

A Critique of Politics, Culture & Society

TIKKUN

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ADI OPHIR | Israeli Utopianism Today
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Human Rights | **Conscientious Objection** | **Pragmatopia**
Queer Military Photography | **The Lost Legacy of the Left**
Why the Messiah Did Not Come | **New: Music Reviews**

What is needed after food

*The darkness doesn't war against the light,
It carries us forward
to another light.
In my land, called holy,
they won't let eternity be:
they've divided it into little religions,
zoned it for God-zones,
broken it into fragments of history,
sharp and wounding unto death.
—Yebuda Amichai*

—for Linda Zisquit

And so beautiful it cracks the bones, especially Jerusalem
With the lustre of its stones, the hurt in its eyes,
And our dreams for its children: a triangle,
Beauty, despair, hope . . . the whole *mishpochah*
Pulling three ways at the same time
Like the people in so many families,
Fighting but joined at the hip, or call it a sandwich,
Despair the filling embraced by the bread of beauty and hope,
Like a manna we eat every day, sent from above,
While on earth in Jerusalem my friend's husband and son
Relax from a sabbath meal, like well-fed cats,
Happily slumped watching the aftermath
Of a game where the Nazareth team has just won
and vaulted from the bottom of their league
To the top, the players have stripped off their shirts,
Hugging and dancing, circle dancing, belly dancing,
Waving at crowds in the stands to make them cheer louder.
The coach strips his shirt from his hairy barrel chest,
Climbs a wire fence, wobbles and waves his hips.
When someone asks how he feels about his team
(A mix of Jews, Moslems, and one Nigerian,
He himself is Druze), he punches the air
And roars, *I beat them all! I beat Arafat! I beat Sharon!*
I show them we love each other! We watch a while,
The celebration is still going on when we quit
To go back to the kitchen, where loaves of beauty and hope
Stand on the counter and the cup of despair goes on the shelf,
My friend and I, we don't ask for much, we read Amichai,
We're not messianic, we don't expect utopia, which is anyway
Another name for a smiling prison,
But love is a good idea, we think, why on earth not,
Simple women that we are, simple mothers cleaning up
The kitchen after one meal to make it ready for the next.

—Alicia Ostriker

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The narrow frame of public discourse of the Western world, manifested strikingly in the U.S. elections in November, reflects a deep despair that anything could really be different. True, utopian and messianic ideals led to distorted realities in the twentieth century, but **TIKKUN** is encouraging a more practical utopianism, in which means must be equally sacred as ends. Here we offer examples of how a discourse of radical hope might be foundational for bringing out the best in what is possible for the next four years of U.S. politics.

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Front Cover: Christie Brooke/Stone

Sikkum

TIKKUN RECOMMENDS...

WHEN JESUS CAME TO HARVARD: Making Moral Choices Today

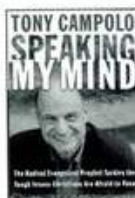
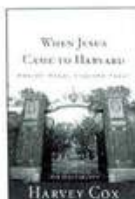
Harvey Cox. Houghton Mifflin, 2004

SPEAKING MY MIND: The Radical Evangelical Prophet Tackles the Tough Choices Christians are Afraid to Face

Tony Campolo. W Publishing Group, 2004

Harvey Cox, one of America's most significant theologians, here shows the enduring power of the Gospel as a guide to the moral life. Cox's Jesus is a Jewish revolutionary. His story of how Harvard students grappled with Cox's forthright rejection of Christian fundamentalists gives deep insight into the struggles that confront contemporary Christians, and shows how grappling with religious themes could improve the quality of contemporary university education for everyone.

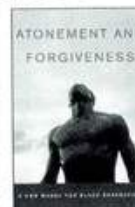
Tony Campolo shares some of Cox's conclusions, though he arrives at them through his calling as a radical evangelical preacher. This book should permanently dispel the liberal tendency to dismiss Evangelical Christianity as inherently reactionary. Campolo criticizes some of the worst tendencies amongst contemporary American Christian conservatives: insensitivity towards the poor, xenophobia towards Muslims, and support for American power at the expense of the social teachings of the Gospel.



ATONEMENT AND FORGIVENESS: A New Model for Black Reparations

Roy L. Brooks. University of California Press, 2004

Addressing the lasting legacy of slavery in the Americas, Roy Brooks argues that racial reconciliation should start with an apology and move toward restitution that would provide a rehabilitative reparation commensurate with the atrocity and foster social and cultural transformation. Brooks calls for the creation of slavery museums and for an atonement trust fund to provide support for still-struggling descendants of slaves to finance educational and business opportunities.



MATRIX HEALING: Discover Your Greatest Health Potential Through the Power of Kabbalah

Raphael Kellman, M.D. Harmony, 2004

Raphael Kellman believes our consciousness can change the material world, including our health and bodies. Drawing upon Kabbalah and contemporary medical research, Kellman produces an approach to medicine and a powerful strategy for healing that is neither reductively mystical nor mechanistically materialist, thus charting a path for future Western-style medical research.



THE ROAD TO JERUSALEM: Glubb Pasha, Palestine and the Jews

Benny Morris. I.B.Tauris, 2003

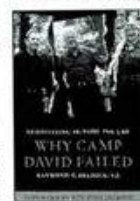
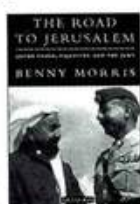
JERUSALEM BESIEGED: From Ancient Canaan to Modern Israel

Eric H. Cline. University of Michigan Press, 2004

NEGOTIATING OUTSIDE THE LAW: Why Camp David Failed

Raymond G. Helmick, S.J. Pluto Press, 2004

Locked into their conflicting historical narratives, Israelis and Palestinians often read that history as unimpeachable proof that they have been the righteous victims of irrational and hateful aggressors. Each of these books will contribute to dispelling these myths. Famous for having been one of the founding "New Historians" (perceived by some as anti-Zionist) and claiming that Israelis should have transferred the entire Palestinian people, Morris nevertheless remains a credible historical researcher still uncovering Jewish atrocities during the Israeli War of Independence. His story of Glubb Pasha, the British commander of the Arab Legion, dispels any notion that Jews were agents of British colonialism. Eric H. Cline's book highlights ten struggles from Ancient Canaan to modern Israel in which the "city of peace" became the cause for endless war and conflict. Jesuit priest Ray Helmick shows both how misguided it is to see Palestinians as responsible for the failure of Camp David, and the strength and limits of diplomacy not linked to a strategy for changing hearts.



THE SLEEP OF REASON

David Gewanter. University of Chicago Press, 2003

Collecting and arranging the exempla of a violent and fractured world in poems that combine lyric feeling and biting wit, Gewanter's intelligence and imagination leap from JFK Jr. to Tacitus, Redd Foxx to General Motors. The musicality of these formally ingenious poems is no less moving for being tough, their offbeat humor no less on target. One of the few new books of poetry with the requisite reach to speak to the times.



IN THE SHADOW OF MEMORY

Floyd Skloot. University of Nebraska Press, 2003

We all imagine dying—but we rarely imagine experiencing a new disability that changes our very sense of self. After suffering a rare brain virus, Floyd Skloot found himself with a ravaged memory and a shattered mind. His compassionate response not only tells us about memory, disease, and recovery, but serves to reconnect us to what is deepest in human experience.



