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TIKKUN

**CREATIVITY
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SUPPLEMENT

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH AND INTERFAITH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY

MARCH/APRIL 2004

ANYONE BUT BUSH?

The Unbearable Lightness of Liberal Politics

Michael Lerner Katrina vanden Heuvel Douglas Rushkoff

LAW AND
HIERARCHY

PETER GABEL

ANAÏS NIN
MARGOT DUXLER

SPIRITUAL
BALANCE

SHEILA PELTZ WEINBERG

ZIONISM AND
OCCUPATION

STEPHEN ZUNES

\$5.95 U.S. \$8.75 Canada



The Passion of Jesus ... Stop Blaming the Jews!

JOHN DOMINIC CROSSAN JAMES CARROLL

Olive Tree 2002

shafted, stuck among three coconut palms
in the red earth of a tub from the Home Depot
in the middle of a junction
turned overnight into a square.

Motorists hurrying home
see it perhaps from the other side of the road
behind the clay pots leaning into each other,
but they have no time for the twisted story
that rises from its trunk
or the flat top of the tree
trimmed with a building contractor's sense of humor.

They cannot imagine the roots
feeling their way confused
in the foreign soil,
their mother's earth
still clinging to them
like food from home
ever since the soldiers cut them down.

The olives, offered and unpicked, blacken
my face
and no miniature roses will divert my heart
from the shame.

—Agi Mishol

Translated from the Hebrew by Lisa Katz



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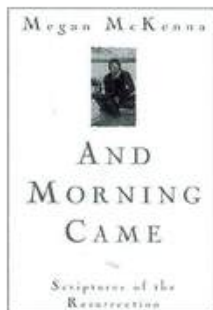
Front Cover: © Dave Cutler. c/o thespot.com

Sikkum: TIKKUN RECOMMENDS ...

And Morning Came Scriptures of the Resurrection

Megan McKenna
Shield and Ward, 2003

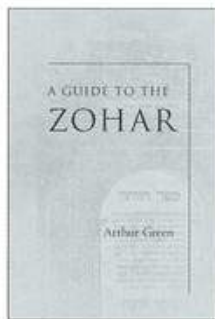
In a powerful study of the Christian notion of Jesus's Resurrection, we get the hopeful alternative to the anti-Semitism generating focus on the Passion. Megan McKenna does a spiritual renewal for Christian faith, seeing the message of Easter as asserting boldly "that death is an empty threat and that life, because of the Incarnation, the life of God-dwelling with us, is ours now. And that there are no limits to this life and its power to transform, transfigure and redeem." This TIKKUN-ish message permeates McKenna's reading of The New Testament.



A Guide to the Zohar

Arthur Green
Stanford U. Press, 2004

The Zohar is the most influential Kabbalistic work, and it has been made accessible through the publication of a new English translation and commentary by Daniel Matt (two volumes published last year, more to come). Arthur Green wrote the introduction to the Matt edition, and in this extended study of the Zohar, Green gives us a powerful philosophical exploration of its concepts and its wisdom. This is more than a useful corrective for the pop-Kabbalah fantasies that have become fashionable among some spiritual seekers—it is also a serious aid to anyone seeking a serious encounter with Jewish spirituality.



Out of the Whirlwind

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik
KTAV Publishing House, 2003

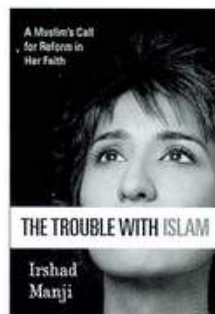
Soloveitchik was one of the great teachers and thinkers of Jewish life in the twentieth century (he taught at Yeshiva University), and this collection of essays on mourning, suffering, and the human condition will help fortify his reputation. It is the combination of intellectual acuity and human compassion which makes Soloveitchik a great hero in the orthodox world, and makes us wish those qualities of soul and intellect had been applied more systematically and forcefully to the two greatest issues facing the Jewish people: the liberation of women and the needed reconciliation with the Palestinian people.

The Trouble With Islam

A Muslim's Call for
Reform in Her Faith

Irshad Manji
St. Martin's Press, 2003

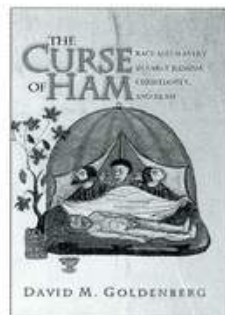
Ms. Manji is a voice for sanity, integrity, and reform in the Islamic world—urging a renewal of Islam and a rethinking of the widespread knee-jerk antagonism toward Israel that has bedeviled its religious community. Unfortunately, Manji isn't always balanced in her approach, rarely acknowledging the legitimacy of critiques of Western capitalism and its materialist, individualist, and community-destroying cultural imperialism. Without that nuance, this book could feed into the Islam bashing taking place in Western societies where this book was published and is most likely to be read. Yet, if this book provokes a serious discussion in the Islamic world, it could be a very valuable counterpoint to the one-dimensional thinking that has been too prevalent in some Islamic quarters.



The Curse of Ham Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity and Islam

David M. Goldenberg
Princeton University Press, 2003

In a powerful new study of the roots of racism in Western religions, David Goldenberg argues that there is no indication of negative sentiment toward Blacks in the Bible. Skin color is never mentioned in descriptions of biblical Kushites. Color did not matter. It was primarily with the increase of slaves from Black Africa, particularly as the Muslim conquest of North Africa brought many slaves to the Near East in the seventh century CE, that the Curse of Ham became prevalent in Jewish Biblical exegesis. The Jews of antiquity and late antiquity did not politically dominate physically distinct people, nor did Jewish society mark ethnicity by color, nor did its literature reflect attitudes of denigration or disdain toward the black African. Only later, when Jews were part of larger cultures that politically dominated physically distinct peoples, does its literature begin to equate ethnicity with skin color and begin to exhibit the anti-Black sentiment of the surrounding culture.



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Letters to the Editor

The Geneva Accord

To the editor:

I find myself more and more critical of the views TIKKUN has taken recently—not because it is too critical of Israeli policies but because it is, I believe, especially with its endorsement of the Geneva Accord, not critical enough.

This Accord is totally unbalanced in its treatment of the Palestinian situation and takes the attention away from the settlements, which have sprouted like mushrooms over the occupied West Bank as well as the Wall, which is turning the farming villages into ghettos and prisons. Geneva is yet another “plan” which will create illusions (wonderful, now they are talking together and there will be peace) but no reality. It is a plan made by people with no real power... so what happens now?

To approve of an Accord which insists on Palestinian demilitarization while agreeing to Israel's continuing to be

one of the most highly militarized countries—a nuclear country—and [agreeing to] its continued control over water and roads is indeed very questionable. Once again, an unbalanced situation is propa-



gated which will never lead to peace. I question that so much credibility has been given to someone like Yossi Beilin who, while Minister of Justice and one of the architects of Oslo, did nothing to dismantle settlements. As for Yasser Arafat, himself a refugee, to disregard the plight of

Palestinian refugees all over the world—which is one of the most important factors in the real search for peace—I am at a loss to know why he agreed to be part of this venture.

PAULA ABRAMS- HOURANI

Vienna, Austria

Editor Responds:

Yasser Arafat is part of this venture (in fact, one of its architects) because the alternative is not a better deal for the

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Palestinians, but a worse one. You might ask why many African Americans took civil rights legislation in the 1960s when they should have demanded reparations for slavery and a total dismantling of all the economic arrangements that allow white society to hire blacks last and fire them first during the business cycle. Such a demand might have had considerable legitimacy, but it would not have yielded anything and, if counterposed to civil rights, would have left most African Americans in far worse shape than they are in today. Racism has not ended in this country, but few Blacks would wish today that they had been followers of the rejectionists of the '60s. Palestinians will not get a perfect deal from Geneva, and Geneva will not be won without a serious and committed struggle. But to refuse to wage that struggle in the name of something even less obtainable is to be insensitive to the suffering of Palestinians in a way that we are not willing to be.

To the Editor:

TIKKUN's national campaign to support the Geneva Accord is irresponsible. TIKKUN says that Yasser Abed Rabbo acted "with the full approval of the Palestinian Authority." This misleads people into concluding that the results of the Geneva Accord are endorsed by the Palestinian Authority, and thus by Yasser Arafat. Of course, this is not true. Yasser Arafat has never met a peace agreement he liked, including the Geneva Accord.

When Arafat and his supporters speak of the "Occupation," they don't really mean the West Bank and Gaza. Long before 1967, they opposed the occupation of Tel Aviv and Haifa. The map in Arafat's head (which he has no intention of giving up or showing us) consists of all of Israel. This is the fact that has not changed. The rejection of Israel is historic and persistent. We can only hope it is not permanent.

STEPHEN MCARTHUR
Montpelier, VT

Editor Responds:

The Palestinian people, acting through their elected representatives, have time and again affirmed a desire to live in peace with the State of Israel once Israel returns to the pre-67 borders and provides compensation for Palestinian refugees. The Oslo Accord was the first step in this direction, reaffirmed in a historic meeting attended by President Clinton, when the Palestinian leadership officially changed

the charter of the PLO to eliminate references to destroying Israel. Of course, the angry talk remains, and will remain as long as the Palestinian people have not achieved either reparations or a state. But that should not surprise us Jews, since in our Passover seder we still retain and say the words written in our anger: "Pour out thy wrath on the nations" and on Tisha B'av we go on to call for their full destruction. There are many other angry statements directed at non Jews in our tradition that have never been erased from the Talmud and which are still part of the "teaching of hatred" that goes on in sectors of the Jewish world. So if you want to find people who want to wipe out the Other, you'll find them on both sides of this dispute.

To the Editor:

The Geneva Accords are a major step towards defining the grounds for peace in Israel/Palestine. However, they are not yet sufficiently convincing.

Palestinians who are denied the Right of Return to Israel are being asked to make a great and nearly impossible sacrifice. It is clearly a huge injustice in their eyes.

And many of the Jewish settlers on Palestinian land also feel that their expulsion would be a huge injustice requiring a nearly impossible sacrifice.

The next challenge, therefore, is to find appropriate "reparations" for these injustices. We must now define and commit the terms for compensation of any Palestinians who are not granted the Right of Return to their property in Israel and the compensation of any Israelis who are encouraged to leave their homes in Palestine and return to Israel.

Such compensation must be adequate to enable these people not only to survive but to have real prospects for a full life in the future. It must include offers of sanctuary and support as well as monetary compensation.

An offering for this and a plan for its fulfillment are now needed if the acceptance of the Geneva Accord is to grow. Please weigh this need and devise a process for developing such an offering and plan.

RUDY J. CYPSEK
Katonah, NY

To the Editor:

I've been wishing and hoping for peace in the Middle East for too many years. The Geneva Accord provides a

wonderful basis to reach that elusive goal. The presence of former President Jimmy Carter at the launch of the Accord means to me that he supports it, and nobody can deny his ceaseless efforts to promote peace everywhere in the world.

I thank you for fully printing the Accord which most members of the media, siding with Sharon, decided was not worthy of consideration. I remember that the media did not publish the "most generous offer" that Prime Minister Barak presented Arafat at Camp David. Not only Arafat, but no Palestinian, could ever have accepted that offer which was an insult to the patriotism and intelligence of the Palestinians. And this is why the media and President Clinton's administration abstained from making it public. There was no possible way to defend it.

I also congratulate you for having interviewed the two top negotiators of the Accord and for giving your readers a full account of these interviews. I found their ideas and comments very valuable and they are a good complement to the Accord itself.

RENE ESPINOSA, SR.
Falls Church, VA

To the Editor:

The Geneva Accord is a lifeline for those of us who love Israel and feel strongly that there will be no Israel unless there is a viable Palestinian State.

My area of concern is that while Israeli aggression against the Palestinians is controlled by the military/state (and therefore, would cease if the government declares a cease-fire and removes the settlers), the PLO has (or claims to have) no control whatsoever over militant groups like Hamas, the Fatah Movement, and Islamic Jihad. These groups have sworn to eradicate Israel and I do not think they will abandon their *raison d'être* in the interests of the majority of the Palestinian people, who just want a safe home in which to thrive and raise their families.

Efforts by the Palestinian Authority to control or rein in these militant groups have been fruitless. How can the Geneva Accord be implemented by the Palestinians, and what efforts will specifically be made to dismantle these groups, who are the enemy of a peaceful, two-state solution? We must have a clear solution, not only for the future of the Israeli state, but to disable this argument for Israel to not comply with the Accord.

ELIZABETH STROM
New York, NY

Editor Responds:

There are extremists in both Israel and Palestine who will revert to violence to block a solution that allows both peoples to have their own states. The Geneva Accord provides for joint cooperation between Israel, Palestine, and an international force to fight against these extremists. Today it is hard to imagine what a moderate government has to gain by engaging in a civil war against extremists in Palestine, but if the Palestinian majority actually achieved a viable state along the borders defined in the Geneva Accord (not those being suggested by Ariel Sharon) and were financially able to provide a decent life for the Palestinian refugees, the incentive to be rid of those extremists would be great. Without that incentive, the violence will continue and Israel will never be safe.

The New Anti-Semitism

To the Editor:

The article "The New Anti-Semitism" by Miriam Greenspan (November/December, 2003) was very thoughtful and interesting; however it failed to face some realities about Israel.

On page 34 it is claimed that "Israel is held to a higher standard than any other country" by the UN and the international community. The facts are very different. Israel has consistently violated UN resolutions with invasions and settlements in the West Bank, but no UN action has been taken. This is in contrast to the UN action on Iraq. International agencies have pursued Iraq, Iran, and North Korea because they sought nuclear weapons, but no action has been taken against Israel, which actually has a large nuclear weapon stockpile. The fact is that only Israel among the smaller countries has been allowed to consistently violate international norms with impunity.

On page 34 it is claimed that "new anti-Semitism is taking hold on North American campuses." I believe there is no evidence for this. It is true that there are many more charges of anti-Semitism because of the deliberate policy of some pro-Israel groups like Hillel to make accusations of anti-Semitism against those who dare oppose the policies of Ariel Sharon. I myself was a victim of such an accusation because I protested against a pro-Israel rally in the middle of our campus. Since I was Jewish and a distinguished member of the faculty, the

accusation had no serious consequences. If I had been non-Jewish and an assistant professor, I certainly would have been intimidated.

The importance of the role of the "right-wing ... mainstream Jewish organizations" mentioned on page 36 is not given proper emphasis. These organizations continue to support Ariel Sharon in spite of his crimes and at the same time have great influence in U.S. politics—as noted in Stephen Zunes's article ("Attacks on Dean Expose Democrats' Shift to the Right") on page 13 of the same issue of Tikkun. Unfortunately these organizations claim they are the representatives of American Jews. If some civilized non Jews take this literally this could lead to an anti-Semitic response. Thus these organizations, including the Anti Defamation League, bear a direct responsibility for increased anti-Semitism.

The best antidotes to anti-Semitism are the voices of Jews for peace and justice, the voices of groups like the Tikkun Community and Peace Now.

LINCOLN WOLFENSTEIN
Pittsburgh, PA

To the Editor:

Amidst understandable dismay at anti-Semitism, Miriam Greenspan accuses Palestinians of irrational hatred, of a "culture of hate" which leads to suicide bombings. Greenspan indulges in what no Jew should do—"blaming the victim."

Erich Fromm distinguishes "irrational" hatred (of Jews and others) from "rational hate," which comes into existence "as a reaction to vital threats" and ceases to exist "when the threat has been removed."

Greenspan should talk to the many Israeli military men—including the Chief of Staff, peace activists, reservists, and journalists who state that Palestinian anger, hate, and violence is a response to an oppressive occupation. Or Greenspan should talk to some of the over 500 Israeli reservists who refuse to "fight beyond the 1967 border in order to dominate, expel, starve, and humiliate an entire people." Facing this existential threat, Palestinian children do not need to be told by their teachers, newspapers, or politicians that they should hate the occupiers. The oppressed usually hate their oppressors.



Greenspan might take up the request by Dr. Eyad El-Sarraj (in an interview in the same issue of TIKKUN) that Jews visit Gaza in order to further reconciliation. El-Sarraj, a strong advocate of nonviolent resistance who was tortured by both Israel and the Palestinian Authority, said in 1997 that he was surprised, given the oppression under which they then suffered, that there were not more suicide bombings.

And the Occupation is much more brutal now. The best way Greenspan can help end the cycle of violence and terrorism is to urge Israeli leaders to end the Occupation and to heed President Kennedy: "Those who make peaceful evolution impossible, make violent revolution inevitable."

NED HANAUER
Framingham, MA

Greenspan replies:

Professor Wolfenstein's letter is fairly typical of the kinds of remarks that emanate from a certain sector of Israel critics: 1) selective "facts" are used to bolster an entrenched bias about how favored Israel is by the West while ignoring how Israel is demonized around the world; and 2) the oft-repeated idea that certain Jewish groups make accusations of anti-Semitism against anyone who "dares to oppose" Sharon's policies is used to deny the very existence of anti-Semitism. Both of these errors are worthy of some serious treatment but I have only the space for two brief remarks:

1. For every "fact" about Israel and the UN you can find counterfacts. Here's one to think about: There are more UN resolutions on Israel than on any other country in the world. China's oppression of Tibet, quasi-genocidal policies against the Kurds in Iraq, the mass murder in East Timor by Indonesia, Assad's killing of 20,000 of his own Arab citizens in one afternoon to suppress critics of his regime, and countless other events that "violate international norms" have been barely noted by the United Nations while condemnation of Israel continues unabated.

2. The anti-Semitism on college campuses is amply documented in Phyllis Chesler's *The New Anti-Semitism*. I suggest that the Professor do some reading about this subject before he claims there's no evidence for it. There is nothing subtle about Jewish students at the University of Pennsylvania being verbally attacked as

Jews and confronted with a shotgun; articles published by the University Provost's office of Kent State blaming the Jews for the "genocide of many of the world's people"; columns in the Columbia University student newspaper describing Jews as "devils," "tricksters," and "evil leeches"; anti-Semitic tracts mailed to professors at colleges around the country, etc. I have omitted from this very brief list any instances that have to do with Israel or Zionism (e.g., student activists who are delivered death threats when they support Israel). The Professor has obviously not bothered to go to the ADL website, where he could easily read about such incidents. Rather, he holds the ADL responsible for increased anti-Semitism!

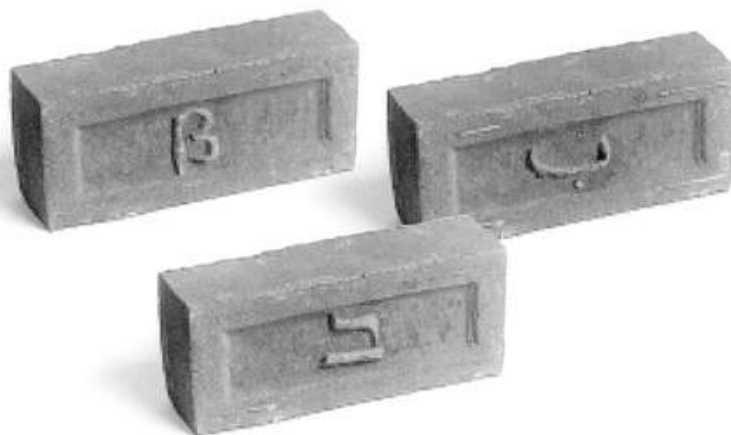
*Mr. Hanauer's comments perfectly exemplify the danger of political justifications and legitimations of hatred as a "rational" response to oppression and injustice. I took a very clear position against the Occupation in this essay and called Sharon a "war criminal"; but I also took great pains to distinguish legitimate outrage from hatred. My claim is that the legitimate anger of the Palestinian people has been corrupted by a politics of hatred which relies on racist stereotypes, joins ultra-nationalism and fundamentalist religion, demonizes the Enemy, and politically dehumanizes the Other as irredeemably Evil. I suggest that Mr. Hanauer read Willard Gaylin's probing study *Hatred: the Psychological Descent into Violence*, for further understanding of this distinction and its importance. If all oppression "justifies hatred" then why shouldn't women hate men for thousands of years of patriarchy? Why not fire-bomb all male institutions? And why shouldn't Jews hate gentiles for thousands of years of persecution, and attack the churches and mosques in which anti-Semitism has been spouted? Would these hatreds be "justified"? (or lead to anything resembling "justice"?). And if hatred is only justified when Jews are the oppressors, this becomes another example of anti-Semitic bias.*

It is ironic that Mr. Hanauer uses Eric Fromm to refer to "rational hate." The kind of group fanaticism that uses hatred as its fuel is something that Fromm would have described as an "escape" from freedom rather than a way to achieve it. It was Fromm who said "There is perhaps no phenomenon which contains so much destructive feeling as moral indignation, which permits envy or hate to be acted out under the guise of virtue." □

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Losing It: Civility in the Eyes of the Beholder

Howard Dean's famous Yelping after the Iowa primary may have given President Bush the perfect TV clip to ridicule his potential rival in November, but was "losing it" in Iowa really as destructive to civility in politics as the invasion of Iraq and the declaration of America's right to unilaterally overthrow regimes around the world?

Judgments of civility or its absence are not only culture-bound, but often politically motivated. Take the cases circulating in the Jewish world. The Israeli Ambassador to Sweden looks at an exhibit that he interprets as praising acts of Palestinian terrorists. (The image of a Palestinian terrorist floating on a sea of blood is described by the Ambassador as a sea of Jewish blood—though as artist Gilad Atzmon points out, the artist might have just as well been referring to the blood of the Palestinian people, an interpretation which, Atzmon argues, never occurred to the Israeli media when they supported the Ambassador's reaction.) In a fit of rage, the Ambassador destroys the exhibit, insisting that in so doing he is attacking Swedish anti-Semitism. The Swedish government and media are outraged at this "art vandal" while Rabbi Cooper of the

Los Angeles Wiesenthal Museum of Tolerance uses the incident to point out the long history of Swedish anti-Semitism and the country's failure to defend Jews during the Holocaust.

Yet this kind of contextual understanding of violence miraculously disappears when Los Angeles Jewry face a peacenik's emotional reactions. TIKKUN editorial board member Chaim Seidler-Feller, arguably one of the most creative Hillel Foundation directors in the country, has faced repeated harassment from a group of ultra-right-wing Jews who protest whenever Seidler-Feller invites anti-Occupation voices to speak at Hillel. In a confrontation this Fall, Seidler-Feller, who grew up in a Holocaust-survivor family, was con-

fronted by one woman who allegedly yelled that he was a kapo (the derogatory term used to refer to Jews who served as guards alongside the Nazis in the concentration camps, hoping thereby to preserve their own lives while they betrayed their fellow Jews). This calumny touched a nerve that led the good rabbi to allegedly push and kick his verbal assailant. The same people who were justifying the Israeli Ambassador's losing it in Sweden found Seidler-Feller's moment of rage unforgivable, and are demanding that he be fired.

None of these are acts to be emulated. But there is something bizarre in the way that demands for civility replace attention to the larger realities of global oppression.

March 20 Anti-War Rallies

Once again Tikkun Community (TC) activists will be marching in an anti-war rally organized by the deeply misguided leadership of ANSWER (Act Now to Stop War & End Racism). The principles of unity of the coalition sponsoring the march include "Bring the troops home now!", "End colonial occupation from Iraq to Palestine and everywhere!", "Stop the attacks on civil liberties!", and "Money for jobs, education, healthcare and housing—Not war!"

On the one hand, TC activists opposed the intervention in Iraq, and most continue to believe that U.S. willingness to undermine the United Nations and assert its right to overthrow govern-

Dumbing Down America

In January, CBS television censored free speech by refusing to sell airtime to the MoveOn Voter Fund for a political ad during the Super Bowl. The ad shows the impact on children who will bear the future burden of the Bush Administration's run-up of the federal deficit.

CBS says that it is unwilling to air controversial ads during the Super Bowl—which has one of the biggest audiences of the year. But it decides what is controversial. In a previous year it ran an ad linking marijuana to terrorism, because from the worldview of the media execs, that's just a public service information ad.

It has always been unfair to blame the American public for not having more progressive ideas when the information it gets is so limited. Media apologists say that decisions are market-driven: "If people want something, and advertising revenues are available, we will supply it." But not when it comes to presenting views from the progressive world!

When we last checked, the finalists for the ad were still posted on the MoveOn website. They are worth watching. <http://www.bushin30seconds.org/finalists.html>

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ments around the world that it considers "evil" will do far more to undermine the well-being of the planet than to improve it, despite any good that comes from the (from-TIKKUN's standpoint-quite-welcome) overthrow of Saddam Hussein in this way. The March 20 anti-war rallies will allow Americans to express their continued opposition to the war consciousness that led both major political parties to rally behind and continue to fund the intervention.

On the other hand, there are many TC activists who feel unrepresented by the current anti-war leadership. TIKKUN has explored the problem of an excessive anti-Israel focus that too often becomes anti-Semitic in the way that it singles out Israel from among the world's human rights offenders. But TC activists are equally dismayed at the lack of vision projected at the anti-war rallies, the excessive negativity, the inability to present a picture of what we are *for* and how we might get there. Few speakers will address the reality of contemporary American politics: that the anti-war movement was unable to unite behind a single candidate for the Democratic nomination for President, that its influence was thus diluted, that it has no serious strategy for making an impact on the rest of the



electoral process in 2004, and that it has no clue about how it is ever going to win over to its side the tens of millions of Americans who might oppose war but who do not resonate with the rhetoric of the ANSWER crowd. We will be subjected to rhetoric about colonialism in Palestine, rather than to a more compassionate "middle path" discourse that TIKKUN advocates (both pro-Israel and pro-Palestine, transcending the blame game). Our efforts within the United for Peace and Justice coalition to get an explicit endorsement of our middle path or of the Geneva Accord has been unsuccessful (we'll write about this in a future issue of TIKKUN).

Most demonstrators have had no role or say in picking the speakers or democratically determining who is to be chosen as the putative leadership of these marches. So most people who march against the war do the only thing they can do to dis-identify with the self-appointed leaders of these demonstrations—they go home after the march rather than stay to listen to the often anger-filled rhetoric, the Israel bashing, and the fundamental lack of vision coming from the podium.

Yet complaints of this sort often hide a certain self-indulgence. The reality is that for at least the past year we've all known the problem with the current coalitions that dominate the anti-war

movement. Yet none of us has taken the obvious next step: create an anti-war coalition that is more visionary, that combines militance with a discourse of love, kindness, generosity and compassion, and that is willing to organize marches and demonstrations that end in rallies with serious analysis, political savvy, and intellectual coherence. Because that hasn't happened, many of us will choose to march rather than have our failure to do so be interpreted as accepting the war policies of this Administration, even though we know that our participation may also be seen as tacit endorsement of an anti-war leadership which is neither smart nor, in the way it deals with Israel, principled.

Responsive-ness in D.C.?

Good news. Our allies at Americans for Peace Now played a valuable role in encouraging the development of a resolution which says some positive words about the Geneva Accord, the principles for peace articulated by Sari Nusseibeh and Ami Ayalon, and other pro-peace ideas.

The co-sponsoring senators are Chafee (R-RI), Dodd (D-CT), Feinstein (D-CA), Jeffords (I-VT), Lautenberg (D-NJ), Leahy (D-VT), and Nelson (D-FL). The cosponsoring representatives are Baird (D-WA), Baldwin (D-WI),

Blumenauer (D-OR), Capps (D-CA), Carson (D-IN), Clay (D-MO), Davis (D-IL), DeFazio (D-OR), Delahunt (D-MA), Dingell (D-MI), Farr (D-CA), Gonzalez (D-TX), Grijalva (D-AZ), Hinchey (D-NY), Houghton (R-NY), Jackson (D-IL), Johnson (D-TX), Kaptur (D-OH), Kelly (R-NY), Kind (D-WI), Kucinich (D-OH), Leach (R-IA), Lee (D-CA), Markey (D-MA), McCarthy (D-MO), McCollum (D-MN), McDermott (D-WA), McGovern (D-MA), Miller (D-CA), Moran (D-VA), Norton (D-DC), Olver (D-MA), Owens (D-NY), Pascrell (D-NJ), Pitts (R-PA), Price (D-NC),

Rahall (D-WV), Simmons (R-CT), Solis (D-CA), Udall (D-CO), Udall (D-NM), Walsh (R-NY), and Woolsey (D-CA).

Inside Influence in the Supreme Court?

Senators Lieberman and Patrick Leahy called national attention to a Louisiana hunting trip by U.S. Supreme Court Justice Antonio Scalia and Vice President Dick Cheney—shortly after the Supreme Court agreed to review a lower court's decision

requiring the White House to identify members of the vice president's energy task force. Scalia also had dinner with Cheney in November, about two months after the administration asked the justices to overrule the lower court.

The case in question involves Cheney's request to keep private the details of closed-door White House strategy sessions that produced the administration's energy policy. The administration is fighting a lawsuit brought by watchdog and environmental groups who contend that industry executives, including former Enron chairman Ken Lay, helped shape the

Democrats Boost Their "Pro-Israel" Credentials

Certain that the right wing of the Jewish world represents an indispensable constituency, virtually all of the Democratic Presidential candidates have avoided serious discussion about how to bring peace to Israel and Palestine, fearful that they might say something that would alienate this section of the Jewish world. Not one of the candidates has been willing to endorse the Geneva Accord or even to discuss why not.

The pandering helps reinforce the notion that the "pro-Sharon" voices really are the voices of the entire Jewish community. Media rarely describes the candidates as speaking to the Jewish right wing, but instead to the "pro-Israel"

or even "Jewish" vote.

The dramatic reversal of Howard Dean's stand, from calling for a more even-handed approach last Fall, to capitulating to the pro-Sharon camp by January of 2004, is illustrative. Faced with an assault by Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi, Mel Levine, and dozens of others, the candidate lauded for his supposed stubbornness and maverick tendencies did a 180 degree turn long before the Iowa caucus.

In mid January, the Dean campaign announced the appointment of Al Gore's national security adviser Leon Fuerth as chairman of Dean's foreign policy team. "Those in the pro-Israel community who know Leon Fuerth and the

role he played with Vice President Gore will be pleased," said David Harris, executive director of the American Jewish Committee. "He has a long record of involvement and there have been any number of encounters that demonstrate his understanding of the region and his support for a robust U.S.-Israel relationship."

"Leon Fuerth's appointment helps send a very strong message to the foreign-policy world and the American Jewish community that Howard Dean's values and policies related to the Middle East should be ones they should be comfortable with," said Steve Grossman, national co-chair of Dean for America and a former presi-

dent of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). While the AIPAC presence in the Dean campaign has been overwhelmingly powerful, there has been no comparable openness to the Israeli peace forces. Attempts by TIKKUN and others to engage Dean in a dialogue about the Middle East have been rejected.

Meanwhile, few of the grass roots activists who were engaged in building the Dean campaign made any significant attempts to get him to address the Middle East. Deep commitment to the notion of "Anybody But Bush," and to their hopes for Dean to be the one who could replace Bush, have led many Dean activists to argue that

administration's energy policy.

The direction of influence here minimizes the real issues facing an "independent judiciary." TIKKUN has long argued that the problem is not that the wealthy and powerful hang out with each other and want to please each other when they make governmental or judicial decisions, but that the entire ideology of the legal system pulls for decisions that ignore the fundamental human longing for connection and mutual caring and instead construe the world as a struggle between isolated individuals with "rights" who have no fundamental desire or

responsibility to care for each other or to care for the survival of the earth. By construing the issue as one of "the wrong people getting positions of power," the Lieberman-Leahy challenge reinforces the liberal fantasy that "if only the Democrats were in power the environment would be protected." But in fact, the degradation of the environment has continued unimpeded under both Republican and Democratic Administrations because neither proposes an effective counterforce to the planet-destroying logic of consumer capitalism, and because the law itself has few relevant categories to

impede the supremacy of individual consumer desires. For more on the challenges of building a TIKKUN-ish critique of law, please read Peter Gabel's article on page 43.

DUH!

The *American-Statesman* news staff in Austin Texas made a remarkable discovery which they printed in late January, 2004: Blacks bear the brunt when police use force.

The Austin Police Department's records show that officers employ violent tactics at higher rates against minorities than they do against whites. Austin police used force against African Americans and Hispanics at significantly higher rates than they did against whites during the past six years, according to an *Austin American-Statesman* analysis of police statistics. For Hispanics, the likelihood was 25 percent greater. For African Americans, it was 100 percent.

According to the newspaper, "The difference in police treatment defies easy explanation. Records of police calls indicate that minorities were 40 percent more likely to be involved in reports of violent crimes than whites. But police used force against African Americans at even higher rates."

The media has never been willing to connect any of the dots, even when the story is hitting them in the head. African Americans

riot in Cincinnati when Blacks are murdered by police. City after city has similar stories, but the white media always seems amazed, and when a story like this gets recounted, it has that breathless quality of a new discovery. The one word never mentioned: Racism.

Ask any young Black male in a major American city and he will tell you of harassment, fear, and the constant sense of danger that dominates young black men's lives. Close to a majority of them will end up in prison—often jailed for crimes like the use of drugs that are prosecuted when done by Blacks and tolerated with a slap on the hand when it comes to whites of the same age. In response, Black men often adopt a swagger and defiant attitude, listen to violent music that affirms their masculinity, and despair of getting jobs (which in any event are often not available for them no matter what their level of training). Just as Jews developed a "chosen people" mythology to protect themselves from the degradation imposed by anti-Semitic societies of the past, these young Black men are doing what they can to protect themselves from the assault of the dominant culture and its police. And just as Jews are then blamed for having caused the anti-Semitism by our supposedly haughty and clannish manner, so today Blacks get blamed for provoking the anger and racism that they daily encounter in American society. □

they can't afford to push their candidate to take a stand on an issue that might lose him some votes.

The question of Middle East peace was raised to candidate John Kerry on the eve of the New Hampshire primary. In a first statement, apparently spontaneous, Kerry said that he did not see any real leadership willing to take a stand to move from some of the settlements, and that would be necessary. Within hours the pro-Sharon forces had managed to get to him and, according to news reports, Kerry reversed himself, loudly proclaiming that Sharon would in fact be a leader who would take the steps needed for peace. Amazing integrity! Anything for a victory at the polls.

Yet a recent poll in the Jewish world suggests that this fear may be unfounded. It reports that no matter who the Democratic candidate will be, close to 1/3 of Jewish voters are likely to vote Republican in 2004, and they include many of the very pro-Sharon people who have created the impression that "the Jews" will not tolerate any criticism of the Occupation. The votes are already lost to the Democrats—not because of their failure to pander to Israeli supporters of the Occupation, but because these same right-wingers favor the kind of militarism and pro-corporate policies that the Republicans champion and Democrats faintly try to mimic.

HOMELAND SECURITY SELF-EXAMINATION

1. Every American should own, and know how to use a gun because:

- a. We may be called upon at any moment to fend off a jihad of foreign invaders.
- b. We may need to protect our valuables from millions of newly unemployed slum-dwellers.
- c. It's fun to shoot things.
- d. We may be called upon to overthrow a tyrannical leadership that has stolen an election and usurped our freedoms.

2. Every American should be fingerprinted because:

- a. After all good Americans are fingerprinted, only the evil ones will be left to round up and lock away.
- b. It will prevent thieves from stealing my identity, and using it to rack up my Victoria's Secret credit card.
- c. If you're ever kidnapped by terrorists, it'll help the authorities find and identify your body.
- d. No American should ever be fingerprinted, unless they have been convicted of a felony.

3. My religion is:

- a. Fundamentalist Christian awaiting the Rapture.
- b. Christian, with a major in business.
- c. Non-Christian, but seriously considering converting.
- d. None of the government's business.

4. I fly the American Flag:

- a. On both sides of my SUV.
- b. In front of company headquarters.
- c. On three-day weekends.
- d. At half-staff to mourn for the death of our democracy.

5. If I find that my neighbor, a subsidiary of a multinational corporation, is stockpiling hazardous waste in their backyard I should:

- a. Ask the company to hide the waste by burying it, so that no terrorists can possibly attempt to use it for some evil plot.
- b. Contact the Environmental Protection Agency, which takes care of all environmental problems, so you don't have anything to worry about.
- c. Shut-up and mind my own business.
- d. Warn other neighbors and the media about the danger.

6. I am most afraid of:

- a. Islamic Fundamentalists.
- b. An IRS audit.
- c. Getting SARS, smallpox, or anthrax without health insurance.
- d. The Republican Party.

7. The Bill of Rights:

- a. Is no substitute for the Ten Commandments.

- b. Only applies to generous campaign contributors.

- c. Is worth sacrificing to protect my family from terrorists.
- d. Guarantees the rights of the people against the abuses of power by the Federal government.

8. In regard to foreign countries, what should a patriot do?:

- a. Do unto others pre-emptively, before they do unto you.
- b. Through bribery, assassination, and subterfuge, install puppet governments that will allow us to extract all their natural resources.
- c. Bomb 'em if they mess with us.
- d. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

9. Most of my money is:

- a. Spent supporting people who believe in salvation.
- b. In oil and defense stocks.
- c. Spent on rent and groceries.
- d. In a glass jar on my dresser.

10. When I shop I look to see:

- a. A Made-in-the-USA label.
- b. Where the designer section is.
- c. Where the security cameras are.
- d. Whether the goods were made by sweatshop labor.

11. Every American deserves an equal opportunity to:

- a. Pray for forgiveness for their sins.
- b. Inherit all their family's wealth, free of taxes.
- c. Work hard, and party hearty.
- d. Employment, regardless of race, color, weight, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or national origin.

12. Have you ever been convicted of a crime?:

- a. No, Daddy arranged things with the judge.
- b. Yes, but I paid a substantial penalty to the SEC, so it's all been cleared up.
- c. Yes, but I didn't do it.
- d. Yes, for protesting in a "non-free-speech" zone.

13. I would be proud to serve my President:

- a. As a missionary to the heathen hordes.
- b. By accepting multi-billion dollar contracts to rebuild any country he wants to bomb.
- c. By enlisting in the Marines, if it wasn't for my anal cysts.
- d. A subpoena to appear in court.

Now total your points: Each a. = 1 point, b. = 2 points, c. = 3 points, d. = 1000 points.

Your Patriotism Level:

- Less than 15: A Loyal American! (Report any suspicious activity in your neighborhood.)
- 15-30: A Friend of The President (Get out your check-book).
- 30-39: Born in the USA (Watch more Fox News).
- Over 39: Terrorist or Terrorist sympathizer (You're either with us, or you're against us. Consider this your final warning.)

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Hooray for the Thoughtful Undecided

George Vradenburg

Many Democrats are rallying around the cry, "Anybody but Bush."

I am not one of them. I am a Republican.

Please don't stop reading. This magazine does not endorse candidates, but offers lots of contrasting views. This is one. What I love about *TIKKUN*, and why I publish and write for it, is that its diversity of provocative views forces me to think more deeply about the serious issues confronting the world and our nation.

At the outset, let me say that I have serious reservations about Bush's stewardship—the tone of our foreign policy and the precariousness of our nation's financial position—but I am far from persuaded that the other candidates have the demonstrated leadership capacity to do a better job.

I am an "undecided," and I hope for the good of America that there are a lot more like me. Our two parties should compete for our support, not assume it. I fear that we Americans are losing our ability to listen to and learn from each other, and to find common ground. How many Bay Area progressives have friends who are evangelical Christians or want to learn more about their views? How many wealthy Americans living in gated communities have spent time with struggling low-income single parents or really care about them? Too few, I believe.

In the belief that readers of this magazine, like myself, are listeners and learners, let me offer a perspective about why George W. Bush at least deserves consideration.

