaign stops. They will be very surprised by a prime minister who shows up after the election.

Here's a suggested itinerary. In the north, visit the village of Ein Hud. It was officially recognized during the Rabin administration, but still has not received a single benefit promised. Next, go to Um al-Fahm, where government confiscation of farmland led to protests last fall that were fanned by trigger-happy police who fired wildly into schools.

Spend time in Kfar Kassem and visit the memorial to the forty-nine farmers who were killed by Israeli soldiers for violating a curfew when they returned from their fields on the eve of the Suez campaign in 1956. Residents are still galled by the fact that no prime minister has ever gone to the village to formally apologize for the tragedy. Also, be sure to notice the high-tech park built on land confiscated from Kfar Kassem that now belongs to Rosh HaAyin. Find out how much that confiscation costs Kfar Kassem in annual tax revenue. Ask why only 20 percent of the homes in Kfar Kassem have been connected to the sewage system and why the drinking water is becoming polluted.

Listen to the complaints of Lod-Ramle's citizens about their housing shortage. Thirty-one percent of Moslems live in rooms with more than two people, compared with 3 percent of Jews. This is what led to the demonstration in June when over-zealous police wounded M.K. Azmi Bishara with rubber-tipped steel bullets.

Head to the Negev and visit one of the many unrecognized Bedouin villages there, Azazmi or Dreejat. Listen to how the "green patrol" has harassed Bedouin shepherds. Inspect one of the seven towns where the Bedouin were moved—high school dropout rates of up to 67 percent, teenagers turning to crime and drugs, etc. A Bedouin friend told me that if the Arab sector explodes, it will start with the Bedouin, since so many of these people feel they have so little to lose.

Finally, initiate regular meetings with the Follow-Up Committee of Arab Citizens (which includes mayors and Knesset members). The Arab community has been waiting fifty-one years for such a meeting. Assure these leaders that you will appoint a special judicial commission to investigate the fact that for comparable criminal profiles Israeli Arabs are 60 percent more likely to be convicted than Jews and then 60 percent more likely to receive a prison sentence.

"The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens."
—Leviticus 19:34

How can you defend such outreach to Israel's Arabs? Teach critics Leviticus 19:34. "The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt." Remind them that Israel's Declaration of Independence promised "social and political equality to all its citizens." Tell them Chaim Weizmann was right when he said, "The world will judge the Jewish State by what it will do with the Arabs."

You can bolster the moral imperative with a pragmatic argument. David Grossman put it this way: "How long can a relatively large minority be assumed to be an enemy without in the end actually turning into one? How long can the state exist as a stable political framework if this is how it treats a sixth of its citizens? Slowly and steadily, as if slumbering, Israel is missing its chance to rescue itself from a horrible mistake. It is creating for itself the enemy it will run up against after its other enemies have made their peace with it. And war (as the Serbs and Croats [and now Kosovars] teach us today) means war."

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MEMO TO BARAK

Hatim Kanaaneh and Rhoda Kanaaneh

Residents of Arrabeh Village in the Galilee and New York

Mr. Prime Minister:

We worked hard to find a tone to address you, Mr. Barak, that would feel right. Is it worth it, we wondered? Will he read our memo at all, and if he does, will he listen? Clearly what we have to say is nothing he hasn't heard before. We decided to go ahead anyway, like the 95 percent of Palestinians inside Israel who went ahead and voted for you anyway.

Palestinians voted for Barak as they stood in the rubble of their demolished homes, in the dust of their unirrigated fields, in the shacks of their unrecognized villages, and in unemployment lines. Palestinians extended their hands to shake your hand, Mr. Barak, hands roughened by menial labor that built your home, paved your street, cleaned your yard, but are barred from receiving keys to a home next to yours. Still, under these circumstances, hands are extended. And yet again they remain empty. As "everyone's prime minister" you suggest rather forcefully that we are no one. Yours is an ethnically exclusive government.



Still here we are appealing to you, offering you an easy "salvation" on a silver plate. Expand your concept of humanity to include us. Give us our share of land, water, schooling, employment, and citizenship. Demilitarize Israel, at least in heart and mind. Even you, as a military man, could be capable of seeing the world through a lens other than that of "might makes right." Imagine a future where our children and yours can dream of living on an equal footing, where you free your child from the madness of compulsory military service, ours from the consequences of exclusion from it, and both from the alienation and antagonism that war-preparedness perpetuates.

We are not in a position to offer you peace with the neighbors. We are offering the possibility of tranquillity within. Stand at ease and don't view us from behind your field glasses. We look you straight in the eye, hoping that you will meet our gaze and see us—a diverse, vital community with great potential—and not see us instead through the dangerous periphery of your vision as a people who must be controlled. It is very likely we will prove naïve and unjustifiably optimistic in our appeal, but through it we will grow stronger morally. In an ideal world, that would count for something. In any case, we appeal to you because we will not give up the hope of being at home in our homes.

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MEMO TO BARAK

Jerome Slater

Professor of political science at SUNY Buffalo

Mr. Prime Minister:

I assume that the outcome of the forthcoming negotiations with the Palestinians will be a demilitarized Palestinian state. In the process, a number of major issues will have to be settled, particularly the status of the Jewish settlements, the boundaries of the Palestinian state, its access to water, and whether it will be granted some form of sovereignty over some part of Jerusalem. How these issues will be settled will have the most serious moral and security implications for Israel's future.

I fear Israel will be tempted to exploit fully the enormous power differential it holds over the Palestinians by simply dictating its terms on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. The Palestinians are now isolated: Arab states will not go to war on behalf of the Palestinians, no matter how one-sided the terms of a settlement. Nor will the American government, no matter which party is in power, bring real pressure to bear on Israel.

Arafat and the Palestinian Authority are well aware of the Palestinian people's weakness and isolation and so will have little choice but to accept—for now—whatever terms your government offers. Even so, it would be a grave mistake for Israel to be ungenerous.

In the first place, an Israeli *diktat* that failed to meet legitimate Palestinian territorial, economic, and psychological needs would be a moral catastrophe—one which would haunt future generations of Israelis, even if there were no other practical consequences. No one who is familiar with the history of the Palestinian-Jewish struggle over the land of Palestine—especially as that history has been revealed and explicated in the past two decades by leading Israeli scholars and journalists—can fail to recognize the moral issue. The Palestinians, in no way responsible for the historical plight of the Jews and with a claim to the land of Palestine at least as strong as the Jewish claim, have become the weak, isolated, impoverished, and landless victims of the partial success of the Zionist enterprise.

Why "partial"? Because we Jews have never thought that the purpose of our survival over the centuries as both a religion and a culture was merely physical survival—as crucially important as that has been. Rather, we have believed—and the civilized world has largely agreed with us—that we embodied the highest values of Western civilization: above all, the love of justice. Israel, you will recall, was to be "a light unto the nations."

But it is not merely elemental justice that requires Israeli generosity toward the Palestinians; long-term requirements of Israeli security are at stake. Whatever terms Arafat or even a majority of the Palestinian people might be forced to swallow now, the residue of bitterness and hatred in the future would be extremely dangerous to Israel. Conventional terrorism by disaffected extremists would be bad enough; the real problem is that sooner or later, they will inevitably obtain weapons of mass destruction. As the former chief of staff of the IDF, you should be able to successfully educate the Israeli public that the most grave threat to Israel's future security would arise not from a demilitarized Palestinian state, nor even from an invasion by neighboring Arab states—both of which could be deterred or defeated by Israeli military might—but rather from the specter of a nuclear or biological holocaust.

In short, Israel should do what is right, both because that is a categorical imperative for Jews and because that's what is in Israel's best self-interest. What is right means

reasonable and contiguous boundaries for the Palestinian state, a trade-off of territory so that most of the settlers can be brought under Israeli sovereignty without further diminishing the size and resource base of the Palestinian state, an equitable sharing of water, and some form of shared sovereignty over Jerusalem.

Mr. Prime Minister, in view of your substantial electoral victory, your personal legitimacy, your status as Israel's leading military hero, and your demonstrated leadership capabilities, there are strong grounds for optimism that a large majority of the Israeli public can be brought to understand the moral and security implications of the forthcoming negotiations with the Palestinians.



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MEMO TO BARAK

Avraham Yitzhak (Arthur) Green

Professor of Jewish thought at Brandeis University and a fellow at Hebrew University's Institute for Advanced Studies

Mr. Prime Minister:

Throughout its history, Zionism has been in conflict over the question of the normalization of the Jewish people. From a social and economic standpoint, normalization was considered a positive goal. But many Zionist thinkers, including David Ben-Gurion, were unwilling to give up the special status of the Jewish people, a sense that this people represents certain ideals and bears certain values by the very fact of its historic existence.

The socio-economic normalization of the Jews has been at best a mixed success, as Israel's dependence on Arab and foreign workers clearly shows. But that other normalization, long ago described as "Come let us be like all the nations," has proceeded at a frighteningly fast pace. The secular life of Tel Aviv and Haifa is moving far away from any sense of Jewish uniqueness or important heritage. The religious parties are responsible for much of this, creating a resentment and bitterness toward anything called Judaism.

This process must be stopped. Israel and the Jewish people cannot afford to leave Jewish values in the hands of the Haredim. Our leaders, you first among them, must take the finest values of our tradition and make them your own priority. Ben Gurion's love for, and study of, the Bible asserted a real claim of ownership: this is our heritage; it belongs to all of the Jewish people. You can and must renew that claim.

How to do so? By both study and action! Create a prime minister's study circle, a group that meets regularly to study Bible or Jewish text and hears regularly from the great scholars of the field. Show the Israeli people that you consider such learning to be of value. And act according to Jewish values. "Every person is created in the image of God" is the basis of all Jewish ethics, the *kelal gadol* of our tradition. Think of this principle and speak of it when you negotiate water rights with the Palestinians, when you call out to end home demolitions (as you must), when you work toward integration of our Ethiopian brothers and sisters, when you consider equal opportunity for Israel's Arab citizens, when you renew Israeli help to poor nations, especially to help face the twin needs of development and protection of the earth's resources. All of these are Jewish values.

Consider the Greeks. A fine nation: independent, proud, quite normal. But no one turns to Greece today to study democracy, philosophy, beauty, and the other values of their once-great heritage. They gave their legacy to humanity, but lost their special connection to it. This is not the path we seek for Israel. The Jewish people still represent the values of our ancient prophets. It is for these we have suffered; it is to promote their truth throughout the human community that we exist. We have not come this far just to be another nation. After the moral degradation we have all suffered in the past few years, be the leader who helps us to restore our dignity as a "kingdom of priests" who serve at the altar of humanity's highest values.

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A NOTE FROM JERUSALEM ON BARAK

Azmi Bishara

What follows is a selection from a conversation held in mid-July between Michael Lerner and Azmi Bishara, the member of Knesset who was the Arab Israeli candidate for prime minister.

Ehud Barak is the product of a move toward the ideological center in Israeli society, the product first of revulsion against the murder of Rabin, and then of revulsion against a Netanyahu government which consistently lied to its own supporters as it opportunistically veered from one direction to another. The campaign itself steered away from the issue of Israel's relationship with the Palestinians, as though all the major Israeli political forces already had agreed that "there will be no division of Jerusalem, no dismantling of settlements, and no full Palestinian state," but that whoever won would certainly meet with Palestinians to keep the peace process continuing, at least in the form of dialogue and miniscule concessions.

This consensus, of course, is not acceptable to Palestinians, and I cannot support the government which Barak has brought into existence on this basis. But I did help make Barak's victory possible when I withdrew my candidacy for prime minister a day before the election, thus allowing Barak to receive 95 percent of the Israeli Arab vote. I did this because I know that the Barak government will be more rational and more open than a Netanyahu government, and I did not believe that it would be better to have my people suffer

under Netanyahu so that we could develop more political consciousness.

However, I have noticed that Barak's government has been constituted within an ideological framework which ensures that the Palestinians will not be able to reach a final status accord with it. Such negotiations will be like going to an academic dialogue—because the common denominator in Barak's government contradicts the principles of fairness and justice with the Palestinians. Moreover, I think that, in his heart, Barak believes Rabin made a mistake with the Oslo Accords—that there was no need to promise Palestinians so much land—and that he himself will do whatever he needs to do to make sure that the most minimalist version of Oslo is implemented (that's the only reason why parties like the National Religious Party and Shas, whose members overwhelmingly voted against Barak, nevertheless joined his governing coalition). The Israeli "peace party," Meretz, joined this government not because they believed that it would achieve a lasting peace, but because they believed that Barak would be better for human rights and would be more humane in the way that he continued the Occupation—but they didn't believe that Barak would dismantle settlements or create a Palestinian state with enough land and power to make it viable.

Likud could have joined this government on ideological grounds and was close to doing so, but they could not get enough concessions on the issue of what ministries they would run. Because Likud stayed in the opposition and will now make a huge fuss about every tiny concession Barak makes, many Jews in the United States and many Israelis will feel that they have to continue to support Barak as the only alternative. But from the standpoint of most Palestinians, the policies he pursues will continue to be unacceptable.

Barak's plan for Israeli Arabs is clear: he will offer us more money for some of our villages and towns, and perhaps some more rights—but he'll keep excluding us from the political process. Arabs have been told that though we constituted a major part of his electoral victory, we do not deserve a place in his government, even though parties that opposed him do get such a place. Barak's message to Israeli Arabs is clear: "I want your political support, but I don't want your opinions, consultation, or advice."

I raised these issues during the campaign, and ran for prime minister because I knew that after the election, we would be marginalized; if we wanted to get the nation to focus on our concerns, we needed to do it then. I wish the Israeli peace camp had done the same. But instead, they attacked my candidacy and said it would help Netanyahu. So they never challenged the wishy-washy centrism that Barak was putting forward. The peace camp supported Barak unconditionally, and thereby ensured that they would never get Barak's ear in any serious way nor ever be able to make any serious demands. They disempowered themselves and now, afterwards, they are expressing exaggerated disappointment because they wouldn't face who Barak really is and what he stands for.