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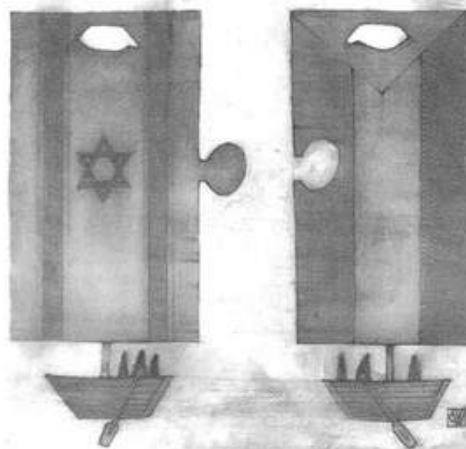
A. B. Yehoshua, Idith Zertal

Letters to the Editor

To the Editor:

An editorial response to a reader's letter in the September/October 2004 TIKKUN states in passing that "Arabs who live inside the pre-1967 border have the same basic rights as Israelis." Sadly, this is very far from true. Even that phrase erroneously implies that "Arab" and "Israeli" are mutually exclusive categories, eliding the fact that there are Arab Israeli citizens living inside those borders as well as numerous non-citizen "Jerusalem Residents" in the annexed East Jerusalem area. The many ways in which non-citizen Arabs lack the same basic rights as Jewish Israelis are apparent and pervasive.

Even Arab Israeli citizens within pre-1967 borders face more than the 'de facto segregation' and discrimination that the editorial response suggests. 97% of the land in Israel is publicly owned in one form or another, and the vast majority of that land is legally re-



served for only Jewish use, no matter how much 'upper middle class' money an Arab might have. This issue is currently in legal dispute in Israel, but the issue of discrimination in publicly controlled land is only the most blatant and obvious example of many ways in which the Israeli government discriminates against Arab Israelis. Most of these cases

Articles in TIKKUN do not necessarily reflect TIKKUN's stance on any issue. TIKKUN's positions are presented in our editorials.

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are by selective or divergent implementation of laws and programs in discriminatory ways not officially written in law, from public funding of infrastructure, to accessibility of building and development permits, to the issue of so-called 'unrecognized villages'. Even if not written into law, the pervasive, organized, and consistent way in which various parts of the Israeli government, not just private actors, discriminate against Arab citizens shows this is not about facing "de facto segregation in the same way that minorities... in the United States" do. I can only mention rather than fully support or explain these many cases, but it would be a good topic for a future TIKKUN article. There are a variety of Israeli organizations, Arab and Jewish, which document and attempt to fight this discrimination.

True, the situation of Palestinians in the occupied territories is far more dire. It is also true that recognizing the facts of discrimination against Arabs in Israel does not necessarily require one to adopt the solutions, perspectives or strategies of the original reader's letter. But these facts do raise some difficult questions that require answers one way or another, rather than a closing of the eyes. TIKKUN is often quite good at prying open eyes willfully closed to the actual situation in Israel and Palestine. I could not let this exception go without remark.

JONATHAN ROCKKIND
Seattle, WA

To the Editor:

I'm an Arab American of the Druze faith. I know that the Druze community is living in peace in Israel. My question is what are the special relations that make the Druze and the Jews enjoy peace together. Is there a lesson here to learn from? If the components for peace are present between the Druze and the Israelis, why not transfer these components to the rest of the Palestinians.

WALID KOOR

Editor Responds:

The Druze sided with the Jews during the original struggle to create the state of Israel, whereas other Palestinians sought to prevent a Jewish state from coming into existence. That history created a bond of trust, and it would take an extraordinary historical act to create that now with the Palestinians. Frankly, I think that the only way that could happen is if the entire

Palestinian people were to embrace without equivocation a 100% commitment to non-violence. The Druze example is one reason to reject the notion that this whole issue can be reduced to Western racism against indigenous peoples—these categories simply miss the complicated historical realities of the situation. On the other hand, there is a growing racism among some sectors of the Israeli Jewish population, and recently that has manifested in ways that also involve discrimination against Druze.

To the Editor:

In the September-October issue, Jerome Slater made an important assertion—"...in the light of the two-thousand-year history of murderous anti-Semitism—often breaking out many decades or even centuries of peaceful coexistence—it can hardly be assumed that the Jews no longer need a state of their own."

I think this assertion merits more detailed examination. Is the best way for an unpopular group to be safe for that group to have a state of its own as a refuge? Does this apply to the Roma, the Kurds, the blacks in the United States? What alternatives are there?

It would be wonderful if TIKKUN could explore these questions, since this assertion is a central part of many people's feelings about Israel.

DAVID GRINSTEIN
Waltham, MA

To the Editor:

It is curious, but revealing, that early into the current Al Aqsa Intifada, Israelis of all political stripes stopped referring to the 'Palestinian-Israeli CONFLICT' and now refer to it as the 'MATZAV' or 'situation,' much as the Iraqis seem to be doing. This only reinforces the dreaded sense shared by so many of us that in Israel and other parts of the Middle East, we have moved from a perception of the conflict as a war that can be resolved and a 'peace' that can be won, to an apocalyptic vision. For some, that is a desideratum and for others a nightmare. The fact that in shul on Hol Hamoed Sukkoth, the Haftarah we read was from Ezekiel's reference to the mythical war of Gog and Magog doesn't do much to allay our sense that these things are deep-seated in our collective imagination.

SIDRA EZRAHI
Jerusalem, Israel

The Last Jews in Baghdad

REMEMBERING A
LOST HOMELAND

Nissim Rejwan
Foreword by Joel Beinin



THE LAST JEWS IN BAGHDAD

REMEMBERING A
LOST HOMELAND

BY NISSIM REJWAN

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"This book offers a rare look—detailed and vivid—into a culture that is no longer extant. An autobiography of place, it is a portrait of the making of a young intellectual and of Iraqi society in the thirties and forties. It tells the story of the end of the once rooted and vibrant Jewish community and serves as a wonderful resource for both the scholarly historian and the casual reader."

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The Meaning of Tikkun

SUSANNAH HESCHEL

Never despair, my father always used to say to me when I was a child. It's a hard lesson to remember these days. All I have to do is listen to the news for five minutes, and I am in despair.

Yet it is a Jewish religious obligation not to despair. And what helps me is TIKKUN. I don't want to turn away from the world, yet facing the atrocities by myself it is almost unbearable. TIKKUN provides a community so that we might face the horrors together, maintain our sense of humanity, and conquer the evils one by one.

While most organizations form themselves around a particular issue, TIKKUN is about a new kind of life. We may be appalled by certain social inequities in our society, but TIKKUN looks more deeply at the pervasive economic injustice, and recognizes that we cannot fix individual problems unless the deeper structures are overhauled.

And yet TIKKUN does not stop in complacency. Economic injustice in itself is not the origin of the problem; it lies deeper, in our spiritual struggles. Unless I address the petty resentments, jealousies, mean-spiritedness, and cruelty that lie within me and within everyone, how I can muster the warmth, compassion, and generosity necessary to create the kind of society we all want and need?

For the prophets, writes my father, the ultimate expression of God is not wisdom, magnificence, glory, nor even love, but justice. Zion, Isaiah declares, shall be redeemed by justice, and those who repent, by righteousness. Justice is the tool of God, the presence of God, the means of redemption. This is an extraordinary assertion: justice is the ultimate expression of God! The prophetic tradition comes not to repair injustice, but to reconstruct human society. After nearly 3,000 years, the prophets will prevail because their principles are eternal and can never be defeated.

What TIKKUN recognizes is that creating a society of justice requires more than laws and economic integrity. Political treaties do not end wars; peace ends war, and peace occurs at a personal level, in the hearts of citizens, not in the signatures of their governments.

In taking to heart my father's understanding of prophetic Judaism, TIKKUN presses us to look more deeply at the Israel-Palestine conflict. What TIKKUN advocates is that we recognize that both sides have legitimate claims and grievances, and that solutions will come not only when the two populations finally decide they have had enough bloodshed, but when they can also drop their resentments and animosities and welcome each other as partners and neighbors.

Yet there is no security without peace, no peace without justice, and justice cannot breathe if it is suffocated by the brewing racism that views all Palestinians as terrorists, all Arabs as savages, all Israelis as violent, and all Jews as oppressors. The racism on both sides is becoming a grave danger, and is infecting both right-wing and left-wing political analyses throughout the world.