First, foreign policy. The 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center dramatically underscored our vulnerability to a violent global terrorism that is hostile to the freedoms we enjoy in this country. Bush acted decisively to eliminate terrorist bases in Afghanistan and to remove the Taliban regime. Today, Afghanistan is moving toward a constitutional Islamic republic with political and gender rights, a remarkable achievement. Compare that performance to the weak and ineffective reaction of the prior Administration to the first attack on the World Trade Center in 1993, a response that actually emboldened terrorists to believe that they could increase the scale of their violent attacks because America would not fight back.

Our subsequent intervention in Iraq, while premised on faulty intelligence and exacting a heavy human toll, appears to be producing democratic reforms in the heart of a volatile region critical to our national security. These achievements

are tied to long-term human rights goals that will take time and patience to succeed.

Interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq do not evince "endless war," but rather targeted changes in regimes hostile to democracy and guilty of crimes against humanity. Indeed, it is the failure to intervene against mass crimes in Rwanda and the Congo that should shame the world. This administration has also increased funding to fight the spread of HIV/AIDS, challenged the world to fight trafficking in women and children, and linked foreign aid to positive reforms.

There is, of course, much to challenge: the refusal to deal with global warming, the increase in global poverty caused by our agricultural subsidies, and the overall tone of arrogance and unilateralism. But, on the central issue of our national security, the likely Democratic nominee is not attacking the direction of Bush's foreign policy, only the tone and manner with which it has been executed. This Democratic challenge is significant, certainly deserving close attention. But would the Democratic nominee have had the courage and the conviction to take on terrorism and Middle East despots in the first place? And, if not, does Monday morning quarterbacking of the "way" it has been done evince the kind of leadership this nation needs?

Second, domestic policy. Through large fiscal deficits and low interest rates, this Administration has shortened a potentially serious recession. Moreover, Bush has moved decisively to improve educational outcomes (national educational testing), extend health care benefits (Medicare prescription drugs), and strengthen homeland security.

There is a lot to question in Bush's domestic policies: our increasingly vulnerable financial condition, the perceived unfairness of the tax cuts, the absence of health insurance for 43 million Americans, and, frankly, the entire Bush social agenda. But, on the central issue of our economy, Democratic candidates do not yet offer a convincing counterargument. Their proposed increases in funding for schools, Medicare funding, health insurance, and homeland security cannot be funded by increased taxes on only a small number of very affluent Americans, an approach that raises its own fairness issues.

We are confronted with only two choices for President. We cannot compare one or another candidate against a hypothetical "perfect" candidate. For those whose vote turns on the environment or social issues, the choice has no

(continued on page 19)

George Vradenburg is co-publisher of TIKKUN.

Anyone But Bush?

The Unbearable Lightness of Liberal Politics

Michael Lerner



Will the resounding commitment of liberals and progressives to the notion of “Anyone But Bush” do any more than guarantee the re-election of Bush for another four years?

The Democrats are in danger of sidelining their most principled voices and once again (as in the Clinton-Gore years) appearing to care more about what’s popular than what’s principled, with the possible consequence of becoming less popular.

I have no problem with any of their leading contenders, but if, for example, Kerry is perceived to win the nomination not because of what he stands for but rather because he has been judged electable, that itself may become the reason he won’t be. It’s easy to understand why the “Anyone But Bush” slogan became popular among the Left. After the Nader campaign of 2000 took the two to three percentage points that would have given Al Gore a clear electoral college win (Gore decisively won the popular vote), liberals and progressives are reluctant to vote from their hearts in 2004. This is all the more so because, from a liberal point of view, President Bush has done more damage to America in three years than any president in living memory:

- Resorting to the most aggressive class warfare in America since the 1930s, Bush has enacted budget cuts that have undermined the social safety net that had been carefully constructed over a seventy-year period, and replaced it with tax giveaways to the rich that will ensure even harsher cuts in services to the poor and lower income Americans, while guaranteeing that future generations will have to carry the burden of these cuts without having any way to raise the resources to do so.
- Transforming the tragedy of 9/11 into a blanket excuse for a new wave of expanding American power around the world, President Bush has proclaimed (and then implemented in Iraq) the right of the United States to intervene and overthrow regimes that it considers threatening to American values. Sixty years of effort went into building an international principle that war should be used only as a last resort and only when agreed upon by the community of nations to restrain rogue states, but now Bush has created a precedent which may haunt our planet for generations to come. (It may not always be the United States which has the greatest military power and

capacity to make unilateral decisions about when its interests legitimate military interventions.) There is every likelihood, many people worry, that a second Bush administration would expand the War on Terror to Iran, Syria, North Korea, and possibly beyond—to any other country with the temerity to reject dictation from the United States. (Some of his backers are talking about France as the new enemy!) While many of us at TIKKUN rejoice in the overthrow of Saddam Hussein’s brutal dictatorship (something we’ve been calling for since 1988, when the United States was turning its head to his crimes against humanity and use of chemical weapons), the way that it was done and the overt lying to the American people (without subsequent sincere apologies for having misled us) are deeply troubling and represent the wrong direction for the use of American power.

- Using the cover of his “anti-terrorism” campaign, President Bush has unilaterally suspended the Constitutional rights to a fair trial, due process, and other protections of law that are the very foundation of American democracy. The Patriot Act gives the President the authority to eliminate many Constitutional safeguards and treat American citizens as prisoners of war—all he has to do is *claim* that a given American is working on behalf of terrorists.
- Undermining decades of environmental progress, President Bush has begun an offensive to put the environment back into the hands of the most rapacious profit-seeking corporations. The long-term consequences for the planet may be irreversible.

With these kinds of positions, it is no surprise that many on the Left have rallied around the idea of “Anyone But Bush” rather than on a positive agenda for social transformation.

The mission of TIKKUN, however, *is* social transformation. As a project of a nonprofit organization, TIKKUN cannot and does not endorse or oppose any candidate running for office, and we are not interested in electability. More than that, we believe we can only heal the world if we speak to what can be rather than what is. “Anyone But Bush” is a

ILLUSTRATIONS BY STAN SHAW

slogan based in fear and in the past, rather than a vision for the future.

Yet, instead of speaking to the deep yearning of Americans for a world of kindness and generosity, for moral goodness and spiritual coherence, the Democrats and their supporters have generated (or some might say capitulated to a media-generated) language of technocratic practicality that will dissipate the very support they so desperately seek in the elections of 2004.

The fact is that you cannot win Americans over to an alternative to the radical ideology of the neoconservative Right that has been the foundation of the Bushites' success by providing them with a variety of cautious half-measures lacking any coherent intellectual foundation or vision. The unbearable lightness of the Democrats—their inability to stand for anything at all—has been with us since the 1990s, when Congressional Democrats were unable to construct a liberal or progressive alternative to Gingrich's very effective (though from our standpoint reprehensible) "Contract with America," which boosted Congressional Republicans to majority status in the 1994 elections. Even in 2002 those

Democrats managed to take a perfect moment for re-ascendancy and present themselves as the party that had no unifying theme or message.

It was in reaction to that unbearable lightness that many people became excited about the candidacy of Howard Dean. Because he opposed the Iraq war consistently from before it had begun, Dean seemed to be the one candidate who had the antiwar understanding and backbone to challenge the Republicans. Other Democ-

rats pointed out that Dennis Kucinich, Carol Moseley Braun, and Al Sharpton all had these same characteristics—that they too had opposed the war consistently and that they had a considerably deeper understanding of the problems facing the country. Yet, when the media told us that Dennis Kucinich, Al Sharpton, and Carol Moseley Braun were not electable, and that therefore we should stop listening to them, many liberals and progressives did. In fact, the media guaranteed that the non-internet-literate crowd would stop listening to them by simply refusing to report what they said. When, after an eight or nine-person presidential debate, the *New York Times*, *Newsweek*, and other media reported only what the candidates they deemed electable were saying, liberals and progressives went along with this because there was no point in fighting to hear the words of the unelectable.

That put most liberals and progressives in the camp of Dean, who had creatively used the Internet in the early buildup to the primaries to avoid these dynamics, until in the two months before the Iowa primary the mainstream media began talking about Dean's alleged angry (and hence

unelectable) personality. Once Iowa and New Hampshire voters had been convinced that anger at Bush's policies was somehow a character flaw that would block electability, they responded to the call of Anyone But Bush by voting for candidates that the media had made electable. Distorted by constant replay, Dean's concession speech in Iowa took on the appearance of a (now-famous)

self-destructive primal scream or yelp, as the media proceeded to do to Dean what it had been doing to Kucinich et al. Suddenly Kerry became the favorite because of media-generated electability. Many progressives and liberals then felt they had no choice but to jump on board with Kerry despite his vote for the war. Perhaps they privately revived fantasies that his days as chair of Vietnam Vets Against the War in the early 1970s might play some role in his consciousness should he ever become president.

If we are trying to decide whether a candidate believes in a coherent worldview that coincides with our own deepest ethical and spiritual truths, we can make that determination ourselves by listening to what they say and have said and done in their public lives. But if we are trying to decide whether they are electable, we give the power to the media and the pollsters to tell us who we should be backing. The result is that many of the candidates who most closely represent the American people's highest ideals can be pushed out of the race, opening up the way for a candidate who fulfills the ideals of those who own and control the media.

All this does not mean there is a media "conspiracy." When the *Times* and *Newsweek* presented the candidates to us in the Spring of 2003, their judgments were not based on conspiratorial goals, but on their own honest assessment of who would appeal most to the average American. Given the long history of media marginalization of progressive and visionary voices in the past, Americans tended to vote for candidates who presented a narrow range of views that are today called "the political center." Taking that to be "reality," the contemporary journalist then assumes that this will define the choices of the moment, and so gives vastly disproportionate attention to those who will represent to the electorate the kinds of views that proved popular in the past. The result is a vicious circle, in which the media marginalizes the most visionary progressive voices because these voices have been marginalized in the past.

Add to that vicious cycle the media's attempt to be "savvy," an endemic cynicism that Michael Bader and Jay Rosen have analyzed in these pages, and you get perfectly decent journalists telling themselves that the outsider voices will never be heard, so why bother to let them be heard? And then those same dynamics lead all the friends and advisors of the candidates to whisper in their ears advice about how to tone down



ANYONE BUT BUSH?

whatever their own thinking is in order to be “realistic” in this media context, and so they do so in compliance with the rotating pressures of each on each. Ultimately, the good folks who want change end up not voting for anyone who would actually embody their own views. They think that in so voting they are being realistic and responsible, when actually they are recreating the very reality that they had hoped to change.

“If all this is what it takes to beat Bush,” some people may respond, “then I’ll do it and worry about a better world at some later date.” Yet this kind of thinking may be deeply flawed, not only on ethical but on pragmatic grounds. What we’ve been trying to tell liberals and conservatives for many years is this: it is *only* a different worldview that has a real chance of changing the political dynamics that have generated conservative dominance in all three branches of government.

Since our inception in 1986, TIKKUN has been articulating what that alternative must be.

First, we’ve opposed a politics of demeaning the Other. We have powerful criticisms of George W. Bush, just as we had of Bill Clinton and Ronald Reagan, and just as we’ve had of the Israelis who supported the Occupation, the Palestinians who have supported terror, the neo-cons who have supported a wide variety of reactionary programs, and the fundamentalists (Islamic, Jewish, and Christian) who have too often ignored their own religion’s injunctions to compassion and social justice. But we have rejected the political tendency to see our opponents as embodiments of pure evil or to delight in finding their personal flaws as a cheap way to make political hay. We often find ourselves quite uncomfortable with the kind of demeaning of George W. Bush that focuses on his alleged stupidity or cowardice—we reserve our criticisms for the public actions and discourse of our elected leadership and for others who act in the public sphere, not for their personality or character.

Next, we’ve objected to the tendency to blame Americans for all the distorted policies of our government. We are proud of America and of much that it has stood for in the history of the past 215 years. Unrelentingly critical as we may be of the racism, sexism, and imperialist policies pursued by America’s elites, we are also appreciative that those elites were committed enough to democratic values and civil liberties to allow the space for democratic movements to challenge and often counter their wishes. Though the battles to build a morally and ecologically healthy, just, and peace-oriented society are still ongoing, we insist that a movement to change America must articulate a deep love for this country and a deep appreciation for the goodness of the American people.

In fact, the reason we are not discouraged from putting forward a transformative vision of what could be in America is because we reject the notion that our current societal distortions are an accurate reflection of what Americans would

want if they had enough information and opportunities to hear the kind of alternative spiritual understanding of contemporary events that we present in TIKKUN. Give us a well-funded hour news show on prime time national network TV, twenty major newspapers in various regions of the United

States, twenty local TV stations, and a few hundred million dollars to run a presidential campaign and a few senatorial campaigns, and we’d quickly demonstrate the idealism and generosity of the American people that rarely finds forms for public expression in the contemporary configuration of American politics. Our affirmation of the goodness of America and Americans is a central part of our healing vision.

We’ve argued that the old-line socialist/materialist conception of the world underlying progressive and liberal politics since at least the middle of the nineteenth century must be transcended. Transcended doesn’t mean rejected. We have always enthusiastically agreed with liberal and progressive notions of democratic control of the economy, fair redistribution of wealth, guarantees of employment, health care, education, and protection from the greedy excesses of the competitive marketplace. We’ve been allies to the liberal and progressive fights so much that when the media sought to discredit our politics of meaning in the mid 1990s (in the days when Hillary Clinton was telling the country that it needed a politics of meaning) they suggested that all we were doing was repackaging old liberal ideas that had been part of the tradition for the past 150 years.

Yet the TIKKUN vision is far more than that. We can accept much of the liberal and progressive program, but we contend that it is fundamentally limited, and in certain respects deeply flawed, because it has too narrow a conception of human needs. Human beings certainly need economic and physical security—we reject all attempts at a spiritual politics that talks about “values” while ignoring the material well-being of the human race. We don’t need the right-wing fundamentalist (Jewish and Christian) brand of spirituality that takes biblical quotes and misuses them to cover selfishness and materialism, celebrating American military power and ignoring the hungry and the homeless.

But we’ve also rejected the notion of a Maslow-based hierarchy of needs (“first satisfy material needs, then the spiritual needs”). The twenty-plus years of research we conducted at the Institute for Labor and Mental Health with middle-income working people showed us that people are often willing to sacrifice material security for the sake of higher meaning in their lives. They hunger for a framework of meaning and purpose that transcends the individualism, selfishness, and competitiveness of contemporary market-driven societies.

We call this framework a politics of meaning or an Emancipatory Spirituality. Central to its vision is the call for



A New Bottom Line, so that instead of judging institutions, social practices, and individual behavior as rational, productive, or efficient only to the extent that they maximize money and power, we insist that they also be judged by the extent to which they maximize human capacities to be loving, ethically, ecologically, and spiritually sensitive, and capable of overcoming narrow utilitarian attitudes towards others. We replace this utilitarian and materialist approach to the world with an approach that recognizes the sanctity of others and responds to the universe with awe, wonder, and radical amazement.

Applied to international politics, an Emancipatory Spirituality would insist that the only path to security for the United States is to reject the paradigm of domination over others and insist on the paradigm of cooperation and mutual caring. In a world where two billion people live on an income of less than two dollars a day, and an average of 30,000 children die every day (yes, every day) from diseases related to malnutrition, those who live at the top of the world's food chain will always live in fear that military prowess will prove inadequate to protect them.

A politics of meaning candidate would insist that America's long-term security will be most effectively guaranteed when the United States is and is perceived to be:

- a. The leading force for global redistribution of wealth, the elimination of poverty, homelessness, and hunger, and the creation of adequate health care and education for all humanity.
- b. The leading force for ecological sanity and reconstruction of the world's systems of production, transportation, and distribution of goods and resources along lines that will permit preservation and reconstruction of the damage done to the planet by 150 years of environmentally irresponsible industrialization by capitalist and socialist societies alike.
- c. The country in the vanguard of embodying a new ethos of global social justice, generosity, and genuine kindness and caring for others.

As a first step to implement this, let the United States commit to leading the way for a Global Marshall Plan—so that all the advanced industrial countries commit for the next twenty years to tithe one-tenth of their GNP to the purpose of building the economic infrastructures of poorer countries in a way that is both ecologically sensitive and enhances democratic participation and sensitivity to the particularities of cultural nuances and traditions. Such a plan will have to incorporate market mechanisms as well as generous but carefully thought out ways to supply food to the hungry and clothing and housing for the homeless.

As a down payment on this plan, let's take the money that President Bush wants to put back into the hands of the rich and immediately dedicate it to providing health care for every American on a single-payer plan, and provide funds to eliminate hunger in every corner of the globe. Osama Bin

Laden and his extremist followers will be far more challenged by that move than by any other anti-terrorist strategy.

Let a liberal or progressive candidate for office make the case consistently that the best security is a world where poverty has been eliminated—and that this is not only our moral duty but in our best self-interest. Let such a candidate argue that the only world worth fighting for is a world in which we recognize that we are all in the same boat, stop polluting the world's environment and dumping our wastes, and instead work together to make the world safe and loving for everyone. And let the candidate explain that this is also the best way to deal with the immigration problem in the United States: Make the rest of the world economically viable and people won't be crashing our borders.

A candidate who is willing to speak in this language would also have no problem endorsing the Geneva Accord—or at least unequivocally calling for an end to the Occupation of the West Bank and Gaza and for a new spirit of reconciliation and open-heartedness. A progressive candidate should be talking in a way that reassures both Israel and Palestine that building peace and reconciliation is high on the American agenda.

Endorsing what we in the Tikkun Community call a "progressive middle path" would be understood as a manifestation of a larger foreign policy vision that sees strength as emerging from cooperation rather than domination. Let America show Israel the way by dramatically reducing our defense budget (by at least 50 percent) and adopting a Global Marshall plan. Speaking from this moral standpoint, rather than from a place of economic coercion, the United States could play a major role in reshaping the political dynamics in Israel.



The key here is the oldest teaching of all the world's spiritual traditions: the unity of all humanity, the equal sanctity of all, the overcoming of ego, and the recognition of our place in the whole. If we thought of ourselves as the human family, and someone came along and told us that we could work it out so that two thirds of our family would have enough to eat, and 10 percent of our family could live at a high level and enjoy more food and more comforts than we could possibly want, but at the cost that one third of our family would be close to starvation, who among us would sign up for such a deal? It's only because most Americans have not been taught to think of themselves as part of the human family, and have no idea that the deal that gets us a land of plenty is intrinsically linked to the deal that produces poverty and hunger for others, that they go along with our current foreign policy. A spiritually informed foreign policy rooted in caring for the Other is realistic precisely because

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Americans are, like most other people on this planet, fundamentally decent, generous, and kind.

Domestic policy must reflect this same spiritual vision. In every arena, let us liberate the goodness of the American people, affirm our shared desires to be giving and to care for each other.

Most people recognize that fundamental changes are needed in our school systems. We sympathize with the desire of working families to have schools that teach the basic skills necessary for their children to compete in the current world. No candidate could afford to deny to America's middle-income and poorer families this set of skills that upper-middle-class and wealthy families guarantee to their own children—and that will require well-paid teachers, smaller teacher-student ratios, and decent school buildings. But this typical liberal agenda is one-dimensional.

Classes rarely focus on what makes life meaningful, or prepare students to build a life based on love, caring, ecological sensitivity, spiritual depth, or moral responsibility. But imagine if a progressive candidate were beginning to talk about a world based on kindness and generosity instead of on domination and fear of the Other. Educating children for such a world would require a very different orientation than the obsessive focus on testing that is doing so much to distort our schools. Imagine a school system that gave high priority to fostering a student's capacity to be caring, cooperative, generous, and morally and ecologically responsible. Imagine a school that gave serious attention to developing a student's ability to respond to the universe with awe and wonder at all that is. Imagine a school that taught children how to celebrate all the goodness of others, to see themselves as the current embodiment of the unfolding of the consciousness of the universe and as capable of increasing the level of love, cooperation, and mutual recognition among all peoples. Imagine a school that taught genuine gratitude, that encouraged joy, that valued love, and that saw its heroes as those students who were most capable of sharing their skills and their caring with others. Instead of sounding like dry technocrats, let a candidate speak to a vision of schools that foster the highest values in our students, that speaks to the very hunger for a different set of values than the "show me how my kid can make more money" values they settle for as the best they can hope for from public schooling.

What's the point, some people will ask, of developing in students the capacity to be caring when they will have to enter the "real world," in which the bottom line is money and power and they are evaluated primarily in terms of how well they've developed whatever skills are deemed necessary by the corporate economy for maximizing the bottom line? Won't we just be creating dysfunctional students who will fail?

A good point, and one that a progressive candidate could address head on by calling for the Social Responsibility Amendment (SRA) to the U.S. Constitution. The SRA calls

for every corporation with a gross income of over \$30 million a year to get a new corporate charter once every ten years. Such a charter would only be granted to those corporations that could prove a history of social responsibility as measured by an Ethical Impact Report, and as assessed by a jury of ordinary citizens (to avoid a new regulatory agency, given the way that those agencies quickly become dominated by the corporations they seek to regulate). The SRA would give all the decent people in corporate life a chance to finally be able to overcome the Old-Bottom-Line mentality which constrained them to make environmentally destructive choices or policies that are insensitive to workers' rights in order to preserve their own jobs. With the SRA the corporate leadership will be able to argue to their own investors that they have no choice but to be more socially responsible lest they lose their corporate charter. The dynamics in corporate life would dramatically change in favor of policies that were more humane and ecologically sensitive. A discussion about the SRA would have a transformative impact even if the SRA itself never got passed—just as the struggle for the ERA transformed how we think about gender even though it never was passed.

Liberals have been right to insist on universal health care, and alternative medicine has moved this discussion beyond the traditional mechanistic model and helped us understand that because we are conscious, love-seeking, mind-body-spirit beings, our health care is going to require building an environment in which genuine caring for each other replaces the frantic search for profits that dominates contemporary health care systems. Most people know that their health care has become worse at every level since the defeat of the Clinton plan in 1994. That decline is a reflection of the triumph of an ethos of selfishness and materialism, qualities that are in their essence the opposite of what "health caring" needs to be about. Let a candidate acknowledge that it is not only health care recipients, but also service providers who suffer in this process. Let them talk to doctors, nurses, and others who work in the health care arena and learn of the deepening crisis in the lives of so many that is created by the extreme disjunction between their desire to serve and care for people on the one hand, and the pressures of the marketplace that force them to curtail their caring to serve the needs of the health care profiteers. As the cycle continues, more and more people in health care shut themselves off from their own deepest motivations to serve humanity, and instead end up developing a cynicism that helps them manage and repress the pain of not being able to live up to the sacred profession they imagined themselves to be in. They then become the vehicles to communicate this cynicism to a new generation of health care workers, who are taught that in order to be "realistic" and be perceived as "professional" they must subordinate their idealism to the requisites of the insurance companies and health care profiteers. A progressive candidate could seek to convene

public gatherings in every community in the United States to allow the health care workers themselves to speak about this process.

A progressive candidate must talk about the most fundamental of all issues: the desire that we all have to be caring for each other. A health care system must provide effective ways for us to mobilize this caring, legitimate it, and create opportunities for ordinary people as well as professionals to pour forth our desire to support and affirm each other's beauty, uniqueness, and sanctity.

This process of affirming goodness, creating opportunities for mutual caring, and allowing for a new ethos of generosity could be repeated in every arena of work. Imagine a campaign in which each week a given profession was highlighted, and a public gathering was created in every Congressional district in the United States where people in this profession could discuss what a New Bottom Line of generosity and caring would look like in their field. For 2004, imagine starting the first week on the issue of health care, followed by law, education, community safety, media, care for seniors, environment, and economic growth. Imagine if a campaign were seeking to encourage ordinary people to have these conversations in every neighborhood, and the discussion became the major focus of the campaign—so that the “get the vote out” campaign flowed from the involvement of people in real neighborhood and town meetings discussing the kind of society they actually wished to create for themselves.

This of course would be a very different kind of campaign than has ever been waged by a mainstream candidate.

Let a progressive candidate speak in a language that evinces genuine caring for the Other. When the media comes at them with the hostility and seeming superiority of its cynical realism, let that candidate hold his ground, insist

that most people really would prefer a world of love and caring, and reject the notion that evil and cruelty are necessary parts of human destiny.

This direction is also the only way to counter the very clever attempts by some right wingers to make a Defense of Marriage anti-gay constitutional amendment into a central issue of the campaign. Liberals will get nowhere if their response to this is primarily in terms of gay rights. While we at TIKKUN have always been champions of gay rights, we believe that the only way to secure them is to address the deeper anxiety generated by the dissolution of family life that then gets unfairly and irrationally blamed on gays and lesbians. In the research at the Institute for Labor and Mental Health, we discovered a widespread anxiety about the crisis in family life. Liberals have typically ignored or misunderstood this problem by dismissing it as nothing but a cover for anti-feminist and anti-gay sentiment. But the reality is that many Americans feel deeply unhappy about a world in which the one institution that was supposed to be about love and caring—the family—has become increasingly unreliable.

What we further discovered, however, was that family instability is deeply tied to the triumph of narcissism, me-firstism, and selfishness that are themselves rooted in the ethos of the marketplace. Liberals and progressives cannot position themselves as champions of the family if all they have to offer is a set of economic benefits for the poor, because most people understand that family instability, while accelerated by tensions rooted in inadequate material supports, crosses class and economic boundaries and cannot be reduced to material needs. A serious pro-family program would have to challenge the Old Bottom Line and help people understand that family instability is often (not always) rooted in a society which gives lip-service but no real



EMMANUEL LEVINAS

*Translations from the French by Nidra Poller
Introductions by Richard A. Cohen*

Humanism of the Other

Based in a new appreciation for ethics, and taking new distances from the phenomenology of Hegel, Heidegger, Husserl, and Merleau-Ponty, the idealism of Plato and Kant, and the skepticism of Nietzsche and Blanchot, Levinas rehabilitates humanism and restores its promises.

Foreword by Don Ihde

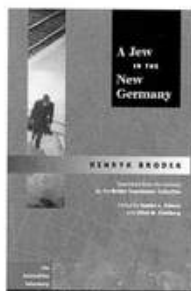
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support to love and caring and generosity. Want a loving family? Then build an economic and social reality that values love over power, generosity and kindness over money. Because the real source of danger to the family is the Old Bottom Line, not queers. The SRA is actually a far better Defense of Marriage than the assault on gays that right-wingers want to make a central part of the 2004 election.

In my books *Spirit Matters: Global Healing and the Wisdom of the Soul* and *The Politics of Meaning*, I lay out more of the details of what an Emancipatory Spirituality could look like as a political program. In Peter Gabel's book *The Bank Teller and Other Essays on the Politics of Meaning* there is a vision of an ethically sensitive legal system. In the writings of Jerry Mander, Andrew Kimbrell, David Korten, Vandana Shiva, Peter Singer and others there emerges a picture of a compassionate globalized economy. And there is a wealth of programmatic thinking put together by Marianne Williamson in her collection *Imagine*, and in the writings of Roger Gottlieb, Cornel West, Arthur Waskow, Ian Mitroff, Michael Bader, Jerome Segal, Thich Nhat Hanh, Karen Armstrong, Sharon Salzberg, Jack Kornfield, Sylvia Boorstein, Lama Surya Das, Jim Wallis, Riane Eisler, Zalman Schachter Shalomi, Duane Elgin, David Batstone, Thomas Berry, Svi Shapiro, Edmund O'Sullivan, Brad Blanton, Samuel Oliner, Douglas Noll, Starhawk, Zygmunt Bauman, Thomas Moore, Barbara Marx Hubbard, and many more.

In every arena from health care to education to programs for honoring society's elders to developing an economic program that will give democratic control over corporate life, we at TIKKUN and our allies in the emerging spiritual politics of the Tikkun Community have been developing the concrete details so that a serious, spiritually sensitive party could move beyond slogans and describe how some of our major institutions could be rebuilt with a New Bottom Line. The program is there. The details are available. Most people who talk about "Anyone But Bush" would agree with the more detailed vision spelled out in these works. They are not based on adherence to a particular religion, and the most militant atheists will find most of the ideas completely acceptable.

What is lacking is not agreement—but the moral courage to fight for what we really believe in.

Most people want a world of kindness and generosity, but as Peter Gabel has argued in these pages (see page 43), most people have felt humiliated at times in their lives when they found themselves disappointed by others who failed to deliver the love and sensitivity that was being promised. Eventually, many people develop thick layers of self-defensiveness over their deeper yearnings, fearful that they will once again be humiliated should they allow those yearnings to be revealed. It is this fear that gives energy to

the conservative's "common sense" that the world cannot be based on kindness and generosity.

Conservatives present a politics that mixes two very different elements. They affirm the higher meaning needs, and religiously affirm the value of love. But then they refuse to imagine building a world based on love. They imagine that such a world is for heaven or for "the second coming." Instead, they revert to a picture of a world filled with hurtful and evil people who will hurt us if given a chance. Believing that this evil inevitably will dominate this world, that being "realistic" requires defending oneself against the "evil other," they champion economic and political policies that assume mutual estrangement and hostility. To protect themselves in such a world, they assume the need for a harsh and punishing attitude toward the Other. Those who believe in human goodness or the possibility of love triumphing in this world, on this planet, are dismissed as naïve and childish. The triumph of conservatism in the past fifty years has been to move this religious pessimism from the margins

of the extreme right to the "common sense" cynical realism that dominates the media and public discourse.

This conception of "realism" undergirds the media's perceptions of "electability." Convinced that most Americans will always share the media's own cynical realism, journalists and commentators marginalize anyone who does not instinctively recognize the ontological necessity of giving up on a larger vision of social change. Yet desperately trying to accommodate to this cynical realism creates a contradictory dynamic for liberals: as they prove their electability by scaling down their vision, they re-enforce a deep pessimism about politics that leads many of their supporters to despair and withdraw from political involvement. As their own supporters learn that the candidate they support is acting from a deep personal conviction that it is unrealistic to try to change very much, they ask themselves why they are bothering to get involved at all—why not just focus on their own self-interest, since that seems to be what their political leaders are doing? Ironically, when these liberals succeed in getting elected, they find themselves unable to mobilize the support that they need for any serious or visionary changes. Subject to ever-increasing pressures to be realistic and accommodate to the conservative political climate that they themselves helped generate by scaling down any visionary discourse in their own party, they often take the "realistic" path while in office (e.g. Clinton abandoning welfare to make himself re-electable, then finding that he could accomplish little because his conservative discourse had demobilized the progressive base of supporters who could have allied with him in pushing for substantive social change).

Many Howard Dean supporters are on the verge of deep depression. After months of tireless sacrifice for their



candidate, they are beginning to feel that progressive politics have been repudiated by the American electorate. Yet what actually happened was a playing out of this Anyone But Bush dynamic of electability and realism. Dean won many of his supporters from the ranks of those who might feel closer to Kucinich on the substantive issues, but who were convinced by the Dean campaign that they should back a candidate who the media was saying was more electable. So when the media turned on Dean, portrayed him for a solid two months before the Iowa caucuses as unelectable, Dean followers had no intellectual or moral foundation to challenge the "electability" argument. Supporting Dean because of his alleged electability, and convinced of the "anybody but Bush" approach, many Democrats who deeply opposed the war in Iraq ended up accepting the media's self-fulfilling prophecy that Dean could not win, and therefore switched allegiance to Kerry or Edwards—even though these candidates supported the war—on the supposition that maybe one of them could win.

Meanwhile, putting a final stab through the heart of his most loyal followers, Dean undermined himself on the one issue that had most energized his core supporters—his maverick style that promised serious confrontation with the elites of wealth and power. When he allowed the media to convince him that declining support indicated public discontent with his alleged radicalism, Dean toned down his approach in the two months before Iowa and began to accumulate the endorsements of Al Gore and mainstream politicians, put business-as-usual political operatives into key campaign positions (including figures from the AIPAC), and made it clear that he was interpreting his declining support as a reason to become more moderate and mainstream.

The denizens of the Center rejoiced at Dean's declining fortunes in February, 2004. After Dean's loss in the Iowa caucuses, Thomas Friedman of the *New York Times* and other champions of the war in Iraq used the victory of Kerry and Edwards to make the point that "the American people" really wanted a candidate who would support the Iraq war and use this moment to reconstruct the entire Middle East (with who knows how many more interventions necessary)!

Given what the media was interpreting as a defeat for the antiwar forces, Democratic voters in subsequent state primaries, fearful that if they stuck by their own antiwar views they might be backing an unelectable candidate (Dean), started switching in large numbers to candidates further from their own ideals, thereby creating a sudden drop in support for Dean. Viewing this, Dean supporters are in danger of dropping out of politics altogether because they feel that they wasted their energies by being "too idealistic." But the truth is the opposite—they weren't idealistic enough. They identified with the Dean campaign not because they were sure it was the campaign that most

closely resembled their own substantive views, but because it was the one that was most "realistic" or electable. In so doing, they validated a way of thinking about politics which would (as it turned out, very quickly) be used to defeat their efforts and allow for the re-emergence of the unexciting political mush of the middle that has rarely energized enough support to win an election for Democrats unless it was being conveyed by a sexy and charismatic figure like Clinton.

What is needed is a campaign that speaks to people's deepest fears and reassures them that a different kind of world is possible—that helps them overcome their depressive "certainty" that it is "ridiculous" to hope for a world of love and kindness and generosity. Only such a campaign can provide a serious alternative to the worldview of fear that drives people into the arms of the Right.

And that means someone who can talk with strength, commitment, and no ambivalence about the need for a world based on love and caring. People want a strong parental figure to reassure them that the world can be safe. Not a compromiser and waffler, not someone whose views change with the political winds, but someone who emanates strength, certainty, humor, warmth, and genuine caring for others. Not someone who leads with anger, but someone who communicates compassion and generosity of spirit even as they powerfully insist that the most practical path to the security we all desire is the most idealistic and visionary path. Please don't wait for that kind of political leadership to emerge in the political world. Be that person. Be that leader. Be the loving and principled person who emanates love and generosity and a certainty that others will eventually respond in kind—and we will. And join us in Washington D.C. April 25–27, 2004, for our Tikkun Conference and Teach-In to Congress so that we can build the supportive community within which you can find nurturance for being the embodiment of your own highest ideals. For more info go to www.tikkun.org or email us at community@tikkun.org or call us at 510-644-1200. □



HOORAY FOR THE THOUGHTFUL UNDECIDED (from page 11)
doubt already been made. But on the central issues that move most of us, national security and the economy, the debate has just begun.

And where should you look for strong, diverse opinions and trenchant analysis of that debate? Here, in the pages of *TIKKUN Magazine*.

See you next issue! □

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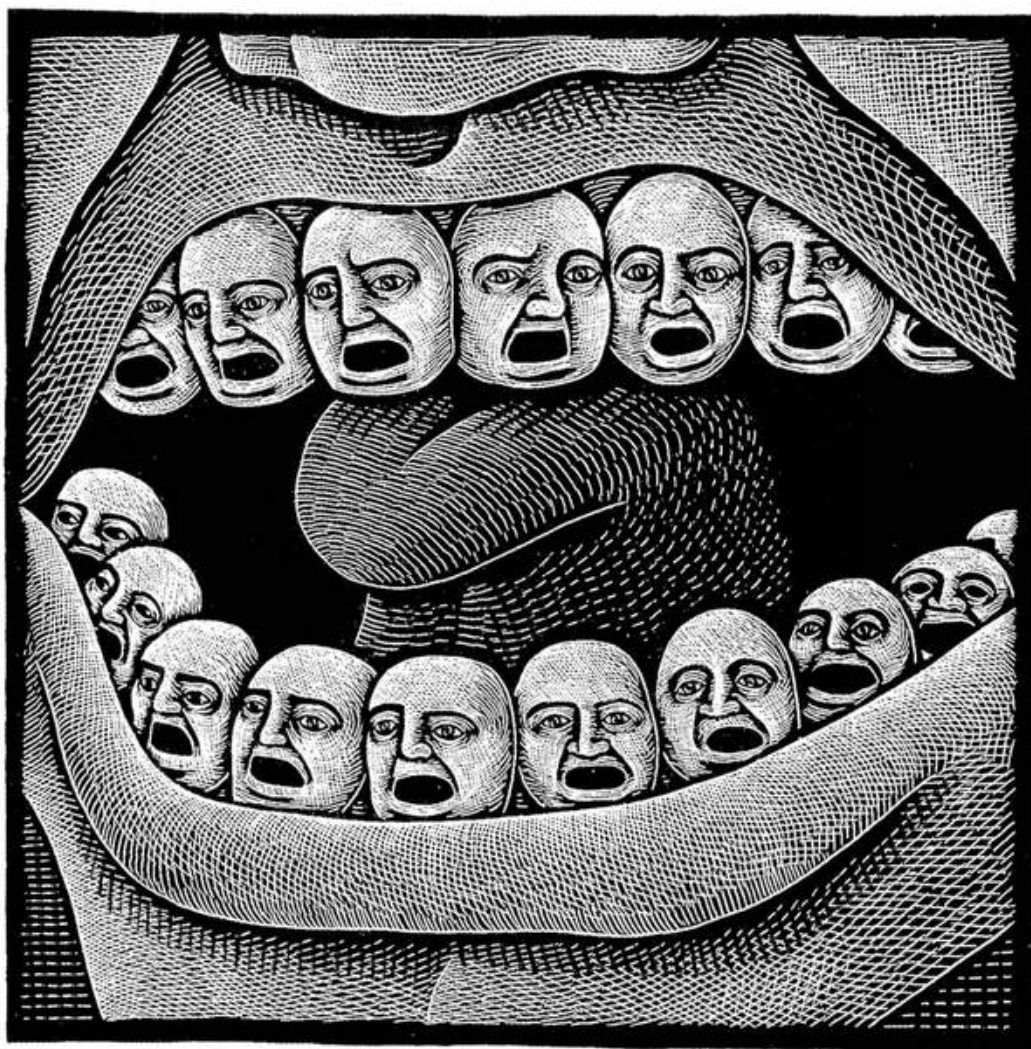
Building To Win

Katrina vanden Heuvel

It's not hard for progressives to see that we're in for the fight of our lives. George W. Bush has made it clear that, mandate or no mandate, he will pursue an extremist far-right agenda. But, as Representative Jan Schakowsky insists, these are times to "organize, not agonize." Progressives have no choice but to fight back and build an America that is safer, healthier, better educated, more secure, and committed to shared prosperity and opportunity for all. But we must fight back in smart and coordinated ways. After all, the Right's success over the past generation in defining our politics and its limits comes in no small measure from its decades-long development of an imposing array of independent institutions, messengers, and media outlets. Now, for the first time in decades, thanks in part to a unified and fierce desire to defeat Bush, progressives are coordinating, organizing, and building the independent capacity to drive their message, their values, and their movement into the political debate and the electoral arena.

We begin with an advantage. On fundamental questions, this administration and the Right are out of tune with the majority of Americans. Sure, the American people want us to govern from the center—but this isn't the center the Washington pundits and politicians talk about; citizens want us to deal with issues that are at the center of their lives. They seek a politics that speaks to and includes them—affordable childcare and healthcare, quality public education, retirement security, a living wage, corporate

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Progressives are coordinating, organizing, and building the independent capacity to drive their message, their values, and their movement into the political debate and the electoral arena.

accountability, environmental protection, clean elections and campaigns, and an internationalist foreign policy that will create real security. In these areas, the majority prefer progressive alternatives to the failed policies of the conservative Right.