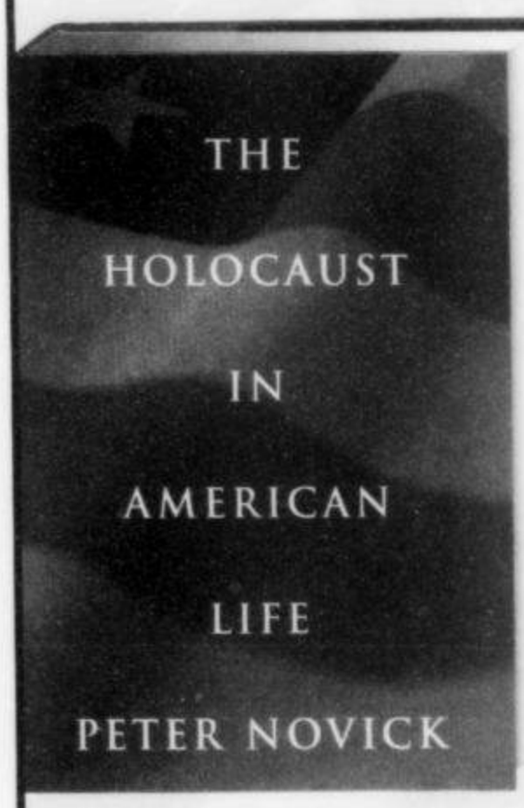
What is clear for us is that Barak is going to emphasize the goal of demographic separation, even more than Netanyahu. He will give even fewer licenses for Palestinians to work in Israel than Netanyahu gave. He is going in the direction of separation.

But separation would be possible only if Israel were to allow a Palestinian state true sovereignty and were to remove settlements. If you have settlements, then you do not have separation. You also can't have separation and continue to forcibly incorporate Palestinian parts of Jerusalem into Israeli sovereignty. Israel has to choose between a genuine two-state solution, in which the Palestinian people have real sovereignty and a viable country of their own, or apartheid. It's apartheid when you have state-imposed separation in which one people is sovereign and the other is not.

Some of the people in Meretz and Labor who should be acting as real allies of Israeli Arabs have a rather narrow and distorted perception of how to be our allies. They think that all that Arabs want is to improve their conditions of life and that by meeting this need, you can exclude them from politics. Unfortunately, there are many Arabs who are willing to cede politics in order to focus on their own material well-being.

So Barak may find a lot of cooperation within some Arab villages with his strategy of meeting material needs, but that's not a long-term solution. ❑

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ISRAEL UPDATE

Israeli Feminism

The Impact of Women's and Gender Studies on Jewish Studies

Deborah Greniman

In Israel, where the rabbinate together with the army give patriarchy a stranglehold on civil society, the potential impact of the feminist study of Judaism is of far more than personal significance. Nevertheless, it is only recently that the isolated efforts of a few scholars working in different institutions have begun coming together to form a vibrant and distinctive Israeli branch of feminist Jewish women's studies, bringing a breath of fresh air and activism to a field dominated by conservative Judaic studies faculties and yeshivas. This in itself is one of the most important messages to emanate from the conference on "The Impact of Women's and Gender Studies on Jewish Studies" held in Jerusalem in June 1999.

Another extra-textual message to emanate from the conference was the possibility, in a feminist context, for multi-leveled dialogue of a kind that cannot be taken for granted in present-day Israel, or even in the Jewish world. This was emphasized by the cooperative sponsorship of the conference by the Schechter Institute, which is associated with the Israeli Masorti (Conservative) movement, and the Fanya Gottesfeld Heller Center for the Study of Women in Judaism at Bar-Ilan, Israel's national-religious university. Also taking an equal part in the discussion of Judaism's sacred texts were a number of Israeli-born, non-religiously-identified women scholars, including talmudists Tal Ilan and Shulamit Valler, who cordially shared a panel with Orthodox scholar Chana Safrai and Conservative scholars David Golinkin and Judith Hauptman.

Running through all these levels of interaction was the intellectual trialogue between Israeli feminist Jewish scholarship, its American older sister (represented by several visiting scholars), and the theoretical tools and ideologies generated by feminist and gender studies—and, more broadly, by postmodern schools of historical and cultural/anthropological inquiry and literary critique. This interplay was highlighted in the session on Bible studies, as panelists debated whether the feminist interpretation of the Bible should be viewed entirely as *derash,* the infusion of new meanings into old texts, or whether it can also yield *peshat,* a new understanding of the original meaning(s). Speaking in an Israeli context that has emphasized historicism, Ilana Pardes argued passionately that feminist interpretations hold their own with other modes of critical Bible scholarship in yielding "sparks from the past"—new versions of a peshat which, as midrashist Galit Hasan-Rokem remarked, can no longer be viewed as monolithic.

Is feminist interpretation of the Bible an infusion of new meanings into old texts or can it yield a new understanding of the original meaning?

The session on rabbinic literature crackled with the excitement of women—including secular women—seeking to break the hegemony of the rabbinate by asserting their own expertise, using the academic setting as an alternative path to the yeshiva. According to panelist Chana Safrai, the unprecedented numbers of women now studying rabbinic literature on an advanced level are already creating the "base of the pyramid" upon which women experts can rise to the peak. For this revolution to succeed, however, the yeshiva model of learning must make room for alternative, more focused, and time-efficient models, suitable to women's life paths. Judith Hauptman and Tal Ilan debated Rabbi Eliezer's assertion that "one who teaches his daughter Torah is teaching her *tiflut* [obscenity according to Hauptman, triviality according to Ilan]," often used as an argument for denying Jewish learning to women. Their learned disagreement about the meaning of tiflut showed how feminist scholarly critique not only yields a more profound understanding of the text, but can also defuse or redefine the text's normative implications for Jewish practice. This dual set of implications, both academic and political, which is typical of the impact of feminist scholarship in every field of study, will work changes in both the collective memory and the contemporary practice of Judaism, as visiting historian Paula Hyman and anthropologist Vanessa Ochs later emphasized.

Two further sessions highlighted the uniquely Israeli context, its difficulties, and its promise. In the session on

Deborah Greniman is managing editor of Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies and Gender Issues.

modern Hebrew literature, panel participants emphasized that, in a literary tradition stretching back several millennia, it is only in the modern period that women have emerged as writers. Israeli scholars, arriving late on the scene of feminist criticism, have the difficult task of trying to introduce and apply a feminist literary theory that has yet to be translated into Hebrew and adapted to the Israeli context, while simultaneously retrieving almost-forgotten women's voices for the Israeli literary canon. Their struggles to establish a new field of criticism, in comparative geographical and linguistic isolation, were echoed in the conference's closing symposium by descriptions of the difficulties faced by their colleagues in other fields of feminist Jewish study in Israel. Particularly in the humanities, even as the fruits of their research burgeon, women are faced with academic departments that refuse them tenure, publishers that reject their books, and universities that fail to recognize their programs as full-fledged academic fields.

Perhaps the most moving session was that in which Howard Adelman described the differences between his students at the Achva teacher training college in Israel and those he had taught as a tenured professor at Smith College in the United States. Adelman's non-university students in Israel, most of them Mizrachi women, initially perceived feminist (and other) critiques of Judaism as threatening cherished traditions and memories. The educational and cultural differences between them and their instructor—often the first generation in their families to participate in higher education—raised the difficult issue of how feminist concerns could be put to them "at eye level," without patronization. Some of the most interesting and radical feminist thinking in Israel is today being carried out by faculty members at teachers' colleges, many of whom found themselves unable to get tenure at universities. This raises the exciting prospect that large numbers of Israel's elementary and high-school teachers—also in the religious school system—are being trained in feminist thinking about Judaism, and, concomitantly, in understanding the multiple meanings of oppression in society. Moreover, as emphasized by panel chair Debbie Weissman, head of the Kerem Institute of Education, in Israel this kind of study and involvement in Judaism is necessarily political. Here lie seeds of change for Israel's future, and they are being well watered.

This brief report has not done justice to the array of ideas presented at the conference, in particular to those offered by the visiting American scholars, several of whom gave their talks in fluent Hebrew, indicating their desire to be part of the new feminist discourse developing in Israel. I have chosen to stress those aspects that highlight what is fresh and distinctive about that discourse, in the hope that future, more comprehensive surveys will be able to focus on the common issues being studied and debated by Jewish feminist scholars internationally. ❑

THINKING ABOUT PUBLIC AND PRIVATE *(cont. from page 31)*

talk about your feelings," "you must strive to reach closure," that sort of thing), it grew increasingly difficult, as the sorry matter played out, to engage in a strenuous civic and political debate. Clinton was construed as a poor fellow with an addiction. He needed help, not censure.

But imagine a reversal in this standard scenario. Consider what would happen were a female president to engage in President Clinton's behavior, this time with a young male intern. Toward whose side would the female public rally in such a case? It's easy enough to predict: they would circle the wagons of emotional support around the wronged "First Man" who had trusted his wife, the president. There would be no "gals will be gals" talk or, "she just couldn't help herself so she needs help." In this scenario, the president/woman would be shamed out of office as public support plummeted. The young man in question, rather than a conniver, would be construed as a spineless wimp incapable of standing up to a powerful temptress or, perhaps, as someone with ambitions of his own who aimed to blackmail her. And men? This scenario would have drawn men together with women in one roaring chorus of criticism: no gender gap would have emerged as it did in the Clinton case, with men assessing the president's actions more harshly than did women.

So what is going on here? Women may have come a long way. But archetypal representations and simplistic storylines are alive and well. We conflate or collapse public life into categories that fail to do justice to public life by definition. Along the way, intimate life, too, is denuded as it takes on board many of the stock and by-now banalized categories of the confessional culture. The implication is that we—especially women—would be far less inclined to cut women some of the slack routinely granted proverbial bad boys, as a number of our favorite emotional levers—the wronged wife, the feckless husband, the tawdry temptress—would have been removed. This, at least, may help to clarify the muddied waters somewhat. ❑

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RELIGION

In the Wilderness with Hagar

Christine Benvenuto



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In our death-defying, health-obsessed culture, it can easily seem that we've invented the practice of abandoning the sick or dying, isolating those who kinder, gentler societies would have enclosed in a tender embrace. But it's not just us; the Torah suggests that there may be an all-too-human impulse to turn our backs on sickness and death.

Traditional Jewish sources urge us to be present for each other in times of illness precisely because they assume we need to be urged. How many of us know (or are) spiritually engaged people who give *tzedakah*(charity), work for social change, yet drift away from a friend who becomes sick? Because our society has turned away from traditional social bonds, we especially have to be reminded that even small gestures can indicate abandonment or inclusion to those in crisis. Compare these responses to the everyday wilderness of suffering:

A man phones his rabbi to explain he can't attend a meeting because his wife has just miscarried for the third time. After perfunctory condolences, the rabbi launches into a discussion of temple politics.

An emergency room nurse stands with a mother by the bed of an unconscious child. Moved to respond as a parent, the nurse murmurs one sentence that makes the mother feel seen as nothing else that is said to her: "I know you wish that it was you."

How do we find the right gestures? In the story of Hagar and Ishmael, traditionally read on the first day of Rosh Hashanah, the Torah offers a model of *bikur cholim,* the mitzvah of caring for the ill.

When Abraham casts Hagar and Ishmael out of his house, the mother and son wander in the desert until the last of the water Abraham has given them is gone. Thinking, "Let me not look on as the child dies," Hagar leaves Ishmael under a bush and seats herself a bowshot's distance away.

"Let me not look on as the child dies." Hagar makes a conscious decision not to perceive. How often do we absent ourselves physically, emotionally, spiritually from suffering we feel we can do nothing to alleviate? Hagar's words can be read, "I can't look on and do nothing. Since there's nothing I can do, I won't look on." Anyone who has experienced this helpless looking-on can understand Hagar's refusal, just as anyone who has suffered knows that it's possible to find a lifeline in another's willingness to witness, to keep watch through the wilderness journey.

It's striking that the text makes no mention of the fact that, without water, Hagar too will soon be dead. As a reflection of the mother's consciousness, the omission rings true: her child is in danger and this terror eclipses every other concern. But paradoxically, the strength of Hagar's feeling for Ishmael doesn't bring her closer to her son—it causes her to withdraw to a point where she can't see him and can drown out his cries with her own. It's a position many of us wish to take up when we're confronted with another's illness or impending death. Does the fact that Hagar can run to Ishmael in an instant benefit the boy while he lies alone awaiting death? Absolutely not. We can only say that she's accessible and ready to act when called upon by God's messenger.

The name Ishmael means "God will hear," and now both we and Hagar are told that "God has heeded the cry of the boy where he is." For the rabbis, this rescue of a pre-ordained trouble-maker requires explanation. Why save Ishmael? The answer, they conclude, lies in these three words, "where he is." According to midrash, God hears and judges a person on his or her present circumstances, not where he or she was or will be. At this crucial moment, God perceives a boy crying out to be saved from death and it's to that cry alone that God's attention is directed.

The literature on bikur cholim stresses that the central act of this mitzvah is to listen: to offer a receptive, compassionate ear to a person in crisis. To be present for someone in the place where he or she is and not where we wish them

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Christine Benvenuto's short stories and articles have appeared in many publications. She is completing a novel for which she has been awarded a grant from the Vogelstein Foundation.

to be, even when it's a dark place, a place of pain, fear, anger, doubt, denial—this is the essence of bikur cholim.

Fulfilling this mitzvah for Ishmael, God becomes a model for Hagar, and Hagar's partner. God doesn't suddenly create a well for Hagar. The well is there all the time. She isn't told, "Quick, give the boy water, it's right there in front of you." Instead, she is beautifully instructed to offer Ishmael gestures of affection and comfort, "Come, lift up the boy and hold him by the hand," instructions that bring her back into relation with her son.

