

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

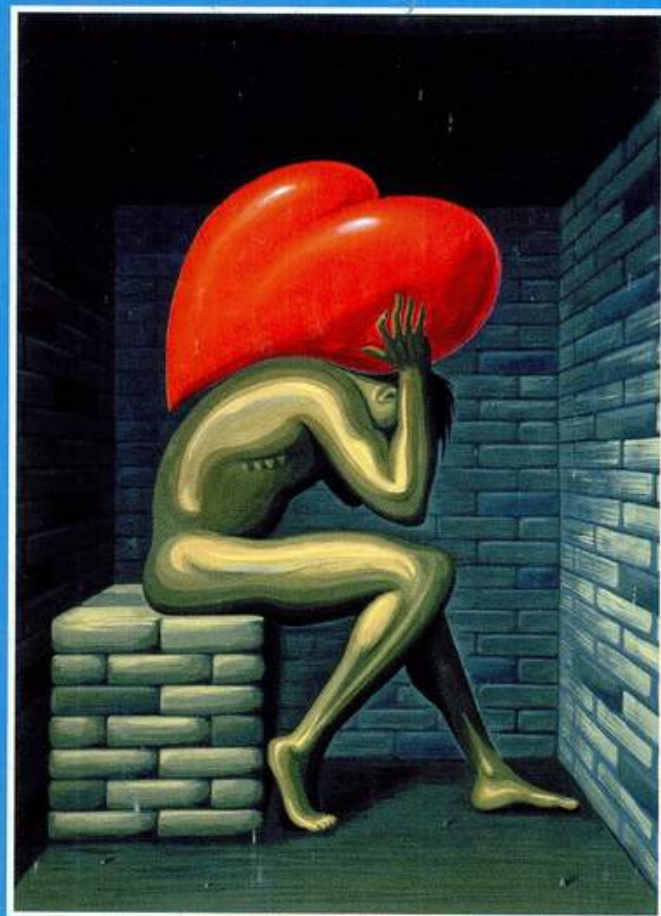
TIKKUN

MICHAEL LERNER

**THE DARK YEARS:
Facing Post-Election
Depression Syndrome**

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2003



Activism *from the* Heart

Vandana Shiva, Robert W. McChesney,
Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, The IFG Task Force,
Joel Schalit, Abdullahi An-Na'im,
Ana Villa-Lobos, Diane Mintz, Marisa Handler,
Jo Ellen Green Kaiser, Deborah Kory

Robert Jewett and John Shelton Lawrence

IRAQ AND A HARD PLACE

Hannan Hever

ISRAELI FICTION AND THE OCCUPATION

Lawrence Hoffman

JEWISH SPIRITUALITY

Joel Kovel

THE DOUBLE STANDARD

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Mordechai Gafni on Erotic Imagination • Mark Levine on Anti-Semitism on Campus • Harley Shaiken remembers Paul Wellstone • Greg Miller on spirituality and American poetry • Sybil Adelman Sage on Letty Cottin Pogrebin's new novel • James Berger on Trauma and the Middle East

Body and Soul

The soul remains attached to the physical body after death for the first seven days, when it flits from its home to the cemetery and back. This explains why the initial mourning period is one week. For twelve months after death the soul ascends and descends until the body disintegrates and the soul is freed.

—*Dictionary of Jewish Lore and Legend*

Which must be the reason why,
the night after my mother's funeral,
lying awake in her bed, I caught her
rummaging in the underwear drawer.

What a relief to know
the dead are *expected* to come back—
so seeing them up and about so soon
is no big deal.

If you die, say, in July,
I'd like to think that in the next few weeks
your soul clings like the bar-code
to the book of your body.
Little by little, the label
starts to peel, curling and lifting
until the sticky underside loses its grip.

By Labor Day, it's as if
your body can walk your soul on a leash,
yanking it back when it lifts a hind leg
over the perfect green of a neighbor's lawn.

Halloween night, the soul begins to rise
like a mylar balloon drunk on helium,
bobbling along the ceiling, trailing its string.

At Thanksgiving,
it's a kind of beach ball clearing the net.
On New Year's Day, it flips on the trampoline
of the body, bouncing higher and higher
until it shoots through the roof.

As Pesach approaches,
your soul—tied by the ankles—
bungee-jumps from the body,
which, meanwhile, has been attending to
its own messy business in the ground.

How else to explain why
Judah Ha-Nasi would suddenly appear
to his family on Friday nights,
dressed in his shabbat finery,
recite a Kiddush over the wine, and vanish?

Or why my mother, just last week,
stood behind me by the stove,
telling me my brisket needs more salt.

Some retired dentist from Great Neck
swears he's photographed a soul leaving its body.
And a deposed countess from Rumania
topped *that*
by claiming she's measured its weight in ounces.

But who knows for sure? Has *anyone*
returned from a sabbatical of being dead
with a book on the subject?

On my mother's Yahrzeit,
when our family gathers at the cemetery
to unveil her headstone,
and we're crying, why be sad?
Think of it as a bon voyage party—
a soul free of the body at last
to make its own plans.

—*Jane Shore*

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For many of us, activism seems like something somebody else does. In this issue, we've gathered together activists of all kinds to trace their own roots and share their vision for the future. We start with the most basic question, "how does activism begin?" with thoughts from TIKKUN editors **Deborah Kory** (33) and **Jo Ellen Green Kaiser** (35), *Punk Planet* editor **Joel Schalit** (37), and Tikkun Community organizer **Marisa Handler** (38) followed by the personal voices of well-established activists including members of the **IFG Task Force** writing on globalization (39), **Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz** on multiculturalism (42), **Vandana Shiva** on the environment (43), **Robert W. McChesney** on media (46), **Abdullahi An-Na'im** on human rights (47), **Diane Mintz** on education (49), and **Ana Villa-Lobos** on spiritual politics (51).



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Sikkum: TIKKUN RECOMMENDS ...

No Sign of Ceasefire An Anthology of Contemporary Israeli Poetry

Edited and translated by Warren Bargad
and Stanley F. Chyet

Skirball Cultural Center, 2002

Israeli poets don't have the luxury of being politically or socially irrelevant. The editors of this collection have assembled a group of poets whose work is a testimony to that fact, and to the deep ties between Israeli culture and the major themes of the West. Yet, as the editors point out, the idiom reflects "biblical images, theological and liturgical echoes, historical and mythical references, all of which remain sure channels of art, though the pietist mindset of earlier generations (by no means vanished from Israeli life today) may very well be seen here in their use and manner of appropriation." Israel is one society where poetry is taken seriously, and this volume presents some of the cutting edge writers whose work commands attention, including Leah Aini, Ya'ir Hurvitz, Admiel Kosman, Yitzhak Laor and Rivka Miriam.



Affluenza The All-Consuming Epidemic

John De Graaf, David Wann, and
Thomas H. Naylor

Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc. 2002

Affluenza, we are taught by these authors, is "a painful, contagious, socially transmitted condition of overload, debt, anxiety, and waste resulting from the dogged pursuit of more." The authors root this disease in the almost religious quest for economic expansion that has become the core principle of "the American dream." These authors have an understanding of the hunger for meaning articulated in *Tikkun*, and this book is a particularly important follow-up to *The Politics of Meaning*. While some of the Affluenza epidemic may be cured by the current decline in stock-market and high-tech fantasies, there's enough of the disease permeating American society to make this a "must read" for every American.



One World The Ethics of Globalization

Peter Singer

Yale University Press, 2002

The twentieth century's conquest of space made it possible for a human being to look at our planet from a point outside of it, and to see it, literally, as one world. Now, Peter Singer tells us, the task is to develop a suitable form of government for that single world. In this carefully reasoned book Singer argues for the development of institutions that can have power over global environmental and labor standards. He argues that these moves and others need not entail cultural imperialism, and insists that national sovereignty has no intrinsic moral weight. "Reducing the number of human beings living in absolute poverty is surely a more urgent priority than reducing the relative poverty caused by some people living in palaces while others live in houses that are merely adequate." With this book, Singer makes an important contribution to the development of a planetary consciousness so needed in these times.

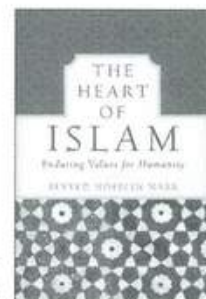


The Heart of Islam Enduring Values for Humanity

Seyyed Hossein Nasr

Harper San Francisco, 2002

If a book could offset the wild growth of anti-Islamic hatred, this would be the one to do it. Nasr, university professor of Islamic studies at the George Washington University, gives us a sober, coherent, intelligent and accessible introduction to the powerful wisdom and beauty in Islamic tradition. Contrasting traditional Islamic norms based on peace and openness to secularist modernist and fundamentalist versions of Islam that now dominate the popular discourse, Nasr provides for Islam the path that might correspond to certain kabbalistic versions of Jewish Renewal. This book is required reading for anyone who has given plausibility to pop critiques of Islam—and will help you see more clearly the level of hatred and indoctrination that pervade Western media.



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Josh Neufeld, Stan Shaw, Dana Van Blair,
Michelle White, Mario Zucca

Web Design

David King, Jer Welter

Publisher

Trish Vradenburg

Controller

Valerie Bach

2107 Van Ness, Suite 302

San Francisco, CA 94109

415-575-1200

fax: 415-575-1434

magazine@tikkun.org

Visit the TIKKUN website at

http://www.tikkun.org

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Letters to the Editor

Elie Wiesel

To the Editor:

Mark Chmiel, in his profile of Elie Wiesel (November/December 2002), writes of "sickening reports of the deaths of innocent Palestinians and Israelis in an increasing spiral of violence." This phraseology suggests a moral equality between the causes of these deaths, but there is no such moral equality. Innocent Palestinians are being killed unintentionally because they are caught in the crossfire as Israel acts in self-defense to stop known terrorists from committing additional atrocities. Innocent Israelis are being murdered in cold blood simply because they are Israeli. One is self-defense; the other is terrorism in its purest form.

Arguing that Israel must vacate the territories is preaching to the choir. Everyone (within Israel and in the Diaspora) knows and accepts this must happen, except for a tiny fringe on the



far right. But it can only happen within the framework of a sincere and enforceable peace agreement that puts a final end to the conflict, i.e. offers the guarantee that organized Palestinian violence against Israel, whether merely tolerated

by or actively aided and abetted by the Palestinian leadership, will genuinely and permanently cease. Barak already offered some 95 percent of the territories at Camp David/Taba in 2000, and Arafat's response was the current intifada. Rather than preaching to Israelis and Jews

who widely accept the principle of land-for-peace, energies would be more usefully directed at convincing the Palestinian people and leadership to accept this same principle. They are the ones who have not accepted it, but still hope to destroy Israel and recover the entirety of the land of historic Palestine.

PETER D. MARK

Seattle, WA

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To the Editor:

Mark Chmiel's analysis is a beautifully written essay summarizing the intellectual and emotional conundrum faced by Elie Wiesel—and of others like him who are torn by the contemporary tragedy we witness and the historical obligation that we feel to not judge Israel. As a non-Jew who, nevertheless, grew up in the immediate, dark after-shadow of the Holocaust, I believe I am one of millions who share Mr. Wiesel's ultimate, sad realizations. We bleed for the memory of the moral and physical horror out of which Israel burst forth like a light of renewal—and now dims from an accumulation of political acts that, we had hoped, would never be contemplated by the Holocaust's children. Not all of Israel, not all Jews, not all people. If an historical tragedy prevents us from living moral contemporary lives, then we must consider moving past the tragedy. In its way, the Holocaust was "clean" evil unmitigated—and now, as Mr. Wiesel's moral evolution points the way, we must be prepared to confront and cut through the ambiguous "greys" of the Israel/Palestine situation to find the moral heart of common humanity lying within.

ROBERT FLEET
Montclair, CA

The Case for War

To the Editor:

I applaud George Vradenburg's reasoned analysis ("The Case for War" November/December 2002) of the need for a willingness to engage in military action under certain conditions, to hasten the coming of a loving and caring world. We've waited for decades for values embraced by '60s/'70s culture to overcome baser instincts which are apparently solidly rooted in human nature and maintained by power and force. Inasmuch as we are part of this world of today, our thoughtful voices expressing how power is used could be more helpful toward that more perfect world, than simply repeating our wish that we were already there.

STANLEY KARTER
San Rafael, CA

To the Editor:

"The Case For War" is impressive in scope and style, but fails to emphasize what seems to be the obvious incentive for U.S. intervention in Iraq—political deflection. Mr. Bush needs the war with Iraq to keep this nation occupied while the economy slowly recovers. It is exactly the same tactic used by his father in 1991. And, like his father, he is totally ignorant of the culture and mindset of the people he intends to confront.

If, indeed, Saddam Hussein had been eliminated in 1991, democratization would not have followed. If he were eliminated tomorrow or next week, democratization will not follow. First, because we are dealing with a tribal culture and a people who have never known freedom as defined in Western European or American terms. Second, because of that tribal culture, the country will eventually return to independent and hostile regional leadership once the strong leadership is removed. Witness the situation in Afghanistan. Third, it is naïve of anyone to believe that either the mullahs or the leaders of any Islamic nation will allow their people to enjoy the basic tenet of democracy, e.g. the freedom to question their rule.

GENO PAESANO
Windsor, CT

A Simple Plan

To the Editor:

As you repeatedly say, and I agree, the Occupation is the main impediment to peace. Since a large proportion of the "settlers" in the West Bank (I have heard the estimate to be 70 percent) are living there not for ideological but for economic reasons, let us begin by establishing a fund which will subsidize the resettlement of these people in Israel proper. Eventually, we might see our peace partners in Israel move politically in a similar direction, creating an Israeli governmental fund to accomplish the same end (and to simultaneously reduce the variety of subsidies to the settlements). Here is a program that the Israeli Labor Party might be able to support while it is desperately in need of a



way to separate itself from the Sharon regime.

In the process of fundraising, the rationale for the resettlement of Jews will be brought into prominence. The cost of such resettlement will certainly be less than the current cost of defense of these settlements, both economically and politically. We might get strong support from within Israel, especially from those who do not want to continue to sacrifice their sons and daughters for the protection of the settlements. I think we might also get good European support. This approach places the focus on the Occupation, not on Iraq, or Sharon, or Arafat. This is eminently do-able because it does not require any major decisions of governments or other authorities. It is something in which everyone can participate; it is moral, nonviolent, and ends up damning no one. It tells no one what they should do, but creates new opportunities for the settlers, while simultaneously supporting the rights of Palestinians. In that sense it is a win-win plan.

SHIMON S. GOTTSCHALK
Tallahassee, FL

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LETTERS

To the Editor:

Thank you. You are a ray of light in what feels like a darkening world. Keep preaching—some of us are listening, and need to hear your voice.

GEORGE S. RICHARDSON
Nabant, MA

To the Editor:

I thought you had more common sense. Over a million Palestinians, after half a century of persecution, the loss of their land, their future, their children, are barely surviving in refugee camps while the arrogant and selfish settlers backed by an Israeli military continue their theft of the only land the remaining Palestinians have. The first intifada should have been an adequate warning to any intelligent occupier, but the Jews paid no attention. Israel's demands for "security" are at best

hilarious. No people stealing their neighbor's land, killing their children, bulldozing their neighbors' homes, deserve security. Without tanks, helicopter gun

ships, F16s, what is left to Palestinians whose futures have been destroyed except suicide bombing? You Jews celebrate Masada, when generations ago under the cruelty and rigor of a Roman occupation your people chose to kill themselves rather than submit. Had explosives been available then, we might have seen the first explosive suicides. Stop this silly complaining and face the truth—the occupiers of Arab land are the criminals, as are the Jews in this country who support these Zionists. The more than sixty UN Resolutions against Israel's human rights crimes would represent more than adequate indictments in any international criminal court. The bombers are exactly what your people deserve.

EDWARD W. MILLER
San Rafael, CA

To the Editor:

Every single kibbutz in Israel is built on land confiscated from Palestinians who have been warrened up in squalid refugee camps since 1948. The myths of Zionism are built upon the reality of Arab farms confiscated and depopulated to accommodate refugees from European fascism. Today, these areas have the

lowest density of habitation of any arable land in Palestine; if the Palestinian exiles were allowed to return, they could settle on the kibbutz lands alone without displacing a single Israeli Jew, with plenty of room to spare. There can be no peace until the Law of Return conforms with international law, the UN Charter, and basic human decency, and allows those millions of people to return to their homes.

I deplore terrorism, but I can't condemn the Palestinian people for using the only weapon at their disposal.

I think it is a bit much for us to lecture them on the virtues of nonviolence, when they face a fascist juggernaut bent upon their annihilation as a people. The

British in India were in large part shamed into leaving; the fascists who control the Israeli government today have no shame. As an American, my taxes subsidize the bloated military bud-

get and social welfare infrastructure of Israel, a European colony that could not survive a year without massive infusions of foreign cash. I am doubly outraged by the fact that most of the racist bigots populating the "settlements" seem to be Americans, which is to say Europeans. I think they should be stripped of their citizenship and left to deal with the mess they have created; unfortunately they'll probably end up back here, feeding the fires of bigotry and hatred. Eventually, the Europeans will be expelled, as they were in Kenya, as they were in Rhodesia, as they were in Algeria, as the Franks were from the holy lands centuries ago. If the Israelis are smart, they'll emulate the example of their bosom buddies, the Afrikaners, and reach a settlement that allows human decency and good will a chance to prevail.

By the way, I am an American whose family has been in this country for nearly four centuries. The idea of me claiming some ancestral tract in Scotland or Yorkshire is too silly to contemplate. I

grew up in the Middle East, and elsewhere in the Third World. I was fortunate enough to visit Jerusalem and the West Bank prior to the Israeli occupation of 1967. Today, I have far more Israeli friends (almost all Sephardim)

than Arab, and I find they are far more rational about what is going on in the Middle East than American Zionists. I'm not impressed by the label of "terrorist" these days. By any sane definition, after September 11, that definition would encom-

pass the majority of the ruling house of Saudi Arabia. When the call to action against "terror" comes from an American government filled with un-indicted war criminals who have sponsored terror, death-squads, and repression all across the globe, and continue to do so today, who pushed the Baath party to power in Iraq, and subsidized Saddam Hussein's "weapons of mass destruction," who trained the Taliban and have no vision beyond profit and power, I am unimpressed. When the Butcher of Chantilla calls Arafat a "terrorist," that's about as blackly comic as politics gets. (Other than Bush pontificating about free and fair elections!) Gandhi's tactics

worked in India because (a) the British were vain enough to be ashamed when they violated their own principles and (b) they were exhausted by war and flat broke and they couldn't afford direct rule any longer. As soon as we stop

subsidizing the madness in Tel Aviv, saner voices will be heard. I appreciate and respect your point of view. I hope you can understand mine.

CHARLIE G. DODSON
Long Beach, CA



*You are a ray of light
in what feels like a
darkening world.*

*I thought you
had more
common sense.*

Love at First Sight

To the Editor:

I was at a bookstore when for the first time I saw your publication. It was whispering to me to pick it up. After I glanced at the inside and read an article, I was hooked. I bought the magazine and took it home.

What a great blessing you are to our humanity. I love what you are doing,

Telling the Truth without Fear, with love for all humanity! It is true that Truth (love) can set us Free!!

Your publication gave me hope and a reason for living again. I was hopeless and confused. Finally, some fair analysis of world affairs with no hype and spin.

I love you!

I would recommend and promote your publication to all my Christian and Muslim friends.

God Bless Your Organization and Anyone Helping You With Your Mission!

HASSAN FARAHZADI
Springdale, AR

To The Editor:

It is a challenge for individuals and organizations to know which course of action will help prevent war in Iraq and bring peace to the Middle East. Protest, pray, attack those you disagree with, write letters, etc.? I offer the following, which to me has become a magic formula, applicable in every situation.

When my son was sixteen, he stole a car. Frantic as to what to do, I asked for suggestions from those at a Course in Miracles study group I was attending at the time. Jerry Jampolski, author of the best selling *Love Is Letting Go of Fear*, suggested that I go inside and seek guidance, which I did.

Two weeks later while leaving the study group gathering, I heard the following message from within: "Do that which makes it easiest to love your son." I did so and miraculous changes occurred in his life. Based on that and subsequent events, I have concluded that I was given a universal gift that works in every situation.

So now I no longer try to figure out what is best, or what is right, or what will get me what I think I want, or what will get others to love me. The quest is always for what course of action will result in my feeling loving, toward the other person, or group, or just in general.

WARREN WERTHEIMER
(from the Internet)

State Terrorism in Israel?

To the Editor:

Regarding Lev Grinburg's article, "State Terrorism in Israel?" (September/October 2002), I have one word: naïve.

It constantly surprises me how scholars, persons of academia and what seem to be intellectuals are so naïve.

What the world seems to want to ignore is the fact that Saddam Hussein and Yasser Arafat are both very dangerous men. But somehow the political left, in the deepest and most hidden prejudices of its mentality cannot give credit to a less-developed country and its government. The Left does not believe that these so-called "less developed nations" have certain capabilities. That because of their lack of a high standard of living and economic prowess, they lack the ability to do wrong and evil. That, since they are economically less developed than our nations, they somehow can never be as powerful as our own governments and therefore, can never be as dangerous as a more developed nation. Would it not be logical that these same people would then limit these very peoples in other capabilities as well? Education. Finance. Economy. Infra-

structure. Perhaps the West feels more adequate placing these "poor, poor" countries in a position of pity. For then, perhaps we can rationalize our enormous standard of living and consumption of goods. It feels so good to feel like a big brother instead of taking responsibility as an adult for our actions and what might seem like stern decisions, however necessary.

Do Israel and the United States commit travesties along the way? Absolutely. But just because we are the more powerful, does not mean we are not justified in protecting ourselves. This is war. Like it or not, it's ugly, painful, and unfortunate. But sometimes necessary. What if the Civil War had not occurred? Slavery would have continued for years. What if the Allies had not made war on Hitler? Think! Are we to allow monsters among us? We allowed Pol Pot to slip through our fingers and as a result, millions of people suffered horrible deaths. If we have the ability, why not take out evil in our world?

Being naïve is so easy. No hard decisions. Never questioning your reasons. Ignoring what truly could exist in the world. Ignorance is bliss. Why not?

REBEKAH MILLION-STEELE
Boulder, CO



Senior Staff Opening in San Francisco

HELP BUILD THE TIKKUN COMMUNITY

We are looking for an experienced organizer to help build the Tikkun Community, recruit people to leadership positions, raise money, and travel around the U.S. organizing chapters and encouraging people to come to the Tikkun Conference, June 1-4 (the Teach-In to Congress at which we will present our "middle path" perspective on the Middle East).

More than full time work. Salary competitive and based on experience. Must be someone who is fully committed to the Core Vision of the Tikkun Community as articulated at www.tikkun.org and outlined in *Spirit Matters: Global Healing and the Wisdom of the Soul*, by Michael Lerner. This is a job for a tireless self-starter who has an amazing way with people and can actually envision the community and help build it. Work will be based from our San Francisco office, though expect to work long hours and to be traveling around the U.S. as part of the job. To apply, send a self-disclosing personal letter to Organizer Job, Tikkun Community, 951 Cragmont Ave., Berkeley, CA 94708 or email RabbiLerner@Tikkun.org. Include your reactions to the editorials in the September, November, and current issue of *TIKKUN*, and your ideas for how to attract more people and financial support, and how to get our ideas into the media. Application deadline: January 25, 2003.

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... I Did Not Speak Up

George Vradenburg

There is no more powerful expression of the universal character of liberty than the haunting words of Martin Niemöller.

In Germany, they came first for the Communists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me, and by that time no one was left to speak up.

His message is unmistakable: If we grant to the State the power to deny liberty to unpopular minorities (now Muslims), we forfeit our own claim to liberty as well. We make this clear in our own Pledge of Allegiance, where we commit to "one nation, indivisible, under God, with liberty and justice for all."

Since September 11, the Bush Administration and Congress have asserted dramatic new powers of surveillance, arrest, detention, and secret proceedings that seriously threaten all of our liberties.

First, the USA PATRIOT Act (Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorists) permits government agents to obtain foreign intelligence surveillance warrants which do not require a "probable cause," even when the primary purpose of the counter-intelligence investigation is domestic law enforcement. In doing so, the government can effectively sidestep the Fourth Amendment's probable cause requirement in criminal investigations. These new powers are not limited to anti-terrorism investigations and, absent further Congressional action, will not expire until December 31, 2005.

Second, the USA PATRIOT Act modifies the existing requirement that, except in limited circumstances, law enforcement officers give notice before searching or seizing an individual's belongings ("knock and notice"). Now the government is permitted to use "sneak and peek" warrants, which allow Federal agents to enter a person's home or office and seize books and records without notice to the subject of the search. These new powers are not limited to anti-terrorism investigations and do not have an expiration date.

Third, the Department of Justice has adopted new regulations that permit the FBI to conduct surveillance of domestic religious, civic, and political groups, even where there is no suspicion of criminal wrongdoing. These new regulations reverse restrictions adopted when the public learned that the FBI had

been conducting widespread, secret surveillance of anti-war protestors and civil rights activists, including Martin Luther King Jr. Now the FBI, once again, can monitor and keep records of people who attend places of worship (no doubt starting with mosques), as well as those who attend meetings of civic or political groups. These new regulations are not limited to anti-terrorism cases and do not have an expiration date.

Fourth, the Bush Administration has asserted the power to arrest and detain, without charges or trial, American citizens designated by the government as "enemy combatants." Although only applied to date against two Americans, both Muslims, the breadth of the government's assertion of power is breath-taking, particularly in the context of a War on Terrorism where "enemy" and "combatant" are words of ambiguity and potentially broad scope. This assertion of power exceeds that used in the legally-ambiguous arrest and detention of nearly 1200 "suspected terrorists" immediately following September 11, virtually all of whom were Muslim and none of whom were charged with a terrorism-related crime.

While few would deny to the government the tools needed to protect American citizens from terrorist or other criminal activity, there is strikingly little evidence that these new powers have actually led to terrorism-related convictions or otherwise had a positive impact on our safety or security.

Equally troubling, the mere assertion of these powers by the U.S. government is being used by undemocratic regimes around the world to justify repressive controls over domestic political dissidents. Freedom-loving peoples around the world are looking to us to be the beacon of freedom and democracy and are, to say the least, stunned and saddened that the United States is adopting the tools of repression at home while championing freedom abroad.

The American public is said to be supportive of granting government these new powers, valuing their security over their liberty. I don't believe that to be true. Americans surely want security, but they also want freedom and fair play for everyone.

Governmental powers needed to protect us should be narrowly drafted, limited in duration, and regularly reviewed by Congress; their individual application should be closely scrutinized by the courts. Only then can we be assured that new governmental powers are not being extended beyond the limited exigencies that gave rise to their adoption.

Now is the time to speak out, for if we fail to do so, we will no longer be able honestly to pledge allegiance to a nation that stands for "liberty and justice for all." □

George Vradenburg is co-publisher of TIKKUN.

A New Light for America and for Israel

Michael Lerner

Countering Post-Election Depression: America in the Age of Bush

This could be a very depressing year for anyone with any moral sensitivity or ecological consciousness. The tragic death of TIKKUN's best friend in the Senate, Paul Wellstone, leaves a huge vacuum of national leadership for progressive causes. The months since the November elections have been frightening for those of us who see a newly-strengthened American Right that perceives itself as having a mandate for war, a mandate for the repression of dissent and the narrowing of civil liberties, a mandate for dismantling environmental and worker protections, and a mandate for economic policies which will further enrich the wealthy and upper middle class at the expense of the poor and middle classes. The creation of a department of "Homeland Security" is likely to make us all far less secure, as co-publisher George Vradenburg makes clear in this issue's Publisher's Page. The appointment of Henry Kissinger to head the investigation of September 11 will ensure a cover-up if there is anything to cover up. The packing of the courts by right-wing ideologues is on the immediate agenda. And it appears that the Administration will get the war with Iraq that it desperately seeks sometime in the next few months. This could be a scary period ahead.

Some progressives are reassuring themselves by reminding us that the president received fewer votes than his Democratic opponent in 2002; or they will say that the new Congress has a weak mandate since the Republicans won a majority of votes among the less than 45 percent of the public who were motivated to vote; or they will pin their hopes on the fact that the actual number of people voting Republican vs. Democratic is very slight. But this should provide little comfort. The reality is that the Republicans will be in power for at least the next two years, and the ever-obsequious media will give them the mandate that the electorate did not.

Nor is it enough to base our hopes on the fact that some Democrats have at last gotten the message that you can't fight something with nothing—that at the very least they



Former House Minority Leader Dick Gephardt (D-MO) announces his support of President Bush's resolution on Iraq, October, 2002.

need to have some kind of vision. New Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi may well understand the need for a new vision. But for many of her colleagues, all a new vision means is that they have to more efficiently serve up the old-time coalition-style Democratic liberalism that has been uninspiring and one-dimensional for many decades. The central fallacy of "coalition politics" is that it has no core idea to which the different factions cohere—so when asked to articulate what they really believe, all coalition members can do is list their thirty-seven or fifty-three or sixty-one platform planks, few of which actually fit together (and meanwhile, after the first few have been articulated, the population has fallen asleep or turned the channel).

There's much to learn from what the Republicans did over the course of the past forty years, from the time they suffered a stunning defeat in 1964 to their present moment of triumphant return. There were those among them who sought to reconstitute old-line moderate Republicanism, imagining that the defeat of Goldwater demonstrated that they had to be more like Democrats in order to get elected.

But a significant group of them turned instead to create a "New Right," which aligned conservative politics with the spiritual focus of Christian evangelicals. Though the New Right knew that this direction would not produce any immediate reversals of liberal strength in the electoral arena, these leaders had the wisdom to look beyond immediate victories and to fashion a whole new ideological foundation—and then to do the painstaking work of being in the minority and staying there while convincing people of the validity of their new way of thinking. They recognized that ideas matter, and so they built their own think-tanks and national organizations that advanced right-wing ideals. They fought for their ideas in professional associations and in media that they sometimes had to create for themselves, and went through the painful work of building caucuses in churches and on university campuses. Eventually, they built the foundations for right-wing presidencies (Reagan/Bush/Bush) and now for a right-wing Congress.

That's exactly what liberals and progressives need to do. We need to put forward an equivalent to the "Contract for America" that won the Republicans control of the House of Representatives in 1994, which they've held ever since. We need to offer A New Light for America to offset the dark days that we will be facing.

Conservatives spoke plain and clear, and they spoke with a willingness to challenge the dominant values. President Clinton and his folk did not respond in kind. They tried to equivocate and pretend that they shared the same values as the New Right ("we'll dismantle welfare in a humane way," said Clinton). Clinton succeeded in part because he was able to erase some of the ideological differences between himself and his opponents, but mainly because he was able to rely on his strong personal charisma. His short-term success, however, has left the Democratic Party ideologically crippled, because opportunism is not a long-term strategy. People in the United States actually want their politicians to present a coherent worldview that makes sense of citizens' lives and of the role their country is to play in the world. When the Democrats can't offer an ideological alternative to the Republicans (and when they run out of Clintonesque charmers), then people tend to move toward the most articulate and loyal members of the dominant worldview—after all, if all the ideology is right-wing, why not vote for the real thing instead of some watered-down substitute?

To retake American politics, what the forces for peace, justice, and ecological sanity need is a whole new kind of voice and worldview. And that's what we've been developing in our new national organization, the Tikkun Community.

Here are some of the elements that could be central to A New Light for America:

1. A New Bottom Line. Instead of our excessive focus on money and power, let's demand that our social policies and economic and political institutions be judged efficient, productive, and rational not only to the extent that they

maximize wealth, but also to the extent that they tend to produce loving and caring human beings, ethical and ecological consciousness, and a capacity to respond to the universe with awe and wonder at the grandeur of creation. Use that as your New Bottom Line and you'll quickly see how badly we need a New Light for America—because so few of our institutions are efficient or productive by this criterion.

A significant step toward a New Bottom Line would be the adoption of a Social Responsibility Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Under this amendment, every corporation with income above \$50 million a year must receive a new corporate charter every ten years, which will only be granted to corporations that can prove a history of social responsibility, as measured by an Ethical Impact Report, to a grand jury of ordinary citizens chosen at random. Employees, investors, and community groups would be allowed to testify to the jury about the record of social responsibility to the workers, the environment, and the well-being of the community (both where it is located and where its products are sold or used).

2. Generosity and Open-heartedness as the Path to Security. No amount of wars with Iraq or Korea (or whoever else Bush designates as our next enemy) will be able to protect us from the anger about American selfishness that provides the foundation for recruits to terror.

The United States contains only 5 percent of the world's population, but owns 25 percent of the world's wealth. Meanwhile, two billion people live on less than \$750 a year, and one billion live on less than \$375 a year. Does it surprise you to know that every day over ten thousand children die of diseases related to malnutrition? This picture will only change when the United States adopts a new foreign policy whose central goal is to end world hunger and homelessness, create a global system of health care accessible to and affordable for everyone, and participate in a worldwide crusade to save and enhance the natural environment (rather than, as now, participate in its destruction).

A New Light for America must be a light of peace and hope, challenging the fantasies of those self-described "realists" who imagine that they can beat terror with power (look at how dramatically that strategy has failed to produce safety or security for Israel). It is as the force of kindness and generosity, not as the force with the most effective military (which we are already), that Americans can create a world in which we are truly safe.

Let's start by taking the \$1.5 trillion dollars the Bush tax cut gives to the rich and upper middle class and use that instead to fund the building of the infrastructure for ending global poverty and illness, homelessness and hunger. That will do more to dry up the cesspools from which the fundamentalist and ideological haters recruit their followers than any amount of "counter-terrorist" violence will ever do.

If the Democrats are too scared to speak this truth, don't expect them to ever have anything important to say about

terror except some form of “me-too-ism” mixed with some wimpy civil libertarian doubts that will appear to most people to confirm their suspicions that the Democrats are just like everyone else, except less so.

3. Education for Caring, Gratitude, and Awe. Instead of rewarding students solely for how many traditional skills they can accumulate, we need to teach three central values in schools: an attitude of caring for others, an ability to feel and express gratitude for the many blessings we have received from past generations, and a sense of awe and wonder at the grandeur of creation. These compassionate and spiritual attitudes can be taught—as Waldorf schools, religious schools, and many private schools have learned. We need to make sure public schools teach these values too (in non-denominational ways, of course) so that low-income minority parents have the same choices as other parents in how their children are taught.

4. Nature is too precious to be sold. Our task is to honor it, preserve it, restore it, and stand in awe of it. This is a spiritual attitude toward the universe and it stands in sharp contrast to those who primarily want to sell nature for private profit. We are opposed to the efforts to privatize all parts of nature (for example the recent efforts to sell rivers and other drinking sources to private corporations) and we want to repair the damage done by over-commercialization and the narrow utilitarian attitude toward nature. This is partly about ecology, and partly about a sense of reverence for all that is. We must share a sense of responsibility based on our role as stewards for all of creation.

These proposals are the tip of the iceberg of what we in the Tikkun Community call a politics of meaning (or an “Emancipatory Spirituality”) that could become the source of a New Light for America. A fuller account is available on our website at www.tikkun.org (see the Founding Statement of the Tikkun Community). The ideas are there. The question is, are the Democrats willing and able to use them?

No. The Democratic Party will not be ready to embrace this kind of truly progressive vision as long as they concern themselves with policy details instead of with the big picture. Many Democrats do want a world based on love and caring, ethical and ecological sensitivity. They don’t act on that vision because they think it’s not “realistic.” So, instead of speaking from their hearts, they keep on talking as though they have lost contact with their own humanity, and then wonder why they don’t inspire confidence.

Nor will the Democrats develop into a true opposition party if they keep trying to show that they do not oppose the president. Instead of putting forward an alternative vision, the meta-message constantly conveyed by the liberal forces is this: “We believe x, y, and z, but not enough to fight for those ideas; we really want to go along with the

president, with the Republican leadership, and with the corporate leadership of the country. We don’t want to offend anybody by standing up for anything that might require a fight.” And most Americans conclude: “I’m not going to trust these people, because if they won’t fight for their own ideas, how can I expect them to fight for America or for my interests? I’d rather have someone who seems strong and sure of what they believe in—because in any event the details of politics seem too confusing to know which of these sides is really right about the substance of the issues, but only one side acts as though they believe they are really right.”

Many Americans are scared of the world today. They won’t be an easy sell for a politics that talks about caring for others as the best way to build security. They’ve been taught by both Democrats and Republicans to believe that we are in a world filled with enemies and that we need a bloated defense department and a

huge security apparatus. It won’t be easy to turn this national conversation around—just as it wasn’t easy for the Republicans in the midst of the 1960s to start building a New Right political consensus. Democrats will certainly never be able to get into the conversation if they aren’t willing to actually stand for what they stand for. Americans will only take a chance on a progressive strategy for security if they can believe that the people to whom they are turning actually have a backbone and the ability to face the scary part of the world with real determination. So far, Democrats haven’t shown that sort of backbone. For example, in the last election, the Democrats (following the lead of Al Gore) called for a reduction of Bush’s \$1.5 trillion tax cut to \$1.1 trillion. Where is the principled difference there? More recently, they’ve called for UN involvement in the war on Iraq, but they have not objected to the way Bush bullied the UN into voting for a resolution that will give him a freehand to pursue a war should he so choose. Again, what’s the principled difference? Only that the Democrats seem more moderate in pursuing the same end.

Nancy Pelosi may be a source for change. She is a very decent person with middle-of-the-road liberal politics. But it’s not clear that she does or could understand the value of the approach we are suggesting. I still remember how the Clintons momentarily embraced this way of thinking, and how it played a critical role for them in the election of 1992, but how, once in D.C., they became convinced that it was unrealistic to seek to change the dominant discourse in the country and in the media, and more expedient to try to accommodate to it (a path that quickly led to the triumph of the Republicans in 1994). Nancy Pelosi would need a core of solid advisors and supporters among the Democrats to take the kind of courageous position we are advocating—and frankly that sort of core group just isn’t there. Apart from a

*We need to offer A
New Light for America
to offset the dark days
that we will be facing.*



New House Minority Leader, Nancy Pelosi (D-CA).

handful of people like Denis Kucinich (Democrat of Ohio and chair of the Progressive Caucus, to which Pelosi belongs), even the liberal Congresspeople can't be counted on to go for a new vision. The truth of the matter is that they are decent people, but their worldviews are that of the old Democratic Party, the Labor movement, and the social democrats ("what people really want are a few good material benefits, and if we deliver them those benefits that will be enough for them to re-elect us"). This old-time religion of the Left, essentially a hard-core materialist worldview, is overtly hostile to the kind of spiritual vision that would make it possible for Democrats to think in the kinds of terms that would make *A New Light for America* seem plausible.