However, since 9/11, progressives have also had to contend with a political landscape in which—all too often—we've seen fear trump hope. Despite the fact that this Administration has cynically played on citizens' fears, we need to respect the fact that many Americans today feel insecure and worry not just about their jobs, health, and

financial security but also about their physical security. Progressives, therefore, while challenging the radical militaristic policies of the Bush Administration, must also champion an alternative security policy—one of humane and pragmatic internationalism—that will help make America safe. We need to lay out the limits of what military power can do in a vulnerable, interconnected world in which the central challenges are stateless terrorism, the worst pandemic in human history, environmental degradation, human rights and human wrongs, and global inequality. These are problems that no one country, however powerful, can solve on its own—even a country as powerful as the United States.

A redefined security policy means working to forge a global consensus against terrorism and waging a global campaign to isolate terrorist groups and bring their leaders to justice. It means rebuilding shattered alliances, strengthening battered international institutions, and renewing our diplomacy to lead global efforts to bring peace and security to the troubled Middle East. We should enlist others in helping to build a more just world, to fight devastating pandemics and poverty, to spread the blessings of public health and education, and to open the opportunity for growth and democracy. We must state again and again that America will be more secure if it makes itself a source of hope, not fear. And we must show that there is a real political opening for a credible and alternative security policy. Recent polls, for example, show that a majority of Americans do not feel safer today; and the well-regarded survey by the University of Maryland's Program on International Policy Attitudes found that a majority rejects Bush's unilateralist and militaristic "global cop" role while overwhelmingly supporting a more multilateralist foreign policy with a strengthened and central role for the United Nations.

But we will not be able to achieve genuine security at home or abroad unless Bush is defeated in November. And victory will not come by challenging this administration with "kinder, gentler" variations on conservative themes. If Howard Dean's campaign for the Democratic nomination shows anything, it is that there's a hunger for an aggressive and impassioned progressive message on the entire range of issues—domestic and foreign. Witness the victories of aggressive progressives like North Dakota Senator April Fairfield, a farm activist, who used populist economic positions as a touchstone for a campaign that in 2002 saw her win a district that had two years before voted overwhelmingly for Bush. On the national landscape, progressive leaders, including Dick Durbin and Jon Corzine in

the Senate and Jan Schakowsky and George Miller in the House, have launched independent efforts to take off the gloves, organize a Truth Squad, and challenge the extremism and corruption of this Administration. Backed by a coordinated message, aggressive communications strategies, and targeted issue campaigns, they plan to generate the "echo effect" so vital to driving an argument through the filter of the media.

Progressives have winning ideas, but to effectively challenge the Right, we need to build a powerful progressive

infrastructure that can reach out to citizens with our values and ideas. We need to mobilize allies; identify, recruit, train and support the next generation of leaders, at both the local and national level; apply effective grassroots organizing to electoral politics; provide support for candidates, while holding them accountable; run ballot initiatives (campaign finance, living

wage, the right to organize); offer a vehicle for coordinated national and local issue campaigns, and galvanize a network of media-savvy groups with a broad-based message. The antiwar movement, that went from zero to 15 million in just a few months, is an example of the strength we already have and the impact we can make when we are energized and organized. Integrating the energy of this and other grassroots movements into our electoral capacity—not only for the crucial work of defeating Bush in 2004 but for the long term—is vital for making our whole equal the sum of our parts.

The ability to drive our ideas—as well as our energy and values—into the national and state debates relies on strengthening progressive organizations and think tanks like Campaign for America's Future, the Economic Policy Institute, the Institute for Policy Studies, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, and the Institute for Women's Policy Research on the national level, and similar organizations like the Economic Research Analysis Network, the Public Interest Research Groups (PIRGs), the Center for Policy Alternatives and the newest group on the scene, the American Legislative Issue Campaign Exchange (ALICE), on the state and local level. If better funded, these networks could provide greater program support for a farm team of new progressive candidates and legislators—as well as setting up a "war room" to provide targeted assistance in cases of special need in legislative or electoral fights.

Building a bolder presence in the media is imperative if we're going to drive our ideas and values into the political debate. Although, with each passing day, our media landscape seems more FOXified and Clear Channelized, we're also seeing—for the first time—that media reform clearly

The antiwar movement, that went from zero to 15 million in just a few months, is an example of the strength we already have and the impact we can make when we are energized and organized.

registers with millions of people. That frustration with the rightward tilt of our media has fueled ambitious plans to build a progressive echo chamber in TV, radio, and electronic media—for example, Progress Media is launching a populist radio network this spring, with stations in at least five of the country's ten largest media markets (Al Franken will host his own talk show on the network). Former Vice-president Al Gore is working to launch a youth-oriented cable network to counter FOX TV. Link TV broadcasts via satellite to more than 21 million U.S. homes 24/7 and is expanding; and Free Speech TV currently reaches over 11 million homes. The fact that five of the country's top best-selling books in 2003 skewered the Right and Bush—including *Lies and the Lying Liars who Tell Them* by Al Franken, *Bushwhacked* by Molly Ivins and *Big Lies* by Joe Conason—signals the resurgence of liberal ideas and humor in our skewed-to-the right marketplace of ideas. A slew of popular websites act as truth squads exposing the Administration's deceptions and holding right-wing politicians and pundits accountable. And other models of creative citizen engagement are bringing young people into the political process, building on the work of socially-conscious music-based organizations like Rock the Vote and Russell Simmons' HipHop Summit, which has registered thousands in the cities where it has held events.

The power of the internet to mobilize, engage, and raise funds for progressive causes and campaigns is another vital piece of the progressive infrastructure—and crucial for a new generation of activism. In the last year, MoveOn.org's savvy and pioneering work has brought millions into the streets and onto the net to oppose the war against Iraq and lobby the FCC against media consolidation. Its first "virtual" presidential primary was instrumental in putting Democratic presidential frontrunner Howard Dean on the map as an insurgent/outsider. MoveOn.org's work to hold our politicians and mainstream media accountable, its support of progressive campaigns, and its ability to raise astonishing amounts of money—in small donations—for anti-Bush ads and other good causes, is creating a new politics of fundraising—breaking the hold of Wall Street and big bucks on the money primary—and devising a new politics of citizen engagement. MoveOn.org is not alone in tapping the power of the Net. WorkingAssets.com, Meetup.com, and TrueMajority.com (founded by Ben Cohen of Ben and Jerry's) are others pioneering new web-based communications, fundraising, and activism.

Among national progressive mass membership groups working to defeat Bush there is a degree of unity and coordination not seen in a generation. Confronted with this administration's unrelenting assault on progressive values, environmental, civil rights, women's, and labor groups are

putting aside past organizational differences and focusing on the importance of building a united and distinct progressive presence in electoral politics. These groups are sharing voter and membership lists and organizing well-coordinated and targeted get-out-the-vote (GOTV) and registration efforts. Organizations involved range from the Sierra Club, Emily's List, the NAACP, ACORN, Progressive Majority, People for the American Way, to NARAL, the AFL-CIO, MoveOn and US Action. America Votes will have help from the new political action committee, America

Coming Together—which expects to raise close to \$100 million by election day. The Media Fund, a \$50 million media campaign to support the democratic nominee, will work to complement ACT's ground war.

The obvious challenge is for these groups to continue to build and to work together after November 2004 to develop long term, coordinated goals

within the progressive movement. It would be a shame if this unprecedented unity was exhausted in this, admittedly, critical presidential race. Where we can do so without doing harm to the achievement of our short-term goals, we should be looking at down ballot races and, most controversially and importantly, at how we propose to organize ourselves after November 2004. Shouldn't we start discussing, early this year, how we will handle non-presidential politics this cycle, and how we will be coordinated as a movement after the election? It will be easier to do this now than in the heat of the final months of the presidential race.

No matter what happens in the election, it is vital to sustain our emerging progressive infrastructure after the election. The great unraveling—likely no matter who wins—will provide both great challenges and great opportunities for progressives—and it is essential that we continue to build and grow and be ready to lead.

The real test before us is can we take everything we're doing right and do it even better, do it more, and do it in a coordinated way with passion, confidence, purpose, and principle? □

*It is vital to sustain our
emerging progressive
infrastructure after
the election.*

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The Promise and Peril of Internet Democracy

Douglas Rushkoff

There's perhaps nothing more irksome to progressive-minded Americans than the current administration's contention that it represents a revival of our nation's populist civic tradition—especially when the right-wing's popularity seems more orchestrated by radio hosts armed with talking points supplied by Republican think tanks than energized by any genuine groundswell of public opinion. Yet the Left's exploitation of the Internet and other apparently more citizen-driven media networks may prove no more authentic, and—in the wake of Howard Dean's waning candidacy—entirely less effective than we previously had hoped.

Still, the promise of a properly orchestrated bottom-up media campaign is so tremendous, and the downside of its mishandling so very perilous for the future of participatory democracy, that it behooves us to take an honest look at the current state of Internet-enabled democracy.

Until very recently, Internet democracy meant worthless email petitions or thinly veiled polling operations like Dick Morris's vote.com. Reducing the democratic process to binary consumer choice (Should the US support Israel? Click Yes or No!), these early efforts seemed to prove that the Internet would push decision-making even further down toward mindless, impulsive reactions. Rather than soliciting opinions or, better, creating forums for the development of new ideas, affiliations, and activism, the creators of these sites used them to help their paying clients glean the same sorts of information they were getting from telephone polls and quantitative analysis.

Under the guise of promoting democracy, most early "electronic democracy" sites were actively thwarting it. By early 2000, and thanks in part to the misuse of the

bilities represented in the mainstream media, many, mostly younger, media-savvy people from around the world began to use the Internet in the manner for which it was intended: to share ideas and to network across formerly impenetrable boundaries. Activists publishing their own daily political commentary on websites called "blogs" forced issues that the mainstream media refused to pursue, such as Trent Lott's racist gaffs, or the government's obscenely misrepresented environmental policies. WTO protestors also started using the Internet to organize across ideological barriers that confounded the mainstream media. In an effort to bring some of this Internet enthusiasm into the real world, a site called "Meetup.com" was launched that allowed people with common interests to schedule meetings in their neighborhoods.

By simply inviting the disenfranchised majority of America to participate directly in his campaign through the Internet and Meetup gatherings, Dean gave his supporters a terrific gift: one another. Within a month, there were thousands of self-organized groups meeting around the country to talk about what kind of president they wanted, and how to get the man they presumed to be this candidate elected.

But therein lies the rub: the bottom-up gatherings around the country may have had more to do with our need, as members of a purportedly democratic society, to self-organize than they did with Howard Dean.

As far as his Internet organizers were concerned, Dean was a relatively blank screen onto whom they could project their collective agenda. But as he began to dominate the mainstream press, he proved to be a different man: pro-NAFTA, pro-gun, fiscally conservative, and somewhat bull-headed. His Internet activist constituency remained faithful, but it was becoming clear that, to their candidate,

True Story

Verbal and Visual Media



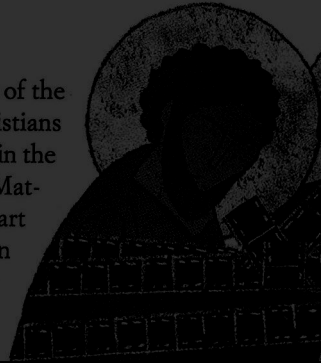
CHRISTIANITY

Loosely Based on a T

The Passion of Jesus Christ in V

John Dominic Crossan

There are different accounts of the execution (what some Christians call “the passion”) of Jesus in the four canonical gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John at the start of the Christian New Testament. On the one hand, it is utterly impossible to reconcile the tone or atmosphere in the earliest version (Mark) with



Christians left us four canonical examples of that updating process, as any parallel-column study makes clearly evident (see page 27). It is not their fault if we cannot tell fact from fiction, history from parable, and biography from gospel.

Second, those four gospels are not four independent texts, but most likely a single stream of linked tradition. It is generally accepted that Matthew and Luke use Mark as their major source and, although this is more disputed, John is probably using those earlier gospels at least for the opening and closing chapters of his interpretation. In other words, the passion of Jesus is basically Mark's account as adopted and adapted by Matthew, Luke, and John. We can, therefore, see their changes, assess their purposes, and, above all else, realize how much depends on a single version—that of Mark.

What, in light of these two conclusions, is the best historical reconstruction for the dramatic story of an open Passover amnesty, a reluctant Roman governor, and a shouting Jerusalem crowd forcing him to act against justice and his own best judgment?

The Open Amnesty

Would Pilate—or any sensible governor—grant an *open* amnesty on even a special occasion? *Open* means that the petitioners—not the governor—get to choose the criminal to be released. No responsible administrator could countenance such an annual release of “anyone for whom they asked,” as Mark 15:6 puts it. The release of whomever Pilate decided, is possible; of whomever the crowd decided, is unlikely. Philo, the contemporary Jewish philosopher from Alexandria, describing in his *Flaccus* what good governors should do for condemned prisoners at the greatest festival gives this example: “It is the custom to punish no one, even of those who have been lawfully condemned, until the famous festival and assembly in honor of the birthday of the illustrious emperor, has passed.” At best, then, postponement but not amnesty.

The Reluctant Governor

There are first-century governors of Judea about whom we know only their names, but Pilate is not one of those. We know a lot about him from non-Christian texts.

First, Philo, once again describes Pilate in his *Embassy to Gaius* as “a man of a very inflexible disposition, and very merciless as well as very obstinate.” He speaks of “his corruption, and his acts of insolence, and his rapine, and his habit of insulting people, and his cruelty, and his continual murders of people untried and uncondemned, and his never ending, and gratuitous, and most grievous inhumanity.” He mentions him as “being exceedingly angry, and being at all times a man of most ferocious passions.” This may well be rhetorical overkill, but it is precisely Pilate whom Philo chooses as a specific example of a very bad governor.

Second, in the gospels, Pilate finally condemns Jesus by

submitting reluctantly to the wishes of the shouting crowd. Various motives for that acquiescence are given in the gospels: “Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd,” in Mark 15:15; “Pilate saw that he could do nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning” in Matthew 27:24; and “Pilate tried to release him, but the Jews cried out, ‘If you release this man, you are no friend of the emperor. Everyone who claims to be a king sets himself against the emperor’” in John 19:12. But there is an acute irony here. What the Jewish historian Josephus emphasizes about Pilate in his *Jewish Antiquities* is precisely his lethal way with unarmed but protesting crowds. He brought pagan images into Jerusalem on his military standards. An unarmed crowd demanded their removal and, confronted with the crowd's willingness to die as martyrs, he finally backed down and removed the offensive emblems. Next, when they tried such nonviolent resistance a second time over his use of Temple money for a Jerusalem aqueduct, Pilate infiltrated civilian-dressed soldiers and “many of them were actually slain on the spot.” Finally, he was removed from office by his immediate superior, the Syrian legate Vitellius, and sent to explain his actions before Tiberius in Rome. Those actions, not unexpectedly, involved “the slaughter” of a Samaritan crowd (18.55–89). The high-priest Caiaphas was also dismissed from office by Vitellius at around the same time—from even the viewpoint of imperial administration they had, apparently, collaborated not wisely but too well.

The gospels, however, record Pilate's patient debate and reluctant submission before a crowd demanding he do what they want. Maybe Pilate had an unusually good day? Or, better, maybe Mark was creating parable rather than writing history.

The Barabbas Option

Recall, as background, that Jerusalem was somewhat of a tinder-box at the time of the great festivals, and especially at Passover, when thousands of Jewish pilgrims were concentrated in and around the confined space of the Temple to celebrate liberation from past Egyptian oppression, though they were under its current Roman equivalent. On such occasions, Pilate came up to Jerusalem from his base at coastal Caesarea. Zero tolerance was standard for any disturbances, with crucifixion an immediate penalty and instant warning for disturbers.

Consider that open Passover amnesty even within the narrative logic of a Markan fictional parable. Mark 15:8 says that, “the crowd (singular *ochlos* in Greek) came and began to ask Pilate to do for them according to his custom.” How many is a “crowd”? In that tense Passover situation and with a governor like Pilate, I suggest that even ten people might be pushing their luck, since it was necessary to send a clear message to Pilate and his soldiers that their small numbers did not constitute any type of threat. In any case, a *very* small group comes before Pilate to request liberty for, as

Mark 15:7 says, “a man called Barabbas [who] was in prison with the rebels who had committed murder during the insurrection.” In the logic of Mark’s narrative, they simply wanted their hero Barabbas saved from crucifixion, and when Pilate, sensibly judging Jesus to be the lesser threat to Roman law and order, tried to give them him instead, they shouted for Jesus, not Barabbas, to be crucified. So, according to Mark 15:15, “Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.” All of that, be it fictional parable or factual history, is clear enough. In any case, the

and most revealing element in the story. Mark’s “crowd” which, in that context, could hardly have been a dozen people, grows exponentially as his version is copied and changed into Matthew, Luke, and John in that chronological sequence. This can best be seen in the summary diagram below.

Recall, as mentioned above, that those are not four independent witnesses with access to different data, divergent traditions, or separate archival sources. It is simply a case of Mark’s (small) “crowd” growing exponentially but intra-textually before our eyes as it progresses across twenty-five years to become “the Jews.”

Mark 15:8, 11, 15 (Date: c. 70 C.E.)	Matthew 27:15, 20, 24, 25 (Date: c. 85 C.E.)	Luke 23:4, 13, 18 (Date: c. 85 C.E.)	John 18:31, 36, 38; 19:7 (Date: c. 95 C.E.)
“the crowd”	“the crowd”	“the chief priests and the crowds”	“the Jews”
“the crowd”	“the crowds”		“the Jews”
“(they)”	“the crowd”	“the chief priests, the leaders, and the people”	“the Jews”
“the crowd”	“the people as a whole”	“(they) all together”	“the Jews”

“crowd” is there primarily *for* Barabbas and not—or only secondarily, or only to free him—*against* Jesus.

Mark invents the parable of Barabbas *or* Jesus to interpret the terrible destruction of Jerusalem and its temple in the war of 66–74 CE. against Rome. That Jerusalem “crowd” in the year 30 CE represents, for Mark, those who accepted the wrong method of opposing Roman imperial oppression in the year 70 CE. Barabbas incarnates the option of violent rebellion just as Jesus incarnates the option of nonviolent resistance. Those options were, of course, both absolutely intra-Jewish first-century alternatives, both totally if divergently activist, and both equally liable to end up in martyrdom. Pilate understood the difference quite clearly and that is why he rounded up Barabbas’s followers (two of whom died beside Jesus) but did not pursue Jesus’s disciples (none of whom died with Jesus). Pilate, in other words, got it precisely right. Jesus’s message was that the Kingdom of God, that is, what the world would look like if God sat on Caesar’s throne, could be entered *here and now* by a communal share-life lived against the normalcy of imperial greed-life. It was not about the next life and heaven-above but about this life and earth-below. It was about living already within the justice and righteousness of God, not the power and control of Rome. Jesus’s option, therefore, is but one other mode of Jewish nonviolent resistance, similar to those unarmed and nonviolent protests against Pilate around 26 CE—a strategy repeated when Caligula attempted to place his divine statue in the Temple around 41 CE.

The Growing “Crowd”

Watch now how that originally (small) “crowd” grows exponentially as the story is copied from Mark into Matthew, Luke, and John. This is actually the most significant

It is within that context, of course, that Matthew develops within ten verses from “crowd” to “crowds” to that infamous quotation, “the people as a whole answered, ‘His blood be on us and on our children.’” That is only, repeat only, from the theology of Matthew’s community and not from the history of Jesus’s execution. That verse means that “the whole people” take responsibility for Jesus’s execution, consider it just, and approve of its implementation. That is why, says Matthew, Jerusalem was destroyed in the year 70 CE. It was not just because of a very unwise political rebellion (as Mark said), but because of a divine punishment.

First of all, let me repeat—“the whole people” never said any such thing in earlier Roman history but only in later Matthean theology. Second, even if they had said it, the reason Jerusalem was destroyed was not divine penalty but imperial cruelty—a small people rose against a great empire and, inevitably, they lost. Third, *even if* “the whole people” or “the Jews” of that time and place had actually and historically agreed on Jesus’s execution (how could such an “all” have ever operated), any later attempt to widen responsibility beyond those immediately involved was earlier denied by Jeremiah 31:29 and Ezekiel 18:2, who claimed that children were not responsible for their parents’ action. Finally, for Christians, no matter who did what in the execution of Jesus, and even if all words and deeds in those gospel accounts are taken literally and historically, whoever was responsible was surely already forgiven before Jesus was dead. The dying prayer of Jesus in Luke 23:34 is, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.”

The reason for that increasing responsibility, from Mark’s (small) pro-Barabbas “crowd” to all of John’s anti-Jesus “Jews,” was not to exculpate the Romans by blaming the

(continued on page 32)

CHRISTIANITY

Christian religious imagination. Only then was the Nicene Creed composed with its emphasis on crucifixion. Indeed, only then was the “true cross” discovered—by Constantine’s own mother, Helena—and only then that the cult of the cross began. And it was then that the myth of Jewish responsibility for that cross began to be wielded like a sword. Here came the anti-Jewish preaching, the first “ritual murder” charge, and history’s first large-scale pogrom. Painful as it is for a Christian to say so, the history of anti-Jewish contempt is tied in its very origins, and then through its development, to the cross of Jesus Christ—to the story Mel Gibson has now put on film.

The Roman Catholic Church has seen this connection, acknowledged it, and begun to undo it, which is the importance of *Nostra Aetate*. That document, and the accompanying insistence that care be taken when the Passion is recounted, is a first attempt to uproot the “Christ killer” charge from Christian belief. Other Christian denomina-

Christian relations, that, too, will be a sign of what must yet be done. The Gospels themselves remain a terrible problem, a potential source of renewed anti-Jewish hatred, because Christians in pews around the world have not yet learned how to read those texts *as if they themselves are Jewish*; how to think of Jesus as fully and permanently a Jew; how to relinquish the implicitly anti-Semitic distinction between a “New Testament God of Love” and an “Old Testament God of Vengeance,” and how, finally, to preach the awful slanders of the Passion against themselves.

The reforms needed in Christian theology, in other words, go very deep. The question must move away from, “Who killed Jesus?” to “Why does it matter so?” Why is the death of Jesus so central to this faith? What kind of God wills the brutal death of a beloved son? And can the God whom Jesus preached be understood at last as the God of *Israel* pure and simple?

Mel Gibson’s movie may represent a set back on all of

Mel Gibson's Passion

James Carroll

Will Mel Gibson's movie about the Passion and death of Jesus Christ resuscitate the old "Christ-killer" slander of Jews? Ahead of the film's release next month, alarms have been sounded among scholars; various observers, some of whom saw versions of the script, warned that it could quicken the old hatred: the film's backers have launched a

nor upon the Jews of today." Since that declaration, Church officials have issued numerous elaborations of the point, while theologians and Catholic teachers at every level have worked to reform the preaching and teaching of the Church. Other mainstream Christian denominations have, likewise, repudiated anti-Jewish readings of the Passion story. No more "Christ-killers," period! But from the time a

'if they had known it, they would never have crucified the Lord of Glory' [1 Cor. 2:8], while we, on the contrary, professing to know Him, yet denying Him by our actions, seem in some sort to lay violent hands on Him."

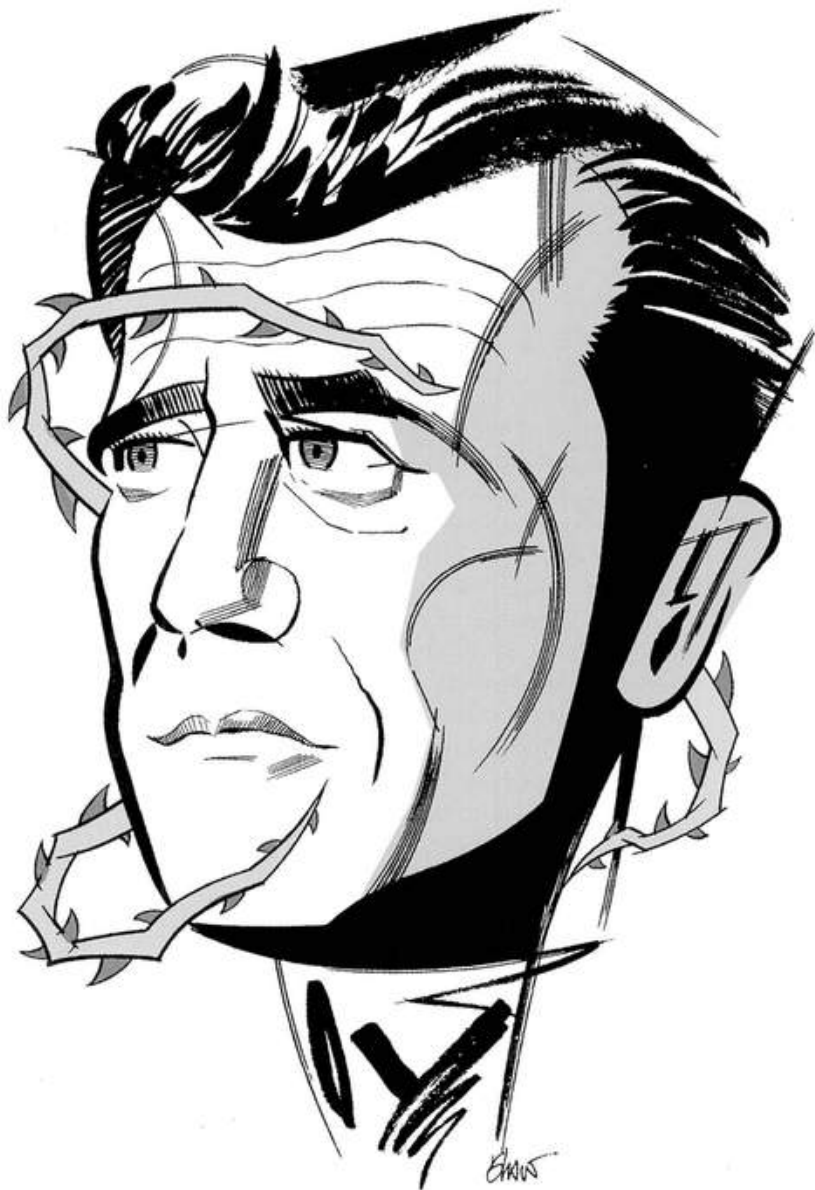
That's the Council of Trent, a doctrinal assertion that few Christians know of. But even the Nicene Creed itself, the statement of faith proclaimed every Sunday at all Catholic and many Protestant services, keeps Jews well away from culpability when it refers to the crucifixion "under Pontius Pilate." That is the creed's only historical detail, and it is significant that it does not say "under the High Priests" or "at the instigation of the Pharisees." No, the tradition is clear, and Gibson is right. Jesus suffered because of the sins of *all*, and the Romans put him to death.

Then why are "the Jews" charged with the crime? Not only by gutter bigots, but by the Gospels? If the perception that the death of Jesus involved a generalized guilt and a particular Roman act had maintained its firm hold on the moral imagination of Christians, the history of Jews, the so-called "decide people" (a term that first appears in the 2nd century) would be very different. Even at Trent, the impulse to acquit Jews of the decide charge came in a larger destructive context. The main work of the Council—responding to the trauma of the Reformation—was to impose rigid measures to "counter" all "unbelievers," which included Protestants, certainly, but also Jews. In other words, the Council of Trent, notwithstanding its broad attribution of responsibility for the death of Jesus, effectively continued the "decide" tradition of singling out Jews for punishment.

It was during Trent, after all, that the Pope issued *Cum Nimis Absurdum*—the Church's most repressive anti-Jewish decrees ever (no real estate, no university, no Christian servants, not to be addressed as "sir" by Christians, not to ignore the requirement to wear the distinctive badge, and, most momentously, not to live outside a distinct quarter).

That "sinners" were responsible for the murder of Jesus, not "the Jews," remained a minor note of the more dominant "Christ killer" theme that rang down through the centuries. And for purposes of anticipating Gibson's coming film, it is important to acknowledge that that scapegoating of Jews—burning of synagogues, ritual murder charges, dispersal, blood libel, pogroms—resulted from various interpretations of the Gospel's own Passion narratives.

Judging from press accounts that have already appeared, the problem is far more complex than Gibson and his colleagues seem to realize. For example, Gibson said to an interviewer on the Eternal Word Network last spring: "This is not a Christian versus Jewish thing: 'He came into the world and it knew him not.' Looking at Christ's crucifixion, I look at my own culpability in that." Admirable as



Gibson's intention may be here, he is missing something. The Gospel verse he has in mind is almost certainly this one from John: "He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not." A good summary of the broad indictment of human beings of which Trent speaks. But the very next verse in John goes on to say, "He came to his own home, and his own people received him not." The verse does not say what would be historically more accurate—"Rome received him not." This is the twelfth verse of the very first chapter of John, which defines the very essence of the conflict the Gospel goes on to dramatize. And, of course, the dramatic power of the story John tells is in the conflict between Jesus and not Rome (where is the drama in that, since all faithful Jews are in conflict with Rome?), but between Jesus and his own people. *There* is a drama. John tells a story of Jesus *against* "the Jews." Yes, it is Jesus against his people, but so radical is the break between them (Jesus opposing dietary laws, observance of Sabbath, reverence toward the Temple, and so on) that in a Christian reading, Jesus soon enough appears not to belong to this people at all. Jesus, that is, is not a Jew.

With such a conflict defining the very structure of the Gospel and the Passion narrative, the death of Jesus at the hands of “the Jews” is the story’s inevitable climax. Yes, as Gibson says, “the world” rejects Jesus, but the character that plays that role in this telling is “the Jews.” Similarly, all of the disciples of Jesus abandon him at his supreme hour of need, but the one, in this story, who mortally betrays him is Judas, who, as even his name implies, is remembered in the Christian imagination as the only real Jew among the twelve. And in the bigotry of that imagination, it is always emphasized that Judas betrayed Jesus for money. So despite Gibson’s wish to have it otherwise, the Passion story, as the Gospels tell it, (and certainly John, which he cites), is very definitely a “Christian versus Jewish thing”—particularly when read with an uncritical eye. Judging from how this story is reiterated in most Christian churches every Holy Week, it is more complicated than many otherwise well-trained preachers know. A scrupulously literal rendition of the Passion narrative, whether on film or from a pulpit, can be lethal because the sacred text itself, if unnuanced by the sort of “guidelines” proposed by the Catholic bishops, carries the seed of anti-Jewish scapegoating.

“Crucify him! Crucify him!” Matthew has the “people as a whole” shouting. “Let his blood be upon us, and upon our children!” (And a version of this scene, apparently, has been rendered in Gibson’s film, although it is not clear if it will be in the final cut.) In Matthew, the blood-thirsty Jews override the sympathetic reluctance of Pontius Pilate. Clearly disgusted with them, the Roman washes his hands of the whole affair, saying, “I am innocent of this man’s blood. It is your concern” (Mt. 27: 23–26). In John, where it isn’t the “crowd” who force Pilate’s hand, but “the Jews,” the line is, “Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no crime in him” (Jn. 19:6–7).

But what if the death of Jesus did not happen like that? Jan Michelini, an assistant director to Gibson, told the Catholic News Service, “It will be a very brutal movie, but I’m glad because for the first time someone is showing what really happened.” But there’s the problem, as Crossan’s essay in this issue demonstrates. The Gospels themselves do not show what “really happened.” Jesus being hauled before the Sanhedrin, and then before the Roman procurator; Pilate as a benign ruler of sensitive conscience; the Romans as reluctant executioners—none of this should be taken as “factual.” Contrary to the way Gibson and most Christians read them, the Gospels are not history. (That is why, of course, one might wonder at the Vatican’s recent unnuanced reference, in connection with Gibson’s film, to “the historical fact of

the passion of Jesus Christ according to the Gospel accounts.”) In direct contrast to what Gibson said in a television interview in January, the Gospels were not composed by eye witnesses. In addition to the “facts” of Jesus’ life, the Gospels consist of inventions, stories, and details drawn from scripture, and from compilations of the remembered sayings of Jesus. The Gospels, however “inspired,” were composed over a long period of time by human beings whose *current* conflicts were reflected in the stories of past events, and whose humanity, therefore, is fully apparent.

Despite Gibson’s wish to have it otherwise, the Passion story, as the Gospels tell it, (and certainly John, which he cites), is very definitely a “Christian versus Jewish thing.”

Jesus died in the year 30 CE or so. Those who loved him soon began meeting to exchange memories, to pray the scriptures, to grapple with his meaning. To them he was still somehow present. The stories they told evolved into oral traditions, but those accounts did not take the form of written documents until decades later. As scholars like Crossan instruct us, the earliest Gospel, Mark, is dated at around 70 CE, with Matthew and

Luke dated in the 80s, and John around the mid-90s. In this same period the Jewish people were traumatized by the Roman War, which led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Jews, the destruction of the Temple in 70, and, finally, the leveling of Jerusalem in 135 CE or so. Jewish identity was thrown into crisis: What was it to be a Jew without the Temple? Apart from Jerusalem? Some Jews answered by asserting the primacy of Torah or observance of the Law, and others by asserting the centrality of Jesus. He is the “New Temple.” The Church becomes the “New Jerusalem.” The differences between these two Jewish responses became exacerbated in the context of Roman hyper-violence, and as the Jews following Jesus added Gentiles to their number. But these differences between two groups of Jews living at the *end* of the first century are reflected in the story the Gospels tell about Jews who lived *early* in that century. The famous enmity, for example, between Jesus and “the Pharisees”—a staple of the Gospel story, and of a culture that ever since has slandered Pharisees as hypocrites—is better understood as enmity between their separate followers a full generation or two later.

Over time, these varied responses to the Temple destruction began to mature into two groups of Jews inventing a new way of being “Israel.” There was a flowering of what came to be known as “Rabbinic Judaism,” what would form the core of Jewish identity for two thousand years. And in the same period, the separate identity of Christianity developed. For reasons not fully understood, these movements saw each other as antagonists, ultimately as mortal enemies (probably some version of the ferocious conflict of small differences). As the decades went on, the conflict

heated up. Thus, a progressive reading of Christian texts, as Crossan demonstrates, shows a chronological intensification of antagonism toward a group that came to be called "the Jews" (in Greek *hoi Ioudaioi*), even though almost all "Christians" were themselves still Jews. For example, the phrase "the Jews" appears a total of sixteen times in the Gospels of Mark, Luke, and Matthew, but it appears seventy-one times in the latest text, John. As that usage indicates, John is by far the most "anti-Jewish" of the Gospels, even going so far as to identify Jews with Satan. The point to emphasize, and what most Christians still fail to appreciate, is that the conflict belonged not to the time of Jesus, but to the traumatized later period. By then, it was not that origins were being consciously misrepresented—and Crossan helps us see this, too—but that they were misremembered.

Jews argue over what it is to be a Jew today: What do the secular children of David ben Gurion have in common with the ultra-Orthodox? Something crucial—but something that may well elude non Jews. So it was with ancient Israel. A whole range of Jewish identities prevailed. There were Pharisees emphasizing synagogue study and Temple sacrifice, and whose movement evolved into Rabbinic Judaism. There were Sadducees—aristocrats—some of whom were high priests focused on the cult of sacrifice, and inclined to cooperate with the Roman occupier. There were Zealots, anti-Roman revolutionaries. There were Essenes, famous now for caves in Qumran, but in the first century they were a countersect, rejecting cities and Herod's Temple, which to them was a Hellenized blasphemy. There were Jews of the Diaspora, Greek-speakers like Philo of Alexandria (30 BCE–45 CE) who wrote favorably of the emperor Augustus. There were Judeans, Samaritans, Galileans, city people, peasants, itinerants, and oligarchs—all Jews committed to a common core (Temple, Torah, Oneness of God, Election, Covenant), yet all distinct. Nothing shows the essential Jewishness of Jesus better than the fact that, like other Jews of his time and place, he responded to the crisis of the Roman occupation by initiating a new, expressly Jewish movement.

But these subtleties are lost in the words "the Jews." Especially with developments that made the arguments between these two particular groups of Jews deadly. First, the Jesus community, especially after the leveling of Jerusalem, fell more and more under the sway of its non Jewish members, who found it easy to miss the distinctions among the various "Judaisms," to use Jacob Neusner's word, and to even forget that Jesus himself was emphatically

a Jew. With that ignorance, the phrase "the Jews" began to take on the edgy curl Christians hear in it today. When that phrase is used to deny to Jewish people the diversity of experience and ideas (existing even within a consensus of basic conviction), it is properly recognized it as a signal of an anti-Semitic mindset.

The philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard distinguishes between Western civilization's figment of "the jews," with a lowercase "j," and what he calls "real Jews." This entity, "the jews," exists only in the consciousness of Europe as a principle of negativity, denial, hatred, and guilt, which is why Europe has wanted to be rid of it. And this mental framework, unacknowledged and rooted in the *hoi Ioudaioi* of the New Testament, still exists. One sees it in the univocal way in which the policies of the State of Israel are sometimes criticized by non-Jews today. As if *within* Israel and among many Jews there is not a range of dispute about those same policies.

Early Christians lost the ability to see Jews in any but such a

mythic, slanted, negative and univocal way—which is how Jesus came to be seen as non Jewish. As he commonly still is. How often has the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as it flares in and around Bethlehem, been characterized over the last three years as "the Jews" against Jesus ... again? Whatever else one thinks of the conflict, it is nothing but the old anti-Semitism to see it in this way. And so it is with other sweeping critiques of "the Jews," whether alleging Jewish dominance in the media, or, for that matter, a conspiratorial Jewish control of Hollywood. And there is the dread possibility that criticism of Gibson's movie itself will be taken as a reiteration of the old opposition—"the Jews" now against Gibson, as if he is Jesus, as if the film's critics do not include Christians like me.

The second development that made this conflict deadly was, of course, that the small sect of Jesus people became the Church of the Empire in the early fourth century, able at last to resolve its competition with Jews by force. By then the true origins of Christianity had been "misremembered" by Christians themselves, with special consequences for the story of Jesus' death. The Passion was read as a polemic *against* the Jewish community, instead of as an argument within it.

Until Constantine, Jews and Christians had lived as disenfranchised minorities in the Roman Empire, each making up perhaps 10 percent of the total population. After Constantine's conversion around the year 312 or so—and consider that he could just as easily have converted to Judaism—the relationship of these "sibling rivals," as various scholars characterize them, was transformed. It was then that the *death* of Jesus came into the center of the

Nothing shows the essential Jewishness of Jesus better than the fact that, like other Jews of his time and place, he responded to the crisis of the Roman occupation by initiating a new, expressly Jewish movement.

Christian religious imagination. Only then was the Nicene Creed composed with its emphasis on crucifixion. Indeed, only then was the “true cross” discovered—by Constantine’s own mother, Helena—and only then that the cult of the cross began. And it was then that the myth of Jewish responsibility for that cross began to be wielded like a sword. Here came the anti-Jewish preaching, the first “ritual murder” charge, and history’s first large-scale pogrom. Painful as it is for a Christian to say so, the history of anti-Jewish contempt is tied in its very origins, and then through its development, to the cross of Jesus Christ—to the story Mel Gibson has now put on film.

The Roman Catholic Church has seen this connection, acknowledged it, and begun to undo it, which is the importance of *Nostra Aetate*. That document, and the accompanying insistence that care be taken when the Passion is recounted, is a first attempt to uproot the “Christ killer” charge from Christian belief. Other Christian denominations, to varying degrees, have undertaken the same project. All that has been done in this positive vein—including the momentous apology of Pope John Paul II in 2000—is the beginning of something, not the end. And if it turns out, as some predict, that large numbers of Christians, from Catholic to evangelical, relive the brutal crucifixion of Jesus through Mel Gibson’s film *without thinking critically* about its implications for theology, and especially for Jewish-

Christian relations, that, too, will be a sign of what must yet be done. The Gospels themselves remain a terrible problem, a potential source of renewed anti-Jewish hatred, because Christians in pews around the world have not yet learned how to read those texts *as if they themselves are Jewish*; how to think of Jesus as fully and permanently a Jew; how to relinquish the implicitly anti-Semitic distinction between a “New Testament God of Love” and an “Old Testament God of Vengeance,” and how, finally, to preach the awful slanders of the Passion against themselves.