Feeling we can do nothing, we turn away. Turned away, we are unable to see what we can do. In her grief and believing herself powerless, Hagar turns from Ishmael. Coaxed back to him, Hagar's eyes are opened. For the first time she is able to see that she does have something to give her son. She sees the well—metaphoric, and in this case actual, source of life.

Understanding the well as the potential to forge a meaningful connection with someone in crisis, it seems safe to say that we continually overlook or discover that source ourselves. I've walked around it with averted gaze for years—not unaware of suffering, not indifferent to it, but, like Hagar, looking at and listening to my fears.

For those who care, failure to respond to another's illness is almost always rooted in fear. We're afraid to confront mortality. We're afraid to intrude, afraid we'll lack the right words or gestures, that we'll be rebuffed or overwhelmed by need, that too much will be demanded of us and we'll reveal ourselves as lacking some essential criterion for being human. In a sense, this last fear is on to something: illness is exposure, and not only for the one who is ill. "You can ruin your life getting involved with sick people!" This was the reaction someone had upon learning of my plans to explore bikur cholim. The expression of naked terror is emblematic for me of what we brave in order to be there for each other.

I began to think about these things not because I suddenly became a better, more altruistic person, but because illness entered my life. When some friends and acquaintances responded by turning away, I was crushed. I was also forced to consider what I really needed and what I had often withheld. I laughed when I heard that someone hesitated to ask how things were for fear of "reminding" me of a situation always at the forefront of my thoughts; and I recalled a time when I had failed to offer a coworker condolences for the same reason.

Like Hagar, when we involve ourselves with the sick we risk seeing things we never saw before. We risk change. Rabbi Tsvi Blanchard describes the sickroom visit as a moment in which human and Divine nurturance are fused. That fusion is achieved for Ishmael when Hagar takes the dried and empty water skin, apt symbol of her son's body and her own spirit, and fills it from the well God reveals to her. Her heart, and not just her eyes, is opened, much as our hearts are sometimes pried open by our encounters with tragedy. ❑

FINDING PERSONAL MEANING *(continued from page 30)*

clinical goal of psychoanalysis—and certainly it is an extremely important goal—is to help people do that, to help people through painful feelings and thoughts, through anxiety and depression, and to to help people feel that understanding their conflicts in the context of a relationship with a therapist will help them. But psychoanalysis also describes how this happens for many people in their ordinary lives, not just from being analyzed.

So, I'm interested in returning our attention also to the larger implications of psychoanalysis, beyond psychoanalytic practice and technique themselves, but drawing on clinical rather than theoretical thinking to do so. In the Forties and Fifties, psychoanalysts and scholars like Erik Erikson, Norman O. Brown, Herbert Marcuse, Lionel Trilling, Philip Reiff, and Paul Goodman suggested that psychoanalysis is really a grand theory about human possibility. I believe that's true. Psychoanalysis gives us the best understanding we have of fundamental aspects of our experience of personal meaning. If we are lucky, we can gather split-off and repressed fantasies into consciousness and come to know ourselves and recognize our lives as ours; unconscious tonalities and emotions can infuse our conscious life, and the depths and complexities of these unconscious fantasies can infuse reality. These processes all describe what it is to have a meaningful life. ❑

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INTERVIEW WITH JIMMY BRESLIN *(continued from page 29)*

BRESLIN: The size of the paper doesn't count. I was on the *New York Herald Tribune*; it was a terrific paper, a broadsheet, and I did the same then as I do now. You've just got to have drive and energy and a dislike of most things that are going on, governmental things, because governments mostly don't do much. And you've also got to understand the level of incompetence out there. Nobody knows what they're doing. They just pose and act as if they know and walk through life and get away with it. And so, attack government! Get at them and you find they know nothing!

NEWFIELD: You sound like I.F. Stone. He came from a completely different place but I think has a lot of similarities with you. He said, "All governments are run by liars."

BRESLIN: Ben Hecht had one of the best lines. He said, "The competition is fools. The competition is idiots. Keep it under your hat." There are so many people on television and everyone is "good." Name me one reporter on television that people don't like and that the politicians don't like.

Today, you've got Brokaw, Jennings, and Rather, that's three Al Gores.

NEWFIELD: So you're saying our business has gotten away from the old-fashioned values of do-it-yourself legwork and questioning authority?

BRESLIN: Old-fashioned? Sure. Most papers now don't want to upset anything or anyone in power that they like. The publishers like government because they do well with it. The readers don't, but the publishers do. There just is not enough [digging and] attacking.

NEWFIELD: What about television news?

BRESLIN: Television news is terrible. I'd like to get Walter Winchell into those newsrooms. Let them use that energy and enthusiasm for what they're doing. Winchell was an idiot; he didn't know what he was talking about. But his voice and energy would blow these guys off the screen. Today, you've got Brokaw, Jennings, and Rather, that's three Al Gores on television. And then they wonder why the ratings are going down. Because they're boring!

NEWFIELD: Probably the two most consistent themes of your columns over the years have been race and the police.

BRESLIN: Well, they're almost the same.

NEWFIELD: Do you think the relationship between poor minority communities and the police has gotten worse over the last forty years? Better? What is the chemistry of that conflict?

BRESLIN: It's gotten worse because there are more police. When there were less police it was better.

NEWFIELD: Why?

BRESLIN: Because they're whites and they don't like blacks.

NEWFIELD: My experience is that police precincts are a lot more integrated than most newsrooms.

BRESLIN: Newsrooms? Forget it. I don't even talk about them. You'd never know police precincts are so integrated out on the streets. You just wouldn't. We've had the Abner Louima [police brutality] case, with four white guys beating one black. And you've got the Diallo case with four guys shooting forty-one shots into an unarmed black man.

NEWFIELD: What would you do to make police departments less racist and less brutal?

BRESLIN: I think it starts at the top. Here in New York City, it starts with Giuliani, who thinks he's a tough guy. He wants everybody to crack down on crime. He walks around and he swaggers, and the cops imitate him.

NEWFIELD: Police brutality exists in all big cities around the country. Los Angeles' department is probably worse than New York's, as is the one in Washington, D.C. where they have a black police department.

BRESLIN: Oh, they're the worst. I don't care about other cities, though, I only care about the place I'm in, where we have an enormous population of color and we have forty thousand police. I mean that's nuts. It's too many. Cut it, quick, by ten thousand.

NEWFIELD: Would you pay the police more money?

BRESLIN: Of course, pay them more. You know, they cry about salaries, but that's a pretty good pension they have. That's a pretty good medical plan the police and their families have for life. They get quite a bit of time off. They get a good long vacation period. The job is not as bad as they say it is. The job can be an eminently satisfying job; it can be terrific. If you're out there seeing new people every day, you should like that very much. And you're something, you're a person of substance, you're doing work that's damn good work. Now, will they stop moaning? How much money should they get? They should get more. But nobody argues about the money; they argue about the stupidity and the lousiness that they bring with them out into the street at night.

NEWFIELD: Your columns seem equally hostile to both Mayor Giuliani and Hillary Clinton. And now that it looks like they're running against each other for a Senate seat in New York....

BRESLIN: I'm stuck. I'm really in a bind.

NEWFIELD: Tell me your assessment of both Giuliani as a human being, whom you've known well for a long time and don't like, and Hillary Clinton, whom you beat up in every column.

BRESLIN: They're the same person! You can't trust either of them! They'll be anything they have to be to get any place they want to go. They feel they're entitled. She's much more arrogant than he is. He's willing to lie and cheat to get some place. She just thinks you should give it to her. The way she uses the plane rides and all that, she reminds me very much of Bess Myerson, when it comes to maneuvering, taking things. I just think it's going be a horrible

thing because I think she's the only candidate that Giuliani can beat.

NEWFIELD: You think she's a complete phony?

BRESLIN: Yes, absolutely. She's half smart. When Tom Foley was the Speaker of the House of Representatives, he brought her into a big meeting of all the Democratic representatives, and he introduced her like she was the Queen of England. They all stood and applauded and she stood and talked. This is when she and the president were just in the White House. And then she was going to change the whole health care system!

She takes Ira Magaziner with her, this "genius." The two of them go into a closet, and they come out with a health plan. But she can't tell you the health plan because it's so intricate and so brilliant it's too much for your minds and they don't want the insurance companies running commercials against it. It turns out the plan was a zero, a Ponzi scheme. And Ira Magaziner now is in charge of the meter readers for the Washington Consolidated Edison Company!

NEWFIELD: The only three politicians I can recall you really liking were Paul O'Dwyer, Robert Kennedy, and Tip O'Neill.

BRESLIN: Most politicians are half people. Talk to them. They don't have anything on their minds but themselves. They don't have any real knowledge of anything. They're untrustworthy. And they see everything as what they could do for themselves.

NEWFIELD: You open and close Spike Lee's new movie, *Summer of Sam*. Some really stupid critics have said the movie is prejudiced against Italians or insensitive to the victims of David Berkowitz. Tell me what you think about Spike Lee and the film.

BRESLIN: Spike is an energetic, imaginative fellow with a great sense of humor. I think he's a great addition to any business he's in. He's fun to be around. I never had a bad moment with him.

I thought the film was representative of his work. It was terrific. He certainly brought off what the smell of the City was at that time. And why don't they like him? I think they think, "Who is this uppity little black to be taking over our business?" It shows that racism is at the bottom of everything in the country. Because if he bothers you, it's a sickness.

I don't think it was anti-Italian; you could have picked out any neighborhood. And he opened wounds or something, what is that? Berkowitz put the wounds there with his gun....

NEWFIELD: Nobody complained about Truman Capote when he did *In Cold Blood*. Is there a double standard here?

BRESLIN: Of course! What about Spielberg's film, *Saving Private Ryan*? Did everybody who had bad memories around World War II come out and scream? I bet you if Spike Lee made that movie they would have complained; some guy in the American Legion in a hall in Mineola [Long Island] would say, "I got tremors remembering



Norman Mailer and Jimmy Breslin campaigning for New York mayor and city council president in 1969.

D-day, he shouldn't (have made) the movie." It's an outlandish criticism.

NEWFIELD: What do you think about all these politicians blaming movies, television, and video games for school massacres? Is this like a scam politicians run?

BRESLIN: That's why they're half people; they don't have the guts to even really look at a thing. Littleton, Colorado—I was there. Two imbeciles got their hands on four guns, they went out and shot thirteen people, committed suicide, and shook the world. If they didn't have the four guns there's no story.

NEWFIELD: Do you think all of this noise about violence in the media is going to lead to censorship, which won't solve the problem?

BRESLIN: Shakespeare had bodies piled high on the stage within five minutes of the start of a play. What are they talking about? But it'll lead to censorship. They'll try.

NEWFIELD: Let me ask you one last question. Who are the smartest people you've met in your life and career? Who are the wise men and women that have impressed you, looking back on your fifty years in journalism?

BRESLIN: Paul O'Dwyer is one. Dr. Judah Folkman [the cancer researcher], of course. You're not going to get much smarter than [Brooklyn Federal Judge] Jack Weinstein.

NEWFIELD: Talk to me about Mailer. You and Norman ran for mayor and council president in 1969; I was your campaign manager. Would you put Norman in that league of geniuses?

BRESLIN: Oh come on, of course, that's an automatic.

NEWFIELD: What is it about Norman's genius?

BRESLIN: Curiosity. Restless curiosity.

NEWFIELD: And he's productive; he's sat there and written thirty books, fiction and non-fiction.

BRESLIN: Mailer has got the patience. He sits and he drives himself. Yes. Yes.

NEWFIELD: Anybody else?

BRESLIN: That can produce like Mailer can? Nobody can do that.

NEWFIELD: Okay, thank you. ❑

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE NEW YORK POST

BOOK REVIEW

Alger, Ales, Tony, and *Time*

Victor Navasky

- *The View from Alger's Window,* by Tony Hiss. Alfred Knopf, 1999.

Two Cold War archives have recently come into public consciousness. First, there is the Venona Project, which consists of nearly three thousand decryptions of early 1940s cables between Soviet agents working in America and their masters in Moscow. Second, there are the twenty-five hundred letters and postcards Alger Hiss exchanged with his family over the years, including four hundred and forty five letters he wrote to his wife Priscilla and son, Tony, during the three years and eight months he spent in the federal penitentiary at Lewisburgh in the early 1950s.

The National Security Agency (NSA) released its Venona decrypts amidst much fanfare in the spring of 1995, and ever since, historians and journalists (some embattled, some merely recyclers) have pounced on one of them and cited it as proof that Alger Hiss, among scores of others, spied for Russia. Earlier this year Tony Hiss published *The View from Alger's Window,* for the first time making public substantial excerpts from the prison (and other) letters from his father which he rediscovered among his mother's papers and reread after his father's death. The same reviewers who regard the single Venona cable as conclusive tend to dismiss this new Hiss archive as irrelevant.

The Hiss case is symbolically important because, as his accuser Whittaker Chambers wrote in his best-selling 1950 memoir, *Witness,* "It epitomized a basic conflict. And Alger and I were the archetypes." For Chambers, it was a battle between atheistic communism and Christianity itself. At the time, many Democrats saw the Hiss case as an attempt to smear and discredit the New Deal. Senator Joseph McCarthy used it to charge "twenty years of treason." But for the new generation of Hiss reconvicters, the significance of Venona and other new archival finds is more than symbolic. Post-Cold War historians like Alan Weinstein, Ron Radosh, and Harvey Klehr, and journalists like the late Eric Breindel would seem to argue, as Sam Tanenhaus did in *The New Republic* in July of this year, that McCarthy and company were right all along. Some of them would add that given the "infiltration" of Communists at the highest levels of government (Hiss being Exhibit A), the 1950s intrusions on liberty in the name of security were not merely justified but, next time around, they ought to be fortified.