Facing this, was it any surprise to hear Nancy Pelosi reassure the country that her selection as Minority Leader would not mean a turn to the left by the Democrats because she was elected to serve everyone, not just those who agreed with her own personal liberal politics? It's this kind of mealy-mouthed liberalism that has lost the Democrats any prayer of ever recapturing power.

To be sure, Pelosi is facing a situation in which a sizable chunk of Democrats would bolt to the Republican Party were she to push for a deeply principled and morally coherent party. But let them bolt—that would be the best thing for the Democrats and for the country. If the Democrats

actually had a coherent worldview along the lines I've suggested in the four points of the "New Light for America" described above, they would undoubtedly face further decline during a period in which there was a serious national realignment. But then, if they could stick to that program and the values that underlie it, they, like the New Right before them, would experience a powerful renaissance of energy that would eventually turn into substantial political power.

If the Democratic Party faces a time of rebuilding, the next question on the minds of many of us is this: Are the Greens capable of filling this vacuum? After all, it might be argued, many of the major changes in the two party system historically have come from third parties that articulated a more coherent worldview.

There are two objections to this argument in the present moment. First, a significant segment of progressives (including some in the Tikkun Community) believe that the Ralph Nader candidacy of 2000 was a major cause for the election of Bush, and that, had Gore been in power, we would not be facing the current dire circumstances. It's not likely that they are going to be willing to work with the Green Party—at least not on the national level. Second, and more decisive if correct, the Greens don't seem to be much more open to a politics that talks about love, generosity, open-heartedness, and a New Bottom Line than anyone else. The Greens are far more principled than the Democrats in terms of their willingness to articulate a progressive politics, but it is a progressive politics within the context of the old paradigm. We have already seen that that paradigm is incapable of mobilizing more than 5 percent of the national vote even with an articulate spokesperson like Ralph Nader, who is a veritable legend of principle and progressive activism. There are some inside the Greens who believe that the party could be moved toward the new spiritual vision we advocate. But if what they have in mind is simply to add the provisions of a politics of meaning to a coalition style program that has twenty-seven other points to it, that won't change the way the party is perceived. Our point is that the redistribution of wealth is very important, but it is only one dimension of a better society, and unless this emphasis on material well-being is incorporated into a larger vision that validates non-material needs and talks unashamedly about the need for a world based on love, mutuality, generosity, and compassion, it cannot succeed. Until the Greens can talk unequivocally about a New Bottom Line of love and generosity and kindness, they will only be perceived as a left-wing version of the old Democrats.

There are some people in the Tikkun Community who are thinking about creating a spiritual politics party. There are others who are wanting to form a caucus to push for spiritual politics along the lines of *A New Light for America* inside the Democratic Party or the Greens. We'd like to know your opinion on this—send us an email to magazine@tikkun.org and we'll send you a questionnaire we are doing to elicit our readers' thinking.

Perhaps what we should advise both the Democrats and the Greens and all other varieties of liberals and progressives is this: "Stop what you are doing and start to develop an inner spiritual practice. Get in touch with your own mortality, the fragility of your own lives, and the absurdity of ego-tripping. Get in touch with your own heart. Ask yourself if you had not gotten into politics whether you think you'd really be moved by the kinds of things liberal or progressive politicians talk about, or whether you too might not want to just retreat into personal life? Dare to be honest with yourself. Listen to your own heart. Clear out the clutter of the voices telling you to accomplish something, and instead just listen to the deepest voices within you and ask them to tell you how close you are to the highest God or Spirit energy within you, or what you need to do to get closer to that. You don't have to believe in God to know what we are talking about—just contemplate your own

mortality and ask whether you are being true to the deepest values of your soul. And ask yourself what is keeping you from speaking the very deepest truths you know, which must certainly be about something more than critiquing George Bush's Iraq adventure or his assault on civil liberties, important as those are to challenge.

Democrats and progressives rarely think this way, but that's the point—it's time for them to stop thinking in the old way, and to start to recognize that when somebody says that an idea is "utopian," that's a high recommendation. The world that the practical politicians have given us isn't working—it's leading to war, inequality, and ecological destructiveness. It's time to go in a different direction. And that's what a politics of meaning or an Emancipatory Spirituality is about—and that is the basis of the Tikkun Community. Join it and help us build this alternative way of thinking!

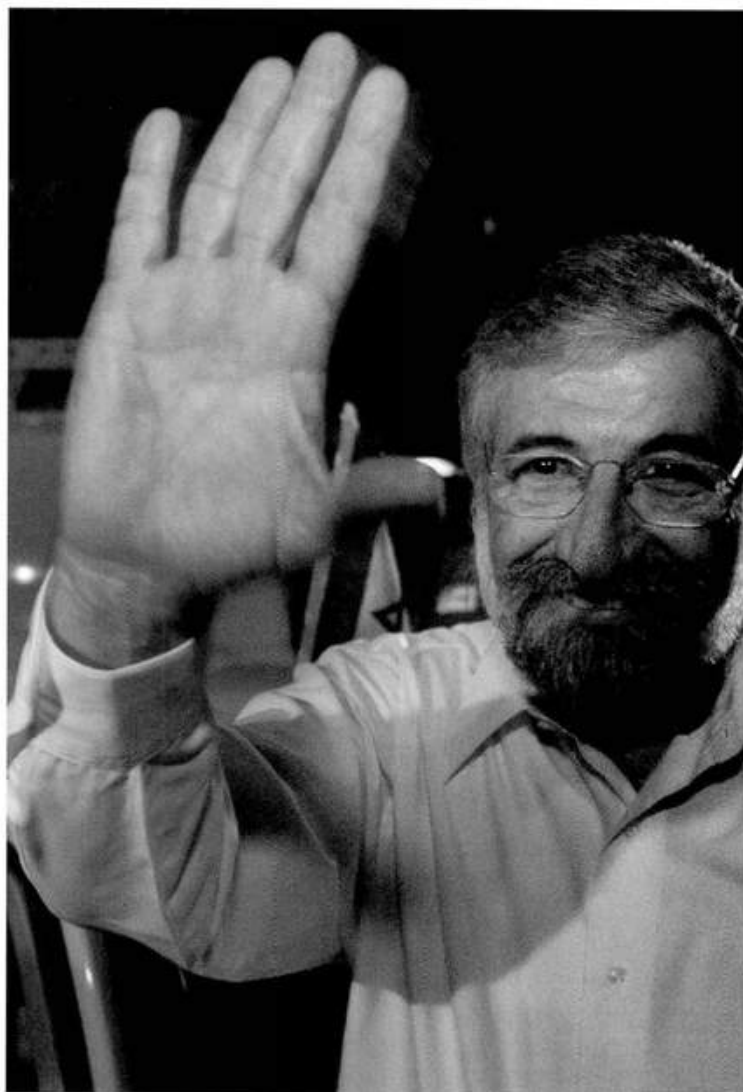
Israel and Mitzna

The selection of Amram Mitzna as the new head of the Labor Party is a reason for celebration, even though he is unlikely to win the election.

In the last seven years, the Labor Party managed to follow the worst examples of Clintonism, so that by the time of Ehud Barak they were essentially indistinguishable from the unabashedly right-wing Likud. We've analyzed the deceitful nature of Barak's "generous offer" in 2000 at Camp David on these pages many times, and we've bewailed the way that Shimon Peres let the Labor Party become part of an Ariel Sharon-led government that has been the most brutal and insensitive that Israel has ever had.

By failing to articulate an alternative worldview, Labor allowed Sharon (and Netanyahu before him) to shape public opinion and define fighting the Palestinian intifada as a struggle for Israel's survival. Meanwhile, Sharon's cynical defacto alliance with the Islamic terror-group Hamas created a cycle of violence in which Hamas' immoral attacks on Israeli civilians were met by Israeli attacks not on Hamas, but on Hamas' enemy Yassir Arafat and the Palestinian Authority. And since this is exactly what Hamas wanted, it provided them with an incentive to do more bombings, which led to greater escalations until Arafat's infrastructure was virtually dismantled and he became little more than a talking head. By late 2002 Arafat no longer held much influence over his own Al-Aqsa Brigade, which then turned to Hamas for funding and support and became allied with Hamas in crazy suicide attacks (attacks which, in turn, were used by the Israeli Right to "prove" that they had no alternative but to further escalate violence).

We've often railed against the violence of both sides. We know that the violence of the Israeli Occupation causes damage to a far greater number of people than the violence



Amram Mitzna, the new Labor party leader.

EDITORIALS

of those Palestinians who use suicide bombings to revenge the deaths caused by the Occupation. The numbers of Palestinians and especially Palestinian children killed or maimed far exceeds the numbers of Israelis. But in our view, that is neither excuse nor acceptable rationale for the violence of these terror attacks. Let us say what we have said before: there is no excuse for acts of terror. They are wrong, morally abhorrent, and can never be justified by reference to some other acts of oppression or murder. There is no moral equivalence to violence ever—each human being is precious, and each unnecessary death is a unique tragedy that cannot justify or excuse the murder of anyone else. We were horrified when a Palestinian attacked Kibbutz Metzger and killed a mother trying to shield her two children, who were also murdered by this person who thought he was representing the Palestinian people's struggle. And we were horrified when that same day Israel killed two Palestinian children. Each act of murder on both sides is a moral outrage, and each one must be protested by itself.

The cycle of violence must be broken, and Mitzna is willing to do so, by returning to the bargaining table with the Palestinians and by immediately ordering an unconditional withdrawal of Israeli troops and settlements from Gaza. Had his voice been that of Labor's for the past two years, Labor would be winning this election.

But Mitzna is facing the same pressures to abandon his stance and to become more "realistic" that the Democrats face in the United States. Mitzna, too, needs to become more visionary, because it is only by giving people a clear vision of how the violence could end that he will win. Even if Mitzna had to be in the opposition for the coming years, if he could give Israelis a coherent picture of a solution that would meet Palestinian needs and yet retain Israeli security, he would eventually win the majority of Israelis over to the side of Labor.

If Mitzna does win but does not embrace this vision of open-heartedness, he is likely to find that partial measures will not stop the violence and the public will eventually be won back to the Right's logic that "you can't deal with the Palestinians." Nothing less than a new spirit of generosity will be able to break through the resentments, anger, and humiliation experienced by the Palestinians through the thirty-five years of Occupation, and nothing less will begin to unfreeze Israelis' hardened hearts. To achieve a lasting peace, Mitzna must be ready to explain to the Israeli public that they not only need to end the Occupation and provide reparations to Palestinian refugees, but that Israel needs to approach the Palestinians in a spirit of open-heartedness and generosity, and with a clear willingness to repent

and atone for the ways that Israel has been unnecessarily cruel to Palestinians. Though both sides will eventually need to engage in this process of atonement, it must be Israel, the superior military and economic power, that takes the first steps (for a fuller argument of this point see my

new book *Healing Israel/Palestine*, available through our website at www.tikkun.org and free to anyone who has paid their dues to the Tikkun Community).

Both in Israel and in the United States, we are in a dark and difficult moment. This difficulty too will pass. We have the power to make it pass more quickly. Don't let the light go out. We can remain a voice for rea-

son, for justice, and for love. If we are willing to speak our deepest truths, others will respond. □

Nothing less than a new spirit of generosity could break through the anger generated by thirty-five years of Occupation.

Join The Tikkun Community Today!

Even if you are on our email list or get the magazine, that doesn't mean that you have joined The Tikkun Community. The Tikkun Community is a separate project from Tikkun magazine, and joining the community is separate from subscribing (though each member gets a free subscription to TIKKUN for one year and a free copy of Rabbi Lerner's book *Healing Israel/Palestine*).

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Sliding Fee Scale for Yearly Membership:

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Call (415) 575-1200 or email Community@tikkun.org

Paul and Sheila Wellstone

In Memoriam

Harley Shaiken

A version of this speech was delivered at a memorial to Paul Wellstone co-sponsored by TIKKUN and Mother Jones magazine.

Paul and Sheila Wellstone were close friends of mine and my family. They were married thirty-nine years; they loved each other even longer. There was no clear division of labor; their hearts, souls, thoughts, and passions were so intertwined and inspired both their lives. It is hard to think of one without the other and the love that united them both.

The last morning of their lives tells a lot about the lives they led. The father of a friend had died and Paul wanted to honor him by attending the funeral; leaving behind his own fundraiser in Minneapolis, Vice-President Mondale, and Senator Kennedy who had flown in for the event. The father was a steelworker in the iron range, and for Paul a steelworker was always as important as a senator or a vice-president or a president for that matter.

Paul had an enormous heart. You could tell it from the causes he fought so hard for on the floor of the Senate, but you could also tell it in the jungles of Colombia where he risked his life for human rights; you could tell it in the Mississippi Delta where he retraced the route Robert Kennedy took over three decades earlier to emphasize today how much more has to be done for the marginal and the poor; you could tell it in the farms of Minnesota and Iowa where he fought for the family farmer; you could tell it in the fields of California where he championed farm workers; you could tell it in the iron range of Minnesota where he fought for steel workers, their jobs, and their dignity.

But you could also see his heart in the way he treated ordinary people on every day of his life. His politics of course ran through his positions and his speeches but for Sheila and Paul their politics were also visible in their everyday actions.

When Paul was first elected to the Senate, he stated that he might be the only person joining that body who was getting a pay raise. Shortly after, he invited me out to dinner in Washington. I was very much looking forward to the dinner and where a Senator might want to go. Visions of white tablecloths and fine wines briefly crossed my mind. When I

arrived at his office, he gave me a warm hug and said, "Good news! Today's Tuesday and I know a nice pub where we can get two hamburgers and two beers for the price of one." Paul was careful with his money—he had to be—so he mentioned the "good news" again several times on the six-block-or-so walk to the restaurant, interspersed with talk of health care and politics. Only when we got there did I have the nerve to tell him I was a vegetarian.

When we left after dinner, we ran into a lobbyist for a major Minnesota firm. Paul was respectful but short—we had to move on. A block later we ran into a homeless person. Paul asked him about his life, sought to help him a bit, and took far more time to hear his story.

Paul was an organizer. He was an organizer from the soles of his feet to the top of his head. He fought for the poor, he fought for the dispossessed, he fought for the abused, he fought for those who were discarded and trampled on. With seemingly inexhaustible energy he helped a community organizer in danger in Colombia by putting his own life on the line, he stood with workers trying to form a union in Tijuana, he supported strikers in Flint, Michigan, and he fought for the people he represented in Minnesota wherever they needed him—in their offices, farms, factories, nursing homes, and communities. He fought with passion, with toughness, but always with a twinkle in his eye. He could be thunderous in his anger but find a way to flash a smile. He could bring any union hall in the country to its feet, but he knew how to sit down with a half-dozen conservative farmers in western Minnesota and quietly convince them that they shared the same values.

Paul was courageous. As Senator Tom Harkin put it at the memorial service in Minneapolis, he had a bad back but a spine of steel. After a long, tiring day, he sometimes walked with difficulty but seemed ready to run a marathon for justice. All his life, he was not afraid to stand alone—whether at Carlton College or in the U.S. Senate. His courage stayed the same; his foes just got bigger. He would not send someone to war if he thought peace were possible, no matter what the consequences for his political career.

Paul and Sheila knew they were loved, and that love sustained them. They also at times experienced venom and hatred that disturbed them. Like Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Cesar Chavez before them, the hate was often a

Harley Shaiken is a professor of Education and Geography at U.C. Berkeley and chair of the Center for Latin American Studies.



reflection of discomfort with the values and principles they stood for, but it was also a sign of their effectiveness.

My wife Beatriz Manz and I could see the love in the faces of Minnesotans and others who lined up hours before the memorial service in Minneapolis. People braved the cold and the wind of an overcast fall day to show their solidarity and share their grief. Those who knew him and those who never met him came to honor his values and share their tears. They wore VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars) hats, they were farmers, they worked in hotels and they managed offices, they were immigrants from Laos and from Mexico, they were African Americans and Native Americans, they were gay and straight, they were Muslims and Jews and Christians, and they shared a dream and a sense of hope that things could be different and things could be better. Paul was that hope.

In front of his Senate campaign headquarters in St. Paul, people have come all hours of the day and night to pay homage. They want to repay the passion and the sacrifice that touched them so deeply. They have left bouquets and candles and books; they have left notes and photos that tell an extraordinary story.

Photos that show Paul bounding off the green bus; hugging someone at a backyard barbecue; gesturing passionately in one of his talks; standing next to Sheila at the end of a long day.

The notes sought to find solace in remembering and in giving thanks:

"Good-bye Paul and Sheila, Thank You! Thanks for your courage, heart, soul and all you did for Minnesotans and all those in need!"

"Compassion, honesty, sincerity, integrity, love, humanity, caring, passion, hope, love forever, Paul and Sheila."

"Gracias por entender las necesidades de los inmigrantes en Minnesota y gracias por ayudarnos. Vamos a tenerte en nuestros corazones para siempre. Te queremos."

"To an American hero from an American conservative, with love."

"May the legacy be the touchstone of a new wave of courage and decency in America."

"Marines for Wellstone."

"What a terrible loss, what a wonderful man!"

In his life, many sought to marginalize Paul Wellstone. He was often referred to as the "most liberal member of the Senate," something of which he was unabashedly proud but was hardly meant as a compliment. He knew how to build strong coalitions, and he could reach out to the most unlikely allies—but he was not afraid to be on the short end of all those ninety-nine to one votes when he had to.

In his tragic death, he may redefine American politics. He has become the soul of the Senate and the conscience of the nation. He was always both, but now his heart, his organizing, and his courage are widely acknowledged. His life has shown that people prefer principle over posturing; passion over calculation, the depth and sharp edge of a diamond to the glitter of cut glass. He could inspire us because he knew who he was and what he stood for.

Let me end with the words Paul Wellstone used to end his book, *The Conscience of a Liberal*.

The famous abolitionist Wendell Phillips was once asked, "Wendell, why are you so on fire?"

He responded, "I'm on fire because I have mountains of ice before me to melt."

So do we.

Paul and Sheila, you've melted far more ice than you ever knew. You've inspired us to turn up the heat. □

Captain America Takes on Iraq

Robert Jewett and John Shelton Lawrence

On October 10, the U.S. Congress issued President Bush a license for pre-emptive military strikes against Iraq. Rather than retaining its constitutional right to decide on a declaration of war, Congress delegated that judgment to an insistent, eager president. He was thus "authorized to use the Armed Forces of the United States as he determines to be necessary and appropriate."

It's true that this congressional authorization was a step forward from earlier this year, when the president asserted he could use force against Iraq without any new authorization. The polled preferences and cautionary statements of America's uneasy electorate finally nudged George W. Bush to present a case to both the UN and the Congress. This process, clearly sought by America's voters, steered the president's war aims into the harbor of democratic consensus.

The cultural puzzle that remains is why Congress and America's citizens, given the opportunity to dissent, instead consented to Bush's new doctrine of pre-emptive war to be undertaken by the president entirely at his discretion. As with the Southeast Asian debacle of the 1960s and 1970s, the second war with Iraq on our horizon should compel us to think less about individual leaders and more about the popular beliefs that empower them when they promise wars that will produce lasting peace.

In discussing the public's continuing post-September 11th deference to this president, Fred Brannan (TIKKUN, Sept/Oct 2002, "The Need to De-Mystify the Presidency") has suggested we see Americans' deference to the president through the lens of a widespread fear of death, which is unconsciously relieved through granting extraordinary power to leaders who promise protection. Fear may be a factor, but we suggest that such surrender reflects an impulse more deeply anchored in the American psyche. In building a will-to-war among the American people, the president had pledged early to "rid the world of evil," then defined the

more particular "axis of evil" as part of a distinctively apocalyptic obligation. The optimistic scenario we are urged to believe tells us that the unity of the American people, backed by unequalled military power, will have a positive domino effect. With Saddam Hussein no longer free to threaten his neighbors or to assist terrorists, the Middle East will become a far less dangerous place in which free market

economies flourish as militant Islam loses its appeal. Iraq's enormous oil reserves will lubricate the growth of indigenous democratic forces in Iraq, and that influence will spread to other failed states in the region. The source of this extraordinary optimism, which entails overlooking the possibility of disastrous side effects of an Iraq War such as the use of weapons of mass destruction and the destabilizing of the entire Persian Gulf, lies beneath the surface. It derives from what we call "the Captain America complex."

The Captain America complex is a bipolar form of civil religion that periodically blesses crusades against evil enemies.

The Captain America complex is a bipolar form of civil religion that periodically blesses crusades against evil enemies, often adding the stamp of biblical authority, in the pursuit of peace. Since Captain America must always take the law into his own hands to rid the world of evil, this civil religion produces acute conflicts between the impulse for holy crusades and a commitment to the rule of law.

The Captain America complex was evident in our World War I experience, when President Wilson demonized Germany's Kaiser in "the fight to make the world safe for democracy" while working for the League of Nations that America refused to join. The complex was also apparent during the Cold War, when we worked to build treaty organizations like NATO and SEATO, at the same time that we were fighting secret wars that LBJ and Nixon hid from the American people. The signs of this bipolar disorder are manifest now in fervent U.S. appeals for other nations to build international institutions that will help us fight terrorists—at the very moment that we are withdrawing from treaties that would compel U.S. accountability to international rules.

Since the Captain America complex is afflicting our national judgment again, we should prepare for a long and divisive struggle that will leave domestic scars in families, educational institutions, churches, and synagogues. Unless we can leash the dogs of war, new kinds of instability will

Robert Jewett is guest professor of New Testament at the University of Heidelberg and John Shelton Lawrence lives in Berkeley, CA. They have co-authored *Captain America and the Crusade Against Evil* (2003) and *The Myth of the American Superhero* (2002).

result from this war for peace. A series of crusades against the "Rogue Nations" in the "Axis of Evil," beginning with Iraq, will evoke divisiveness that surpasses that of the Vietnam War and cause economic and political turmoil around the world. As we write, the United Methodist Church, which claims both Richard Cheney and George W. Bush as members, has publicly chastised them both for pursuing a policy of pre-emptive strikes and their unseemly haste to make war. Other religious groups, comfortable with zealous nationalism, are singing their praises for the starkly dualistic moral judgments that have defined the Bush foreign policy.

Religion and the Call to War

Religion, in fact, particularly America's dominant Judeo-Christian tradition, has everything to do with the Captain America complex. Redemptive violence has an important place in the Bible's narratives of conquest, national security, and moral purification, and sits incoherently beside biblical messages of acceptance, coexistence, and love.

In the Book of Exodus, for example, the glories of the deity are seen as praiseworthy deeds of a "man of war" (Exod. 15:3). Yahweh's violence presents us with an apparent paradox in that he hates violence when employed by enemy peoples but loves to use it against them. In the Noah narrative of Genesis, Yahweh condemns the world's inhabitants for their violence but saves the physical world for one good man and his family: "I have determined to make an end of all flesh; for the earth is filled with violence through them" (Gen. 6:13). In the political contexts evoked by Israel's struggles for autonomy or homeland, the books of Exodus, Deuteronomy, Daniel, and Ezekiel offer narratives of redemption through the destruction of enemies.

Countering those tales of violence are the critical voices of Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah, who reject zealous warfare and extol the creation of institutions of coexistence. Isaiah's vision of a place where the nations themselves come together to cooperate and to be judged is appropriately inscribed on the wall at the United Nations Plaza in New York City. The rabbinic tradition along with most of the early Christian writings continued in Isaiah's line, resisting the lure of zealous violence.

Yet the lure of violence has always remained. Of particular importance for the American civil religion has been the Book of Revelation, which stands triumphantly at the end of the New Testament canon, giving its hearers a grandiose



flood of zealous images and ideas that negate Jesus' teaching about coexistence even with adversaries. It pictures the plot of world history as a battle between God and God's demonic enemies. Over and over again it promises total victory to the saints. It urges them to keep pure and undefiled while God annihilates their opponents, whom it stereotypes as bestial and irredeemable. Perhaps the most insidious

impact on later generations lies in Revelation's fusion of the humane tradition of the fatherhood of God with the zealous tradition of the annihilation of enemies. For example, the idea of God's word, defined in Isa. 11:3, and in the early Christian tradition as the redemptive force that would replace warfare as a means of adjudicating conflicts, is transposed by Revelation 19 into an image of annihilation.

It is widely recognized that the Book of Revelation played a crucial role in the Puritanism that shaped the early stages of American Civil religion. This violent legacy is apparent in the supremely popular "Battle Hymn of the Republic" where the Prince of Peace becomes the warrior who "hath loosed the lighting of his terrible, swift sword." The verses of this hymn became the favored marching song of the Union forces during the Civil War. Its Revelation-inspired imagery expresses the belief that the destruction of enemies would finally produce lasting peace. The Confederacy, whose motto was "*Deo Vindice* (God Will Avenge)" shared this very same hope for their prospects if they destroyed the wicked forces of the North. They were thus spiritually disposed to take up the "Battle Hymn" as their song in the Spanish-American War of 1898. In that conflict the mission of holy violence was, for some of its champions, nothing less than redeeming the entire world.

Senator Albert J. Beveridge, an imperialist ally of Theodore Roosevelt, claimed this precisely at the beginning of the twentieth century as he spoke to the U.S. Senate: "Almighty God ... has marked the American people as the chosen nation to finally lead in the regeneration of the world. This is the divine mission of America.... We are the trustees of the world's progress, guardians of the righteous peace." Adding a biblical gloss to perfect his Christian imperialism, Beveridge quoted from Matthew 25:21: "Ye have been faithful over a few things; I will make you ruler over many things."

The biblical sanction for America's crusades has continued up to our own time. When America stood at the threshold of a major ground war in the Persian Gulf, the senior President Bush told a convention of the National Religious Broadcasters that "America has always been a religious nation—perhaps never more than now." Citing words from Ecclesiastes that there is "a time for peace, a time for war," he described the Gulf War action as a cause defined by religious absolutes—"good versus evil, right versus wrong, human dignity and freedom versus tyranny and oppression." He audaciously proclaimed that the United States sought "nothing for ourselves," and that all the Gulf War coalition partners were "on the side of God." The Reverend Billy Graham stood with him to echo the sentiment that "there comes a time when we must fight for peace." This impulse to make war with God's blessing is reinforced by the more secular entertainment culture, which repeatedly gives us images of redemption by saviors who must circumvent law and institutions to save the community.

Zealous Redemption in American Popular Culture

In addition to the overtly religious blessing of nationalistic zeal, the Captain America complex has given shape to superheroic mythologies that now seem to enthrall even our president. The popular culture that seems most apt for grasping President George W. Bush's populist style of leadership in international relations comes to us in three important movies: *Independence Day* (1996), *Air Force 1* (1997), and the Rambo film *First Blood* (1982). *Independence Day* and *Air Force 1* are the most successful films ever made about American presidents, real or imaginary. The Rambo character elicited the president's approval in a bizarre incident that occurred in Germany this year. What can these blockbuster films tell us about public taste and the presidential state of mind?

Independence Day is a science-fiction genre film that uses twin American crises as its theme: the challenges to American masculinity and the destruction of the entire planet. In this film a female pundit of television's McLaughlin Group quips that the nation "elected a warrior but got a wimp." The sad news of his sagging status in the polls is delivered to the President Whitmore (Bill Pullman) by one of his female advisors.

That personal crisis is soon magnified and replicated on a large scale by the public crisis that occurs when a giant, alien-controlled spaceship appears over Washington, D.C., and other major American cities. Whitmore tries to communicate in a friendly way by sending a helicopter as an emissary, but it is immediately destroyed. The president manages to escape before the White House explodes and burns. He is taken to a remote base, Area 51, where he learns that this is the very same species of alien that had descended at Roswell, New Mexico, in 1948. What he learns from a brief and frightening encounter is that the aliens have come to extract the earth's resources and have decreed that all humans must die. The president alone is in the position to fight the apocalyptic battle that will save the world.

Undeterred by environmental arguments against using nuclear weapons in the near atmosphere, Whitmore gambles as he launches an attack on the spaceship hovering over Houston. The attack destroys Houston, but the aliens remain. The president himself, a Gulf War pilot, steps aside from his strategic role as commander in chief and volunteers to fly a tactical missile raid against one of the space ships. His rationale, expressed to a puzzled general, is: "I'm a combat pilot—I belong in the air." This makes absolutely no sense, except in conformity with the American superhero myth that the president must now function as a lone savior to redeem the world. In fact, the president does not strike the final blow to the aliens, but his willingness to function as the lone savior redeems his own masculinity and fortifies the nation.

Looking at these events in the movie as an exercise in

presidential power, we can see an assortment of constitutional circumventions that are rendered acceptable through the myth system shaped by the Captain America complex. In addition to the president's desertion of his own decision-making post, most other institutions of democratic government go missing in action. The president does not consult with Congress about declaring war on the aliens, nor does he consult with state or local governments about their emergency capabilities, nor with party leaders. The president dismisses his Secretary of Defense as a "sniveling little weasel" and does not bother to replace him. He also takes on the role of world leadership without working through any visible international institutions. We simply see that other military forces on the globe are coordinating in response to the president's leadership.

President Whitmore offers a florid affirmation of American centrality to the world's hopes, which comes before the final battle: "We will not go quietly into the night. We will not vanish without a fight. We're going to live on! We're going to survive! Today we celebrate our Independence Day." He proposes that "our 4th of July" become humanity's Independence Day from the tyranny of aliens—once those aliens have been successfully destroyed. The film scans several times through villages, mosques, and synagogues that show frightened people in prayer, obviously hoping that the United States will succeed. American's crusade has become the world's crusade, as the good humans align against the evil aliens in a war as religious as it is political. In the end, the world has been restored to safety—and is permanently indebted to the redeemer nation.

Air Force 1 also presents the American president as a superheroic redeemer figure who has contempt for diplomacy and constitutional processes. President Marshall (Harrison Ford) has been summoned to Moscow for a celebration of a joint U.S.-Russian raid to capture a Kazakh, General Radek, who threatens to bring back nationalistic Communism. Disgusted by his own government's delay in intervening, he announces: "Never again will I allow our political self-interest to deter us from what we know to be morally right." The "right" here is defined in absolute terms that preclude consultative or constitutional processes. The president then issues a challenge to all enemies in the world in terms that sound very like recent rhetoric from the White House: "Atrocities and terror are not political weapons. And to those who would use them, your day is over. We will never negotiate. We will no longer tolerate you and we will no longer be afraid. It's your turn to be afraid." President Marshall's speech has a sensational effect in Moscow. Russians line the streets to wave American flags as the presidential motorcade passes.

The president's national security adviser fumes about not being in on the decision to take such a bold stance; but



his chief of staff gloats about the new mood of implacability and the publicity: "They're already calling it the 'Be Afraid Speech,'" he says to the president. And then he tells someone on the phone that "The president is ready to take Congress on. He's not going to kiss their ass for each vote." Consulted about a new crisis in Iraq, the president simply says: "Let's not waste any more time. Let's send the Nimitz back in."

The triumphal mood does not last for long, because the champions of General Radek have made a deal with a disloyal agent of the Secret Service, which quickly permits them to control Air Force One. They execute passengers and threaten the president's wife and daughter as tactics in gaining the release of General Radek. In the first confusion of the hijacking, the president—just at the moment when he was expected to take his exit using the ejection pod—has hidden on the plane. He was, as we learn, a Vietnam helicopter pilot who had won the Medal of Honor. In authentic superheroic fashion, he fights unarmed, in hand-to-hand combat, with terrorists who are thirty years younger than he. He eventually kills five of them as he stalks the lower deck, luring the armed men to their death below.

With super technical abilities, the president employs a telephone with a weak battery to get wiring instructions on dumping the fuel and uses a fax machine to order a missile attack by U.S. forces on his own plane. After helping many passengers to parachute to safety, he flies the plane himself in a tricky mid-air rescue operation.

Air Force 1 symbolically vindicates the notion of the president as the one man who can take huge risks—physical, moral, and political—and is capable of winning triumphant victories in each arena. The citizen-spectators applaud because he effectively plays the role of superheroic redeemer. In both *Air Force 1* and *Independence Day*, the president ascends into a trans-constitutional zone where law and prudence become secondary to the task of global redemption.

These popular cinematic embodiments of the Captain America complex throw light on the current complacency in allowing the president rather than the Congress to make the final decision on war or peace. It is clearly unconstitutional, but it is mythically consistent, and for most current Americans, that appears to suffice.

The Appeal of Superheroism for American Leaders

While we do not know about President Bush's viewing experience with these exciting films, we know something about his liking for superheroes from an incident this year in Germany. To accompany a very dismissive "Masters of the Universe" article on the Bush administration's crusade against evil, Germany's news magazine *Der Spiegel* cre-

ated a satirical cover depicting each national security player in the role of a zealous destroyer from American popular culture. George W. Bush, surrounded by his advisers, received a muscular Rambo body holding an automatic weapon and ammunition belts.

Daniel Coats, U.S. Ambassador to Germany, visited *Der Spiegel's* editorial offices—not to protest the caricature or the article's viewpoint about reckless unilateralism—but to report that “the president was flattered,” whereupon he ordered thirty-three poster-size renditions of the cover for the White House. Each policy maker on the cover reportedly wanted a copy.

In light of Bush's affection for the character, we might wish to recall that John Rambo, in *First Blood*, burns down his hometown law enforcement headquarters after killing several officers and national guardsmen. Rambo's actions are triggered by his aching and inarticulate rage about how he is treated. He could have avoided his murderous confrontation with Sheriff Teasle and his deputies by explaining who he was, by mentioning his status as a veteran, by appealing to his First Amendment right to wear his hair as he chooses. Instead, Rambo wants to explode and finds a good match in the Sheriff, who is also preoccupied with the physical domination of everyone who walks his turf.

In *First Blood, Part II*, Rambo is released from prison to save the betrayed POWs of the Vietnam War, finally turning a shower of lead against the computers and radio equipment at the CIA control center. (This film, incidentally, was advertised with a poster proclaiming that “No Man, no Law, no War can stop him.”) In *Rambo III* he carries weapons to the Mujaheddin in Afghanistan for their anti-Soviet jihad, fighting furiously at their side. Always brutally right, Rambo acts most heroically beyond the jurisdiction of failed laws, institutions and their treaties. President Bush's emotional affinity for this myth of redemption by persecuted superheroes is shared by millions of Americans.

Unfortunately, there may be a link between this popular story line and U.S. efforts to disable the International Criminal Court. In July the United States finally succeeded in gaining from the United Nations Security Council a one year exemption from any criminal prosecution by the International Court. John Negroponte, the U.S. ambassador to the UN, praised this first small step in creating a special immunity. He also reaffirmed opposition to the idea of a permanent court: “The President of the United States is determined to protect our citizens—soldiers and civilians, peacekeepers and officials—from the International Criminal Court.... No nation should underestimate our commitment to protect our citizens.” Looking beyond its year of immunity, the Bush administration is also seeking Section 98 agreements, bilateral exemptions from prosecutions—with Israel and Romania its first trophies. These initiatives are



being coupled with threats to withhold military aid from any country that becomes a member of the ICC.

Why would a nation engaged in a global campaign against terrorism seem so obsessively opposed to an institution well suited to its prosecution, and risk alienating most allies? Why would it completely opt out of shaping ICC statutes and procedures in directions that meet its sense of justice?

An important explanation lies in our national fascination with stories of vigilante figures like Rambo who circumvent the law to save the world. Translated as an impulse for the world stage, this mythic imperative requires shielding American crusaders in the war against terrorism—no matter how unpopular they may become or how many laws they feel compelled to break. In our two recent books, we explore the sources and implications of this trend toward unconstitutional behavior. We argue that when a zealous civil religion is joined with widely popular entertainments that encourage leaders to take the law into their own hands, the threat to a democratic society must be taken very seriously. Thus the prospect of a large new war challenges us not merely to focus on a president, newly empowered to make war “as he determines to be necessary and appropriate.” We must also grapple with the legacy of a zealous, nationalistic civil religion and the emotional power of its daily ritual enactments in tales of pop superheroes. As voices for peace, we must cultivate the skeptical good sense that has at least brought the restraint of consultation to our present danger.

Beyond the Trap of War

At a time when the drift toward war can so easily infect our sense of possibility, we need to recall an earlier moment in history when religiously apocalyptic thinkers, including President Ronald Reagan, expressed enthusiasm for a crusade with nuclear weapons. Reagan and his Armageddon-minded friends Hal Lindsey, Jerry Falwell, and Pat Robertson, saw in nuclear weapons the instrumentality of Revelation's end times. The president charmed his followers with thunderous proclamations about the absolute evil of the Soviet Union. As he put it at the time of the Korean Airlines downing in 1983, it was “a society which wantonly disregards individual rights and the value of human life and constantly seeks to expand and dominate other nations.” The United States did not seem far from deploying nuclear weapons against this “evil empire” in a war to end all wars.

In response to the threat of apocalyptic warfare, peace movements energetically focused on nuclear weapons. Clergy and Laity Concerned, SANE, Freeze, Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility, Catholic bishops and

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Hope for Henry



Henry Strongin Goldberg was born with Fanconi anemia, a fatal genetic disorder that causes bone marrow failure and, often, birth defects. Patients usually do not reach adulthood and, if they do, they are highly susceptible to leukemia, head and neck cancers, and other cancers.

Dave and Lynn Frohnmayer of Eugene, Oregon, desperately in need of answers for their children, founded the Fanconi Anemia Research Fund in 1989 to raise funds for research into this devastating disease.

Today, we know that at least seven genes are responsible for FA. Recent collaboration by researchers at five universities has led to the discovery that one of these FA genes is identical to a breast cancer-susceptibility gene, BRCA2. This discovery opens an avenue for research into finding a cure for both Fanconi anemia and this inherited form of breast cancer.

We know that 1 in 87 people with Ashkenazi Jewish ancestry carries a defective FA gene. Most Ashkenazi patients have a common FA-C mutation that places them at high risk for leukemia early in life.

FA families and friends have raised \$13.1 million over the last thirteen years to launch pioneering studies. Twenty-nine laboratories have received support from the FA Research Fund to study Fanconi anemia. Major medical centers now provide FA patient care and conduct clinical research. Carrier testing and prenatal diagnosis are available.

If you'd like to know more about FA or how your charitable gift will help save precious lives, phone the FA Research Fund at 1-800-828-4891 (U.S. only), e-mail us at info@fanconi.org or visit our website at <http://www.fanconi.org>.



Fanconi Anemia
RESEARCH FUND, INC.

1801 Willamette Street, Suite 200, Eugene, OR 97401

IRAQ

CAPTAIN AMERICA TAKES ON IRAQ (from page 20)

others campaigned against nuclear weapons and eventually persuaded Reagan to distance himself from the millennial right. The movement helped create a political atmosphere that welcomed the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty that came in 1987.

President Reagan, who had prided himself on his Star Wars-inspired denunciation of the Soviets as "the evil empire," eventually traveled to Moscow pursuing an arms agreement with Gorbachev. The public rewarded him with approval for his dealing with the Soviet Union. The fact that George W. Bush has shown himself responsive to public opinion invites comparison—and strategizing for peacemakers. The large anti-war rallies of late October offer hope for cooling Washington's passion for war.