Racism is destroying hopes for peace. By racializing the conflict, we depoliticize it and make a resolution hopeless. Anyone can potentially make peace with a political or military enemy, but no one can make peace with an enemy whom we have convinced ourselves wants our utter annihilation. Therein lies the danger of racism that TIKKUN, more than any other peace group, is seeking to overcome.

TIKKUN proclaims: Let us not turn the entire world against us as Americans, as Jews, as Israelis. Let us end our absurd belief that walls and bombs can bring us security, that waging war will bring peace. Let us turn away from the paralysis of hopelessness, from the evil of indifference, and get back to negotiations with the Palestinians and back to work without allies. Let us show the world what it means to be a Jew: to be a peacemaker, to pursue justice, to shoulder responsibility, and to achieve the peace settlement that we all know has to come and will come.

To the Editor:

How can there be peace in the Middle East when the Arabs teach their children such hate? I have read the Koran and find a great many verses that support terrorism and all the terrible things that we see today being perpetrated on America, Israel and Western civilization.

ABRAHAM
Brooklyn, NY

Editor Responds:

Read Deuteronomy and you'll see hatred and violence being advocated there that is at least as bad. Check it out and get off this high horse about the Arabs having worse holy texts than ours. The reality is that both in our holy books and in our religious institutions both sides teach hatred, and both sides have other parts of their holy books and their religious institutions that also teach love. Which voice gets loudest depends in part on people's assessment of the world in which they live—how much the voices of love feel congruent with the realities of their world, or not.

So, let the teaching of love and caring, the voice of compassion and generosity, become the dominant voice in Israel in its policies and in its own inner discourse, and that will have an amazingly healing impact on Arab culture and society. Similarly, whenever asked by Palestinians, I tell them that a commitment to a principled non-violence and to an affirmation of the humanity of the Israeli people and the Jews would have an amazingly healing impact on Jewish culture and Israeli society.

To the Editor:

I cannot believe the rubbish you preach. You claim that Judaism specifies that self-defense (may) only happen in the moment that you can actually see the person coming after you physically. Monday morning, four Qassam missiles struck the Israeli town of Sderot. One missile landed near a kindergarten, killing a three-year-old and critically wounding his mother. Nine other people were injured, another died. No one saw who fired the Qassam missiles. According to your convoluted logic, Israel may not go after these bloodthirsty terrorists. Thank God you do not live in Israel and have to defend my country and my family.

You have the gall to say that Israel's behavior in Gaza is morally outrageous,

at every level unacceptable. Please explain that to my cousin who was a brilliant young man and now is in a wheelchair with a bullet lodged in his brain. Also explain it to all the families who lost loved ones on buses, in coffee houses, in malls, discos and markets. Have we not learned our lessons from the Holocaust? Six million of us were slaughtered, one and a half million children were sent to their death! Rabbi Lerner, you can wait until you see the white of their eyes, but I will not. Haven't you learned anything from history?

ISA JACOB
Orange County, CA

Editor Responds:

I have no sympathy for these horrible acts of terror against Israeli civilians, just as I have no sympathy for the daily acts of terror committed by the Israeli army against Palestinian civilians. The policy of Occupation has not actually provided protection, but only increased the vulnerability of the Israeli people, whereas the policy of support for the Geneva Accord negotiated by Yossi Beilin and others who live in Israel could achieve the security that Israelis deserve.

To the Editor:

Out of intellectual curiosity, I'd like to ask you if you would have opposed the Warsaw Ghetto uprising had it occurred during your lifetime? In other words, are there any circumstances in which a person is allowed to defend himself (by force) or is violence unacceptable even at the price of one's own life?

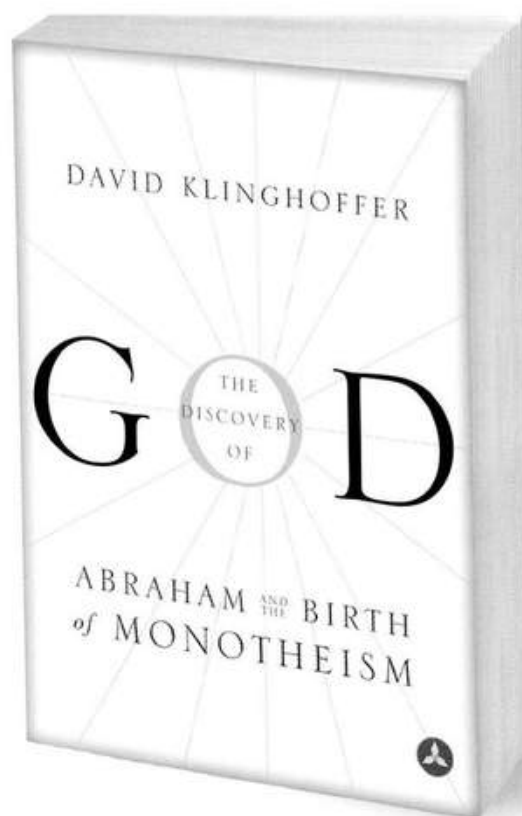
REUVEN KALIFON

Editor Responds:

I do think a person has a right to self-defense, if necessary with force, when being personally attacked. But I am very concerned about the slippery slope that has developed when countries or states claim to be under attack or acting merely to defend themselves. This has been a defense of violence used by dictators and mass murderers. And it is the defense that is used by the U.S. to justify a war-without-borders against terrorists around the world that gives our militarists endless leash to attack wherever they choose. I've seen this argument so badly misused by Israel in its disgraceful treatment of Palestinians, and it is that experience that finally pushed me to adopt a principled non-violence when it comes to social policy.

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Tikkun at Eighteen

George Vradenburg

Eighteen years old. In the civil society in which we live, eighteen years of age is the age of maturity and the time of assimilation into the mainstream of an adult community. Yet, Tikkun has no intention of becoming mainstream—it has maintained and will continue to maintain its youthful curiosity, freshness, and distinctiveness even as it approaches its third decade.

The call of TIKKUN to live an individual life of love and generosity and to heal our communities and the world through justice and peace is even more relevant and urgent today as it was eighteen years ago.

As Michael Lerner's article in this issue points out, the soul of TIKKUN comes from a place deep in Jewish tradition yet shares a vision of a better world with all faiths and with secular humanism. TIKKUN reflects that diversity of background and perspective—but within a worldview that seeks healing and transformation, not the supposed realism of the status quo.

TIKKUN will continue to find new and innovative ways of conveying the essential truth that all people share a common destiny, that our experience on this planet is shared, and that freedom and social justice is indivisible—if denied to some, all are at risk. No one has permission to remain silent on the sidelines when poverty and sickness, injustice, and despair remain so widespread. No one has the power to give that permission; no one has the right to accept it. At TIKKUN, we will not forget our obligation and responsibility to make our voices heard. We will continue to speak truth to power and to inject into the public discourse "uncomfortable" facts about the desperate state of the human condition here in the United States and in so many other parts of the world.

We approach the world with a sense of hope and wonder—about what a well-ordered global system can and should be and what a just society might look like. And then we ask, in the words of Robert F. Kennedy, "why not?" Is there not a purpose to humankind's existence on this planet? Is it not to produce peace and justice? If so, let's identify the barriers to bringing it about and overcome them. TIKKUN Magazine is the place for the rich exploration of the multiple pathways to that society healed of injustice, even



the different paths that come from this publisher's Republican, libertarian, and highly idealistic roots.

Even as TIKKUN Magazine engages the mind, the newly-organized Tikkun Community gives us a new, practical means of working together in the healing of our communities and the world. The Tikkun Community is this nation's leading vanguard organization seeking to create a renewed sense of human interconnectedness. In communities in this country and in Canada, like-minded individuals devoted to creating a new mass movement for social change

and healing are meeting, organizing, and acting. These growing and increasingly interconnected communities gather at an annual conference in Washington, D.C. each spring to educate their political representatives on the need for social change in America.