Of course, establishing the innocence or guilt of Alger Hiss will not change the historical fact that, as a class, the Cold War red-baiters included more than their share of anti-Semites, opportunists, and reckless defamers of the Left; but if we are ever to understand the meaning of the domestic cold war and the lessons it may contain for the future, it is essential to deal fairly and fully with the facts of its most troubling and complex case. And this is not what appears to be happening in regard to Alger Hiss.

Take *Time* magazine's treatment of the two new archives. It is worth examining less because *Time*'s institutional interest in the Hiss case goes back to the days when Whittaker Chambers worked as a *Time* editor than because it seems typical in the way it permits old Cold War assumptions and biases to influence contemporary judgment. In its issue dated June 7, 1999, *Time* allows that the Hiss letters may have been "gentle, long, teasing, serene, filled with the observations of a bird-watcher and stargazer." But do they exonerate Alger? *Time*'s answer: See the key Venona cable.

Time's institutional interest in the Hiss case goes back to the days when Whittaker Chambers worked as a Time editor.

As it happens, a few months earlier I had received a call from a researcher for *Time*. Lance Morrow, she told me, was preparing an essay on Venona and would I be good enough to share my thoughts?

I shared them. My main thought about the Venona documents was that they contain tantalizing material which eventually—in tandem with other, more compelling evidence—could help us to solve the complex jigsaw puzzle about who stole what from whom

Victor Navasky, publisher of The Nation *and author of* Naming Names, *is the Delacorte Professor of Magazine Journalism at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism.*

in the late great game of Cold War espionage. As deciphered, however, they are incomplete, fragmentary, internally inconsistent, and accompanied by troubling anonymous footnotes purporting to identify—with no supporting evidence—the real people behind the code names in the cables, and they fail to distinguish witting from unwitting sources (and sources from agents). Until significant new, independent corroborative or clarifying evidence is uncovered and these decryptions can be read in context, it's a mistake to regard them as anything more than fertile territory for hypotheses to be investigated.

For example, the man code-named "Rele" is said in an anonymous footnote to be "possibly Morton Sobell" (who was eventually sentenced to thirty years in prison as a conspirator of the Rosenbergs), and is described as having an artificial leg. Sobell, who is still alive and living in the San Francisco Bay area, does not and never did have an artificial leg. And what is one to make of other Venona entries which, read in isolation, would compromise the reputations of such otherwise worldly citizens as the late dissenting journalist I. F. Stone, loyal FDR aide Harry Hopkins, and nuclear physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer?

Then there is the cable that is said to implicate Alger Hiss. Cable No. 1822, dated March 30, 1945, refers to an agent code-named "Ales," who, in a footnote by an anonymous bureaucrat dated August 8, 1969—twenty-four years later—is identified as "Probably Alger Hiss." In another Venona cable, this one a fragment which is otherwise incoherent, Hiss is mentioned by his own name. In the world of Venona, spies are supposed to be referred to only by their code names. Does this imply that Hiss is not a spy after all?

Morrow, or his *Time* editors, chose not to include any of these anomalies in his essay, which appeared under the title "Alger, 'Ales' and Joe." That, of course, is their right. Instead, referring to the now-famous Ales cable,



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF CORBIS-BETTMANN

Alger Hiss before the House Un-American Activities Committee in August 1948. He denied Whittaker Chambers' accusation that he was a Communist.

Morrow writes: "And so in Venona No. 1822 dated March 5, 1945, we find an agent code-named 'Ales.' The message says Ales had worked for Soviet intelligence since 1935.... Ales, according to the message, was one of four members of the U.S. delegation to Yalta who returned to the U.S. via Moscow." Morrow goes on to inform us that "Hiss was one of these four Yalta delegates. No evidence or allegation has ever suggested that one of the other three could have been communists.... Added to the earlier accumulation of evidence, the Venona message seems to remove reasonable doubt about Alger Hiss' guilt."

I have in front of me the Venona document No. 1822. It is dated March 30, 1945, not March 5, and it refers to the fact that "after the Yalta conference" Ales had "gone to Moscow" but says nothing about his being one of four members of the U.S. delegation.

Put aside the erroneous date. (What ever happened to *Time*'s much-vaunted fact-checkers?) Put aside the fact that *Time* has confused the Venona document with a KGB document that historian Alan Weinstein and his coauthor, Alexander Vassiliev, a former KGB officer, refer to but do not reproduce in *The Haunted Wood,* their methodologically-challenged book about Soviet espionage in America. That Hiss was the only one of the four who traveled from Yalta to Moscow who could have been a Communist may well be true (or not)—although surely more than four of the one hundred and ten Americans at the Yalta Conference stopped in Moscow on their way home—but my purpose here is not to argue Hiss's innocence or guilt.

What longtime believers in the guilt of Hiss, like the conservative William F. Buckley, the Cold War liberal Arthur Schelsinger, Jr., and a host of neoconservatives, have in common with the new Venona Hiss convicters is that while they are only too happy to seize on and flout any arguably incriminating reference (whether from Venona, the KGB files, or wherever), they seem almost systematically to omit even mention of inconveniently exculpatory materials. Thus Alan Weinstein, the new factotum of the Hiss-was-guilty school, omitted from the new edition of *Perjury,* his book about the Hiss case, the fact that a half-dozen of his key sources (save for the one who sued and won a settlement) disputed his claims in the first edition of *Perjury* that they confirmed Chambers' version of what happened. Sam Tanenhaus, Chambers' biographer, includes new material from Czech archives related to possible double agent Noel Field that appears to implicate Hiss, but fails to mention other material from the Field file that explicitly exonerates Hiss. John Earl Haynes and Harvey Klehr, in their book on Venona, quote the former KGB officer Oleg Gordievsky who says in a memoir that Hiss was a spy, but they fail to quote another KGB officer, General Vladimir Pavlov, who says in his own memoir that Hiss was not a spy, and so forth.

Time's capsule description of *The View from Alger's Window* says, "Tony Hiss's biography tries to prove Dad's innocence by quoting lonely letters to his family." In fact, Tony doesn't really try to use the letters to "prove" anything, although there does appear to be one piece of new news in the book that most reviewers have ignored.

Tony's stepbrother, Timothy Hobson, whom Hiss' lawyers never called to testify at the time (either because Alger wanted to protect his privacy or because he was quite critical of the Hiss family), has for the first time spoken for the record. He was ten or eleven and home with a broken leg at the flimsily built Thirtieth Street Hiss house in Washington, D.C., during the precise time when, according to Chambers, Alger brought home State Department papers, Priscilla stayed up late to type them, and Chambers arrived to collect them.

Tim tells Tony that (a) his mother was such a poor typist that when she took courses at George Washington University she wrote her papers out by hand; (b) given the flimsy walls, he would have heard any late-night typing of the sort Chambers describes; and (c) the passages in *Witness* describing Chambers' encounter with Timmy never happened. They met once, and while Chambers describes him as "puny," he was, in his own words, "a fat, little, bubbly prickly pear."

Also contrary to *Time, The View from Alger's Window* is not a biography but a memoir. Rather than use the letters to "prove" his father's innocence, Tony invokes them to explain—to the reader (and sometimes, it seems, to himself as well)—what he has come to think about his father and why. In Tony's formulation, there were three Alger Hisses. First, there is the public Alger Hiss—punctilious, correct, aloof, formal, detached—the Hiss of the legalistic voice whose own affectless book about his case, *In the Court of Public Opinion,* frustrated friends and foes alike and turned many sympathizers into critics.

Then there is the Whittaker Chambers/Richard Nixon version of Alger Hiss—traitor to his country, spy, Stalinist—whose continued insistence on his innocence proved only that he was, as one of his enemies put it, "the greatest actor in America." As Tony notes sardonically, that might explain the hundreds of letters his father wrote over the course of forty-seven years and left in his wife's care "in which he deliberately presents himself as a loyal American devoted to his country's culture." Then, Tony muses, his mother must have been the second greatest actor because her 742 letters to Alger, while seeming to deal with the ups and downs of family life, must have had "the hidden purpose of bolstering the lies in Alger's letters" (even though they were never shown to anyone while either was alive); and his Uncle Donald, a partner in the prestigious D.C. law firm of Covington and Burling, whom Chambers also accused of Communist underground activity (which he denied even as he continued to practice law for many years), must have been the third greatest actor, and so forth.

And finally, there is the Quakerly, literate protégé of Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes revealed in the three letters a week that he was permitted to write his wife and son from prison—a half-million words in all, "the book he never wrote," says Tony. This Alger Hiss writes in "the little language," as the Quakers call it—using "thees" and "thys"—rather than, say, the inflated, ideologically portentous prose of the letters Julius Rosenberg wrote to Ethel on the eve of their execution. Hiss' hero—in addition to Holmes (in a 1954 letter from Lewisburg he refers to his Holmes clerkship as "a year of radiance")—is not Karl Marx, but Sigmund Freud. His letters, which are punctuated by pictures ("I'm going to try to draw a picture of the storeroom where I work") are a form of long-distance fathering ("Tony, my darling, I have been thinking since thy visit to Boston and Cambridge that thee might like to try reading a fine recent novel about 1850s in B + C.... The Book is *Sin of the Prophet* by Truman Nelson"). And they include a long-running saga about the mischievous adventures of a character called the Sugar Lump Boy, who was such a schlemiel that he made Tony feel good about himself.

Reread with what he calls his 90s/50s "bifocal" vision, Tony finds no contradiction between the values and goals of the public Alger and the inner, playful, patriotic (although he doesn't use that word) humanist Hiss revealed by these letters. Incidentally, this is the Alger Tony got to know in his post-Lewisburgh years. (His father used to remark that three and a half years in the federal penitentiary are a good corrective to three years at Harvard Law School.) On the other hand, there is no way he can reconcile this third Alger with "the monstrous Alger that Chambers talked and wrote about, the Alger who had taken on the life of a dangerous criminal because his core personality—smoldering, corrupt, disaffected with life—had collapsed into a dangerously unstable form, like some kind of malignant dwarf star."

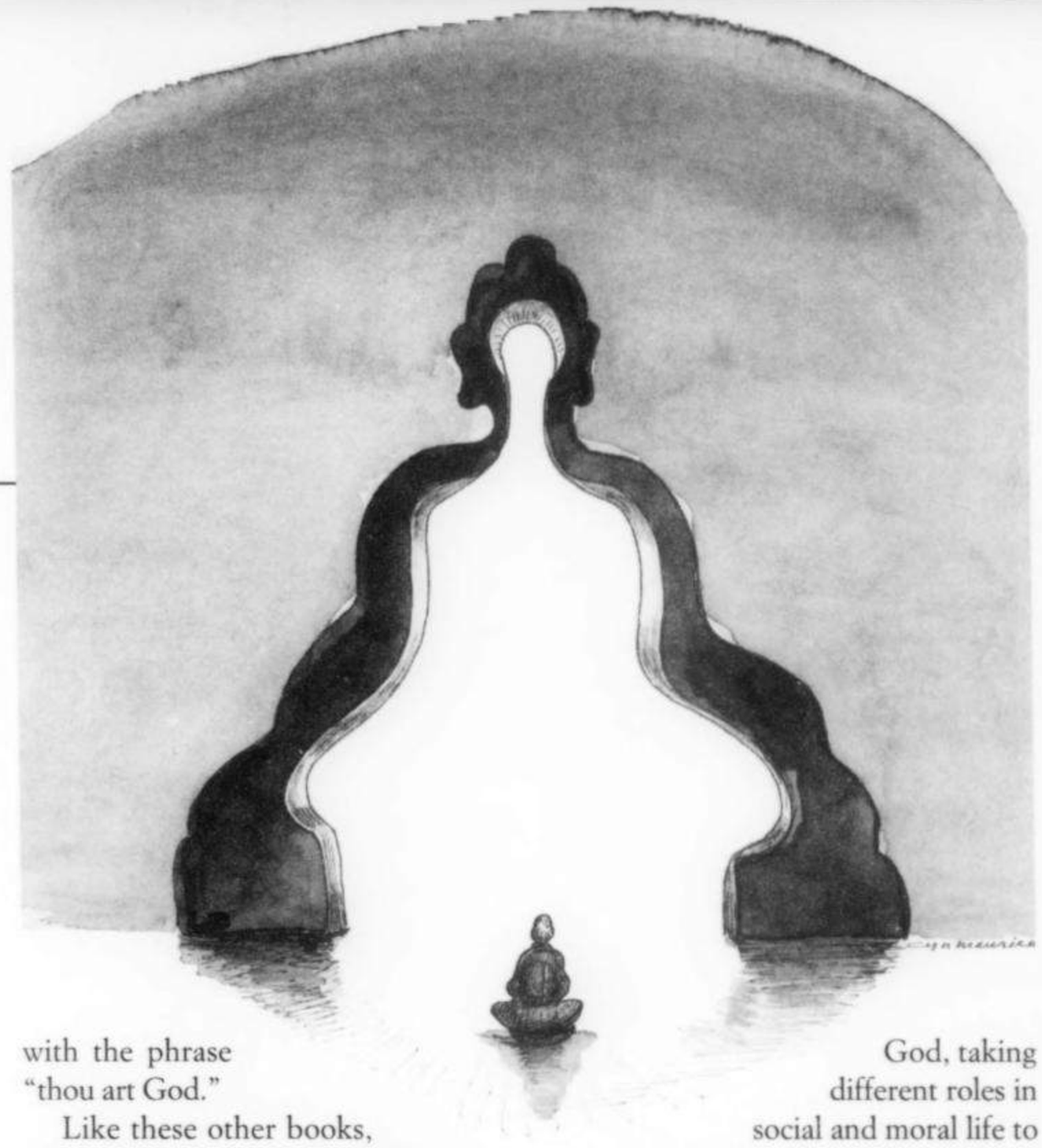
It's not necessary to accept either Tony Hiss' conclusions about his father or his belief in his old man's innocence to understand and receive the value of his evidence, and that's what these letters are—evidence of his father's character, a window on his soul. In this era of compartmentalization, it would be foolish to assume, as Tony naïvely may, that a "spy" (especially on behalf of an ideological ally) would almost by definition be incapable of fatherly feelings or insensitive to nature's beauties. Nevertheless, he does make it possible for us to contemplate the evidence. The Venona file is one kind of evidence. The Hiss file, what Tony Hiss calls "a heart made plain," is another kind of evidence. It invites us, as he says, "to hold an entire life by the hand." Some readers of the Venona file have already handed down their verdict. Readers of *The View from Alger's Window* may want to entertain another hypothesis: "Probably not Ales." ❑

READING SPIRIT

Can We God Talk?