As for popular culture, we need to remember that the dominance of violent, superheroic blockbusters did not prevent the creation of other films that aroused skepticism about the Captain America complex. *Dr. Strangelove* invited large, multi-generational audiences to become more realistic about the risks of nuclear security. *Wag the Dog* raised the possibility that an American president might cynically use warfare as a way of deflecting attention from issues that reflect personal or policy failure. A contemporary example of this counter trend is the television series, *West Wing*, that regularly shows us a less-than-superheroic president, often mired in problems that he cannot master because he has created them himself.

We must take inspiration from these secular resources as well as remind each other of the prophetic vision that lies behind international law as embodied in the United Nations. Isaiah's God is different from the mighty warrior who urged the faithful to "slay utterly" all who thwarted the aims of the chosen people. In Isaiah's vision of a God of impartial justice, we see that

He shall judge between the nations,
and shall arbitrate for many peoples;
they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more. (Isa. 2:4)

This "swords into plowshares" image is carved on the walls and in the sculpture garden of the UN building in New York. It thus stands at the center of a different, globally-focused civil religion, one that was also supported by American religionists through their advocacy and support of the founding of the United Nations in 1945. For the American people whose civil religion is rooted in "the Book," we must regularly remind them of its counsels of peace that have led to the creation of such institutions of conflict resolution. If people of faith would recover this vision and lend their support again to such lawful institutions, the global drift toward zealous conflict could in time be overcome. □

In the Realm of the Double Standard

Joel Kovel

There is a saying, "One law for the lion, another for the ox": a noble sentiment, if we are talking about lions and oxen as different creatures, each entitled to their unique way of being, but quite another matter if we are speaking metaphorically about lion-like and ox-like fractions of our own species, the one assigned the faculty of violence and rule, the other that of servitude and passivity. Neither lions nor oxen have, so far as I know, an imagination, nor do they construct a Law to regulate their mutual exchanges. We humans have, and need, both an imagination to envision an alternative world; and a Law to harmonize the real world according to the rule of justice.

Or so we hope. In the actual world, where the potential of being human is stifled all around by violent institutions, the law is arrogated by the powerful, justice is sold in the street, and split-apart moral universes arise between the nations. Then our fine saying turns into the double standard: one law for our side, another for the other guys. This is associated with the curious idea that these differences in accountability to Law are functions of the greater inherent virtue of our side.

The Nazis were specialists in this sort of thing, whose inevitable expression is racism, in its full-blown shape a biological delusion of sub-speciation. They had their oxen, as expressed by Heinrich Himmler in a speech to the S.S. in 1943, when he said it was all right if tens of thousands of Slavs die in building projects for the Third Reich, for these are "human animals," and we Germans have the world's best record of decency toward animals. And of course they had their vermin, too, like Jews and Gypsies, who had to be exterminated so the human project could go forward.

After the war there was a brief surge of interest in universal human rights and the associated notion of a universal legal standard, most notably enshrined in the UN Declaration of 1948. Since then, however, the situation has been badly deteriorating. A candid look at the facts tells us that the propensity for splitting apart moral universes is as rampant today as at any time in history, including the Thirty Years War, or the Nazi era itself. The phenomenon is most definitely not restricted to the infamous Islamic fundamentalism with which the world is



afflicted, but extends deeply as well into Western civilization, and particularly to the axis within it formed by the United States of America and the State of Israel. The howls of denial with which this statement may be greeted will come mainly from those on our side of the fence who feel that, by virtue of our virtue, We Could Never Do Such

Things. But that, of course, is the way one feels when living in the cocoon of a self-contained moral universe.

The United States recently compelled the European Union to grant it immunity at the UN's International Criminal Court. This might be called the "Let Henry Kissinger Travel Freely" clause, though the court's domain extends much, much further than that most wanted man. One hundred thirty-nine nations signed onto the treaty establishing the Court, a historic development that sets up an independent body to adjudge offenses in international law. A greater advance, toward a just world beyond national chauvinism and state terror can scarcely be imagined. But as great as this advance was the retreat of the superpower, who said, in effect: We are the lions and you, the oxen, and we will not submit to anything that might hold our agents accountable before the bar of history. So much for the rule of Law invoked by the United States when marshalling world opinion against Saddam Hussein.

Then there is the matter of nuclear weapons, and the behavior of Israel. The world knows that Israel holds some two hundred nuclear weapons, but it doesn't know this the way it should because nobody has ever inspected Israeli weapons of mass destruction. It knows this because of Mordechai Vanunu, Israeli nuclear technician and whistleblower, who revealed the fact in the interests of humanity. Vanunu, having been illegally kidnapped by Mossad, is currently serving eighteen years in prison for charges of espionage and treason. No state has ever demanded Vanunu's freedom, or that Israel submit to inspection. Israel has refused to sign any treaty regulating nuclear weapons, and has flouted other UN resolutions sixty-nine times. The United States has legislation forbidding it to aid countries that develop nuclear weapons outside of international control, yet gives Israel three billion dollars a year in aid, provides the bulk of its armaments and backs it against the UN, while trying to convince that same body that our convenient devil, Saddam Hussein, is a threat to peace because of his uncontrollable development of weapons of mass destruction.

Why do they hate us?

□

Joel Kovel teaches at Bard College and is the author, most recently, of *The Enemy of Nature*, just released by Palgrave (Zed Books, London). For more information: www.joelkovel.org.

Peacemaking in Irvine?

Mark LeVine

Five months ago, as the rubble of Jenin still smoldered and Palestinian and Israeli parents, children and brothers and sisters mourned their dead, I was asked by the University of California at Irvine (UCI) chapter of Amnesty International to participate in a forum bringing together Muslim, Arab, and Jewish students to mediate the growing hostility between them over the events in the Occupied Territories. This was an important and risky event, as several other UC campuses had already seen verbal confrontations and even physical violence over this issue. And indeed, our goal was to “stop and listen”—as the forum’s title suggested—to some critical thinking by professors and student representatives as a way of beginning a process of healing and perhaps even reconciliation to the UCI community.

It wasn’t a perfect forum, but it was a good beginning, as students on both sides committed themselves to work for “true democracy” and an end to racism, for human rights for citizens of both countries, to recognize that “peace is not a goal but rather a result” of true democratic processes and “establishing justice first.” Most important, it was clear that the crucial first step to any mutual recognition of the realities of the situation in Palestine and Israel, let alone the possibility for collective action here at UCI, had to be to “stop bringing hate” to the campus.

Last week I was fortunate to host a public follow-up forum to “Stop and Listen” entitled “Visions of Peace” that featured two Israeli and two Palestinian academics who had come to participate in a workshop on the socio-religious dimensions of Middle Eastern conflicts. They had agreed to talk about the historical and contemporary realities of the conflict, and how their work together offers a paradigm for peace and justice to us all.

Sadly, from the moment word got out about the forum there was intense opposition to it by the organized Jewish community, based on misinformation about the purpose of the forum as well as some highly objectionable stories that ran this past summer in UCI’s Muslim Student Union newspaper.

The July issue of the paper, *al-Kalima*, featured a cover portrait that morphed together the faces of Ariel Sharon

and Adolph Hitler, with the caption “History Repeats Itself,” and several articles claiming to reveal “fundamental” similarities between Nazism and Zionism. Now I’m proud to mention that UCI was just ranked 12th among all public universities in the country. There’s simply no excuse for anyone at UCI (or anywhere else) to be making such a comparison as it is factually, historically, and morally wrong, and politically counter-productive. No less a partisan of Palestine than Edward Said has gone out of his way publicly and repeatedly to criticize the easy and false comparisons between the Jewish Holocaust and Israeli treatment of Palestinians, however bad it is.

But for argument’s sake, let’s explore the equation Sharon=Hitler. If Sharon were Hitler, he wouldn’t just want to prevent the emergence of a viable Palestinian state (which he clearly does) or even expel all the Palestinians (which he probably wants to do, and might get the chance to do during the upcoming war on Iraq). No, he would want to kill every single Palestinian living anywhere in the world—in the Occupied Territories obviously, but also in Jordan, since it’s over half Palestinian. As you can’t even tell who’s “Palestinian” and who’s “Jordanian” you’d need to kill all Jordanians, and of course everyone in Southern Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, in the Gulf—wherever there are Palestinians; so I guess that means nuking my home town of Paterson, New Jersey, which is nicknamed “Little Palestine” because of the large Palestinian population there. In fact, he’d have to kill every Arab in the world to ensure that he eliminated everyone who has even one-eighth Palestinian blood, even if it meant the destruction of Israel to carry this out. Because that’s what Hitler tried to do to the Jews.

Clearly—and thankfully!—such a final solution to the Palestinian problem is not on the horizon; so how does writing that Zionism is “fundamentally similar to Nazi Germany” help anyone? If Zionist Jews have “mastered the Nazi methods of dehumanization and torture,” as *al-Kalima* argues, how many Palestinians would be alive today? Can someone tell me how many concentration camps and ovens would that take? If it took X to kill six million Jews let’s multiply it by about twenty to get the right number. And where would they be located? Is Israel going to invade and occupy all the Arab countries and build death camps there, like Hitler did with Poland? Or perhaps this is the whole point of the upcoming U.S. invasion of Iraq, to help Israel kill all the world’s Arabs? And who would be Sharon’s

Mark LeVine is assistant professor of History at U.C. Irvine, a contributing editor to Tikkun, and author of Overthrowing Geography: Jaffa, Tel Aviv, and the Struggle for Palestine, 1880 to the Present (UC Press). mark_a_levine@yahoo.com

"willing executioners" in the Arab world, without which such a plan couldn't be implemented?

Beyond the immorality and, to put it bluntly, stupidity of such comparisons, they totally overshadow the valid criticism in *al-Kalima* of the continual and large scale abuses of Palestinian human, political, civil, cultural, and economic rights by Israel. The Hitler-Israel equation makes it all too easy for the supposed "supporters" of Israel to deflect criticism of the country, however legitimate. Making matters worse, there is no condemnation of the acts of Palestinian terrorism, which have become dangerously destructive to Palestinian aspirations.

Yet however stupid and immoral this comparison, it has a profoundly negative effect on anyone who sees or reads it. For Arab/Muslim students, it helps generate and perpetuate anti-Semitism and hatred of Jews—the kind of hatred that has led to violence at other UC campuses, and led a resident of Irvine, Hesham Mohamed Hadayet, to drive the twenty-eight miles to LAX and kill as many Jews as he could on July 4. Indeed, the Hitler-Sharon issue of *al-Kalima* was the July issue, so how do we know that he didn't see this picture on July 1, 2, 3, or even 4, and that this comparison wasn't what sent him off to LAX guns in hand? Because if Sharon really is Hitler, then wouldn't any means necessary be justified to stop him and the world's Jews (since he apparently represents us all), including suicide

bombings and airport shootings? Indeed, Hadayet's neighbors and relatives talked about what a "tender" and even—in the words of a young Jewish girl who lived down the block—"cool" person he was. So something set him off; it could well be that if the editors and writers of this issue of *al-Kalima* don't literally already have blood on their hands with the LAX shooting, they might have it someday soon if they keep up this kind of rhetoric.

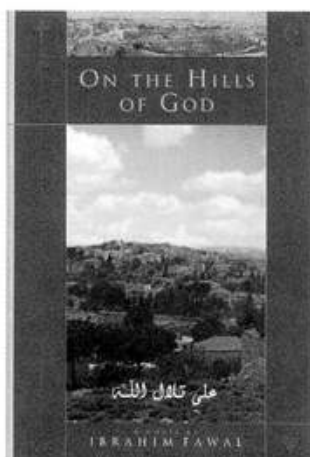
Or perhaps he was at UCI in May at the last forum, where one of our speakers engaged in a thought experiment that purported to demonstrate the plausibility of Palestinian justifications for suicide bombings based on the British use of terror bombing against German cities at the beginning of WWII. The problem is that he neglected to mention that unlike the situation facing Britain, all other means haven't been exhausted in Palestine before resorting to terror; namely, aggressive and organized society wide nonviolence has not been tried, as Palestinian leaders and intellectuals themselves have admitted. And yet sitting next to my colleague that evening even I didn't immediately criticize his equation, much to my regret as I look back on his words. Perhaps he and I have a share of blood on our hands too?

And the violence has hit UC campuses hard: Hillels spray painted with "fuck Jews," Jewish students attacked on their way to or from campus. Who's to say we won't be next here at UCI? I'm still sometimes mistaken for a student, so could

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THE MIDDLE EAST

I be next? After all, I used to ride the thrice-bombed #18 bus in Jerusalem every morning, openly reading my Arab paper in the hope it would give pause to any would-be suicide bomber who got on, and I missed being blown up by only a few minutes one day at a café on Allenby Street. Maybe my luck will run out in Orange County. One thing's for sure, this kind of rhetoric and logic makes it more, not less, likely that the enmity and hatred exhibited at other UC campuses will spread here at UCI.

This immoral and unthinking equation of Hitler and Israel has to stop for everyone's sake, and for the sake of those people fighting for real justice and peace in Palestine and Israel. But Muslim students are only half of the equation. The Jewish community at its highest levels of leadership is inciting similar levels of fear and hatred. Thus even before I knew who would be speaking and what the format of the "Visions of Peace" forum would be, I started hearing ominous words from colleagues on campus and in the Orange County Jewish community that I was making enemies, that people didn't like what I was doing, and that "I'd better be careful." I was subsequently added to the now (in)famous "Campus Watch" website, where I and my mentors and colleagues have been deemed too "pro" Arab or Muslim and are being targeted for intimidation by today's McCarthyites. Indeed, one local Jewish group, MERIT, even circulated a letter that was also sent to the County Supervisor, Todd Spritzer, in which they accused me (without ever contacting me to check the facts) of holding a "course" with "three Palestinians who support suicide bombings and the far-left Israelis who support them." This sounds like a good title for a *Jerry Springer* episode: the Arab Nazis and the Jews who love them—but it had no relationship to the forum or its participants.

While MERIT put a "clarification" on their website after I confronted them, how can they clarify their accusation that I use "inflammatory methodology" that threatens Israel, especially now that it's forever floating through the virtual universe of the World Wide Web? Perhaps even more ominous, the American Jewish Committee (AJC) approached the highest levels of the UCI administration, again without ever contacting me, to stop the forum on the premise that I wasn't having any "opposing views" present. Yet the day after our forum the AJC sponsored a speaker at UCI, Avi Davis, who in a recent column, entitled "The Jewish People's Fifth Column," wrote that people like Michael Lerner (and by implication me, since I write for *Tikkun* and support its views) are "piranhas," "far left," and continuously "lambasting Israel." He compares criticism of Israel to the "infamous *Judenrat* of the Holocaust, who were a council appointed by the Nazis to execute their orders on the Jewish towns under their control." If the Muslim Student Union sees Israelis as Hitler's accomplices, Avi Davis also sees certain Jews as "witting or unwitting accomplices to murder."

What is crucial to keep in mind is that there's a very short step, ideologically and visually, from depicting someone as Hitler's willing Jewish accomplices and depicting him as Hitler. If I'm not mistaken, that's exactly how right-wing Israelis depicted Yitzhak Rabin at Likud rallies before he was assassinated in 1995. And it's not just Rabin, Sharon, and Michael Lerner who are Hitler or his accomplices: Yasir Arafat is Hitler too. This is a favorite comparison of American and Israeli Jews especially in Israel, as widely reported in the press this past October 4 on Holocaust Remembrance Day. And if Arafat is Hitler, then Palestinian society must be his willing executioners. And so what peace can be made with them? Clearly none, and so the only option is to expel them, which is increasingly the choice of too many Israelis and a significant percentage of their elected leaders, and is now even becoming part of the educational curriculum.

During our "Visions of Peace" forum no one asked my colleagues about their work together for peace—which was the whole reason for having the forum. Instead they attempted either to elicit condemnations for actions and policies the speakers personally have nothing to do with or to obtain more damning information on the "other side." And so the right-wing Jews thought the night was a "travesty" while at least some of the Muslim students continue to make the Hitler-Sharon analogy the basis of their worldview. Thus the vicious circle of hatred and lies continues, in Irvine as well as Hebron. But it doesn't have to be this way.

In the three days after the forum our group of scholars examined in great detail the origins of the kind of hatred that allows Hamas terrorists to strap bombs to their bodies and Israeli citizens to support decades of terroristic occupation. Looking at detailed data and analyses of the writings of leaders of both communities, my colleagues and I engaged in the hard work of uncovering the complex web of economic, political, and cultural processes that have made too many Palestinians and Israelis see violence, discrimination, and hatred as the rational solution to their plight. While there are no excuses for oppression or violence, it is clear to us that there are long-term local and global forces that have made the Occupation and the violence and hatred it breeds seem perversely natural and impervious to change. Only by understanding them better can scholars and activists hope to find as yet uncharted solutions to the conflict.

The saddest thing was how a well-educated wealthy Jewish community seemingly is incapable of hearing a critical moral vision. Yet the combination of events I've experienced in the last few months ultimately has reinforced my belief that only by hearing voices of honesty, integrity, and a hard peace—for there is no easy peace here—will all of us in the UCI-Orange County community do the kind of soul-searching necessary to make the jobs of my Palestinian and Israeli colleagues a little bit easier. But we have to be willing to listen first. □

Reflections on the Israeli Election

Uri Avnery

I loathe Benjamin Netanyahu, and therefore I hoped that he would be elected leader of the Likud. I am sorry that current Prime Minister Ariel Sharon won the primary election instead.

How's that? After all, Netanyahu has presented himself as a man of the extreme right. Unlike Sharon, who now says that he is ready to accept a Palestinian state and does not talk anymore about expelling Arafat, Netanyahu continues to demand Arafat's expulsion (he would really like to see him dead and out of the way) and is ready to fight to the last drop of (our) blood against the creation of a Palestinian state.

So why did I prefer Netanyahu?

Because Netanyahu is an unprincipled politician, ready to change his positions any time. He reminds me of Groucho Marx, who once declared: "These are my views. If you don't like them, I have others, too." He could easily exchange his rightist slogans for leftist ones.

Sharon's recent willingness to at least appear to embrace peace may make some think he also is unprincipled, or at least willing to change his views. But he is not.

Sharon is very different from Netanyahu: he has a rigid outlook, which he has not changed for decades. He resembles an IDF bulldozer in Jenin, destroying walls on his way and demolishing houses on top of their inhabitants. His aim in life is to destroy the Palestinian entity and imprison the Palestinians in isolated enclaves, until the time is ripe for their expulsion from the country altogether. Nowadays he hides his unwavering attachment to this plan behind the mask of a benevolent, moderate grandfather, who has settled down and wants nothing more than to crown his career by making peace.

If I can choose my enemy, I prefer an unprincipled politician to a disguised true believer. Netanyahu would have been easier for new Labor Party head, Amram Mitzna, to defeat.

In the competition for the Likud leadership, Netanyahu was a sheep in wolf's clothing, while Sharon was a wolf in

If I can choose my enemy, I prefer an unprincipled politician to a disguised true believer.

sheep's clothing. The Likud members preferred the clothing of the sheep to that of the wolf. And that is significant.

Netanyahu did not understand that the mood of the Likud members has changed. He made a big mistake—one of many—when he decided, in the middle of the campaign, to adopt ultra-right positions, demanding Arafat's expulsion and coming out against a Palestinian state. It appears that most of the Likud members

do not believe anymore that that is practical—a conclusion confirmed the next day by a public opinion poll that showed that half of the Likud members accept a Palestinian state and agree to evacuate settlements.

Sharon, on the other hand, knows how to read maps. He pretends to accept a Palestinian state and to make "concessions that hurt." This, of course, is mere make-believe. He has made his acceptance of the Palestinian state dependent on so many impossible "ifs" that it has been emptied of any content. Sharon remains the same Sharon and will never be anything but the same Sharon. The leopard will not change his spots, but he understands that he has to hide them. To the trusting public he has presented himself as a moderate, as against the extreme Netanyahu. And, wonder of wonders, the Likud, the party of the extreme right, preferred the candidate posing as a moderate to the candidate posing as an extremist.

This is not the only miracle: a few days before, something very similar happened in the Labor Party, when Benjamin Ben-Eliezer was trounced by Amram Mitzna.



Uri Avnery is founder of Gush Shalom, an Israeli non-partisan grassroots peace movement composed of Jews and Arabs. Check out their website at www.gush-shalom.org.

There is some similarity between the two Benjamins: Ben-Eliezer, like Netanyahu, is a man without principles, who is ready to change his views like socks. Mitzna, on the other side, is a man of clear principles.

Mitzna is a declared dove. As against the right-wing line of Ben-Eliezer, he presents to the voters a clear, left-wing alternative: negotiations with Arafat, evacuation of most settlements, immediate withdrawal from the whole Gaza Strip, compromise over Jerusalem, a Palestinian state. Despite this dovishness in a time of virtual war, Labor Party voters chose him over Ben-Eliezer by an overwhelming majority.

Let there be no mistake: Mitzna is not a Gush Shalom member. Some of his slogans are anathema to me. But he is firmly located on the left of the political arena. If one does not grasp the significance of his election as Labor leader, one does not understand what's happening under the surface of Israeli society.

One miracle can be accidental. Two testify to a tendency. If in both the big parties—Likud and Labor—the candidate with the more “leftist” program defeats the candidate with the more “rightist” one, it proves that new public currents are at work.

One may add to this mix the happenings in the National Religious Party. Once upon a time, this was a very moderate party. In the 1950s, when the moderate Moshe Sharett was struggling against the extremist line of David Ben-Gurion, the National Religious Party generally supported Sharett. Since then it has—like almost the whole religious camp—moved steadily to the extreme right. A year ago it crowned as its leader Effi Eytan, compared to whom Haider and Le Pen look like bleeding-heart liberals. Yet lo and behold: this week, when choosing its candidates for the Knesset elections, it turned against its new leader and filled the most coveted spots on the list with people who are (comparatively) more moderate.

If one puts all these facts together, what do they say? They say that the whole system is slowly moving to the left. The public is fed up with the war, the unceasing bloodshed, the economic crisis, and the social breakdown. People want a solution. They are looking for compromise. They are ready to pay for it.

This gives Mitzna a chance. It will be very difficult for him to win, but it is definitely possible. And even if he does not succeed this time, he can do it the next time, which may be in a year or so. Mitzna should be supported, provided he gives a clear message that he will not join a so-called National Unity government under Sharon. Support for Mitzna can also be given by voting for Meretz or Hadash, since they will be part of the peace bloc in a Mitzna government, or even in a strong, fighting opposition. However, many people will vote directly for the Labor Party, so as to

assist in the recovery of the party under Mitzna, strengthen its morale, and add to his prestige in the crucial struggle against Sharon.

The outcome of the elections will also depend on the actions of the Palestinians. It is impossible for the Palestinians not to interfere in Israeli elections. Everything they do or do not do has an impact. There is no way to measure this influence, since they involve hidden psychological currents. For example: Do Palestinian suicide attacks strengthen Sharon (“You have to hit them even harder”) or Mitzna (“Sharon has failed. There is no military solution”)?

Some believe that the situation will never change until we change the mindset of children on both sides. In this view, Mitzna should offer to change the Israeli education system to promote reconciliation with the Palestinians if the Palestinians, in exchange, would agree to stop the anti-Israel emphasis in their schools. Speaking about Palestinian education in the present situation is non-

sense. While Israeli tanks roam in all Palestinian towns, killing and destroying at random; while Palestinian homes are demolished and Palestinian trees are uprooted everywhere, even Mother Theresa could not fill Palestinian children with the milk of human kindness.

When my friends and I come to Palestinian villages and towns to pick olives and rebuild demolished homes, we are received by Palestinian children with great enthusiasm. Rachel, my wife, who is a photographer, has taken hundreds of pictures of Palestinian children proudly wearing the Gush Shalom emblem—the crossed flags of Israel and Palestine.

Yesterday, an eight-year-old boy was killed while proving his bravery by climbing an armored troop carrier. He was on his way home from school. This is a routine event, hardly reported. The sad truth is that while the selection of Mitzna is a reason for hope, the daily reality of Occupation makes hope virtually impossible for the Palestinian people, and that fact will continue to play out in acts of violence and in Palestinian anger at all those who support the Occupation.

This is not a moment for complete pessimism, however. Something is changing in Israel. People are speaking once again about things which had seemingly died: the Green Line, evacuation of (most) settlements, exchange of territory, speaking with Arafat, the Taba and Clinton plans, international monitors.

Ahead of us the tunnel is still dark. But after two years of anguish and despair, it seems that at least a small light has appeared at its end, beckoning us forward.

To quote Winston Churchill: “This is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.” □

*The public is fed up
with the war, the
unceasing bloodshed,
the economic crisis, and
the social breakdown.
People want a solution.*

A Blessing to the Families of the Earth

Arthur Waskow

Once upon a dream, I imagined the two peoples that share the narrow land between the Jordan and the Sea becoming a model for peacemaking to the peoples of the earth.

Was peace between them easy? No. For there are no obvious boundaries between the two peoples, and they both feel deep yearning for the whole land each calls its own. Precisely because their journey from hostility to peace has been hard, I felt that if they could walk the journey, their path would matter to all the peoples, whose path is also hard.

For we all live on the great unboundaried earth, and most peoples love a scrap of land some other people loves as well. In our generation of H-bombs and global scorching, the journey to Peace has seemed hard—but necessary.

It even seemed both canny and uncanny that the need for all the peoples to make peace came due in history at precisely the same time that the two families of Abraham met up once more in that tiny land where he had herded sheep.

Uncanny: The workings of the God of Abraham—Whose Torah taught that the seed of Abraham would become a blessing to all the families of the earth.

Canny: The churnings of history had through Modernity brought the Jewish people to nationhood in the ancient land, had through Modernity brought the Palestinian community to nationalism and a nascent nation there, and had through Modernity brought all the peoples to the brink where transformation meets disaster.

The upshot? It has all come about precisely as I dreamed—but with all the colors reversed into their opposites. The green of life turned to the red of blood and fire, silver hope turned into black despair.

The two peoples do indeed teach many others. Arik Sharon responds to brutal terror with still more brutality, creating an infinite spiral of rage and death, keeping himself in power by creating hopeless dependency upon his mini-imperial vision; and look!—he becomes the model and the most dependable ally for a would-be real Emperor, a big

enough American to bestride the narrow world on tanks of oil and make perpetual war on boasts of Christian triumph.

The terrorists of Hamas pour blood on the streets of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, and look!—a global band of Muslim terrorists pours yet more blood on the streets of New York and Washington.

Can we find anywhere in this a blessing from the two families of Abraham to the other families of earth? Is there any alternative to the war between Israel and Palestine, or a U.S. war against Iraq?

It is not enough to say: Put a team of UN inspectors in Iraq. Or, set a peacekeeping team of US/UN soldiers separating the two peoples in Twice-Promised Land.

These might be useful, but nowhere near enough. What has gone sour is an entire vision of international connection and relationship. Treaties to make peace between Israel and Palestine, to heal the earth from

CO2, to ban land mines, to create an International Criminal Court—all spinning down the sour drain. They had too few supporters to make the Imperial Corporations and the one remaining Super-state accept their authority.

Wintertime for decency. But what dies in winter leaves deep-buried the seeds of new and unexpected life. The one blessing of these terrible two years has been the firm though frightened grass-roots solidarity between some Israelis and some Palestinians and some menschlich human beings from abroad.

Women who held hands around Jerusalem.

Men who together rebuilt Palestinian houses that had been bulldozed down.

Rabbis who helped harvest olives when Israeli settlers were shooting at the Palestinian farmers.

Israeli soldiers who refused to serve in the Occupation, and Palestinians who demanded that the suicide bombings cease.

Italians, Brits, Frenchfolk, Americans who fed and healed and cried.

Not “international,” between the nation-states, but transnational. Crossing all the official Boundaries.

The other treaties also need constituencies that exemplify nonviolence:

Germans and Americans who together will boycott the

(continued on page 62)

*What has gone sour
is an entire vision
of international
connection and
relationship.*

Rabbi Arthur Waskow is director of The Shalom Center (www.shalomctr.org) and co-author of *A Time for Every Purpose Under Heaven*.

spirituality, as an inner-directed, even “selfish,” search for wholeness, against social justice, an outward-directed thrust into worldly problems. But that dichotomy is foreign to Jewish spirituality. Jews have never cultivated a monastic life of quietude as opposed to social activism. Separating spirituality from ethics is a case of Satisfying the Anthropologist, imposing the cultural categories of other religions onto Judaism.

Take the peculiar Jewish notion of “landedness” which leads Jews to an ethical imperative to feed the hungry and clothe the poor. Like Native Americans, Jews claim spiritual rootedness in a particular soil—in the Jewish case, the Land of Israel. The Jew’s special relationship to Israel is established in the Bible; even today, though we think of visiting Israel as “tourists,” it is more accurate to say that we go there as “pilgrims,” knowing Israel is our spiritual home. We bring back pictures as relics. It is not the same as visiting Milan or going on safari. Every Jew knows that Israel matters in ways we cannot fathom.

The Jewish accent on Israel’s spiritual centrality has prompted a primary distinction in Judaism between being *ba’aretz* (“in the Land”) and *chutz la’aretz* (“outside the Land”). This distinction is not just literal, but metaphorical. Very deep down, Jews know the difference between being “at home” and “not at home” or (as it is called) *galut*, *golab*—literally, “exile.” Being without a home is so devastating an experience that Moses names his son, Gershom, meaning “stranger there” (Exod. 2:22), “for he [Moses] said, ‘I have been a stranger in a strange land.’” The most oft-repeated law of Torah—it is reiterated seven times!—is “Do not oppress a stranger, for you know the feelings of the stranger, having yourselves been strangers in the land of Egypt.” Because of our knowledge of landedness and its opposite, care for strangers is built into the very fabric of being a Jew. My Jewish “being in the world” obligates me to make an end to homelessness, which I must see as a Jewish ethical responsibility.

A Spirituality of Journeying With

The rabbis give us the twin metaphors of “home” and “journey.” I have already mentioned the significance of home, but now I can add the following rabbinic text based on a line from Torah, “Teach them the way on which they will walk”:

Rav Joseph taught, “Teach them”—this is the home of their life. “The way”—this means the practice of deeds of loving kindness. “They will walk”—implies visiting the sick. “On which”—refers to the grave.

We live ideally in a “home of life,” but we also must travel—like Abraham and Sarah. Life is a journey, “a way ... that we will walk,” ending in an eternal home, the grave,

*Sometimes we meet
each other for no other
purpose than to be
there for each other,
if only for a brief
moment.*

when the journey of life will finally cease. When Rav Hiyya lost his son, a rabbinic visitor advised, “It has always been thus, a *pathway* from the time of creation.”

These texts are taught in the context of visiting the sick, which turns out to be more than a *mitzvah*; it is a spiritual practice for Jews. Fail to visit the sick, and you fail to apprehend your own journey from birth to death. Visiting the sick is an affirmation of a common human destiny, a path shared by those who find it difficult, and those who do not, not yet anyway, but who will. Visits to the sick

entail catching up with those ahead of us who have been slowed by illness. We pause to share the moment. It follows that visitors must be physically present for the visit to count, and that is why actually being there is required. Visiting is, literally, sharing the physical space of a common road.

We know most of the world scientifically and instrumentally—we learn about the world to do things in it. But sometimes we meet each other for no other purpose than to be there for each other,

if only for a brief moment. To do so is to be distinctively human; it is distinctively sacred as well. It is to practice what Martin Buber called “the spirituality of meeting.”

These are but some examples of what I want to call reasonable spirituality, ways of living according to the deepest spiritual wisdom of Jewish tradition, remaining mindful of what matters, as we go through life’s journey. We are all heading home: home to life’s final end (some day), but in the meantime, home to some spiritual mooring that tells us we are not in exile, home to the deep Jewish insights about how to be in the world. □

GODWRESTLING (from page 27)

U.S. car companies that make SUVs, putting notices upon their windshields of “indictment” for poisoning the earth. And whisk away on bikes.

Brits and Colombians and Canadians and New Yorkers who will “die” from simulated land mines in front of the offices of the generals and senators who have refused to ban them. And then arise to dance the music of the peoples who are dying as left-over wars continue to explode.

Lawyers who will serve on unofficial alternative war crimes “courts” to cry out justice on those accused of terrorism or of war crimes, to hear whatever evidence can be gathered, serve subpoenas on those who refuse to testify.

People who will not only march against the Iraq War but buy some food to be delivered to Iraqi children—and give the Attorney General an affidavit they have committed this illegal deed of love.

What dies in winter leaves deep-buried the seeds of new and unexpected life. □

Dialogical Inquiry as Spiritual Practice

Jorge N. Ferrer

The term “dialogue” derives from the Greek word *dialogos*, which can be translated as “meaning flowing through” (*dia*: through; *logos*: word, meaning). Dialogue is usually contrasted with argumentative discussion, which stems from the Latin *discutere* (“to smash into pieces”). These two forms of conversation need not be at odds, however. Instead, the practice of dialogical inquiry may be understood as a blend of both dialogue and discussion that can function as a spiritual practice. Fostering the strengths of both dialogue and discussion while avoiding their weaknesses, dialogical inquiry can become a practice of interpersonal or relational meditation.

In a discussion, people often feel as if they are in a win/lose situation. Participants usually battle to make their views prevail (this is regarded as a victory), and defend them against the attacks of their opponents (in order to avoid being defeated). As linguists George Lakoff and Mark Johnson point out in *Metaphors We Live By*, the metaphor underlying both academic writing and ordinary conversations is “argument is war.” Accordingly, the skills of critical thinking and writing (logic, argumentation, rhetoric, etc.) are used as weapons to beat opponents and enemies (i.e., people who do not share our viewpoints).

Argumentative discussion’s strengths include sharply putting in relief genuine differences among viewpoints, pushing people to give adequate reasons for their beliefs, and, when skillfully practiced, promoting the dialectical development of ideas. Its shortcomings are well known: argumentative discussion can foster a strong self-identification and attachment to one’s own views, lead participants to personalize criticism, hinder the spontaneous flow of ideas, and make it difficult for people to revise their assumptions and change their minds (in some academic circles, changing one’s mind is almost a synonym of defeat!). Attachment to one’s ideas often turns the conversation into

a battlefield characterized by polarization, fragmentation, and stagnation, rather than an encounter characterized by emphatic understanding, co-operative inquiry, and mutual transformation.

In dialogue, by contrast, participants are encouraged to suspend their assumptions and explore them together in playful and non-confrontational ways. Two central elements of the practice of dialogue are awareness of the context in which ideas are spawned and the creative exploration of

alternatives. Generally, dialogue has no pre-established agenda and in dialogue there is nothing to prove or defend. This encourages a situation in which no one is attempting to win because, as David Bohm puts it in *On Dialogue*, “in a dialogue, everybody wins.”

Dialogue’s strengths are that people learn to detach themselves from their assumptions, which allows them not only to feel more relaxed when receiving criticism of their views, but also to be able to change them when useful or necessary.

Furthermore, in dialogue, people learn to listen deeply to each other, as well as to consciously participate in the collective creation of meaning. The main shortcoming of this approach is that, deprived of its polemic and argumentative force, dialogue tends to lose its critical power and degenerate into a friendly, nice, but often inconsequential conversation in which there is little room for healthy criticism and genuine disagreement (the tyranny of the “yes, but” is substituted by the equally problematic despotism of the “yes, and”). Also, the fact that dialogue has no pre-established agenda often hinders the adequate exploration of specific issues whose resolution or clarification may require more sustained, focused, and deeper attention.

The practice of dialogical inquiry attempts to integrate the strengths of dialogue and discussion while avoiding their shortcomings. In a mindfully maintained dialogical encounter, argumentation and polemics can become penetrating tools to playfully inquire into the possibilities and limitations of all views. If we are able to passionately argue for what we consider to be truth at any given moment with humbleness and non-attachment, then we can recapture the critical force of dialogue while preventing the conversation from becoming a battle.

Active listening is an act of generosity in which we offer our full presence and attention to another human being.

Jorge N. Ferrer, Ph.D., teaches in the East-West Psychology Program at the California Institute of Integral Studies, San Francisco. He is the author of *Revisioning Transpersonal Theory: A Participatory Vision of Human Spirituality* (SUNY Press, 2002).

The Spiritual Potential of Dialogical Inquiry

Dialogue and discussion are widely applied to the study of spiritual matters, but are hardly ever thought of in spiritual terms, at least in U.S. culture. Yet, once we grasp the concept of dialogical inquiry, we can find at least ten elements common to both dialogical inquiry and many spiritual paths and traditions. These similarities show how dialogical inquiry can be framed and practiced in ways that foster the development of spiritual skills, values, insights, and transformation.

1. Practice: Rather than a technique to be learned and used following a set of instructions, dialogical inquiry is a practice. Dialogical inquiry is a way to practice mindfulness and other contemplative skills (non-attachment, self-surrender, ego-transcendence, etc.) in the intersubjective world that emerges out of the encounter between two or more conscious beings. As with any practice, then, dialogical inquiry can only be learned through direct experience and conscious participation.

2. Mindfulness: To practice mindfulness in the intersubjective world involves observing the observer (observing our own consciousness, thoughts, emotions, and body sensations), as well as paying attention to all these dimensions of being in our dialogical partners. As in mindfulness meditative practices, the quality of this attention is non-judgmental, open, curious, receptive, and appreciative.

3. Generosity: In dialogical inquiry, the virtue of generosity can be cultivated through the practices of active listening and mindful speech.

Active listening is an act of generosity in which we offer our full presence and attention to another human being. Active listening to other human beings means being with them from the beginning to the end of their communication, and avoiding entanglement in our own mental constructions and interpretations so that we do not miss or distort what others are saying. Active listening entails paying attention not only to the linguistic content (what is expressed), but also to the whole person (how it is expressed, which emotions are present, which body reactions, etc.). Paradoxically, a crucial element of active listening is "inner listening;" that is, the anchoring of a small portion of our awareness in ourselves (through body-awareness, observing the observer, etc.) while giving the rest of our attention to the other person. The practice of "inner listening" during verbal exchanges prevents states of uncritical absorption into what other people are saying and helps us to be with them in a more conscious way.

Mindful speech is the practice of expressing our ideas in the spirit of truthfulness and compassion. To practice mindful speech is to speak our own truth with force and clarity, even if this involves taking risks or overcoming fears. When addressing the ideas of others, we can practice both appreciation and the art of constructive criticism, i.e., criticism that is not hurtful, hostile, mocking, or cruel (harsh language,

labeling, personalizing, etc.). We can critique ideas we consider distorted or problematic with both passion and compassion, without condemning the people who hold them.