There are innumerable other, more traditional, organizations that work on the issue of community connections, including local community foundations, the United Way, the Red Cross and organizations serving the homeless, the hungry, or the new immigrant. Whatever your interest may be, get engaged! The good life, well lived, is not a life dedicated simply to material comforts or personal advancement—service to others and giving back to the community have been staples of the American way of life since the birth of the Republic. No one has given us a pass on that fundamental obligation. But for those seeking fundamental social change, the Tikkun Community, using TIKKUN Magazine as the core platform for innovative new ideas about changing American consciousness, is *the* place to be.

For eighteen years, TIKKUN Magazine has relied on the support of its subscribers and contributors for its intellectual and financial sustenance. That support has provided the lifeblood of the magazine. Like the magazine, the Tikkun Community relies on its members for the energy that is producing increasing momentum across the country.

We at TIKKUN thank you for your support, your ideas and your advocacy. This Magazine and this Community are *you*.

So, as Publishers of Tikkun, my wife and I urge you to continue your subscription to the Magazine, to join the Tikkun Community, and to ask your friends and colleagues to do the same. With your support, we will continue our work together to heal the world. □

George Vradenburg is co-publisher of TIKKUN.

Girlie Men and the Psychodynamics of Bullies in the 2004 Election

Michael Lerner

When California Governor and film star Arnold Schwarzenegger attacked the "girlie men" who were supposedly not strong enough to defend the United States from terror, he was uncovering a central issue in the 2004 election. Unfortunately for them, the Democrats never publicly challenged that formulation of masculinity, or the long history of bullying that lies behind it.

One of the central challenges for boys in the United States is the societal demand, usually faced between the ages of 9 and 16, to dis-identify from the love and nurturing that they get from a "mothering" figure in their early years in order to assume the independent and "tough" stance of "man" as it has come to be understood in the last few centuries in the West. To be a "man," one must be able to stand on one's own without reliance on others, not cry or be "too" emotional, not be vulnerable, not be "too" focused on loving or caring for others, and not be physically weak.

The function of superheroes and other cultural icons is to present to young boys an image of the "tough guy" that they are supposed to emulate. Schwarzenegger's movie characters often embody this notion of manhood, and so do most of the actors who appear in action flicks that excite adolescent males, reconfirming for them this new identity.

All boys face a crisis when their peers deride them for being "sissies." The ultimate put-downs are charges of being a "momma's boy," "a fag," or "gay." To avoid this, oftentimes boys form gangs in which they can find validation for their new male identities and can distance themselves from any boy who has not yet successfully made the transition from the earlier stage in life when boys, like girls, are dependent upon the nurturing of a mother figure.

The demand that boys distance themselves from their mothers is not always so easy to meet. Those who are most unsure of their success in making this transition may become bullies, attacking others for the weaknesses that they suspect in themselves. Or they may be attracted to gangs that are ruthless in their persecution of some outsider suspected of not being equally successful in becoming "a real man."

In the public sphere, such anxiety is often manifest in aggressive behavior toward those labeled "weak" on defense



and national security. While it may be argued that politicians who choose to emphasize such issues do so for ulterior motives—personal or economic—such political posturing may be equally symptomatic of an anxiety about their masculinity. If one did not perform military service during Vietnam, for example, or have the courage to refuse and resist the war publicly, one might find oneself being questioned about how strong a leader one

might be when faced with contemporary challenges. Sometimes a way to cover up the appearance of not having manifested this tough-guy courage in the past is to question the authenticity of their masculinity, transposing the schoolyard bully syndrome into the center of American politics. Thus, Arnold Schwarzenegger may suspect deep in his own heart that making a film about being tough is not the same as being tough! Sadly, these dynamics manifest themselves in both major political parties, and too often the competition around who is tough replaces a discussion of what we could do to heal the world's pains and generate more trust and global solidarity, peace and justice.

Instead of trying to prove themselves tough, we believe it would be more healing for our leaders, teachers, authors, and preachers to challenge the whole distorted conception of what provides safety and security in our world. We'd like to see our leaders affirm that being "girl-like" is really something to be valued as one part of our identity. The "girlish" qualities that are being disparaged—interdependence, emotionality, caring for others, and vulnerability—need to be publicly defended as part of what it is to be a healthy human being. Indeed, what it means to be morally self-conscious. Those men who have felt the need to suppress that part of their emotional makeup need to be treated in therapy and given sympathy, but prevented from serving our country in any official capacity until they've been cured.

Homeland security will best be achieved through ending global poverty, oppression, and injustice. We suggest a Global Marshall Plan as a first step. Compassion for others, a capacity to understand their needs, and a willingness to communicate with honesty and vulnerability—these are the character traits that a leader needs in order to build the kind of global relationships with others that will isolate terrorists and make wars unnecessary. □

Four More Years

Joel Schalit

September 28 was the fourth birthday of the Al-Aqsa Intifada. However, without carefully excavating world media, one would never have known it. No English-language Israeli newspaper websites carried any reference to it. Nor did any western periodicals appear to have taken stock of the date, with the exception of one brief article in the *New York Times*. I only remembered we had reached this somber birthday when I heard a foreign television news correspondent, covering the September 30 IDF raid on the Jabalya refugee camp, incorrectly note that this was the first time in four years of conflict that the Israeli army had dared to stage an operation inside this densely populated desert slum of 100,000 inhabitants. In reality, it was the second such incursion.

As I am wont to do on such occasions, on my way to work I called my parents to discuss the matter. But as luck would have it, they were out having dinner with friends in Tel Aviv. Four years ago today, I was in the midst of preparations to visit them in order to attend the opening of a museum in my great-grandfather's home in Rishon Le Zion. As a descendant of one of the seventeen families that founded Rishon, I had mixed feelings about attending this event under such circumstances. "Lucky you," my father said to me on the phone that day. "It looks like your visit will coincide with a great deal of bloodshed."

It would have been hard to forecast the apocalyptic devolution of events that began on September 28, when Likud leader Ariel Sharon staged his infamous stroll across the Temple Mount, effectively giving birth to Israel's most morally devastating of wars. Despite the numerous stops and starts of the peace negotiations that had begun with the Madrid Conference in 1991, up until September 28, 2000, the peace process seemed so logical, so irreversible, so much an expression of the post-Cold War zeitgeist, that the current descent into anarchy seemed historically impossible.

Clearly we were wrong. In Israel that October, I watched an IDF patrol furiously searching a thicket of sickly-looking trees northwest of Nahariya. Though sightings of armed troops are by no means uncommon anywhere in Israel, this appeared to be far different. The troops were tensely holding their rifles, peering out of light-armored vehicles, looking visibly nervous.

Scanning *Ha'aretz* the following day, I stumbled upon a picture of what must have been one of these same soldiers—standing over the bullet-ridden body of a dead Palestinian guerilla who had just crossed over from Lebanon. I remem-

ber at that moment experiencing a rare feeling of disgust. Not just at the photograph of a dead terrorist ripped apart by automatic weapons fire. But also at the fact that I had come so close to something so violent. I could literally smell the brisk sea air this man had been killed in.

The sensory nature of my connection with this man's death seems utterly foreign to me now. Reading about the Israeli assault on Jabalya during Operation Days of Penitence, seeing a picture of an elderly Palestinian woman with bloodstains on her dress being carried towards an ambulance, I struggled to recall that revulsion I first experienced four years ago. But I couldn't, and I was troubled by that. Had the last four years of conflict numbed my senses? Was my lack of emotional response to this image of an innocent civilian, wounded by gunfire, indicative of some kind of personal acceptance of the naturalness of this violence? Most likely, the answer is yes. But not entirely.

Six months after the war began, my late brother Michael told me that his therapist, in a rare moment of political discussion, had confessed to him his fears about having to treat young soldiers instructed to shoot civilians. "There'll be a whole generation of young Israelis permanently scarred by these experiences," Michael stated. "My shrink is worried that these kids will think that what they were ordered to do was normal, that suppressing the revolt will warp their sense of morality entirely."