Roger S. Gottlieb

- *Conversations with God: An Uncommon Dialogue (Book 3),* by Neale Donald Walsch. Hampton Roads, 1998.



Conversations with God, now in its third and final volume, has been a phenomenal success: years on the bestseller lists, translations into twenty-four languages, spin-offs of workbooks, calendars, CDs, and a newsletter. The books are, supposedly, transcriptions of discursive encounters between Walsch, who would write a question on a large yellow pad, and God, who (sometimes taking His own sweet time about it) would then direct Walsch to write down His answer.

Both the "form" of direct channeling from God and some of the content make *CWG* reminiscent of other New Age best sellers. We may remember *A Course in Miracles,* a widely read encounter between two previously agnostic Columbia University psychology faculty and a deity who taught them that "only love is real." We may remember *Seth Speaks* and *Emanuel,* with their comforting messages that death is an illusion and that human spiritual progress is inevitable. And we might recall how the characters of Robert Heinlein's science-fiction/fantasy classic *Stranger in a Strange Land,* once they'd properly "grokked" the teachings of their half-human, half-Martian guru, were always greeting each other with the phrase "thou art God."

Like these other books, *CWG* teaches the essential divinity, unity, and immortality of everything that exists. Fear, anger, greed, and violence come from a mistaken belief that we are different and separate from each other, that there is not "enough" (love, material goods, security, etc.) to go around, and that physical death of "our" particular body can mean the end of "our" existence. Because death actually liberates us to a more fulfilling form of existence, mass murderers such as Hitler (along with everyone else) "go to heaven." Walsch is aware that this last statement is pretty offensive on its face, but his God reassures us that ultimately no person can really harm another, that all the experiences we have on earth are in some sense chosen by us, and that it is inevitable that we will all eventually remember our true identity, which is to be part of the collective divinity of the universe.

This view hearkens back, really, to some of the basic ideas of Hinduism. For Hinduism, each of us is a part of God, taking different roles in social and moral life to create for God an experience of existence outside of His/Her "natural" perfection. Moral good and evil are, cosmically speaking, interchangeable—for they are simply different forms taken by the same divinity. Therefore, there can be no such thing as an unhappy ending. In the Hindu religious epic *The Ramayana,* for instance, armies slaughter each other in huge battles, and rise up alive the next morning. The "bad guy" of the story is the "good guy's" closest friend in heaven, who for some arcane reason has to incarnate as a sinner.

Yet neither for Hinduism nor for Walsch does the cosmic equivalence of good and evil mean that there are no distinctions between right and wrong (or, as Walsch's God puts it, between "what works and what doesn't") here on earth. Unlike most other New Age channeled writing, Walsch's God is an astute critic of social injustice and irrationality. He might be guilty of simplistic romanticism about indigenous peoples, but He makes some pretty sharp comments about soil erosion from chemical agriculture and about the destruction of the rain forest,

ILLUSTRATION BY CYN MAURICE

Roger S. Gottlieb teaches philosophy at Worcester Polytechnic Institute. His most recent book is A Spirituality of Resistance: Finding a Peaceful Heart and Protecting the Earth *(Crossroad).*

income inequality, and our health care system. He criticizes personal greed, and also the systemic nature of class exploitation that typically has little to do with anyone's individual motivations. While He calls for a "revolution in consciousness" rather than more government control, He identifies institutions that need to be changed for this revolution to occur.

CWG deserves a serious response, if only because it combines a serious outlook on social life with a cosmic view of humanity's ultimate identity.

And so, to take up that challenge, I would say that my own spiritual temperament leads me in a rather different direction. It has always seemed to me that evil is as fully real as anything else and that it is not reducible to ignorance or mistakes. Evil stems partly from evil choices, and I don't believe in any metaphysical guarantee (for this life or any other) that a person will choose well. God said to Moses, "I set before you this day, life and death, blessing and a curse. Therefore, choose life." Not: "Therefore, become knowledgeable," or "Realize that it's in your own best interests to act this way," or "If you don't choose life this time, there is always next time."

When Walsch's God says that we needn't fear death because in our essence we are life and that life goes on forever, I think He confuses life with existence. The miracle of life, it seems to me, can be undone: by fate, by error, by malice. The energy in our bodies won't cease to exist—but it can cease to be alive. What "continues" is not, in any sense that can be expressed in language, "us." Perhaps this prospect of the loss of the recognizable self is too frightening for Walsch to accept. Yet putting forth the idea that "we" are immortal simply strengthens the attachment to the personal ego that he is supposedly trying to overcome.

On earth, it is clear, traumatic experiences do not always have favorable ends. Brutality destroys some people, who are not inspired by what they've suffered, but are psychologically and sometimes even morally crippled. And this might well be true on a cosmic level as well. A viewpoint in which everyone wins, no matter how lost they seem, may be comforting, but it certainly needn't be true. For me, the essential spiritual task is to learn to function, and to love, even in the face of losses and defeats—not to try to adopt a perspective in which all loss is illusion.

We read in *CWG* that we are all One, yet in our daily experience we are divided: by class and race, nation and sexual preference; by who sleeps in their own bed and who is a refugee; by who will live long and who will die tonight. To compensate for such divisions Walsch asks us to adopt a cosmic perspective which the vast majority of us can only take on faith, and which almost none of us can live out for more than a few moments. We end with what Hegel called the Unhappy Consciousness: we identify with the cosmic but can't abide the nagging realities of our ordinary mind. Or we feel mired in the ordinary and yearn—desperately, unhappily—for the cosmic. In that split is deep unhappiness, the overcoming of which takes a willingness to live in the pain of existence, not dissolve it in a dream of cosmic perfection. It is because Walsch fails to seriously address this aspect of spiritual life (and not just because his God says things like "Yippee!" and "Give Me a break") that I personally find his books less than inspiring. In his cosmos there is nothing at stake that can't be recovered in the next life. But we don't live like that because that is not what we feel. And if we pretend to feel it, we live a life of—just that—pretense.

Yet this all may be a matter of temperament. Others are inspired by the books, aroused to be more compassionate and aware of the conflicts between spiritual aspirations and political reality, and less desperate about their conventional social egos. To just that extent these books (as much as any others) *are* inspired by God. ❑

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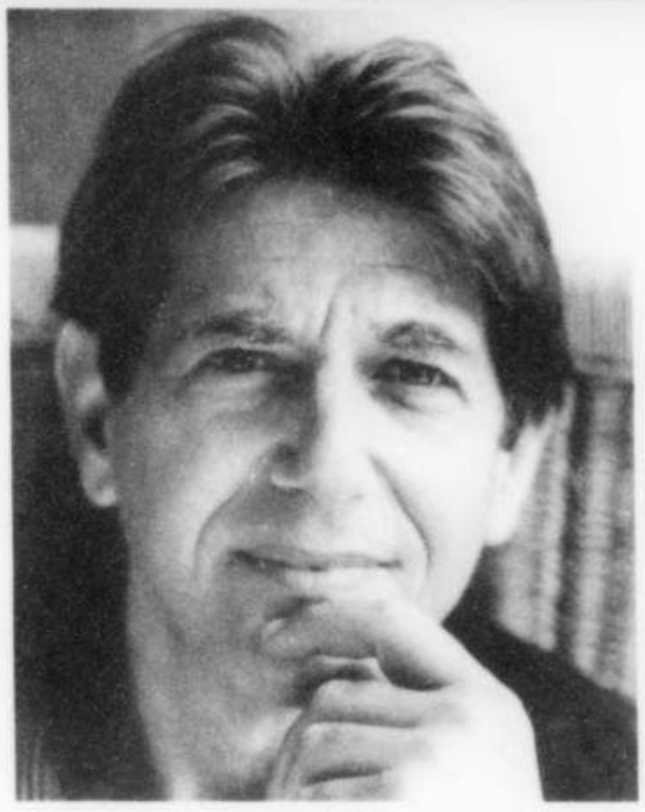
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BOOK REVIEW

A Record of the Tribes

Tripping with Peter Coyote



Paul Krassner

- *Sleeping Where I Fall,* by Peter Coyote. Counterpoint Press, 1999.

With the baby boomer generation coming of middle age and putting into perspective their own personal histories, innumerable autobiographies and memoirs have been glutting the literary market. Indeed, a recent *New Yorker* cartoon depicts an editor saying to a writer, "Congratulations! Your manuscript was the one-millionth personal memoir submitted to us this year." Peter Coyote's *Sleeping Where I Fall,* published by Counterpoint, survived this fierce competition. Ironically, although Coyote is best known as an actor, having appeared in more than fifty films (he played the compassionate scientist in *E.T.*), his show-biz career is conspicuously absent from this memoir. Rather, Coyote tells the story of his chosen journey from riches to rags, from being delivered to school in a chauffeur-driven, leather-roofed Cadillac limousine to traveling with hippies in a truck called the Meat and Bone Wagon, and retrieving radishes, lettuce, tomatoes, and squash from a garbage bin behind a Safeway supermarket. It's the story of what he learned in the process of traveling so far from home.

Born Peter Cohon in 1941, Coyote was raised with a younger sister in Englewood, New Jersey. His mother, Ruth, had traded in her Orthodox home in the Jewish ghetto in the Bronx for the modern world. Coyote swears that she should be certified "without question as the first Jewish saint." He describes his father, Morris, as a complicated Sephardic Jew who coveted aristocratic style and confidence with the hunger of a displaced person.

In the 1930s, Morris and his Jewish friends, wielding baseball bats, broke up Nazi Bund meetings. Morris began as an investment banker and underwriter; owned cattle ranches and a Wall Street brokerage house; and became president of a railroad and chairman of an oil company. Interestingly, Coyote mentions nothing about any religious observance at home. Later in life, he took it upon himself to expand his religious identity and practice, becoming at one point a self-labeled "Hopi-Jew-Buddhist mongrel." Of course, this sort of conversion was not uncommon in the 1960s.

While a student at Grinnell College in the early 1960s, Peter Cohon ingested peyote, a hallucinogenic cactus he had ordered from a mail-order source in Texas. He felt as if he had been transformed into a small wolf and spent most of that night dog-trotting effortlessly through Iowa cornfields, following scents and colors, marveling at his newly heightened powers. He was amazed to see little dog tracks in the furrowed grounds where his footprints should have been. A few years later, he came across *Coyote's Journal,* a poetry magazine. Their logo was a coyote footprint, which he recognized immediately as the same paw print he had made, which he then took as a definite omen. A shaman, Rolling Thunder, asked him what he was going to do about it, and he changed his last name to Coyote. For starters.

He then embarked on a search for new and more liberating social structures—a pursuit of absolute freedom—which led him, in 1965, to the San Francisco Mime Troupe, "the portal through which I would enter my own adulthood." These radical actors were not of the silent pantomimist-in-an-invisible-box variety; they were culturally uncompromising and outrageously outspoken and they quickly became Coyote's quirky family. He was introduced to and embraced for himself an analysis "that explained how money was created and privileges protected by the political process. It explained the root causes of environmental degradation and the oppression of workers ... easy to translate into theatrical action."

It was with the Mime Troupe that Coyote first experienced what was later to become his trademark theatrical pursuit: the dissolution of the boundaries between art and life. And it was there that he met a couple of life actors—Peter Berg ("perhaps the most radical and cranky member of the troupe, and arguably the most brilliant") and Emmett Grogan ("determined to be a life star ... moving through a room with the detached concentration of a shark"). Having met within the Mime Troupe, Grogan and Berg had begun to form the nucleus of what would become the San Francisco Diggers, a loose confederation of friends who were part psychedelic social workers,

PHOTOGRAPH BY TARZAAN PHOTOGRAPHY

Paul Krassner's spoken-word album, taped at M.I.T. and titled Sex, Drugs and the Antichrist, *will be released by Artemis Records in October.*

helping supply local hippies and new arrivals to the Haight-Ashbury scene with food and shelter, and part practitioners of street theater. Coyote soon joined in and became an integral part of it. He writes: "The Diggers—an anarchistic experiment dedicated to creating and clarifying distinctions between society's business-as-usual and our own imaginings of what-it-might-be, in the most potent way we could devise—could not be co-opted: Part of the power and flexibility of our profit-oriented economy is that it can co-opt nearly everything. Everything but doing things for free. The Diggers understood that style was infinitely co-optable. What could not be co-opted was doing things for free, without money."

The Diggers were intrigued by the concept of living their lives in such a consistently improvisational manner that it would alchemically transform other folks from audience members into inadvertent participants. For example, they created a series of "Free Stores," with bins of take-what-you-like goods, which were annexes of an actual storefront called "The Trip Without a Ticket," where not only were products free—clothing, jewelry, TV sets, kitchenware, waffle irons, skis, tennis rackets—but roles were also free. A customer might ask to see the manager, only to be informed that she was the manager. If someone was observed stealing, he would be aided in his theft by the clerk. Soldiers would donate their military uniforms to the Free Store, leaving with civilian clothes and new identities.

At first, Coyote had flourished by being both in the Mime Troup and in the Diggers. But his talent as an actor brought him the kind of local fame that conflicted with the Diggers' goal of anonymity, and as his relationships with his fellow Diggers became more strained, life outside the theater became more challenging. And so in 1967 Peter left the Mime Troupe, which had served him so well, to focus on his anonymous work with the Diggers.