The reforms needed in Christian theology, in other words, go very deep. The question must move away from, “Who killed Jesus?” to “Why does it matter so?” Why is the death of Jesus so central to this faith? What kind of God wills the brutal death of a beloved son? And can the God whom Jesus preached be understood at last as the God of *Israel* pure and simple?

Mel Gibson’s movie may represent a set back on all of this, as well as an uncritical reiteration of the Passion slander. If so, imagine what it means that, in the season of this film, Jewish children in America may once again find themselves the targets of denigration by non Jewish classmates who have been naively brought into the old lie. That emphasizes the urgency of turning *The Passion of the Christ* itself into an occasion of teaching and learning that might end this perverse tradition once and for all. □

LOOSELY BASED ON A TRUE STORY (from page 27)

Jews for that execution. It was not lie but gospel. Recall what was said above about a gospel’s now-as-then amalgam of words and deeds of Jesus or friends and enemies of Jesus. At the time of Jesus, Christian Jews were, like Pharisaic, Essene, or Sadducean Jews, one more group struggling polemically with one another for the future of their people under the strains of Greek internationalism and Roman imperialism. Slowly but surely, however, the Christian Jewish option was being refused by more and more of their fellow Jews. And, inevitably from the nature of “gospel,” as those opponents grew in the last quarter of the first century, Jesus’s opponents grew as well in the first quarter of the century, from (small) “crowd” to “the whole people” to “the Jews.”

The Visual Problem

All of this should be self-evident to any Christian who reads those four gospels in parallel columns, genetic relationships, and chronological sequences. But that process is also dangerous and subject to terrible misuse as the tragic history of Christian anti-Judaism and political anti-Semitism has made clear. Further, the problems and dangers multiply as one moves from the verbal register of quadruple gospel text to the visual register of a necessarily single staging or screening.

Any Passion Play or Passion Movie starts with certain major *a priori* problems. First, it tells of an execution without

detailing the life that led to it and thereby turns a martyr into a victim. Why should *anyone* oppose, let alone condemn, this person? Second, it emphasizes *passion*, not in our ordinary active sense of fervor or dedication (a passion for justice) but in its *passive* meaning, from the Latin *passio* or suffering. But Roman crucifixion was not primarily about private suffering, but about public warning. Were suffering its main purpose, the individual would have been kept in the barracks and tortured for weeks. Third, as a single Passion Play on stage or screen, it must necessarily collate four gospels into one and thereby negate their intrinsic purpose. Fourth, any visual dramatization of those four texts will have to make many decisions about actors, costumes, voices, and so on, that may well derive less from textual accuracy than from directorial prejudice. What message is sent to the audience at “Oberammergau,” for example, when Caiaphas arrives on stage atop a *sedes gestatoria* and Pilate simply walks on. Who is in charge, who is more important, and who is more responsible? Or, again, imagine a purely hypothetical Passion Movie. What will its director do with that “crowd”? Will it be a small group of pro-Barabbas petitioners or “the whole people” of Jerusalem or “the Jews” (of all time)? Will it fill the streets of Jerusalem in the year 30 CE and our theater screens in the year 2004? Finally, if a Christian believes that God inspired that discrete canonical multiple-gospel, does not a Passion Play or Passion Movie simply create a single uninspired anti-gospel? □

Finding Balance in a World Off-Balance

Sheila Peltz Weinberg

Often, after I present an introductory teaching on mindfulness or some spiritual topic, someone raises their hand and says, "But Rabbi, aren't meditation and spirituality really navel gazing? Don't they make us too self-absorbed? Aren't Jews supposed to be involved in the work of social justice and tikkun olam?" Or someone else will chime in and say, "This seems so individualistic, even self-centered; isn't Judaism about relationship and community, and less about the individual's spiritual condition?"

I have come to anticipate these questions and value their importance. As a practitioner of mindfulness, the last thing I would want to advocate would be a withdrawal of engagement from community, relationships, and social causes. Instead, the aim of spiritual practice is to find internal balance in a world that often appears out of balance. This search is not undertaken to escape into one's own sealed cocoon of balance while the world rocks and reels. Rather, it is to establish a solid footing, a centered strength, a clarity of thought and intention, which will inspire and support our work in the world.

Most of us struggle with balance in many different dimensions—whether it's balancing the checkbook every month, keeping the family or the job from going tilt, or maintaining an equilibrium of rest and work. Think of how pervasive the word "balance" is in our language: to hang in the balance, to hold the balance, to strike a balance, to throw off balance, to balance out, to be balanced, balancing act, chemical imbalance, balanced diet. And yet, what is balance? How do we know it when we see it? And how does balance manifest itself most significantly in my (or your) life? In this essay, I will explore four broad definitions of balance and their implications. We will find that the presence

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or absence of stability in one system has an impact on the balance of other related systems. More specifically, we will discover that the state of my soul impacts on my relationships, my family, my community, and ultimately on the larger world—and vice versa. The concentric circles of balance move in two directions—between the world and myself and back again.

I. A Steady State

The first definition of balance is as follows: "A steady state on a narrow base—a state in which a body or object remains reasonably steady in a particular position while resting on a base that is narrow or small relative to its other dimensions. For human beings, this most commonly involves remaining upright and steady on the feet." (*Encarta World English Dictionary*, St. Martin's Press) This dictionary definition reminds us that just to walk is an exercise of balance. The precarious nature of the human body's most typical position is reflected in two popular images: "a fiddler on the roof trying to scratch out a simple tune" and the

Rebbe Nachman folk song: "The whole world is a narrow bridge and the most important thing of all is not to fear."

We are not only balancing on the narrow pedestal of our feet. We are balancing on the slender base of our life span, our talents, our understanding, and our upbringing. Our capacity to dream and imagine is sometimes so much vaster than our ability to implement that we may totter and sometimes fall. The challenges of our circumstances may feel top heavy on the base of our tenacity and resolve. Our temptations may topple off the tapered base of our moral fiber. We human beings are indeed balanced midway between heaven and earth. We have a mind that seeks to touch the infinite in a fragile and finite body.

To answer the mind's need we must turn to bodily practice. Yoga is wildly popular today, perhaps because it is a hands-on balance practice that asks us not to think about balance but just *to* balance. That is compelling. You can't fake it. You either can do the "tree" or you fall over. You learn in yoga the relation between focus and balance directly through your cells.

Judaism doesn't offer a developed body practice to inspire balance. For this reason, many Jews, in print, in lectures, in groups, have begun to wonder whether we can Judaize yoga or whether we need to. Is it too important to just let it be secular? Or is it really not a Jewish way of learning balance? But Jews do have the Amidah—the central standing prayer—that is also a guide to balance.

Our posture for this central prayer moves between standing erect and bowing.

We spend most of the eighteen or nineteen separate blessings that make up this prayer mindful of the erect spine, which symbolizes our mastery and power on this earth as the covenant partner of the Divine. We are the ones who stand erect, who shoulder responsibility. (If we are not physically able to stand, we sit as erect as we can, for the same purpose). We imitate Abraham in the text in Genesis when it says "Next morning, Abraham hurried to the place where he had *stood* before the Lord..." (Gen. 19:27). At the same time, the Amidah includes a set of choreographed bows. Again we imitate Abraham in Genesis (Gen. 22:5) when he tells the servants to remain where they are because "the boy and I will go up there; we will *bow down* in worship and we will return to you." Bowing is a recognition of our dependence, our vulnerability, and our surrender to the great forces that are beyond our control or our understanding. We ask our bodies in prayer to integrate the balance of human life, poised between upright mastery and the bow of submission.

A profound insight of this traditional Jewish practice is reflected in the fact that the more power and responsibility we have, the more we are required to bend in surrender and

acknowledgment of our limitations. Thus, a common person bows four times in the Amidah. The high priest of the ancient Temple was to bow at the beginning and end of every blessing for a total of thirty-six or thirty-eight bows. But the king, the one with the most power in this world, is told by tradition that he must remain stooped in submission throughout the entire prayer.

II. Balance of Power

*We are balancing on
the slender base of our
life span, our talents,
our understanding, and
our upbringing.*

The difference between commoner and king brings us to the second definition of balance: "a state in which two opposing factors are of equal strength or importance so that they effectively cancel out each other and stability is maintained." Think of the terms "balance of power," "balance of trade," "balance of payments," and "balance of terror" as great mythic moments rarely achieved. We cannot go long in the search for balance before we must turn

from balance within to balance without. At this moment in national and in world history, huge imbalances are the rule. Unfortunately, we are not the first age to witness such enormous disparities in wealth, power, and privilege among people and groups. In northern Israel in the eighth century the prophet Amos said of the elites:

They lie on ivory beds, lolling on their couches
Feasting on lambs from the flock and on calves from
the stalls.
They hum snatches of song to the tune of the lute...
They drink straight from the wine bowls
And anoint themselves with choicest oils
But they are not concerned over the ruin of Joseph.

—Amos 6:4-6 JPS

"Joseph" in the last line refers to the impoverished and exploited of the contemporary peasant society. Amos heard God speaking to him and calling him to address the elites and decry the oppression that produced the imbalances.

I am very conscious of the lack of balance in our current socio-political environment. Maybe it is because my husband teaches a college sociology course that is called "Stratification" and our home library is filled with books crammed with statistics on domestic and global inequalities. Maybe because a friend, Felice Yeskel, started an organization about a decade ago first called "Share the Wealth" and then renamed "United for a Fair Economy" to reveal the growing income divide in this country. Maybe because of the endless calls for belt tightening on services to the weakest and most marginal members of our society while the income of the wealthy is further protected from taxation by the national and state governments. Maybe because in my home town of Amherst the state decided to close a successful halfway house for women, all formerly homeless drug

addicts who were able to live in community and recover with their children. Maybe because I have learned that about half the tax dollars that Congress allocates goes to the Pentagon. TrueMajority.org cites these statistics:

For just 15% of the Pentagon budget, we could do the following:

- Provide basic health and food to the world's poor—\$12 billion
- Rebuild America's public schools over 10 years—\$12 billion
- Reduce class size for grades 1–3 to 15 students per class—\$11 billion
- Reduce debts of impoverished nations—\$10 billion
- Provide health insurance to all American kids—\$6 billion
- Increase federal funding for clean energy and energy efficiency—\$6 billion
- Public financing of all federal elections—\$1 billion
- Fully fund Head Start—\$2 billion

So what's going on? Why does the military so skew the scale against the peaceful programs for better health, education, and international aid? And why do the interests of the few very wealthy so vigorously tilt the equilibrium from the suffering of children, old people, the sick, and the frail? Does the God of Amos and Isaiah and Micah still speak to us? Are we listening? How can we get this world back into balance? And how can we ourselves get so upset and still remain balanced?

It is painful and frustrating to feel our own sense of powerlessness. It is very tempting to close down mentally and emotionally to avoid feeling overwhelmed, despondent, or inadequate. We know that mind states of ignorance, denial, indifference, cowardice, or despair are not conduits of spiritual energy. And we must ask, is it possible to cultivate a mind and heart that can remain engaged in the world without tipping over? Can we remain active, concerned, and energized without losing our poise? The key to retaining self-mastery while seeking social transformation can be found in the wisdom of Rabbi Simcha Bunem who said: "Our sages teach, 'Seek peace in your own place.'"

Seeking peace in our own place is difficult work. There's a story I read about a volunteer who works with terminally ill children. She writes, "My idea was pretty simple at the beginning. I started to volunteer in wards with terminally ill children or burn victims—just go in there to cheer them up a little, spread around some giggles... Burnt skin or bald heads on little kids—what do you do? I guess you just face it. When the kids are really hurting so bad, and so afraid, and probably dying, and everyone's heart is breaking. Face it and see what happens after that, see what to do next. I got the idea of traveling with popcorn. When a kid is crying, I

dab up the tears with the popcorn and pop it into my mouth or into his or hers. We sit around together and eat the tears" (from Ernest Kurtz and Katherine Ketcham, *The Spirituality of Imperfection*).

Sometimes all we can do is eat the tears. And sometimes when we do that together we are less alone, less powerless. We might even be moved to understand that there is work to do in the world. There is healing and there is advocacy and it all comes out of the willingness to be face to face with the world and not avert our eyes.

The core Jewish practice is about the power of being still. The Sabbath is a personal, communal spiritual letting go of our distractions for one day a week. It is a practice of restoring the balance between extending our mastery and accepting the gifts of tranquility, rest, and intimacy with each other and ourselves.

The Sabbath counteracts the idea that materialism is the goal of existence. Isn't that why it is so hard to not use money for one day, or not use the Internet for one day, or not be an economic being for one day? By taking us out of the market for one day the Sabbath has radical social implications. Money is not God. God is God. We can meet God everywhere. But we need to stop sometimes, just so we can catch our breath and remember that we didn't create this planet or this body or this moment. In the Bible the Sabbath is only one facet of a radical rebalancing program that includes the Sabbatical year and the Jubilee. Its ultimate purpose is revolutionary: the redistribution of wealth—like the first name of my friend's organization "Share the Wealth." (Try running on that platform in a U.S. election!) The Sabbath is about being the change you want to see, being the peace you want to see, being the balance you want to see.

The importance of Shabbat, of being the balance we want, does not mean that we don't also work to *bring* the balance we want to the other six days of the week. In fact, Jewish law focuses on literal balance—on the need for honest weights and measures—in order to remind us of the importance of acting justly in every day life.

In the Torah, we are enjoined from even owning inaccurate ones. Errors made with weights and measures have no minimal level and no statute of limitation. It is considered an enormous moral and religious infringement to cheat one another in this way (for more, see Meir Tamari in *With All Your Possessions*). In fact, the injunction against this falsification is repeated twice in the Torah, in Leviticus in concurrence with leaving Egypt, Israel's formative connection to Spirit, and in Deuteronomy, associated with living on the land, the fulfillment of Israel's destiny.



The great medieval Bible commentator, Rashi, links these legal texts on weights directly to our personal and political commitments. Rashi notes that the cruel and unprovoked attack on the nation of Israel by Amalek as Israel was leaving Egypt comes immediately after the verse prohibiting false weights and measures. Rashi concludes, "If you falsify weights and measures, be concerned about awakening the enemy." That is, if we act with little regard for our connection to our neighbor, we are likely to incite the fearful and ignorant against us and create dangerous situations. Greed breeds dishonesty and dishonesty makes one confused, alienated, and vulnerable. These are conditions that attract Amalek, that bring calamity.

Our life rests on a delicate balance. Truth and integrity are the substances that nurture and sustain the stability of our stance. While honest scales are enforced by the rabbinic authorities, our own willingness to be present to our own experiences, thoughts, and reactions—bidden or unbidden—grows a heart of truth, compassion, and equanimity that is more resilient to confusion and less likely to cause harm. To reach out to the world, we must not only reach out with integrity, but reach within with integrity. We must not only be able to see tears, we must be able to eat our tears.

III. Harmony

A third definition of balance is "harmony—a state in which various elements form a satisfying and harmonious whole and nothing is out of proportion or unduly emphasized at the expense of the rest." The key to this state is mindfulness. When I am alert to my feelings, I see how often I am tipped over because something doesn't go my way. Ever notice how you feel while waiting on line in a store when someone ahead of you doesn't have the right credit card? Then the supervisor comes over. And you look around. All the other lines seem to be shorter than yours. Heat rises in your chest. Your mind starts to race. I will be late. Someone will be angry with me. Why can't these people plan ahead? Why aren't there enough cashiers? This is a scenario repeated ad infinitum in airports, on highways, at gas stations. You name it.

We can learn mindfulness by practicing in structured settings. A common position is sitting still and making the intention to pay attention to one in-breath followed by one out-breath. When the attention wanders to a thought, a feeling, a sound, or another sensation, one notes the distraction and then renews the intention to rest the attention on this one breath. Meditation teacher Larry Rosenberg explains how this practice can train us in deeper qualities that allow us to live with balance, wisdom, and compassion on our slender human base. He writes: "To contemplate breathing is to contemplate life itself."

When I am alert to my feelings, I see how often I am tipped over because something doesn't go my way.

When we are asked to bring our attention to the breath, we are practicing being present in the moment. We are finding a place of stability and comfort, which is our connection to the breath as it appears. Our tendency might be to try and make it into a certain kind of breath or to get it to conform to an idea we have of what our breath should be like. But the practice is to allow what is arising in the present to just be as it is. We are practicing a kind of intimacy, a kind of relaxed knowing and allowing, which is unbiased, and therefore not straining or pushing. "If we allow the breath

to unfold naturally," Rosenberg writes, "without tampering with it, then in time we may be able to do that with other aspects of our experience: we might learn to let the feelings be, let the mind be. We do a great deal more controlling of the mind, because we are afraid of what might turn up. But it is through letting the mind be that we eventually learn how to relax and let go into freedom."

(Breath by Breath)

What does this have to do with balance? Coming into the present again and again is like regaining one's balance again and again. We realize that we are often out of balance because we are dragging along sets of judgments and expectations, baggage from the past and expectations of the future that weigh us down and throw us off kilter. The fragile equilibrium of this life gets stressed and irritated by all of the encumbrances that bare little relationship to the truth of this present moment. Everything suffers in a climate of distraction.

Jack Kornfield explains how our minds work in his book with J. Goldstein, *Seeking a Heart of Wisdom*: "Our minds are reactive: liking and disliking, judging and comparing, clinging and condemning. Our minds are like a balance scale, and as long as we're identified with these judgments and preferences, likes and dislikes, wants and aversions, our minds are continually thrown off balance, caught in a tiring whirlwind of reactivity. It is through the power of mindfulness that we can come to a place of stability and rest. Mindfulness is that quality of attention which notices without choosing, without preference; it is choiceless awareness that, like the sun, shines on all things equally."

My personal experience has corroborated this description many times. On a mindfulness retreat I attended, every evening another teacher would give an hour-long talk. One evening I noticed that following the talk I was feeling irritable and restless. The talk was about the cultivation of certain mind states. I noticed that my mind was filled with thoughts about how I wasn't adept at the particular techniques he had discussed. I was suffering because I had an ideal of the person that I was supposed to be and was falling short of the ideal. All of a sudden I realized that that thought was not me. I didn't have to believe in it and I

didn't have to be demoralized. I am not a fixed concept that needs to measure up to some idea. I could become aware of this very flimsy thought without it destabilizing my state of mind and mood. It was just there, passing through, conditioned by old habits and new stimulation. I could be free if the quality of mindfulness, or non-judging awareness, was spacious and inclusive enough to allow any thought or sensation to just *be*, without holding on to it or pushing it away. The insubstantial nature of the thought was revealed. It moved along on its own, leaving the mind and mood clear, calm, and balanced.

A similar teaching is found in the work of the Baal Shem Tov. He is commenting on the verse in Psalms—“*Shiviti Adonai l'negdi tamid*”—“I place the Lord before me always.” The Baal Shem Tov writes,

“*Shiviti*”—“I place”—is from the word “equanimity” *hishtavut*. Regardless of what happens, let everything be equal (*shaveh*) for you, whether people praise you or despise you, or any other way they might treat you. So, also, regarding the food you eat, whether it is the finest cuisine or just grub let it all be the same in your eyes. Once you have removed the *yetzer bara* (temptation) completely from within you, regardless of what happens you will be able to say, “Is not this also from the Holy One?” Let everything be for the sake of Heaven ... That is great spiritual attainment.

We might feel the Baal Shem Tov is asking too much. Our preferences, in fact, are part of our identity. However, if we are able to move slightly in the direction of less reactivity we will actually be happier and freer. We can explore the energy we utilize in disliking things we cannot control—such as other people, the weather, or feelings and thoughts that come and go. If we were less absorbed in the struggle to have things go our way, we might expand our creativity and our capacity to love, heal, and serve. If we could rest in the quality of equanimity just a little more, we would have greater access to the fullness of life. Our disliking contracts and narrows our beings and makes us less present to the fullness of God's presence flowing through all time and space. Could we make our awareness so inclusive that we would see God in everything? Could we come to realize that all the diversity has its root in the One? This is the meaning of *Shiviti Adonai l'negdi tamid*.

IV. Wisdom

The fourth and final definition of balance is “emotional stability and mental stability in which somebody is calm and able to make ... [wise] decisions and judgments.”



The attainment of wisdom is the culmination of the spiritual path. It makes possible keeping our own center while making a contribution to the whole circle of life. The biblical figure who best represents this

potential is Joseph. Joseph is the *tzaddik*, the righteous person, a person who has been able to resolve many of his own conflicts and tensions. That person has a broad perspective, which allows him or her to live harmoniously without easily being shaken.

The Sfat Emet (Rabbi Yehudah Leib Alter of Ger) teaches that when the Bible uses the exact same word to tell us that Joseph “*stayed (vayehi)* in the house of his master” (Gen. 39:2) and “*he stayed (vayehi)* in the prison (Gen. 39: 20), we are being given an indication of Joseph’s equanimity. Joseph does not change *who* he is regardless of *where* he is. He models emotional balance and spiritual maturity.

According to the Sfat Emet, these qualities equipped Joseph to lay the foundation for the redemption. He was able to see God’s guidance in each step of his journey. Because of his balance, his steadfastness, and his dependability he prepared the way for the rest of the nation.

Joseph represents the quality of clear seeing. This is possible when the mind is not clouded by desire for approval, pleasure, or gain. Joseph is able to resist the same temptation that presents itself to us all every day. The temptation says: “If you have this or are this or think this, you will be permanently all right, you will be enduringly settled and at peace, you will have arrived.” In giving ourselves to this voice, we become hostage to that which we imagine will save us, be it a person, place, or thing. We lose our inner freedom.

Mordecai Kaplan, in *The Future of the American Jew*, tells us that faith, hope, humility, patience, thankfulness, justice, and love are simultaneously the fruit and the seed of a balanced spiritual life. They all involve letting go of controlling the consequences, recognizing the interconnection of all beings, accepting change as a constant in life, and being willing to continue to formulate one’s intention again and again—to make consistent effort without an expectation of achieving perfection.

Where do we begin to learn such wisdom? In my own quest to balance a peaceful inner life and activism for social change, I am always in search of models. These may be individuals working in the world or inspiring teachings, texts, and stories—individuals like Mordecai Kaplan, kabbalist scholar Arthur Green, or the Buddhist scholar and peace activist Joanna Macy. Macy, for example, first came to my attention through her workshops guiding people to

(continued on page 52)

Creativity and Spirituality

Lama Surya Das

First Thought is Best in Art, Second in Other Matters.

—William Blake

Who or what is the creative genie? One could say that it is the natural mind open to itself. Open, vividly aware, and without constraint or expectation. Open, and full up with delight and childlike grace. Beyond poetry, beyond music, painting, sculpture. One could also say that the greatest art form of all is the fine art of living. Living day-to-day, moment-to-moment is the most basic, even authentic, art medium we have: it is the means for allowing the creative genie out from inside us. When we create our experiences, ourselves, through every moment—isn't that art?

One could even say that this is how God creates the universe. The fine arts have always been connected with mysticism. Prayer and contemplation have always been in themselves art. Artful. Reclaiming the sacred in our lives naturally draws us closer to the wellspring, the source of creativity. Many American churches today hold open-mike poetry readings, often outside. They recognize the unity of faith and culture. As Emily Dickinson wrote, in 1860:

Some keep the Sabbath going to Church—
I keep it, staying at Home—
With a bobolink for a Chorister—
And an Orchard, for a Dome—
Some keep the Sabbath in Surplice—
I just wear my Wings—
And instead of tolling the Bell, for Church,
Our little Sexton—sings.
God preaches, a noted Clergyman—
And the sermon is never long,
So instead of getting to Heaven, at last—
I'm going, all along.

Authentic creativity is the art of freedom. It is pro-activity, like Buddha activity, which selflessly and spontaneously occurs according to needs, conditions, and circumstances. *Wu-wei* in Chinese expresses the Taoist notion of nonstriving, of going with the flow, of oneness. It expresses effortlessness, rather than over-doing, which is so unlike our ordinary conditioned reactivity—the totally predictable and

conditioned stimulus-response known in Asia as *karma*. Creativity is pro-activity. It comes forth freely and fearlessly, impeccably, as we must respond. Not simply in reaction to what others think and do, or what the circumstances around us seem to call for, but freely, according to whatever arises. Enlightenment embodied means unobstructed, uninhibited, spontaneous Buddha activity—the ultimate creativity.

We may feel in the thrall of others; we may go through life with a victim mentality. But it's really a matter of following, or not, our own creativity and accepting responsibility for our own karma, our own character and destiny. Not fooling ourselves about this. We don't benefit by editing out this scene or that memory; we don't benefit when we deny the truth and pretend even to ourselves. We may blame others for our problems, but if they obstruct us, it's because we empower them to do so. There have been realized masters in prison, such as Mahatma Gandhi, and Sri Aurobindo, who said, "the British can imprison my body, but they can't imprison my mind."

Unfortunately, so many of our responses today are aggressive, neurotic, and violent—just like eruptions of the unconscious in dreams. There is an outpouring of aggression. We can see the confusion in some modern art. Natural creativity is spontaneous: there's joy in it, the joy of mind untrammelled by limitation. But what we think of as spontaneous may well be nothing more than the knee-jerk spasm of conditioning. Karmic reactivity. Unkindness toward another, trashing the immediate environment like a child in a tantrum, or even the smearing of neurosis on canvas: all this is an expression of egotism, of self-preoccupation.

The total attention and precision, the discipline required for true creativity to blossom through craft, requires fully inhabiting the present moment. Free of self and other, past and future, in a nonconceptual state of wakefulness—one is free of fabrication, unadulterated by artifice. As with meditation practice, one just is.

Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche titled a book of poetry *First Thought, Best Thought*, a Mahamudra slogan that embodies the notion that raw unedited *isness* is the real stuff of poetry. Allen Ginsberg said, "Ordinary Mind includes eternal perceptions." The unedited expression of what emerges before we have a chance to remake it is the primal stuff of art.

The more that comes up out from our unconscious mind, the better we get to know ourselves; and the more primal stuff, the more raw material there is for us as artists to explore. It's not a matter of repressing anything—thoughts,

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emotions, sensations, perceptions, but of becoming more aware of all that there is within us. This is how we can directly experience reality as it is, not as we would like it to be. Buddhism calls it clear seeing. And to see things just as they are, without the tinted glasses that distort our perception, is a form of wisdom.

What we seek ultimately is so close we overlook it. It's not outside of us, so we can't grasp it, quantify it, or show it easily to others. As it's not outside of us, we can't acquire it. Just keep your eyes open. By cultivating a mindful way of life, rather than living mindlessly, you too will certainly observe it.

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Pro-activity isn't relational; it's non-reactive. It's like unconditional love, openness. More than creative, it is creating. The process itself—spontaneous, uninhibited—arises from this. It takes time and practice to get out of one's own way enough for such art to emerge.

Dharma artists, including Barbara Dilley, Rick Fields, Allen Ginsberg, Philip Glass, John Daido Looori, Meredith Monk, and Kate Wheeler have all spoken of how their art is an expression of spiritual practice. Writing teacher Natalie Goldberg was told by her Zen master, Katagiri Roshi, that as she was having so much trouble sitting in meditation, she would do better simply writing. It was her own creative process that loosened her up, her own natural meditation that freed her from the constraints of self-consciousness. "The voice of our original self is often muffled, overwhelmed, even strangled, by the voices of other people's expectations," writes Julia Cameron. "The tongue of the original self is the language of the heart."

Rumi, the great 13th century Sufi saint and mystic, is perhaps surprisingly a best selling poet today. But saints have always loomed large among the giants of literature and mysticism. Basho, Hildegard of Bingen, Blake, St. John of the Cross, St. Francis, Milarepa, Han Shan, Tolstoy, Wang Wei and Wordsworth—all expressed their spirituality through art, and art through their spirituality. In the Zen Buddhist tradition, poetry, painting, gardening, the tea ceremony, calligraphy, and the other arts are considered ways to meditate in action; they engender the same results, it is believed, as sitting meditation, as *zazen*.

Creativity and spirituality are related, intimately.

Divine creativity flows through us when we learn to tap into our inner natural resources. That's why it can be extraordinarily helpful and inspiring to find one's own natural meditation through what most passionately enlivens. This is congruent with the principles of tantra, which teach us that every aspect of life is sacred. Such principles can provide access to the awakened state. It may seem purely accidental when creative grace moves through us, but practicing one's



craft definitely makes us, in this sense, more accident prone. As we learn to get out of our own way, the inner light show becomes ever more visible.

God's playing field awaits our discovery and exploration. If we want to think of ourselves as imprisoned, enslaved, helpless, we're free to do that. And so we do, often—However, the door of our interior prison is always open. Have we become so used to cowering in the corner that we're afraid to step out? Longtime prisoners are afraid to leave the prison they know: they feel lost.

The wide unstructured world seems too free to cope with, too open. Not for the artist, though, no matter how the world might seem—in every moment there are infinite possibilities. Dencombe, the writer in Henry James' story "The Middle Years" said, "We work in the dark—we do what we can—we give what we have. Our doubt is our passion and our passion is our task."

Like the spiritual seeker, the artist is always searching. And yet the artist is never really lost, no matter how she may occasionally feel. It's not so much a matter of choosing the right muse or art form, as whichever form one chooses is the right one. Creative people find every opportunity to step out; they enjoy exploiting their own innate natural resources, and in the most unexpected ways.

There is no such thing as art except what we invent. Who saw a Campbell's soup can as art before Warhol saw it in new light? That's called fresh seeing. When we can see freshly in every moment—and actually we do, but don't notice—that is art, which is creating life anew. Not caught by conditioning, by our illusion of a limited and finite self, we can reinvent ourselves in every moment. True art introduces a new way of seeing; it introduces a new way of being.

If we're caught up in a self-concept, such as, "I'm an artist," or for that matter, "I'm a lover," we're not really an artist, and we're not really in love—there isn't unconditional non-dual divine love in it. There's only fixation, self-love, a kind of narcissism. It's the same with art. Art, like love, truly flows when it's allowed to flow unimpeded. Art flows when it's not even tinged by the color of our own prescriptive lens. Of course, color can be part of the art, but it's more transpersonal than that. We have to step out of our own way so that the greater selfless self, the greater vision, can emerge. That's pro-activity; that's freedom.

• • •

When we formally practice meditation and other contemplative practices, we're as a monk in robes. The robes, the shaven head, the mala beads remind the monk that all he has to do is sit through it, through all the weather, with his eyes wide open. Likewise, making a sacred space for ourselves can help us through the chaos without kooking out. If we cut off the chaos too soon, if we're unwilling

to really hang in the void and dance in the openness of craziness before contracting back into our socialized lives again, back into the gilded cage of egotism and normality, our breakthroughs are limited.

One can go further.

Many, like R.D. Laing, for instance, have spoken of the benefits and insights that madness can provide; they've spoken of the value of integrating these experiences within our lives. Even in my lineage of the tantric Tibetan Vajrayana tradition, we speak of crazy wisdom. Another fine book by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche is entitled exactly this.

The struggle to open the inner doors and windows can precipitate psychological breakdown as well as breakthrough: psychosis such as Van Gogh's can give birth to beautiful forms, feelings, and perceptions. Artists and mystics plumbing the source of vision tear off the inner blinders: they open to the infinite effulgence of Being. Spiritual madmen and holy fools, such as Kabir, Mirabai, Nasruddin, Han Shan, and so many others exemplify that kind of craziness. As Tibet's great poet and saint, Milarepa, sang: "My lineage is crazy, I am crazy—crazy for Dharma, for enlightenment!"

The irrational, the intuitive so-called other side of the brain, can set us free. Not just mind, but heart-mind, the total embodiment of being on all levels—not just the mental, intellectual, psychological levels, but deeper, beyond person and individual. The Be-ing level.

Socrates, regarded as the wisest man of his time in Athens, said "If I am the wisest, it is only in that I know how little I know." So let's not fool ourselves. Do we know where we're going tomorrow, really? We may think we're headed somewhere, but how to be sure until we get there? If we want to face the existential facts, we face the openness of everything. Anything can happen. If we create our life tomorrow in a familiar way, it is because it's all we care to do. Decidedly, it's not because that's all there is.

Concepts are embedded within the limitations we've constructed around ourselves. Maybe the kindergarten teacher, or in my case, the third grade teacher, told us we couldn't sing. When everyone else sings, just mouth the words. Don't ruin the harmony, Jeffrey. And for a long time after, I was afraid to sing. "I can't sing," I'd tell myself. "I can't." Until I heard Bob Dylan and Leonard Cohen, their gravelly voices, whereupon it became instantly clear that anyone can sing. I picked up a guitar, and began writing my own tunes, singing them in my own voice.

Making music isn't just for musicians.

Who can keep us from recreating our life as we would like it to be—as it could, and should be? No one but ourselves can keep us from being artists, rather than marching forward like mere consumers, corporate robots, sheep. No one but ourselves can keep us from dancing with life instead of goose-stepping. In every moment recognizing our own creative imagination, the living picture we paint on the canvas of our lives. Everything is imagination. And imagi-

nation is freedom, but it can also be conditioning, bondage. What I learned training in the Zen arts is very different from what I learned of writing and the other arts within the halls of the American Academy.

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In Kyoto the first thing I had to do in my calligraphy class, before even making a single stroke with the brush, was devote an hour to rubbing the ink stone in water for the ink. On my knees in a meditative posture, relaxed, I'd breathe in and out, slowly: all this in preparation. The rub of stone, the dark ink. Only then, only through and after, could I make the stroke for One. big deal! A single stroke, Bloop! Three hours later, maybe, I'd be allowed to make the strike for Two. As you slow down, slow down, slower, after a while the inconceivable opens. You begin to realize that art doesn't happen in just the way you had believed before, the way you'd framed it. And it has nothing to do with imitation.

The Zen arts are a total, inclusive training in focused attention and spontaneous expression. We're all spontaneous all of the time, naturally, whether we know it or not. We need but to recover that faculty, so we may better recognize and actualize it within our own life.

Have you ever seen the famous Zen painting of a single stroke, the sword stroke? Five hundred years later it still arrests the viewer. It has so much *chi* in it, so much energy. It's alive with non-conceptual directness. No one knows what to do with it, or how to interpret or imitate it; the stroke boggles the mind. That's art—a fresh way of seeing, of being.

Art isn't only about daubing color on paper. This moment we create is inexpressibly precious. Let's not ruin it, crumple it and throw it away too quickly while we seek elsewhere.

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The art of living demands a certain degree of freedom from conditioning. But even being one with conditioning is freedom. Not trying to get away is freedom. Not having to deny or suppress is freedom.

Freedom is in the dancing, in the aliveness, not in the struggle to find the right place only to remain stuck there forever.

Are we living in a way conducive to dance, moving with whatever tune the band is playing? Or do we know just a few steps, the same old steps? Do we really want to be a wallflower the whole of our life rather than enjoy the bash? What are we afraid of? Let's allow for the pure joy of creativity, the joy of no standards to worry over other than the wish to excel within ourselves, to act impeccably. No one is watching the dance. No one is telling us we may or may not dance this way, or that way. But fear and hesitation can hold us up; they can inhibit us. Courage, confidence, fearlessness—all enter in. We can't pretend to be fearless, but we can learn to notice how fear holds us back—fear and doubt, hesitation and anxiety. Noticing that, better learning ourselves, we can let go a little, more. We can walk through the walls of fear, dance through them.

See through them.

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When I first began to teach Dharma, the Dalai Lama—a mentor to me, an inspiration—had some words of advice. Don't be afraid to make mistakes, he said, otherwise you'll never do anything. This simple advice was helpful. It continues to remind me of my own creativity that I am often, for some reason, trying to suppress. As if the spontaneous is nothing but distraction. This is the kind of dualistic thinking that inexperienced meditators can fall prey to; all too often such meditators try not to think or feel anything.

Sometimes, even before I write a poem, I edit it in my mind. I rule out fertile, preconscious material, great swaths of it, before it ever meets paper. The original poem doesn't appear. But what about trying to simply write? Keep the hand moving. One can always edit later. If we're not careful, the internal editor can become too much like an inner tyrant; it can prevent us from finding our own voice.

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Let's reflect upon whether we live free and totally as though we were dancing without aim or purpose, as though no one were watching, as though we were making love. Or do we live as actuaries, calculating entire worlds of possibility, increment by increment, before we make the slightest move.

• • •

Lighthening up, as well as enlightening up—humor is a factor in the creative process. Perceiving the absurdity of our own seriousness—it's absurd if we can't laugh at ourselves!

I used to think that haiku writing and calligraphy and keeping a journal, conscientiously, and listening to certain kinds of music would help unlock at least some of my resistances to my natural creative flow. But I found that such things can also merely socialize us, freeze us into society's concepts about creativity. How far, how deeply, can we allow ourselves to go? When I began to experiment with art in my late teens it looked like other things were doing the unlocking: Dadaism, for example—found art, wallpaper length scrolls, and the throwaway. Not serious, not affected art. I experimented with cartoons, which are easy to enjoy and understand and can carry insightful lessons. Such exercises in absurdity helped open me to unfettered creativity; I didn't hold back, struggling to produce something ostensibly, suitably serious and art-like.

One can feel more open, freer, without that inner critical voice.

• • •

Open yourself. Awaken your energy body. Play; discover what arises.

You can play with paintbrushes, words, breath. Sounds, too. You can open your throat chakra and turn all sounds into mantras. You can chant straightforward traditional mantras like *Om Mani Padme Hum*, or *Hari Krishna*. Or other mantras, composed of more simple, primal sounds. In

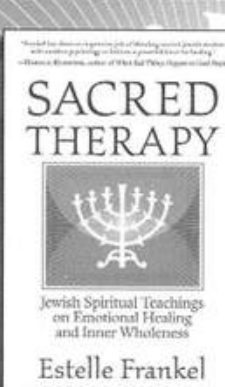
the Dzogchen tradition, there is a mantra that has only one syllable: *Ahhh*. There are no words or concepts to interfere with it; one can play with this mantra. Just say it, with a big stress-relieving exhalation: *Ahhh*!

Breathing exercises are good at opening the psychic channels; they're good at undoing the knots in our psyche, which keep tied up within us an incredible nuclear-like energy. Visualization practices can also engender such openings of energy. There are so many ways to open up! And we can each find what works for us—writing every day; singing every day; reading poetry; walking outside, and alone—creative homework of whatever kind that seems appropriate so long as we don't obscure our marvelous inner eyes and ears.

One of my learned lamas, Nyoshul Khenpo Rinpoche, who was also a poet and an enlightened vagabond, said, "What I visit the West, I see people everywhere. But whether they're inside or outside they're always plugged in." I said, "What do you mean?" Running his hands across all his sense gates, he said, "You know, plugged in here, plugged in here, plugged in here, plugged in here, plugged in everywhere! Why are they always plugged in? Don't they have their own battery inside?"

Walkmans, cell phones, pagers—Nyoshul Khenpo Rinpoche was saying that we seem to have lost touch with our own inner natural resources.

SACRED THERAPY



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Walking in nature or simply listening in stillness can be among the best tonics for us in our windy, agitated time. Expressions of creative meditation can help ease us into the realm of non-doing, of *wu wei*. They allow for our unknown, mysterious, unfabricated inner self to emerge.