"Yes," I blurted out. "But what about us? What about those Jews privileged enough to live at a distance from it all, who remain affected negatively by it anyway? Can we qualify for war therapy too?"

Perhaps the answer lies in simply giving things time to gestate. For example, on Monday, October 4, a week later, *Ha'aretz* published an English-language article commemorating the Intifada's four years. Entitled "War Without Winners" by its long-serving defense correspondent Ze'ev Schiff, the article began by observing that a number of articles had observed the fourth anniversary of the Intifada. "Articles, what articles?" I thought, as I read Schiff's piece. "The fact that I had to make such an effort to find even this must mean something's wrong."

This was when I recalled that conversation with my brother and concluded that perhaps the best kind of therapy for someone so far removed from the conflict—six thousand miles away in California—was to continue to bear witness to it as best we can. Not just on the level of reportage, but in the form of analysis, reflection, and discussion, as *TIKKUN* has done for the past eighteen years, and as each of our readers can do in conversation with friends, family, and neighbors. □

Joel Schalit is Managing Editor of *TIKKUN*.

Rabbinic Concepts and Contemporary Conscientious Objection

Laura Duhan Kaplan

In the world of Jewish religious thought, Judaism is viewed as a language that is constituted by both its past and its present. Rabbis and scholars have a long history of addressing moral and ethical questions by interpreting the Hebrew Scriptures and the commentary built upon them. Because Jewish ethics are based upon scripture, new ethical questions must be addressed using the very words of the Hebrew Bible. Anything worth saying can be said in these words; after all, these words came directly out of the divine mouth, shaped the history of the Jewish people, gave form to the universe and the universe of discourse. Etymological associations, metaphorical expansions, and numerological conversions are all acceptable ways of developing and extending the meanings of the original words.

It is no surprise, then, that the Jewish conversation on conscientious objection takes place in the language of the Hebrew Bible, bolstered by the linguistic interpretations of the rabbinic sages of late antiquity, recorded in the Mishnah and Talmud. Because of the role that religious, or *halachic*, law plays in Israeli society, these discussions are not just theological, but have an immediate political significance, especially when one considers the debate about the morality of performing one's military service in the Occupied Territories. In particular, the Israeli group of soldiers who call themselves *Omets Lesarev* ("Courage to



An Israeli soldier argues with a demonstrator during a rally of the so called "refusniks," Israeli citizens calling people to refuse to serve in the Israeli army in the Gaza Strip or the West Bank, in Tel Aviv Thursday March 18, 2004.

Refuse"), referring to military duty in the Occupied Palestinian territories—base their argument for refusal to serve on religious law.

The building blocks of the discussion on conscientious objection are found in Deuteronomy 20, which presents rules for the ethical conduct of war, including draft exemptions, peace negotiations, treatment of noncombatants, and environmental preservation. The narrative that frames the Book of Deuteronomy recounts Moses the Lawgiver instructing the assembled Israelites on the laws of warfare shortly before their invading army enters the land of Canaan, an invasion dated approximately 1200 BCE by archeologists. Some critical Biblical scholars date Deuteronomy to the sev-

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enth century BCE during the reign of King Josiah of Judah. They read II Kings 22-23 as suggesting that King Josiah hired a scribe to describe his program of religious reform as if it were the original law of Moses, and then staged an important archeological "discovery" of a pseudo-ancient scroll. Whether we read Deuteronomy as Moses' words or as Josiah's, it is likely that these laws are not meant to be theoretical or metaphorical, but are to govern the actual conduct of national military campaigns.

Deuteronomy 20:5-8 focuses on exemptions from military service. Discussions by traditionally oriented Jewish scholars attempt first to determine which principles guide the exemptions and then when the exemptions apply.

Who Can Be Released from Military Service?

Deuteronomy 20:5-8 states:

5. And the officers shall speak to the people, saying, What man is there who has built a new house, and has not dedicated it? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man dedicates it.
6. And what man is he who has planted a vineyard, and has not yet eaten of it? Let him also go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man eats of it.
7. And what man is there who has betrothed a wife, and has not taken her? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man takes her.
8. And the officers shall speak further to the people, and they shall say, What man is there who is fearful and faint-hearted? Let him go and return to his house, lest his brothers' heart faint as well as his heart.

At first glance, the first three items on the list seem to form one category of exemption, and the last seems to stand alone. The first three deal with unresolved legal contracts or, in the most cynical sense, the acquisition of property, while the fourth seems to identify a psychological quality. However, as Rabbi Judith Z. Abrams has pointed out informally, all four items represent the recognition that a good soldier makes a wholehearted emotional commitment to warfare. Anyone whose attention is on life back home is not ready to commit to the discipline of warfare. Anyone who cannot harden his heart toward his peacetime life, should return home to his peacetime family and not put the unit in danger by being its weak link.

An interesting pun in verse 8 supports Abrams' interpretation that all four exemptions are for those unable or unwilling to commit wholeheartedly to the war. The text says, "Let him go and return to his house, lest his brothers' heart faint as well as his heart." In Hebrew, the word translated as "faint" in "lest his brothers' heart faint" is *mas*. *Mas* can be linked to two different word roots: *masah* means "melt" or "dissolve," but *mas* also refers to a "body of forced laborers." Thus, Deut. 20:8 can be translated as, "Let

him go and return to his home, lest he melt his brothers' heart like his own" or as "Let him go...home, lest he make his brothers feel like forced laborers, as he feels." Read the second way, this verse suggests that one who feels forced to participate against his will should return home, lest his presence cause the entire troop to lose any sense of ownership over the campaign. The fourth exemption thus appears to be a summary of the principle behind the first three.

The Mishnah and Tosefta, compilations of rabbinic views on Jewish ethics and practice from late antiquity (approximately 200 CE) seem, on the other hand, to view the fourth exemption as a new category. Why, the rabbis wonder, does the text of Deuteronomy introduce the fourth exemption with the words, "And the officers shall speak further to the people" unless it is an *additional* exemption? The Mishnah suggests that the fourth exemption is not about the ability to give full attention to battle. Instead, it is about fear. Mishnah Sotah (8:5) quotes Rabbi Akiva as saying, "Fearful and fainthearted is to be understood literally, viz., he is unable to stand in the battle-ranks and see a drawn sword." Perhaps the fearful soldier, out of consideration for his fellows, should return home. Perhaps returning home is more honorable than staying. For the fearful soldier might "melt the heart" of his fellows, and they might spend all of their time caring for him!

The same Mishnah quotes Rabbi Jose the Galilean as describing another kind of fear when he says, "'Fearful and fainthearted' alludes to one who is afraid because of the transgressions he had committed." Here it seems the soldier worries that the divine punishments due him personally—death perhaps—might cause the army to fail. The issue of sin can also be restated in more contemporary terms for those who are cynical about divine justice. Perhaps a soldier guilty of moral transgressions lacks integrity and could influence others to behave without integrity.

According to this Mishnah, the fearful soldier is not the same as the distracted soldier, who is required to complete important civilian business before he can commit to military service. The fearful soldier, on the other hand, can be fully present, but his participation weakens the group. According to both Judith Abrams' interpretation and that of the Mishnah, the exemptions are not granted for the sake of individuals, but rather serve the national interest. Thus soldiers who fall into any of categories in Deuteronomy 20:5-8 should simply not perform their military service.

Tosefta puts Deuteronomy's discussion in a new context. Military preparedness becomes a metaphor for undertaking spiritual study. Here Rabbi Akiva is quoted as saying, "Even the most heroic of heroes, the strongest of the strong, if he was merciful, he would return [home], as it is written, 'lest his brothers' heart faint as well as his heart.'" (Tosefta Sotah 7:22). Rabbi Akiva's statement is a straightforward play on Hebrew word roots. Deuteronomy 20:8 speaks of the man who is "fainthearted." The Hebrew word that is translated

as “faint” is *rach*, which is also heard in the word *rachaman* (compassionate). Thus Akiva interprets Deuteronomy 20:8 as ordering the compassionate soldier, regardless of his military prowess, to return home. In the Tosefta’s context, the “bravest of the brave” might refer to the expert religious scholar. The expert might not want to melt the hearts of his fellows, or in other words, shame them, and ultimately himself, with his expertise. Thus, he should “return,” or, in other words, reign himself in.