4. Unconditional Acceptance: Regardless of whether we agree or disagree with an expressed view, we can unconditionally accept all contributions to the conversation as efforts on the part of the participants to articulate what they consider to be true at a given moment. Testing our views in the fire of intersubjective scrutiny can be risky and threatening, especially if we are too identified with them. In any event, we may want to keep in mind that, when expressing views, both we and our peers may be taking risks, disclosing openness and honesty, and displaying vulnerability to criticism. With this in mind, all contributions can be valued and respected even if we do not agree with their content.

5. Service: To be at the service of "something" greater than our own personal agendas or acquired viewpoints is another important element of dialogical inquiry. The meaning of this "something" may vary for different people. For some it may be the search for truth; for others the expression of truthfulness with ourselves and others; for others the collective flow of ideas and generation of shared meaning; or for others, the searching for liberation from self-centered ways of being. Whatever is the case, to be at the service of "something" beyond our egocentric agendas is a transpersonal motivation crucial for developing non-attachment to our views.

6. Non-Attachment: The art of dialogical inquiry invites us to practice non-attachment with regard to our own ideas, beliefs, and values. It is fundamental to be aware that we are not our thoughts, beliefs, and values; we must be aware that we have acquired all of them from different sources (parents, teachers, books, situations, experiences, etc.) at some point in our individual biographies. Aware of the fact that all our ideas and opinions are the product of specific contexts and experiences, we do not need to identify ourselves with them; we need not defend them at all costs. As David Bohm puts it: "If the opinion is right, it doesn't need such a reaction. And if it is wrong, why should you defend it?" To practice non-attachment gradually allows us to explore our ideas in more playful and relaxed ways, rather than trying to make them prevail, trying to receive validation for holding them, or feeling defensive when they are critiqued. The practice of non-attachment to our views opens unlimited possibilities for constructive transformations of ourselves and our lives, allowing us, for example, to let go of assumptions that inhibit our growth or have become problematic.

Of course, and this is extremely important, non-attachment to our views does not mean that we cannot take a stance, be passionate about our convictions, or forcefully critique ideas we consider erroneous, distorting, or problematic. It simply means that we do not need to hold our beliefs as the Truth or dogmatically defend them against any critique.

Genuine dialogical inquiry can only occur when our commitment to truth, truthfulness, and liberation is greater

than our attachment to our ideas. And conversely, whenever our attachment to our ideas surpasses our commitment to truth, truthfulness, and liberation, we should realize that, captives of a blind intellectual self-slavery, we have ceased to be free human beings.

7. Humor: Non-attachment allows us to be playful with both our own ideas and the ideas of others. Non-attachment helps us to respond to seemingly erroneous or distorted views with humor, understanding, and compassion, rather than with denial, defensiveness, aggressiveness, or rationalization. Humor is one of the best antidotes for destructive self-criticism and criticism of others. Practicing dialogical inquiry can be fun and liberating!

8. Openness: To engage in a dialogical inquiry is to be open to learn, to be challenged, and to be enriched by the views of others and the new meanings that are collectively created by engaging with others. To observe the evolution of our views through the process may serve as an index of how genuinely we are engaged in the practice of dialogical inquiry. If our views have not changed at all in our dialogue with others, then we may have good reason to be suspicious about our attachments and openness to others. A useful way to respond to this situation is to carefully examine how attached we may be to the ideas we learned in the past.

9. Transformation: When we are open to learn and be enriched by the other, it is very likely—and perhaps inevitable—that we will be transformed during the inquiry process. The transformative element of dialogical inquiry cannot be overemphasized. Dialogical inquiry is a transformative practice that challenges us to expand our consciousness and worldview through the practice of mindful communication, non-attachment, and openness to the other.

10. Liberation: The practice of dialogical inquiry can be emancipatory not only at personal and interpersonal levels,

but also spiritually. As we have seen, the uncovering of assumptions can help us to transform limiting views about ourselves, others, and the world. As for the spiritual level, we have in the West a very restrictive understanding of the conditions for spiritual insight or spiritual liberation, tending to consider, for example, that these events are individual inner experiences that occur only while we are meditating in a retreat or walking by ourselves on the beach. In contrast, the world spiritual literature abounds with stories in which profound spiritual insights and even final liberation occurred in a conversational or interpersonal context. In any event, to open ourselves to the possibility of liberation in an interpersonal context may not only make more room for its occurrence, but also bring mindfulness to our relationships and motivate us to become less self-centered in our everyday life.

Challenges of Dialogical Inquiry

Practitioners of dialogical inquiry will face several challenges. To pursue dialogical inquiry, we must be able to free ourselves from our attachments to particular modes of communication, or even from verbal communication at the expense of non-verbal ways of knowing. Finally, we must be able to free ourselves from the forced expectation of consensus, no matter how desirable such consensus may be.

The first challenge is the importance of refusing to privilege any style of thinking or communication. A genuinely dialogical encounter must be able to house and value the different forms of reflection and communication. It is common in discussion groups, for example, that more “thinking-type” people tend to dismiss more “feeling-type” ones as too personal, touchy-feely, emotional, flaky (such dismissal is even sometimes disparagingly termed “women’s talk”). And conversely, “feeling-type” individuals tend to judge the “thinking-type” style of communication as too


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SPIRITUAL PATHS

heady, abstract, disembodied, detached or even oppressive and patriarchal. Too often, this dynamic emerges between genders, usually fostering further polarization between these styles of communication. It is fundamental to realize that both styles of thinking and communication are valid, necessary, and complementary.

Another common clash in conversational style comes from the distinction between theoretical models and frameworks and the personal experiences (emotional, social, spiritual, etc.) from which they emerge. But this clash does not really make sense. On the one hand, this grounding in experience can grant theoretical models validity. On the other hand, such personal accounts may eventually require some form of theoretical articulation to acquire force, clarity, and, most importantly, applicability to other people or situations. Otherwise, they remain personally edifying, but ultimately idiosyncratic and solipsistic stories.

Communication differences may also be grounded in multicultural diversity. Conversationalists from different cultural backgrounds may display different styles of thinking, communication or exposition of ideas of which we must become aware and to which we should become open.

The second major challenge of dialogical inquiry does not revolve around the actual method of communication at all, but is rather the need to make room for the non-linguistic and non-rational dimensions of human nature, like the voice and wisdom of our instincts, our bodies, our hearts, our intuition, and our transconceptual awareness. These dimensions of our being may have information extremely relevant for our inquiry. Therefore, we are challenged to make room not only for verbal exchange, but also for somatic interaction, emotional expression, and even silent communion. Games, ritual, prayer, meditation, storytelling, artwork, or dramatization are among the possible vehicles to convey the messages of these fundamental aspects of ourselves.

Finally, it is important to stress that the goal of dialogical inquiry is not necessarily the attainment of consensus. Defenders of “consensus building” conversations usually fear that disagreement will lead to conflict (and even violence). This belief falsely assumes that shared resolutions and actions must necessarily stem from identical positions or viewpoints. Although there are certainly situations in which a consensus of views can be crucial (e.g., certain political decisions or medical diagnoses), in many cases ideological disagreements in personal and social arenas may have no implications for our practical decisions or actions: Agreement on the course of actions can perfectly follow from diversity of opinion. Furthermore, it is not clear that we must always attain consensus on shared actions before going forward. As the Dalai Lama points out, arguably one of the most pressing challenges of our present world situation is to learn to live in harmony with people holding different views. To be sure, agreement is one of the most desirable outcomes of most human encounters (it naturally

fosters a sense of fellowship, connection, etc.), but to a priori impose it as the goal of our conversations may create unnecessary constraints to the inquiry process itself.

Philosophically, consensus approaches—such as can be found in traditional science or certain forms of critical theory—are rooted in two fundamental beliefs: (1) there is only one world (metaphysical monism); and (2) there can be only one right interpretation or one final Truth that everybody everywhere will accept once we fully free ourselves from ignorance and external and internal coercion (critical monism). Both beliefs are questionable. In my opinion, the discussion about whether there is one world or a multiplicity of different worlds is ultimately a semantic one, and therefore metaphysically a pseudo-problem. Even admitting the existence of an independent, pregiven single world, however, it is quite possible that there can be equally free and rational disagreements about its nature, a plurality of “right” interpretations, and, in addition, that no single model can map reality in all its complexity and be proclaimed as paradigmatic for the rest.

Goals of Dialogical Inquiry

But if we are not necessarily looking for agreement or the Truth, why in the world are we engaged in dialogue in the first place? Among the many possible answers, you may consider the following (and please feel free to add to the list others that may speak to you):

- to learn how to carry out collective inquiry;
- to learn how to give and receive constructive criticism;
- to practice relational mindfulness in communication (generosity, non-attachment, openness, etc.);
- to rethink, articulate, and express our own truths;
- to develop and put to the test our truths in the fire of intersubjective opinion;
- to expand our horizons of understanding;
- to free ourselves from the tyranny and shortcomings of dogmatic, rigid, tacit, coercive, distorting, limiting, partial, biased, or misinformed views;
- to learn and emphatically engage different views and ways of thinking and experiencing the world;
- to be enriched, edified, or transformed by new information or perspectives;
- to genuinely open ourselves to others;
- to raise new and deeper questions that may open us to the Mystery out of which everything arises;
- and, perhaps, to experientially understand the nature of truth and what it means to be human.

Dialogical inquiry is a doorway to spiritual awakening because it invites us to expand our consciousness, making our relationships fertile places for spiritual realization and contributing to the emergence of a human community that truly honors the spirit of the Between. □

ACT NOW

ACTIVISM *from the* HEART

For many of us, activism seems like something somebody else does. Even though most of us desperately want to change the world, we often don't know where to begin. In this section, we've gathered a diverse group of activists to talk about who they are, how they came to do the work they do, and what their strategies are for the future.

We begin from the heart, as TIKKUN editors Deborah Kory and Jo Ellen Green Kaiser grapple with how we become politically active when life seems overwhelming. Joel Schalit argues that we don't need to identify as "activists" to fight for social change, while Tikkun organizer Marisa Handler responds by calling all of us to direct action. We then feature a few of the people working on some of today's most important issues—the IFG task force on globalization, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz on post-colonial movements and the importance of history, Vandana Shiva on ecology, and Robert W. McChesney on the media—followed by activists working within their local communities, from Abdullahi An-Na'im, who is crafting a human rights agenda based in the Islamic ethical tradition to Diane Mintz, who is working with low-income kids in her own town. We end with Ana Villa-Lobos from our activist arm, the Tikkun Community, who encourages us to take action within the context of a spiritual politics.

When we act from our most deeply held spiritual and ethical convictions, we can change the world. We can act now, when we act from the heart.

—Eric Zassenhaus and Jo Ellen Green Kaiser

Where the Heart Takes You

Deborah Kory

I have just started speaking publicly about my own activism in the last year, in my role as one of the leaders of the Tikkun Community. Standing on a stage (or occasionally a milk crate) and sharing my vision of the world with a crowd of strangers is scary and sometimes difficult. But I know that the inner conflicts and insecurities that are present in me are also present in most other people. I know it's vital that we address this vulnerability of heart and mind that we all share, because only when we address our insecurities and allow ourselves to be who we are can we take the leap into the unknown that activism requires. As Ram Dass says, "To acknowledge our humanness, with its mixture of empathy and fear, strengthens our helping hand."

As a society, we are hemmed in on so many levels, most of them unconscious. The world is an emotionally dangerous

place. Many of us carry around shame of some sort—we feel we aren't smart enough, witty enough, funny enough, beautiful enough, whatever enough, to warrant the esteem of those around us. We try to prove our worthiness by making lots of money, climbing the professional ladder, filling our schedules—by trying to look like we've got it all together, like we are popular, loved, desired. We are afraid of ending up alone.

These little seeds of doubt were implanted in us long ago. I look back to the seeds of my own identity: the place was my particular split-apart family in my particular uppity suburb of L.A.; the time was the 1980s—a Ronald Reagan, nuclear proliferation, corporatization kind of decade. They called us Generation X, which means nothing; it means the generation about nothing. I feel sure we will be the subject of history book ridicule. We tucked our pants into our socks and had stupid hairdos, but more than that, my adolescence

Deborah Kory is managing editor of TIKKUN.

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coincided with the 1960s backlash, when society began to view social change movements with a kind of cynical that-was-then-this-is-now attitude. It was difficult to grow up in the shadow of the radical hippie folks and experience their disillusionment as free love turned into free commerce and suburban disengagement set in. Madonna made up for a lot, bless her virgin soul, but it was beyond even the great pop icon to redeem the Eighties.

It wasn't until college that I began to step outside of myself and my depressed worldview. I entered Harvard in 1991 and moved into Dudley Co-op, the only co-op on campus, and it was a sweet little haven. There were thirty-five of us living in two old Victorians and there was a big meal on the table every morning and night, fresh bread baked every day, a garden, cats; and what I loved most was that at anytime of day or night I could go into the kitchen and shmooze. The bread came out of the oven late in the evening most days, and people would descend upon it with greedy joy and pats of butter and sit around and chat or watch TV. For the first time I felt what it would be like to have a real safety net in life. To feel part of a family, to never be alone, to live with a degree of intention.

I was already somewhat politicized by the environmental movement, whose second wave began to shift public consciousness in a tangible way in the late 1980s and early 1990s. At age fourteen I read *Diet for a New America* by John Robbins and immediately became a vegan. I wasn't a very good vegan, subsisting on vegan candy bars and vegan potato chips for a few years before becoming a raging carnivore again, until I finally settled where I am now, which is a lawless vegetarian. What I learned at fourteen, however, changed the course of my life—that our voracious appetite for animals and animal products was starving the rest of the world and destroying the ecology of the planet. The revelation that eating certain things, using certain products, leaving the lights on, driving cars, flushing the toilet, disposing of everything as if there were unlimited space actually impacts the natural order—that I really was connected to the world in some cosmic way—cracked my head wide open and affirmed something deep in me that yearned for more meaning and connection. It gave me a sense of my own physical weight on the earth and that what I do in this life actually matters.

Perhaps part of the reason that the environmental movement has had such an impact on my generation is that it derives from a sense of the sacred, a cherishing and marveling at creation that reminds us of our own mortality, of that linear march from birth to death, but also of the circularity of nature, its graceful insistence on birth and rebirth. In recent years, the environmental movement has converged with the anti-globalization movement, and this consciousness of the globe, in all its splendor and wrath, has transformed the political atmosphere. The shock of September 11th and the incessant cries for war that have subsequently emanated from the White House and the media have only

added to this new sense of urgency. Even the “slacker generation” is waking up.

My own introduction to the world of activism came around the issue of Israel/Palestine. After I graduated my travels took me to Israel, where I spent a year studying Hebrew and Jewish and Israeli history at a little institute in Arad, a town in the Negev desert perched just over the Dead Sea. It was the most extraordinary time of my life. I fell madly in love with the country and its people. I fell in love with the Hebrew language and my Hebrew teacher. I fell in love with a woman for the first time and went to study at a straight Orthodox yeshiva in Jerusalem with a group of mostly gay and bisexual women, where we snickered subversively for three weeks at our delightful little coup. Going to Israel for the first time was like discovering a huge, warm family that I had never known existed.

What I didn't learn when I was there, however, was the painful reality of life for Palestinians. It's hidden from popular view. You have to actively seek it out, at great risk, and if you don't already know about life beyond the Green Line when you get there, you could fail to notice Palestine at all. My awakening happened subsequent to leaving Israel, mostly through reading and working at TIKKUN. It's astonishing how life unfolds. How you walk around ignorant about so many things, or holding them so far back in your unconscious that you just aren't “aware,” and then one day you learn something that changes your whole life. Taking in the truth about life in the Occupied Territories was not unlike realizing, on an emotional level, what it means to be white in America. It's as if a consciousness you may have held in the mind becomes more manifest in the body, in the heart.

I go through periods of being very angry at myself for not having been more aware, for having been blind to this or that injustice (there are so many), but I'm coming to realize that we are all shaped by the particular skewed realities we were born into, and that we should be thankful for moments of insight whenever they occur in life. We shouldn't beat up on ourselves for not “getting it” earlier. After all, why should we want to let the full picture in? The amount of suffering in the world is so immense that we must find ways to protect ourselves. We all do this—we have all walked by and intentionally ignored homeless people on the street to protect ourselves from their suffering. We've made accommodations to the system and allowances for ourselves which is natural and forgivable.

What I have found, however, is that the more I engage with the suffering in the world, the less I suffer in my own soul. It's paradoxical and trite, but nonetheless true and worth repeating. I've come to realize that my suffering is not my own, that it is an integral part of the living organism of which we are all a part. Your suffering is not your own and you are not alone. And when you realize you are not alone, you begin to cross the boundaries of acceptable discourse,

(continued on page 53)

Becoming Citizens

Jo Ellen Green Kaiser

I never thought I'd be one of those people," my friend said as she watched her two-year-old son mash playdough through his fingers. "But now I don't read anything. I don't want to know. I hate what's happening but I feel helpless."

Standing on the sill of war, we feel strangely passive. Why? Pollsters and pundits tend to cast the general ennui in purely political terms: "Voters are afraid of war, but also afraid of Saddam. Not knowing which is worse, they trust the president, but express anxiety over the outcome." If that were the case, however, wouldn't we want more information rather than less? Wouldn't we be eager to know exactly what weapons Saddam has, exactly how he could use them, whether his close neighbors feel threatened, what the likely outcome of a war would be, and so forth? Yet few are asking these questions. We are silent, numb.

I feel this numbness in myself, and see it in my friends. My younger friends struggle to make enough to live while still making time for what is important to them—music, art, activism, love. How many twenty-year-olds have I talked to who are so exhausted from their work-week that they don't have time to date? To make meaningful connections with friends and potential lovers? To take care of themselves? Nine-to-five jobs are draining enough, leaving only snippets of time at lunch and in the evening; but many of the young people I know work two jobs, or work for companies that require fifty, sixty, even seventy hours a week as a minimum. Where is there room for life or thought there?

Those of us who have families are "cocooning," not out of fear but out of sheer exhaustion. Almost all of us work outside the home. Our children are in school or childcare from 7:30 AM to 6:00 PM. Or we try to juggle jobs and children, rushing from our child's school to the workplace and then back to school. In the spaces between, we must choose between our children, our spouses, ourselves.

Even those of us who thought the horizon of work life was in sight are finding new obligations. Elderly parents must be



cared for, and who can afford quality nursing homes or would want to send their loved ones to the homes they can afford? Retirement savings are slimmer, and children who we thought would be on their own still need our financial help. More folks in their sixties and seventies are working as hard as they did in their thirties and forties.

Exhausted and pressured, we turn inward and reward ourselves by consuming what we can: a TV show, new shoes, the latest tool, a meal out. We immerse ourselves in the very consumer culture that drives our work life. We slake our desire for intimacy with things. We are too tired to resist the haunting voices telling us our world will be better if only we consume more.

As we turn inward, our lives become atomized in space as well as time. Our homes, if we can afford them, become McMansions, containing enormous space inside and none outside. Who has time to work in a garden, or sit out on the porch waiting for friends to amble by? Who ambles? We have so little time to ourselves that we cannot even abide sharing that time with family, so we retreat from family space to the master suite, and finally to the privacy of the bathtub.

Act Now

What are the dangers without? While in the past armored cars and gated communities might have existed primarily to protect the rich from the poor, the white from the black and brown, today the dangers have expanded to include merely the unexpected and unknown. If I meet a neighbor on the street and she wants to talk—I will be late for work! What if one of my kid's friends comes by without an appointment? How will I finish the housework, get my kid to his lesson, have the special time with my kid that I've been looking forward to all day or all week? We cannot handle the unexpected, so we protect ourselves, we gate ourselves in.

As we retreat, we lose sight of the way we belong to a larger community, what the ancient Greeks called the "polis." We lose the connections that hold the polis together: the casual conversations about the state of the world, the sharing of our home, the willingness to give of our time and to receive such time from others. We lose the offer of mutual aid and the gift of mutual trust. This communal fabric is the real foundation of what we call politics. We no longer have politically active citizens because we are quickly losing the polis to which such citizens belong.

We feel helpless because we have lost faith, not just that our government can help us, but that our own neighbors, our own little community, can help us. That's why it is not enough, when faced with the kind of agonized silence we now hear about the war on Iraq, to call on the people to rise up and demonstrate against the war. It's not that no one will answer. Some will. Some of us have never withdrawn from the community. This October 26, the 200,000 protestors who encircled the White House; the eighty thousand who rallied in San Francisco; the thousands more who raised their voices in cities across America have not forgotten what it means to be political. And since those of us who have gone to these demonstrations are awake, we must lead the way—we must continue to pursue these activities even when it feels that we are speaking to the void.

Yet we are a small fraction of the American people. On October 6, one and a half *million* people marched in Italy against a U.S. war in Iraq. Most of our fellow citizens are not ready to join us. They will not rise up because they will not hear the call, or they will not think they are being called. Before they can be expected to take political action, they must be able to remember that we live in a polis, in a political world in the largest sense.

Even as we call for demonstrations, for boycotts, and for civil disobedience, we must also actively work to rebuild the fabric of our communities on the smallest scale. We need a kind of consciousness-raising about community

itself. Early feminists did not plan marches; they met in each other's houses and discussed the most mundane issues of their lives—their hatred of housework, their desire for some mental stimulus, the difficulties of raising kids without help. In the same way, we must rebuild the space of our communities and the time we have for them.

These acts may not seem political; they are not political in the narrow sense of "politics as usual." But even though they are "personal," they are political in the most fundamental sense, the sense of the polis.

If you do not feel ready to join a demonstration; if you feel helpless about the way the world is going; if you feel you don't have the time or energy for anything, even though you want so much to do something; here are some things you can do right now that will actually give you more time, space, and energy, and will simultaneously help reweave the fabric of your community



and build your political strength:

- Discover your local park. Bring your dog or kids there regularly. Sit on the benches. Instead of exercising on a machine at home, arrange impromptu games of softball, Frisbee, volleyball with whoever walks by. Engage whomever you meet in conversation.
- If you practice a religion, attend your local mosque, church, synagogue, ashram, etc. regularly. You will find free childcare and dating events there. Join committees. Stay a bit after services and mingle. Volunteer to set up potluck brunches and dinners for the community. Bring in outside speakers who will discuss political issues.
- Make your streets pedestrian friendly. Change zoning laws to encourage the formation of an old-fashioned main street. Are the sidewalks wide? Lobby your local city council to permit sidewalk cafes and benches. Meet friends on main street for a cappuccino and a chance to talk. Organize parades. One day you may run for city council yourself!
- Plan a weekly playdate with all of your kids' friends and parents at the playground or park (or take turns using your own backyards). While the kids play, talk with their parents. Discuss what's happening in your school, in your community.

At the playground last week, one father told me that he was fed up with the political situation in our country. "I don't know what to do about all this," he told me, "so I'm talking about it. I'm just talking about it to everyone I know. Maybe something will happen." To a pollster or pundit, this dad is just another indecisive voter. But that is not so. He does not feel helpless anymore. He has become a citizen of the polis. His path to political action has begun. □

Why I'm Not an Activist

Joel Schalit

Whenever I hear the word "activism," it makes me want to run. It's not that I have anything against activists, per se. As a leftist, I find a great deal of value in individuals engaging in the kinds of political activities we normally associate with activists: helping organize demonstrations, handing out leaflets and petitions, volunteering on behalf of political parties and labor unions, or working as an employee of a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO). These are all entirely laudable activities, because they represent individuals attempting to actively participate in the political process. In progressive circles, there is no higher calling, because to be an activist means to be dedicated to concerns of a decidedly political nature.

What I find alienating about the term is the way it tends to define political labor. Unless an individual is formally involved in structured political activities or a member of a disciplined revolutionary organization, progressives tend to infer that those not *involved* are not actively engaged in struggles for social justice. Unfortunately, not everyone has the time or the resources to make politics their vocation, nor should they have to. Equally troubling is the implication that politics is its own sphere of activity distinct from the kinds of power struggles we experience in everyday life. Just because someone might not participate in conventional political activities does not mean that they are not critically negotiating their relationship to the state and the marketplace in their own highly personalized ways. The point is to be politicized.

Such surplus connotations of the term "activist" have their roots in the absence of any credible social democratic political parties in the United States capable of representing the interests of the Left. Since very few alternative political formations actually exist, we develop ways of speaking about our political activities which suggest that we are part of a greater network of persons united by our respective pursuits of social justice. Describing our political engagements as "activism" is a way of doing that.

I've had to learn this lesson through searching for supportive media spaces to explore and express my political opinions as an Israeli American writer with a strong interest

in Frankfurt School Marxist theory and the Middle Eastern conflict. These informal institutions are my political parties and NGO stand-ins.

As an editor, I solicit specific pieces on the basis of what I'd like to learn. So far, the result has been a politically plural mix, which bears very few signs of the kind of doctrinal rigidity that influenced factional infighting between Communist intellectuals in the 1930s. Structurally, there's a great deal of deference paid to anarchism, particularly when it comes to speculating on what anti-market movement hierarchies ought to look like. However, there's an increasingly Marxist influence being brought to bear in terms of how progressives in our circles speak about class. This is also a mixed blessing. Sometimes I fear there's almost too much emphasis being placed on the mechanical movement of global capital, without enough attention being placed on culture, gender, and in certain instances, religion. My worry is that this will lead to a new kind of crude economism redolent of the Cold War Left. With the International Socialists taking an increasing leadership role in demonstrations and campus organizing, it's not hard to conjecture.

Regardless of my own heterodox concerns, I am delighted by what I see happening, because it's creative, it's thoughtful, and it's not so obsessively devoted to street politics that it forgets that intellectual labor is its own kind of political practice. Even better, there's a certain kind of generosity of spirit afoot, because all of this hard and creative work is being done after hours, during time normally allotted to coping with life after dinner. Best of all, most of the people I learn from are by no means what Antonio Gramsci called "traditional intellectuals," but people with real jobs who learn just as much about free trade zones from an Ultra-red record as they do from reading a William Greider book.

They are young punk rockers, thirty-something office workers, service industry laborers, sex workers, teachers and professional journalists, fearful for their future and how they are going to be affected by an increasingly war-torn, authoritarian world that none of us can ever remember being so dark, so violent, or so cruel. A good day for them is being able to sneak a peak at the online edition of the *Guardian* while they are enmeshed in spreadsheets, or an op-ed piece in an Israeli newspaper such as *Ha'aretz*, which given the country it comes from, is proof that the best progressive intellectuals can survive the worst periods of history with their moral integrity firmly intact. □

Joel Schalit is co-director of Bad Subjects (www.eserver.org/bs) and Associate Editor of Punk Planet Magazine. He is the author of Jerusalem Calling, and the editor of The Anti-Capitalism Reader, both published in 2002 by Akashic Books.

The Necessity of Action

Marisa Handler

I recently spent five weeks traveling through the Midwest and Northeast, speaking about the Tikkun Community's perspective on the Middle East and organizing local chapters of the Tikkun Campus Network. I spoke about Israel-Palestine, about growing up in South Africa, about spiritual activism, and above all about the need to recognize our common humanity as a first step to social change. One of the responses I heard most often was this: "I'm not an activist, but this just speaks to me, and I feel the need to do something."

I am an activist. So when I heard this kind of response, I was simultaneously excited that my listener was "ready to do something" and also perplexed that they would not identify as an activist, as if "activist," like "feminist," had become a taboo cultural identity. I understand, as Joel Schalit argues in this issue, that the word "activist" has come to connote a lopsided hierarchy, but there is not just one kind of activist, nor one kind of activism.

Indeed, all over the world, all kinds of people are raising their voices against the apparatus of power in nonviolent protest. In Italy, for example, a country roughly a fifth our size, one million took to the streets to protest war in Iraq. Yet, in the United States, one hundred thousand comprises a massive demonstration. Is it that Americans are indifferent? Do we just lack time or energy? I'd say Americans don't "do" more because of the singular forms of alienation that our excessively materialist—and resultantly individualized, community-deprived—culture manufactures. We don't join efforts that lie "beyond the establishment" until we feel needed; until we are actively pulled in. Until then, we don't believe our activism can have any effect.

We must learn to fight against this feeling of powerlessness. Even though it may seem near impossible to topple the behemoth of global capital, nonviolent direct action—whether it be a rally, protest, civil disobedience, or any other manifestation of organized opposition that falls outside of established channels of dissent—does make a difference. Advocacy, education, alternative media—these are all vital forms of raising consciousness, but none of them precludes the necessity of nonviolent direct action. First and foremost, direct action is something we do for ourselves, to unite us as a community. A

successful action is the result of thorough planning, hard work, and truckloads of creativity. Given the weight of current power constructs, a communal experience like this is a miracle of shared hope. That feeling of connection is the sort of thing that can keep us going even when the Republicans have won both houses and the nation is off to war.

Direct action is also deeply empowering. In a direct action, we will hold a sit-in at Chevron-Texaco's offices, because the fact that children are dying in Iraq over oil is more important than whether an executive has an unpleasant morning. This alteration in the power structure, even for a few hours, is crucial: it is proof that we can create a moment in time when alternatives become thinkable.

Direct action is also a vital means of giving voice to people who are not accorded voice within mainstream media. In direct action, marginalized political voices are granted a forum within the radical spaces of local organizing. And as these voices reach out, propelled by conviction of conscience, they may—and this is the kind of change that happens at a measured pace, that we must nurture as if our lives depended upon it, for those of our grandchildren certainly do—they may ebb into the ripe awareness of a passer-by or a businessman in the office next door. Creative, unexpected ways of reaching out often yield proportionately thoughtful responses.

I did not start life wanting to be an activist—I only became an organizer when a close activist friend dragged me with her to some meetings, and I discovered I could use my talent for singing to contribute to the cause. Until each of us feels embraced as a member of a community with something important to offer, direct actions will continue to be the property of an elite, if marginalized, few.

When I step into existing Tikkun Communities I sometimes encounter people who tell me they had once been "on the other side." What brought them into the fold? A community of folks who make a sincere effort at being welcoming and open to different kinds of people, and thus differing perspectives, personal styles, and even political opinions. When we practice respect and compassion for those with whom we disagree, we sow the ground for action, for those who hear us will hear affirmation. When action becomes divorced from the sacredness of each human life, it becomes a numb venture. Building loving community is inseparable from mass activism; it is especially crucial in a nation like ours, in a time like now, when democracy desperately needs us. □

Marisa Handler is the national organizer of the Tikkun Community and the Tikkun Campus Network. She has worked as a journalist, producer, singer-songwriter, and activist.

Alternatives to Economic Globalization

By: Jerry Mander, John Cavanagh, Sarah Anderson, Debi Barker, Maude Barlow, Walden Bello, Robin Broad, Tony Clarke, Teddy Goldsmith, Randy Hayes, Colin Hines, Andy Kimbrell, David Korten, Sarah Larrain, Helena Norberg-Hodge, Simon Retallack, Vandana Shiva, Vicky Tauli-Corpuz and Lori Wallach.

Over the past decade, millions of people have taken to the streets all across the world in massive demonstrations against the institutions and policies of corporate globalization. Often the mainstream media have done more to mislead than to inform the public on the issues behind the protests. Thomas Friedman, foreign affairs columnist for the *New York Times*, is typical of pundits who characterize the demonstrators as “ignorant protectionists” who offer no alternatives and do not merit serious attention. Many in the media have dismissed those involved in protests as “spoiled children of privilege” who would end trade and international cooperation.

But anyone who makes even the most minimal effort to discover why millions of people from virtually every nation and walk of life have taken to the streets will find these simplistic characterizations to be untrue. The largest protests are in low-income countries and the majority of those involved are themselves poor. Rather than the work of privileged isolationists, the resistance against corporate globalization is global in scope and is dedicated to international cooperation to achieve economic justice for every person on the planet. As for the charge of being anti-trade, many of the movement’s leaders are actively involved in the promotion of “fair trade”—in contrast to the often exploitative free trade they oppose—as a means of improving the economic conditions of poor people and their communities.

The claim that the protestors offer no alternative to globalization is as false as the other claims. In addition to the alternatives described by individuals in books, periodicals, and conferences, numerous consensus statements have been crafted by civil society groups, including those emerging from the 2000 and 2001 World Social Forums in Porto

Alegre, Brazil, titled “Another World Is Possible,” attended by tens of thousands.

Perhaps the most obvious and straightforward alternative advocated by civil society is simply to place a moratorium on the negotiation of new trade agreements.

Advocating a moratorium on new trade agreements does not mean that global civil society opposes trade. Instead, what the protesters reject is the use by corporate interests of international trade agreements to circumvent democracy in their global campaign to strip away social and environmental protections that ordinary people have struggled for decades—even centuries—to establish. In place of these corporate efforts, protesters have offered ambitious proposals that center on redirecting global,

national, and local priorities toward the task of creating healthy, sustainable human societies that work for all.

The issue is governance. Will ordinary people have a democratic voice in deciding what rules are in the best interests of society? Or will a small ruling elite, meeting in secret, far from public view, be allowed to set the rules that shape the human future? If the concern of the decision makers is only for next quarter’s corporate profits, who will care for the health and well-being of the world’s people and the planet?

It is imperative to rethink human priorities and institutions. Yet the institutions with the power to provide such leadership are neither inclined nor suited to doing so. Nor is there realistic cause for hope that leaders who are lavishly rewarded by the status quo will experience a sudden epiphany.

The challenge of providing leadership toward a just and sustainable world thus falls by default to the hundreds of millions of extraordinary people in an emerging global civil society who believe a better world is possible—and who are

*The issue is governance.
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This article has been adapted from the Introduction to Alternatives to Economic Globalization: A Better World is Possible, a new consensus report by nineteen board members and associates of the International Forum on Globalization (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2002), available now in bookstores. The IFG will be holding meetings with grassroots groups in different regions of the world to dialogue about this report, with the aim of revising and expanding the document based on this consensus-building effort.

ACT NOW

forging global alliances that seek to shift the powers of governance to democratic, locally rooted, human-scale institutions that value life more than money. Having experienced the violence and insecurity that has come from the world's growing social and environmental disintegration, millions of people have come together in a loose global alliance that spans national borders to forge what may be considered the most truly global and inclusive social movement in human history.

Different Worlds

At times it seems that corporate globalists and the protesters who try to thwart them must live in wholly different worlds. Understanding the differences helps us understand the implications of the choices that humanity faces. Corporate globalists inhabit a world of power and privilege. They see progress at hand everywhere, because from their vantage point the drive to privatize public assets and free the market from governmental interference spreads freedom and prosperity around the world, unleashing the enormous innovation and wealth-creating power of competition and private enterprise.

But, where corporate globalists see the spread of vibrant market economies, citizen movements see the power to govern shifting away from people and communities to financial speculators and global corporations and institutions dedicated to the pursuit of short-term profit in disregard of all human and natural concerns. They see corporations replacing democracies of people with plutocracies of money, replacing self-organizing markets with centrally planned corporate economies, and replacing diverse cultures with cultures of greed and materialism.

In the eyes of citizen movements, these trends are not the result of some inexorable historical force but rather of the intentional actions of a corrupt political system awash in corporate money. They see the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and World Trade Organization (WTO) as leading instruments of this assault against people and the environment.

Ironically, the citizen movements seek many of the things the corporate globalists claim to offer but fail to deliver: democratic participation, good jobs, and a response to the real needs of citizens, as well as a healthy environment, and an end to poverty. Where the corporate globalists seek a competitive global economy ruled by mega-corporations that owe no loyalty to place or person, the citizen movements seek a system of economies made up of locally-owned enterprises accountable to all their stakeholders. Citizen movements work for economic justice for all, international cooperation, vibrant cultural diversity, and healthy, sustainable societies.

Citizen movements recognize that corporate globalists cannot deliver on their promises because the narrow and shortsighted financial imperatives that drive their institutions

are antithetical to such goals. Corporate globalists generally measure progress by indicators of their own financial wealth, such as rising stock prices, and indicators of the total output of goods and services (gross domestic product, or GDP) available to those who have the money to pay. Despite cyclical setbacks in Latin America and declining per capita incomes in the poorest African countries, GDP indicators show apparent progress in the eyes of corporate globalists, when it is actually only assisting the few people at the hub of the process.

In contrast, citizen movements measure progress by other indicators, focused on the well-being of people and nature, with particular concern for the lives of those most in need. With the exception of the highly visible pockets of privilege enjoyed by corporate globalists, these latter indicators are deteriorating at a frightening pace, suggesting that in terms of what really matters, the world is rapidly growing poorer both for people and the environment.

Economic Democracy

The current and future well-being of humanity depends on transforming the relationships of power within and between human societies toward more democratic and mutually accountable modes of managing human affairs. Such modes would be self-organizing, would emphasize power-sharing, and would minimize the need for coercive central authority. Economic democracy, which involves the equitable participation of all people in the ownership of the productive assets on which their livelihood depends, is essential to such a transformation because the concentration of economic power is the Achilles heel of political democracy, as the experience of corporate globalization demonstrates.

Over the past century, as capitalism became the dominant paradigm, progressives tried to reign in its excesses through a focus on sound public regulation. What they often missed, however, was the point that economic democracy is as essential to the socially efficient function of economies as sound public regulation. Today's markets respond only to money, so they are overly attentive to the wants of the rich and neglect the most basic needs of the poor.

Economic democracy is also a necessary foundation of individual, community, and national economic self-determination—the right to determine one's own economic priorities and the rules of one's economic life—which also helps to secure a political voice for each person.

The concern for economic democracy, local self-reliance and self-determination has important implications for global governance. For example, in a self-reliant and localized system, the primary authority to set and enforce rules rests with the national and local governments of the jurisdictions to which they apply. The proper role of international institutions is to facilitate the coordination of national policies on matters where the interests of nations are inherently intertwined—global warming, for example.

Of course, a democratic commitment to self-determination means that ultimately it is left up to the people of every nation—if not every indigenous group or local community—to decide the extent to which they will integrate their own economy with the economies of other nations. The peoples of different countries will likely reach different decisions. The international interest is properly confined to assuring that these decisions are made democratically, that economic relationships among countries are just and balanced, that no country builds up unpayable debts to the rest of the system, and that each national economy is secure against predatory interventions from foreign nations and corporations.

There is certainly a need for international institutions to facilitate cooperative exchange and to mediate competing national interests. These institutions, however, must be transparent and democratic and support the rights of people, communities, and nations to self-determination. The World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and World Trade Organization violate each of these conditions to such an extent that we recommend that they be decommissioned in favor of new institutions built under the authority of a strengthened and reformed United Nations. These new institutions would be responsible for freeing Third World nations from the burden of unpayable international debts, helping all nations bring their international trade and investment accounts into balance with the global system, and working with national governments to establish the public accountability of corporations with operations that span national borders.

Momentum for Change

Less than a decade ago, the claims of corporate globalists of the inevitability of their cause were credible to many. Talk of economic alternatives seemed little more than bravado. Today, although corporate globalization remains a formidable force, it no longer seems quite so invincible, nor discussion of alternatives quite so fanciful. Public consciousness of the pervasive abuse of corporate power has fueled the growth of a powerful opposition movement.