Chuang Tzu, a modernist who happened to live over 2,000 years ago, said "Everybody today knows the use of usefulness. Who remembers the use of uselessness?"

Do we ever leave a gap in our life, in our week, in our day, when we don't have something productive to fill it up? A time for the whatever-it-may-be to arise; a time not fabricated by our life's overall strategy, game plan, war plan? What arises, weed-like, might surprise us.

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I used to think that I needed to meditate more and to write less; I used to think I needed to be in more silent, intensive retreats. But I misconstrued the Buddhist teachings on nonattachment and equanimity. I'd understood them as a call to suppress my thoughts, feelings—my own innate creativity. After years and decades of that, I now find that being receptive, sensitive, listening to what is called for, releases more attachments and more fixations. More natural freedom and creativity is revealed in this way, rather than through the imposition of some cookie-cutter model, some preconceived agenda.

Given the difficulties of our age it seems incumbent upon us to be flexible, to be skillfully creative in our approach to living. We seem to have no choice. We may have to learn, for instance, about such matters as virtual reality and holograms from our ten-year-olds. We don't need to just continue with the making of illuminated manuscripts; we can incorporate other things, go with the flow of events, without ever being stuck in place. It is unfulfilling in the long run—and in the short run—to remain immobile, stationary, fixed.

The Buddha said attachment is suffering. This is often translated as: Everything is suffering. But I don't think that's the way he said it—I wasn't there, so far as I remember, but I doubt that's exactly what was said. He meant that attachment is suffering; fixation and resistance is suffering. The Buddha meant that an unenlightened life is difficult, and full of suffering and confusion.

There is another way, not far from us. The mind is a good servant—the mind, thinking, intellect. It is a good servant; a powerful tool. But it is a poor master, and we are usually too much in its thrall. There are other ways of being within our being.

Let's not get stuck in any particular holding pattern. Let's not find a snug, safe harbor in which to anchor and ride out the storm, the seeming storminess of our lives, our relationships and our formal meditation practice. Life isn't a storm. There may be storm-like moments, heavy weather; there may be times to find that safe harbor. But great vehicles are meant to sail freely on the vast sea. They're meant to

ride the waves, not to remain anchored. Enjoy the sea! Let's pull up anchor! But we're not merely boats adrift in a gale amid typhoons and enormous waves. We are the water, the waves—the energy itself. There is nothing to lose; nothing that can drown. So let's go! Let's ride with it, steering just a little here and there as necessary, noticing our resistances—letting go a little, more.

Let's not be afraid of our emotions; let's not try to suppress, smooth out the waves in the ocean of our psyche. That's childish. And it's futile, too. In fact, the more we can dredge up from the bottomless ocean of our unconscious, the better we get to know ourselves. In Tibetan Buddhism, this is called "dredging the depths of samsara and liberating the lower realms." So let's go with the flow and discover that even when we seem to fall overboard, we never drown. Let's fearlessly enjoy the waves.

As we go deeper into our emotions, exploring them, we discover that they're all just energy. They're like wind. We can't control the wind, but we can move skillfully with it, and it is this that makes all the difference. Any energy can become a positive or a negative force. Anger isn't necessarily evil. Anger is just anger; it is just an inner energy which hasn't yet degenerated into violence and aggression. We don't have to act it out; we don't have to suppress or deny it. We can simply experience it, know it as it is in the present moment, and let it go. Perhaps we can learn to channel it constructively, rather than destructively.

In tantric iconography there are deities with flames about them. These are the wrathful flames of self-liberated anger, not the flames of dualistic anger—the flames that arise from anger at another. It's volcanic energy. Powerful, profound, splendid: it is simply anger. It isn't abusive or selfish. The tantric way of using energy is at once creative and fearless. Not only is it like knowing how to sail, it's like tacking with the wind. After a while, no waves seem too great an obstacle. In such a way are even the fieriest of passions, like anger and lust, used as propellant—as gale-force winds on the path of enlightenment.

Carl Jung said the most terrifying thing in the world is to accept oneself totally. Why is that frightening? Are we afraid of not being the perfect person, of not being good enough? Have we done something infinitely, terribly wrong? Why this guilt? Carrying such old psychological baggage is not very original. It's not creative. Maybe it's too late, we tell ourselves; maybe personal transformation will occur for the better in the next life. Nonsense! This is the next life. Tomorrow is the next life; the next moment is the next life. This very moment is already like a next life. Everyone will die eventually, but not everyone truly lives.

Goethe said, "Whatever you can dream, imagine, or aspire towards, begin it. Boldness has beauty, power, and magic in it."

Let's not wait.



Law and Hierarchy

Peter Gabel

However much we at TIKKUN insist that deep down we all long for a loving and caring world and are optimistic advocates for a new spiritual approach to politics that would speak to this need, we also recognize that these are often very difficult times. We all ask ourselves at one time or another why people don't revolt against the pain and isolation of the existing system, why so many seem to go along with business as usual even when it so manifestly appears to be against their own deepest spiritual needs.

In the piece that follows, TIKKUN Associate Editor Peter Gabel helps us understand the answer to that question in the form of a commentary he has written for the forthcoming republication of *Legal Education and the Reproduction of Hierarchy*, a book by Harvard Law Professor Duncan Kennedy originally self-published twenty years ago after the fashion of Mao's "little red book" during the rise of the Critical Legal Studies (CLS) movement in legal education. Born of the social movements of the 1960s, Critical Legal Studies launched a powerful critique of law and legal education as institutions that actually legitimized the injustices of American society. However, like so many of the radical attempts of that time, it was ultimately largely defeated by the conservative forces whose ideas dominate law and society as a whole today.

Gabel and Kennedy were both founders of the CLS movement and have continued their efforts to transform the legal system in a more humane and egalitarian direction. But while Kennedy's work has emphasized what he sees as the emancipatory possibilities of postmodernism and deconstruction, Gabel has sought to create a new spiritual-political approach to law, an approach that places much greater emphasis on law as



a potential vehicle for fostering empathy and compassion as part of a larger effort to create a new universalist vision of a loving and caring world.

In the essay that follows, you will learn much about the relationship and tension between these two approaches to transforming law, and to transforming human relations generally. And you will gain insight into why we can become addicted to the pain of deference to the way things are, even though our deepest longings are to free ourselves of this very pain and discover the possibility of creating a world based on love, solidarity, and mutual recognition.

When Duncan Kennedy published *Legal Education and the Reproduction of Hierarchy* in 1983, Ronald Reagan had been in office for three years, and the dominant culture's ultimately (largely) successful war against the 1960s was in full swing. But at that time our fate was not sealed, and in the world of legal education, the Critical Legal Studies movement was "hot"—the subject of serious legal symposia in the

Printed by permission from Legal Education and the Reproduction of Hierarchy: A Polemic Against the System: A Critical Edition, by Duncan Kennedy, which will be published by NYU Press in July, 2004. Peter Gabel is the Associate Editor of TIKKUN.

Stanford and Texas Law reviews, a cause for extensive hand-wringing and outrage by icons of the legal establishment, the subject of major (largely denunciatory) articles in the *New Yorker*, the *New Republic*, and national newspapers concerned that the Harvard and Stanford Law Schools in particular were being taken over by radicals. We were also a source of real energy and hope for ourselves—young law professors who had been shaped by the utopian aspirations of the 1960s for a democratic and egalitarian society and who wanted to carry our insights forward toward the transformation of legal education and the whole world—as well as for the generation of law students following us who could still feel in the air the idealism, and basic rightness of that idealism, that was pulsing through us and pushing us all forward. Hundreds of people attended our annual conferences that took place at a different leading law school each year; men, women, and increasingly men and women of color engaged in intense intellectual debate during the day and danced late into the night to the Rolling Stones and Aretha Franklin; and week-long summer camps became exhilarating annual gatherings full of serious study and fun. Although the planning for them may have been in the works in some Washington think-tanks, the Federalist Societies had not yet taken their place as campus institutions, societies which were eventually publicly blessed and thanked by Mr. Reagan himself toward the end of his second term for having decisively defeated the plague to our national well-being known as Critical Legal Studies.

Duncan's "little red book" was thus flung into an historical moment ripe with hope, and yet with storm clouds on the horizon that would eventually overwhelm us. Those storm clouds were not by any means exclusively the creation of our opponents—they were in significant part the result of the limitations of our own vision and of the movements of the 60s themselves, including our own. In my opinion, some of those limitations are reflected in Duncan's book, and I will address them momentarily. But first I want to state what is brilliant and important about the book, and how the ideas in it accurately express the relationship between the revelations unveiled by the movements of the 60s and the critique of legal education as one embodiment of the reproduction of hierarchy that, to use Duncan's word, "maims" all of us by depriving us of our capacity for freedom and collective self-determination ... as well as (and this prefigures my critique of the book) our spiritual capacity to become fully present to ourselves and to each other in relations of loving human connection and mutual recognition.

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When I say that Duncan published his book in the midst of a war waged by the dominant culture against the movements of the 60s, what I mean by "war" is not primarily a struggle to control who will run the economic system or the institutions of American society, but a war over the nature of consciousness, and the nature of reality itself.

The 60s was fundamentally not a movement for reform or revolution according to the inherited meaning of those words, as if what the world needed was a reordering of the external relationships of reality to make economic and political "systems" more equal, or to overthrow the power of the ruling class and replace it with some kind of externally pictured mass democracy, or anything of that kind. The movement was rather a movement of desire, of aspiration, an opening up of closed space that allowed millions of people to come to see and feel something invisible—namely, the artificiality and even unreality of the inherited world and the possibility of a better, more humane, and more real one.

Many, many forces contributed to this opening up of desire, among them the civil rights movement of the 50s, Elvis, the Beat Poets, the evocative lyricism of JFK, the insufferable lack of oxygen in the atmosphere of the post World War II kitchen culture of the 1950s. But the main factor was the Vietnam War and the growing awareness among millions of young people in particular that something insane was taking place, and it was taking place not because the war was in the economic interests of General Motors but because in some sense the whole world was out of its mind, out of touch with Being itself, living out scripts that rationalized the mass murder of millions of human beings.

There is an album from that period by a rock group called the Electric Flag that illustrates what I mean by this. The opening song begins with then-president Lyndon Johnson saying in the southern drawl that we heard every night on the news "My Fellow Americans ..." followed by a few words, and then a mass of people bursting into laughter. The point was that out of the passive confusion that characterized the initial years of ambivalence toward the war, and out of the contradiction that the draft was posing for all of us of whether we were going to ... die ... because it was our "role" to do so, and out of countless televised images of human suffering and death that acquired a surreal character as all of us faced with this contradiction gradually grasped that real people and not televised images were dying without any plausible narrative intelligibility (without any story we could tell ourselves of why this made sense)—out of all this came the genuine insight that Lyndon Johnson was in some way merely playing the role of "president" and that things were happening, real events were occurring, that were the outcome of large masses of people all playing one role or another in the reproduction of a society that was unable to stop this war precisely because they were entrapped in these roles.

I say that this insight was an expression of the opening up of desire because it emerged through a liberating process of *mutual* discovery, in which each of us was suddenly brought into a palpably more authentic contact with others through a dawning "shock of recognition." Out of the drift isolation of our passive conditioning, in which we were to simply play out the passive roles assigned to us by accident of birth and the cultural predestinations that followed from our class,

race, gender, and a multitude of other social attributes, we suddenly felt galvanized into a movement of more connected and more real human beings who could, must, actively shape a more authentic destiny for ourselves and a more just and loving world. Through this phenomenal ricochet of mutual recognition that spread rapidly across the entire face of the earth, what had been invisible became visible and a kind of authentic, elevating love and joy spread across the psycho-spiritual energy field that was social existence itself. That turning of the spirit outward toward the other is the true meaning of the word "movement," since of course nobody physically moves anywhere except during demonstrations or when dancing to music.

But this process of revelation did not instantly change the inherited world and its institutions, values, loyalties, and distributions of power and wealth. On the contrary, although we eventually stopped the war, the patterns of social identity that shaped American institutions kept grinding along, and the farther one was from the liberating experience of the movement, the more one resisted and was even enraged by the movement's challenge to the legitimacy of everything that one's conditioning had led one to feel was the basis of one's very social existence and connection to others. Furthermore, the conflict about the very nature of social reality existed within the heart of everyone who was "in" the movement as well as those outside it—we ourselves were threatened by our opposition to the parents who had raised us and whose love and values and ways of life we had internalized, and in any case we had no idea how to create our own new world whole-cloth out of nothing but a powerful, blinding insight when the weight of history had produced the institutions and the means of material subsistence that were the only ways of life that were "really there" in front of us. Thus the "war" that the movement(s) of the 1960s sparked in the culture was a war between two consciousnesses of reality existing not "between" different collections of individuals but side by side within the whole of social consciousness that was still, for the most part (for there were many, many radical experiments that tried to start over from scratch), the inherited world suffused with the norms, ideas, and values of prior generations. Thus the origin of the German radical Rudi Dutschke's famous injunction to all of us who became activists determined to change the world in accordance with our new-found insights: "We've had the 60s. Now for the long march through the institutions."

Legal Education and the Reproduction of Hierarchy is an expression of one ingenious mind's attempt to bring what was authentic in our awareness to an unveiling of the encrusted and "maiming" patterns of passive alienation in one of the institutions that as a totality generated the Vietnam War (55,000 Americans, two million Asians dead, for "nothing") and that was trying to continue on indefinitely reproducing this social alienation in future generations. Duncan's book is not mainly about law school, but

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about the reproduction of hierarchy within the society as a whole in a way that actually constitutes the society by recruiting each new generation to become passive actors, role-players, in relationship to a self-legitimizing set of ideas and patterns of deference and authority. It is about law school only in the sense that it is a detailed phenomenological description of one particular such institution that Duncan himself is immersed in and in the sense that his “theory” is precisely that it is through telling the story of *his* world in enough detail to make it uncontroversially recognizable to the reader that one can “recognize” the nature of society as a whole as a consciousness-war more or less corresponding to the big war of the 60s I’ve just described in larger societal terms. In other words, it is about law school in the very specific sense that law school is training for hierarchy generally, *and* that law school is one very important hierarchy itself insofar as its training has as its specific aim teaching the “legitimizing ideology” that serves to legitimate all of the others. This last point is in fact hardly touched on in this book—it appears only in the description of the role of the curriculum in transmitting the presupposed legitimacy of the basic rules of the “private” capitalist marketplace in contracts, torts, and property during the first year and the center-left consensus of modest reforms of capitalism institutionalized in the New Deal during the second year—but it is a major theme of the rest of most Critical Legal Studies writing, and its minor presence here is an important bridge to that writing. The vast majority of the book in the first six descriptive chapters is devoted to the first main idea of revealing, mainly through the use of concrete expressive examples, how the hierarchy itself reproduces itself as an alienation factory, as a process of bondage.

To understand the book and its relationship to the consciousness-war theory of our society that I am claiming it is an expression of, it is important to grasp that the book was written *against* the received views of the Left about the role of law and legal education in maintaining the existing order of things. In 1983, the received view prevalent within the National Lawyers Guild and the Left in general was either that law is an instrument of the ruling class, “used” by those in power to maintain their class superiority in relation to an economic system that is the true locus of social struggle, or that law is a potential tool of gradual change through statutory or common-law liberal reforms that will give space to the oppressed to fight for more fundamental change. Duncan spells out his critique of both of these positions in the book itself, mainly by emphasizing, for example, that the market and the State are now so interpenetrated that it is meaningless to say one is “more fundamental” than the other, or that the idea that today’s “proletariat” of the marginalized poor (he names welfare mothers, illegal immigrants, and the homeless) is going to lead the revolution is just implausible, or that the reform strategy just can’t work because external modifications of the System remain encap-

sulated within the internal reproduction of hierarchical patterning that *is* the system. And he shows how both of these theories serve as rationalizations that actually disempower law students from engaging in struggle right now to transform law schools as part of the anarcho-syndicalist, workplace-by-workplace organizing that the book advocates as the cell-by-cell way to actually change the world.

But through the consciousness-war lens of the historical period that I am emphasizing, the most important error in the received Left views of law was precisely that they picture law and legal education as instrumental “tools” of domination within an “entity” called society that actually does not exist—because what *does* exist is the consciousness-war between authenticity and alienation that is masked and denied precisely by “the reproduction of hierarchy” that keeps spreading itself across the face of the networks of human interaction we call society. Duncan is not denying the existence or importance of economic inequality and injustice or of other forms of inequality and injustice that CLS, as one incarnation of the Left, was/is fighting against. But he is writing a work of expressive revelation that makes a demand on the reader to recognize that the source of the problem is not “out there” but right in front of him or her, a condition of existential servitude to a great nothing (the hierarchy with no heart or center to it) masked by a kind of universal fealty that is just self-deception and “false consciousness.” Thus the strategy in the last chapters of the book calls not for changing “society” as if there were some External Thing outside of us that we had to somehow manipulate into democracy and egalitarianism and as lawyers (law professors, law students) “using” law as a “tool” to do so, but rather for cellular organizing to resist the pain right now of having one’s existence as a free being “maimed” by a distortion of social consciousness that is always occurring where we are, right now. Within this effort, law is not a “tool” but a part of the consciousness, encoding values legitimating hierarchy that are masked by claims to neutrality and mere craft (“legal reasoning”) that can and should be exposed and contested just as the institution, law school, that teaches that law should be.

What is ingenious about the book is not the correctness of this point of view stated abstractly as I have just done, but the revelatory power of the description of law school itself. Every detail of life in law school—from the way the interaction of the hard case and the soft case seduces the student into accepting, and the way each is taught draws the student into believing in, the power of legal as opposed to “non-legal” reasoning; to the way that fatuous attacks on law professors in the law school student paper actually help to constitute the pedestal upon which the very meanest of professors must be located (as does the mercy dispensed by these very professors: “his Clark is worse than his Byse”); to the way that the tiniest of gestures serve as modeling displays made coercive by the fact that everyone watching

everyone else follows them (the students seeing “secretaries” treating “professors” with elaborate deference, as though her time and her dignity meant nothing and his everything, even when he is not her boss,” and that humane relations between them when they occur, “are a matter of the superior’s grace, rather than of humane need and social justice”); to the role of law review (“An instant (‘the lightning of grades’) converts jerks into statesmen; honored spokespeople retire to the margins, shamed”); to the micro-details of social coercion students learn to impose on themselves that both reinforce and erase class and race hierarchies (“Lower-middle



class students learn not to wear an undershirt that shows, and that certain patterns and fabrics in clothes will stigmatize them no matter what their grades,” while “Black students learn ... that their very presence means affirmative action, unless it means ‘he would have made it even without affirmative action’”); to literally a hundred other examples—every detail of law school life is subjected to Duncan’s x-ray vision and made transparent as a more or less unified way of life that *seems* impossible to escape from and serves as training for the later hierarchies of the Bar, whose saints come marching in, as Duncan also describes, beginning with the interview process of the second year and the fancy hotels you will be invited to fly out to stay at and the denial of humiliation that is manifested in the ‘ha, ha’ mass posting of one’s rejection letters in the dorms, and so on and so on and so on right up through one’s poignant death (this part is not in the book but is implied by it), when one may realize for the first time that one has lived a life imprisoned in masks that turned into a false self, a life without freedom, authentic personal dignity, and the integrity of self-determination.

As a way of showing both the strengths and limitations of the book as I see it, and of establishing the relation of the book to the work of Critical Legal Studies as a whole, let me again call Duncan’s method “expressive revelation” and separate this method into two consciousnesses: Duncan’s own consciousness, which I will call the *seeing* consciousness, and the consciousness that he is attempting to expressively reveal or unveil, which I will call the *seen* consciousness, that of the role-player caught up in the drama of the reproduction of law school hierarchy. In my view, the seeing consciousness as it is manifested in all of the book’s examples of training for hierarchy is brilliantly insightful and is aligned with what I earlier described as the

liberating consciousness of the movements of the 60s. The seeing consciousness purports to be free and is making a powerful appeal to the seeing consciousness in the reader to identify with this freedom through the unveiling of the “false consciousness” of the seen consciousness. And it proposes concrete strategies (cell-by-cell organizing, the Left Study Group) where possibilities of resistance to the enveloping power of the seen consciousness can be “cracked open,” resisted, and effectively contested.

So far so good.

But the problem, as I see it, comes with the seen consciousness, for a central characteristic

of the seen consciousness is that it *does not wish to be seen*. Indeed, the entire point of the book is to show that this consciousness comes into being through an elaborate process of “imprisonment,” in which each act of modeling deference to hierarchy—together producing a kind of unified ubiquity of social interactions, as well as mystifying ideas that cement this hierarchy in the group’s self-reflection—is designed both to keep reproducing the hierarchy and to prevent this intention from becoming visible. As Duncan puts it, what is initially a mask becomes the self. His point is precisely that the reproduction of hierarchy is elaborated through what I would call a “circle of collective denial,” or through what he on several occasions calls a denial of “false consciousness” that is coercively made unaware of its own falseness. This aspect of what I am calling the seen consciousness provides the link between the unveiling insight of the movements of the 60s, its insight into the unreality of a society of people playing roles that are mistaken for “who we really are,” and Duncan’s own insights into legal education as one important arena where this process takes place and reproduces itself, like an amoeba.

The reason that this aspect of the seen consciousness is a problem is that the book assumes that the seen consciousness can be resisted and eventually undone by a spreading of the seeing consciousness’s discovery of its own freedom—through revealing the seen consciousness for what it is and engaging in forms of political organizing that oppose the hierarchy’s false claims in the name of freedom and true collective self-determination. In my view, however, this contradicts the very *social* nature of the reproduction of hierarchy, in which people gain recognition and their personal identity as social beings connected to others by accommodating to the world of others that surrounds them. Indeed the only

plausible explanation for why law students don't spontaneously resist and reject their assimilation to a hierarchy that "maims" them and deprives them of their authentic selfhood is that the reproduction of hierarchy is the reproduction of our own social alienation, to which, absent some liberating social movement that frees us for a more authentic form of social connection, we have no choice but to succumb. To apply this very insight to the revelatory power of the seeing consciousness, Duncan's own capacity to see through and express the alienated character of legal education and the reproduction of hierarchy generally is not the result of the freedom and insight of a singular individual (here, Duncan himself), but rather the expression of the insight of an era that is itself an expression of an inherently *social* movement of inherently social beings liberated (only partially, alas) from their social alienation and inherited conditioning by the affirming gaze of the Other, with each serving as the Other for the Other. Just as the coercive denial spread throughout the law school hierarchy is made coercive by making accommodation serve as a condition of social membership and identity, so also the capacity for freedom from the hierarchy—the capacity to even see it as social alienation—requires the Other: others who form the more real and more present and more free and more authentically connected consciousness of the movement.

The limitation of Duncan's book is that it does not, in my opinion, accurately analyze the cause of the very "sickness" he describes, a limitation that links the book to what became the dominant point of view in Critical Legal Studies and that must be transcended if we are to pick up where we left off. The work of CLS was always divided into two main strands: what might be called the critique of alienation on the one hand and the neo-legal realist/deconstruction critique, which became known as the "indeterminacy" critique on the other. In part because of the influence of virtually all of Duncan's other writings about law, the indeterminacy critique became the dominant one within CLS and was devoted almost exclusively to demonstrating in a myriad of specific instances—in hundreds of articles—what is merely alluded to in the first chapter of *Legal Education and the Reproduction of Hierarchy*—namely, that all legal reasoning as well as justifications for the alleged legitimacy of legal reasoning (e.g. the work of Ronald Dworkin) can be shown to be sufficiently vague, circular, self-contradictory, or manipulable so as to not provide any plausible justification claiming to legitimately dictate the outcomes of cases. Although in its phenomenological or descriptive aspect, *Legal Education and the Reproduction of Hierarchy* is mainly Duncan's very best published description of the alienation critique, in its separation of the Seeing consciousness and the Seen consciousness the book is also consistent with the indeterminacy critique. For the indeterminacy critique is fundamentally not a critique that uses the social-phenomenological method of "expressive revelation" to unveil the

alienated character of legal thought and culture, but is rather what I would call a neo-formalist analytical mode of critique that seeks to affirm the freedom of the reader from the alleged determinacy of legal doctrine and justifications for doctrine. In this respect, the indeterminacy critique spilled into and joined forces with post-structuralism, identity politics, and deconstruction that more or less took over CLS and the academic Left as a whole with the collapse of socialism and Marxist criticism.

The problem with the indeterminacy critique is that it wants to argue for democracy and egalitarianism by showing that we are all free from any purported state of bondage to legal rules and the political justifications for them, but it leaves us each alone in our freedom—it does not want to come to grips with the social nature of the alienation critique, which accounts for the illusion of bondage by its recognition that the Seen consciousness clings to the determinacy and the purported legitimacy of law and legal institutions *because it does not wish to become conscious of itself*. Whether or not it's a denial of false consciousness, people are just not going to give up their attachment to the alienated networks of passive role-performances, or their belief in the legitimacy of legal reasoning and legal education, if maintaining their allegiance to these modes of alienation is their only apparent source of social identity and self-worth as inherently social beings, that bowing to this alienation is even the seemingly necessary condition of group membership. The relationship of Duncan's book to the indeterminacy critique in CLS scholarship is that both covertly assume that people will *want* to reclaim their freedom, from hierarchy, as well as from the supposed objectivity that rationalizes the legitimacy of legal reasoning, if their freedom from the "false necessity" of following the rules can be shown to them (in the case of hierarchy, through this particular book's method of demystifying "expressive revelation"; in the case of legal reasoning, by the analytical deconstruction of the purported rationality of the thought-process). But this is not the case if freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose, and if un-freedom is the only source of fulfilling the longing for mutual recognition and social connection that inheres in the nature of social existence itself.

It was Martin Luther King who most fully grasped this truth in relation to law when he defined justice as "Love correcting that which revolts against love." The point of this idea in relation to the reproduction of hierarchy is that the "sickness" of the "maiming" hierarchies of legal education that Duncan so brilliantly describes is a spiritual sickness that must be healed by new methods of educating lawyers that bind them to the moral ideal of creating a loving and caring society. Like Duncan's book itself, the 60s provided my generation with a glimpse of King's insight, a glimpse of our essential possibility for authentic and loving connection that could transcend the spiritual distortion of our forced

allegiance to the legacy of social alienation that we inherited from prior generations and that were indeed, as Duncan says, a form of collective denial of "false consciousness." But the glimpse turned out to be too brief and too frightening in its very radicalism to allow us to develop the way out of the claim that our prior conditioning made upon our loyalties; and within both CLS and the 60s themselves, we were not yet able to link the experience of the possibility of liberation-through-each-other with what many spiritual traditions call The Way, the details of the spiritual strategy to successfully transform our servitude to hierarchy into an authentic, beloved community.

What would this mean in relation to the transformation of legal education in a more "just" direction within the meaning of King's definition? Paradoxically, I am in substantial agreement with a core element of the last chapters on "Strategy in Legal Education" and the "Reproduction of Hierarchy"—the vision of an existential, cell-by-cell transformation of the whole in which concrete groups of students, teachers, and lawyers see the hierarchies before them as an unnecessary network of mutually legitimating denial of authentic human longing that rationalizes alienation, domination, and even cruelty and that must be overcome piecemeal, rather than, say, seizing control of the State or the means of production or any of the other "totalizing" strategies that in 1983 were part of the dominant Left fantasy about replacing the current order of things. I also think there is some appropriate and limited value to the indeterminacy critique of legal reasoning as an intellectually helpful part of this process in showing that no political or legal *concept*, no matter how lofty (liberty, equality, democracy), can be shown to *entail* a particular result, which is to say, to entail the realization of the ideal claimed by that concept. As one moment of the spiritual awakening that leads our students and ourselves to move toward correcting that which revolts against Love, it is helpful to see that this has nothing to do with the concept of love, which is of course indeterminate in what it entails, but rather with the undistorting, the healing, and the resacralization of our experience of one another as social beings whom we can come to recognize as the source of each other's completion.

But in order to "correct" in King's sense what should have been the main theme of CLS (i.e., that the legal sys-



tem legitimates social alienation) and what is the main accomplishment of Duncan's book as a critique of legal education as an instance of reproducing social alienation, this path of cellular transformation must be re-understood as a morally compelling, spiritual activity rather than merely an intellectual/political revolt of free individuals against a surrounding false consciousness. The work of transformation must offer those who engage in it the kind of social healing and legal wisdom that is capable of healing the underlying motivation for the maiming collective *denial* upon which the book places so much emphasis, a denial that otherwise will not be

capable of becoming conscious of itself by overcoming the counter-influence of the processes of social coercion that institutionalize this denial and keep reproducing it, as they have successfully continued to do from 1983 until today.

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The Project for Integrating Spirituality, Law and Politics, of which I am a member, is a group of lawyers, law teachers, and law students who are trying to do precisely this: to engage in the piecemeal spiritual disalienation and transformation of the legal profession, of which legal education is a very important part. I also work in one cell of legal education, New College of California's public-interest law school, and in a cell within that cell, the first-year course in Contracts that I have taught for almost thirty years.

In that cell within a cell within a cell, every year I teach the case of *O'Neal v. Colton School Board of the State of Washington*. Mr. O'Neal was a long-time school teacher in Colton High School who had developed diabetes and found late one spring that he could no longer read well enough to see his students' papers, read their writing, and read the board in his classroom. During the summer following the end of that year, he reluctantly decided that he had no choice worthy of his students and his school but to inform the School Board that he could not return the following year, although he was "under contract" to do so. The School Board shocked Mr. O'Neal by replying that he had no justification for "refusing to perform" and rejected his attempted resignation, denying him in the process his request for his accumulated 27 1/2 sick days. The legal issue presented to the students by the casebook and the case itself is whether Mr. O'Neal was excused from "performing" under the doctrine of impossibility of performance.

It is possible to teach this case in many ways. One is to

ask a student from a position of superior knowledge, backed by the threat of humiliation and non-recognition of the student's legal talent, a question designed to test the student's capacity to see that Mr. O'Neal should have foreseen the risk of his disabling illness prior to entering his contract and that to excuse him under these circumstances would both undermine personal responsibility for assumed risks and bring inefficiency and instability into market transactions where no transaction costs are present that might justify governmental interference in the market (a law-and-economics method of conditioning students to embrace the legitimacy of competitive individualism and a materialist conception of value popular today, although largely unheard of in 1983). Another certainly more common approach would be to use the same interpersonal methods to compare Mr. O'Neal's resignation to, say, a deep-sea diver's refusal to go through with an agreement to dive for valuable pearls for fear of being attacked by sharks, an exercise in distinguishing cases involving foreseeable risks that eliminates the fancy philosophy (if law-and-economics can be considered such) and reduces legal reasoning to more of a trade involving cleverness but transmitting the same values to students. Still a third, more liberal approach would be to adopt the same superior stance as the teacher but treat *O'Neal v. Colton* as just an easy case to get across the rule that serious illness forms the basis for a valid impossibility defense in employment cases, but focus on the Court's formalistic refusal to allow him the sick days, which the Court in fact says fell through because accumulated sick days must be claimed before the end of one's employment, and the contract was terminated at the moment of impossibility when the diabetes disabled Mr. O'Neal from performing. Even more "political" would be an effort to bring out the labor movement's long struggle to win the granting of accumulated sick days at all for workers in a market characterized by inequality of wealth and power and the injustice of the opinion's formalism in light of the length of Mr. O'Neal's employment.

Personally, in my cell, I have used all of the foregoing methods, although to the extent that I employ the "Socratic" posture in my egalitarian school, I do it playfully, to remove the (in my opinion) absurd implication that it is humiliating not to know the fancy (1) or clever (2) or historically informed (3) answer. And I explicitly bring out at the end of this portion of the discussion what the rule is in employment cases.

But then I ask a question that addresses what I honestly deeply feel about Mr. O'Neal as I have thought about him and his family over the years. I ask a student how a local community ought to respond with justice to a long-time, perhaps venerated high school teacher who has taught most if not all the children in the town of Colton, many of whom are now grown, many of whom now have children of their own who benefited from Mr. O'Neal's teaching. Under all

of the traditional approaches to teaching the case described above, the very best treatment Mr. O'Neal receives means going home alone with a little money to at most his wife and children, if he has a wife and children, to rattle around in retirement half-blind until he dies. Might it be our *legal* obligation—that is, the legal obligation of the School Board as the embodiment of the community—to keep him on as an elder, to make sure he is venerated and appreciated and taken care of and even given an active mentoring role in the school that doesn't require the eyesight acuity of everyday teaching? Mightn't this elevate the later years of Mr. O'Neal's life, give great pleasure to his former students, bring a greater sense of community to the high school as a whole, and strengthen the high school's ties to the rest of the town?

In my view, it is this sort of approach, writ large and reimagined toward transforming the whole moral and spiritual nature of the curriculum as well as informing the teaching of the very nature of the social interventions one might consider trying to make as a lawyer in the school's clinics and later as a lawyer in practice, that undermines the reproduction of hierarchy and carries forward the promise of Critical Legal Studies. The reason is that this approach touches on the longing for a beloved community, and of law as a path to the creation of such a community, that exists in each of us—indeed even consciously in virtually all law students on the first day of law school before they are conditioned to become clever, cynical arguers for the materialist self-interest of clients at the expense of their brothers and sisters. Or to put it differently, in my view there is no "opposite" of the reproduction of social alienation and hierarchy except for the *experience* of love and community, and then the reproduction of the experience until it becomes confident of itself. As Duncan's dear and lifelong friend, I actually am confident that this is the inspiration behind his "Polemic Against the System"—his brilliant and, at the time of publication, daring little red book. □

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The Duty of American Jews

Yitzhak Frankenthal

After many years of conceptual stagnation, the Likud Party finally woke up. In the end of 2003 Deputy Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Prime Minister Ariel Sharon made some interesting statements about Palestinian statehood and unilateral withdrawal, albeit vague and reserved. Had Sharon and Olmert supported Rabin ten years ago, we probably would have peace by now. However, though Likud has awakened, the American Jewish community is still in a daydream, fantasizing about Greater Israel. Likud has realized that this path cannot be pursued, but U.S. Jewry has not.

It is now clear that Sharon and Olmert and many other Likud leaders have been wrong and have misled others for decades. Not only were they mistaken themselves, but they also incited against people who disagreed with their policies. We all remember the demonstrations in which we were called traitors for saying things that Sharon and Olmert now support. But they were gravely mistaken, and their mistakes caused the deaths of thousands of people on both sides, including my son, Arik, who was a victim of Olmert and Sharon's pipe dreams. And now they are on the verge of making another momentous mistake. They are calling for unilateral moves and resurrecting the walls of the Jewish ghetto.

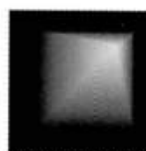
We must not support unilateral moves. Sharon does not know how to read the map of the Middle East; he knows how to use force, he understands the strategy of devastation and destruction—but he does not talk the language of constructiveness and vision. We still have an opportunity to reach genuine reconciliation and make peace. We must realize that Arafat is the Palestinian leader; we must sit down with him and reach a peace agreement based on President Clinton's parameters. Any other path would mean thousands more deaths.

The American Jewish community must intervene in the Middle East and try to change things. Do you have the right to intervene? Is it fair even though you live in America? The answer to that is an unequivocal "yes." And there are six good reasons why.

1. Israel is the Jewish homeland—it is not just the homeland of Israelis. In its declaration of independence, Israel has declared its responsibility for all Jews around

the world. Since it is a national homeland for us all, you, who live abroad, are therefore responsible toward the State of Israel.

2. Responsibility is always based on judgment; if in your judgment Israel's cabinet is misguided, it is your duty to criticize it without fear.
3. According to Jewish tradition all Jews are responsible toward one another and help one another, therefore American Jews and Israeli Jews have mutual responsibility for one another.
4. What happens in Israel influences global anti-Semitism, from which Jews all around the world suffer. In addition, you are deeply frustrated by what is happening in Israel, and if you take action abroad, that will help you deal with this frustration.
5. The Israeli cabinet is influenced by developments in the international arena; pressure applied by you can therefore make a real difference.
6. There is a total distrust between Israelis and Palestinians, which is why it is vital to have a third player. As long as the Occupation continues, the Palestinians will not fight terrorism, because they are afraid to appear as



ISRAELI PALESTINIAN
BEREAVED FAMILIES FOR PEACE

HELLO SHALOM

We can talk about pain. We can talk about anger. Or about repression. Or about conquest or about hope. We can talk about opportunities. Or we can also talk about the family and the kids. In fact, we can talk about ... everything. It's essential to talk, because we are first and foremost people and words have the power to make a difference.

HELLO SHALOM! DIAL 1-900-AT-PEACE FOR
DIRECT CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN
AMERICANS, ISRAELIS, AND PALESTINIANS

Yitzhak Frankenthal is the founder of Parents' Circle in Israel, which has united hundreds of Israeli and Palestinian bereaved parents committed to promoting reconciliation, peace, and democracy.

though they are collaborating with and selling out to Israel. At the same time, Israel will not end the Occupation and give the Palestinians independence until this horrendous terrorism is stopped. Only a third party can start building trust between the two sides. This is where you fit in—building the bridge between Israelis and Palestinians. I therefore feel that it is incumbent on me to call upon you to intervene. Furthermore, I am calling on you to influence your leaders to pressure Israeli leaders to negotiate with the Palestinians and make peace.

It is our duty to have Israel's best interests in mind. We must never blindly believe that the leaders have a better understanding of what our best interests are. If Sharon and Olmert realize only now what we have already known for years, it means that leaders do not always know best. It also means that leaders are capable of making disastrous mistakes.

Let us prevent further tragedy. Let us oppose unilateral moves with everything we have, since this is a guarantee for further bloodshed.

Finally, I would like to note that this letter represents my own personal views, and it does not represent any collective views of the Parents' Circle—Families' Forum. □

FINDING BALANCE IN A WORLD OFF-BALANCE

(continued from page 37)

face their fears about nuclear proliferation. Recently she described the work she is doing using mindfulness—or awakened balance attention from moment to moment—as a tool to help people connect deeply to suffering and crisis in the world and to their own complex reactions. She writes:

In courses I teach in Berkeley at the Graduate Theological Union, we study the condition of the world ... and ... we also meditate. The students make a commitment to daily ... practice to learn how to handle painful information. If you can be sturdily present to yourself with all the internal garbage that comes up in sitting practice, then you can be present to the facts of deforestation and species extinction, and all the insanities happening in our world today. That unconditional presence is the first and essential act we must make. Simply to be there with eyes open, open ears, open heart. All else flows from that. (*Insight*, Spring 2001)

This is the way personal change, spirituality, and structural transformation are invariably linked. We need to foster a calm presence to actually understand and know what is going on in our world without panic, without avoidance, without jumping to reactive fix-it conclusions, and without going into blame or shame. This is the development of presence. While Joanna Macy speaks from a Buddhist faith, this approach is equally expressed by our great Jewish teachers and imbedded in Jewish ritual and text. Abraham Joshua Heschel is a contemporary model of someone who drew on the deepest wellsprings of faith and connection to the unity of being and channeled his energy into advocacy

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for structural changes and realignment of the scales of justice. Heschel writes, "To maintain the right balance of mystery and meaning, of stillness and utterance, of reverence and action seems to be the goal of religious existence...." ("Depth Theology" in *Insecurity of Freedom*). Heschel is suggesting that we must dwell in the places where there is no human answer. We must be willing to explore the unknown, the wonder, the abyss in order to cultivate the soil out of which will grow our true purpose on earth: to create a world mirroring God's vision for us.