If Rabbi Akiva’s statement were part of the Mishnaic conversation about the fearful soldier—which its inclusion in the Tosefta’s discussion of spiritual study does not preclude—then Rabbi Akiva could be understood to be arguing literally for the exemption of compassionate soldiers. Rabbi Arthur Waskow, director of The Shalom Center, presents Rabbi Akiva’s statement in exactly this way in an article on the Center’s website. Waskow understands the compassionate soldier to be the one who has compassion for the victims of war. This soldier must return home, lest he inspire compassion in his fellow soldiers. If they all refuse to harm the enemy, warfare cannot take place.

A range of options for the fourth exemption now exists and includes the soldier who:

- is preoccupied with unfulfilled family obligations
- fears combat situations
- has committed sins that may bring collective punishment upon the entire unit
- possesses a moral character that threatens the integrity of the unit
- has compassion for the victims of war and is thus unwilling to cause harm.

The most inclusive conclusion is to suggest that each of these people would be poor soldiers and thus should be discharged from the military.

Obligatory and Voluntary Wars

When are all citizens eligible for military service morally obligated to fight? When is a leader morally obligated to allow exemptions for commitment, constitution, moral character, and pacifism? Should Deuteronomy 20 be understood strictly in its narrative setting, with the exemptions referring only to the original expedition into Canaan? Or should it be understood as King Josiah’s creation, setting forth ongoing policies for a nation engaging regularly in military campaigns? If Deuteronomy 20 represents a national policy, does it apply equally to all wars, regardless of their purpose and scope?

The Mishnah itself takes up these questions (in m. Sotah

8:7), experimenting with several possible answers. First it offers an anonymous opinion.

To what does all the foregoing apply? To voluntary wars, but in the wars commanded by the Torah all go forth, even a bridegroom from his chamber and a bride from her canopy.

According to this interpretation, it seems, the exemptions found in Deuteronomy 20:5-8 do not refer to the conquest of Canaan. The conquest of Canaan is described unequivocally in Deuteronomy as a war commanded by God through the instruction (*Torah*) of Moses. Surely if the exemptions in Deuteronomy refer to any specific wars at all, they refer to the wars for which the characters of Deuteronomy are mobilizing. Yet Deuteronomy 20:7 specifically exempts the bridegroom, while the anonymous Mishnaic commentator specifically names bride and bridegroom as obligated participants. While this anonymous

commentator lived more than a millennium before scholars began to question the origins of the Bible, he or she seems to think the exemptions apply to later wars, such as those a king like Josiah might have fought.

The same Mishnah next quotes a different opinion, attributed to Rabbi Judah.

R. Judah says: To what does all the foregoing apply? To the wars commanded by the Torah; but in obligatory wars all go forth, even a bridegroom from his chamber and a bride from her canopy.

One cannot argue with the facts of a text one believes to be divinely inspired. Yet it is possible that there could be future wars construed as obligatory wars, from which Israel could not afford to exempt anyone.

In contrast with the anonymous commentator, Rabbi Judah takes the narrative context of Deuteronomy seriously. If the exemptions apply to any wars, they must surely apply to wars in the context of which they were proclaimed. Important as the conquest of Canaan may have been to God, and to the development of the Israelite nation, God allowed exemptions from service. One cannot argue with the facts of a text one believes to be divinely inspired. Yet it is possible that there could be future wars construed as obligatory wars, from which Israel could not afford to exempt anyone.

Given that the final opinion on a subject in a traditional Jewish text is usually construed as the authoritative one, and given that Rabbi Judah is credited with the authorship of the Mishnah, the Mishnah seems to favor Rabbi Judah’s opinion. Thus, according to the Mishnah, Deuteronomy is to be respected at face value; however, the conquest of Canaan is not to be taken as paradigmatic of all wars. Some future wars might be construed as obligatory, with no exemptions allowed.

The Talmud, an early medieval compilation of rabbinic thought, organized as a series of comments on the Mishnah, recognizes that the Mishnah's discussion here leaves several loose logical threads that need to be woven together. The Talmud (in a discussion in b. Sotah 44b) seems to perceive that between them the anonymous commentator and Rabbi Judah have created three categories of wars: wars commanded by the Torah, obligatory wars, and voluntary wars. This set of categories seems odd, for surely wars commanded by the Torah should be the very paradigm of obligatory wars. To solve the problem, the Talmud concludes that there really are only two categories of war: obligatory and voluntary. When the anonymous voice speaks of "wars commanded by the Torah," it refers to obligatory wars, and not only to wars explicitly described in the Torah. It uses the language "commanded by Torah" to indicate that the moral imperative to go to war can be as important as any other religious, ethical, or social commandment and, in fact, outweighs the commandment of dedicating a home, harvesting first fruits, or consummating a marriage. Thus, even according to the anonymous voice, there are only two categories of wars, voluntary and obligatory. In voluntary wars, the Deuteronomic exemptions apply. In obligatory wars, no exemptions apply.

What, then, distinguishes obligatory wars from voluntary wars? The Talmud states:

The wars waged by Joshua to conquer [Canaan] were obligatory in the opinion of all; the wars waged by the House of David for territorial expansion were voluntary in the opinion of all; where they differ is with regard to [wars] against heathens so that these should not march against them.

Elsewhere (m. Sanhedrin 2:4) the Mishnah adds:

He [the King] may lead forth [the host] to a voluntary war on the decision of a court of seventy-one.

In other words, an obligatory war is ordained by God in the Torah, and can be called by a king or general without the authority of a general assembly. A voluntary war allows for a country's expansion or increased power and wealth, and must be supported by the judicial body. Wars that are not clearly either obligatory or voluntary might include wars in response to threats to national security, such as another nation amassing troops at the border, developing weapons of mass destruction, cutting off access to trade, taking citizens hostage, or attacking an ally.

Contemporary Relevance

These, then, are the basic terms in which Jewish discussion of conscientious objection takes place. Most recently, the *Omets Lesarev* refuseniks have cast their arguments in exactly these terms. Following Rabbi Akiva in the Tosefta, they establish their credibility as the most heroic of heroes, and, following Rabbi Judith Z. Abrams, as soldiers who have never placed their families before their military service, thus establishing themselves as committed soldiers. However, because they are compassionate, a moral feature emphasized by Rabbi Arthur Waskow, they choose to return home. This occupation, they say, is corrupting the hearts of their fellows, and they do not wish to further the corruption, as Deuteronomy 20 adjures them not to. Their refusal to fight is justified, since the occupation is a voluntary war, as defined in Talmud, waged for territorial expansion. Because it does not fit the category of wars commanded by Torah, as understood by the Mishnah's anonymous commentator, they are not exempt from the commandment not to oppress the stranger.