For example, secret negotiations toward a Multilateral Agreement on Investment under the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development were exposed by citizen movements and ultimately ended. U.S. President Bill Clinton was twice denied the “fast track” authority he sought, which would have allowed him a free hand in negotiating trade agreements with minimal congressional debate and no amendment. (A Republican Congress finally did grant this authority to President George W. Bush in 2002, by three votes.) Efforts to launch a new round of trade negotiations at the 1999 WTO ministerial meeting in Seattle were disrupted, and the WTO was forced to expose its undemocratic nature by moving its 2001 ministerial meeting to Qatar, a remote monarchy where public protest

is ruthlessly suppressed. In April 2000, police shut down much of Washington, DC to secure a World Bank-IMF meeting from protestors demanding the decommissioning of these institutions and the cancellation of Third World debt. A subsequent meeting of IMF and World Bank directors in Prague closed a day early, and a planned meeting in Barcelona was cancelled. In 2001, pharmaceutical corporations were forced to make concessions allowing greater use of low-cost generic drugs in poor countries. Increasingly protestors and members of the Group of 77—a formal inter-governmental body of over 130 of the world’s poorest countries—find themselves aligned in a common cause.

The evolving alliance of civil society organizations is the product of a largely spontaneous awakening of millions of people to the reality that their future and the future of their children depends on exercising their democratic right to participate in the decisions that shape their future. Unified by a deep commitment to universal values of democracy, justice, and respect for life, this alliance functions with growing effectiveness without a central organization, leadership, or defining ideology. It also takes different forms in different settings.

In India, activists seek to empower local people through the democratic community control of resources under the banner of a millions-strong Living Democracy Movement. In Canada, hundreds of organizations have joined together to articulate a Citizens’ Agenda that seeks to wrest control of governmental institutions back from corporations. In Chile, coalitions of environmental groups have created a powerful Sustainable Chile proposal that seeks to reverse that country’s drift toward free markets and reassert popular democratic control over national priorities and resources. The focus in Brazil is on the rights of workers, the poor, and the landless. In Bolivia, a mass movement of peasants and workers has successfully blocked the privatization of water. In Mexico, the Mayan people have reignited the spirit of Zapata in a movement to confirm the rights of indigenous people to land and resources. French farmers have risen up in revolt against trade rules that threaten to destroy small farms. The construction of new highways in the United Kingdom has brought out hundreds of thousands of people who oppose this desecration of the countryside to meet globalization’s relentless demand for ever more high-speed transport.

And, we have also seen important political changes, such as the election of Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva as president of Brazil, the world’s eighth largest economy. Similar political shifts away from the free market are occurring in Argentina, Ecuador, Bolivia, Costa Rica, and elsewhere.

These are only a few examples of the initiatives and actions in defense of democratic rights that are occurring around the world. Each adds its voice to a growing global chorus proclaiming the right of “We the peoples of planet earth” to create a better world. □

The Revolution

A Memoir

Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz

I'm writing. Specifically I'm writing historical/literary memoir. I have a doctorate in history and a deep, early brainwashing in the importance and methodologies of discovering and writing history, including oral history, thanks to my activism in the American Indian Movement during the 1970s. I have written and published traditional history. But I can no longer bear to write—or to read—dense, footnoted texts in which the author is only insidiously present behind a maze of screens, pretending objectivity. Instead, I now follow the path of Emma Goldman, Big Bill Haywood, Elizabeth Gurley Brown, Agnes Smedley, Simone de Beauvoir, Oscar Ameringer, Ché Guevara, Bobbi Lee (Lee Maracle), and dozens of others who knew that memoir is itself important political work, as important as activism itself. I feel my memoir writing is as important as my past organizing in the anti-war and anti-imperialist, women's liberation, labor, indigenous peoples, and international human rights movements. Why? History. The battle over history.

I think we activists are becoming increasingly aware that History *is* an issue, often *the* issue: Who owns the history of the United States? Whose version of history is valid in Palestine/Israel, in Northern Ireland, in Greek and Turkish Cyprus, in Kashmir caught between India and Pakistan? The question of the state, and who owns it, is at the heart of my current project, a memoir in which I try to unravel and explore what happened in one marginal corner of the world, Nicaragua, between 1981 and 1988, and what happened to me when I spent every waking moment obsessed with that country, nearly destroyed by my personal involvement.

I call my memoir "North: Re-Covering Nicaragua," or alternatively it could be called "Living—and Dying—under Reagan's America," or "Site(s) of Shame." The site of shame was the northeastern region of Nicaragua. Although Nicaragua (and Central America in general) was a sideshow, if not a smokescreen, to the more important Cold War site of shame, Afghanistan. Hundreds of thousands of people died or were maimed during the Central American civil

Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz was one of the founders of the Women's Liberation Movement in the late 1960s and is author of many books including Red Dirt: Growing Up Okie (Verso, 1997) and Outlaw Woman: A Memoir of the War Years, 1960-75 (City Lights, 2002).



wars, with the United States as usual propping up the landed oligarchies by providing war machinery against the insurgent masses. The war in Nicaragua makes the case for the necessity of understanding U.S. history, and continued U.S. struggle for world power.

The war really began once the Sandinistas took the reins of the state, such as they were, from Somoza's one-man rule, and went about nation-building, stoked by enthusiasm and high ideals to eradicate poverty, disease, and illiteracy, and to introduce poetry writing to every woman, man, and child. In a fairytale, the story would end here. But Nicaragua is a real place, with historic complexities. The story of Nicaragua is not just a story of a people rising up against an empire, because there are more than one people in Nicaragua.

On the Mosquito Coast, webbed with rivers and rapids, where travel is by dugout, tens of thousands of Miskitu and thousands of Sumu and Rama people demanded from the Sandinistas acknowledgment and regional autonomy.

The Sandinistas agreed to a literacy program in the indigenous languages but balked at political/economic autonomy. Overwhelmingly Spanish-speaking, the Sandinistas were nationalists and felt threatened by indigenous demands, particularly because those communities were dominated by U.S. Christian missionaries. Soon the Sandinistas began to realize that their revolutionary dogma contained an element of racism in its nationalism, but by then it was too late.

Into this gap between indigenous and Spanish-speaking peoples pounced the United States, linking up with its fifth column of missionaries, licking its chops that it could use an internal conflict to defeat the Marxist-affiliated Sandinistas.

(continued on page 48)

Earth Democracy

Vandana Shiva

Earth democracy is my vision, the basis of my activism.

Today, we are being ruled by terror and greed, fear and insecurity. As we face the tightening control of public space by corporate globalization and militarized police states, by an economic fascism aided by political fascism, our challenge has become to reclaim our freedom and the freedom of our fellow beings. The Earth Democracy Movement takes up this challenge by advocating the creation of all-inclusive living economies that protect life on earth while providing basic needs for all.

The Earth Democracy Movement is based on two fundamental principles. The first is the continuity of all life on earth, and its right to freedom on the basis of gender, race, religion, class, and species. The second is the continuum between and indivisibility of justice, peace and sustainability—we believe that without ecological sustainability and a just division of the earth's bounties, there can be no peace.

Corporate globalization ruptures these continuities. Because corporations establish their dominance through a divide and rule policy, corporate globalization creates competition and conflict between different species and peoples, often subjugating other species to the demands of humankind. By spreading insecurity, it transforms diversity into a set of oppositional differences, which then give rise to fundamentalisms that diminish freedom and shift our focus from sustainability and justice and peace to ethnic and religious conflict and violence.

The Earth Democracy Movement is committed to going beyond the triple crisis of economic injustice, ecological non-sustainability, and the subjugation of people and other species brought on by the growth of global capitalism. Instead, the Earth Democracy Movement provides an alternative worldview in which humans are embedded in the earth family. In this vision, we are connected to each other through love and compassion, not hatred and violence, and ecological responsibility and economic justice replace greed, consumerism, and competition as the fundamental objectives of human life.

Vandana Shiva is an international scholar, author, and lecturer, and has served as the director of the Research Foundation for Science Technology and Natural Resource Policy in India since 1982.



Diversity vs. Monoculture

Corporate globalization embraces exclusivist monocultural modes of thinking—the belief in the necessary dominance of one species, one race, one economy, one religion. This monoculturalism is leading to the destruction of resources; the creation of monopolies over land, biodiversity, water, and food; the deepening of poverty and the exclusion of millions from their livelihoods and economic security; and the destruction of democracy, peace, and cultural diversity. It creates a negative system that provides short-run benefits to just a few. Monocultures are the result of exclusion, intolerance, and domination, and they support exclusion, intolerance, and domination. Their very presence indicates some dominant group or species and experienced coercion and loss of freedom.

The Earth Democracy Movement counters the spread of monoculturalism by transforming our minds and actions, liberating us from this dominant pattern of thought. Earth democracy recontextualises human beings as one member of the earth family (*Vasudhaiva Kutumbham*). When the intrinsic worth and value of every life form and even human is recognized, biological diversity and cultural diversity flourish.

By replacing monocultures with diverse cultures, and replacing one-dimensional systems with multi-dimensional ones, the economics of scarcity can be replaced by the economy of mutually-shared abundance, the guaranteed provision of basic needs, and access to vital resources. Reembedding humans in the ecological matrix of biological and cultural diversity reopens spaces for sustainability, justice, and peace by reorganizing relationships. It also restructures constellations of power, revitalizing freedom and democracy. Gandhi's concept of *Swadeshi*—of economic freedom and economic democracy—is at the core of this vision.

The Excluded Middle

Corporate globalization promotes the formation of monocultural thinking by advocating the logic of

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exclusion, of apartheid, of “us” and “them,” of either/or. It polarizes societies and species into two camps, ignoring continuities, excluding the middle. It creates divisions and exclusions that pit the economy against ecology, development against environment, people against the planet, and people against one another in a new culture of hate.

Earth democracy fights against this polarization by reaffirming the middle that polarization excludes. We affirm the logic of “both/and,” the logic of inclusion. Diversity and multifunctionality reside in the included middle; the middle is also where creativity flourishes. By embracing the included middle, Earth democracy transcends the false polarization of wild vs cultivated, nature vs culture, or even the false clash of cultures. It allows for the forest farm and the farmed forest; it recognizes that biodiversity can be preserved and also support human needs.

By embracing the logic of inclusion, Earth democracy enables us to make the mind shifts that are conducive to our meeting our needs without destroying other species. In the included middle, we can learn to improve human welfare while ensuring the welfare of all beings. This spirit of commonality is symbolized by Hindus visiting a Muslim shrine on their pilgrimage to Sabarimala, and by the Muslim singer Wasiffudin Dagar praying to the Hindu gods Durga and Shiva, keeping the ancient Dhrupad tradition alive for a composite culture. It is represented in farms rejuvenating biodiversity, and in species acting in mutuality to benefit one another. In India, we pray: “Let all beings be happy” (*“Sarve Bhavantu Sukina”*).

Earth democracy is not limited to protecting human beings who are privileged through class, race, gender, and religion, however. In fact, it shouldn’t be limited to humans as a species. It is the democracy of all life. Since other species do not vote, cannot lobby, and have no purchasing power in the marketplace, Earth democracy creates an obligation on us as humans to take their well-being into account. As His Holiness the Dalai Lama said on his sixtieth birthday,

All beings have a right to well-being and happiness. We have a duty to ensure their well-being.

This entails human responsibility as trustees and stewards of the planet, instead of condoning the current, dominant notion of ourselves as masters, controllers, and owners.

Human Rights and Responsibilities

Earth democracy puts responsibility at the core of our relationships with each other and with other species. Our rights flow from responsibility instead of the current, dominant paradigm which gives rights without responsibility and responsibility without rights. This separation of rights and responsibility is at the root of the ecological devastation and gender, racial, and class inequality we see all

around us. Corporations that earn profits from the chemical industry, or from pollution resulting from genetically altered crops do not have to bear the burden of that pollution. These social and ecological costs are externalized and born by others who are excluded from such decisions and from their benefits.

Earth democracy is based on the idea that those who pay the price for a decision should have a say in it. Since we all rely upon the earth and pay the price for its destruction, rights to natural resources are natural rights. They are not given by states, nor can they be extinguished by them or by any other human entity, including corporations or the WTO. Earth democracy opposes corporations’ current attempts to remove people’s rights to land, water, and biodiversity.

By advocating natural rights and rights based on responsibilities, Earth democracy shifts the constellation of power from corporations to people, and rebalances the role and functions of the state. Earth democracy reinterprets national sovereignty, replacing political theory based on representative democracy with one based on direct democracy. Decisions that today are made by global institutions or by centralized governments would be moved to local communities.

Earth democracy would create systems of sustainable and just economics, governed by democratic and accountable organizations. Earth democracy is about maintaining life, and a society’s natural right to maintain the conditions necessary to stay alive. It is about making decisions and protecting the freedoms related to everyday living—the food we eat, the clothes we wear, the water we drink. It is about creating a permanently vibrant democracy, combining economic with political and ecological democracy. Earth democracy is about creating real security, and hence the conditions of peace.

Under globalization, democracy even of the shallow representative kind is dying. Governments everywhere are betraying the mandates that brought them to power. They are centralizing authority and power, both by subverting democratic structures of constitutions and by promulgating ordinances that stifle civil liberties. The September 11th tragedy has become a convenient excuse for anti-human legislation worldwide. Politicians everywhere are turning to xenophobic and fundamentalist agendas and the fear they thrive on in order to gain votes. Economic decisions have been taken away from the nations who will have to endure them and are being made instead by largely unaccountable international groups such as the World Bank, the IMF, the WTO, and individual corporations. Old divisions between have and have-nots are mutating into the “live and live-nots,” as millions are robbed of their very right to stay alive. The economic apartheid between the “lives and live-nots” is being translated into what amounts to genocidal tendencies of ethnic cleansing. Democracy dies when governments no longer reflect the will of the people, but are reduced to

unilateral, unaccountable instruments of corporate rule under the constellation of corporate globalization—as the Enron and Chiquita cases make so evident.

Earth democracy is a democracy that is alive. It combats these unjust and corrupt regimes through withdrawal of consent along with peaceful, nonviolent, non-cooperation. This is a reinvention of Gandhian Satyagraha (the force of truth). Through non-cooperation is born real freedom and self rule (*Swaraj*).

One Example: The Commons

The most basic right we have as a species is survival, the right-to-life. Survival requires guaranteed access to resources. The commons have traditionally provided that guarantee by shifting rights and control of resources from corporate privatization and enclosures to the local communities who depend on them. Commons are neither the property of the state nor individuals. Commons are collectively-owned and community-managed resources and spaces such as rivers, ponds, forests, pastures, and air. While in the West most commons have been destroyed or encroached, in the South they still provide the sustenance base for millions. This shift from global markets to earth citizenship would shift the focus from the globalization to the localization of power, from corporations to citizens.

Privatization based on corporations' exclusive right to vital resources like water and control over biodiversity is an enclosure of the commons. When commons are privatized, it is referred to as an "enclosure," with reference to the "enclosure" movement of England which displaced peasants from the land and privatized it for the rich landlords and royalty to grow sheep for wool for the emerging industrial revolution. Many people who migrated to North America were refugees created by the enclosure of the commons. Resisting the privatization of biodiversity through Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs), the privatization of water through structural adjustment programs, and the corporatization of food and agriculture requires a combination of strategies at local, national, and global levels. It means a shift in the constellation of the power and rights of states, corporations, and citizens.

At the local and national levels, the recovery of the commons will mean the strengthening and assertion of local community rights and people's sovereign and natural rights to vital resources such as water and the preservation of biodiversity. This will mean reinvention of sovereignty, as well as a shift from states functioning on the doctrine of eminent domain to states functioning on the public trust doctrine.

At the global level, the recovery of the commons will require a movement of people fighting to keep the fundamental necessities for life beyond monopoly, ownership,

and commodification. This in turn would prevent the patenting of life forms and privatization of water. These principles need to be enshrined in international law and policy, and to be backed by popular democratic pressure to reform the WTO and the World Bank. A step in the right direction would be to implement the review of TRIPs (Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights), that countries of the global south are calling for, along with an exclusion

of life forms from patentability and a review of structural adjustment programs that impose export-led agricultural strategies and promote policies of water privatization. Since sovereignty, based on the doctrine of eminent domain, has become the conduit for global usurpation of communities' resources and has undermined their sovereign rights, reclaiming biodiversity and water commons must go hand in hand with reclaiming sovereignty, and redefining a new partnership between people and governments on the basis of

a public trust doctrine.

Mandates to defend water and biodiversity as commons will have democratic power and substance to the extent they recognize and strengthen local communities' rights at the global level. Global commons that are not built from, or based on the authority of, locally controlled commons would be ecologically and democratically fraudulent. The idea for global commons is merely a recognition and reinforcement of local community rights.

Conclusion

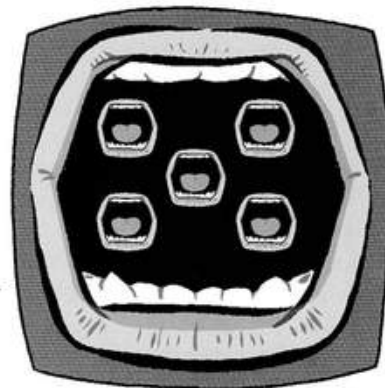
The economic, ecological, and social crises resulting from corporate globalization invite a new way of thinking and being on this planet. We can embrace a new worldview in which compassion not greed is globalized, a new consciousness in which we are not reduced to consumers of globally-traded commodities and to narrow, fragmented, one-dimensional identities based on color, religion, or ethnicity, but can instead experience our lives as diverse beings with planetary consciousnesses, mindful and aware of what our actions may cost other humans, other species, and future generations, and connected to each other and the world in the common fabric of life.

Beginning with people's everyday actions, Earth democracy offers us the potential for changing the way governments, intergovernmental organizations, and corporations operate. It creates a new paradigm for global governance while empowering local communities, and the possibility of strengthening ecological security while improving economic security. Under Earth democracy, societies would be immune to the virus of communal hatred and fear. With earth democracy, we would be able to achieve freedom with diversity, and peace with sustainability and justice. □



Same As It Never Was

Robert W. McChesney



We live in maddening times—with militarism, inequality, corruption and depoliticization rampant—but also in times rich with the opportunity for progressive politics. One need look no further than the media for Exhibit A.

In September 2002 the Federal Communications Commission commenced a formal review of the few remaining important ownership restrictions on media consolidation. If these reforms sail through we will doubtless see yet another wave of massive media consolidation.

These huge media firms are nearly all built on the backs of no-cost, government-granted monopolies, including absolutely free monopoly franchises to radio and TV frequencies, cable monopolies, and copyright monopolies. However, once they get their way behind closed doors, they will crow that their success is due to the “free market.” And after the government has handed them the public piggy bank, they will argue, with no sense of irony or shame, that any government regulation to exact something for the public in exchange for these gifts of monopoly is onerous government regulation that violates their First Amendment rights.

The corruption of the process is palpable. If the historical pattern holds, today’s FCC members will almost certainly go on to lucrative careers for the very firms they are deregulating. Members of Congress who theoretically oversee the FCC are oblivious to the proceedings or are under the thumb of one of the super-powerful corporate media lobbies. And—surprise, surprise—none of this gets any coverage in the general news media, so 99.9 percent of Americans are clueless as to what is happening. Instead, the public has been told to sit back, shut up, and shop.

But increasingly, people understand that it is impossible to live in a just, humane, and democratic society with a media system dominated by a handful of firms dedicated to serving Wall Street and Madison Avenue. Democracy cannot survive without a democratic media system. Any social movement worth its salt must have a vision for media reform as part of its charter, because the existing media system puts massive iron walls around the area it deems the politically possible and the politically acceptable—all else is banished.

Robert W. McChesney is author of numerous books, including Our Media, Not Theirs: The Democratic Struggle Against Corporate Media (Seven Stories, 2000) with John Nichols, and co-editor of Monthly Review.

In the fall of 2002 major demonstrations against the corporate control of the media took place in Seattle and Philadelphia. In October several hundred activists and educators convened in Albuquerque to launch the Action Coalition for Media Education, a media literacy group dedicated to educating people about the effects of corporate and commercial domination in the mass media. Independent Media Centers, where progressives use the Internet to communicate alternative journalism, have blossomed across the United States since 1999. A grassroots coalition has organized to establish low-power community radio as a viable force in our media.

Nothing like this was even thinkable a decade ago. When Ed Herman and Noam Chomsky penned their opus *Manufacturing Consent* in 1988, the point was simply to help people understand the media so they could engage in intellectual self-defense. The idea of organizing to change the media was beyond the pale.

The effects of this grassroots effort to combat big media are even finding a reception among thoughtful progressive members of Congress, like Bernie Sanders, Sherrod Brown, Jesse Jackson, Jr., John Conyers, and Russ Feingold (The list would be even stronger but for the tragic death of Paul Wellstone, one of the most principled and admirable public figures of our times. Wellstone was the Senate’s leading proponent of media reform, gave the matter considerable thought, and wrote the introduction to my 2000 book on the subject—coauthored with John Nichols—*It’s the Media, Stupid!*). Each of them is committed to working on legislation to make fundamental structural reform of our media system, to blast it open to more diverse voices. Numerous policy proposals are in play to establish a well-funded, noncommercial media sector that involves no government censorship, very much in keeping with the Madisonian-Jeffersonian notion of a free press. And my experience indicates that when people have a chance to understand they can actually change the media, they find these proposals very attractive.

With war clouds hovering over our head and a news media doing its best *Pravda* impersonation, it is almost impossible to speculate about where we are heading. But I remain ever the optimist. I am convinced that if Left ideas can get a fair hearing, there is a very good chance that we will win. We will certainly do much better. And that is because progressives are the only people speaking honestly about how power works in this society. It is this commitment to democracy that explains my media activism, and my belief in its importance. □

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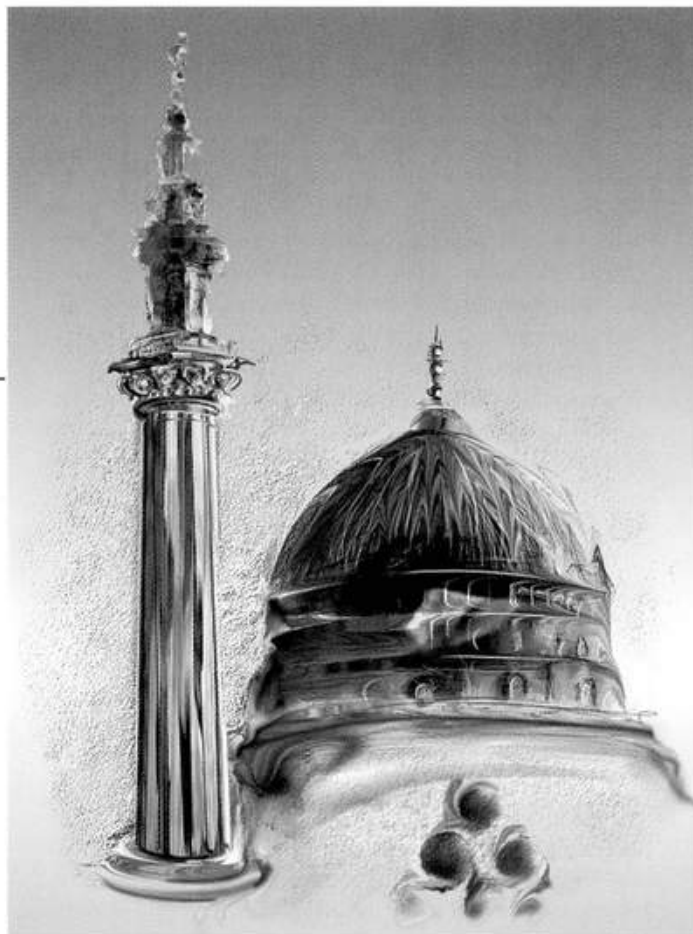
Islam and Human Rights

Abdullahi An-Na'im

As is already clear from the aftermath of the fall of the Taliban in Afghanistan, reckless wars that topple regimes while leaving the structural causes of oppression and violence intact are not the best way to respond to human rights violations, the oppression of women, terrorism, or political violence. Instead, we need to promote internal transformation within these countries' existing cultural and religious traditions, confronting underlying causes of oppression on their own grounds. This work will necessarily have to be done by internal agents of social change, acting from within their own societies and local communities. These internal actors will normally need the material and political support of external actors, but that support must be given in ways that do not undermine the credibility and legitimacy of internal transformation.

While such transformations are difficult, they happen. My own transformation began in June of 1968 when, as a bored law student in Atbara, Northern Sudan, I reluctantly agreed to accompany a friend to a public lecture by a man named Mahmoud Mohamed Taha. Little did I know then that Taha's lecture was going to forever change my life by confronting me with the contradiction between my belief as a Muslim that Shari'a (the historical formulations of the religious law of Islam) was divine and immutable, and my personal commitment to constitutional governance and respect for human rights, including equality for women and non-Muslims.

All Muslims, including Taha, believe that the Qur'an is the final and conclusive revelation of God to the whole of humanity, and that the life of the Prophet Muhammad is the ideal model for understanding and living by that message, thereby making the Sunna (Traditions of the Prophet) the second source of Islam after the Qur'an. These sources were systematically interpreted and elaborated during the first three centuries of Islam (from the seventh to the ninth centuries of the common era) into what came to be commonly known as Shari'a. Taha argued, essentially, that because Shari'a was necessarily conditioned by the specific historical context of those interpretations, it was not



immutable (unlike the Qur'an, which is immutable). Taha called for a fresh reinterpretation in light of the drastically transformed present context of Muslim societies today. Unlike other Muslim intellectuals who called for this process of creative juridical reasoning (*ijtihad*) without explaining how it might be done and to what ends, Taha developed a comprehensive methodology for the reformulation of Shari'a.

Once I heard Taha speak, I realized I could reconcile my political beliefs with my religious beliefs. That gift of personal peace and a sense of coherence prompted me to join the social movement he founded and led to propagate fundamental social and political change in Sudan. In the early 1980s, militant fundamentalists took control over the country and Taha's movement was suppressed following his trial and execution on political charges in January 1985. I left Sudan in April 1985, with the goal of publicizing Taha's methodology of internal and cross cultural discourse within and between religious and cultural traditions and applying it to questions of constitutional government, human rights, and international relations.

The success of such internal and cross-cultural discourse is dependent on several factors. For one, those in the culture being asked to accept human rights must be able to observe serious and consistent efforts to uphold human rights standards by other countries and the international community in general. Unfortunately, the tendency of Western governments to follow a double standard in condemning human rights violations by their enemies,

Abdullahi An-Na'im, Ph.D., is the Charles Howard Candler Professor of Law at Emory University.

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while condoning those of their friends, is used by the opponents of universal standards to undermine the efforts of the supporters of human rights in their own societies.

Second, the credibility and efficacy of internal discourse in support of human rights must be based on appropriate theological and cultural reasoning. In particular, the proponents of human rights should be able to demonstrate sufficient support for these rights within their own religious and cultural traditions in order to counter the charge that these are Western values being imposed on non-Western societies. This is why Taha's methodology for the re-formulation of Shari'a principles regarding women and non-Muslims in particular is so critical for the legitimacy of human rights in Islamic societies. Without that, or a similar methodology, it would be impossible to argue for the equal protection of the human rights of these groups from an Islamic perspective.

Finally, such internal discourse must be conducted by local actors who enjoy the confidence of their own communities. Along with my colleagues at the International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World, I am currently working to identify and support such local "agents of social change" who have the necessary access and credibility within their own local communities for addressing human rights issues. Another effort, a Fellowship Program in Islam and Human Rights, which is based at Emory Law School and funded by the Ford Foundation, identifies young people who have a high scholarly aptitude



and strong commitment to advocacy for social change in different parts of the Muslim world, and works with them to develop specific projects for research that can be employed in the service of positive social change in their own societies.

The fellows visit Emory University for a semester to audit relevant courses and develop the concept and methodology of their respective projects, and then return home to implement their plans.

The other element of this program consists of developing and maintaining a website that contains contact and other information about hundreds of non-governmental human rights and social justice organizations, individual worker's bibliographies, and materials that can be downloaded and printed anywhere in the world. This website will remain indefinitely as a resource for the protection and promotion of human rights in Islamic societies.

Islam, like any religious tradition, can be used to support human rights, democracy, and respect among different communities, or oppression, authoritarianism, and violence, depending on the choices and actions of Muslims everywhere. How individual Muslims and Muslim communities choose will depend on how well human rights values are portrayed by local actors within the community, as well as by how well other religious and cultural traditions model these values. There is no inherent or inevitable "clash of civilizations"; all depends on the choices we all make, everywhere, Muslims and non-Muslims alike. □

THE REVOLUTION (from page 42)

So began the Contra war, backed by Reagan's National Security Council point man Oliver North, overseen by National Security Advisor, John Poindexter, with the CIA flitting in and out depending on the whims of Congress, and a swarm of U.S. mercenaries and missionaries.

I chose the memoir for this history of Nicaragua because the literary memoir uses many of the techniques of fiction in order to tell the writer's truth, and can be written at any time and about any aspect of the writer's experience and thought. The "memoir" does not have to await the twilight of a long life—that's *memoirs*. I write the memoir recalling its influence on me, and my unfulfilled need as a young activist to read memoirs of the crucial rise and fall of the U.S. Left, 1930-1955. I write that the younger generation may have access to their immediate antecedents' inner and outer political experience and theory, and their reading of History.

I am an atheist and I often feel that Sixties' activist-veterans who embrace spirituality misidentify what was missing from our movements and lives that we must now find, locate, incorporate, and pass on. I think what we were

missing was not some outer spiritual connection but an inner life, a life in which the revolutionary vision does not demand the sacrifice of self, of feelings, of being human and all that that implies, a life that can accept imperfections. Kindness to others and to self were missing, simple as that. The memoir gives us that imperfect self back, along with the revolutionary fire. The memoir allows us not only to embrace and elaborate the Sixties' slogan, "the personal is political," but to see how the personal and political can coexist within the person of the activist. Where traditional history effaces the person, memoir brings her back, giving us models for future activism.

My vision of the future, at least in the short term, maybe even in my lifetime, is the (continued) blossoming of an international revolutionary culture based on just a few points of necessary agreement: we agree that capitalism and imperialism (now called corporate globalization) must be dismantled, and that racism, sexism, and homophobia must be eradicated. Within that context, all ideas, actions, means, art, lifestyles, and strategies, are to be respected. No vanguards, no authorities, but a community based on RESPECT, RESPECT, RESPECT, and love. □

A World Apart

Diane Mintz

For five years I have been providing enrichment opportunities—music lessons, gymnastics classes, art classes, and summer camp—the kind of activities offered as a birthright to middle-class children, to kids in a very low-income area of Richmond, California.

My journey into this kind of activism began when I started tutoring a few kids in a first-grade class, thinking that I could confine my concerns for these children to their progress in reading and writing. I was caught off balance one day when, while helping a first grader sound out the word b-e-d, I prompted him by saying: “You know, it’s what you sleep on.” He responded by telling me that he slept on the floor. For the first time, I realized that the stories these kids were struggling to read, the illustrations full of all the signs and props of the middle class—the families and homes which had before seemed so natural to me—bore little resemblance to their lives. These kids needed a different code.

This realization led me to found a nonprofit organization called YES—Youth Enrichment Strategies. Over the last five years, largely through private donations, I have provided almost six hundred children with a sleep-away summer camp experience, as well as sent many children to art, music, and gymnastics classes after school. The consistent goal has been to open the world and its opportunities to kids who have no way of knowing what the world outside of their neighborhood is like. Opening this door to the larger world of opportunity gives these kids the wherewithal to engage their own curiosity, to explore their own talents, and to discover interests that might become serious goals given the right contextual exposure.

One of YES’ achievements has been to inspire tutors to work in classrooms during the school year. Even more critical, YES has provided mentors for four children who before had no emotionally stable and trustworthy adult to whom to turn. Of particular note, in response to an appeal to churches and synagogues to “adopt” a class at the school, the Social Action Committee of Temple Isaiah of Lafayette has “adopted” a second-grade class. Three times a week, Temple members spend time in the class tutoring, providing resource materials for the teacher, developing class projects, chaperoning field trips, and more.

The mother of two grown sons and a mentor to numerous others, Diane Mintz is a lifelong activist/educator and founder and director of YES.



The issues raised by my work have been both politically and psychologically revealing. The children of South Richmond, CA, like other at-risk children, are living on a small island with no bridge in sight to connect them to the productive commerce of human endeavor, nor to their own potential. Every child needs to recognize the feeling that there is something of value to lose by choosing destructive behaviors, yet these children have no incentive to do so. One traditional response to this problem has been literacy, but the more involved I have become and the more research I read, the more it has become clear that although literacy is a critical skill, the ability to read and write is not inherently transformational for an at-risk child. There is no knowing with certainty the reasons for this, but I hazard the guess that the lack of resonance at home, the absence of reinforcing feedback and role models, contributes to the diminished ability of literacy alone to be a life-changer. I’ve also learned that in the families of children at risk, education is neither an expectation nor a value in itself, nor is it seen as a reliable tool to self-enhancement or societal advancement. Even more important, academic skill does not in itself offer the ability to dialogue with the self or with other critical people in a child’s life. Nor does academic achievement give the student the ability to deal with difficult personal issues.

For kids living in poverty, especially those who are exposed to violence and drugs early in life and thus alienated from life-enhancing values, it has been shown again and again—with both incarcerated children and adults—that experience with drama (including forensics), music, art, and nature (gardening included) opens the child to the process of building self-connection and positive role modeling. Anger, low self-esteem, and negative patterns can be addressed directly through art and gardening because there is no competition, nothing required other than authentic engagement with the self. Value is inherent. Once a child is able to identify a feeling of self-worth and confidence learned by seeing that achieving a goal is possible, then that child has something to lose, a stake in life and a belief that

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he/she belongs and can effect some control over his/her life.

Joy is not a hallmark of low-income neighborhoods. Optimism, a feeling of potential and possibility, the buzz of creativity and productivity are not what rubs off on the children of South Richmond. Their parents—most in their twenties to early thirties—are squeezed dry already. Having had nothing to lose themselves, they had children when children arrived, and continue to scrounge for survival, without plans or expectations.

When I first met the families of “my” kids, I was judgmental. I was appalled at how little they seemed to care about school attendance, about homework and grades, about the quality of their children’s nutrition. Sometimes they did not know where their children were and couldn’t remember appointments we had made. For these families, if life proceeds with relatively predictable sameness, change may not seem necessary or helpful. If nothing calls attention to itself, nothing needs fixing. In the large housing project where many of the families of Coronado School live, aspirations do not rise much higher than survival and the needs of that day. Projecting into the future toward higher goals is a middle-class preoccupation. My attempt to inject hopes and expectations into the children can come into direct conflict with their families.

To me, it seemed that, by default, these parents were raising their children to expect and hope for no more than they themselves had at that moment. Sometimes this passivity seems like neglect, as if the parents have abandoned a life of choices because they require too much energy or are too culturally remote. At other times, I intuit that such passivity is a subconscious choice, a desire that children not cross over into new territory that may be unfamiliar—even suspicious—to the parent. In all cases, I realize that these parents have little to give, often no more than the very little they themselves received.

I came to realize, however, that my knee-jerk (though silent) judgments of the families did not help the kids or me. The kids never doubted me, but to the families I was at worst a kook and at best an enigma, especially at the beginning of our relationship. I had to learn that every time I travel to be with my kids I enter into a no-man’s-land: the gap between our cultural and economic differences. I came to see that I experience an ongoing discomfort caused by the manifest differences between my economic status and that of these families, which is exacerbated by the fact that I enter their world and leave it at will. Privilege can be a painful reality. The raw feeling caused by my discomfort is the struggle from which I am never free. I pick kids up for an outing and take them home. I send them to camp and send them back home. I hold the world out to them in glimpses, a peek-a-boo look at what they can’t now have, but what I hope will allow them to dream bigger dreams.

At the same time, however, I can’t let that difference prevent my work. Too often, when we well-meaning activists

recognize the distance built into our relationship with at-risk families, we fall into the trap of too much cultural sensitivity, too much second guessing and social politeness, all of which can collude to prompt us to step aside and allow the denials and excuses and good reasons of the status quo to continue to hold sway. And stepping aside is not hard to do. Even those committed to change for the best reasons can bang into a solid wall for only so long. But I have seen repeatedly that the children themselves welcome change. They want more human connection and more life-enhancing experiences. It is necessary not to offend, not to patronize, and not to ignore those who officially care for the children. It is also of paramount importance not to give up precisely when the adults in charge make access to the children difficult while continuing to reinforce the status quo.

My experience has taught me that we can work around the built-in discomfort of economic disparity in this relationship by making and reinforcing human connections. I know I broke through the distrust of the families of my kids only when I appeared and reappeared, following the kids from home to homelessness to new home to another home. When the families saw I was committed to connection, their toleration turned to trust and even warmth. After five years, I know all the families by name, and often we are on a hug basis when we greet each other. In the beginning I spent hours and hours reminding parents by telephone to pick up their returning campers at the bus. Often they would not be there, leaving it to me and anyone I could get to help to drive the children home. Some of the children were visibly disappointed that a family member was not there to greet them, and others were already inured to such disappointments. Over the years as trust has built, responsiveness and responsibility have also grown. More and more parents wait together with me for the arrival of the bus. They tell me how excited they are to greet their campers, and we shmooze like old friends. Families welcome me into their homes and call me on the phone freely.

For the future, my goal is to grow my organization. There is only so much connecting one woman alone can do! I dream of owning a van and hiring a driver to take kids to after school music, art, and other enrichment classes, of hiring a coordinator to develop a schoolyard garden where kids could grow their own lunch food as a part of the science curriculum (this has been done successfully in many schools and is the dreamchild of Alice Waters), and of reaching more kids for summer camp as well as a year-long program to provide continuity between camp and the school year. All that takes funding, but I know I’ll get there. If the kids are willing to cross that bridge to a larger world, I will find a way to pave the road for them. □

If you would like to volunteer with the Richmond, CA, YES, please contact Diane at dimintz@pacbell.net or visit www.yes.org. To donate to YES, please send a check made out to YES and send to Diane Mintz, 1577 Solano Ave., Berkeley, CA 94707

Why Spirituality is Essential to Progressive Politics

Ana Villa-Lobos

A version of this speech was delivered at the Tikkun Campus Network founding conference in New York City, October 12, 2002.

The Left is missing the mark. Its goals—for us to be worthy stewards of the planet, to not harm each other, and to share food and other resources with those in need—reflect the ethics of the world's major religions, but the Left is reluctant to claim its own spiritual base. Progressives seeking a spiritual life must therefore seek beyond politics, where the reins of meaning have been left in the hands of fundamentalists who sometimes contort and misuse religion for less-than-compassionate aims (for example by citing Exod. 21:24, “eye for an eye,” to justify the death penalty, or misinterpreting “jihad” to justify terrorism).