"Be the change you want to see in the world" Gandhi says. "Seek peace in your own place" says Simcha Bunem. We need to practice contentment with less if we are going to advocate economic change. We need to practice patience and tolerance for ourselves and each other if we are going to work for nonviolent solutions to conflict. We need to be spacious and open when we encounter the other, while we work for the eradication of racism, sexism, and homophobia. We need to meet our inner fears while we commit to the justice and wisdom that can promote true security.

When we practice finding our balance, we are also practicing faith, trust, non-control, generosity, love, contentment, compassion, and just being with what is arising and passing. It goes against our conditioning, yet, we persist. We soften our hearts and our minds open even to the voices of judgment, to the wrong notes, to the silly thoughts, to the fleeting desires, the fragments of memory. We open to the entire circle of life. And as we open and unfurl our hands and uncoil our fear, we realize that we have opened to the Oneness of Being. □

Defending Zionism in a Time of Occupation and Oppression

Stephen Zunes

As someone who has emerged in recent years as one of the more prominent academic supporters of Palestinian national rights and critics of Israeli policies and U.S. support for the Israeli government, many people are surprised that I am unwilling to categorically denounce Zionism.

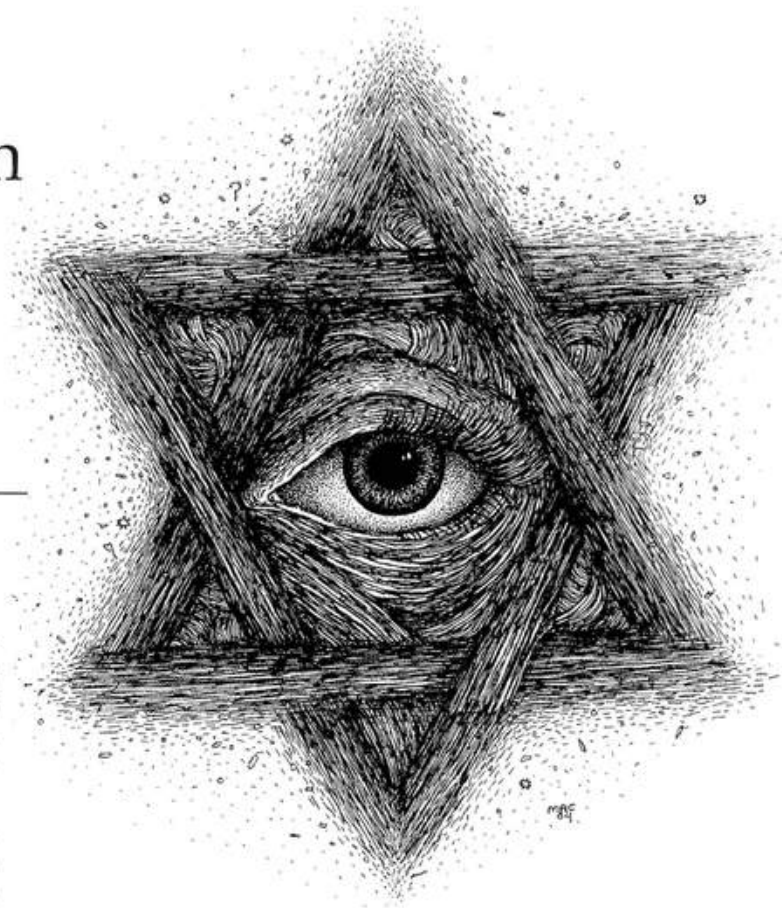
I am not at all oblivious to the many crimes committed in the name of Zionism, but there is often real confusion as to how one defines it. Many supporters of the Palestinian cause tend to portray Zionism as its worst historical manifestations (just as many supporters of Israel do the same for Palestinian nationalism). Certainly, if Zionism is defined as an ideology which advocates dispossession, oppression, and racism—which, unfortunately, is how most Palestinians have experienced it—I have no problems calling myself anti-Zionist.

However, there is something fundamentally wrong with someone who does not identify with a certain ideology defining what that ideology is. (One can only remember Rev. Pat Robertson's definition of feminism as an ideology which teaches women to "leave their husbands, kill their children, practice witchcraft, destroy capitalism, and become lesbians.")

This confusion has been exacerbated by the tendency of some American Zionist leaders to imply that one can only be a true Zionist by blindly supporting Israeli government policies.

What, then, is the nature of Zionism?

The creation of modern Israel was based in part on the premise that only by establishing a Jewish nation-state would Jews be safe from the waves of oppression which had occurred in virtually every country in which they had lived,



Many people are surprised that I am unwilling to categorically denounce Zionism.

actually perpetuated and exacerbated anti-Jewish attitudes (including those on the Left) and has strengthened institutional structures which perpetuate what is commonly known as anti-Semitism.

The modern Zionist movement began at the height of European nationalism. In certain respects, it is ironic that it was not until the Enlightenment—which for the first time allowed Jews to participate in largely Christian societies—that Jewish nationalism came into being. However, while Jews could finally be accepted as part of the larger society under certain conditions, the rise of nationalism led to continued persecution because they could not be accepted as true members of the nation. Jews were still perceived as exiles and thereby of questionable loyalty, as dramatically

to develop and defend autonomous social institutions, which is what made nationalism a largely progressive force; thus, Zionism was born.

Zionism is based in part on the fear of annihilation. Indeed, many of the worst pogroms occurred during the culmination of the Enlightenment. Still, the Jewish community was divided on the question throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The Holocaust vindicated the Zionists throughout most of the Ashkenazi community, in that it demonstrated the extreme vulnerability of Jews as a minority population in the Western world and physically eliminated most of the non-Zionists in Nazi-occupied Europe. The persecution of Jews in the Arab world following the establishment of Israel led the Sephardic community—which had been living in relative security compared to their European counterparts for many centuries—to likewise embrace Zionism and immigrate *en masse* to the new Jewish state.

The simplest and most accurate way to define Zionism is that of Jewish nationalism. Like any nationalist movement, there are elements ranging from the reactionary to the progressive, and while the former have tended to dominate the Zionist movement, this does not mean that Zionism is in itself illegitimate. Few nations have been created without displacing and subjugating large numbers of indigenous inhabitants, including Britain, France, Japan, and most of today's "Arab" states. Most of the English-speaking world—the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand—was far more brutal and thorough than the Israelis in coming to dominance over the territories they now occupy. This does not make Israeli repression any more legitimate, ongoing policies more acceptable, or the need for a viable Palestinian state less urgent, but the tendency of many to use Israeli policies as the rationale for failing to recognize the legitimacy of Zionism is no more justifiable or practical than using the crimes of terrorists as the rationale for failing to recognize the legitimacy of Palestinian nationalism.

At the same time, it should be recognized that the racism, militarism, and alliance with imperialist Western powers certainly predates Likud dominance of the Zionist movement. Any socialism that focuses exclusively upon the class relations within a particular national group, as demonstrated by Labor Zionism, runs the risk of promoting racism. Indeed, the early Labor Zionists were so obsessed with their immediate goals—the establishment of a socialist Jewish polity in Palestine—they ignored the potential for conflict with Arabs. What mattered was the establishment of a state where Jews would be equal; the fate of non-Jews was not of major concern.

Still, while definitely a minority, the efforts and accomplishments of progressive Zionists, both historically and in the present, should not be underestimated or unappreciated. Had the early protestations of some of the more enlightened socialist Zionists been heard, there would probably have been peace years ago.

Critics of Zionism point out that there is a contradiction between a Jewish state (or any kind of ethnic or religious-identified state) and a liberal or socialist vision of equality. While these contradictions cannot be denied, they are just

*Had the early
protestations of some of
the more enlightened
socialist Zionists been
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probably have been
peace years ago.*

one of a number of contradictions between professed values faced in this imperfect world, ranging from legalized abortion to affirmative action. This does not mean that these aren't important principles worth defending despite these internal contradictions, nor does it mean that it is wrong to defend solutions that are less-than-perfect but nevertheless better than other alternatives. Indeed, there are contradictions in Palestinian nationalist ideology as well, such as the strongly-held belief in both a pan-Arabism and a distinct Palestinian national identity.

It is tragic in many ways that we live in the era of the nation-state, which helps create just these kinds of contradictions. While the predominance of the nation-state system has been a relatively short epoch in human history and one that is in decline, it will still be with us for another several decades if not centuries and we have to work within it, even as we strive for alternative visions of social organization less prone to mass violence.

Marxists have traditionally rationalized their support of repressive and even reactionary Third World governments on the grounds that nationalist revolution is a necessary requisite for socialist revolution. Fatah, the dominant party of Palestine, would be labeled "bourgeois nationalist" by most Marxists, but nevertheless receives their widespread support. A history of terrorism, large-scale financial support from reactionary Middle Eastern dictatorships, and an absence of any commitment to socialism are troubling to anyone on the Left, yet the primacy of the Palestinians' national rights is generally viewed as taking precedent over these clear ideological problems.

Similarly, if Zionism can be seen as its lowest common denominator, Jewish nationalism, there is no reason why it should not receive the same support and recognition by the Left as any other nationalist movements of historically-oppressed peoples.

Zionism was born at a time of ultra-nationalism and militarism in Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The continent's powers were at the peak of their brutal imperialism against the peoples of Africa and

Asia and were preparing to slaughter each other as well. With martial and racist values so dominant, it was clearly an inauspicious time to launch a visionary and progressive national movement, particularly when its implementation would later require the utilization of these very elements. Zionism's early obsession with establishing a state led to a blind nationalism which eclipsed many of the other goals of a Jewish identity. The character of this new Jewish homeland was not given sufficient attention, as the *schul* was absorbed in this quest, and the consequences of the state's establishment on the Palestinian population was not given the concern it deserved.

While Zionism may inherently be as valid as other nationalist movements of historically oppressed peoples, its difficulty in being recognized as such by much of the Third World and the international Left can be traced to two major factors: its treatment of the Palestinian population and other Arabs; and its alliance with Western imperialist powers.

In seeking a nationalistic solution to anti-Jewish persecution, Zionism was inherently exclusionary of non-Jews. Virtually every movement by an oppressed group to reclaim its identity from the majority culture has found a need for a degree of separatism, as demonstrated in Western societies by Black Nationalists, radical feminists, and others. While such efforts have often brought charges of "reverse discrimination" and "reactionary segregation," they are generally seen by the Left to have merit to the degree that they allow for autonomous development in a space relatively free from the oppressive institutions of the broader society.

Given the pervasive insecurity Jews have suffered as a minority in virtually every society, perhaps Zionism can be seen as a kind of global affirmative action. Just as the slogan "I'll be post-feminist in the post-patriarchy" attests to the ongoing need for women's liberation, I'll be anti-Zionist when there is no more anti-Semitism.

Still, while nationalist movements based around such a common identity can play an emancipatory role, there are risks that they can emerge not just as a means to an end but as an end in itself, and may fall into a pattern of chauvinism and oppression against still weaker target groups.

While the nation-state is a legitimate vehicle for such autonomous development, the trappings of state power and its coercive mechanisms can exacerbate such risks. This is particularly true when the state is established in an area already inhabited by an oppressed and colonized people. The establishment of Israel in an already inhabited land brought these contradictions to the surface, and the inevitable conflict led to the rise of militaristic and chauvinistic elements in Zionism, even within the movement's left wing. Nationalism blinded the Zionists to the reality of an Arab Palestine, to the extent that the early Zionist slogan

*I'll be anti-Zionist
when there is no more
anti-Semitism.*

came to be "A land without a people for a people without a land." Meanwhile, the Palestinians' own nationalism and the loss of their homeland to foreign conquest has led them to focus upon the crimes committed in the name of Zionism rather than understanding what led to emergence of Zionism itself.

Given the growth of such a nationalist movement, and its culmination into a nation-state on already-inhabited land, the support of outside forces became necessary from the outset. British Prime Minister Lloyd George had wanted to annex Turkish-occupied Palestine since the beginning of World War I, and an alliance with the Zionists seemed a good pretext, so the British government opened up negotiations which led to the Balfour Declaration. European diplomatic support led to the 1947 United Nations partition which legitimized the

creation of Israel, while virtually every African and Asian state in the General Assembly voted in opposition. The massive influx of Czech arms to Jewish forces played a crucial role militarily in the subsequent war. British and French arms flowed to Israel during the country's first two decades and when these European colonial powers sought to block the nationalization of the Suez Canal Company and overthrow Egyptian leader Gamal Abdul Nasser, they called on the Israelis to seize Egypt's Sinai Peninsula as the pretext for their own invasion.

Subsequent to the 1967 war, the United States has played the role of Israel's primary backer. Israel has successfully prevented victories by radical nationalist movements in Lebanon and Jordan, as well as in Palestine. They have kept nationalist governments like Syria in check. Their air force is predominant throughout the region. Israel's frequent wars have provided battlefield testing for American arms. They have been a conduit for U.S. arms to regimes and movements too unpopular in the United States for openly granting direct military assistance, such as apartheid South Africa, Iran's mullahs, Guatemala's juntas, and the Nicaraguan Contras. Israeli military advisors have assisted pro-Western governments and insurgencies. The Mossad and the CIA have cooperated in intelligence gathering and covert operations. The military-industrial complexes of the two countries are tightly intertwined, especially as the United States increases its military presence in the Middle East.

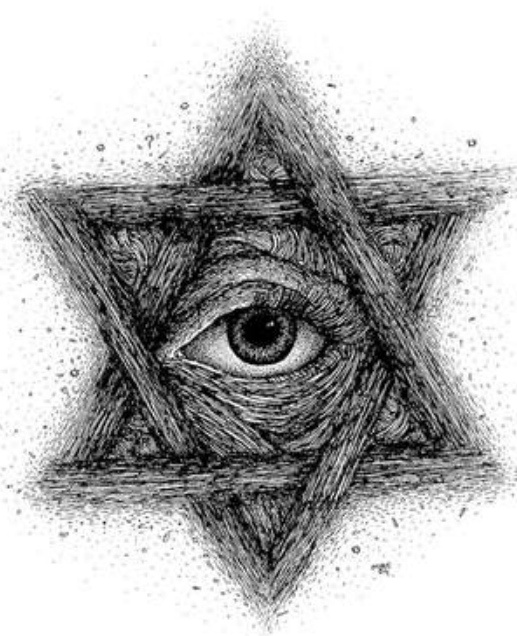
As a result, the United States has been encouraging some of the more chauvinistic and militaristic elements in the Israeli government, and undermining the last vestiges of Labor Zionism's commitment to socialism, non-alignment, and cooperation with the Third World. As Israel's military strength and repression of the Palestinians has increased, so has U.S. aid, contradicting the widespread belief that U.S. military assistance is used to defend a threatened and democratic Israel.

One of the more unsettling aspects of U.S. policy is how closely it corresponds with historic anti-Semitism. Throughout Europe in past centuries, the ruling class of a given country would, in return for granting limited religious and cultural autonomy, set up certain individuals in the Jewish community as its visible agents, such as tax collectors and money lenders. When the population would threaten to rise up against the ruling class, the rulers could then blame the Jews, sending the wrath of an exploited people against convenient scapegoats, resulting in the pogroms and other notorious waves of repression which have taken place throughout the Jewish Diaspora.

The idea behind Zionism was to break this cycle through the creation of a Jewish nation-state, where Jews would no longer be dependent on the ruling class of a given country. The tragic irony is that, as a result of Israel's inability or unwillingness to make peace with its Arab neighbors, the creation of Israel has perpetuated this cycle on a global scale, with Israel being used by Western imperialist powers to maintain their interests in the Middle East. Therefore, one finds autocratic Arab governments and other Third World regimes blaming "Zionism" for their problems rather than the broader exploitative global economic system and their own elites, who benefit from and help perpetuate such a system.

The ramifications of U.S. policy are quite apparent when it comes to the suffering of Palestinians, Lebanese, and other Arabs. But it also has a negative impact on Israel. The late Israeli intellectual Ishawa Leibowitz noted, "The existence of the Jewish people of 60 to 80 generations ... was a heroic situation. We never got from the goyish world a cent. We supported ourselves. We maintained our own institutions. Now we have taken three million Jews, gathered them here and turned them over to be parasites—parasites of America. And in some sense we are even the mercenaries of America to fight the wars of what the ruling persons in America consider to be American interests."

It is important to note that most of the actions of the Israeli government which have brought the most criticism from the world community would not have been possible without the acquiescence and, at times, encouragement, of the United States and other Western powers. This has placed the Zionist movement in a serious dilemma. Through a combination of historical circumstances—however legitimate the goals of national self-determination for the Jewish



people may have been—it has inexorably been linked in the eyes of most of the world as a neo-colonial movement backed by Western imperialism, and a major obstacle to the national liberation of Arab peoples.

Anti-Semitism has been called "a fool's socialism," in that it often takes on populist rhetoric in support of economic justice against capitalist exploitation, yet focuses upon an exaggerated view of the power and influence of a tiny sub-segment of the ruling class.

In a similar way, anti-Zionism may be a "fool's anti-imperialism," where Jewish nationalism itself is erroneously seen as the problem rather than the alliance

its leaders have made with exploitative Western interests.

This is why it is often hard to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate criticism of Israel. For example, when I overhear a conversation about oppressive policies of the Israeli government, I am initially concerned—even if I agree with everything they are saying—about what is actually motivating their opposition. Is it part of a universal commitment for human rights, international law, self-determination, and justice? Or are Israeli policies being used simply as an excuse to bash the world's only Jewish state?

If there was only one black state in the world, certainly most African-Americans and many white liberals would be similarly sensitive to criticism of that government's policies, even if justified, out of a fear that the criticism was an excuse for racism.

This has led many Jews and others sensitive to the pervasiveness of anti-Semitism to be reluctant to publicly criticize Israeli policies for fear it would encourage such bigotry. The effect, however, could be just the opposite. If those of us who do care about Israel's security do not criticize Israeli actions for the right reasons, it will be left to the Pat Buchanans and David Dukes to criticize Israel for the wrong reasons. And, the more universal Jewish support is for what are clearly illegal and unethical policies by the Israeli government, the more Jews as a whole will be blamed.

Unfortunately, certain right-wing Jewish leaders, both in Israel and the United States, have played on the fears, mistrust, and insecurities of their constituencies and give the false impression that increasing militarism and repression by the state of Israel enhances the security of Jews everywhere. The reality, of course, is just the opposite. Israeli

(continued on page 66)

WHAT ABOUT ISAAC? (continued from page 60)

ended there but soon my mother was tugging on my arm, pulling me away from my Hebrew school friends to go to the real party, to the "affair."

I had to change my clothes. My new Bar Mitzvah suit wouldn't do for the evening. I put on a black tuxedo. My mother said I looked "extremely handsome" and "not Jewish at all" as she adjusted my cummerbund. "What do you mean by that?" I asked. "I thought the whole point of this was to be Jewish."

"I only meant you have nice features. Don't be so sensitive." But she was not about to get into a fight with me. I'd never seen her look so ... fancy. She was wearing a powder blue satin dress that was trimmed all around the neckline with mink. I knew it was mink because she mentioned it a bunch of times as she ran her hand over the creepy-looking fur. She even made me touch it. You could see about half her breasts pushing up above the mink line. My mother had a lot on top and I guess she wanted everyone at my Bar Mitzvah party to see.

What do I remember from that evening? Lots of older male relatives sidling up to me and slipping envelopes into the pockets of my tux. The envelopes all had checks in them for twenty-five or fifty and even one hundred dollars. At some point in the evening I turned the checks over to my father—and never saw them again.

The big blow up came near the end of the evening. My mother wanted me to stop spending all my time with my friends and "circulate." "Go over to each table," she ordered. "Say hello to everyone and thank them for coming." She pushed me. "Go!"

"No," I said.

"Don't tell me no. This is your Bar Mitzvah. These are your guests. Now you go talk to them." She reached out to shove me again.

I slapped her hand away. "No." I stood my ground.

DEFENDING ZIONISM (continued from page 56)

progressives, and even a growing number of non-ideological pragmatists, stress that Israeli security and Palestinian rights are not mutually exclusive, but mutually dependent. These Israelis argue that Israel will be far more secure with a viable demilitarized Palestinian state on its borders than trying to suppress nearly two million people in the Occupied Territories engaged in open rebellion.

Only when Israel sees its future with the Third World—made necessary by its geography, its Semitic language and culture, its sizable Sephardic population, and the Jews' history of exploitation by the Europeans—will Israel end its isolation and find the real security that it has been missing. Many of the so-called "supporters of Israel" in American politics are actually making Israel vulnerable by tying its future to an imperial agenda, and blocking its more natural alliance with the world's Afro-Asian majority. The combination of

"This isn't my Bar Mitzvah. I don't know what it is." I saw how angry she was and for the first time in my life I didn't care. "I'm going home," I said and walked right past her out the front door. It felt good. I was free. Once I got outside, though, I realized that I couldn't go anywhere by myself. I didn't even know which direction home was. I felt silly and sick to my stomach. I started to cry. Not only was I not a man, I was a goddamn crybaby. My Uncle Jack came outside to smoke a cigarette and found me there sniffing. Without saying a word, he put a big beefy arm around my shoulder and gave me his handkerchief. We stood out there in the cold air until I stopped crying. Then we walked back in again. And I began to circulate.

Something broke inside of me after that night. Nothing made sense to me and I suspected everyone else already knew that nothing made sense. And if they said any different, they were liars. I even lost my enthusiasm for Jewish studies and told Rabbi Lippman that I wasn't going to continue in the confirmation class. He didn't seem all that surprised or very disappointed either, but he did say, "So, now that you're Bar Mitzvah, you're no longer interested in your religion."

"Something like that," I said. I wasn't about to come clean with this guy. Somewhere along the way I lined him up on my parents' side.

"Well, remember anyway, what you learned. Come to services. Be a *mensch*."

"I will," I lied. "You want the record back?" I offered up the black 78 that I'd listened to so many times over the past months. "I don't need it anymore."

"No, no. You keep it. Someday you'll want to listen to it again. You'll remember the big day."

"Okay, thanks," I said. I took the record home and stashed it away alongside the Sabbath prayer book that the Jewish sisterhood gave me. I haven't used either one of them since. Not yet. □

Israeli technology, Palestinian industriousness and entrepreneurship, and Arabian oil wealth could result in an economic, political, and social transformation of the Middle East which would be highly beneficial to the region's inhabitants, but not necessarily to certain elites in the United States and other Western nations who profit enormously from the continued divisions between these Semitic peoples. Meanwhile, Israeli leaders and their counterparts in many American Zionist organizations are repeating the historic error of trading short-term benefits for their people at the risk of long-term security.

This cycle can only be broken when current American policy is effectively challenged, and Israelis and Palestinians will finally be able to settle their differences among themselves and join together in liberating the Middle East from both Western imperialism and their own short-sighted rulers. □

What About Isaac?

Robert Freedman

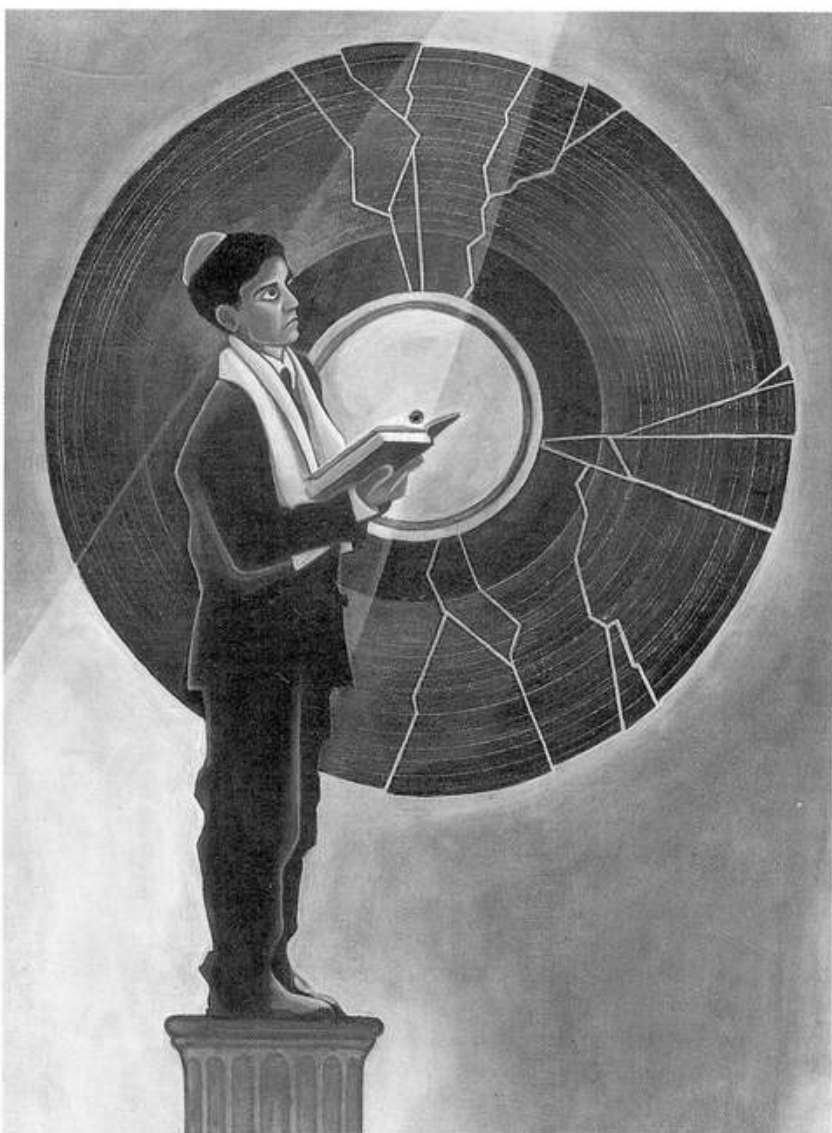
When I was about eleven years old my parents sent me to Hebrew school so that I could start preparing to be Bar Mitzvahed. I was going to become a man—whatever that meant. But most of what I learned in Hebrew school didn't seem to have anything to do with my Bar Mitzvah. What did the stories of David and Goliath or Daniel in the lion's den have to do with walking up to the Torah with my tallis on, reading my portion to a synagogue filled with my mother's friends and family? I liked the stories, don't get me wrong. I especially enjoyed the ones with the really impossible moral dilemmas. Like the one where this guy Lot and his wife are told to get out of Sodom and Gomorrah before the place burns up, but they can't look back or they'll be turned into blocks of salt. How bizarre is that! And naturally Lot's wife does look back and gets zapped. I could see her in my head and I knew exactly how she felt. I mean, how could you not look back? Especially when someone tells you that's the one thing you cannot do. I even told the Hebrew school teacher that I thought God was wrong to turn Lot's wife into a salt person just for being curious. The teacher got all jittery and told me I was too young to appreciate the "essential teaching" of the story. I said, "Maybe you don't know what the 'essential teaching' is because you're not the kind of person who would ever look back." She said that maybe I needed to discuss this issue with Rabbi Lippman since "I was so darn smart."

"Fine with me," I told her and stood up.

I wasn't scared of the Rabbi. I thought he might even agree with me. The teacher saw that I was serious and then had to downplay the whole deal in front of the rest of the class so she wouldn't look bad.

It was about this time that I came home one day from Hebrew School and announced at the dinner table that I wanted to be a Rabbi myself when I grew up. I don't know how serious I was; I was trying out the idea, seeing how it

Robert Freedman is a writer, college teacher, and actor living in Portland, OR. He developed a one-man show from this piece which he performs before Jewish and non-Jewish audiences.



felt coming out of my mouth. I also wanted to know what my parent's reaction would be. They laughed. Though it wasn't a real laugh, there wasn't any happiness in it at all. All of a sudden I felt scared. I had said something stupid again. My mother's laughter quickly changed to anger. "Where did you get such an idea?"

"I don't know," was all I could manage.

"Well, don't be such an idiot. We're not sending you to that damn school so you can become a Rabbi. We're not that kind of Jews." She got up from the table, walked a few steps away and lit one of her cigarettes. "What are they teaching you at that place?"

"Nothing. Just some bible stories and how to read Hebrew. I'm sorry I brought it up."

The preparation for my Bar Mitzvah consisted mostly in my memorizing the Haftarah portion that I would be called up to the altar to read. When I met with Rabbi Lippman the first time he handed me a 78 rpm record in a brown paper slip case and told me to listen to it, to say the Hebrew words just the way the cantor did on the recording, and come back the next week.

"That's all there is to it?" I asked.

"That's enough," the Rabbi said. "It's a very difficult passage. Believe me, you'll have all the study you can handle." I think he sensed my confusion. "There's something you want to say?"

"Well, what about this becoming a man stuff? How do I do that?"

Rabbi Lippman laughed. "These are different times. It might take a few years more." He reached out and patted my cheek. I pulled away from him. "Just memorize the portion. Make your parents happy."

I tucked the record under my arm and turned to leave. I must have been muttering.

"What did you say?" Lippman turned back to me.

"I said, I don't get all this Jewish stuff."

"You do what you have to do," Lippman said. "That's all a Jew has to know."

I thought about what the Rabbi said every time I loaded up the record player and worked on learning my Torah portion. "You do what you have to do." What the hell did that mean? Weren't you allowed to know *why* you did it? But I went ahead and practiced. I loved hearing the unseen cantor chant the Hebrew passage, though I had no idea what the words meant. And I got pretty good at memorizing the phrases and the intonations. I felt like I had heard it all before. I liked practicing and was looking forward to performing it "by heart" on my big day, the day I would become a man, despite what Lippman had said.

Being Jewish only seemed to be okay when you were with other Jews, like at family dinners or weddings. Then there was good food, the kind that Christian people didn't eat, hadn't even heard of: kasha with bow tie noodles, kugel with raisins, pickled herring, smoked whitefish, chicken soup with fat matzoh balls. I loved it. But was being Jewish only about food? I asked my Bubbeh, my father's mother, who lived with us. She was ancient and withered and my mother hated her. My mom thought Bubbeh took up too much space and I think she was embarrassed that Bubby couldn't even read or write English and spent most of every day sitting in a corner chair reading *The Forward*. I figured, though, that if anybody knew what it meant to be a Jew, it would be this old woman. So I asked her, "How come nobody around here ever talks about being Jewish?"

She looked at me with her sad eyes. "Is best to let sleeping dogs lie."

"I don't know what that means."

"This in itself is a good thing," Bubby said. "In this country you don't need to know."

I had no idea what she was talking about, only that somehow Jews were better off not letting anybody know they were Jews, which was a message I'd already received. "What about Jesus?" I said.

"Feh," Bubbeh hissed. "Feh." She wrinkled up her already wrinkled face.

"What's wrong with Jesus? My friend Billy said that Jesus was the son of God and that the Jews killed him. He said that the priest at Saint Francis told them so."

"Feh," she said again. "This is the poison they use to kill us all." She waved her bony hand between us. "Don't talk to me anymore. Ask at the *shul* about this. Let them say."

"You mean at Hebrew School or should I ask the Rabbi?" But Bubbeh was done talking. She got up and wobbled off to her bedroom and I was left feeling more confused than ever. I thought about this big billboard that I would see from the backseat of my father's Buick every time we crossed over the Ben Franklin Bridge. The sign read, "Jesus Died For Your Sins," and there was a drawing of a beautiful sad faced Jesus who seemed to stare straight into my eyes. As we passed by, I had to look away. I felt ashamed or guilty or something.

When I did ask at Hebrew School, the teacher said that the Jews didn't kill Jesus, the Romans did, and that Jesus was himself a Jew. That really shocked me. Jesus was a Jew. Like me. And the teacher went on to say that if Jesus ever came back to earth, like the goyim said he was going to, the first place he'd go would be to the synagogue. "Where else would a Jew go?"

At school the next day I told Billy Wilson that Jesus was a Jew and he said I was a dirty kike liar. I slapped him in the face when he said that. I didn't even think about it. And the gym teacher, Mr. Brophy, had to pull us apart and then made us do 50 push-ups each for fighting in school. Later Billy apologized and we didn't talk about it anymore.

But something new was happening inside me. I don't know if it was Hebrew School or going to synagogue every Saturday, like I'd started to do, but I felt a hot little flame growing in my belly. I was becoming a Jew, no matter what anybody said. It was the Jewishness I heard in that black vinyl record, in the chanting of the verses, in the rituals of putting on the tallis, the opening of the ark, the old men and their bobbing-head prayers. These were the real Jews. To be Bar Mitzvahed. I wanted that. I wanted to be a real Jew. And I was also scared I never could be.

As the time for my Bar Mitzvah grew closer, the atmosphere at home grew more heated. The event was bigger and apparently more important than I ever imagined it would be. My mother, not Rabbi Lippman, was now firmly in command of the festivities. She had sent out hundreds of fancy embossed invitations to "the affair." It now was becoming clear to me that my Bar Mitzvah was to have two very distinct parts: the first was what happened in the temple; the second was the social event that my parents were hosting after. It didn't take me long to figure out that the second part was the one that counted.

"You'll do fine," is all my mother had to say about my Haftarah preparation. "You get up and read. It's no big

deal." I turned away in anger. What did she know? Women weren't even allowed to read from the Torah in our congregation. I had spent hours and hours memorizing the Hebrew and the lifts and dips and emphases of intonation. I wanted it to be perfect, goddamnit, and then I would be a man. I would be a Jew—or at least close. I hadn't shared the information with my parents, but I told Rabbi Lippman that I wanted to go on with my religious training after the Bar Mitzvah. All Mom wanted to talk about was who had RSVP-ed and who hadn't and who was going to sit next to who and at what table. Each day I felt my anger about the affair growing. "I thought this was *my* Bar Mitzvah," I said to my mother.

"Of course it's yours. Who else's would it be?"

"It seems more like your party than mine."

Mom stopped fussing with the seating chart and turned on me. "This is all for you. How can you be so ungrateful? Do you realize the amount of money your father is spending on this?" She didn't wait for a response. "A thousand dollars for the band alone so you and your friends can dance."

"My friends?"

She didn't stop. "And forget about the photographer, the caterer, the goddamn ice sculpture. You think this comes cheap?"

"But I didn't ask for any of that. I don't even get what it has to do with my being Bar Mitzvahed. You just want to show off for your friends."

Mom looked deeply hurt, but she could only maintain the look for a moment or two before it transformed into the angry scowl. "I don't know why I try with you. The more we give you, the more you slam it back in our faces."

"You don't even care about being Jewish. You and Dad never go to synagogue. He probably won't even know what to do when they call him up to the Torah."

"Don't you worry about your father. He's more of a *mensch* than you'll ever be."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"Your father's a doctor and everybody in that synagogue knows it. Who else could give you such a party?"

"I don't want it," I said. "Why don't you save Dad's precious money and cancel the party."

"Hah," she snorted. "Fat chance of that. I've already got my dress."

I was allowed to invite only three of my own friends to the Bar Mitzvah party. My mother said it was because the cost per plate was so high and there were so many other people that had to be invited—even though I didn't know half of them.

I was feeling awful, hating my parents, dreading the event, thinking about running away and hiding on Saturday, October 24th. I felt on the verge of disappearing from my own life. When I went for my final practice with the Rabbi I tried to tell him. "I'm not feeling very good about this."

Lippman was sitting behind his old oak desk. He wore a regular hat with a brim, the kind my father wore when he went out, only the Rabbi wore his inside, too. The record player sat on the desk, though I no longer needed to use it. "Don't worry, you'll do fine. Every word you've got down perfect."

"That's not the part I'm worried about."

"What then?"

"I don't know why everybody has to make such a big deal of this. I'm just getting Bar Mitzvahed. Everybody does it."

"Every Jew does it. Remember that."

"Remember what?"

"That you're a Jew. That's what this celebration is all about. Some are not so lucky as you."

"You mean people who aren't

Jewish?"

"Not only that. Do you think about all the boys in Europe who never had a chance to be Bar Mitzvah. The boys who were slaughtered by Hitler and his madmen?"

I wasn't sure how we'd gotten to Hitler, but Rabbi Lippman seemed pleased. "This is what it means to be Bar Mitzvah."

"What? That I didn't get slaughtered by the Nazis?"

"A Jew must learn to suffer."

"You should tell my mother that."

"If she's a Jew, she knows."

"I'm really confused," I said. "All anybody wants is for me to do what I'm supposed to do. Is that what God wants?"

"Don't talk about God," the Rabbi said. "You're just getting nervous. Try to relax. Go play with your friends. Forget about the Bar Mitzvah."

I got up from the folding chair I was sitting in and took my practice disk off the record player. "I still don't get it. Everybody's going to be watching me and I don't know what they're supposed to see."

"Each will see what he wants."

"Yeah, I guess so." I turned to leave and then stopped. I was going to ask Rabbi Lippman why I had to have such a big affair where I couldn't even invite my own friends, and what that had to do with being a good Jew who didn't get killed by Hitler. But I figured he didn't really know.

The day of my Bar Mitzvah finally arrived. I had a new suit to wear. All my clothes were new. My father had taken me shopping—to South Street, to Krass Brothers where he bought his suits and white shirts and ties. Too bad

he didn't know how to talk to me. He might have understood how upsetting the whole Bar Mitzvah thing had become. I mean, he went through it himself. I'd even seen a picture of him with tefillin wrapped around his arms and an angelic smile floating across his face. I wondered where that boy had disappeared to.

I was nervous when we got to the synagogue, but not too nervous. Rabbi Lippman asked me if I was ready.

"I know my part," I said.

"And your speech?"

"That too." I held up a three-by-five card that had some typewritten notes on it. "In case I need it." I was supposed to say something about how much I appreciated my parents for providing me with this opportunity to have a Jewish education and a "lovely day with all my friends and family."

"You'll do fine," Lippman said. He patted me on the shoulder and adjusted my tallis. I felt like a little boy.

I looked around the synagogue. It was getting pretty full, what with the regular congregation and then all my mother and father's relatives. My parents, my brother and sister, and my grandparents sat in the front row, though I tried not to look at any of them too much from where I sat up on the *bimah*. This is big, I thought. The biggest moment of my life so far. I liked that.

Everything went brilliantly. My father and grandfather stumbled through their *aliyahs*, reading the blessings phonetically and badly. But I didn't care. I soared through my Haftarah portion, going for all the high notes, the lovely gutturals, the trembling finish. Whatever it meant, I felt then like a real Jew, maybe even like a Rabbi.

When I did look out into the audience, I saw my mother turning to speak to someone behind her. Her head never stopped swiveling, checking out the crowd. Making sure they all looked suitably impressed. I wanted to stop and shout at her. "Hey, look at me, damn you! This is my day." But, of course, I didn't do that. It was in that spirit that I launched into my little prepared speech, the one where I was supposed to thank my parents and family and everybody who really hadn't done anything much that I could see. I got through the first line or two okay, but then I made the mistake of looking out at the congregation again. All these people were staring at me, smiling and nodding, but not really seeing anything. Suddenly I was ready to stop being a good boy.