In the words of their declaration:

We, reserve combat officers and soldiers of the Israel Defense Forces...have always served in the front lines...in spite of the dear cost to our personal lives. [We], have been on...duty all over the Occupied Territories, and were issued commands and directives that had nothing to do with the security of our country. We...sensed how the commands issued to us in the Territories, destroy all the values we had absorbed while growing up in this country. We...understand now that the price of Occupation is the loss of...human character and the corruption of the entire Israeli society. We shall not continue to fight beyond the 1967 borders in order to dominate, expel, starve and humiliate an entire people. □



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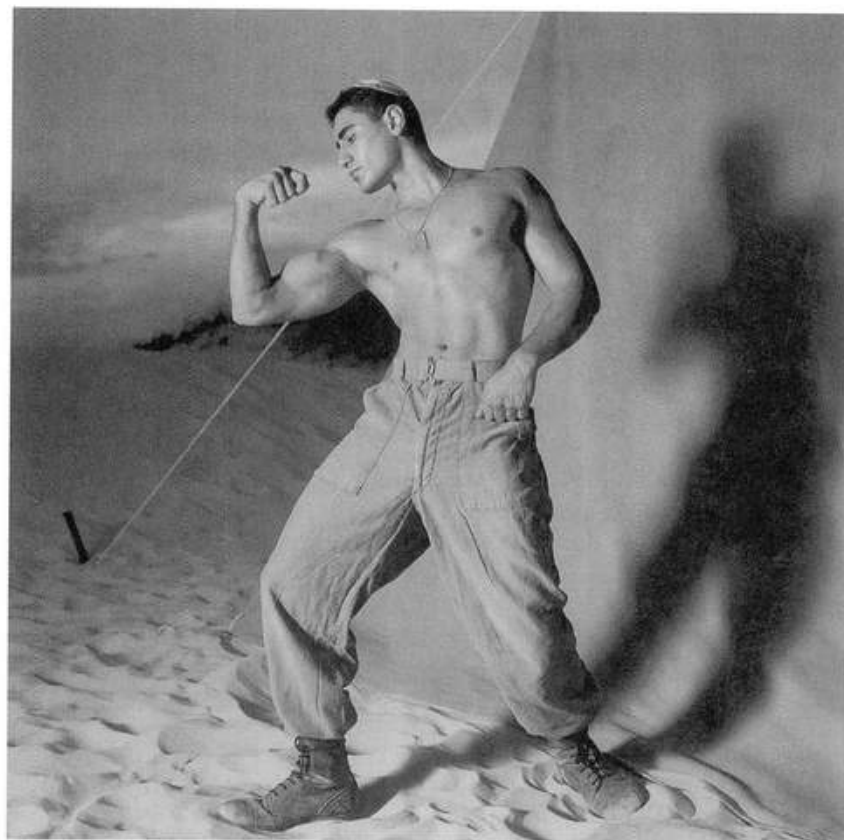


Four Photographs by Adi Nes

Captions by Daphne Gottlieb

Untitled, 1998, 90x90 cm

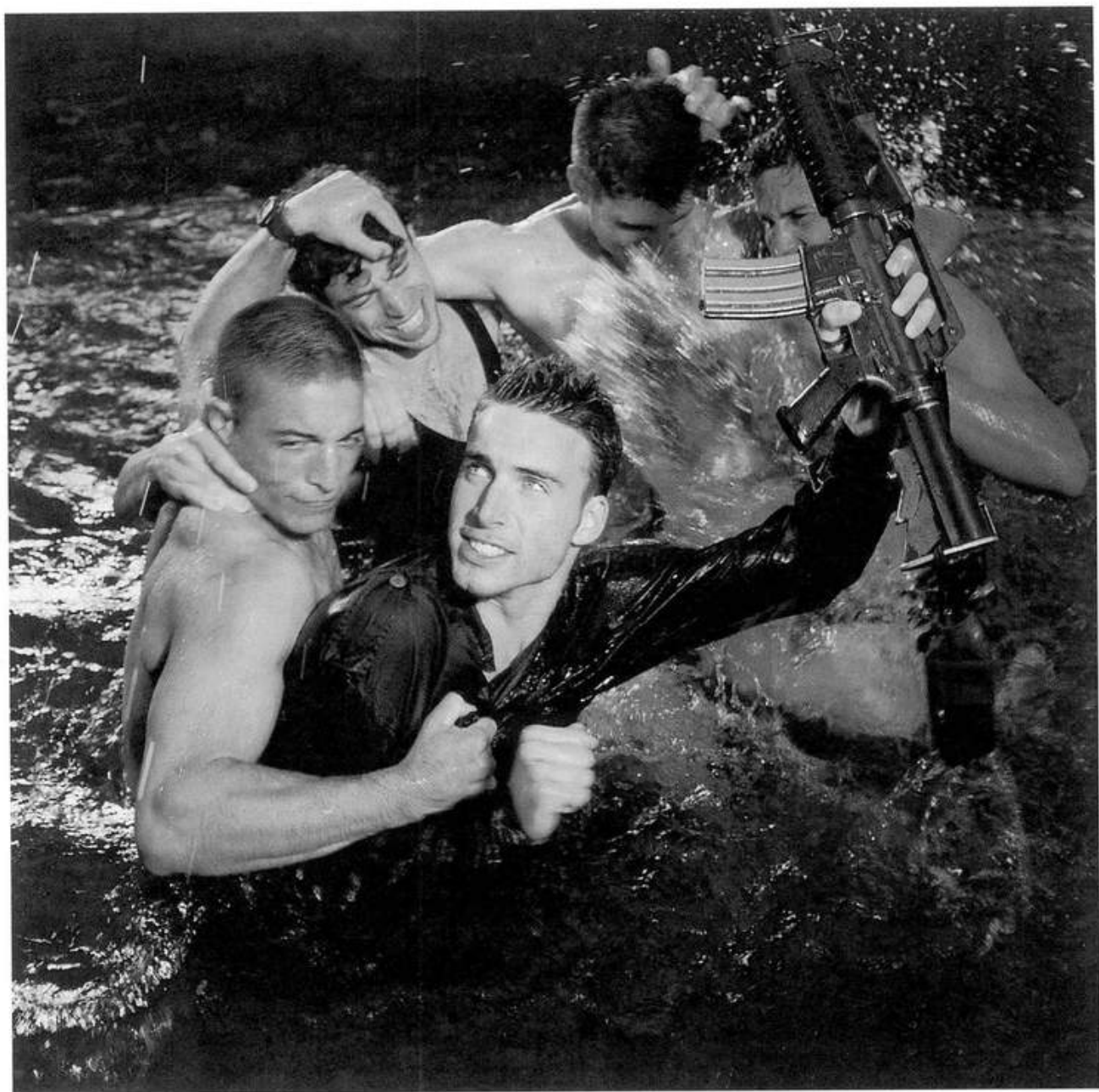
Paralleling the U.S.'s totemic photo of the flag being raised over Iwo Jima, a famous photo documents Israeli soldiers flying Israel's flag over Eilat. Nes's photograph blatantly displays the phallic collective identity of the military. And with the omission of the flag at the top of the pole, country is replaced by a blind cipher—war in the name of nothing except war itself.



Untitled, 1996, 90x90 cm

Throughout his soldier series, Nes allows his subjects a sense of the superhuman, the broadly heroic. The soldier posing in the strongman's pose both implies the shadow side of strength (in the shadow on the tent), and also reminds us that he is, as a subject, on display, performing both masculinity and war for our consumption. The sheer beauty of Nes's composition keeps us enthralled, reminding us that it can also be used in the service of the playful, the subversive, and the political.

Daphne Gottlieb is the author of the award-winning poetry books Final Girl, Why Things Burn and Pelt. She is currently editing an anthology, Homewrecker (Soft Skull Press, Fall 2005) and finishing her fourth book of poetry.



Untitled, 1999, 90x90 cm.

Adi Nes recasts iconic military and religious images with sensual, Jewish men. Nes's soldiers defy both the stereotype of Jews as sissified and of gay men as nelly queens. The homosocial culture of the military is overwritten by a homosexual one. In the above, Nes recreates a *Life* magazine cover from 1967 of a triumphant Yossi Ben-Hanan after the Six Day War. With the addition of the frolicking soldiers, Nes not only makes queerness central to history, he also takes a sideways jab at the "news."

Untitled, 1995, 90x90 cm

In re-envisioning the Pietà as a combat scene, Nes comments on the sacrificial bodies of those in the military. Instead of the bandages of the original Pietà, the Virgin holds a make-up stick, pointing out the artifice of the photograph even as, being a photograph, it insists on the absolute reality of the image and perhaps even the constructed nature of war, which has ghastly consequences. In this series, war is the new religion, and every soldier is a Christ, worthy of tender, chaste love.