But far more grievously, the Left tends to pursue its spiritual goals through means that undermine their goodness. In advocating for the oppressed, the Left too often tries to debase the oppressors by showing everyone how evil and inhuman they are—as if derision will change the primary social patterns that drive them to unkindness. This scapegoating lets the system off easy as we shift attention away from the underlying conditions that cause people to act in unloving ways and put all the blame on those who do. It is a war model of social change rather than a spiritual one, taking sides against a perceived enemy, and even when we invoke this model in the name of justice and peace, antagonisms continue and violence escalates. And we wonder why.

There have been exceptions, movements on the Left that were not enemy-driven. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s civil rights campaign exemplified spiritual activism in its recognition of the divine potential of both the oppressor and oppressed. Dr. King didn't fight against anyone for the rights of blacks. As he championed human dignity, he was simultaneously fighting for the spirituality of whites, for people of all colors to live up to the Judeo-Christian principle of loving one's neighbor as oneself. Elevating blacks meant elevating everyone. Likewise, Nelson Mandela

focused his anti-Apartheid campaign on recognizing South African whites as precious and created in the image of God, and in so doing, whites were able to let down their guard, to see blacks as human beings, and to vote in droves for a racially inclusive policy. It also helped Mandela's own people to spiritually heal and begin to see “the others” as part of themselves, thus breaking the vicious cycle of fear that fortified the Apartheid regime.

In our activism work, we need to align with Mandela and King if we wish to renew the loving core of the Left. This is particularly crucial for our efforts in Israel and Palestine, where the two sides are so polarized and blinded by fear that they can no longer see one another as human beings. Their fear is totally understandable. It's no wonder that Palestinians are terrified of Israelis. Their civilian populations are bombed in order to kill one terrorist. Their homes are searched at the whim of the Israeli state and their private property destroyed. Their families are shot at while harvesting Palestinian olives within firing range of Jewish settlements. Whole city populations are imprisoned in their own homes, free to buy bread or go to work or visit a neighbor only at the discretion of occupying Israeli soldiers—juvenile males who often act in degrading, defiling ways toward them. It makes sense that they hate and fear the Israelis based on that limited exposure.

Likewise, it makes sense that Israelis hate and fear the Palestinians. As Jews fled the Nazi furnaces and sought refuge in their ancient homeland, Arab Palestinians lobbied Britain to change its immigration policies in the region to exclude Jews, and refugee ships were turned away. When the U.N. partitioned the British-held territory into two states—one primarily Arab, one primarily Jewish—the new nation of Israel was immediately attacked by five neighboring Arab countries in an attempt to destroy it. More recently, Israel has been bombarded by a rein of terror, grandmothers intentionally killed while buying ice cream for their grandchildren, teens dying while they dance. And in the newspapers, Israelis read about Palestinians heralding the suicide bombers as martyrs, and publicly cheering each new incident of Jewish carnage. Israelis, who have almost no human contact with Palestinians to balance these horrifying images, are understandably afraid of their Arab cousins.

Each side, then, has experienced unimaginable pain and



Ana Villa-Lobos is a doctoral student in sociology at U.C. Berkeley, and a Fellow at the Berkeley Center for the Development of Peace and Well-Being. She is co-chair of the Tikkun Campus Network, and founding member of Berkeley Tikkun.

Act Now

fear, and if they could only recognize and identify with the tremendous suffering of the other, it might trigger a compassionate moment, a breakthrough, an “Aha, you’re also scared, just like me. You’re also worried about being bombed as you walk to the store. I know exactly how horrible that is. I feel for you.” But rather than uniting in their shared understanding of life under threat, they don’t comprehend why the other is behaving in such a way, nor recognize the other’s basic legitimacy as a people. Instead, they see in the other only a perpetrator of unfathomable, inhuman acts of cruelty.

The Palestinians and Israelis have a monumental spiritual challenge before them: to more truly see the other, to have compassion for a seeming aggressor who is likewise living in daily apprehension of death, and to break their own side of the vicious cycle of fear and violence. The only way we in America can support them in rising to a task of such enormity is to ourselves see both sides as fully human, as deserving of love and care, as similarly beautiful beings making terrible, murderous mistakes because they are trying to defend themselves, and trapped under a veil of quite understandable fear.

We on the Left far too often fail to help in this regard. Of course we decry it when racists regard all Arabs as anti-Semites or terrorists, but rather than balance this atrocity with love, we balance it with hate; only in the Left’s case, this hate is for the Israelis (as if the antidote for hate were to equally distribute it). This in no way makes us balancers or a counterpoint to the Right. In fact, when the Left casts all of Israel as an oppressive, illegitimate monster because of its government’s policy of occupation, and when we fail to recognize and have compassion for the emotional-historical context which drives this policy, we are only perpetuating the very fear, inhumanity, and lack of understanding that fuels the cycle of othering we are hoping so much to break.

But we persist, in part because of a superiority complex. As peace-lovers, we think we’re loving—they’re hateful. We’re good—they’re bad. The Green Party is awesome—Republicans suck. Certainly we recognize the Right dehumanizes people, including immigrants, homosexuals, single mothers, and people without medical insurance. But what we usually don’t see is that the Left dehumanizes, too. We dehumanize the Right. We dehumanize the Israelis who back the Occupation by failing to see the fear that drives them. We dehumanize people who wield power in what we see as unloving ways, without giving a damn about their pain, fear, or ultimate welfare.

A spiritual politics that recognizes the full humanity not only of the obviously oppressed, but also of the apparent oppressor, is hard to come by in our polarized world. Yet it is only through such a compassionate worldview that we can ever hope to heal the system as a whole, rather than just attending to the needs of our chosen beneficiaries. Mandela’s methods worked precisely because he chose everyone in the South African conflict. While he boldly and unapologetically criticized the wrongs done, he didn’t hate his enemy as a way

to extinguish hate. He didn’t capitulate to “way of the world” tactics of withholding love from those who withheld love from him. He held to a spiritual vision of the seeming oppressor.

Of course we’d rather limit our compassionate alliance to the “good guys,” the victims, the blatantly oppressed, since identifying with that aspect of our own selves is so much more palatable. Who wants to love and recognize the humanity of “the bad guys,” particularly when the bad guys are the ones with the most power? But whomever we see as the enemy, no matter how imbalanced the power equation is in their favor, that is precisely the person we must try to love and understand. Like us, our perceived enemy is petrified. Like us, that person does not feel wholly safe or recognized or loved. And we will never heal this state of affairs by cutting them off from us in contempt.

“Us versus them” is a comforting game that gives us psychological distance from those we fear, but it is not a system-altering game. It’s the game that’s already out there, etched into our social institutions. It’s the game we learn by watching TV and getting picked on at the playground and trying to “be somebody” in a competitive market. But it’s a game that no matter how good we are at as progressive activists, if we play it, we’ve already lost. If we play it, we aren’t offering an alternative to the current war-producing system; we’re reinforcing it. And lives are lost everyday because we don’t recognize this and stop it.

We can no longer afford the comfort of saying the Palestinian child is “us,” and the Israeli soldier who kills him is “them.” We can no longer say the Israeli girl blown up on the bus is “us,” but the Hamas terrorist and his supporters are “them.” We can’t say we are the hurt ones and they are the ones who inflict hurt. We are all oppressed and we are all oppressors. We need to work together, drawing on the totality of our human ingenuity, to remake the system that divides us and get it better this time.

It’s easy to be cynical and think, “Yeah right, nice idea, but it’s utopian. We can’t really change things. Every action we take toward a more loving society gets swallowed up by some gigantic social-political machine.”

It’s important in this case to look at history:

In the 1940s, most East Indians had only sticks and stones against the English Empire’s massive military power which had been colonizing them for years in what must have felt like a permanent state of oppression. It was “utopian” for the Indian population to imagine that the actions of the weak could ever lead to the withdrawal of the powerful.

In the 1950s United States under Jim Crow laws, with segregated social institutions, in the face of cross-burnings, lynchings, and other violence, in a world where whites held all the cards, American blacks had no reason whatsoever to believe in the possibility of change.

In the 1980s, South African blacks under Apartheid were caught in a huge, seemingly intractable system of oppression, segregated townships, and rampant social and

political inequality. They had no voice, no vote, and they would have been entirely justified in thinking the system was just too big, and their actions would always be futile in effecting real change.

Thank God someone thought otherwise in each of these historical moments. Thank God someone was an idiot and had hope despite it all, and then clung to that hope—through failures and prison sentences and assassinations—until it became a reality. Thank God someone was able to overcome the common cynicism and despair and imagine the more loving world that could be. But it's very, very tough to imagine that world in the face of a media barrage of counter-images, day after day.

And that's why we need each other to walk this path. We need another image in our heads and hearts, and we need help maintaining it. It's almost impossible for one person alone to overcome a lifetime of social programming that says nothing can change, we're stuck forever with escalating hate and fear, and the only way to survive is to conquer enemies. Dominate, prevail, show everyone you're better than they are, and you're playing it right. But question the competitive, enemy-based foundation on which the institutions of human life are currently constructed, and you're not just radical, you're a heretic. You're a blasphemer. You're crazy!

We need to be crazy together so we're not the only ones

WHERE THE HEART TAKES YOU *(from page 34)*

cross the boundaries of acceptable relationship, cross the boundaries of acceptable love; you begin to be able to recognize in others the Spirit of God or Allah or Jesus or Buddha or Being or Love, whatever word you choose; you become able to see, to really see into the hearts of people and begin the journey there.

The heart is a rough and tumble place to tread. One of the things I have realized this past year as we have become ever more embroiled in conflict at home and abroad, is my capacity for deep, seething hatred. It's frightening. At TIKKUN we are on the receiving end of some cruel and vitriolic attacks—emails, phone calls, death threats—and it's easy to let the hatred draw me into the darkest of places, and to feel a kind of vengeful rage at virtual strangers. Being in such close contact with this rage has given me a much greater understanding of how ordinary people might be drawn into extraordinary conflicts. But it has also given me a deep desire to learn to transcend this all-too-human capacity for hatred, to find a way to fortify the heart, instead of an army, for battle. It's a difficult thing to learn and I've nowhere near mastered it.

But our ability to love people, to imagine—and actually feel—their suffering, is an immensely powerful tool in the struggle for social justice. Particularly in the political world we now find ourselves in, where people everywhere will try to defeat us with facts and figures, we need to remind ourselves that compassion has just as much a place in public

saying the emperor has no clothes, so we can be a movement of heretics questioning not the love in each other's hearts, but the institutions that support that love's denial. Our activist communities should ideally be arenas for us to try on fool's clothing, to practice being vulnerable rather than defensive, practice embarrassing ourselves rather than playing it cool, and get used to bucking pessimism as we dare to envision "the impossible"—a more just and loving world. Mandela dared imagine this "impossible" better world. King and Gandhi dared. The Israelites enslaved in ancient Egypt dared.

"Realism" has never broken the chains of oppression; hope has. But in exchange, hope asks a lot of us. It asks us to defy our conditioning, to defy most of what we've learned about how reality works, and to create a world in which all life is sacred, not just the people we happen to agree with. It asks us to love and trust again, like we haven't since childhood. It asks us to thaw six billion hearts from the safety we've found by giving up hope.

That's a big job and we're just little people who would probably rather wait for someone else to come along and fix things. But at every epoch in history when society has changed for the better, it's because little people like you and me noticed the world was drowning, looked around reluctantly to see if someone else would save it, and finally realized, "We're it." □

discourse. Of course we need to inform ourselves and engage in difficult dialogue about the political realities facing us, but the impulse toward compassion is one that we can trust and continuously draw strength from as we navigate through life's difficulties.

Unfortunately, we have a tendency to extend our compassion everywhere but inward. We idolize people like Martin Luther King Jr. or Gandhi, and assume that it takes people like that to make any "real" changes in the world. But Gandhi himself, towards the end of his life, said "I have never been in such darkness as I am in today.... It is due to my limitations. My faith in nonviolence has never burned brighter and yet I feel that there is something wanting in my technique." These folks were imperfect people like you and me. Gandhi was capable of great power precisely because he was so deeply human.

As a community, we can carry each other along, learn from each other, teach each other, and cultivate the humanity we wish to manifest in the world. That is the process we've begun in the Tikkun Community and I invite you to join us.

As individuals, we must remember that we do not need to be perfect before we begin to act. Speak your mind, even if you're quivering in your boots. Speak your heart, even if it hurts and makes you vulnerable. Inspiration comes from seeing a part of yourself manifest in the world. Seek out that which inspires you; your longing has something important to teach you. Let it crack your heart wide open and see where it takes you. □

Homo Imaginus and the Erotics of Imagination

Mordechai Gafni

The Shechinah is the feminine Divine. Her name means Indwelling Presence, "the one who dwells in you." She is presence, poetry, passion. She is the sustaining God force which runs through and wombs the world. She is the underlying erotic, sensual, and loving force that knows our name and nurtures all being.

Shechinah captures an experience, a way of being in the world, for which we do not yet have an English word. For this is a way of being which we in the West are hard pressed to articulate. It is the experience of waking up in the morning full of utter joy for the arrival of the day. It is weeping over the splendor of the sunset or the scent of the ocean or the fragility of a newborn. It is a way of living in love.

Our best move in the English language is to turn towards the term Plato introduced in the *Symposium*: Eros. For Plato "eros" is "love plus." It is precisely the kind of fully charged life experience which is evoked by the Hebrew term Shechinah.

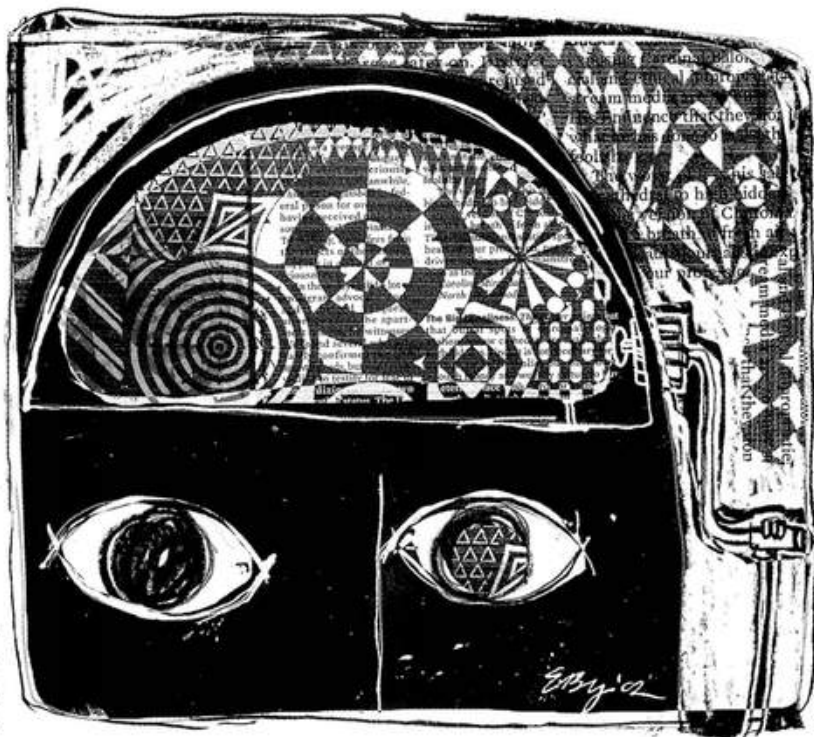
But over time the term "eros" has been so narrowed and limited that it has lost most of its original intention. Usually when we hear the word "erotic" it evokes only the sexual. And although the sexual is a part of eros, it is only a limited part. This narrowing of a term is an expression of a spiritual dynamic which the kabbalists called the exile of the Shechinah.

Now open your hearts and minds to hear the next sentence.

The exile of the Shechinah means no less than the exile of the erotic.

But where did it go? To where was eros exiled? The answer is that the exile of the Shechinah is the exile of the erotic into the sexual. That is to say, when the only place you access the core qualities of eros is in the sexual, then eros, or

Rebbe Mordechai (Marc) Gafni is the head of Bayit Chadash, a spiritual think tank and Wisdom School in Israel. He is the author of several volumes of new Jewish thought.



*The goal of life is to live erotically
in all facets of being.*

the Shechinah, is in exile. When intense desire is a feeling you touch only before exploding in orgasm, then your life is poor indeed. The Shechinah is exiled. Eros has fallen.

Eros Expanded

The redemption of the Shechinah from exile will come when we learn how to re-expand eros from the narrow confines of the sexual back into the broad expanse of living. The goal of life is to live erotically in all facets of being.

One of the core qualities of the erotic is imagination. The Zohar, magnum opus of Hebrew mysticism, says it explicitly in many places "Shechinah is imagination."

In popular understanding, the imagination is implicitly considered to be "unreal." Indeed "unreal" and "imaginary" are virtually synonyms in common usage. To undermine the reality of an antagonist's claim we say it is "a figment of his imagination." In marked contrast, the Hebrew mystics held imagination to be very real. Indeed, it would not be unfair to say that they considered imagination to be "realer than real."

The power of the imagination is its ability to give form to the deep truths and visions of the inner divine realm. Imagination gives expression to the higher visions of reality which derive from our divine selves. Language and rational thinking are generally unable to access this higher truth. The imagination is our prophet, bringing us the word of the divine that speaks both through us and from beyond us. We imagine God. That is what biblical mystic Hosea meant

when he exclaimed the words of God, "By the hands of my prophets I [God] am imagined."

But why don't I feel like such a prophet, handily imagining God? Why don't we have access to this experience of prophecy? Because the Shechinah is in exile. The erotics of imagination has been exiled into the sexual.

The simplest evidence of this exile is that we all have no problem accessing the power of imagination in the sexual. But we have enormous difficulty accessing that same faculty of erotic imagination, not only in a non-sexual visualization, but in all of our non-sexual lives. What that means is that this core erotic quality of imagination no longer plays in all the arenas of our lives where she is so desperately needed. For it is imagination which allows us to access the wisdom and vision we need to re-chart our lives.

This exile of the erotic Shechinah power of imagination is reflected both in our language as well as our most intimate experience. Our English word "fantasy" derives from the Greek word *phantasi*, a verb that means "to make visible, to reveal." For the ancient Greeks, this fantasizing had nothing to do with sex. It meant "making visible—through imagining—the world of the gods," the realm of pure spirit and forms.

So why is it that in modern usage the word "fantasy" first and foremost conjures up images of the sexual? We very rarely talk about economic, political, or social fantasies. We don't even talk about food fantasies. We do talk about sexual fantasy ... all the time. Just like the adjective "erotic,"

the verb "fantasize" has found itself relegated to the narrow confines of the merely sexual. The reason is clear. In modernity we have lost much of our ability to make visible, to imagine, the deeper visions of the spirit. It is mainly in the sexual where we use imagination to conjure up images of that which is hidden or not revealed. The limiting of erotic imagination to the sexual is the exile of the Shechinah.

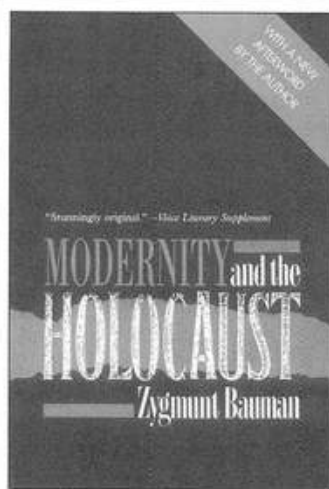
*In modernity we
have lost much of
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imagine the
deeper visions of
the spirit.*

Tragic Mirrors of Desire

Fantasy and imagination hold the keys to many gates, not least of which is the gateway to our freedom.

A story of the wisdom masters suggests that it was the erotic imagination of the Hebrew women in Egypt that set into motion the process of their liberation from slavery.

Pharaoh had insisted that the male slaves sleep in the fields separated from their wives. The women, in defiance of the Pharaonic decree, visited their men in the fields.



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Their men, though, wilting under the oppression of slavery, had lost their potency. In response, the women found tools to evoke their men's desire—mirrors. With these they engaged the men's imagination, even when their bodies would not respond. The women, holding the mirrors in ways that reflected their physical beauty, would tease the men saying, "Look, I am more beautiful than you."

The mirror enhances sexual play because it amplifies the quality of imagination. As with the imagination, the mirror offers us an image, allowing us to see in a way that was previously hidden. Hold a mirror in front of you and you can suddenly see behind you. A rear view mirror is so helpful precisely because it shows you something your normal eyes cannot see. Or position a mirror at a sharp curve in a road and you can suddenly see around the bend, catching a glimpse of something to come that otherwise would have been hidden.

In the women's mirrors of imagination the men were able to reclaim vision, to see the lost images of their women's sexual beauty which the oppressive burden of slavery had rendered invisible. Surprisingly, however, it was not primarily their own bodies that the women showed the men; instead, they reflected the men's bodies back at themselves, taunting them to see their own beauty. "Look I am more beautiful than you." Mirrors are a tool of imagination because they allow us to see images of ourselves that would otherwise be inaccessible.

According to one biblical tradition, this erotic play of the mirrors was itself the beginning of the liberation. In erotic play the imagination is engaged. Once the women taught the men how to re-access their imagination, images of freedom were not long in following. The Exodus from slavery became just a matter of time.

A sexually erotic imagination was thus the model and catalyst for a politically erotic imagination. About this the Talmud writes, "In the merit of the righteous women of the generation, the Hebrews were redeemed from Egypt!" When we think of a typical group of "righteous" women, rarely do we imagine troops of women with sexual paraphernalia going to seduce their men in the fields. But that is what Talmud tells us. The fact that our idea of righteousness is at odds with the sexual is yet another sad example of the Shechinah's exile.

Crisis of Imagination

The greatest crisis of our lives is neither economic, intellectual, nor even what we usually call religious. It is a crisis of imagination. We get stuck on our paths because we are unable to re-imagine our lives differently than they are

right now. We hold on desperately to the status quo, afraid that if we let go, we will be swept away by the torrential undercurrents of our emptiness.

The most important thing in the world, implies wisdom master Nachman of Bratzlav, is to be willing to give up who you are for who you might become. He calls this process the giving up of *pnimi*. *Pnimi* literally means "what is within," but for Nachman it means the old, familiar thing that comforts even when it no longer serves. Nachman calls on us to give this up to reach for *makkif*, that which is

beyond you which you can only reach if you are willing to take a leap into the abyss. Find your risk and you will find your self. Sometimes that means leaving your home and traveling to strange lands. Both the biblical Abraham and the Buddha do this quite literally. But for the kabbalist the true journey does not require dramatic breaks with past and home. It is rather a journey of the imagination.

In the simple and literal meaning of the biblical text, Abraham's command is *Lech lecha* ... "Go forth from your land, your birth place and your

father's house." Interpreted by the Zohar, "*lech lecha*," a reflexive formulation that can be translated literally (though not in a way that is idiomatically correct) as "walk your walk," or alternatively as "Go to your self" is taken to mean not "Go forth," but "Go to yourself." For the kabbalist this means more than the mere quieting of the mind. The journey Abraham—and we—must take is inwards, and the vehicle is the imagination. For imagination is the tool that allows us to image a future radically different from the past or even the present. That is exactly what Abraham was called to do—to leave behind all of his yesterdays and todays to leap into an unknown tomorrow.

It is only in the fantasy of re-imagining that we can change our reality. It is only from this inside place that we can truly change our outside. The path of true wisdom is not necessarily to quit your job, leave your home, and travel across the country. Often such a radical break is a failure rather than a fulfillment of imagination. True wisdom is to change your life from where you are, through the power of imagination.

For virtually every crisis at its core is a failure of imagination. Without leaps of imagination, no growth is possible and the spirit petrifies in its old frozen masks.

Free to Dream, Dream to Free

Erotic imagination is about the ability to see beyond the status quo. This is the deep intent of a second group of wisdom masters who also credit the liberation from Egypt to the power of imagination.

When we think of a typical group of "righteous" women, rarely do we imagine troops of women with sexual paraphernalia going to seduce their men in the fields.

The great Exodus began with a man who had a dream. He was a man by the name of Nun, a Hebrew slave under Egyptian rule. One morning he awoke, stunned by his night imaginings. He had dreamed what seemed to be the unimaginable: He saw a time when the Hebrews were free! More than free, they were courageous warriors responsible for the dignity of their own destiny. News of the dream spread. It is said that the hope enflamed by this vision unleashed the dynamics of revolution which ultimately led to freedom.

Although it would take many years for it to become real in the world of *realpolitik*, this dream was the true beginning of the Exodus. Slavery ends when we can re-imagine ourselves as free people. Nun was none other than the father of Joshua, successor to Moses, who led the people into the Promised Land. All freedom begins with our willingness to stand and say, "I have a dream!" And even if we don't get to the Promised Land, we may well set into motion currents of redemption that will eventually heal our world. If we don't get there, our children will. Nun's entire generation died before reaching Canaan. Yet all of his grandchildren grew up in the Promised Land.

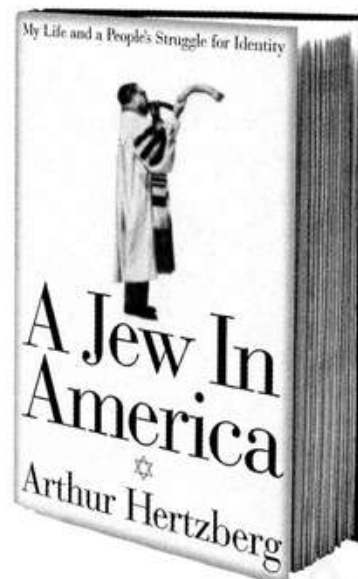
The Possibility of Possibility

Prophet of imagination Nikos Kazantzakis writes, "You have your brush and your colors, paint paradise and in you go." This is a near perfect description of the spirit that animates the biblical myth ritual that yearly celebrates the Exodus from Egypt. Every year on the anniversary of the Hebrew Exodus, people gather for a uniquely dramatic biblical myth ritual, Passover. Unlike the Fourth of July or other freedom anniversaries, it revolves not around commemoration but imagination.

The guiding principle of the holiday is, "Every person is obligated to see him/her self as if they left Egypt." This Talmudic epigram, the guiding mantra of the ritual, is explained by the kabbalists as an invitation to personal re-imagining of the most fantastic kind. You are in Egypt—your own personal Egypt. Egypt, *mitzrayim* in Hebrew, literally means "the narrow places," the constricted passageway of our life's flow. Egypt—kabbalistically said to incarnate the throat—symbolizes all the words that remain stuck in our throats; the words we never speak. The stories of our lives that remain un-lived, unsung, unimagined.

We are slaves. Slavery for the kabbalist is primarily a crisis of imagination. Consequently, the healing of slavery is a ritual of imagination. For an entire evening, we become dramatists, choreographers, and inspired actors. We re-imagine our lives as the first step on our path to freedom. As George Bernard Shaw reminds us, "Imagination is the beginning of creation. You imagine what you desire; you will what you imagine; and at last you create what you will."

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God is the possibility of possibility—limitless imagination. Michael Lerner was correct in his work *Jewish Renewal* when he identified this notion as essential to the Hebrew understanding of the divine. The first of the Ten Commandments is “I am God.” When this God is asked to identify himself, He responds, “I will be what I will be.” That is, “You cannot capture me in the frozen image of any time or place. To do so would be idolatry and would destroy me.” We are commanded against idolatry precisely because idolatry is the freezing of God in a static image, a violation of the imagination, a limiting of possibility.

Homo Imaginus

Bachelard was right when he wrote of the imagination, “More than any other power it is what distinguishes the human psyche.” Or listen to the twentieth century prophet of eros, Norman O. Brown: “Man makes himself, his own body, in the symbolic freedom of the imagination. The Eternal Body of Man is the Imagination.” Hebrew mystical master Nachman of Bratzlav writes: “It is for this reason that man was called Adam: He is formed of *adama*, the dust of the physical, yet he can ascend above the material world through the use of his imagination and reach the level of prophecy.” The Hebrew word “I will imagine” is *adameh*.

For Nachman, the core human movement which gives birth to our spirit is the evolution (within the same root structure) from *adama* to *adameh*. *Adamah* is ground, earth, Gaia. Yet it can also be read as *adameh*, “I will imagine.” Man emerges from Nature to live what philosopher Joseph Soloveitchik called “a fantasy-aroused existence.”

Imagination is not a detail of our lives, nor merely a methodological tool. It is the very essence of who we are. We generally regard ourselves as thinking animals, *homo sapiens*. Descartes’ “I think, therefore I am” is hardwired into our cultural genes. Yet, biblical myth offers an alternative understanding of the concept of “humanness.” The closest Hebrew word to the English “human” or the Latin “*homo*” is “*adam*.” The word “*Adam*” derives from the Hebrew root meaning imagination (*d'mayon*). The stunning implication is that the human being is not primarily *homo sapiens*, but what I will call “*homo imagus*.”

At the very dawn of human existence, man is described as being created in the divine image. “Divine image” does not mean a fixed and idolatrous copy of divinity. God has no fixed form. God is, instead, the possibility of possibility. Consequently, the human being’s creation in the divine image needs to be understood in two ways. First, humanity is not so much “made in God’s image” as we are “made in God’s imagination,” a product of the “divine fantasy.”

Second, as human beings we ourselves participate in divine imagination—*homo imagus*.

How different is this understanding from the bleak depression of modern existential thinking! Our longing for the good is dismissed by Sartre as a “useless passion.” Human imagining, writes Camus, condemns us to misery, for it is absurd. We long for goodness, beauty, and kindness in a world perpetually marred by ugliness, evil, and injustice.

But for the biblical mystic, our erotic imaginings of a world of justice and peace marks the immanence of God in our lives. Our creative discontent, that which drives us to imagine an alternative reality, is the image/imagination of God beating in our breast. The cosmos is pregnant with hints that guide our imaginings. We are called to heal the world in the image of our most beautiful imaginings. The eros of imagination is the elixir of God running through the universe.

Creating God

Imagination is powerful. Very powerful. “Think good and it will be good,” wrote Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the last master of Chabad mysticism. This is true not merely because of the psychological power of positive thinking, but also because every imagining gives birth to something real that eventually manifests itself in the universe.

Imagination is transformative not only on the human plane; it has a powerful effect on the divine scale as well. Kabbalists teach that each dimension of divinity, known as a *sefirah* in Kabbalah, has a color which incarnates it. By ecstatically imagining the colors of the sefirot and combining them according to the appropriate mystical instructions, one can actually have an impact on the inner workings of the divine force.

The Zohar goes further in audacious formulations which, upon first reading, describe man creating God in his image—that is to say, in his imagination. Unlike the philosopher Feuerbach, who called human imaginings of God a mere projection, for the Zohar such imagination simply reinforces the substantive reality of God. Or to put it slightly differently, while there is a limited truth in saying that God is a face of human imagination, we need to remember that imagination is a face of God.

Imagination is not childish fancy. It is the spiritual reality called forth by the sacred child within. The God we do not create doesn’t exist. Yes, there is a divine force that exists beyond us. Yet there is also a powerfully manifest current of divinity that is nourished by our being. We are the erotic mirrors of God. The first string of letters in the bible, “*bereshit bara elokim*”... can be re-read as “*b’roshi tbara elokim*”—in my mind God is created. □



The Journey Home

Authentic Jewish Spirituality

Lawrence A. Hoffman

Jewish spirituality? What's that!?" too many Jews still say to me. "Spirituality is Christian, not Jewish. *Jewish spirituality* is a contradiction in terms."

Here we are in the midst of only the third Great Religious Awakening in all of American history, an era with spirituality at its very center, a time when people are leaving organized religion in droves precisely because they do not find it spiritually satisfying—and Jews who care deeply for Jewish continuity, or who speak glowingly of a Jewish renaissance, deny the very idea that Judaism has the spirituality that millions seek. Why? Can it really be that Judaism is bereft of spiritual insight? Of course not. If spirituality is the practice of living self-consciously and mindfully, based on a unique perspective on the universe, then, clearly, Judaism—like any of the world's religions—has the capacity for spirituality. If we can't find spirituality in Judaism, it might be because we have not yet learned how to recognize Jewish spirituality when we see it.

To begin to see Jewish spirituality, we must first look at the language we use for spirituality. Over its two thousand year history as the dominant force in Western civilization, Christianity virtually formulated the English language. Almost every English word with religious significance sounds Christian at first: salvation and resurrection, for instance. But salvation (or its synonym, "deliverance") is just Hebrew for the biblical *yeshuah* and resurrection (in Hebrew *techiyat hametim*) is a cardinal theological precept for the Rabbis. To find Jewish spirituality we must act like anthropologists in the strange culture of Judaism. Like anthropologists looking for particular kinship relations in a community, we are looking for something—spirituality—which is present in Judaism, but which Jewish sources rarely discuss directly.

Satisfying the Anthropologist

In our investigation, we must be careful to avoid two particular errors: "Satisfying the Anthropologist" and "Going Native." A cartoon I have posted on my office door

Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman, professor of Liturgy at the Hebrew Union College, is the author of *The Journey Home: Discovering The Deep Spiritual Wisdom of the Jewish Tradition* (Beacon Press, 2002) and *The Way Into Jewish Prayer* (Jewish Lights, 2000).



If we can't find spirituality in Judaism, it might be because we have not yet learned how to recognize Jewish spirituality when we see it.

pokes fun at the danger of Satisfying the Anthropologist. It pictures jungle natives in a thatched hut frantically stowing away their television set and stereo system, with the warning, "Quick! Get these out of sight; the anthropologists are coming." When we look to find something in cultures foreign to us, we all too often come with our own ideas in mind about what we will find. The cartoon spoofs the idea we have that people living in thatched huts do not participate in the global media.

In a more subtle way, we also need to beware of Satisfying the Anthropologist with the very language we use to inquire into or describe the subject of our investigations. For example, anthropologists of a particular community might be interested in family relationships, which they have learned to call kinship systems, a term the members of that community do not know. So the field workers ask such

things as, Why do people call their mother's sister's daughter their "sister" not "cousin"? Imagine, however, some crafty native informants who have gotten hold of an anthropology textbook, figure out what the anthropologists want, and decide to save their questioners a lot of trouble, by just answering right away, "Oh, the kinship system; we are matrilinear." Unwary anthropologists would write that down at their peril, even if it were true. They would have translated the culture in question into proper scientific categories, but missed the whole point of what they were there to find out: how these people may be similar to others, but still be special in their own way.

Going Native

The reverse of this problem is Going Native. Going Native happens when we record or repeat what we observe in another culture without relating what we observe to our own or other cultures. For example, when anthropologists "Go Native" they record the usual native practices, stories, and rituals but decide not to translate these back into scientific categories at all. The outcome would be a book transcribing exactly what the anthropologists were told, no less and no more. Such a book would miss the point of the study, capturing what natives think they are doing but never conceptualizing it in a way that is useful to people other than the natives.

Studying Judaism is like visiting a far-off society whose native informants are the Rabbis, and whose testimony about what Jews think and do is available in the books those rabbis wrote. We want to ask questions of their writings to elicit what spirituality we find there. But beware! If we limit ourselves to the language of modern spiritual jargon, we may satisfy the spiritual anthropologist within us, but not learn anything valuable about the way the rabbis really thought; and if we just reiterate the stock phrases that come naturally to the native lips of the Jewish authors, even though we will be replicating authentically medieval or ancient sentences, we will not be coming to terms with what those sentences mean for our own lives today.

The pop spirituality market is filled with such translations of Jewish spiritual masters, as if simple translations of other people's recorded experience were sufficient to allow us to share that experience. Were that the case, we would all know the wonders of falling in love just by reading romance novels, and we could experience financial success by reading biographies of people who made millions. Alas, the world doesn't work that way. That is the problem of Going Native. It is not uninteresting to hear the natives talk; it is just unsatisfying. In our search for spirituality, we should demand intellectual rigor, rooted in authentic Jewish sources and aptly translated into our own terms.

Modes of Jewish Spirituality

We will find many versions of Jewish spirituality in our search, because spirituality is not like the Masoretic text of the Torah or the original sheet music for *Hatikvah*, where either you have the right one or you don't. It is more like commentary to the Torah, where Rashi has one view on what a verse means and Ramban has another. And just as the Talmud is not a free-for-all, Jewish spirituality can mean many things, but that does not mean anything goes. The hunt for Jewish spirituality is like watching the drama of Judaism through the centuries and becoming its drama critic. *Hamlet*, for example, has been credibly said to be about indecision, depression, and the Oedipal complex. But describing it as a spoof on *Saturday Night Live* is unlikely to convince. So too with Jewish spirituality.

It helps to think about Jewish spirituality as "the Jew's unique way of being in the world." Jewish sources presuppose bedrock conceptions of nature, people, relationships, responsibility, and so forth. Not being analytic philosophers or introspective psychoanalysts, the Rabbis rarely say what these conceptions of the world are. But they do have an implicit and unique perspective on the universe, and spirituality is living self-consciously and mindfully with this sort of perspective in mind. As staunch monotheists, for example, they saw the entire universe as the seamless work of God. That is why the Talmud may evoke lessons about, say, family law, from precedents in civil law or a biblical verse dealing with ethics, where the modern mind would tend to separate such things into discrete categories. For example, because Jews see everything as intrinsically related, all part of the solitary mind of God, we don't find a separation between "science" and "religion." We find equal awe in the secrets of nature and the hidden meaning of a biblical verse. Jewish physicists can be talmudists as well. Both laboratory work and weekly *sedra* open the magnificence of the divine to us.

What, then, are some authentic modes of Jewish spirituality?

A Spirituality of Blessing

Practically all of Jewish prayers are *brachot*, blessings. We say blessings before and after eating, when seeing nature's miracles, or just finding ourselves again at a happy moment (*shehechyanu*). But that is not all. In synagogue prayer, biblical readings (like the *Shema* or reading Torah) get blessings before and after. The prayer at the center of every Jewish service, the *Amidah*, is nothing but blessings, nineteen of them. Weddings end with the *sheva brachot* ("seven blessings"). *Havdalah*, the service marking the end of the Sabbath, culminates in four blessings. And on and on and on.

*We find equal awe in
the secrets of nature and
the hidden meaning of a
biblical verse.*

It didn't have to be that way. Being "blessing-centered" is a rabbinic invention. And it has its own underlying spirituality.

To get at it, contrast the rabbinic approach to prayer with that of the Church Fathers. Christianity built a liturgy where the Eucharist (the sharing of bread and wine) is central. "Eucharist" comes from the Greek word for "thanksgiving," *eucharistein*. The Christian way of being in the world is always to be grateful for anything we get, since in the Christian view we are all sinners and unworthy of such grace.

Jews too are grateful—gratitude is a basic human emotion. But even as the Rabbis affirmed the reality of sin, they denied the doctrine of essential sinfulness. They described the essence of being human as being partners with God in covenantal contract. What does that mean? To take a mundane example, suppose I promise to let you use my car in return for permission to swim in your pool. Were you to drive home and see me swimming, I would hardly feel the need to voice profound gratitude to you. I might, however, express wonder at the way we humans can reach agreements which not only benefit both parties but which, as a byproduct, establish lasting bonds of mutual trust and affection.