In December of that same year, the Diggers sponsored a parade in Haight-Ashbury called "The Death of Money." There they were, without a permit and four thousand strong, chanting, "The streets belong to the people!" When the police arrested two Hell's Angels, the coffin marked with dollar signs that marchers had been carrying was passed around and spontaneously filled with bail money—to the utter surprise of cops and bikers alike. In return, the Angels threw a party in Golden Gate Park on New Year's Day, footing the bill, with free beer and music by the Grateful Dead, Janis Joplin, and Big Brother and the Holding Company.

And so it came to pass that an alliance was forged between the Diggers and Hell's Angels. Although the Angels brought weapons of violence to the Diggers, they also brought a sense of honor. "Generally," Coyote writes, "they held themselves to a higher standard of honesty and commitment than most civilians I knew. Like the Diggers, they lived life as they imagined it possible. Unlike the Diggers, however, their aspirations and hopes for success extended no further than themselves."

As they operated at the edges of the Haight-Ashbury counterculture, the Diggers expanded through combinations and alliances, like the one with the Hell's Angels. They referred to this larger, centerless coalition as the Free Family. And it is to the rise and fall of the Free Family, a group that established a series of communes in the Pacific Northwest and Southwest, that Coyote devotes the bulk of *Sleeping Where I Fall*. The Free Family sought to create an environment devoted to an alternative lifestyle, one not tied to the conventions of polite behavior. But it quickly became obvious that the credo of "do your own thing" did not work in an overloaded household. Somebody would use someone else's toothbrush, and objecting to this might be regarded as bourgeois. Ideological conflicts invaded the communal spirit. One individual removed the bathroom door, asserting that the fear of being observed was a neurotic vanity to be banished. High aspirations were tainted by petty arguments. There was even a hair-raising public fight in the street about a spoon.

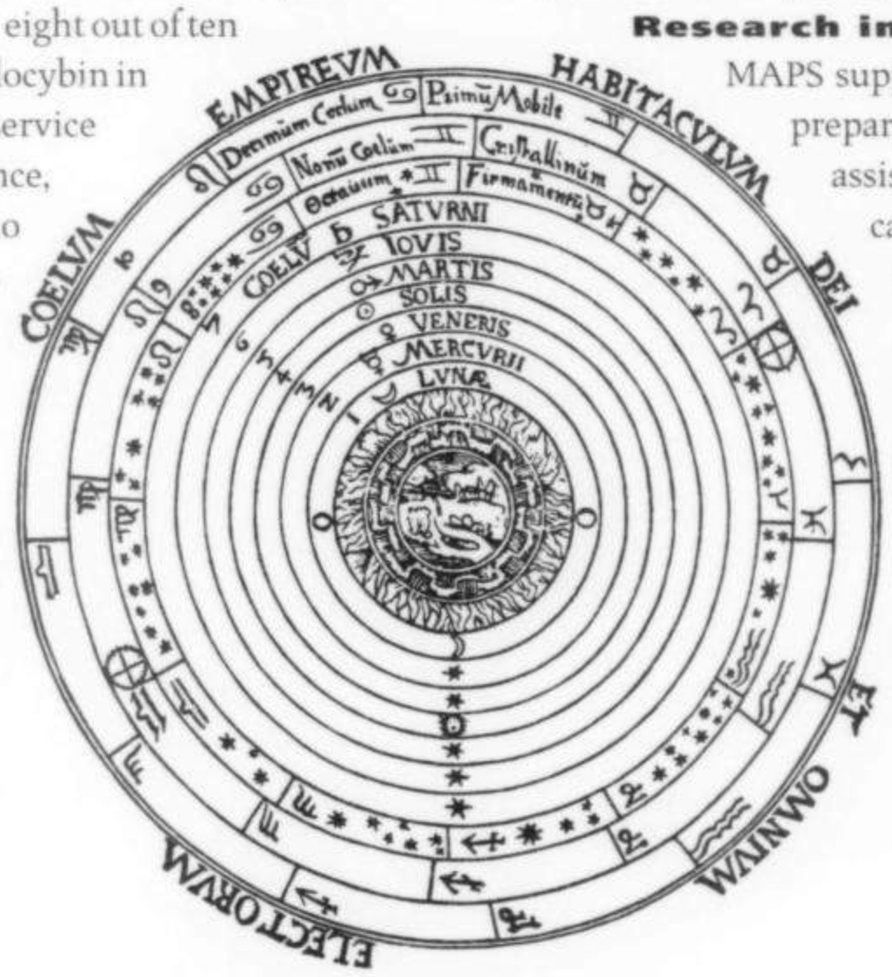
When Peter's father, Morris Cohon, died in 1971, the Free Family moved back east to his ranch, Turkey Ridge. As the 1960s had progressed, Coyote had become more and more estranged from his Cohon family. Of the experience of returning to live on his father's property he laments, "There was no way for me to insist on more respectful behavior without asserting the prerogatives of ownership which would have violated the principles of community, so I remained silent, and in this manner abetted the transformation of Turkey Ridge from the crown jewel of Morris' possessions into another tawdry Digger way-station." Their experiment in alternative communal living continued to unravel. Coyote describes this process with a feeling of lost innocence: "The only reason to fix the trucks now was to escape from one another. Life continues after something dies, it simply does not continue in the same way. We maintained our chores and responsibilities, but the activity was pro forma. Everyone knew that the Free Family as a source of future security was a fiction."

By comparison, The Farm in Tennessee is a commune that evolved out of the same San Francisco community but succeeded in hanging together and working productively. Indeed, their relief and development agency, Plenty International, founded in 1974, grew into an earthquake relief program in Guatemala that moved millions of Canadian International Development Agency dollars into projects that included the rebuilding of 1200 houses in the villages and the installation of 27 kilometers of water-pipe between 1976 and 1981. The Farm organized water projects in South Africa and soy dairies in the Caribbean. Stephen Gaskin, leader of The Farm, told me, "The things we had to learn to feed ourselves and deliver our babies were relevant in the small countries.... I think the important factors in The Farm's long term survival was that we tried not to

What if... You had a Telescope but were Forbidden to Use it?

THE SUPPRESSION OF SCIENTIFIC FREEDOM by religious/political orthodoxies did not end after Galileo was forced by the Inquisition to recant his astronomical observations. Rigorous, scientifically credible research into the therapeutic and spiritual potential of psychedelic drugs has been almost completely suppressed since the mid-Sixties, in a panic reaction to the widespread use of drugs within the so-called "counterculture."

Dr. Walter Pahnke's 1962 double-blind placebo controlled study, which found that eight out of ten divinity students who received psilocybin in the context of a Good Friday service reported a classic mystical experience, versus only one out of ten who received a placebo, still stands as state-of-the-art 37 years later. Promising studies by Dr. Stanislav Grof at Johns Hopkins conducted in the early Seventies, in which LSD-assisted psychotherapy was provided to terminal cancer patients to help them prepare psychologically for dying, have not been replicated. Dutch psychiatrist Dr. Jan Bastiaans' use of LSD-assisted psychotherapy to help concentration camp survivors, movingly described by one patient in *Shivitti – A Vision*, is a tantalizing suggestion of unfulfilled promise *(orders@gatewaysbooksandtapes.com)*.



"The Cosmographia" by Peter Apian, circa 1539, describing the universe according to the Ptolemaic model: Earth appears at the center, with the moon, sun and planets fixed about it on a series of concentric rings.

Psychedelic Research in Israel

MAPS is sponsoring the efforts of researchers at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev to obtain permission to study the use of MDMA (Ecstasy) in the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). MAPS organized an international scientific conference on the clinical use of MDMA at the Dead Sea in August 1999, bringing together scientists from seven countries. MAPS also supported the recently completed follow-up study to Dr. Bastiaans' LSD research.

Research in the US

MAPS supports scientists at UCLA who are preparing to study the use of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy in end-stage cancer patients. MAPS also works to catalyze medical marijuana research. After two and a half years and five rejections, MAPS recently received word from the FDA that its application to have marijuana designated an Orphan Drug for AIDS-wasting was finally accepted.

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What is MAPS?

Founded in 1986, the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS) is *the only* 501 (c) (3) nonprofit membership organization assisting scientists worldwide to obtain permission, fund, conduct and report on scientific research into the healing and spiritual potentials of psychedelics and medical marijuana. Within the last decade, a few psychedelic research projects have been permitted in the US and Europe. MAPS currently has 1,850 members and is seeking donors, large and small, interested in supporting legally sanctioned research already in development or initiating new lines of inquiry.

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"Psychedelic research by people who understand spirit can deepen our experiential understanding of divine immanence, spirituality, healing, and mind. This perennial inquiry stimulates renewal and needs sustained support."
— Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi

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be doctrinaire. We were not Baptists, we were not macrobioticists or Marxists or Jains or Buddhists.... We were hippies who wanted to live together and who would accept the level of organization that it took to achieve that. I think that allowed us to bend rather than break when heavy changes happened."

By definition, though, an experiment such as Coyote's Free Family can never fail. *Time* magazine may have invented the shorthand term "hippies," but in reality those who participated in this counterculture created an epidemic of idealism, displaying courage and imagination. They served as a generation of young pioneers, traveling westward without killing a single Indian along the way.

It was a modern version of Exodus. When a *Time* reporter asked me what I thought they were all going to do when they got to San Francisco, I answered, "I guess they're just gonna rub together." But sex, drugs and rock'n'roll were merely the underbelly of what was essentially a spiritual revolution. The Free Family just went too far, trying to follow the rules of permissiveness and rubbing each other the wrong way in the process. As for the other Digger leaders, Peter Berg now publishes *Planet Drum*, a bioregional magazine, and Emmett Grogan died of a heroin overdose in 1978 on a subway train to Brooklyn.

At the time, Coyote was chairman of the California State Arts Council and pressing a radical agenda through the state legislature. In 1975, Governor Jerry Brown had appointed Pulitzer Prize winning poet Gary Snyder to that position. The Free Family had once camped out on Snyder's land, and now he asked Coyote to join the council. After twenty minutes with Brown, Coyote—shoulder-length hair, jeans, and boots—got the job. "From the farthest edge of the outside," he writes, "I had, after one conversation, been invited to the inside of the inside." In 1976, he was elected chairman. When he left in 1983, at his last hearing before the State Senate Finance Committee, the same uptight senators who had often tried to abolish the arts council now put on hippie headbands and applauded him. "The gesture moved me," he recalls, "and I accepted it as my passing grade in civilian life, an indication that my years in the wind had been put to good use."

Coyote realizes in retrospect that "the Diggers understood fundamentals about the relationship between culture and imagination, and culture and politics, but our spurning of more traditional political alliances was, I believe, somewhat snobbish and counterproductive.... The failure to curb personal indulgence was a major collective error." However, he does not apologize one iota for trying to put into practice a humane value system: "The ideas and moral positions that emerged during this period—the civil rights movement, feminism, holistic medicine, organic farming, numerous alternative physical and spiritual therapies and disciplines, and perhaps most important, bioregional or watershed political organization—were abetted by agents like the people remembered here: flawed and imperfect people certainly, but genuinely dedicated to creating more enlightened options for themselves and others...."

Recently, I was a guest lecturer in a popular course at UCLA about the 1960s titled "Agitational Communication" and taught by Professor Paul von Blum, who was active in the Berkeley Free Speech Movement. A student asked me, "Did you guys really believe what you were saying, or was it all just rhetoric?" "Both," I answered. Countless people were actually living their ideals, personally and in communal situations, but there was also lots of rhetoric. In this context, then, *Sleeping Where I Fall* is Coyote's attempt at "carving a petroglyph, creating some record of the tribes of free people who passed through here." His book serves as an inspiring, sad, yet juicy slice of American countercultural history. ❑

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BOOK REVIEW

Holocaust Infatuation

Marla Stone

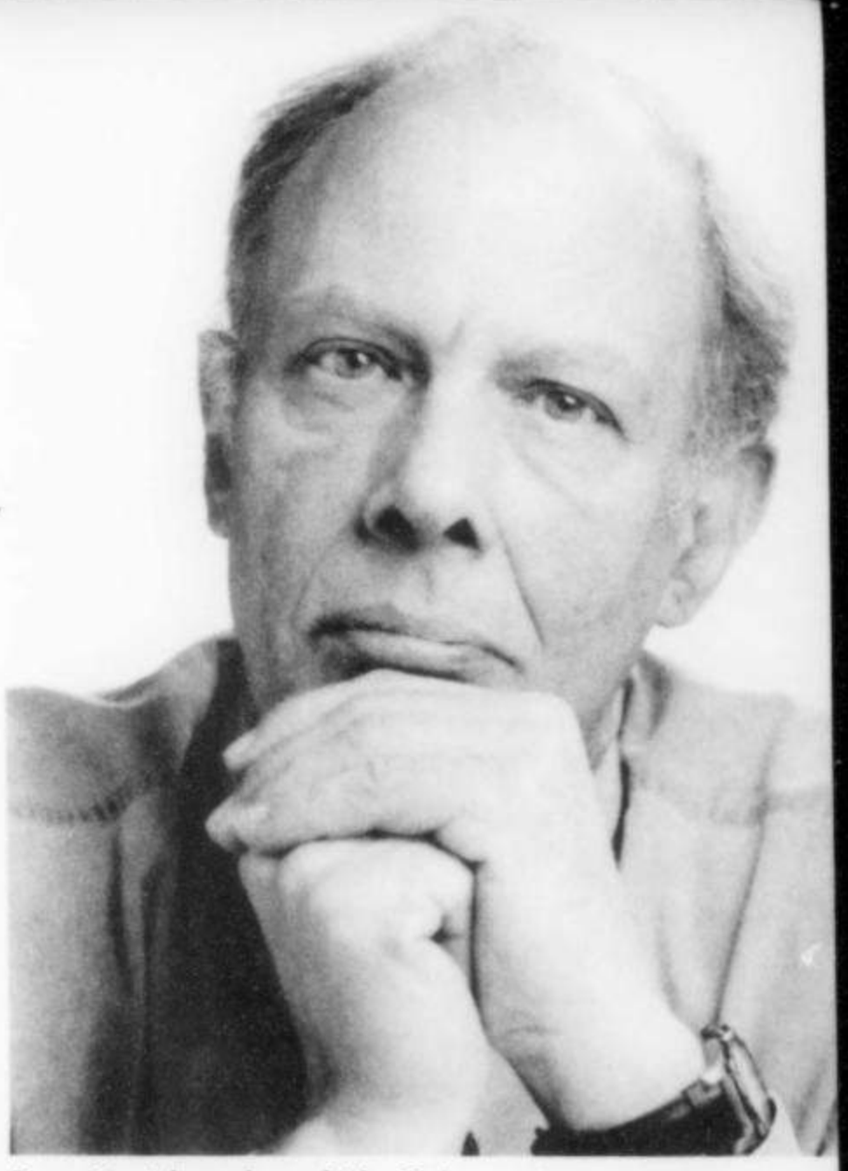
- *The Holocaust in American Life,* by Peter Novick. Houghton Mifflin, 1999.