"Rabbi Lippman says that today is my very special day,"

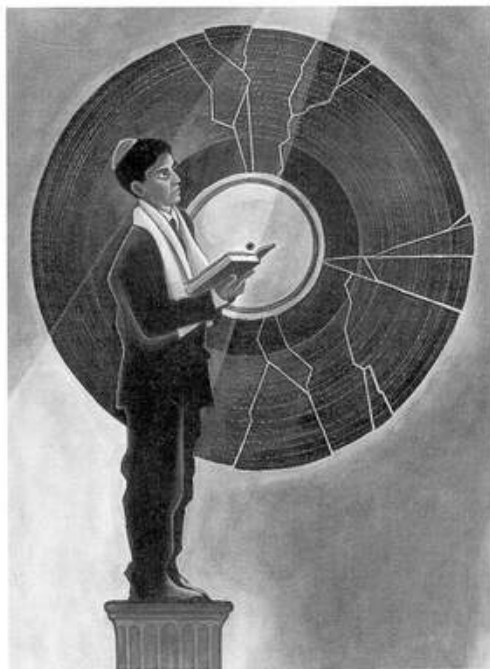
I told them, "but, you know, I can't figure out why. The Rabbi says I'm supposed to be a man, but I don't feel like a man. I don't even shave yet, or do other things." My friend, Gary Earlbbaum, giggled. My mother and father were looking worried, but I had their attention. "And I just don't get it about being a Jew. I think it's a pretty good thing, but I'm not always sure. Some days I think it would be easier not to be a Jew, 'cause then I wouldn't have to think about it all the time. I could just be a regular person. But I'm glad I am a Jew and I'm happy having this Bar Mitzvah day. I know

my parents are proud of me for doing a good job and all. And then there's the big party we're all going to next—at least those of you who've been invited. I know my mom has gone to a lot of trouble and my father's had to pay a whole bunch of money. That's why we couldn't invite everybody." I looked around and tried to catch my breath. I thought, if I just keep talking I'll figure out what I want to say. But it wasn't working out that way. I was drifting. The congregation looked confused. Rabbi Lippman stood up and placed his hand on my elbow, like he was going to lead me away. I moved back a step and continued on. "In Hebrew school they told us the story of Abraham being ordered by God to sacrifice his son Isaac—to actually kill his own kid. And

Abraham is all set to stick a knife right into Isaac's chest when God stops him and says 'It's okay, you don't have to kill your son. You've proved your perfect love to me.' And Abraham is all relieved cause he didn't have to really kill his favorite son. But you know what I kept thinking is—What about Isaac? What does he think? How's he ever going to trust his father again? How's he ever going to trust God?" That's where I stopped. I was afraid I was going to start to cry. I went and sat back down. Rabbi Lippman tried to pull things back together. He even said that my "commentary" about Abraham and Isaac was in the spirit of the great Jewish scholars and that the Haftarah I'd read earlier was also a discussion of God's love and justice. Maybe everybody figured that I had planned the whole thing out. Probably not.

I was stunned after the service. There was a reception in the basement of the synagogue where the sisterhood ladies served hard little cookies and glasses of grape juice and lots of people came up and shook my hand and said, *mazel tov*. It would have been better if my Bar Mitzvah

(continued on page 66)



Times Square Seder

Happening for Homelessness

Melissa Shiff

This is the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate in the land of Mitzrayim. All who are hungry, let them enter and eat. All who are in need, let them come celebrate Passover.

—Passover Haggadah

From February until the end of Passover this year, my video sculpture "Elijah Chair" is featured in The Jewish Museum's new Goodkind Media Gallery. This sculpture was an integral piece of a larger multi-media/social action event I created in 2002 called the *Times Square Seder, Featuring The Matzah Ball Soup Kitchen*. The aim of that event was to mobilize art in the service of activism, using the ritual of the Jewish Passover Seder. In the words of Rabbi Arthur Waskow, the goal was "to translate the Seder into forms that speak to a contemporary community that is not entirely Jewish, with both the practices and values of Pesach." In particular, I sought a way to take the Passover Haggadah's mandate to "feed the hungry" to a place where New York's hungry and homeless had been most visibly banished.

In January 2002, Chashama Arts Organization opened its 42nd Street Times Square storefront gallery window spaces to artists. Upon learning this, I was struck with the idea to stage a Jewish ritual there that would act as a counterpoint to a space that is so clearly identified with the celebration of the Christian New Year and with mass consumerism. Instead of glorifying this epicenter of capitalist culture, I wanted to call attention to a site that was once specifically associated with homelessness before its sanitization by conservative governments who have merely relocated the problem elsewhere.

The Times Square Seder was held on March 30, 2002, on the fourth night of Passover. The event took place in three distinct spaces all on the same block of 42nd Street, just steps away from Times Square. The happening utilized two

Melissa Shiff is a Toronto based independent video, performance, and installation artist who reinvents and rethinks Jewish rituals. Her video sculpture "Elijah Chair" can be seen through Passover at The Jewish Museum in New York City.



The Matzah Ball Soup Kitchen.

storefront window spaces and one interior space that was transformed into The Matzah Ball Soup Kitchen. The performance began in front of the first Chashama window, continued inside this storefront window space, then moved onto the street, and ended up at the nearby soup kitchen. Meanwhile, an interactive video installation played throughout the evening in the second storefront window. Along with sculpture and video art, the Seder featured symbolic actions performed by political and religious leaders known for their concern with social justice. The former Manhattan Borough President and current director of The American Jewish World Service, Ruth Messinger, helped to officiate. Rabbi Arthur Waskow, leader of the famous Freedom Seder in the 1960s, current Director of the Shalom Center in Philadelphia, and regular contributor to *TIKKUN*, was also a participant in the Seder performance. In addition, Rabbi Burt Siegel of the Lower East Side Shul of New York and Cantor Mark Perman made important contributions.

The first segment of the Times Square Seder performance at 135 West 42nd Street created the link between Jewish ritual, art, and homelessness. Cantor Mark Perman began the happening by singing a Nigun (a traditional Jewish melody), after which I asked four "refashioned" questions including "Why is there a need to feed hungry people in the windows of Chashama this evening?" The Cantor then proceeded to ask the traditional four questions in Hebrew. Then Rabbi Burt Siegel chanted out the ten plagues and proceeded to ask those on the street to shout out a plague that they would like to see abolished. Louis Kaplan shouted out "Plague of the repression of artistic freedom." We then proceeded to voice these ten contemporary plagues:

Plague of one dimensional rhetoric
Plague of homophobia and hatred of the Other
Plague of unbridled profit motive

PASSOVER

Plague of religious fundamentalism
Plague of the rape of nature
Plague of AIDS
Plague of exploitation of workers
Plague of conformity
Plague of indifference and apathy
Plague of homelessness.

The dignitaries then proceeded to take their places inside the storefront window. The space was empty with one exception—matzah covered the entire wall behind them. Rabbi Waskow removed three pieces of matzah from the back wall and, in elegant midrashic style, proceeded to explain why we break the matzah. More pointedly he linked the Afikomen ceremony to the problem of homelessness:

If anybody tries to hold onto all the abundance in the world, the matzah remains the bread of affliction, the bread of oppression, the bread of poverty and despair. The only way in which the matzah can become the bread of freedom is if we share it and in order to share it we have to break it. So that applies to wealth that we have to share. That applies to land that we have to share. It applies to food that we have to share and so, we set aside one of the pieces of the broken matzah as a symbol that we will be sharing it.

After his interpretation, the dignitaries all proceeded to tear down the matzah wall that Ruth Messinger spontaneously termed “The Matzah Wall of Oppression.” We performed this symbolic gesture to the upbeat fusion music of the British group Zohar; people on the street buzzed in anticipation to see what was being revealed beneath the wall.

Gradually, what came to light was a quote by the Israeli philosopher Gideon Ofrat from his book *The Jewish Derrida*. Ofrat wrote, “Elijah represents unconditional ‘total hospitality,’ the expectation and willingness to extend hospitality at all times, awaiting the arrival of the unknown Other without any prior assignation of the time of meeting; keeping the Elijah chair forever vacant as an ever-open ‘here-and-now,’ in the expectation of the event of the Messiah.”

After the matzah wall was taken down, the participants brought in the Elijah Chair. Taking my cue from Ofrat’s quote, I constructed my own chair for Elijah containing a video component laden with Passover symbolism. I chose a rocking chair for the project because of the possibility of movement it conferred, as if the prophetic figure Elijah were haunting it. In the traditional Seder, there comes a point when one is supposed to open the door for the Prophet Elijah. Incorporating that symbolism, I inset into the back of the chair a flat screen monitor that plays a video loop of endless doors opening. The doors open onto various sites of New York, from lower-class neighborhoods to more wealthy parts of Manhattan. I took this footage as I walked the streets where Jewish settlers have lived—from the Lower East Side, to Manhattan’s Upper West Side, and various neighborhoods in between. I videotaped various

synagogues in the Lower East Side as a reminder of a more humble time when Jews didn’t have the material luxuries of today. This video documents the staggering divide of wealth in this city of extremes. It is an effort to show that Elijah signifies hospitality and openness to the Other, which must occur in all homes at all times.

If Elijah represents hospitality, I wanted to push his role even further and employ this prophetic figure in the service of social action. In Rabbi Arthur Waskow’s Rainbow Seder, there is a passage that expresses this point succinctly. “We ourselves shall be Elijah, we ourselves shall act to bring the Messiah.” This segment of Rabbi Waskow’s Haggadah was read by Ruth Messinger as the Elijah Chair was placed in the middle of the storefront window. On the wall to the right of the chair was the quotation by Gideon Ofrat, and to the left of the Chair, two house builders began to apply the broken matzah that had been removed from the wall back onto the wall to form the shape of a house in order to symbolize the desire for home that the Passover story evokes. This window installation stood on 42nd Street for the duration of Passover and was witnessed by countless passersby.

After the storefront performance, the Seder moved down the block to the soup kitchen. After soup was served to the hungry, a second ritual object was ushered into the kitchen. This was Miriam’s Well, a sculpture based on recent feminist revisions that have introduced Miriam into the Seder in an attempt to call attention to the absence of the female voice in the Tenach. Therefore Miriam’s Well can be seen as a complement to the Elijah Chair. The biblical narrative tells of a woman (traditionally interpreted to be Moses’ sister, Miriam) who divined water for the Israelites along their journey out of Egypt. For me, Miriam symbolizes nourishment of all kinds—food, water, shelter, and love—all of which are the basic necessities of life. Miriam’s Well contains a video loop combining images of water with superimposition of text upon the water. The well itself is a construction of about 3½ feet high, round and covered in white satin to signify the feminine. To access the video imagery, the viewer looks down into a hole in the middle of the construction. This hole is not only meant to resemble a well but also to be reminiscent of a birth canal, thereby doubling the associations with the female.

After the introduction of Miriam’s Well, musicians brought out their instruments, and those in the soup kitchen began to sing “Chadgadya” and various other Passover favorites. Many people started dancing spontaneously to the Passover songs and a feeling of joy and optimism spread throughout the crowd. We even brought the singing out onto 42nd Street where people engaged in conversation and song. Just down the street one could see others playing with the final piece of the happening, an interactive video projection.

At 125 West 42nd Street, a few doors down from the Matzah Ball Soup Kitchen, I employed an artistic device that superimposed the people walking by that night onto the scene of Cecil B. DeMille’s famous movie “The Ten

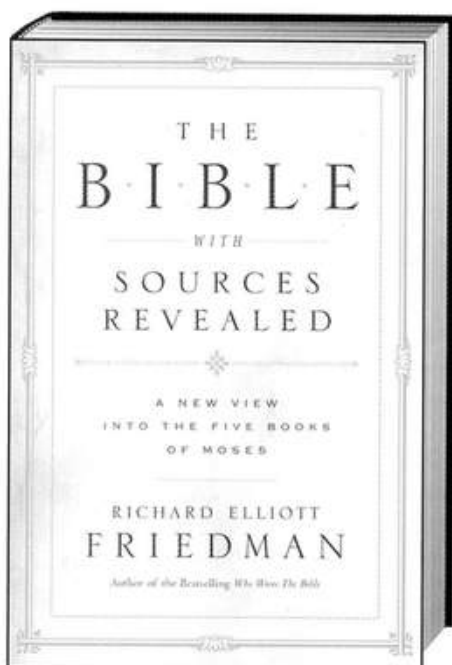
Commandments" where the Jews take flight from slavery through the parting of the Red Sea. The Jew and non Jew alike all became runaway slaves, thus literalizing the Passover injunction, "Remember you were slaves in Egypt." The video interaction illuminated the humanist ideal, via a humorous reference to pop culture, that all of us are morally enjoined to empathize with the oppressed. Moreover, for a Jewish passerby, the superimposition would generate another layer of meaning. Even though most of us in this generation were never victims of slavery (or for that matter homelessness), we should remember that our ancestors were and that one should never become entirely removed from this subject position.

By combining Jewish religious ritual, community activism, performance art, installation art, and, most importantly, public art, I sought to create a multi-media, multi-layered event that would engage the person on the street—the non Jew as well as the Jew who happened to walk by that night—to think about the problem of homelessness. One interesting moment captured by videographer Peter Shapiro occurred when two German tourists happened to walk by and were initiated to the Passover Seder by being handed a piece of matzah. They asked, "What is this?" Strikingly, this question is similar to the one asked by the simple child, the child at the Seder table who does not know. By asking this question, these people on the street spontaneously enacted a

fundamental part of the Passover ritual. The Jewish woman who handed them the matzah told them, "This is the bread of affliction—the bread of poverty that my ancestors ate in the land of Mitzrayim." At that moment, the injunction to pass on tribal history was accomplished and exceeded the mandate to keep it within a Jewish context.

If we recall, Mitzrayim is not only the Hebrew word for the land of Egypt—it also literally means "small spaces." The Times Square Seder is a celebration of leaving these small spaces, which can also signify narrow-mindedness, using art to move from individual to communal experience, from self to other, in a way that opens and expands us. Art has given me the means to link a sacred tradition to contemporary social problems.

The Times Square Seder worked at the crossroads of Jewish religious ritual, postmodern installation art, performance art, and community activism. With the Times Square Seder, I created a symbiotic relationship between all of these methods of cultural production in an effort to illuminate the contemporary plague of homelessness. The Elijah Chair is just one vehicle to shed light on these larger social issues. So, if you happen to walk through the doors of the Jewish Museum in New York this Passover season, I hope that you will go and see the Elijah Chair. It is my hope that one of the doors that you will see in the Elijah Chair leads you out of Mitzrayim and toward social action and activism. □



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The Passover Seder

A Time to Ponder Our Treatment of the Stranger

David Arnow

[God] said unto Abram: "Know well that your offspring shall be strangers in a land not theirs, and they shall be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years...."

—The Passover Haggadah quoting Genesis 15:13

Every Passover, Jews read the Haggadah, a guidebook to the Passover Seder designed in part to help us re-experience our redemption from slavery. But, unlike the Bible, the Haggadah does not explicitly call us to remember our oppression in order to avoid imposing it on others.

In the Bible, the injunction to treat the stranger justly because we were slaves in Egypt recurs dozens of times, more often, in fact, than any other positive commandment. The Seder is a perfect opportunity to sample the Bible's repeated exhortations to use our memories of slavery in Egypt as the basis for humane treatment of minorities and the weaker members of society over whom we have power. It's also a good time to look at the relationship between Jewish suffering and social justice, especially in the context of the State of Israel. You may want to use this article to supplement your Passover Seder, Tikkun Community discussions about the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, or, more broadly, other interfaith discussions you engage in about social justice. Simple directions and questions for discussion are included throughout.

Start with the passage from the Haggadah that begins this article, from Genesis 15:13 (it comes not long after the section about the Four Children). Read it aloud slowly and ask each participant to respond to this question.

- What do you think is the most important lesson we should learn from re-experiencing our redemption from slavery in Egypt?

Knowing the Heart of the Stranger

Over the long centuries of the Haggadah's evolution, Jewish weakness, vulnerability, and exile fueled a powerful yearning for Divine redemption. Oppression in

David Arnow is the author of Creating Lively Passover Seders: A Sourcebook of Engaging Tales, Texts & Activities published this winter by Jewish Lights. This article is based on a chapter from that book and is used with permission from the publisher. © Jewish Lights, 2004. All Rights Reserved.



Egypt became paradigmatic of later painful experiences at the hands of the Persians, Greeks, Romans, Christians, and others. The Haggadah proclaimed hope to a powerless people: "In every generation they rise up to destroy us, but the Holy One, praised be He, saves us from their hands." Understandably, the compilers of the Haggadah worried more about preserving hope for the downtrodden than about how a *strong* Jewish people would wield power.

Although we certainly have our enemies, and Israel has not yet achieved peace, today the Jewish people have been blessed with a different reality than that which produced the Haggadah. Despite real setbacks in recent years, Jews throughout the world probably still enjoy greater security than at any other time in our history.

Now we must attend to another theme of the Exodus: At the Seder table, we remember our suffering as strangers in Egypt to help us avoid imposing it on others and to renew our capacity for empathy.

Easier said than done. Once empowered, long-persecuted Christians lost no time in turning upon vulnerable Jews. Ruthless kings and colonial oppressors have been overthrown by insurgents who all too often create even more brutal, despotic regimes. The Seder is a good time to remember Hillel's seemingly simple words: "What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor. That is the meaning of the whole Torah. All the rest is commentary. Now go and study."

The Haggadah speaks plainly: "In every generation, each individual should feel as though he or she had gone out of Egypt." Therefore, tonight we remember that we were strangers in the land of Egypt. Tonight we study the Bible's teachings about how we should relate to the *ger*, the stranger in our midst; the Other, whom we have the power to oppress or uplift, to shun or welcome, to insult or honor, to neglect or protect. The Bible contains so many reminders to treat the stranger fairly because the experience of suffering more often leaves a thirst for vengeance rather than compassion for others: "The earth shudders ... [when] a slave becomes king" (Proverbs 30:21-22).

Copy the passages below for each participant. Take turns reading the passages aloud. These are only some of the many variations on this theme.

1. There shall be one law for the citizen and for the stranger who dwells among you. —Ex. 12:49

2. You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. You shall not ill-treat any widow or orphan. If you do mistreat them, I will heed their outcry as soon as they cry out to Me, and My anger shall blaze forth and I will put you to the sword, and your own wives shall become widows and your children orphans.
—Ex. 22:20–23

3. And you shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the feelings of the stranger, having yourselves been strangers in the land of Egypt.
—Ex. 23:9

4. Six days you may do your work, but on the seventh day you shall cease from labor, in order that your ox and your ass may rest, and that your bondman and the stranger may be refreshed.
—Ex. 23:12

5. When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not wrong him. The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I the Lord, am your God.
—Lev. 19:33–34

6. But the land must not be sold beyond reclaim, for the land is Mine; you are but strangers resident with Me.
—Lev. 25:23

7. When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, do not pick it over again; that shall go to the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. Always remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore do I enjoin you to observe this commandment.
—Deut. 24:17–22

8. ... If you really mend your ways and your actions; if you execute justice between one man and another, if you do not oppress the stranger, the orphan, and the widow; if you do not shed the blood of the innocent in this place; if you do not follow other gods, to your own hurt—then only will I let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers for all time.
—Jeremiah 7:5–7

9. And the people of the land have practiced fraud and committed robbery; they have wronged the poor and needy, have defrauded the stranger without redress. And I sought a man among them to repair the wall or stand in the breach before Me in behalf of this land, that I might not destroy it, but I have found none.
—Ezekiel 22:29–30

10. This land you shall divide for yourselves among the tribes of Israel. You shall allot it as a heritage for yourselves and for the strangers who reside among you, who have begotten children among you. You shall treat them as Israelite citizens; they shall receive allotments along with you among the tribes of Israel. You shall give the stranger an allotment within the tribe where he resides—declares the Lord God.
—Ezekiel 47:21–23

- How do these biblical verses make you feel?
- Which passages evoke the strongest reactions?
- Who are the strangers among us today and how might you, or we as a people, act more justly toward these individuals or groups?



- If you were writing a Haggadah, how much attention would you give to the theme of our treatment of the stranger?

Two Views on the Stranger

Read aloud and discuss.

RThe history of the Zionist movement includes sharply divergent views on what role the biblical injunction to treat the stranger justly should play in a Jewish State.

1. Chaim Weizmann (1874–1952) was one of the principal architects of the Balfour Declaration, served for many years as president of the World Zionist Organization, and became the first president of the Jewish State. He was a political moderate and accepted the concept of partitioning Palestine to create both a Jewish and an Arab state. In 1947 Weizmann wrote his autobiography, *Trial and Error*, in which he envisioned the following about the Jewish State's treatment of its minority of Arab citizens:

There must not be one law for the Jew and another for the Arabs. We must stand firm by the ancient principle enunciated in our Torah: 'There shall be one law for the native and for the stranger who resides in your midst.' ... I am certain that the world will judge the Jewish State by what it will do with the Arabs, just as the Jewish people at large will be judged by what we do or fail to do in this State where we have been given such a wonderful opportunity after thousands of years of wandering and suffering.

2. Vladimir Jabotinsky (1880–1940) led the Revisionist Movement in Zionism, a group that withdrew from the World Zionist Organization and opposed partitioning Palestine. Jabotinsky's ideology has played an important role in Israel's right-wing political movements. The following is an excerpt from his 1910 article, "Man is a Wolf to Man":

Sometimes we base too many rosy hopes on the fallacy that a certain people has itself suffered much and will therefore feel the agony of another people and understand it and its conscience will not allow it to inflict on the weaker people what had been earlier inflicted upon it. But in reality it appears that these are mere pretty phrases.... Only the Bible says, 'And you shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the feelings of the stranger, having yourselves been strangers in the land of Egypt.' Contemporary morality has no place for such childish humanitarianism.

- Which view is closer to your own and why?
- On balance do you think memories of Jewish suffering have made us a more or less compassionate people?
- Different cultures tell a story about an individual who has suffered terrible injustice. She explains to her child that it feels like two wolves are fighting within her. One is angry and vengeful, the other is compassionate and forgiving. "Which one will win?" her child asks. "Whichever one I feed," she answers. How would you apply this story to the Jewish people today? □

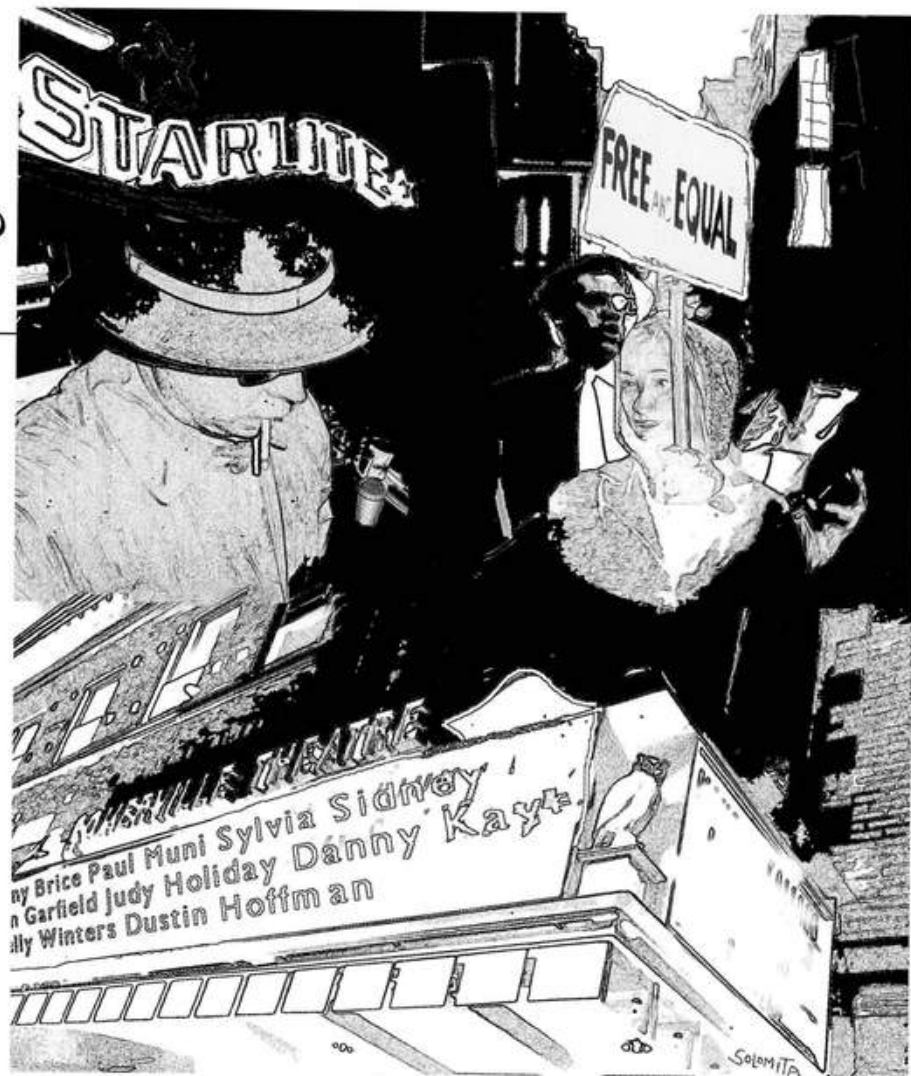
Is America Entertaining?

Paul Buble

- J. Hoberman. *The Dream Life: Movies, Media and the Mythology of the Sixties*. New Press, 2003.
- J. Hoberman and Jeffrey Shandler. *Entertaining America: Jews, Movies and Broadcasting*. Jewish Museum/Princeton University Press, 2003.

Jim Hoberman (he always uses "J." for his first name) has been the reigning *Village Voice* film critic for almost thirty years, has long since become a member of the New York Critics Film Circle, and is an adjunct professor at Cooper Union. In short, he's the movie teacher to die for. TIKKUN readers should (but may not) know him best for the heavily illustrated *Bridge of Light: Yiddish Film between Two Worlds*, an extremely sensitive recuperation of films that are now rarely seen but were once (shortly before 1940) the pride of the Jewish world from Warsaw to Manhattan and beyond. Hoberman has also become, in a larger sense, the film critic as social critic, and that's a Jewish-inflected story worth at least one good postmodern movie.

From the dawn of sound to the middle of the 1950s, American newspapermen with a background in theatrical drama and novel-reading dominated the prestige end of film reviewing. The *New York Times*' Bosley Crowther was the golden critic for a Golden Age Hollywood. He and his



counterparts worked in real-life conditions reminiscent of *The Front Page* and other 1930s–40s films that made the reporter a real character, working always under a furious boss, facing an even more furious deadline, sometimes with an office romance as a sidebar to the action. These critics celebrated a good film comedy, of both the sophisticated (Katharine Hepburn) and slapstick (Abbott and Costello) type, as well as musicals with lots of dancing, family movies with a loyal horse or dog, and the three-hankie "women's films" like *Stella Dallas*, gendered masochism in full flower.

But they most loved the serious film, the "meller" (Variety-speak for

melodrama), that lifted up the audience, films with stars like Paul Muni (birth name: Muni Weisenfreund) playing Emile Zola—the kind of film that Jewish intellectuals and self-educated working people considered the closest to real theatrical drama. By the time of the Second World War, "message" films with costars like John Garfield had gone from financial risk to financial security, thanks to the action-filled war dramas with just enough liberalism (like multi-ethnic squads, Jews included, and some talk about what it meant to wipe out fascism) to give the politically-inclined viewer a thrill of significance. In *Casablanca*, Hollywood had already made the best of the antifascist romances, but the mood swelled and extended into the immediate postwar period into anti-anti-Semitic melodrama and the earliest of feature films

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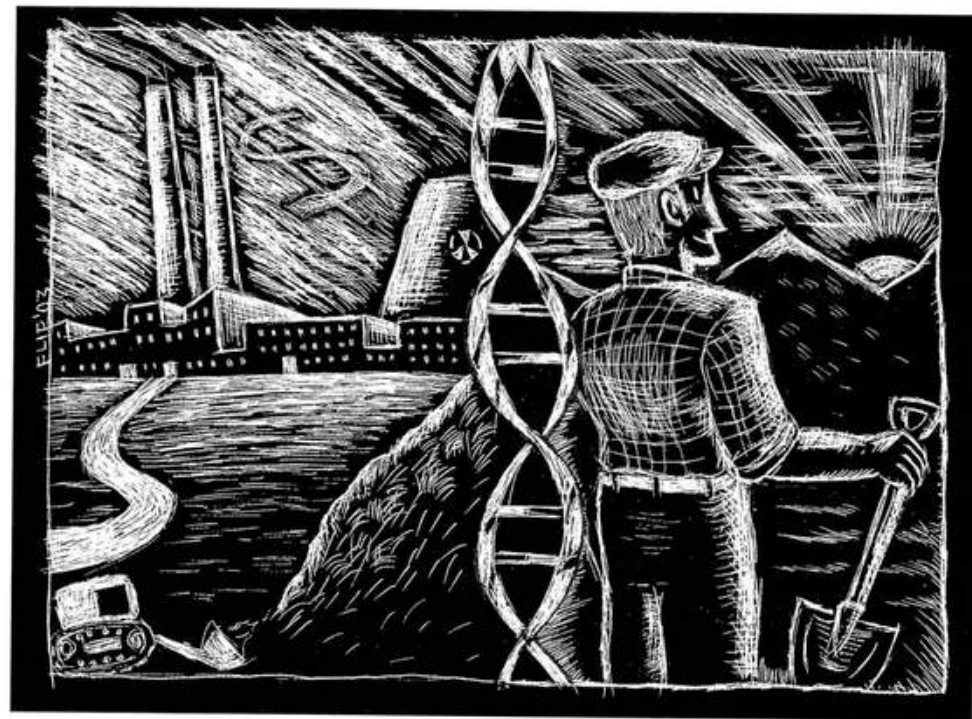
The (Un)natural Order

Siri Steiner

- *The Hidden Connections: Integrating The Biological, Cognitive, and Social Dimensions of Life Into a Science of Sustainability*, by Fritjof Capra. Doubleday, 2002.

Fritjof Capra (*Tao of Physics* and *Web of Life*) is known for finding correlations between seemingly unrelated concepts and making them seem obvious. It is fitting that his newest book, *The Hidden Connections*, undertakes the unusual challenge of using advances in biological sciences to describe deficiencies in the current social structure. Ranging from the origin and definition of life on earth to human consciousness and meaning, the scope of the book is daunting. Capra uses such diverse disciplines to reveal a few basic themes, which he extrapolates to human groups. He analyzes the relatively simple and straightforward processes of living cells and organisms to explain complex interactions between human organizations, and he suggests new ways of ordering social groups to plan a more healthy, realistic, and sustainable future.

When compared to the elegance of natural design, human progress clods around like a bull in a ballet. Our manufacturing processes require huge amounts of a particular crop or resource and often use only 4–25 percent of the raw material. The rest is waste—unusable byproducts of raw materials that were once rich with possibilities. Part of the problem is that most companies focus on making one



specific product. Everything else is irrelevant and falls to the wayside. Crops become massive and monotonous, causing huge pest and mineral problems for the land, while factories “junk” everything that is not valuable for the one product they are trying to create. But working in isolation to make a profit clearly isn’t sustainable. Such a single-minded, non-integrated approach within cells would kill an organism, so why should it work for a network of organisms?

Capra describes organizations such as Zero Emissions Research and Initiatives (ZERI), which bring a more thoughtful approach to industry. The goal of ZERI is to produce zero waste. In order to accomplish this goal, producers must work together so that byproducts of one manufacturing process can be used for another. This

requires the kind of cooperation and regulation seen in natural systems, rather than the top-down monoculture of most man-made systems. Communities come together to share resources and provide a variety of goods and services, instead of focusing on a single goal in isolation. In this scenario, planning, sharing, and communicating are of utmost importance. Here, the natural model is not only seen in the networking capabilities of the cell or organism, but in the rich diversity and parsimony of natural ecosystems.

Capra also suggests that globalization and the concentration of economic power in the hands of a few have created a roadblock to true sustainability, and describes a fairly recent paradigm shift in cell biology to frame his argument for a diffusion of power. Genes, contrary to old models, do not function as absolute dictators. Gene transcription and expression (the ultimate factor in what makes an organism

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what it is) depends largely on the cellular environment. Where and when transcription takes place is not as simple a matter as biotechnologists might like to believe. Organisms cannot be perfectly programmed by tweaking the order of nitrogenous bases on a strand of DNA. Instead, phenotype is realized because certain genes are expressed in certain amounts at certain times. The transcription process is affected by non-coding DNA, the environment of the organism, hormone levels, and other complicated positive and negative feedback loops which occur when one cell communicates with another. Rather than a top-down scenario of organization, organisms are complex networks—each part shares information and causes reactions in the nucleus, in turn effecting transcription and protein formation. It would be very difficult to hunt down a source of absolute power in the cell or the organism.

The diffusion of power in a cell is the result of thousands of years of evolution, and Capra argues that its intricacy should be used as a model when creating a strong, sustainable system. Currently the IMF, WTO, and the World Bank act in isolation, setting the pace for the production and distribution of goods across the globe, and exerting enormous control over the fate of most human lives. Power is not checked, shared, or diffused. This is not only unjust, it creates a power structure that leads to out-of-control production of goods that are useful to a handful of countries at the expense of goods and resources that are necessary for local peoples. If an organism functioned this way, it would quickly perish.

Capra uses another example from biology to emphasize the importance of checks on production. One of the most common methods for cells to maintain metabolic control involves something called "feedback inhibition." Feedback inhibition occurs when the end product of a certain metabolic pathway switches off its own production by binding to the enzymes responsible for

its synthesis. By binding to an enzyme and changing its shape, molecules effectively inhibit their own production. The build-up of any one particular complex actually prevents further production. Such feedback helps the cell avoid over production of specific amino acids, proteins, enzymes, and hormones. Without this vital system, cells would poison themselves with an overabundance of certain chemicals, while lacking others crucial to survival.

As globalization becomes a reality, the manpower of many translates to political power for a few. Consolidating goods distribution and production capabilities in so few hands, compacted by rampant mono-industry, leaves no room for feedback inhibition. Rather than producing less of an item once production is high, we continue to make more of something as long as it sells in the world market. We do this at the expense of products and resources that we desperately need for the health and livelihood of most humans. If a cell within an organism behaved with such selfish, wild abandon it would be cancerous. Because modern humans are single goal-oriented and we produce and distribute goods without regard to our surroundings, we are quickly losing our hardiness and resiliency. Life as we live it is simply not sustainable.

Much of this already sounds familiar, but Capra goes on to describe solutions. He presents a promising scenario proposed by the Seattle Coalition to restore a sustainable balance of power and production: limit or eliminate the powers of the Bretton Woods institutions (World Bank, IMF, WTO) and empower the United Nations. In addition to strengthening current UN organizations, we should create new global institutions under the authority of the UN to help impoverished nations relieve their debts, maintain global stability, and provide the public with information about corporate activities. As Capra explains, "The main thrust of all these proposals is to decentralize the power of global institutions in favor of

a pluralistic system of regional and international organizations, each of which would be checked by other organizations, agreements and regional groupings." We must decentralize control and create feedback systems in order to make our global economy more reactive to human needs and the environment. In order to achieve this, we need more regulatory agencies, each with separate local goals and agendas to be hammered out in agreement with other agencies—we need to distribute control over what is produced, how much is produced, and the method of production. In this way our global economy would behave more like the complex network of a living system. Capra explains that with this "fluid" structure, we might arrive at self-governing that is fair and less destructive to our environment.

Capra's points are elegant, but he may have overlooked one thing. Emergent properties, as he reminds us in his book, occur in higher levels of organization and cannot be pared down to their more simple parts. Just as complex qualities of human consciousness cannot simply be reduced to an understanding of firing neurons, there is no perfect analogy between social systems and processes that occur in individual organisms. His analysis of human networks ultimately faces the same problem that scientific reductionism does: Human social systems will become more complicated as new properties emerge in group behavior. The character of a group will be much more than the sum of its parts. Therefore, the functions and behavior of a cell or organism cannot possibly give us a complete framework from which to analyze and organize communities. This being said, Capra does an admirable job of gleaning what he can from biological feedback loops and networks that occur in individual living systems. As long as we are cautious about the limitations of the analogy, such efficient systems are useful models for re-envisioning a new social order. □

The Seduction of Anaïs Nin

Amy Wilner

■ *Seduction: A Portrait of Anaïs Nin* by Margot Beth Duxler, Ph.D. Edge-work, 2002.

Ours is a culture of celebrity and appearance in which theoretical debates about whether reality is found or constructed are largely confined to academia. Politicians communicate in sound bites as the public refuses to demand otherwise. Trent Lott goes on Black Entertainment Television to disavow the racism he clearly expressed days earlier; George Bush simplifies the motives for waging war in Iraq before, during, and after the destruction. All of this takes place on television, which itself is both the incarnation and the reification of the inauthentic real, right in our own living rooms. In the latest wave, we watch show after show of produced reality as the genre continues to fold in on itself like a mutating virus. Our society thrives on exposure rather than revelation; our desire to bear witness to anything authentic is far outweighed by our voyeurism, which can be sated by anything false as long as that thing announces itself as real. In other words, it turns out we don't even care if the emperor is wearing a fake naked suit—all we need is the illusion of having seen someone exposed. And certainly no one asks about the meaning of the act; some might even argue

that the act has been pre-stripped of its meaning for us.

Whatever the illusory quest manifest in "reality" television, we as a society appear to be not all that interested in reality itself. Yet shouldn't we be? The nature of reality—and, on a personal level, authenticity—is not just an ontological question of interest to poets and philosophers, but a powerful issue at work in almost every significant aspect of contemporary American culture and daily life. When are we genuine and when are we false? How often are we conscious of the myriad ways and contexts in which we are, individually or collectively, personally or culturally, privately or politically, less than

authentic? And if we are, by definition, unaware of the unconscious conflicts that may drive us to create, maintain, present, and believe (in) our inauthentic selves, does that absolve us of the responsibility, both individual and societal, to question what is true and to rekindle our appetites for the authentic? Not if we wish to thrive.

It can't be mere coincidence that reality television, on the other hand, thrives because enough of us find pleasure, or satisfaction, or relief, or fascination, in watching the aggression, hostility, humiliation, and shame of others. Our fascination with and envy of celebrities can make their upsets and failures even more gratifying. Still, whether it's the admittedly intriguing group dynamics of shows like *Survivor* or *Big Brother*, or the lengths to which individual people will go for a chance



ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTIANE GRAUERT

Amy Wilner received her MFA in fiction from the Writers' Workshop at the University of Iowa. She is currently completing her doctorate in clinical psychology and maintains a private psychotherapy practice in San Francisco.

at "love," if we felt compassionately towards these people, we'd change the channel, if not turn off the set. But we're just certain enough that these folks aren't really suffering, that the "reality" is "just television," to delight in it instead. We may root for an underdog here and there, but not without mustering some real contempt for others along the way. So couple the collective *schadenfreude* that allows us

The posthumous publication of Nin's unedited journals revealed a woman who was dependent, needy, and duplicitous. She never supported herself economically; she was married to two men simultaneously; she seduced every psychoanalyst who ever treated her; she slept with her father when she was an adult. She was more than unconventional; she was deceptive, with both the people closest to

had presented herself to be, was not, in fact, who she was."

How, so many years later, could Duxler make sense of such painful truths about a woman whom she had believed in and loved, and been loved by in a way that allowed her to come into being herself? One route proved to be through the lens of psychoanalysis, a lens through which both Nin and Duxler had explored themselves, and a practice for which Duxler later trained.

Duxler's beautiful volume, published by Edgework, is a deep and thoughtful exploration of Nin that draws strongly from the author's understanding of the ideas of D.W. Winnicott, a British pediatrician and psychoanalyst whose contributions remain a cornerstone of object relations psychological theory. One of the central tenets of this theory is the idea that the human psyche is informed by interactive relationships with actual, external others as well as with internal others, mental representations which do not necessarily correspond to "real" others in any one-to-one way. Foremost among Winnicott's ideas, and central to Duxler's understanding of Nin, is the notion of a false self, a psychological creation that develops under circumstances in which one experiences one's authentic self as profoundly unsafe. For Anaïs Nin, early childhood experiences with a fragile mother and a charming, abandoning father led to this development. Her journals were the written record of that self's development.