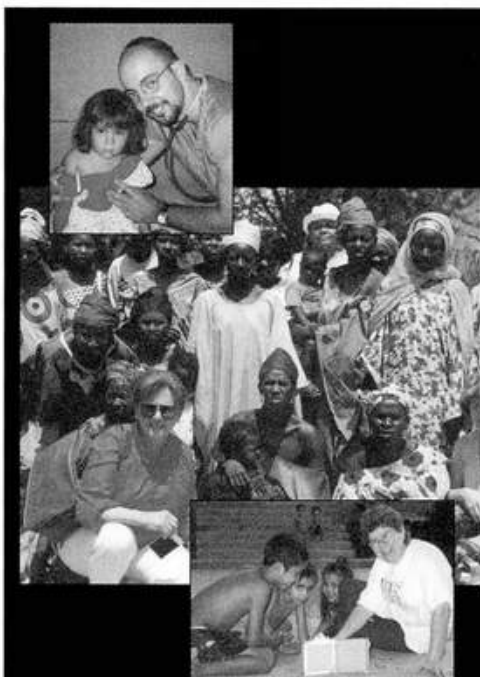
So Judaism, a religion built on covenant, stresses wonder, awe, and therefore praise of God who established a world where we can be God's partners, enjoying God's creation of which we are a part. Hence the blessing: in rabbinic

sources (like *Seder Rav Amram*, our first comprehensive Jewish prayer book), the word "bless" is set in apposition with other verbs, all of which mean "to praise." *Baruch atah* is usually translated as "Blessed are You," but it is more accurately understood as "Praised are You." Christian America gave us a national day of celebration called "Thanksgiving." Jews would have invented a day called "Praisegiving." As human beings, both Christians and Jews naturally feel both gratitude and awe. But Christians stress thanks, while Jews stress the wonder of this universe and of its God who stands in covenant with us.

A Spirituality of Ethics

The Jewish spirituality implicit in blessings also connects us to a Jewish ethic of ecology. In Judaism, blessings over food stress the delivery system by which the food is made available to us: we give praise for "bread from the earth," "fruit of the vine," and so on. The Rabbis explain that the earth belongs to God, its maker, but was given over to human use on condition that we say a blessing first. We may use God's earth, but we must remain mindful of the fact that it belongs to God not us, and we must keep in mind the miracle by which a particular foodstuff comes our way. We may use nature, that is, but not ravage it. The earth is sacred.

This example demonstrates the fact that spiritually has its ethical side as well. Common understanding today pits



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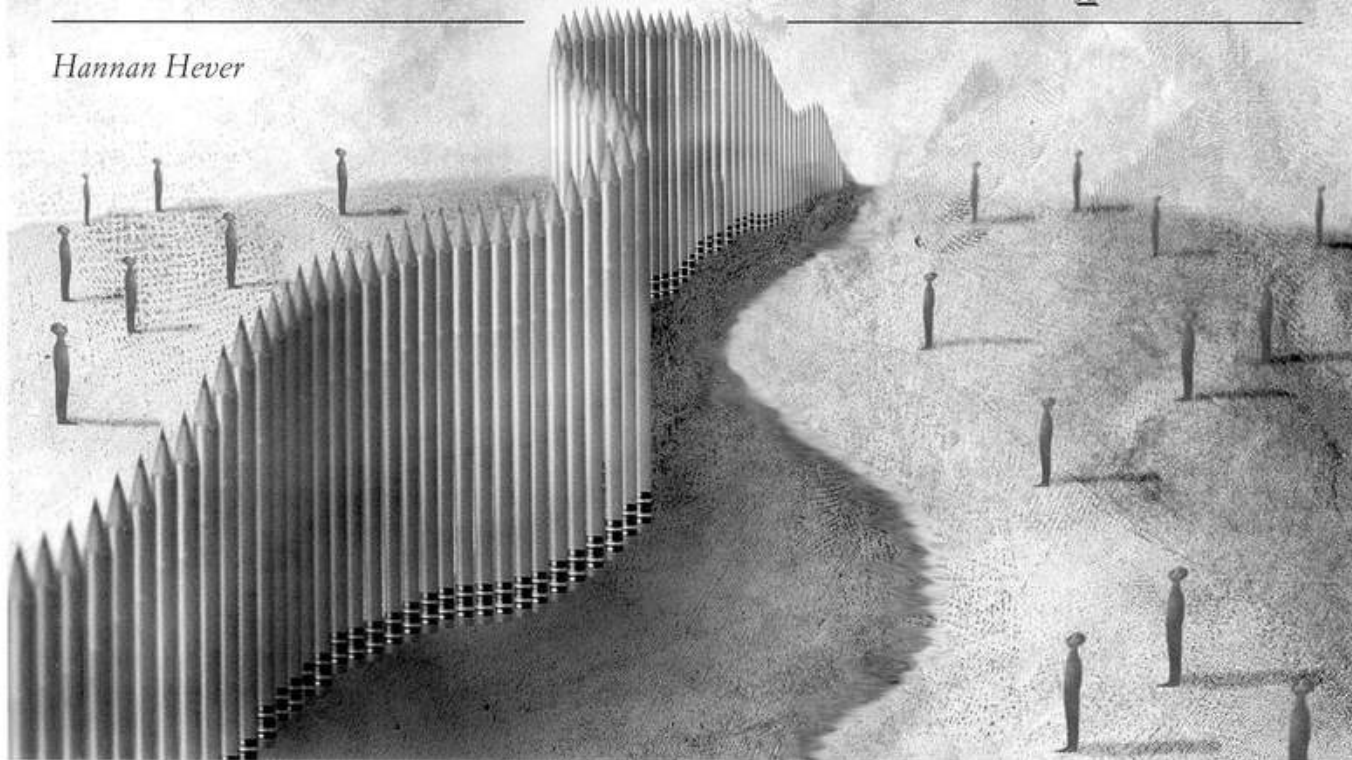
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Israeli Fiction and the Occupation

Hannan Hever



It is common wisdom that literature is sometimes slow to respond to political or even catastrophic events, and, when quick to respond, it can be flat, shallow, too political, and often better placed under the rubric of popular culture than that of an elite canonical literature. But how does literature react to an on-going political situation declared by its writers to be catastrophic, or at least disastrous?

Current catastrophic events notwithstanding, the acknowledged disastrous event in Israeli history has been the military occupation of 1967. Passing years have worsened the effect of this Occupation on the social, cultural, and, of course, economic and military structure of the country. The most profound effect, however, although invisible in its workings, has been the silent acceptance of the Occupation, the almost tacit common understanding that, on the one hand, the situation of Occupation is only temporary, "until we have peace with our neighbors," together with, on the other hand, the real and never-ending permanence of its

Many Zionist Israeli writers have no choice left but to become entertainers and singers.

presence. This permanent presence on all levels of everyday life has become not only the settlers' main source of reassurance of their own permanency in the Occupied Territories, but has also become the underlying common denominator of Israeli society. That is, in this fractured, conflictual, small community, the Occupation—which on the surface seems to be the dividing element between right and left, and, through nuances of understanding, between ethnicities, genders, and religions—is, in effect, that which molds, structures, and colors Israeli society.

The Occupation becomes not only Israeli culture's social survival net, something to fall back on, but also that which forms its daily life, the main element which constitutes and constructs its language; its social behavior; its political make-up; its moral discourse; its consumerist habits; its economic rationale; its understanding of childhood, of youth, of old age; its production and consumption of culture, including the most elite, canonical literary writings.

A Time for Singers?

In 1972, during the period between the wars of 1967 and 1973, at a time when Israeli society saw the Occupation as something it could live with forever, Amos Oz wrote in

Hanan Hever is a professor in the department of Hebrew literature at Hebrew University and author, most recently, of *Producing the Modern Hebrew Canon* (NYU Press, 2002).

LITERARY REVIEW

an article entitled "In the Harsh Azure Light" (published in Hebrew as "Be-Or Ha-Thelet Ha-Aza" in *Sifriat Poalim*, Tel-Aviv):

Ultimately it is perhaps necessary to fall silent. For the time being, at least. When does the tribe need its shaman if not in times of disaster and fear, during nights of horror, or conversely, in times of great joy, at the hour of ecstasy. At other times, few are the people who need all this. I don't know. I shall not define, here and now, what I consider to be 'the state of the tribe at this time'—I withhold my thoughts.

But if indeed our tribe is currently enjoying a temporary, middling respite between calamities and ecstasies—why then the sorceries and why the stories? Give it singers, give it entertainers—and may it rest in peace.

With his perceptive gaze, Oz suggests that singers and entertainers rather than shamans and storytellers will best suit this false respite. If his observation were to be translated into the literary field, one might say, following Oz, that meaningful literature should vacate its place in favor of a literature of entertainment, a popular literature that is easy to read and take in.

But what is the nature of this time of the respite? This interim period, and others like it that have occurred between outbursts reaching back to 1967, is no ordinary time. Although Oz admittedly relates to its illusory nature, he seems to forget that its main characteristic lies in its being a time of military occupation.

We, on the other hand, should not forget that Israeli Occupation of Palestine profoundly influences the Israeli literary situation to such an extent that Israeli literature suffers from an acute schizophrenia between its canonical-elitist and popular strata, a situation particularly characteristic of Israeli literature over the course of the past decade. At this point in time, literature which enjoys canonical and even super-canonical status, namely elitist literature, is written in a surprisingly popular manner that earmarks it for the masses, as opposed to situating it within the great tradition of national literature. That is to say, contemporary literature is actually responding to the post-national Israeli situation. I make the distinction of this moment as post-national as opposed to its more common location as part of nation formation.

A national literature typically both represents and creates the imagined national community out of which it is produced and on behalf of which it speaks; but does so through the specific device of conflict, through the creation of an aesthetic confrontation having moral and political distance between the writer and his audience. Like the prophet, the nationalist writer traditionally takes up a confrontational position against his own community. For example, for Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth*, "The native intellectual who takes up arms to defend his nation's legitimacy and who wants to bring proofs to bear out that legitimacy, who is willing to strip himself naked to study the history of his body, is

obliged to dissect the heart of his people." In this give-and-take between writer and audience, the literary text appears to be an autonomous, superior aesthetic product.

National literature delivers a complex, uncompromisingly elitist message. It formulates and constructs a unified national-ethical identity by means of aesthetic codes that are difficult to decipher and that are accorded supreme national authority as the "representation of representation." In the current post-national situation, in which the national text cannot provide a leading critical position addressing the pressing moral issues, a need arises for an alternative literary idiom which will be able to deal with the difficult post-national transformation phase. The canonical elitism loses its function and is finally abandoned. The canon substitutes, instead, the kind of tribal framework, an emphasis on entertainment, to which Amos Oz refers. This avoidance not only results in the absence of that ethical confrontation which typifies national literature, but it also brings about the evacuation of those complex aesthetic codes which mediate it. One direct consequence of this is the popularization so characteristic of Israeli literature today.

This evasion is a direct outcome of the cultural conditions created by the illusory respite or "interim period" of the Occupation. The sensation of calm induced by the absence of frontal war is a delusion; but more importantly the Occupation has become the main organizing principle of a highly fragmented Israeli culture, the main glue holding the society together.

Present-day Israeli culture rests on the bedrock of the tacit matter-of-fact acceptance of the Occupation of Palestine as a permanent situation disguised as an interim one. This has a curious consequence. Both those in favor of annexing the Occupied Territories and those in favor of a bi-national state are equally bound to the cultural and moral coordinates generated by the state of occupation. Focusing on the temporary, impermanent nature of the Occupation (whether in the direction of annexation or of withdrawal) becomes yet another device enabling life in a continuing state of occupation and veiling over the horrors and violence of the Occupation. Both the ostensible absence of a border-war and the supposedly temporary nature of the Occupation make it possible to digest the violence, killing, and war-crimes as simply "a passing phase." But while it might well be the case that the Occupation will end someday, cultural and moral life continue to be conducted as part of a state of occupation.

The de facto permanence of the Occupation and its disguise as a temporary interlude causes culture and morality in Israel to be constructed on the basis of a moral double standard that approaches the schizophrenic. The declared moral pre-eminence of the nation stands against its actual and plainly apparent lack of morality resulting from the oppression of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Territories. It is impossible to combine these two contradictory moral

systems into an ethical framework at the national level. Yet, that is the task of a national literature—to define a national morality to which the literary text might commit itself and might demand the same of its readers and its partners in the national community as a shared principle of identity. Unable to join a collective that ostensibly manages to contain this moral contradiction through ignoring it, ethically motivated writers must choose to stand against the collective, point to the existence of the contradiction, and seek an unequivocal, sharply defined morality. Yet the ethical imperative to stand against the collective poses a profound threat to writers working in the national tradition who aspire to maintain a dialogue with the collective and who now become alienated and estranged.

Yehoshua and Oz

For writers who do not wish to disengage from the community, another option exists: the one chosen by A.B. Yehoshua, Amos Oz, and others. Yehoshua and Oz, the two most well known Israeli authors outside of Israel, are also prominent heroes of the saga of twentieth-century canon formation in Israeli literature, a set of uneven and non-linear processes. Both writers played a central role in the classic Dor Hamedina, or Generation-of-Statehood, phase in the development of Israeli literature at the end of the Fifties and early Sixties. During this time a majority literature emerged in Israel, but a majority literature whose self-description in terms of its consciousness and poetics employs the very norms associated with a national minority. The roles played by Yehoshua and Oz are thus especially elusive, precisely because they write the literature of the emergent state. Throughout there are texts which do not obey the requirement to create a perfect fit between the project of representing national sovereignty versus that which envisages the continuing national existence of a minority in the Diaspora. Canonical authors like Oz and Yehoshua, however, continually strive to achieve a perfect fit between the two and invest considerable energy in eliding the gap. But it is only partly my intention here to talk about the shifting or elusive position of these two central authors with respect to this historical background. More particularly, I would like to emphasize their role in the period following 1967 and extending into the present. These writers join the national community by blurring and softening the terrors of the Occupation, its sources, and its history, in a move which displaces the ethical schizophrenia at the nation's heart and substitutes instead a glib and popular story. Tracing the work of Yehoshua and Oz from 1967 to the present tells the story of the long reach of the 1967 War and especially of the Israeli military Occupation in shaping the ideological positions and developmental stages of Israeli literature.

Yehoshua's new novel, *The Liberating Bride* (2001), exemplifies the characterizations of the popular text. Here, the Israeli Occupation is produced through a poetry festival that takes place in the Palestinian city of Ramallah, in the

Halil Sakhakini Cultural Center, an event during which, according to the Palestinian organizers, there will be "no politics," while the narrator is ridiculing the Palestinians' politicizing of the texts at the festival.

Six years earlier, in 1995, Amos Oz published his novel *A Panther in the Basement*, which combines a national story with the libidinal *bildungsroman* of an adolescent. *A Panther in the Basement* is a coming of age narrative which recounts the final days of the British Mandate in Jerusalem, evoking the stirring lives of children involved in underground rebel games for whom national and moral issues of betrayal and loyalty are interwoven with the dynamics of growing up and with doubts concerning sexual identity. At the center of the novel stand the sexual and nationalist fantasies of a boy who is preoccupied with the issues of personal and national betrayal. Here, nostalgia for childhood in the Jerusalem of the Mandate period, as well as the indication of a possible homosexual resolution to the Oedipal dilemma, shape the parameters of a national text where the primal, emotional world of an adolescent comes into conflict with the fanatical obligations of the world of the collective. These motifs are all visibly exposed and transparent in the novel, which directs its readers to decipher its codes through the apparatus of popular fiction.

Oz's novel, like Yehoshua's and that of other popular writing by canonical writers, openly exposes and displays its characteristic set of strategies, often through manipulating ready-made cultural allusions—thus the abandonment of psychological complexity, the repetitive use of linguistic devices, especially the literalization of idioms and metaphorical language, and the compulsive use of triangular structures. Above all, the novel's popularity is established through adopting a linear plot line, which progresses within a readable and readily familiar framework. The popular text does not illuminate and enter into dialogue with reality by means of literary experiment, nor by fortifying the autonomy of "literary language," but by fusing with hegemonic and consensual devices of writing. In popular literature, representations appear exposed, naked to the eye, and easy to decipher, while any hint of ambivalence is diluted by the strains of a seductive nostalgia.

A Panther in the Basement's emplacement in popular literature is highlighted by the author and publisher's choice to promote the book as something between a novel for adolescents and a novel for adults. A similar strategy has been employed in the writing of another central and canonical writer, David Grossman, in two of his recent novels, *Zigzag Children* (1994) and *Somebody to Run With* (2000) which oscillate between the categories of canonical and adolescent literature.

Grossman's and Oz's works, as well as novels by Sammy Michael, Meir Shalev, and others, form part of a larger phenomenon, the attenuation of the hierarchical centralized authority of the Israeli literary field which in the past



consistently refused entry to popular texts as legitimate partners in the literary canon or which hemmed them in with strict operating instructions. Earlier in Israeli history, the hegemonic center of the system refused to grant legitimacy to writing that did not purport to conduct itself in the medium of an elitist "literary language." Moreover, the fraught and culturally saturated distance which canonically sanctioned texts maintained between their language and their readership constituted a cultural precondition for a text to achieve the status of constituting an authoritative representation of national identity. The Israeli culture of occupation has worn down and devitalized this necessary distance, transforming the Israeli arena of writing into a post-national one. Tacit cooperation with injustice and oppression, and with the erosion of elementary moral standards in a state which poses as an ethical society, all this has eradicated the national function of elitist distancing.

It is undeniable that criticism of deteriorating moral norms and behavior may be found in popular bestsellers, but always secretly, hidden behind a thick veil of compulsory popularization. Thus, for example, in Yehoshua's *The Liberating Bride*, as in another popular novel, the latest from Sammy Michael, *Water Verging on Water* (2001) the exposure of the moral turpitude of Israeli society does occasionally glimmer behind a very powerful, sentimental, nostalgic screen. In this case, the popular drama of a libidinous family is hinted at and resolved by means of incestuous stories. The rupture of the bonds holding the crumbling tribe together is alluded to by means of the great secret of incest. Following from a Freudian perspective, incest is that which dismantles unifying codes of the tribe. The revelation of the secret of incest tears the family and, by analogy, the nation, apart. Incest becomes, indeed, the compositional fulcrum of the entire novel. But the critical dimension of these novels is not just peripheral and veiled. Even more, Yehoshua's text is not a critique of the rift, a reassertion of a national morality, but instead it is something of a lament over the rift, more an acknowledgement of loss than the assertion of a moral code meant to guide the nation and to direct it to prefer its declared morality over its veritable absence in actual practice.

Ronit Matalon

The post-national situation illuminates in retrospect the very essence of the Zionist national project. The new dual morality born out of the Occupation brings to light the importance of territory throughout the Zionist revolution. Equally it points to the complicity of the Zionist Left in colluding with the repressed or tacit consensus regarding the possibly unending nature of the Occupation. Ethically motivated writers working in a post-national situation are therefore required to adopt a confrontational stance vis-à-vis the very project of national identity construction in and of itself.

Very few choose this radical course. A prominent example of one recent work that does opt for radicalism is Ronit

Matalon's novel, *Sarah, Sarah* (trans: Bliss, 2003 [2000]). The book recounts the story of a friendship between two women, one of whom is a photographer working in the Occupied Territories who comes into daily contact with Palestinians and then relays the horrors of the Occupation back to Tel Aviv. Matalon has chosen the difficult aesthetic path of not only pointing to and lamenting over the loss of national morality, but also of actually attempting to decipher the dynamic of the dissolution of Israeli society due to the violence of the Occupation.

Matalon's apparatus of representation is consequently very complex in its quest to track down the sources of the evil that permeates the daily experience of the Israeli Occupation. She is not content with merely hinting at the rift that the Occupation has caused, but tries also to ascertain the origins of the evil which shape the nature of the Israeli Occupation. She points to the selective blindness of the Israelis, to their aversion of the gaze, as central factors that enable and even encourage outbursts of violence. Violence is represented here as an inextricable part of the Israeli cultural experience that eventually contaminates the private familial frameworks and personal profiles of the Israelis and is held to be the direct outcome of a voluntary self-imposed moral blindness, which has penetrated right to the very heart of relations between Israeli individuals as well.

As opposed to the populist course of mainstream writers, Matalon has turned the epistemology of the Occupation into the thematic focus of her novel. In contrast to popular modes of representation which conceal, obfuscate, and depoliticize the Occupation, Matalon performs a politically motivated deconstruction of the Israeli gaze, whose blindness is an inseparable part of the permit it grants to the violence welling up within it. *Sarah, Sarah* ends with the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, Israel's prime minister; the entire novel seeks to map out the coordinates of a violence that eventually contaminates the private familial frameworks and interpersonal relationships of all Israelis.

Violence in the novel almost always erupts in those places where the elision of the concrete sources of violence occurs. It always exists at the remove of the not-seen, at the distance of an arm's length from the commitment to, and responsibility for, the outcomes of one's actions—the responsibility for the location from which one sees, speaks, and acts. Thus, it does not suffice for the novel merely to chart the locations of identity; rather, it always tries to trace the modes through which these locations of self are formed, and especially the ways in which one seizes or loses hold of them. When elision, simplification, and detachment from the concrete do arise, Matalon interprets this distance from the objective causes of violence as a kind of renunciation of responsibility for one's location. This location is one's private situation within the public space, that which endows one with identity by virtue of a dialogue with the other. Violence occurs in the moment when people are no longer willing to look at the

other, to pay attention to the other's very precise location, to read the other's specific alterity and to assure responsibility for it. Violence is the result of obfuscation, of the averted gaze. It entraps one, or so the novel claims, behind the mask of identity which flattens the other rather than allowing for awareness of the contingent and very detailed particularity of identity. So the novel does not rest with the mere depiction of the locations of violence but meticulously examines its concrete, physical ramifications.

Matalon's novel is careful to perform its proposed anatomy of violence by means of very scrupulous moral pathos. The people of Gaza, those oppressed by the Israeli Occupation, enter the novel by means of the photos taken by the protagonist of "people sleeping in Gaza, in various positions, in different spaces, inside houses or outside them, men, women, soldiers, the elderly, patients in hospitals, children, alone or together." Violence is articulated when it cannot be seen by the naked eye, and thus needs the camera's distancing mediation. Violence is precisely that which one does not wish to see. Therefore Udi, Sarah's husband who has become indifferent, sealed off from sight, considers the photos of the sleepers in Gaza utterly boring. In the flash of the transition from the gaze to its absence, between the work of photography and that which finally appears as the photo, violence emerges and sometimes erupts. Thus, even Udi—passive, withdrawn, disdainful Udi—contributes his share to the accretion of violence.

Violence in Matalon's work is thus consistently linked with a blurring of the distinction between the domestic and the public. It comes as no surprise therefore, that the political assassination of the private individual Yitzhak Rabin which contains the fatal connection between the personal and national dramas—the wound in the private body that is simultaneously the wound in the national body—becomes the inevitable climax of the novel's aesthetic structure. It is surely no coincidence that one of the characters, Uncle Henri, refers to Rabin's assassination in familial and private terms: "Your Rabin was murdered." His statement locates the victim of the assassination squarely in "your" home.

Sarah, Sarah is a novel that expresses moral and political outrage at the Occupation and the violent culture that it gives rise to, but it does so without resorting to the binarism that designates who is worthy and who is not, who is the oppressor and who the oppressed, who has the authority to judge and who hasn't. That is to say, alongside its clear judgment of the Occupation, the novel traces the course of violence as a mode of representation of the relations between people, relations which cannot be neatly allocated to clear-cut locations, or partitioned off within clear-cut identities such as man versus woman, Palestinian versus Israeli Jew, Arab-Jew versus Ashkenazi. Violence becomes the result of fatigue, of choosing to ignore the private individual behind the identity, who is more than just this identity, for she is

comprised of a series of concrete identities that turn her into a unique, specific entity.

In the final analysis, the novel cannot, therefore, offer to construct an "Israeli identity" as a result of its engagement with violence. Personal identity and moral stance in Matalon's post-national novels, *The One Facing Us* (1995) and *Sarah, Sarah*, are perceived as a flexible, unstable site that fluctuates, joins, or splits off from other such sites. It is, above all, in constant need of constitution and reconstitution, over and over again, an activity that requires tireless effort and constant redefinition.

Sarah, Sarah is distinctive and impressive. Its greatest accomplishment lies in its refusal of the literary apparatus of the politics of identity, however complex and refined they might be. Matalon opts instead for a powerful attempt—rare in its scope and complexity—to create a narrative language by whose means it might be possible to explain and describe the intricate, and at times mysterious, transitions between personal suffering and violence, and the violence of the overall Israeli situation in the context of the Occupation. The literary structure of Matalon's novel thus makes the extremely rare move in Israeli literature of bypassing the obsession with identities that has preoccupied Israeli literature for so many years. She attempts to free the dynamics of identity from their obsessive entanglement in the dynamics of ethnic, national, sexual, and gender positioning. Thus she achieves a deeper understanding and a more precise anatomy of the ways in which a private, intimate "disturbance" (Matalon's own term) turns into a general, public matter concretized through the signification of identities. Additionally, Matalon refuses to present a privileged moral (ethnic, gendered, national) site of identity, such as the national narrative might have demanded. Rather, she goes about undermining and deconstructing the illusion that such a site is necessary in the pages of a novel that can only be characterized as post-national.

Matalon's is precisely the kind of analysis which the popular-canonical literature of the contemporary Israeli scene tries so hard to avoid. This is because any such analysis—tracing the violence arising from repressed, tacit assumptions about the permanently temporary nature of the state of occupation—would mean giving up all claims to a stable, steadfast Israeli identity mobilized in an effort to construct an ethical national identity. Clearly such a unitary identity is absent given that the post-national Israeli identity is fragmented and torn apart by the contradiction between its declared and actual morality. This is equally manifest in the absence of all willingness to examine the inter-relatedness of national identity and the violence arising from Zionism's historical constructions of such identity. In this rift between positionality and blindness many canonical Zionist Israeli writers have no choice left in this mendacious "interim period" other than to become entertainers and singers. □



Spirituality and American Poetry

Greg Miller

Ralph Waldo Emerson described poets as “liberating gods.” For Emerson, poetry is not only religious in its function, but superior to revealed religions and other attempts to embody unchanging truth. Poetry, for Emerson, “is vehicular and transitive, and is good, as ferries and horses are, for conveyance, not as farms and houses are, for homestead.” With this homey metaphor, Emerson highlights the way language echoes “the quality of the imagination,” which “is to flow, and not to freeze.” While religious communities and dogmas took the poetic utterances of a particular time and place and denatured them by understanding them as unchanging sacred texts, the poetic recognizes freedom and time as part and parcel of the divinely human. Poetry, in the new American dispensation, was to bring all Americans closer to what Emerson saw, at that optimistic high point of his career, as their own natural inner divinity.

Human history, particularly the history of the twentieth century, renders faith in an innate human divinity difficult for many of us. Nor have poets consistently acted as “liberating gods,” though some have certainly seen themselves as such. Ezra Pound’s virulent anti-Semitism, his radio broadcasts and tracts in support of Mussolini, stand as potent reminders of the limits and dangers of the human imagination. And Robert Frost’s curmudgeonly Yankee conservatism contrasts starkly with his ability to imagine fully, and from within, the lives of the poor, the mad, and the disenfranchised in poems like “The Self-Seeker,” “A Servant to Servants,” or “The Death of the Hired Man.” Why is it, then, that I feel Emerson was right, that poetry can be liberating, that it can expand the spirit, bust up the ice, and let the living waters flow?

Walt Whitman’s “Leaves of Grass,” having drunk deeply from Emerson’s essays, sought to be something entirely new, a poetry distinctively American in its cadences, vision, and voice. In “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry,” surrounded by ordinary women and men whom he does not know and upon whom he meditates tenderly and longingly, the poet addresses the ebb and flow of a particular river, of place and time—and of us!

Greg Miller is the author of Rib Cage and Iron Wheel (University of Chicago Press). He is an English professor at Millsaps College.

Flow on, river! flow with the flood-tide, and ebb with the ebb-tide!

Frolic on, crested and scallop-edg’d waves!

Gorgeous clouds of the sunset! Drench with your splendor me, or the men and women

Generations after me!

At his best, Whitman forces us to imagine ourselves in others’ bodies and places, calling into question our own bodies and places: as slaves on the block, Native Americans, women, physical laborers. Whitman claims, “I too had received identity by my body.” For Whitman, the daily and the bodily are holy. (How many poets write of armpits as giving forth “divinest odors”?) He puts no stock in purity of religious identity, as he writes in “Song of Myself”: “Not objecting to special revelations, considering a curl of smoke or a hair on the back of my hand just as curious as any revelation.” For Whitman, the divine is in the temporal; flux itself is part of the eternal, when experienced in its holiness.

In Whitman’s time and since, many poets identified their work as spiritual (think Emily Dickinson) or liberating (from the socialist poets of the Thirties to the more traditional spiritual urge of Allen Tate and his fellow agrarians). Both impulses in the poetry of our day tend to be masked or downplayed, but they remain. For example, when the poet Adrienne Rich was asked a few years ago at a gathering of the Modern Language Association whether her poetry was “spiritual,” she strongly took issue with the suggestion. My guess is that she objected to this Pauline sense of the word. In the Hebraic understanding of the “heart,” much of our best contemporary American poetry is indeed spiritual, concerned with the roots of the whole person and with ultimate questions about identity, relationship, understanding, and justice.

Poetry can also serve as a means of defining and addressing the root causes of alienation: In “Hunger: for Audre Lord,” Rich writes, “Until we find each other, we are alone.” Rich’s poems are alert to the dangers of individualism, the “I,” lyric or otherwise, whose “wellness” may be bought at the expense of a greater good and the truer person: “In those years, people will say, we lost track / of the meaning of *we*, of *you* / we found ourselves / reduced to *I* / and the whole thing became / silly, ironic, terrible: / we were trying to live a personal life ... (*Dark Fields of the Republic*). Since

*Much of our best
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Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law, *The Dream of a Common Language*, and *Diving into the Wreck*, Rich has been consistent in following her calling, in articulating the world newly so as better to be able to change it. Though we often hear the mantra that “the personal is political,” the personal can also be merely personal.

Rich has claimed a Jewish identity through her father and sons, describing her mother as a Southern protestant who in a letter encouraged her college daughter “—Marry out, like your father / she didn’t write / She wrote for / wrote / against him” (*An Atlas of the Difficult World*). Rich’s Jewish spirituality affirms identity by calling readers to deeper consciousness of the underlying structures of power in our society, in examining our assumptions: “My hope is that the movement we are building can further the conscious work of turning Otherness into a keen lens of empathy, that we can bring into being a politics based on concrete, heartfelt understanding of what it means to be Other” (“If Not with Others, How?”).

Making use of imagery from a variety of religious traditions—Jewish, Christian, Muslim—Robert Pinsky’s verse is deeply American in its focus on choice, our American insistence on shaping our own identities. The poems also distrust the desire to choose “purity,” or to escape choice through an appeal to the pure. Rwanda, Bosnia, and Kosovo are some of the last century’s more recent examples of the dangers of “cleansing,” of definitions of identity that rely on exclusivity. Pinsky’s “Daniel,” for example, re-imagines the biblical prophet:

The Jews disliked him,
He smelled of pagan incense and char.
Pious gossips in the soul
Said he was unclean,
He had smeared his body with thick
Yellowish sperm of lion
Before he went into the den,
The odor and color
Were indelible, he would reek
Of beast forever.

Wheat-color. Faint smell as of smoke.
The Kings of Babylon feared him
For generations.

(*The Figured Wheel* 60)

The biblical Daniel, representative of the perseverance and triumph of an oppressed and faithful people, is here represented as doubly an outsider. Playing with a passage from



James Joyce in which a nation is described as “The same people living in the same place,” Pinsky earlier in his career mused on the meaning of America, contemplating our constant state of inconstancy: “Our nation, mellowing to another country / Of different people living in different places” (*Explanation of America*). Pinsky continues to muse on American transformations: “We take up harvesting knives and we sweat / Gathering the herbs of transformation. This / Is my language,

not the one I learned” (*In Berkeley*).

Pinsky’s poems question violence that is used in the name of religious purity. In his poem “From the Childhood of Jesus,” Pinsky imagines an utterly creepy child Jesus. In this poem, the five year old, having fashioned clay birds and made a little dam on the river, is chastised for breaking the Sabbath. The “son of Annas the scribe” breaks Jesus’ dam. The young Jesus responds wildly, disproportionately: “Unrighteous, impious, ignorant, what did the water / Do to harm you? Now you are going to wither // The way a tree does, you shall bear no fruit / And no leaves, you shall wither down to the root.” The poem ends with a continuation of the nightmarish vision: “And high in the dark ... unknown even to Jesus // The twelve new sparrows flew aimless through the night, / Not blinking or resting, as if never to alight.” Pinsky uses mythic language to make us see sacred texts newly, to question their implications. Christian churches have yet to feel or articulate sufficient contrition for the sin of anti-Semitism, to confess and make what my Episcopal *Book of Common Prayer* calls “true amendment of life,” though Pope John Paul’s apologies beginning in the Jubilee year of Christianity have been a promising, though limited, beginning. Pinsky’s criticism, though, goes still deeper, questioning violent religious language that separates the pure from the impure, the outside from the “righteous” community. In Pinsky’s poem, the mythic boy Jesus himself does not seem to comprehend the full implications of his own severity.

Louise Glück’s poems share this kind of intense self-scrutiny, the turn of consciousness back upon itself which unmasks the self’s attempts at self-deception. Though her work appears secular, her mythic poems are close in spirit to contemporary religious poems. Her language is unfailingly startling, surprising, and convincing in its moves. To read Glück’s poetry is to experience pure voice, to have the sensation that everything extraneous has fallen away:

Spirit, invited to leave the body,
to stand exposed a moment,

LITERARY REVIEW

trembling, as before
your presentation to the divine—
spirit lured out of solitude
by the promise of grace,
how will you ever again believe
the love of another being?

My soul withered and shrank.
The body became for it too large a garment.

And when hope was returned to me
it was another hope entirely.

The pleasure of the ending is in part the result of its understatement. The hope that comes to one in extreme circumstances can come in part because its form and substance are unknown and unexpected. The surprise of the final line mimics the surprise of the experience. Glück's *Vita Nova* and *The Wild Iris* are full of unexpected and utterly convincing movements of mind and voice. The self and the heart (or soul) are not the same, and poetry's willingness to plumb the depths between them, to test the self's disguises in the light of a deeper reality, animates much of what is most moving in contemporary poetry.

My late friend David Matias, who died of AIDS in December of 1996, conceived a voice in defiance of the forces that would silence him or make him speak something other than what he was. David struggled with his fundamentalist upbringing (his father the pastor of a Spanish-speaking Baptist flock in rural Texas), recording the violence, psychic and physical, that religious communities can impose on "outsiders" in their midst: "It's hard for Dad to accept my Jerusalem. // *In those days there was no king in Israel: / every man did that which was right in his own eyes.* (21:25)" (Book of Judges). David chose to do "*that which was right in his own eyes*," defying his father, claiming, through the voice of his poems, a new home that was not a desecration of his

heart, undertaking what the poet Gail Mazur described as "the transcendent soul-making of a life."

David chose to worship with the Unitarian Universalists, where he felt all people—regardless of religious heritage, gender, race, or sexuality—were welcome. In his poems, David's voice, the voice in the process of defining itself, converses with voices and traditions of his own choosing. David's "Glimpses at a Destiny," beginning with a remembered epigraph from Ginsberg's "Kaddish," addresses God with the audacity of the Psalmist:

Meanwhile his mother in Greece
packs her suitcase, travels to America.
Stay awake, God.
She wants to see her son.
She won't see how that night
of the eight-hour telephone call,
necks became sore,
receivers wet with sweat.
There were peaceful periods,
but airplanes moving over a storm
must go back through the dark to land.
Your turn, God. You speak to him.
Tell him, God. Confirm it somehow.
Tell it to him BIG. This has meaning.
Ilias was an architect. Show him the design.
Show him the order. Shed your clothes, God.
Unpin that red ribbon.
Let him see you *not* draped in chaos.
Let him touch your skin.
Let him feel you naked.

The Catholic "mother in Greece," we learn later in the poem, blamed her son for the failure of her marriage and for his own disease ("*This is what you get.*"). The poet addresses God intimately as an absent lover, beseeching him with both deep seriousness and sarcasm—plaintively, angrily—to show the dying Ilias, ironically himself an architect, the "design," the purpose and form behind this evident "chaos." Like Ginsberg's "Kaddish," David Matias's "Glimpses at a Destiny" treats given texts and traditions with deep spiritual seriousness. David asks us to view the impiety of the "pious" with new eyes, rooted in the whole heart.

Many contemporary poems were conceived to bring a better vision into being, to be "conveyers" of the good and true, often by my unmasking the masked, speaking what one might not otherwise feel free to speak. Poetry can show us the limits of our communities, religious and civic, of our language, of ourselves. Poetry can help us to re-imagine our own inner lives, to affirm, through questioning, truer and more intimate relations with the soul, the divine, the world, and other people. Poetry's solitary voice asks us to question the roots and nature of our aloneness, what Rich describes as the solipsistic "I," and poetry's prophetic voices demand deeper communion with others and more vital, soulful living in just community. □

A Contemporary

After his wife left—she wasn't Jewish—
Took the kids and took up with—to his mind—
A no-goodnik—he became Lubavitch

And bought himself a Harley-Davidson.
You can see him early summer mornings
After prayers, accentuating the contradictions:

His engine screaming down sleepy streets,
Martial helmet and sacred fringes,
Denim vest and sweep of patriarchal beard blown back

As if caught in a prophetic wind.

—Kenneth Sherman

Death, Silence, and Teshuva

Ellen Spolsky

■ *Daughter*, by Lois Silverstein. Red Shoes Press, 2002. www.xlibris.com.

The connection between death and silence seems obvious. Yet the psalmist thinks it worth reminding us to praise God while we can, because the dead don't. The linkage of silence and death is one of the ways we comfort ourselves; if the dead are not shrieking, moaning, or complaining, we assume they are past pain. They have "passed away," not only from the pain of earthly life but also from the suffering of the final illness. Our wish, for ourselves, as for those we love, is that the transition from life to death be accomplished peacefully. If any sound is heard let it be heavenly music. Horatio wishes his dying friend Hamlet a "goodnight ... and flights of angels sing thee to thy rest."

We desperately want to infer, from the silence of the dead, that there is not only an end to bodily pain, but also an accession of calmness that comes from understanding. But who is it who needs to understand? Many of the laws and customs that surround Jewish burial and mourning are meant not to sing the dead to their rest, but to ease the passage to a new kind of life for those who remain. Lois Silverstein's fable, *Daughter*, follows its life-loving heroine through the journey of the survivor to a new level of understanding. Though the burial rites she provides for her mother are uncon-

ventional, there is finally an important silence, and then the living praise God in the words of the *Kaddish*.