Today one might say that the Jewish catastrophe has become the American catastrophe. At some point in the last decade (probably in 1993 with the opening of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the debut of Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List*), the Holocaust became a defining event of American culture and identity. American life is now framed by a sensitivity to and awareness of the Holocaust, from the legislated Holocaust curriculum which dot the nation's schools to the annual commemoration of the Holocaust in the nation's capitol rotunda.

In *The Holocaust in American Life,* Peter Novick confronts the complex and controversial path of the Holocaust through the post-war American and Jewish American experience. The book takes the reader on a journey from the late 1940s, when American Jews avoided making the Holocaust the center of their world view, to the 1970s and 1980s when it began to hold the defining place it does today. Given the sacrosanct character of the Holocaust for American Jews, Novick braves a minefield as he challenges deeply held assumptions about the benefits of Holocaust vigilance. At the center of his book is Novick's assertion that the ubiquity and grip of Holocaust memory is the product of changes in American Jewish life—not a transcendent imperative, nor the displacement of emotions repressed since 1945, nor a reaction to the fact that survivors are passing away. Instead, Novick links the American Jewish focus on the Holocaust to social and political trends of the last three decades, such as the fear of assimilation on the part of American Jewish leaders, the need to defend Israel, the rise of identity politics, and the decline of the social justice component of American Jewish culture.

It is no surprise that the Holocaust shapes American Jewish consciousness and that it has increasingly done so in the last three decades. But why does the tragedy of European Jewry loom so large in the broader culture? And, is contemporary Holocaust memory culture a positive force in Jewish American and American life? The answer to this question is different for Jews and non-Jews.

For American Jews, the Holocaust has been mobilized since the 1970s to forge support for a particular vision of Israeli security and a proscribed version of Jewish identity. As anyone who grew up Jewish since the 1970s knows, not a few Reform and Conservative synagogues and organizations have raised the specter of the Holocaust to urge an allegiance to Judaism against the competing secularizing forces of American life. How many of us were told that marrying out of the faith would "give Hitler a posthumous victory"? Religious school programming offers a steady diet of Warsaw Ghetto simulations and Anne Frank re-enactments designed both to commemorate the Holocaust and "to scare kids into Judaism." Novick contends that fear of assimilation, declining attention to ritual and liturgy among many Jews, and rising intermarriage rates in the 1970s and 1980s drove many reform and conservative Jewish institutions to foreground Holocaust programming and to imply that an absence of a Jewish identity meant a "victory for Hitler." The Jewishness which emerges from such programming often leaves young Jews with a superficial Jewish identity centered on contemporary Israel and the Holocaust.



PHOTOGRAPH BY FREDRIC STEIN/COURTESY OF HOUGHTON MIFFLIN

Peter Novick, author of *The Holocaust in American Life.*

The mobilization of the Holocaust into a contemporary Jewish American agenda has meant that a particular interpretation of the Holocaust has predominated. The Holocaust which has emerged since the 1970s and around which memory culture focuses is sacred and unique, even redemptive, as in recent productions like *Schindler's List.* It is always conceived as a crime against Jews (other victims—Poles, Gypsies, homosexuals and political prisoners rarely reach visible status), an uncomplicated product of intolerance run wild. In this reading, any attempt to compare the Holocaust to other genocides bespeaks anti-Semitism.

As it stands today, the centrality of this Holocaust in American Jewish life

Marla Stone is associate professor of history at Occidental College and the author of The Patron State: Culture and Politics in Fascist Italy, *Princeton University Press, 1998.*

is neither enriching or enlightening. The cult of the Holocaust has flattened and eviscerated a rich and profound faith and tradition. Many suburban Jews, alienated from ritual, practice, and history, measure their commitment to Judaism by their outraged attention to Holocaust memory. To take a representative example: one Jewish student from the San Fernando Valley accused me of anti-Semitism in a course on European history because "there were more pages of reading assigned about World War One than about the Holocaust." The memory of the Jewish catastrophe has been too internally focused, too invested in protecting the specificity of Jewish loss. If only we could stop policing its uniqueness and find other ways to think about the Holocaust, we could make our collective grieving an act of growth. Do we have the strength to take off the mantle of a particularized Holocaust and to regain the responsibility to use our suffering in the name of others?

The Holocaust in American Life raises questions which we must all confront. Yet it falls short on its promise. We expect the book literally to address the Holocaust in American life, but Novick instead focuses on Jewish American responses to the Holocaust and subsumes the non-Jewish ones under that umbrella. Indeed, the aspect of Novick's argument which is sure to unleash bitter controversy is his claim that the institutionalization of Holocaust memory in general American culture was a conscious policy of portions of the American Jewish establishment. While the American Jewish leadership undoubtedly pushed a particular awareness of the Holocaust, can we really prove cause and effect? Not only does this view downplay other sources for Americans' interest, it misrepresents an American Jewry which is far from monolithic. The Jewish Renewal movement, for instance, with its emphasis on spirituality and tradition, is but one example of a Judaism which rejects the cult of the Holocaust.

When Novick finally turns to the question, "why do non-Jewish Americans care about the Holocaust?" his answer is that "for most Americans deploring the Holocaust is a rather ritualistic, albeit undoubtedly well-meant, gesture toward Jews who ask them to do so." This response, however, rejects the Holocaust's powerful resonance for many non-Jewish Americans. It is not enough to say, as Novick does, that Jewish leaders and Jewish money in Hollywood, Washington, and New York promoted the culture of Holocaust memory. Many Americans have assimilated the "lessons of the Holocaust" as their moral yardstick and it frames their understanding of good and evil. Take, for instance, an interview conducted for the PBS Newshour of May 4, 1999 with a U.S. Army reservist named Larry who was on his way to Kosovo: "We learned from Hitler," explained Larry, "not to wait too long with the genocide, ethnic cleansing thing."

The cult of the Holocaust has eviscerated a rich and profound faith and tradition.

No, the Holocaust as it has appeared in America in these last decades—redemptive, apolitical, and as a shorthand for absolute evil—fits American cultural needs and interests. Americans have responded to it in part because the Holocaust allows for an easy consensus: it was something which took place on another continent with perpetrators and victims of other nationalities. Holocaust vigilance also coincides with an American need for moral absolutes and crusades (even more since the end of the Cold War and the disappearance of the great Soviet enemy). The two million annual visitors to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum are driven by a sense of mission and a feeling that it is their civic duty to bear witness. In his conclusion, Novick declares his antipathy to this universalized mobilization of the Holocaust, which he believes desensitizes the public to more specific and local forms of suffering. If every group from abortion foes to AIDS activists claims its own "Holocaust," he argues, then the Holocaust simultaneously means nothing and everything; because of its extreme nature, the Holocaust offers us no practical lessons.

Yet, the foregrounding of the Holocaust and the attempt to find lessons in the most horrifying destruction of a people may have encouraging elements: this is an historical process of which we are still in the midst. Comparisons of other events to the Holocaust have produced a diffused awareness in American discourse of "what happens when human rights are abrogated." This phenomenon operated most strikingly in the NATO intervention in Kosovo, where the media and the Clinton Administration transformed the Kosovar Albanians into modern-day potential Holocaust victims. Certainly, the application of the post-Holocaust dictum, "Never Again," has been haphazard, inconsistent, and, at times, cynical, but it has opened the door to an anti-genocide politics. A politics which uses the Holocaust not as a measure of uniqueness but as a lens through which to secure the triumph of an international human rights agenda would prove a living memorial to the victims of the Holocaust.

Novick's book represents an opening salvo in a debate with high stakes: Holocaust memory is now institutionalized in both American and Jewish American culture. Will the memorials and museums mobilize future action or will they stand guard over institutionalized ritual? Is our current use of the Holocaust really the best way to remember the dead? ❑

BOOK REVIEW

Still in Watergate's Shadow



ILLUSTRATION BY GARY THARLER

David M. Stone

- *Shadow: Five Presidents and the Legacy of Watergate,* by Bob Woodward. Simon and Schuster, 1999.

At first, it's surprising that one of America's preeminent newspapermen would "bury the lede." But after reading more than five hundred pages of *Shadow: Five Presidents and the Legacy of Watergate,* it becomes clear that author Bob Woodward doesn't really have one. A quarter century since he, along with Carl Bernstein and their voluble source "Deep Throat," helped bring down the Nixon White House—and about a quarter hour since Ken Starr and congressional Republicans failed to bring down the Clinton White House—Woodward appears ready to offer a little perspective. After all, it may be fine for daily news reporting to be merely "the first rough draft of history." But Woodward clearly promises something more: reflection, insight, context. Though rich in juicy details that may or may not be significant, his book delivers precious little of the above and, most remarkably, never really tries to.

Instead, Woodward plunges us headlong into a rigidly chronological roller-coaster ride through nearly three decades of Washington scandals, large and small. He starts by rehashing the conflicting memories of those who played a role in Gerald Ford's pardon of Richard Nixon. Did Alexander Haig propose a deal for Nixon's resignation? Or was everyone simply struggling to understand the political and legal options in those tense final days? Woodward aptly assures us that either way, "a shadow of suspicion was cast over Ford."

We then breathlessly careen up and down political molehills—like the alleged cocaine sniffing at Studio 54 by Jimmy Carter's Chief of Staff Hamilton Jordan or rumors about the sexual orientation of George Bush's Supreme Court nominee David Souter—as well as constitutional mountains like Iran-Contra. There is little in the narrative to distinguish the significance of one set of stories from the next. Sometimes there's an independent counsel investigating potential legal wrongdoing. Sometimes, like the Clarence Thomas-Anita Hill hearings or Bush's handling of Iraq, there are political questions of personal veracity involved.

Along the way, there are some vivid scenes, like Lawrence Walsh's achingly pointless deposition of Ronald Reagan about Iran-Contra just as a soon-to-be-diagnosed Alzheimer's is taking grip over his memory, or burly Senator Warren Rudman physically restraining a diminutive David Souter from picking up the phone to pull the plug on his own Supreme Court nomination. Woodward also asks (but doesn't answer) some titillating questions. I was desperate to know more about the break-in and ransacking of Howard Baker's house a month after the Senate Watergate Committee uncovered the existence of the White House taping system. Woodward lays out the ominous facts like Oliver Stone, suggesting this was no robbery, but "a message." But who was behind the break-in? What was its real ramification? That, Woodward leaves unsaid.

Woodward plunges us headlong into a rigidly chronological roller-coaster ride through nearly three decades of Washington scandals, large and small.

Later, Woodward ends one of his Clinton chapters by referring to a Whitewater-related news story prepared by *New York Times* investigative reporter Jeff Gerth about Lippo Group payments to indicted Clinton associate Web Hubbell. "But Gerth did not write the story for nearly two years," Woodward concludes. Why

Now an independent television producer in New York, David Stone served as communications director to United States Senator Harris Wofford between 1991 and 1995.

not? Perhaps an explanation would provide some insight about how political reporters and editors handle such topics in today's Washington. But none is forthcoming.

Less than halfway into this five-hundred-plus page narrative, the scandal ride just about comes off the tracks with the thrills and chills of Bill and Hillary, Whitewater and the Rose Law Firm, the Travel Office and the FBI files, Vince Foster and Web Hubbell, Paula and Monica. Didn't we have enough fun getting nauseous on our first wild ride these past eight years? Is it really time to do it all again? Dear Lord, if we must relive the experience of Linda and Lucianne, Ken Starr and Henry Hyde, "distinguishing characteristics" and semen-stained dresses, shouldn't it be for a very, very good reason?

If Woodward has one, he certainly isn't saying. About the only stab he makes at any lesson-drawing comes in a three-and-a-half-page "Epilogue" in which he unsurprisingly distinguishes between the constitutional conspiracy of Watergate and the personal embarrassment of the Monica matter. As to the larger case he is making, it's not exactly breaking news: Vietnam and Watergate undermined respect for presidential veracity. Attack-politics and independent counsels have eroded the scope of presidential authority. Bill Clinton is a creative liar and compulsive womanizer. Okay, tell me something I don't already know—and really should know—about the scandals of the current and four previous administrations.

Like the talismanic "What did the President know and when did he know it?" there are plenty of meaty questions hanging in the air in the aftermath of a historic, if stunted and sullied, impeachment trial. Are scandal politics the fruit of the poisoned independent counsel tree, whose legislative root officially withered on June 30, 1999? Does some fault lie with a destructive cynicism that has so largely displaced healthy skepticism as the journalistic creed of a generation of Washington reporters reared on Woodward's Watergate example? What about the impact of the twenty-four-hour political spin-cycle made possible by the explosion of cable TV news and the Internet? Or of an increasingly ideological, special interest-driven Congress? What, after all, is "the shadow"—the legacy Watergate has bequeathed to our five subsequent presidencies?