Duxler's detailed discussion of the functions of diary-writing is fascinating enough in a literary context; in light of her psychological study of one of the most famous diarists in English literature, it becomes more deeply so. The keeping of a private journal can, for example, be a potent vehicle for a developing personality to come into being, a safe space in (and into) which one can write over the gaps between who one is and who one wishes to be, with language itself serving as a kind of connective tissue for the psyche.

What happens when that most private space for the written word, the diary, becomes a repository for autobiographical fictions?

to revel in the misfortunes of others, with the drive to project and disown our own hostility and aggression by watching it played out by others, and reality television has a niche market. We've mastered and disguised the village stoning so that it takes place in our own living rooms, and without physical violence. Shame wins the day and once again television proves to be a superior medium for keeping ourselves disconnected, safely removed to a place from which we can watch rather than participate, look rather than feel.

Unlike television, literature has always aspired to reveal the truth about our human nature and our human lives, to be authentic even if fictive. And journals, even those with literary aspirations, present themselves as inherently real. But what happens when that most private space for the written word, the diary, becomes a repository for autobiographical fictions? What does that say about its writer, who, in this case, might be more properly named its *author*?

Authenticity, exposure, and tantalizing illusion are themes in Margot Beth Duxler's radically illuminating psychobiography, *Seduction: A Portrait of Anaïs Nin*. As we discover, these also were some of the most profound themes in Nin's own life.

her and with her readers.

Given that Nin had already long been embraced by a then-new feminist movement—hailed and revered as a role model for an autonomy that broke boundaries in artistic, personal, intellectual, and sexual arenas—the journals published after her death ignited controversy and polarized Nin's champions and detractors. The volumes brought into stark relief the tension between truth and falsehood, fiction and reality, forthrightness and duplicity, independence and dependence, and self-awareness and denial.

For Duxler, who is a practicing clinical psychologist as well as a writer, the revelations in Nin's journals were particularly, and personally, painful. At the age of twenty, she had written Nin a starkly honest letter in which she revealed how important Nin's work was to her. Duxler was shocked and thrilled when Nin wrote back, inviting a meeting. Their relationship bloomed, and met Duxler's basic needs for nurturance, encouragement, and respect—needs never met by her own mother. She left Chicago and followed Nin to Los Angeles, where they remained close until Anaïs's death in 1977. However, as Duxler writes, the unexpurgated journals were manifest evidence that "... the idealized maternal figure I had wanted and needed Anaïs to be, and whom she

Duxler's work, in turn, carries the reader across Nin's years of journals and other secondary biographical sources, reflecting its author's efforts to understand the meaning behind Nin's falsity such that her own experience of that duplicity is transformed.

For Duxler, analyzing the meaning of Nin's act of false-self-creation became an opportunity not for judgment but for love, and she appreciates Nin's inauthenticity for being less about selfishness than self-preservation. Nin created a self who could survive her childhood losses and neglect, which were themselves wrapped in a false identity of complexity and artistic necessity (e.g., her mother wasn't needy and hypervigilant, she was exquisitely complex and perceptive; her father wasn't neglectful and destructive, he was artistic and passionate). As Nin's journals revealed, her sexual polygamy was not just a willful, manifest rebellion against the constraints of gender roles and social mores, but also involved ongoing personal deceit of people who loved her deeply. Esteemed as an independent thinker and artist, she was a woman profoundly dependent on the financial and emotional support and approval of others, mostly men. What can this have meant for the multitudes of feminist thinkers who exalted Nin as a role model for modern women?

Confronted on an even more personal level by her surrogate maternal figure's feet of clay, Duxler chose to sculpt her own process of rediscovery, seeking her subject by carving away at everything that wasn't the truth. In so doing, she had to discard not only the illusions Nin presented and perpetuated about herself, but also the projections of those who "knew" her, or wanted to, including, of course, Duxler herself. Faced with the truths revealed in the unedited journals, including the incontestable reality of Nin's secretive, polygamous, and seductive nature, Duxler, who was herself no longer so young and emotionally vulnerable, was in turn no

longer restricted to the unthinkable choices that faced the child Anaïs (blame her parents or create a self that could tolerate the pain they would inevitably bring her). She could choose instead to make meaning of the discrepancies between her own experience of Nin, the woman Nin presented herself to be, and the broken, unintegrated self the journals revealed her to be, in order to make meaning of the relationship that was so central to her own early adulthood.

Duxler quotes Nin on the nature of truth: "... the destructive element of truth is neutralized" by a "deep probing" of "motivation: What is understood is not judged." Duxler explicitly takes Nin's idea further and suggests that "what is understood is almost necessarily loved, because understanding cannot exist without empathy, empathy without compassion, and compassion without love."

In the end, Duxler's volume offers readers an object lesson in valuing

authenticity, which has little place in a market culture that colonizes every emotional state for purchase, and exposure is what serves as currency. When there is money to be made from each other's downfalls or failures or shame, compassion becomes a commodity with little market value. That said, the path of connection to which compassion leads may be the only route away from the isolation that feeds a society where shame thrives. For if we are not for our authentic selves, then who will be for us? Sometimes, suggests Duxler, those who love us, not only despite our flaws, but, empathically, because of them. This is sometimes the transformative and healing work of psychoanalysis. This is sometimes the nature of our transformative and healing personal connections with others. It is surely not to be found in the ethos or transactions of a marketplace society predicated on our disaffection and disconnection with and from each other. □

IS AMERICA ENTERTAINING? (from page 68)

biopic scripted by blacklistee Michael Wilson (whose other credits include *Bridge on the River Kwai* and *Planet of the Apes*). *Che!* was so turned around by the studio that the Guevara of poster fame became little more than an egotistic creep in the final film. Movies like *Shampoo* brilliantly satirized the Republican return to power, but in ways that could easily have confused any ordinary viewer. Only daring artistic experiment—like *Medium Cool*, shot by cinematographer-director Haskell Wexler literally on the streets during the 1968 Democratic Convention—was likely to go much further. The revolution in films only went so far.

More details arrive on every page of *The Dream Life*, an immensely enjoyable read that will enrage and amuse nearly every reader at various points. The book, like the era, ends in a tragedy that Hoberman appreciates best—whatever healthy rebellion Hollywood had represented in the baby boomers' booming political years was capped by

the political ascendancy of old-time Hollywood hero Ronald Reagan, who marked a return to the artificial smiles of celebrity shots, the pseudoheroism of the film aviator in a plane suspended by wires, the happy ending that will prove devastating for the collective American understanding of self—and for the poor people as well as the animals and plants of Planet Earth.

Hoberman does not always persuade, in his leaps from films to politics to personalities and back to films, that he has cut far beneath the surface. But if one of the great problems of recent decades is to actually *see* the surface—rather than theorizing deconstruction-style about how one might see it—he offers us a document of surprising strength. Hoberman's zest points us toward the next generation of film critics, now engaging mainly on the Web, averse to any orthodoxies but full of insight and a sense of resistance against the conservative turn of the erstwhile liberal mainstream. □

BOOK REVIEW

with dignified African Americans near the center of the plot. Then came McCarthy's political crackdown and soon after, the near disappearance of the kind of films that the Crowther types liked best.

Throughout, these critics had cheered, jeered, and laughed at the films themselves, often commented on the live audience response in Manhattan and other venues, and cast themselves in bronze as hard working liberals of the age when liberals seemed to be always fighting tycoons and fascists of various kinds (including racial and sexual). If they had one great flaw, it was to bemoan Hollywood's finest art product, the *noir* film, because it was too pessimistic for their hopes.

The next generation of film critics, above all the *New Yorker's* Pauline Kael, was already born to another age. That time's mixture of consumerism, alienation, and Cold War politics prompted deep suspicion of liberal idealism, let alone anything resembling "protest." Looking back, *Casablanca* seemed to them simpleminded and Charlie Chaplin (self-exiled for refusing to testify in front of HUAC) an annoying has-been who refused to move off the sound stage. Where Crowther cheered *Salt of the Earth*—that low budget drama about mining-town Chicanas, made by mostly Jewish blacklistees as an attempt at a commercial hit—Kael hissed it as anti-American propaganda. Meanwhile, the wider view of film and its critics was also changing. Ironically, television quickly came to be looked upon with such horror that a select group of movies, guided by U.S. and other directors, became accepted overnight as high art. At the other end of the scale, some of the low budget drive-in films could now be described as so-bad-it's-good. In both cases, the critic inserted her/himself into the picture, a public personality by turns fussy, exuberant, and iconoclastic in ways that would have shocked Crowther.

The Kael era gave way to Hoberman and his allies, a generation who

worked more often in radio, television, and the slick weeklies than in the fading newspaper trade. Like colleagues Robert Ebert, Bob Mandel, and Ken Durand, Hoberman makes more room for the return of political idealism, while properly placing the director alongside the screenwriter, cinematographer, and the many other creative minds that had been displaced by the previous critics' belief in auteurism. Specifically, this generation has been willing to suspend the old aesthetic favoritism (usually for the director who would talk with the critic) for a buoyant eclecticism.

When the popular culture of the past becomes the museum exhibit of the present, we have obviously entered a new era of interpretation. Hoberman's latest book, *Entertaining America*, is in some ways the logical successor to *Bridge of Light*, as both books emerged as catalogues/reflections on museum-based shows. You still have the chance to experience the half-Yiddish, half-assimilated mental worlds of the 1910s to 1950s if you can get yourself to the traveling exhibit formerly at New York's Jewish Museum, where you will be able to (re)acquaint yourself with the icons of that period—stage comedienne Fanny Brice, melodramatic film actress Sylvia Sydney, John Garfield, May Questal (the voice of Betty Boop), Judy Holliday, Danny Kaye, and Shelley Winters—and also see afresh more recent stars like Dustin Hoffman, Adam Sandler, Roseanne Barr and Barbra Streisand. The most touching moment for me was to enter a faux living room where a show from one of the last seasons of *The Goldbergs*, starring Gertrude Berg, was playing: "Jewish American life, 1951."

Hoberman and Shandler (who teaches Jewish Studies at Rutgers) write more than a handful of the select essays in *Entertaining America*, but fellow essayists Mel Gordon (on the *shanda* that is Howard Stern), Deborah Dash Moore (on the mere embarrassment of *Exodus*), Rhonda Lieberman (on Streisand), Amelia S. Holberg (on Betty Boop), and acute television

scholar David Marc (on Roseanne), have lots of shrewd and funny things to say. If you didn't get to the exhibit, or even if you did, this is the big book of Jewish vernacular.

Hoberman's *Dream Life* is a creature of another kind. A bit like the educated ramblings of Mike Davis, whose blurb highlights the cover, *Dream Life* starts with cultural images and goes on to pop politics, in fact, goes on to ponder everything that an era stands for. It will not likely be seen as the best book on the 1960s, but stands so free of the familiar moralizing about young radicals who went too far and spoiled everything (and so unlike David Maraniss' best-seller *They Marched Into Sunlight*, with brave American soldiers betrayed by campus extremists) that it will go down as one of the most enjoyable.

We need to be reminded, for instance, that Elvis Presley, in 1970, wrote Richard Nixon a six-page letter requesting to be made a Federal Agent-at-Large in the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, becoming part of the anti-Americanism that his rivals, the Beatles, had brought to an embattled nation. This was a sort of climax to the *Billboard* headline only five years earlier, "ROCK + FOLK + PROTEST = AN ERUPTING NEW SOUND," a youth market not to be denied, but at the same time viewed as a source of extraordinary danger to morals and nearly everything else. By 1967, Barbara Garson's *MacBird*, a MacBethian takeoff on Lyndon Johnson's takeover of the White House, sold 100,000 copies in pamphlet-form, was performed across the country on campuses, and began previews in Manhattan with Stacy Keach in the title role. (New York's *Daily News* called it "one of the most revolting displays of political slander to ever come out of the American theater," the *New Yorker* refused to list it on the calendar or take ads for it, and J. Edgar Hoover warned against the dangers that it posed.)

The fun made for uncertain advances in real-life Hollywood. The best example given by Hoberman is *Che!*, a

(continued on page 73)

Trauma in the Second Degree

Roger S. Gottlieb

■ *Common Shock: Witnessing Violence Every Day*, by Kaethe Weingarten. Dutton, 2003.

One Sabbath evening during the first Gulf War, my then eight-year-old daughter refused to join in singing “Oseh Shalom,” a prayer asking God to make peace. “Why ask God to make peace?” Anna asked flatly, having seen the images of bombs falling and tanks moving through the desert. “There is no peace.”

Psychologist and social activist Kaethe Weingarten would tell us that Anna was suffering from “common shock”: a physiological and psychological reaction “triggered by our being witness to an event or an interaction that we appraise as disturbing.” Weingarten calls it “common” because it is so widespread, and “shock” because “it affects our body, mind, and spirit.” Her book explores the causes, effects, and best responses to common shock, with examples ranging from the casual cruelties of anonymous urban rudeness to the interpersonal traumas of child abuse and family illness, to the collective disasters of ethnic war, the environmental crisis, and the Holocaust.

Common Shock is a profound and important book, and in it Weingarten joins disparate and significant thinkers such as Wilhelm Reich and Joanna Macy, who have tried to connect the

individual’s psychic state to their mental and emotional perception of the world, and continues work on trauma done by thinkers like Judith Herman. While much study has been done of victims of violence, this book focuses on those who see it but are not its direct targets. Not the son who is systematically beaten by his father, but his sister who knows what is going on and cannot stop it; not the Serbian women raped by Croats, but those of us who watch news reports about it; not the Jews who survived concentration camps, but their children who vicariously witness their ordeal.

As philosopher Eva Kittay directed our attention to those who care for the disabled as well as the disabled themselves, so Weingarten asks: What happens to the onlookers of violation and injustice? The simplicity of this question is essential to its significance, for often the most vital ideas are so elementary that we simultaneously wonder if there is anyone who doesn’t realize how crucial this matter is, and also why we ourselves never thought of it in such simple and clear terms before.

As someone who follows the news, researches topics like the Holocaust and the environmental crisis, has Holocaust survivors for in-laws, and fathers a daughter with disabilities, I spend a great deal of time witnessing others’ pain, helplessness, and violation.

The critical question Weingarten would have me ask is: *How* am I witnessing? Do I try to brush off the emo-

tional effects of what I’ve seen only to find myself overeating or having bad dreams night after night? Do I find myself numb, increasingly unable to connect emotionally to people around me? Am I stuck in toxic shame because of my inability to do anything about the violations of which I am aware? Does what I’ve seen make me despair of ever finding meaning or safety in my life?

These questions reveal some of the symptoms of toxic shock and it is Weingarten’s goal to teach us how to transform passive, unconscious, or emotionally isolated witnessing into active, engaged, and—though at times enormously difficult—essentially positive experiences. The key steps in this process include awareness of what we are seeing and its effects on us; empathy for victims and a humanizing, rather than violent, response to perpetrators; and, where possible, an action to change the situation. This could be individual action, such as offering

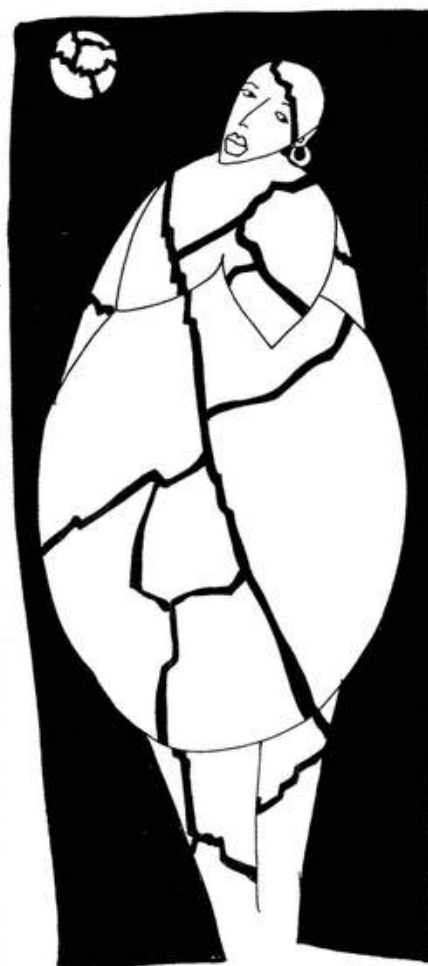


ILLUSTRATION BY NADINE ESPEIN

Roger S. Gottlieb is professor of philosophy at Worcester Polytechnic Institute. His recent books include *Joining Hands: Politics and Religion Together for Social Change* and *Liberating Faith: Religious Voices for Justice, Peace, and Ecological Wisdom* (gottlieb@wpi.edu).

open-hearted and compassionate listening to the victim; or collective action, such as the Truth and Reconciliation commissions in South Africa. The key to active, engaged witnessing is both to fully take in the suffering at hand and also to refuse to be bound by or to it. If we can act in the face of the others' pain, while never avoiding or denying it, we can transform our own response and, at times, aid in the healing of those who have been wounded.

Besides the originality and powerful simplicity of its guiding ideas, the power of *Common Shock* resides in its wealth of examples. As an academic psychologist, Weingarten deepens our understanding by relating her claims to a wide range of research; as a clinician she can share stories of clients who have wrestled with the demons of common shock through the pains of family life; as a socially engaged professional she can relate the work she herself has done in the face of collective trauma in South Africa and Bosnia; and as a cancer survivor and parent of a child with special needs, she can talk about her personal life. All of these resources are woven together in a powerful account of the world's pain and how we can respond to it.

The prevalence and intensity of common shock stems, I suspect, from the morally interesting fact that we do not experience ourselves as purely individual beings. We feel a visceral sense of violation when we hear of mass killings or needless starvation because this feels like an assault on "us," where "us" is a collective sense of people, humanity or even life itself. Of course, for some this feeling may not arise. In the film *Shoah*, a Polish farmer was asked how he felt when he saw cattle cars carrying Jews to Auschwitz. He shrugged in unconcern and replied: "If someone hits you, do I feel the pain?" Ultimately, the great divide among human beings may have less to do with ideology, religion, gender, race, or nationality, than with whether or not and in what degree we feel connected to other beings, so that their pain and violation feels at least to

some extent like it is our own; so that witnessing the other is always mixed with a sense of the self as well.

At the same time, *Common Shock* made me wonder about the place of politics in all of this. On the one hand, it is partly our sense of what the world is that determines how "shocked" we will be by an event. While I was horrified by the suffering caused by 9/11, my sense of the world's violence made me less surprised than many. Since my country has dropped millions of tons of bombs in the last sixty years, and promotes militarism by selling an enormous amount of weaponry, I grieved for the victims but was hardly astonished by the fact that we too could suffer from irrational violence.

More important, Weingarten pretty much skirts difficult political judgments about which sufferings are violations and which are not. Doubtless slave owners felt traumatized by the freeing of the slaves, and many in the United States today are deeply pained by the prospect of gay marriage. If settlements on the West Bank are removed, some Jews will feel victims of an ethnic cleansing; and some Palestinians believe the only way to heal the loss of land in 1948 is to take all of it back. Those of us who are spiritually developed may feel compassion for everyone's pain, but if we are to do more than simply offer a sympathetic ear, we must have a political perspective which tells us which suffering is to be redressed and which is simply to be endured. We don't tell the former slave owner that we are sorry for his loss because we make a certain moral judgment about slavery; and I for one could not see settlers forced to return to Israel as victims of a moral outrage.

Finally, *Common Shock* raises the question of the possibilities of active and engaged witnessing in an age of global media. If awareness is essential to psychological health and compassionate action, what are we to do with the fact that between the Internet, television, and a multitude of written sources we now can be aware of the

suffering of six billion humans and countless other species? My morning newspaper offers enough trauma to occupy me for hours, and that leaves out the evening news, the six environmental magazines gathering dust on my bookshelf ("Three million trees gone in one year," screams the cover of one of them), and the Internet sites of Amnesty International, Global Trade Watch, Mother Jones, and so forth. Weingarten assures us that moving through the pain with awareness allows us to pair vulnerability with resilience and helplessness with agency—yet in the face of the information overload, I'm not so sure. Perhaps we simply have to turn away from much of the suffering if we are to bring quality attention to the rest.

In any case, our attempt to provide that attention will be immensely furthered by this book, which should be read by anyone who ever witnessed another's pain and wondered: "How can I stand this?" and "What do I do now?" □

Elat Chayyim

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Web Watch

Jewish Web Sites

Jonathan Schorsch

When God promised our biblical ancestors that their descendants would become as numerous as the stars in the sky, it is not clear whether God had Jewish websites in mind—but they sure are there aplenty! The black fire on white fire of Torah (in the widest sense) has moved to the world of pixels with ease and enthusiasm. With such an abundance of sites, I can only offer the slimmest of pickings, self-selected for TIKKUN readers, of course. Those doing their own web surfing need to proceed with caution: not everything is what it purports to be. For instance, the cool-sounding Jewish Tribal Review site presents a veritable library of anti-Jewish writing, frequently including critical excerpts from Jewish authors (I know because some of my work is reproduced there in full). Still, I have attempted to tread on the more obscure side, since many readers may already know of some of the more familiar sites. I purposefully have ignored commercial sites

selling Judaica or Jewish music, books, travel services, etc., as well as Jewish newspapers and sites belonging to major Jewish organizations or particular Jewish communities. Some of these latter sites make fascinating reading and might come in handy for travelers or even researchers, though many of these sites are not in English or are not kept current: Brazil (www.jewishbrazil.com), Cuba (www.jewishcuba.org), Japan (<http://emol.org/nihongo/japanlinks/japanesejewish.html>), Poland (www.jewish.org.pl/index-en.html), among many others. For thorough and well-maintained listings of all kinds of Jewish sites, visit the Jewish Net Ring (www.ringsurf.com/netring?ring=jewish;action=list) or Andrew Tannenbaum's Judaism and Jewish Resources web page (<http://shamash.org/trb/judaism.html>). As is typical of the web, however, many of the links lead nowhere or to sites that have been shut down. In any case, seek and ye shall hopefully find. Turn on, click in, draw out!

Middle East Peace

Encounter

www.salam-shalom.net

A site for a multitude of Israeli-Palestinian co-operative projects. The home page is somewhat enigmatic, but those with persistence will discover information on international efforts to come together, some nice photo galleries, and avenues for participation.

MidEast Web

www.mideastweb.org

The wonderful collection of peace activists from many backgrounds who established this site have performed a great service. Visitors can access a plethora of current news, analysis, dialogue projects, links to other groups, and even pertinent activities for children.

Music

Jewish Music WebCenter

www.jmwc.org

Judith Pinnolis has assembled a simply incredible resource touching on many aspects of Jewish music. Here one can find

a plethora of information, bibliographies, discographies, databases, links of all kinds, and much, much more. Be warned that many of the links do not lead anywhere. Still, wow!

Yiddish Radio Project

www.yiddishradioproject.org

Informative and fun site from this incredible project, which seeks to make better known the rich history of Yiddish radio from the first half of the 20th century. Many clips and complete episodes from the documentary series produced on NPR are available for listening via RealPlayer. Frankly, I could not get any of them to work, and my computer is pretty well set-up; perhaps others will have better luck.

News

Jewish Telegraph Agency

www.jta.org

JTA, the source for many of the news stories appearing in local Jewish papers, provides a good one-stop destination for both breaking news and interesting features concerning Jews around the world. Coverage from this highly professional organization, which calls itself the "Global News Service of the Jewish People," tends to be centrist and avoids sensationalism. Self-sponsored investigative reports often unveil significant new information.

Jonathan Schorsch is Jewish Book Editor for TIKKUN and Assistant Professor of Jewish Studies at Columbia University.

Jewsweek

www.jewsweek.com

A nice attempt at a glossy style Jewish webzine, its politics are not necessarily more interesting than its namesake, *Newsweek*, however. The site puts it best: "It mixes entertainment, celebrities, humor, and news with a sprinkling of spirituality—all from a Jewish perspective." Unfortunately, many of the columns and opinion pieces could not be accessed from the homepage.

Jewish Spirituality

My Humblest Abode

www.rebshlomo.org/abode.html

One of the best of several sites devoted to the late, great rebbe, a great source for his teachings, stories, songs, jokes, list of Carlebach minyanim, and more. If only the audio clips lasted longer...

Reconstructionist Divrei Torah

www.jrf.org/recondt

Teachings written by a variety of Reconstructionist rabbis and leaders on the weekly parsha or for holidays can be found here. Some even have nice graphics. The page is fairly current.

Activism

SocialAction.com

www.socialaction.com

A forum for those who seek to perform *tikkun olam* (world restoration), this site will find favor in the eyes of most TIKKUN readers/activists. Launched in 1999, it comes from Jewish Family & Life!, an award-winning publisher of online magazines, the print journal *Sb'ma*, and JFL Books. The many articles offered (on occasion reprinted from TIKKUN) cover a wide range of issues: social justice pursuits, commentary on the weekly biblical portion, political analysis, profiles of effective activists, advice regarding life-cycle events, and more. In addition, visitors can find lists of resources, announcements and links to concrete actions, a calendar of events, discussion groups, job and internship listings, and links to many other progressive web sites. The site's design aims at functionality: lots of text, little by way of stimulating visuals. A site with obviously large ambitions, some components (such as the History in Action page) remained empty as of this writing, while the latest "extensive" job/internship listings were months out of date.

Youth Culture

Zeek: A Jewish Journal of Thought and Culture

www.zeek.net

This relatively recent addition to the Jewish culture scene (founded in 2002) appears both electronically and in print. Zeek aims to present "alternative Jewish voices of criticism, literature, and religious thought, in an intelligent, but non-academic, context." The writing is arty, political, edgy, spiritual, personal, and *au courant*. Produced by and targeting

the Gen X+ crowd, recent volumes have featured thoughtful pieces on the Burning Man festival, a eulogy to Johnny Cash, a graduation speech by Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, and a meditation on one young woman's shofar-blowing father, among other wonderful contributions. In order to read the frequently long articles online, one needs to toggle between separate pages, but this slight annoyance dims in light of the accompanying high-quality photos and illustrations. My one complaint concerns the preponderance of writing by the three men who founded the journal.

JVIBE

www.jvibe.com

A site for teenage Jewish girls. It would make a refreshing and informative virtual location for its target audience, if it weren't several months out of date as of this writing. A missed opportunity.

History/Archives

Jewish Women's Archive

www.jwa.org

Web site of the Brookline, MA, organization that focuses on Jewish women's history and identity. Visitors will find a mix of virtual exhibits, information, and resources for personal and educational use.

Babylonian Jewry Heritage Center

www.babylonjewry.org.il/new/english/index.html

A site produced by the museum and research center based in Or-Yehuda, Israel. Visitors will find well-presented history about Iraqi Jews and their Diaspora, photos, some great music playable via RealPlayer, and of course the requisite on-line store.

Beth-Hatefutsoth: The Nahum Goldmann Museum of the Jewish Diaspora

www.bh.org.il

Despite the Israeli Zionist anti-diaspora origins of the sponsoring museum, this site offers an electronic tour of the Jewish world (literally, world). A visit can also be considered a vote of support for an institution that faces an uncertain future amid the current Israeli economic crisis. When I checked in, one of the feature presentations covered the Jewish community of Maui! Just one of the many past and present communities treated (and archived) in essays accompanied by simply incredible photos. Further delights—all quite informative—await those who choose to enter the virtual exhibitions (I looked at one called The Land of Hagar: The Jews of Hungary), though they don't always live up to the music-backed video introductions and can be somewhat difficult to navigate. The website promises that the museum's enormous collection of music from around the Jewish world will soon be available online (well worth waiting for). The electronic shop constitutes a useful resource for teachers seeking CDs, films, and books from beyond the Pale. □

Art for the People's Sake

Albert Boime

- Bram Dijkstra. *American Expressionism: Art and Social Change 1920–1950*. Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2003.

Bram Dijkstra's latest book should be compulsory reading for all red-diaper babies and fellow travelers—for all those, in short, whose intellectual, cultural, and social roots can be traced to the Depression and the mass movements of the 1930s and 1940s. Dijkstra plucks out of the dung-heap of history a body of paintings that captures the sweep and tensions of that period more effectively than any written text—a time when dissent and critical inquiry were lauded as consistent with First Amendment rights and when belonging to the Communist Party could be trendy and not necessarily branded with the Mark of Cain. The visual examples he dredges up from the swampland of cultural and historical neglect shed light on a wide range of interconnected political and sociological issues critical for an understanding of twentieth-century American history.

Dijkstra's title, *American Expressionism*, is designed to turn traditional art criticism of this era on its head. The artists Dijkstra studies are more typically described as "social realists" or "surrealists," and dismissed as the impoverished siblings of the avant-gardist Abstract Expressionist movement, which has dominated critical thinking about the period. Yet, as Dijkstra points out, both movements of the era agreed upon the principle of

"Expressionism," a term invented during that era to dialectically oppose the nineteenth century's Impressionism. Early twentieth-century expressionist artists embraced a proactive approach to painting in opposition to the passivity implied by the impressionists. Artists strove for a "freedom of expression" in the liberation of the brush technique, the freedom to exaggerate what the eye espies in nature. Daringly

The "American Expressionists" clearly (if exuberantly) depicted the world in which they lived.

grouping both realists and surrealists under this rubric, Dijkstra limns as expressionists all those who not only exaggerated natural forms, their spatial relations, and colors but who mainly bent, twisted, pulled, and stretched their figurative elements until, even as they approached the brink of formlessness, they yielded something of the pain of everyday life. It is as if these artists work to reveal all the contortions and uncontrollability of the society whose inconsistencies they sought to disclose.

Where the "social realists" and "surrealists" differed from their Abstract Expressionist counterparts was not so much in technique as in content. As the name implies, Abstract Expressionist work had little recognizable content,

especially as first generation artists like Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, and Franz Kline moved into their mature work. The "American Expressionists," in contrast, clearly (if exuberantly) depicted the world in which they lived.

The "American Expressionist" painters Dijkstra studies—many of them emerging from the immigrant communities of Eastern and Southern Europe and Asia that had comprised the general labor force—came to see themselves as "workers" in their own right. Aided by the work-relief schemes of the New Deal government such as the Federal Art Project, these artists were thrown together collectively and organized themselves in organizations like the Artists' Union, launched in 1934 to facilitate collective bargaining in state projects, and in the American Artists Congress, a Popular Front group that actively engaged in fundraising for the Spanish Republic. These unions often joined with other labor organizations, emphasizing their solidarity with the American working class. Their attempt to link some modernist experimentation with the thematics of the class struggle differentiates their form of expressionism from that of their European counterparts.

Of interest to TIKKUN's readership, a majority of the artists represented in Dijkstra's book are Jewish, either brought over as kids from Eastern Europe or born in America of recent immigrants. In addition to their isolation as lefties, they also had to endure the barbs of the prevalent anti-Semitism. Dijkstra is at his best targeting the anti-Semitic art critics like Royal Cortissoz who referred contemptuously to "Ellis Island art," and the mean-spirited Thomas Craven,

Albert Boime is professor of Art History at UCLA and is currently writing a multi-volume social history of modern art. Volume 3, Art in an Age of Counterrevolution, 1815–1848, will appear this spring.

allied with the Regionalists, who mocked the alien-sounding names of the social expressionists and their work as hopelessly un-American.

Being Left and Jewish meant engagement with an ideological stand that promised to rid society of the scourge of racism and discrimination in all its ugly forms. Meanwhile, the artists, like American Jewish intellectuals generally, preferred to think of themselves as "internationalists" rather than call attention to themselves as Jews, creators of a brand new secular world of Enlightenment universalism.

In fact, these "American Expressionist" artists thought of themselves, and were understood by their contemporaries, to be authentic modernists. That is not, however, how they were understood by a later generation of critics, led by Clement Greenberg, who categorized their art as a naïve throwback to nineteenth-century figures as opposed to the avant-gardism of the Abstract Expressionists. Even members of the political Left have often seen themselves allied with the work of the trendy avant-gardists (and more recently postmodernists), thus reinforcing the systematic bias of mainstream cultural institutions.

Dijkstra probably strays off the mark near the end of his book when he particularly excoriates the Jewish post-war critics and artists who rejected the social expressionists in favor of the avant-garde. He rightfully sees irony in the fact that critics like Clement Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg were mainly assimilationist Jews bent on rejecting their cultural and religious heritage and establishing themselves as "sophisticated intellectuals." Dijkstra sees these critics as the gatekeepers of the new American high art, serving up a "third way" besides Zionism and leftist politics and argues that their new cultural elitism led them to denounce the predominantly Jewish socially conscious artists.

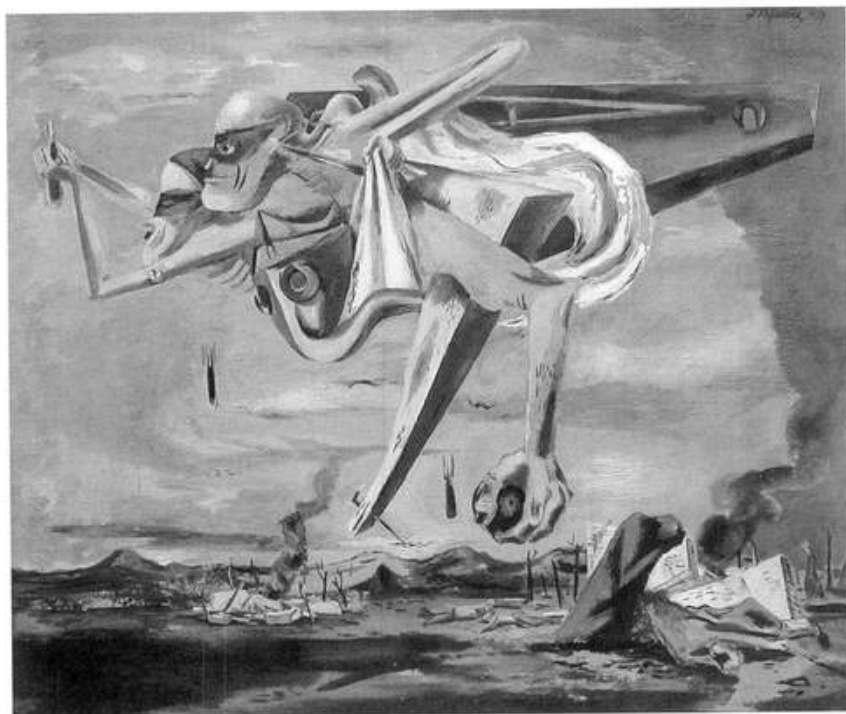


Philip Guston (1913–1980), *Bombardment*, 1937–38. Oil on wood.

It is true that Greenberg deeply admired T. S. Eliot and shared many of the pretensions of the St. Louis-born British citizen to higher culture, but in the end neither Greenberg nor any other Jewish critic should be pigeonholed because of their ethnic origins. While the phenomenon of Jewish assimilation in the mid-twentieth century is certainly of interest, it is also worthy of note that Greenberg never changed his name and served as managing editor of *Contemporary Jewish Record* from late 1944 through the last issue in June 1945 and as associate editor of *Commentary* from November 1945 until 1957.

It's also unfair to suggest, as Dijkstra does, that these pro-avant-garde critics contributed to the Cold

War climate of hostility towards artists like William Gropper, since the same bigots who ran the House Un-American Activities Committee were also those who perceived Abstract Expressionism as Bolshevik. Despite recent disclosures of CIA involvement in the promotion of Abstract Expressionism abroad, those who hauled Gropper over the coals for his work for the *New Masses*, *Daily Worker* and *Morgen Freiheit* would have preferred his style any day to that of the Abstract Expressionists. Here it's less a question of the artists' Jewishness than their ideological affiliation. Jewish abstractionists like Gottlieb, Rothko, and Newman also entertained utopian visions of a more inclusive American society in the postwar delirium of the



Anton Refregier (1905–1979), *Guernica*, 1937. Oil on panel.

1950s, creating imagery associated with a Sublime New World. They saw themselves as part of an emerging Golden Age in which society, purged of its disruptive political elements on both the Right and the Left, would start life afresh as a classless republic. That another agenda unfolding in the American imperium led to the appropriation of their work for Cold War propaganda should be understood as one component of a larger constellation of forces that declared the American Century.

In fact, the irony is that Abstract Expressionism actually shares many of the qualities of social expressionism except for the absence of recognizable subject matter that can be immediately translated into socially redeemable ideas. Almost all of the artists of the first generation of Abstract Expressionism shared the lifestyle and politics of their more literal-minded colleagues, and even did work in the Thirties and early Forties that in mood and theme approximated their production. The space-bending and figural malformations of their paintings were justified on the grounds that they

conveyed exceptional states and abnormal social and political phenomena. Artists viewed their nascent abstractions through the lens of events like Hiroshima or geographical spaces like the American West and natural phenomena like stormy skies and blazing red suns. Indeed, the bombing of the Basque town of Guernica during the Spanish Civil War might have been lost to history if not for Picasso's notable masterpiece, future abstractionist Philip Guston's terrifying *Bombardment* (see page 79) and the social surrealist Anton Refregier's *Guernica* (above).

Dijkstra's contribution not only fills a major gap in the historical record by resurrecting the currently unfashionable social realists, but also in the process conveys in a broad range of imagery the capacity for dissent through visual expression. Admittedly, it takes courage to embrace the figurative, socially conscious artists of the Depression era, who have been so stigmatized that they now are almost universally shunned. Yet these artists walked the walk between individual fulfillment and social responsibility,

tapping into modernist ideals to reach the goal of peacefully changing American society by contributing to ending American capitalism through revelation of its contradictions in stark images of breadlines, strikes, lynchings, and homelessness and now and then the projection of a new social order.

Their contribution as record-keepers of these visions of a brighter future, the flagrant contradictions of capitalism, and the awesome threat of fascism remind us that all events are mediated through representation in one form or another. Every effective politician knows the power of images and how to manipulate them, and politicians are among the first to attack artists who probe beyond the envelope and force the public to reexamine entrenched assumptions. Who can forget the violent controversy over the National Endowment for the Arts—all about politics but displaced to issues of pornography and family values? While we as a society pride ourselves on freedom of artistic expression there are apparent limits, and although no member of Congress would dare state them *a priori* the constraints reveal themselves whenever an artist crosses the invisible line.

When will the country learn that those who care most deeply about it are often its severest critics? Artists most often are those who expose the disconnect between national rhetoric and national reality, and at no time was this more evident than among the community brought to light by Dijkstra. Despite the dogma from the Right about the pitfalls of “propaganda” or “message” art, these painters sincerely believed that revolutionary aims would culminate in innovative art, and that even visual forms redolent with political purpose could be both relevant to social struggle and still attain to the status of high art. For them art was inseparable from the intense ideological conflicts generated by the crisis of American capitalism and from the heated debates over the shape of an alternative socialist future. □

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

תיקון

**There's something concrete YOU can do for Middle East Peace.
We need people from every Congressional District
in the United States to come to the**

National Teach-In To Congress FOR Middle East Peace

**SUNDAY, APRIL 25 – TUESDAY, APRIL 27
WASHINGTON, D.C.**

In May, the pro-Occupation forces will be bringing thousands of people to D.C. We need Congress to hear another voice in April. Help us educate Congress and the media about the Geneva Accord, the terrible reality of The Wall being built through the West Bank, and the reasons why the United States needs to get involved.

Please note: The Sunday, April 25th session will include an afternoon break so that people can participate in the March for Women's Lives (www.marchforchoice.org) in D.C. But please stay until Tuesday—the day we will actually meet face-to-face with Congresspeople on Capitol Hill.

PLUS A FOCUS ON:

**The Psychodynamics of the 2004 Elections,
and what the Tikkun Perspective might
contribute to the Triumph of Hope over Fear.**

Registration Information: www.tikkun.org or members@tikkun.org or 510-644-1200