The issue in this novel is cremation. Although our heroine had agreed to her dying mother's request, she cannot, in the event, bring herself to sprinkle her mother's ashes over her strawberry plants. At the crucial moment, a new understanding of Jewish law comes to her in a flash, and a process of *teshuvah* begins. *Daughter* Rachel's return is accomplished in a comic series of events by which she attempts to get things right for her mother, for herself, and with her estranged sister.

Rachel begins this journey with a literal return from her adopted home in California to New York City, where she grew up. Her Peruvian hat pulled down over her hair, her Mexican skirt flouncing, and the round urn containing her mother's ashes held by a colorful Guatemalan string bag, slung over her shoulder and bouncing against her hip, she heads for the home of her older sister, Sherry. With this inspired image, a kind of parodic pregnancy in which Rachel is expecting, as it were, not to give birth but to return her mother to the earth, Silverstein reminds us that if one meaning of *teshuvah* is "return," another might be "turning again" or reversal. For one who is not born into a traditional Jewish life, but comes to observance as an adult, many inversions are involved.

One obstacle to the easy accomplishment of the return (but the difficulty, of course, makes the attainment sweet) is the gap between Rachel and her sister, "a Bergdorf Goodman dressed brunette, immaculately made

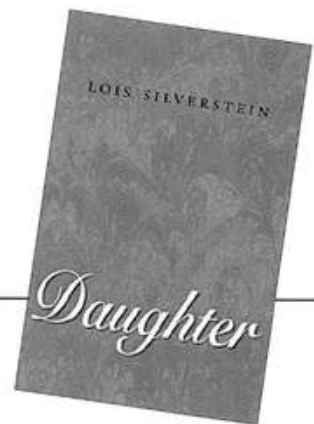
up." Sherry also wants to mother: she expresses her love by attempting to feed Rachel, but is repeatedly rebuffed by her younger sister's California food prejudices. So even though Rachel has traveled miles across America in quest of reconciliation and the satisfaction of return, the farcical but familiar conflicts between the sisters teach her that she can't accomplish *teshuvah* by herself; she must engage both kith and kin in the process.

Indeed, as she had guessed, the desired resolution can only be provided by a funeral; by laying to rest some of the old mistakes, divisions, and hostilities among family members. Rachel's quest continues on the subways that lead her to the various people she hopes will help her get her mother properly buried. Rail travel is the metaphor throughout for the journey toward the reconciliation and absolution that Rachel seeks. She wonders whether her mother is trying to guide her two daughters from the beyond, "trying to get us on track together." She is overjoyed when her sister agrees to accompany her on the subway to buy the coffin: "When was the last time, when was there ever any time, that my sister and I traveled anywhere together?... And yet here we were almost arm-in-arm taking care of family matters. Our family matters. Who could believe that?"

Silverstein's funny story is not only a pleasure to read but also a serious teaching about *teshuvah*, and about the halachic question of how or whether the ashes of her mother, following the offense of the cremation itself, can be buried in the cemetery plot next to their father. What hangs

(continued on page 75)

Ellen Spolsky is professor of English literature and director of the Lechter Institute for Literary Research at Bar-Ilan University in Israel.



A War of Ghosts

Trauma Theories, Traumatic Histories, and the Middle East

James Berger

■ *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, by Dominick LaCapra. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001.

We live in traumatic times. This seems an obvious statement, but what exactly does it mean? Not every bad thing that happens, not even every awful, horrific thing, is necessarily traumatic.

For an event to be traumatic, and not just bad, the event must seriously disrupt how a person understands, remembers, and feels to such an extent that the event is usually forced from memory and symbolic understanding. Although the trauma is forced from consciousness, however, it often returns in the form of physical symptoms. Healing from trauma thus must be accomplished by creating a symbolic form, most often a story, that allows the person to work through his symptoms and come to terms with the traumatic incident. The question Dominick LaCapra raises in his thoughtful and compelling analysis is how this representation of trauma may be best accomplished. In the course of *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, LaCapra manages to critique both those who adhere strictly to an unemotional, facts-only approach to trauma, and those who immerse themselves in the traumatic event.

LaCapra's analysis is especially critical for readers now. As we have experienced with the events of September

11, traumas can be experienced by societies as well as by individuals. While LaCapra focuses on the Holocaust, the reaction to the suicide bombings in Israel is another example of societal trauma. It is my contention that a better understanding of the nature of trauma might help us understand and even resolve the political conflicts—from the War on Terrorism to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—that arise from traumatic events.

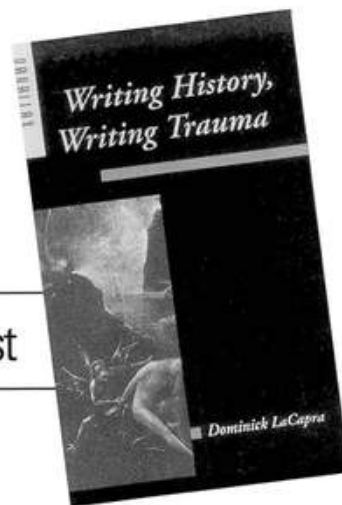
Trauma

A catastrophic event may so shatter a person's psychic equilibrium that he cannot represent the event to himself—cannot assimilate the event into any stories of the world or self he knows. Instead, the event actually disintegrates the stories that connect the self to the world. Without such stories, a person truly is bereft and broken. No science fiction or dystopic scenarios, for example, could prepare us for the realities of Hiroshima or the Nazi concentration camps; not even pictures of the Twin Towers in flames could prepare us for their fall. The events of atomic war, modern genocide and mass-scale terrorism shattered our previous narratives of political stability and technological progress. They rendered negligible what we had thought were our most terrible fantasies.

Trauma, as LaCapra writes in *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, creates a break between lived experience and cognition, so that "one disorientingly feels what one cannot represent; one

numbingly represents what one cannot feel." But the mind, the psyche, the soul struggles to find itself again and to situate itself in a world whose features have been altered by disaster. The first result may be oblivion, amnesia, or a kind of numbness that allows us to report the facts of trauma without feeling. But gradually, in a variety of ways, the trauma returns. We re-experience or reenact the traumatic event in dreams or in compulsive, repetitive actions. These *symptomatic* returns—what psychologists call "the acting out of trauma"—show that a person still is psychically immersed in the trauma. She is, in effect, haunted by the event—and indeed, ghosts are among the most common and effective figures for the return of trauma in recent fiction. (See, for instance, Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*, J. Ballard's *The Atrocity Exhibition*, Thomas Pynchon's *Vineland* and *Mason and Dixon*, Cynthia Ozick's *The Messiah of Stockholm*, Thane Rosenbaum's *The Golems of Gotham*.)

But crucial to psychoanalytic approaches to trauma such as LaCapra's is the belief that this immersion in or haunting by a traumatic event can be countered by narrative. Instead of allowing the trauma to return on its own terms, we recall the trauma in a narrative of our own framing. Because trauma shatters the narratives that structure our lives, we can only be healed by telling our stories again, by representing in words the trauma that now controls our mental images, thoughts, actions, even our bodily functions beyond the reach of language. Language, and especially narrative,



James Berger teaches at Hofstra University and is the author of *After the End: Representations of Post-Apocalypse*, University of Minnesota Press, 1999.

allows us to *work through* trauma rather than *acting out* the trauma symptomatically.

How can we distinguish cultural expressions that act out from those that work through? The study of trauma is hampered by the slippery interdisciplinary interstices it inhabits. Most historians and sociologists lack both a psychoanalytic vocabulary and an interest in that interpretive frame to be able to make these distinctions. Yet, clinical psychologists and psychoanalysts, who might best distinguish traumatic behavior, are not trained in the analysis of society or culture. Freud himself, infamously, was often blind to the impact of historical events on the individual psyche. (In a late essay, "Analysis Terminable and Interminable," Freud refers to a patient who became "a refugee and destitute" after the First World War, having lost "his home, his possessions, and all his family relationships"; yet Freud can only comment that the patient's renewed symptoms were merely parts of older neuroses that had not been resolved in his pre-war therapy.) The field of trauma studies thus has fallen primarily to literary scholars like Cathy Caruth and Shoshana Felman, philosophers like the psychoanalytically-trained Slovenian scholar Slavoj Žižek, and a few intellectual historians like LaCapra, whose previous works include *Representing the Holocaust*, *Soundings in Critical Theory*, *History, Politics and the Novel*, and *Rethinking Intellectual History*.

Ceding the study of trauma to literary scholars may seem risky, unscientific; but perhaps there is justice in the fall. For literary study is a social discipline and a psychological discipline. It is a study of signs in all their guises, whose method consists explicitly in imaginative jumps and slides—from the part to the whole, outside to inside, history to fiction; from the scar to the wound; from any set of terms or metaphors to any other, and back again through every possible inversion and mutation. Literary studies as a

field is nothing if not the study of representation, and trauma is nothing if not a crisis of representation.

Writing Trauma

In *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, LaCapra develops a persuasive argument for the close, not necessarily oppositional, relation between "acting out" and "working through." Like most recent students of trauma, LaCapra's point of departure is the Holocaust and the work of Theodor Adorno. Where most previous writers, however, begin with Adorno's ethical questions on the aesthetics of representations of the Holocaust (will the pleasure of aesthetic representations of the trauma contaminate the portrayal of atrocity?), LaCapra begins instead from Adorno's meditation on the continuing nature of the trauma itself, the ethical penetration of past traumas and their crimes into the present. Even as we "work through" the past by creating representations of it, we are also necessarily acting out the past at the same time. For, as Adorno explains in his essay of 1959 "What Does Coming to Terms with the Past Mean," "We will not have come to terms with [*aufarbeiten*: literally, 'to work through'] the past until the causes of what happened then are no longer active. Only because these causes live on does the spell of the past remain, to this very day, unbroken."

In other words, while representations of the Holocaust should, at their best, be means of working through the traumas of this horrific and pivotal event, working through itself may require some measure of acting out, or re-immersion in the trauma (insofar as that is possible for one who encounters it through representations). To attempt to represent trauma without an element of acting out denies the traumatic nature of the event, just as individuals who first experience trauma may be able to retell the factual events, but with a numbness that denies their import. For that reason, LaCapra suggests that even scholarly

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BOOK REVIEW

historical accounts of the Holocaust should allow for some emotional relation to the events described, an “empathic unsettlement,” as LaCapra calls it, that resembles the psychoanalytic concept of transference. At the same time, however, this “empathic unsettlement” risks becoming blurred with an excessive identification with victims (or even, more perniciously, with perpetrators) and thus risks becoming a form of pure, symptomatic acting out. The poise that LaCapra proposes should inform representations of the Holocaust is exceptionally difficult to maintain, for it includes the genuine confusions and dissonances that come with an emotional relation to traumatic historical events.

The writing of history, for instance, requires an adherence to professional standards of documentation and reference. But, LaCapra argues, this documentary or “self-sufficient research” model of history, while necessary, is not in fact sufficient for understanding and working through the Holocaust’s traumas. When writing the history of a traumatic event, a historian must be conscious of how the effects of the trauma continue to be felt and may affect the historian’s own work. Thus, LaCapra questions Peter Novick’s argument in *The Holocaust in American Life* that each generation or group of Americans has created versions of the Holocaust based primarily on their current needs and interests, as if the Holocaust existed as a kind of repository of moral-historical capital to be used for particular purposes. History, in LaCapra’s view, has powerful emotional consequences for succeeding generations—including historians—not just pragmatic or strategic uses.

Having criticized Novick for excessive scholarly detachment, LaCapra reproaches Daniel Goldhagen for an “excessive, unchecked identification” with Holocaust victims. In his dogmatic insistence that a single factor—anti-Semitism—brought about the Nazi genocide, Goldhagen abandons scholarly standards of evidence, and

his book becomes “little more than the compulsively repetitive illustration or imaginative, at times novelistically embellished, enactment of a preconception.” *Hitler’s Willing Executioners* is historiography in which the acting out of trauma plays too dominant a role.

Some of LaCapra’s most compelling conclusions come in his analysis of the effects of trauma on philosophy and literary theory. For LaCapra, the poststructuralist movement itself is a philosophical acting out of trauma. It is a striking fact that in poststructuralism’s early years, from the mid-1960s through the mid-1970s, thinkers such as Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, and Michel Foucault introduced terminologies foregrounding historical rupture, decentering, fragmentation, erasure of identity, the shattering of origins and ends, and yet made no mention of the central, most traumatic violence of the twentieth century. More recently, some of these thinkers, notably Derrida and Jean-Francois Lyotard, have turned to the Holocaust as a topic, but often in ways that blur those specific historical traumas with some more generalized idea of trauma as part of the structure of all symbolic systems. In a fascinating discussion of the difference between *loss* (which is specific, historical, and traumatic) and *absence* (which is general or structural), LaCapra develops a theory of poststructuralism as an evocative, but traumatized, account of a post-Holocaust world that tries compulsively to convert its traumatic losses into more emotionally manageable structural absences. You can’t lose, after all, something you never had; or, as LaCapra puts it, “Paradise absent is different from paradise lost.”

LaCapra’s discussions of historiography, philosophy, and psychoanalysis are extraordinarily lucid, and this book is a brilliant example of the some of the capabilities of contemporary trauma theory in analyzing representation of trauma. *Writing History, Writing Trauma* also stands, however, as an

example of this theory’s limits, especially as it remains focused on the Holocaust. Trauma theory has not yet been able to address the workings of trauma in contemporary political events. One of Cathy Caruth’s most evocative conclusions in her book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* is that history “is the way we are implicated in each other’s traumas.” If this is so, the Middle East is the most historical place in the world, for everyone there is not just implicated, but imprisoned and strangled by a multitude of conflicting traumas.

Trauma: Mideast

Both Israelis and Palestinians define themselves in large part by their historical traumas.

For Jews, there would be no Israel without the Holocaust, no Zionist movement without the successive persecutions inflicted on the Jews of the Diaspora, and no Diaspora without the destruction of the temples and of the original Jewish State. Much of Jewish culture and literature, both religious and secular, responds directly or indirectly to this history of catastrophe and suffering. The modern state of Israel is in one sense an attempt to redeem and pass beyond this suffering: to embrace the suffering in memory but radically to change the direction of Jewish history. It rejects Yiddish and reinvents Hebrew, deciding that the thousand years of Ashkenazic culture whose ending was genocide was a long and disastrous mistake. It will create new Jews, who can fight and defend themselves. They will never again, under any circumstances, be victims. There is moral and historical justification for this attitude. Given the magnitude of the Nazi genocide, it is difficult to call any response an overreaction. And placed in a small country surrounded by hostile neighbors, inhabited by unsympathetic residents, it is hard not to see Israelis’ emphasis on militancy and toughness as pragmatic. And yet, at

the same time it is a symptomatic response to the trauma of the Holocaust. Israel itself is a symptom of trauma, a proud, unyielding acting out of a history of Jewish pain and humiliation whose finale was near extinction.

But Palestinian history is traumatic as well—a series of dispossessions, colonizations, and occupations, of which the Israeli occupation is just the most recent. With the rest of the Islamic Middle East, Palestinians can look back to a period of glorious cultural and political ascendancy, followed by centuries of decline and humiliation at the hands of Western technology, capital, and racist ideology.

These two traumatic histories are now in collision. A crucial feature of traumatic aftermaths is that the victim is not able to distinguish the present from the past. This is not merely the conservative tendency to “fight the last war”; one is, rather, actually immersed in the past, traumatic event. The American determination to refight, and win, the war in Vietnam (in Grenada, Panama, Iraq, Afghanistan ...) goes beyond any rational refiguring of military strategy. Our country’s military, and much of our populace, has been possessed by the memory of that defeat and will do almost anything to exorcize it. In the Middle East, Israel is fighting not just the Palestinians, but the Nazis and centuries of haters of Jews. The Palestinians are fighting not just the Israelis, but centuries of European colonizers. No wonder negotiation has proved so difficult. This is a war of ghosts battling for the vindication of the most ancient injuries.

But one of the enormous complexities of traumatic analysis, especially in social-political contexts, is that real events and conflicts continue in the present and often compound the effects of past traumas. Many Palestinians, for instance, really do hate Jews and want to eradicate the state of Israel entirely. And many Israelis really do hold Palestinians in such suspicion and contempt that they want some form of occupation—if not a “Greater

Israel”—to continue indefinitely. And each new abuse and affront shocks the two populations into even more rigid symptomatic formations with new traumatic memories to be acted out in a war without temporal boundaries.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is now entirely a process of acting out—a war of haunted enemies possessed by traumatic cultural memories and

*We cannot defeat
Hitler; Hitler is dead,
and he is not Arafat.*

renewed violent provocations. How can these shared and separate traumas possibly be worked through? It is easier to analyze than to heal, and I am neither a psychotherapist, a statesman, nor a shaman. But I will offer two suggestions. First, each side must recognize the other’s traumatic histories. Both must recognize that they are locked in conflicts not necessarily with each other, and must separate injuries of the past from the conflict in the present. Traumas of the past must, ultimately and after much work, be accepted and lived with; the outcomes of past battles cannot be changed. But conflicts in the present can be addressed and resolved.

Second, each side must abandon its myths of national purity, which in large part are symptomatic responses

to histories of oppression. These myths proclaim that *we*, our side, are the only ones wronged, that we have always and only been virtuous, and that any violence we commit is thoroughly justified by the inhuman evil of our enemies. Neither Israelis nor Palestinians can make these claims. Neither is pure; each has shed innocent blood. When real negotiations take place, they will be between people who acknowledge they have injured each other and that they have not only received but have performed acts of injustice.

Until now, it could be argued that the Holocaust has been the defining moment, the defining trauma, in modern Jewish history, the single greatest shaper of our consciousness and ethics. Now, however, it is becoming clear that the resolution of the Middle East conflict will be our new defining ethical moment. Haunted and possessed by our historical traumas, the Israeli leadership and American Jews who support their policies are acting out our pain in violent and oppressive forms. We cannot defeat Hitler; Hitler is dead, and he is not Arafat. Nor are the Israelis reincarnations of the Crusaders. But we as Jews must take responsibility for the wrongs we have done. We must make sure that our efforts toward peace and justice will define us, as difficult as this surely will be.

It is not so hard to divide a piece of land, once you can distinguish the ghosts from the living people. □

DEATH, SILENCE, AND TESHUVA (continued from page 71)

on this is nothing less than the possibility of *tikkun*. Can error be made right? Can broken families be made whole? Can they make the journey together, in the presence of death, as they hadn’t been able to, so far, in life? The heroine does what Jews have always done when they need to understand the law: she consults with rabbis, studies texts, interprets, argues, and reinterprets.

Without giving away how the legal dilemma is resolved, I can say that,

finally, silence is achieved. There’s no back talk, no squabbling, no sass when the family gathers around an open grave. A good funeral makes clear just who gets the last word in the argument of life. Together in silence and then in formulaic prayer, those around a small opening in the earth have no choice but to acknowledge their kinship and their common destiny. The heroine of Lois Silverstein’s *Daughter*, somehow knew this, and knew it was worth working for. □

Back Where We Belong

Danya Ruttenberg

■ *The Values of Belonging*, by Carol Lee Flinders. HarperSanFrancisco, October, 2002.

I first met Carol Lee Flinders about four and a half years ago, with the release of her shimmering treatise *At the Root of This Longing: Reconciling a Spiritual Hunger and a Feminist Thirst* (HarperSanFrancisco). Its terrain shifted from the politics of mysticism to Polly Klaas and back again, marking her as a rare talent in her ability to seamlessly meld anecdote with analysis, spiritual truth with political insight in the creation of something important and new.

Musings about Gandhi and girls give way to a more overarching, ambitious view of humanity in her latest book, *The Values of Belonging: Rediscovering Balance, Mutuality, Intuition and Wholeness in a Competitive World* (HarperSanFrancisco, October, 2002). Here, Flinders goes back in time, arguing that before the advent of agriculture certain values prevailed in early hunter-gather societies (and their few surviving equivalent cultures)—and that the shift in values generated in the Fertile Crescent some six thousand years ago have had a profound hand in shaping the ills of Western Civilization ever since.

Before this review can proceed in earnest, I must say that though the book is compelling and important as midrash, I have some difficulty accepting her thesis as historical fact. Although

Danya Ruttenberg is a writer and editor of Yentl's Revenge: The Next Wave of Jewish Feminism (Seal Press).

she peppers the anthropological chapters of her book with anecdotes about this Pomo Indian tribe or that band of the Kalahari San, no book, I think, can successfully make a case for a definitive reading of the “values” embraced by all hunter-gatherers across time and place, let alone the prehistorical ancestors for whom we have no written record. The author herself acknowledges this: “No one lens will ever do justice to the complexity of human history... [but] I’ve nevertheless found this particular lens to have enormous explanatory power.” Let us, then, harness its power, and proceed.

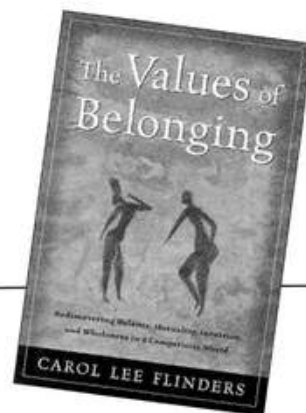
Flinders labels the interconnected values embraced by early hunter-gatherer societies as those of “Belonging.” Just a few on her list include: self-restraint, conservatism, balance, expressiveness, generosity, mutuality, and inclusiveness. These principles were not, she asserts, inherent to human nature but rather the necessary tools for survival; people dependent on the Earth’s bounty needed restraint and conservatism to keep the delicate ecosystem in balance, and generosity served as a safeguard, since everyone eventually met leaner times.

When agriculture developed, Flinders writes, the equally “natural” human impulses towards innovation, inquiry, and risk came to the fore. And while this was fine and good, the radical nature of the shift from nomadic to sedentary life caught people somewhat off-balance and the more benign face of the “values of Enterprise” gave way to competitiveness, acquisitiveness, hierarchy, and exploitation of humans and land. She argues that a transformation of gender roles occurred amidst the many social and material

changes taking place at this time—a process at the end of which men, dominant, became associated with the values of Enterprise and women, subordinate, keepers of the old values of Belonging. It’s this split in values, she asserts, that plagues us through the “gender wars” to this day.

“The purpose of elucidating these two paradigms,” she writes, “isn’t to exalt one over the other. It is, rather, to suggest that much of the confusion we’re experiencing in Western society right now, and particularly in the United States, is the result first, of having responded so unrestrainedly to one value system as opposed to the other, and, second, of our having declared one set of values as masculine and the other feminine.” Flinders issues a challenge: “Can we imagine, and then build, a civilization that doesn’t occlude one of its two eyes?”

To prove that mutuality and innovation aren’t mutually exclusive, Flinders offers some specific ways in which people have begun to transform Enterprise projects to be more inclusive and holistic in approach: Collaborative law seeks to resolve disputes with lawyers, but without litigation. Organic farming creates viable non-corporate economies and helps heal the environment. High school classes can be used to rebuild endangered wilderness while teaching biology and real-life politics. The examples go on, and their potential for transformation is far-reaching, both on a global and an individual level. This, then, is the real payoff in an attempt to recalibrate our value system. What’s at stake is a whole new way of seeing the world—not as two halves (or, worse, a Mars and a Venus) but as something that is, finally, whole. □



The Enemy of Nature

Brian Tokar

■ *The Enemy of Nature: The End of Capitalism or The End of The World?* by Joel Kovel. Zed Books, 2002.

This past August, civil society representatives, public officials and heads of state from around the world converged on Johannesburg for the tenth anniversary of the landmark 1992 United Nations "Earth Summit" in Rio de Janeiro. While the U.S. media focused largely on symbolic issues such as President Bush's absence from the proceedings, a far more disturbing scenario was unfolding there.

For many people, Rio '92 had been a symbol of hope and renewal, a sign that world leaders were finally giving priority to pressing and long-neglected environmental problems, and that the much touted agenda of "sustainable development" had finally come of age. While corporate representatives, gathered under the banner of the "Business Council for Sustainable Development," clearly played a disproportionate role in those proceedings, meaningful progress appeared to have been made in areas such as forestalling global climate change, protecting biodiversity, and adopting a comprehensive framework for linking environmental concerns to the needs of the world's impoverished peoples.

Johannesburg, in contrast, seemed to merely reinforce and enshrine the

virtually complete lack of official environmental progress that we have seen over the past few years. This time, corporate agendas were not only in the forefront, but may have been the only agendas given a substantive hearing. Civil society was largely silenced inside the official proceedings, and peaceful protests outside were met with vicious police attacks, replete with tear gas and concussion grenades. Behind the platitudes and self-congratulatory rhetoric about "ending" poverty in a decade or two, "Rio+10" was an overt attempt to reverse years of diplomacy around environmental issues by making environmental agreements subservient to the agendas of the WTO and other institutions of global capitalism.

Perhaps there has been no more urgent time for a book like Joel Kovel's *The Enemy of Nature*. In this very personal, thoughtful, and passionate manifesto, Kovel, a long-time psychologist, professor, and Green Party activist, examines the roots of today's ecological problems and speaks to the urgency of moving toward a fundamentally different kind of society. Kovel labels his solution ecosocialist, but his grasp of ecological issues, social history, and ethics clearly transcends the limitations of that label and offers much food for thought to all who seek a more ecological way forward.

The scope of Kovel's synthesis is very broad. He surveys issues from climate change, and the concomitant rise in the frequency of natural disasters, to the 1984 chemical disaster in Bhopal, India, and the underlying roots of global poverty and dislocation. He enfoldes themes from philosophy, history, political economy, psychology,



Brian Tokar is the author of *The Green Alternative* (New Society) and *Earth for Sale* (South End Press), and the editor of the recent collection, *Redesigning Life?* (London: Zed Books). He teaches at the Institute for Social Ecology in Vermont (www.social-ecology.org), and is the coordinator of the Institute's Biotechnology Project.

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and the analysis of popular culture, examining the origins of patriarchy, private property, and the entrenchment of class structures, all in a search for radical, systemic solutions. Kovel critiques popular environmental approaches, from the fashionable "Green capitalism" embraced by many in today's "sustainable development" camp, to Naderite populism and the back-to-the land philosophy of bioregionalism, showing how past approaches have failed to address both the magnitude of the problems we face, and their systemic origins.

Where Kovel falls short, however, is in his proposed solutions. Having chronicled such a vast scope of issues and their origins, this is no fatal flaw, as we have long since passed the time when formulaic answers to our most pressing social problems may have appeared sufficient. Indeed, the prefigurative approach embraced by Kovel is an essential step forward. Prefigurative politics—the idea that a transformative social movement must necessarily anticipate the ways and means of the hoped-for new society—is one of the most important, lasting legacies of both the classical anarchist tradition and the 1960s' New Left. Kovel seeks inspiration in the communistic, Christian society of the Bruderhof, the ethical traditions of Marxism, and a broad array of social experiments, from organic farms and community credit unions to direct action affinity groups. Each in their own way helps overturn the capitalist tyranny of exchange values over use values—Marxist economic categories that Kovel truly makes his own—and helps usher in a better world.

Clearly, such experiments are a necessary step toward transforming society, and the sad legacy of state socialism serves as a warning that any revolutionary movement that does not rectify its ends and its means will inevitably reproduce the worst crimes of capitalism. But is it sufficient? Where is the whole that emerges dialectically from more than the sum of the parts? How

does a social and political movement develop that can truly hope to remake society? It is here that Kovel's effort to fuse ecology and Marxism breaks down somewhat, and alternative ecophilosophies may offer some missing parts of the solution.

For example, Kovel is rather dismissive of social ecology, which emerged in the mid-1960s as perhaps the first genuinely ecological form of radicalism. Kovel tends to reduce social ecology to the personal failings of its founder, Murray Bookchin, and offers a rather caricatured account of Bookchin's affinity for the instinctual anti-authoritarianism of classical anarchism. In fact, social ecology was the first school of thought to equate ecology with a fundamental critique of capitalism, to view social hierarchy as a more fundamental problem than class inequality, and to embrace a revolutionary politics of localism and direct democracy as the alternative to the inherently ecocidal and anti-social nature of today's elite institutions.

Marxists, by and large, initially dismissed environmental concerns in the late 1960s and early Seventies as a mere diversion from the class struggle. We were lectured *ad nauseum* about the advantages of "socialist nuclear power"—until Chernobyl—and the ecological industrial models in Eastern Europe, where the patterns of lung disease turned out to be a horror unimaginable even among Appalachia's coal miners. Recent attempts by James O'Connor, John Bellamy Foster, Elmar Altvater and others to reconcile Marxism and ecology have offered important insights, especially toward explaining just why capitalism is so inherently anti-ecological. But there remains a fundamental mismatch between the economic world view of Marxism on the one hand, and ecological radicalisms that attempt a more holistic critique of contemporary society. Many leftist ecologists have been influenced less by Marx than they have by Mumford's critiques of the origins of technology and the city, and by Polanyi's plea to re-sub-

merge the economy in social relationships, for example.

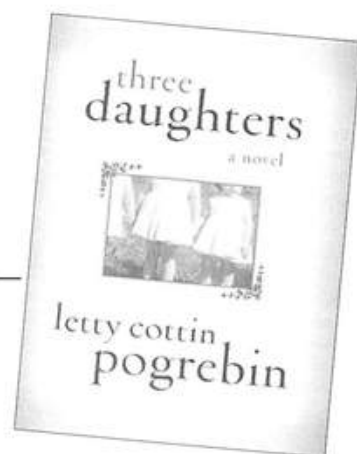
The movement against corporate globalism that came of age in Seattle during the historic demonstrations against the WTO has embraced many of the insights about the world that Kovel shares with social ecologists and other eco-radicals. This past fall's mobilization against the World Bank and IMF was the first since Seattle to embrace an explicitly ecological dimension, with the emergence of the green "Eco-Bloc." This is most appropriate following the fiasco in Johannesburg, and a summer that submerged Central Europe's historic cities beneath torrential floodwaters, while unprecedented wildfires raged across the Western U.S. But today's global justice movement is already reaching beyond some of the limitations of Kovel's approach, merging prefigurative forms of internal organization with a mission to directly confront the core institutions of global capitalism. Many embrace social ecology's call for confederations of directly democratic communities to emerge as a revolutionary alternative to those institutions. Social ecologists such as Cindy Milstein and Chaia Heller have written articulately about the imperative to move from the short-lived democracy of the streets to a longer-range agenda of community self-governance based on democratic popular assemblies. Lessons about ecology and the resistance to globalization from thinkers and activists in the global South have become increasingly influential in recent years as well.

In the end, Kovel's book raises more questions than answers, and it is quite appropriate for these times that he ends with a series of key, strategic questions that have plagued activists for generations. The questions he raises are fundamental ones, and his book offers one of the most compelling cases in some time for a more systemic, long-range view of today's often overwhelming social and ecological crises. □

Three Daughters

Sybil Adelman Sage

■ *Three Daughters*, by Letty Cottin Pogrebin. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002.



Whether it's a universal truth from a Greek tragedy or the personal sting of a parent's voice dropping to a whispered, "Shh, not in front of the kinder," each of us understands the swirling drama of a family secret. In *Three Daughters*, Letty Cottin Pogrebin's first novel, an alef-bet of secrets is unfurled. Even an impossible decision made by a misguided father ultimately comes out of hiding thirty-five years later.

Rachel, Leah, and Shoshanna are the daughters of the scholarly, prominent Rabbi Sam Wasserman who, after retiring in 1987, made aliyah. The half-sisters have matured with the generation of women who faced head-on the demands of combining marriage, career, and motherhood. Like all siblings, they unwittingly compete to claim turf of their own. Rachel wins "most children," "most domestic," and "most physically fit." Leah's domains are political activism and the English language. Shoshanna, with her *kevell*-worthy family and unparalleled organizational skills, would insist it's not a contest, fearful that winning would attract her enemy, the Evil Eye. For her, there are two kinds of people—"those ... who took their well-being for granted and those ... who knew something horrible could happen because it already had. Her job was to

stay alert on behalf of both breeds."

Time is the fourth daughter in this compelling and convincing story: Dates and holidays—Thanksgiving, Pesach and International Women's Day, lunches, and birthdays convene and separate the family, each a shofar blast awakening all to take spiritual inventory. The central drama unfolds in the months preceding the turn of the millennium with the three women anticipating their father's return to New York. He is delighted to accept the Lifetime Achievement award from his former congregation.

Ten long years have passed since the eighty-seven-year-old Rabbi Wasserman last visited. Rachel, still proud of her tiny waist and large Long Island home, has weathered devastating losses and is using Torah study, her needle-point business, and denial to help her cope. Leah, the product of Sam's first marriage, remains loyal to Birkenstocks and Yiddish, snubbing Manhattan-style consumerism by turning yartzeit glasses into "her crystal set." She's now faced with the fall-out of having channeled every ounce of energy into politics at the expense of her husband and sons. Shoshanna remains the family's best juggler, but this scheduling junkie has been traumatized by the loss of pages from her *Filofax*, a book to which she imparts biblical significance.

The characters are drawn so vividly, we feel as if we've made many a kiddish with the Wassermans, and been to their seders. We share Shoshanna's stress as she prepares for an annual sisterly get together. The youngest sister

explains, "Lunches with Leah were often difficult. No, that was mealy-mouthed; lunches with Leah were always an ordeal.... Regardless of how careful she was in Leah's presence, something always went wrong, be it syntax or subject matter, and it always seemed to be her fault. The pressure could be crushing." Yet Pogrebin's affection for these women inspires us to feel far more empathy for them than we might for our own siblings.

With great compassion and incisive humor, *Three Daughters* raises serious questions about honesty and forgiveness, ingredients as essential as love for keeping a family whole. The author delights in language, actually in three languages. Leah, as feminist, takes issue with Hebrew as the language of "our fathers" and closely identifies it with the father who rejected her, arguing "Hebrew has no nashameh. If any language has the right to speak for the Jewish soul and carry our traditions, it's Yiddish." All of the rabbi's daughters know their *mikva* from their *mabitzta*, but it's Rachel who most desperately needs *t'filah*, the chanting of *b'rachot*, to get her through the year, if not the day.

If Letty Cottin Pogrebin had only been cofounder of *Ms.* magazine, that would have been enough. If she'd only given us *Deborah*, *Golda and Me*, *Getting Over Getting Older* or any of her eight nonfiction books, that would have been enough. But, like the women in this novel, she opted for a new challenge and we're grateful that she's added "novelist" to her already impressive credits. □

Sybil Adelman Sage is primarily a script writer who has written for Lily Tomlin, The Mary Tyler Moore Show, Maude, Alice, and others. She and her husband, Martin Sage, have written for Northern Exposure, Magnum P.I., and Growing Pains.

Feeling Safe in a Risky World

Helping Your Child

Susan Dermond

If we thought in the months after September 11 that eventually we would get beyond dealing with horrific news, we certainly know better now. Bombings, sniper shootings, and other acts of violence both here and across the globe, have dominated media and captured our attention.

Much has been written by psychologists of the importance of allowing children to express their fears and of reassuring them of their safety. Excellent advice, but I would like to look at this issue from another perspective.

Can we prevent children from experiencing so much fear in the first place? Is it falsely protecting them from reality to limit their exposure to knowledge of evil and cruelty, or is sheltering them a good thing? In what ways can parents give their children a feeling of security *other* than verbal reassurances?

A Contracted Heart

Childhood is a time when the capacity to love is developed. An open expansive heart is developed by positive, happy experiences, by loving environments. Exposure to violence, whether first or second hand, runs counter to the relaxed heart because it causes contraction—a fearful drawing back into oneself.

As adults when we hear bad news, our tendency is to tune into the media to get as much information as possible because being informed gives us the false illusion of getting more control over our lives. Actually, the opposite may be true. If you observe yourself during news coverage of violence, you will notice that your heart rate, respiration rate, and muscle tension rise, along with your anxiety level.

A child experiences exactly the same thing. Partially because the child has had many fewer sensory experiences and memories than you, the impact of the violent images and emotional voices is far greater. The child is more open in the heart, has developed fewer protective barriers.

Susan Dermond is the director of the Portland, Oregon, Living Wisdom School, grades pre-school–7, and editor of I Came from Joy, a spiritual activity book for children. For more information, see www.livingwisdom.org.



By far the best way to help your children is to limit your household's media consumption, not only because it protects them from experiencing the dramatic, emotional hype that media uses to get viewers, but also because *you, yourself*, will be calmer. Choosing to watch or hear news that is noncommercial (such as public TV) and delves more into issues rather than the emotions of witnesses will also be helpful.

Sharing Your Peace

A parent, describing to me her son's fear of going to sleep after September 11, got more and more agitated as she talked about the events of last autumn. It was apparent to me that her child's difficulty in sleeping was as much due to *her* anxiety level as it was his own. Having a strong spiritual practice in your life, such as the observance of Shabbat, or the practice of T'ai chi, yoga, or meditation, will give you a source of inner peace to turn to in crisis. As your child witnesses your healthy ways of restoring peace and calm, he too will gain a sense of strength and security.

The value of human touch to calm anxiety also cannot be overrated. For example, holding your child in your lap, giving a hug or back rub, holding hands as you walk together. It has been well documented that the warmth of pets helps elderly people; how much more does the warmth of a parent's body help the child to relax! Lying down on the bed with your child and humming a soothing song or just talking about your day is reassuring. And if your child has trouble falling asleep, you can try massaging the soles of her feet.

Of course, your child is not the only one who will benefit. As you slow down to stroke your child, you will find your own body and emotions calming. Together you can rediscover the inner peace that can help in the midst of life's storms. □

ILLUSTRATION BY ANNIE KASSOF

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

תיקון

Don't let the lights go out!

These are hard times for all of us who want a world of justice, peace, and generosity. Witness Bush's war on Iraq, a conservative-dominated political world, an unending cycle of violence in Israel and Palestine.

Now is when we need each other most.

That's why it's so important for you to read TIKKUN and to join the Tikkun Community. Don't give up—underneath all the craziness, the people on this planet share an abiding desire for a world based on love and not on hate, for a world that can survive rather than be sold for profits, and for a society based on justice and caring.

JOIN THE Tikkun Community

Contact us at

www.tikkun.org, at **community@tikkun.org**,
or at **415-575-1200**

CREATE A GATHERING

in your home to discuss the Middle East and the War on Iraq. We'll send you information about how to do it—and how to create your own local Tikkun Community.

COME TO WASHINGTON, D.C.,

June 1–4, 2003, to our Annual Tikkun Conference and Teach-In to Congress (June 3). Save the dates and start asking your friends to join you.

RENEWAL & TRAINING

Come to our Summer Spiritual Renewal Gathering and Training for Activists, August 12–17.