Nearly a decade ago, former Moynihan Senate aide Suzanne Garment (wife of former Nixon counsel Leonard Garment) provided a helpful historical analysis of such questions in *Scandal: The Culture of Mistrust in American Politics.* More recently, former Washington reporter Tom Rosenstiel and former *Atlanta Constitution* editor Bill Kovach have offered the well-reviewed *Warp Speed,* analyzing the media's special role in the Lewinsky drama. Woodward adds a blow-by-blow account of every round of Bill and Hillary Clinton's bouts with Ken Starr, congressional investigators, Paula Jones, each other, and their own worst instincts. But while he certainly does unearth some heretofore unknown details about these inside-the-Beltway battles, he never matches his renowned reporting with a similarly thoughtful analysis of stories that have so recently been reported to death in print, online, and over the airwaves.

It's not only the lack of analysis that is troubling. Bob Woodward is renowned for being able to pry remarkable revelations out of the mouths of Washington insiders in background and off-the-record interviews. It's the words he puts into their mouths that have always invited skepticism, as well they should. He re-creates dramatic conversations and confrontations, quoting vivid dialogue. How? Mostly by getting people to tell him what they remember saying or hearing. It's an old complaint, but still, I think, a legitimate one, that Woodward devalues the very idea of quotation marks in his lively re-creation of conversations for which the only source is the fallible human memory of people with their own axes to grind.

Ask yourself: even if, like some of these figures, you keep a daily journal, can you really remember verbatim a conversation from this morning? What about last week? Last year? Of course, you can give the flavor of an exchange. You may even be able to paraphrase what you and someone else said. But a word-for-word exchange? Not me. I'd much rather have historical drama, based on real characters and events, but plainly labeled, as David Mamet gives us Terrence Rattigan's "Winslow Boy." Or give me the actual White House transcripts, as William Doyle does in his recent *Inside the Oval Office: The White House Tapes from FDR to Clinton.* With tapes, we know what a president and his aides said, for it really is as if we were in the same room with them ourselves. I'm not enough of a philosopher to deconstruct the meaning of truth. But I think there's a difference between a statement someone actually said and a statement someone recalls making or hearing. To me, the former deserves those quotation marks. The latter is merely conjecture.

Beyond the fallibility of memory, there's also an inherent bias at work. The Washington reporting game is a bit like detectives you see on *NYPD Blue* or *Law and Order* who put a couple of suspects in different holding rooms. Whoever rats out the other first gets the best plea deal from the prosecutor. So it's long been a capital parlor game to pick who opened up the most to Woodward—since they almost always come out looking the best in his narrative. Two likely sources here are former Clinton White House deputy counsel Jane Sherborne and scandal spokesman Mark Fabiani. Their roles and views are presented with extraordinarily rich detail and sympathy. But Sherborne antagonists in the White House Counsel's office, like former federal appeals judge Abner Mikva and impeachment star Cheryl Mills, don't come out as quite so heroic.

With Fabiani, we find out what kind of bourbon he and his team favored

after a day of press spinning (Maker's Mark, in case you were wondering). But it's the kind of detail that doesn't add much to our understanding of the Watergate legacy. Indeed, both Nixon's and Ford's scotches are duly noted but remain generically branded.

In short, Woodward's confidence game of reporting has its limits, and it's refreshing when someone—even if he is former President George Bush—simply refuses to play. To his credit, Woodward reprints, largely unedited, an extensive letter that Bush writes him declining the opportunity to be interviewed for the book. I voted against the man all four times he was on the national ballot, but I think Bush is onto something when he writes, "When I read books by today's new school journalists I see my name in direct quotes, words in my mouth I never uttered. I talked to our publisher at Knopf about this method. 'Literary License,' says he. But I don't like it."

President Bush goes on to criticize a cynical breed of young reporters who want to emulate Woodward's own Watergate example by questioning the word and integrity of all in politics. Democrat or Republican, liberal or conservative, it's a gut feeling that anyone who's been on the receiving end of a bad spin cycle has had. It's too easy to blame the media alone for what both Bush and Woodward agree is "a climate of scandal and mistrust" in Washington. Indeed, it wasn't even cyber-gossip Matt Drudge, but Independent Counsel Ken Starr who published the smuttiest report of the year. But Woodward might have helped us understand this "shadow" if he told us a bit more about the meaning of the so-called "Watergate legacy" for his fellow journalists, as well as for the politicians they report on.

I was a true Watergate fanatic as a teenager—riveted by the Ervin and Rodino hearings, the Saturday Night Massacre, the tapes, Maureen Dean's hair, all of it. I remember reading Nixon's resignation speech out loud to a group of somewhat less engaged fellow junior camp counselors. Like many staffers and reporters in today's Washington, the scandal propelled me to a lifelong interest in politics and the press, law and government. Now, looking back on the personal and political wreckage involving friends and colleagues—and the country—over these last years, I wish Bob Woodward would try to do more than simply recount again how the system has failed. Given his unique access and experience, I expect him to explain why. Even more important, as more and more Americans turn away from politics for solutions to the nation's problems and tune out the political news coverage at which Woodward excels, it behooves him—and us all—to give a bit more attention to how on earth that system can be redeemed. ❑

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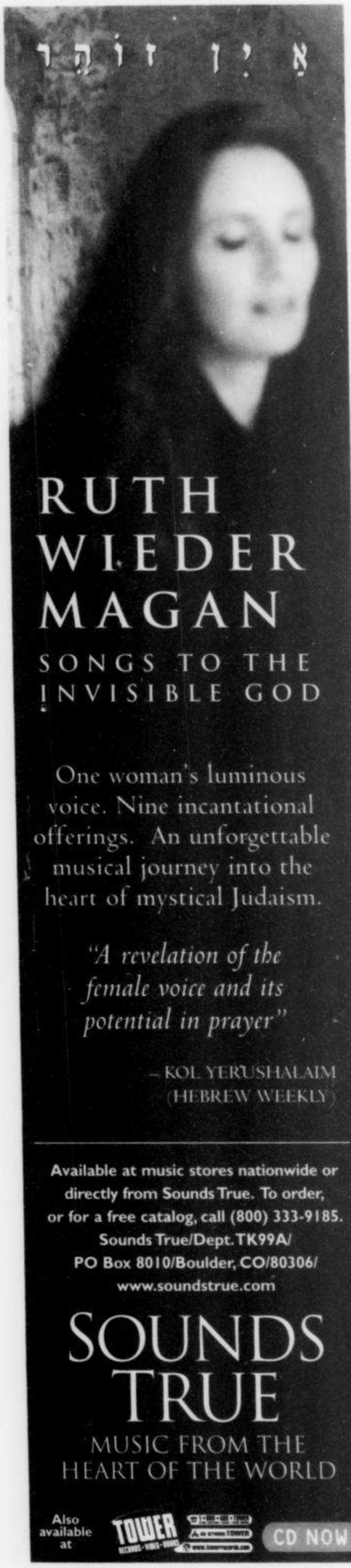
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Ya'acov Gabriel

What's important to look for in Jewish renewal music is its vitality. Is there a fearlessness in its reframing of a traditional genre? Is it ambitious, irrepressible, mysterious, and inspired with holy chutzpah? Does it move you or leave you awestruck? Does the artist have a sense of power or a sense of humor? A "yes" to these questions keeps me playing a few new CDs I've been enjoying lately.

Jack Kessler is a cantor, bass player, and band master in Philadelphia. His latest release, with his group Klingon Klezmer, *Honey Would You be Meshuga Tonite?* (available via amazon.com or at www.Goldmedina.com) has a wink and a nudge running through it. It's a rare record that can boast inspiration from Eastern European Jewish party music and *Star Trek*'s Klingon Opera, but this one manages the trick successfully. There are enough sound effects and archness in the vocals to be otherworldly, and enough shtetl roots to be down home. The band features extraordinary soloists on clarinet, keyboards, fiddle, and electric guitar, with a very solid drum/bass underpinning. It's tough, industrial-strength warrior music on some tracks and sentimental and poignant on others. Sometimes, you can sense the presence of Worf and his buddies back on Kronos, kicking back with a keg of quality blood wine from around 2314 or so.

This new recording comes on the heels of Jack's other brainchild, the cosmic/Mizrachi band Atzilut, and their two fine discs, *Planetary Jewish Music* and *Souls on Fire: Music for the Kabbala*. The two groups share four musicians and Jack's out-there sensibility. The rhythms are different, but both projects create hypnotic songs and let you see where an unrestrained musical mind like Jack Kessler's can wander for inspiration.

Another kind of muscular, millennial music comes from Alan Scott Bachman and his group Desert Wind. On his double CD, *She is a Tree of Life* (available via deswind@aol.com or Desert Wind, P.O. Box 3722, Salt Lake City, Utah 84110) the focus seems mythological and political. You can hear Middle Eastern chant, belly dance sensuousness, and classic rock influences, as well as lyrics that sing of repairing the world. It's very cool to have Jewish music that's this sexy and anthemic. It reminds me of The Who when they were making records that were larger than life and happily rebellious. The power chords on this recording are mostly on Alan's keyboards. The power and grandeur of the sound comes from the Hebrew verses Alan highlights and from his Desert Wind Singers, who do a kind of Temple Priestess vocalese. It's clear the songs are to God, but this face of the Divine, so feminine and lush, is often overlooked in our tradition. What can I say? I'm seduced. I like it a lot. These songs and chants are a gift to those of us who like to dance as we pray.

I encourage you to get these recordings and to play them loud. They have a strong pulse and a hot core, and they groove the body as well as the mind. As we enter 5760 and a new millennium, we will need all the vigor we can fit into our spirituality. Baruch HaShem, thank the Nameless One, for inflammatory and fun recordings like these. ❑

Rabbi Ya'acov Gabriel leads the Jewish renewal Congregation Har Shalom in Fort Collins, Colorado. His seventh recording, Living Tree, *has just been released.*

ILLUSTRATION BY J. PAUL SIMEONE AND SCOTT JOHNSTON

Sikkum: TIKKUN RECOMMENDS ...

Black Men on Race, Gender and Sexuality

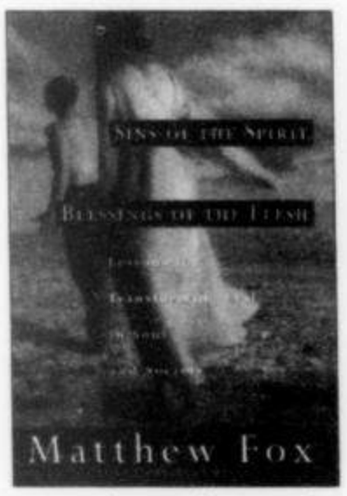
Edited by Devon W. Carbado
NYU Press, 1999



This collection presents a full spectrum of perspectives on black male identity, covering topics like black identity and racial inequality. Understanding the struggles facing black men as they sort through issues of gender, sexuality, and race can be instructive to all of us—and the editor's reflections on a possible male feminism are provocative and important.

Sins of the Spirit, Blessings of the Flesh

Matthew Fox
Harmony Books, 1999



Matthew Fox is quite simply one of the most inspiring and provocative Christian theologians of our time. Fox wisely begins his book with a celebration of all that is good in our bodies, and his account of sin as misdirected love articulates in a fuller way the politics of meaning perspective on how our hunger for connection can go astray. You don't have to be a Christian to learn a new way of thinking from Matt Fox—this book is a great place to begin.

Shake Heaven and Earth

Louis Rapoport
Gefen Books, 1999

Louis Rapoport was a beloved *Jerusalem Post* journalist. This important book about Peter Bergson is the most damning critique yet of the American Jewish establishment and of Labor Zionism's role during the Holocaust. Bergson, a right-winger whose role in bringing arms to Israel on the Altalena in 1948 led to a bloody battle between Jews, is here portrayed as a prescient post-Zionist thinker whose insistence on separating Judaism from Jewish nationality might have saved Israel its current hassles with religious coercion.

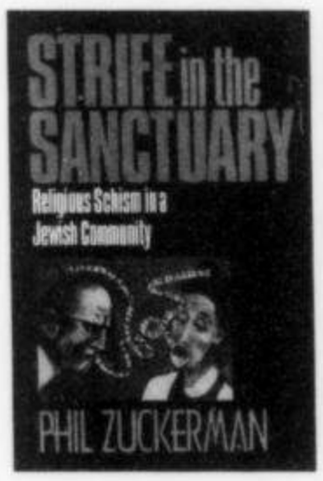
The Art of Blessing the Day

Marge Piercy
Knopf, 1999

TIKKUN's former poetry editor, whose feminist work still rings with the authenticity and power of women's insight, has collected her poems with a Jewish theme in this beautiful new volume. Future generations would be well advised to incorporate her work into the liturgy as we have done with the past poetic geniuses of our people.

Strife in the Sanctuary

Phil Zuckerman
AltaMira, 1999



Phil Zuckerman tells an intriguing tale of the religious schism that took place in the Jewish community of Willamette, Oregon. Zuckerman shows us how the conflicting world-views in the community played out in every possible direction, finally producing an Orthodox shul and a progressive, renewal-oriented congregation. Yet he shows too how the dance of separation is still a dance with each other; Zuckerman's account is nuanced and fun to read.

Loose Sugar

Brenda Hillman
Wesleyan University Press, 1997



Loose and inclusive in its aesthetic, sweet and impulsive in its temperament, Hillman's poetry speaks with an awkwardly attractive human voice that addresses the nature of our lives from a breach between a material shadow world and a spiritual world of light. Hillman is clearing a new path for American poetry.

The David Story

Robert Alter
W.W. Norton, 1999

Robert Alter is one of our greatest Bible translators and a renowned literary scholar; his new translation and commentary on Samuel I and II is rich and provocative. Alter brings to the text his keen literary skills, resulting in commentary far more lively than most scholarly grappling with these biblical texts.

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