Dancing In Caterpillar Tracks

Stephanie Marie

I went dancing in the caterpillar tracks last night
the moonlight was silver in a squid ink sky

I tried to imagine those monsters as butterflies

there were ferns sprouting from their footprints
ancestral wisdom lies dead in a pile of roots and undergrowth
soil still smelling fresh like the earth
but cracked open like wounds screaming to heal
disembodied branches still replete where the death hadn't touched her yet
reaching to feel sunlight on green paper hands
to touch the breeze
like a young child caressing her mother's face for reassurance

I tiptoed around the life which had germinated since the demolition
soon I realized that I could push their seeds deeper into the earth

Perhaps flowers would blossom beneath those houses
and peek out in the springtime like ruby red slippers
Perhaps my dancing footsteps were bigger than the caterpillar's heavy tracks

I walked closer
to ask him why he was so hungry
with belly so full of diesel

The monster was stoic
cold yellow metal resting after his meal
his feet were a head and a half taller than I was
his eyes shaded from view

I climbed up his legs to sit in his lap
the way I had done the day I asked grandpa
why a deer hung from rafters in the garage
skin stretching from the hook
weight fallen to bottom

From his eyes I couldn't see the pile of bones he had spit out
his vantage obscured the child crouched over in the death of sadness
reaching for her mother's breeze
a pile of toothpicks for his screeching claws

From here I could see the houses that he made way for
sharp right angles on a horizon
rows of vinyl siding
sidewalks and cul-de-sacs and driveways

I asked grandpa why deer hung from rafters in the garage
and he told me that he had killed them
so that we wouldn't be hungry in the winter
there were too many of them anyhow
wolves would get them if he hadn't
in the springtime there would be more
But no mother's face to reach for

I climbed down from the caterpillar's lap
and tried to imagine a butterfly
dancing in ruby red slippers

Israeli Utopianism Today: Interview with Adi Ophir

Joe Lockard

Adi Ophir is one of the central intellectual figures of the contemporary Israeli Left. He rose to public prominence prior to the first Intifada, when together with cultural studies critic Hannan Hever, he founded the Year 21 group to oppose Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. Today Ophir is a philosophy professor at Tel Aviv University's Cohen Institute, from which he publishes on contemporary continental philosophy, ethics, and politics.

Ophir and Hever's engaged style of simultaneous intellectual and political embroilment, wherein Israel's social conflicts define an agenda for philosophical and cultural inquiry, has been deeply influential in formulating post-Zionist discourse. Ophir pursued these analyses as editor of *Teoria ve Bikoret* (Theory and Criticism), a leading Hebrew-language journal well known for its critiques of nationalism and nationalist culture.

This interview, conducted in early September 2004, explores Ophir's ideas on Israel's utopian visions, ones that regularly transform themselves or get transformed into dystopias. It exhibits both the potential and the problems of the Left in Israel, which has produced acutely perceptive analyses, even as left-wing parliamentary power has declined over years.

The despair that finally characterizes Ophir's responses—leaving him with a self-delegitimizing analogy of Israel to a racial apartheid regime—speaks to the frustration of an Israeli Left able to visualize possibilities for social justice and peace with the Palestinian people, but unable to achieve the political power necessary to achieve such visions.

JL: Israel today seems to function without a utopian consciousness, although it has a rich political tradition of utopianism: Ahad Ha'am, Ber Borochov, and far less-known "practical utopianists" like Enzo Sereni. What happened? Did utopia disappear from Israel's public consciousness?

AO: I think it is wrong to assume that "Israel today seems to function without a utopian consciousness." Israel is replete

with utopian discourse, dreams, and plans. True, utopianism characterizes the Right, and especially the religious Right, more than the Left, and the social movements that dare to use utopian language are much stronger on the Right. But utopian discourse and utopian practices exist on both sides of the political spectrum.

On the Right, a new generation of "pioneers," who take the hills of Judea and Samaria as their frontier, dream about an empty landscape where they can build their scattered farms and develop their typical blend of fanatic religious faith, a new-age mentality, and individualism of the new brave Jew. Many of the old guys of Gush Emunim, who have been driven by utopian consciousness throughout their adult lives, still dream about a peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in which Jews settle everywhere in Eretz Israel and their presence is somehow accepted by a weakened and reduced Palestinian population. And there are all those who dream about a once-and-for-all violent solution of the conflict in the form of another war, transfer, or even worse.

On the Left, the Geneva Accord can be seen as an entirely utopian vision, though not a very inspiring one. And there is a tiny group of people who still—or once again—dream about some form of bi-national state, in which Arabs and Jews would share land and power in a system of government where the state would be separated from nation and nationhood, in the same way that it was once separated from the church.

However, the statement "Israel today seems to function without a utopian consciousness" does contain a grain of truth if one thinks only about the political sphere. Politics has deteriorated to such an extent that it lacks not only utopian consciousness, but self-consciousness and common sense. Political discourse has lost touch with reality: its cynicism is completely blind and its blindness is completely insane. Political discourse is sound and sober only when people speak about how to retain power, remain in office, or outpace their rivals. Politicians have lost even the little credibility they used to have. Greed, corruption, and avarice are shamelessly expressed everywhere. Hence, when one looks at Israeli politics, one can see no traces of utopian consciousness, as well as no reflective thinking of any other kind.

JL: When utopianism can arrive in the form of Gush Emunim's dreams of dispossession of Palestinians—or from

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the Islamicists dreams of a Palestine without Jews—how can we take advantage of its political potential while avoiding its pitfalls?

AO: Utopian discourse is an art of imagining the impossible as possible, of pushing the limit of the possible. From its inception it has been an ambiguous political tool with dubious morality. Plato's utopia is presented as the ideal city, the incarnation of good and justice, but it is a nightmare for anyone who does not accept the principles of Platonic ontology. If you don't share the socialist philosophical anthropology, you may mistake a socialist utopian community for a city of punishment, and in fact, this is precisely what happened to some socialist utopias.

Utopia has always been related to critique: Plato's critique of Athenian politics, More's critique of English nobil-

ity, which should be playful and daring about the limits of the possible (what is thinkable, imaginable, etc.) no less than political action. I am less certain about the critical basis of contemporary utopianism. I suspect that it is often the other way around—critique originates in some utopian vision. For example, the vision of the land of Israel as an "Arabian" land comes first; criticism of policies that fail to meet this objective, and of political and social movements that oppose it, comes later. The same was true for many years of some versions of the vision of Peace Now.

But the really hard and important question is how to explain the decline of what you call "radically visionary economic and class critique." Frankly, I don't know, but I may try some hypotheses. Besides the shift to the Right and the triumph of neo-liberalism in most Western countries—which have their own sources—there are some local rea-

When one looks at Israeli politics, one can see no traces of utopian consciousness, as well as no reflective thinking of any other kind.

ity, socialist and Marxist critiques of capitalism, Zionist critique of Jewish life in exile, etc. This critique always had its anthropological, metaphysical, and moral assumptions. Critique shows what is wrong and assumes that things can be otherwise; it is already free from the reign of the real but is less certain about the possible. Utopian thinking pretends to know how to portray the good as logically possible but fails to (if we believe Marx), or rarely shows how to get there. In both cases, however, moral sensibility and the difference between good and evil are both assumed and articulated by critical and utopian discourse. The only way to avoid pitfalls of utopianism is by insisting on questioning its moral judgments and sensibilities. If utopia pushes the limits of the possible, it does so for the morally and the immorally possible alike. Therefore utopia can never come at the beginning of any serious moral or political thinking; it may come, if it should come at all, only later, after a certain moral ground has been secured.

JL: Much of the contemporary political utopianism you mention in Israel originates in critiques of ethno-national or religio-national identities; these find political translation. Radically visionary economic and class critiques, though, have little prominence outside of limited academic circles. Why did such social criticism decline?

AO: I completely agree with the first part of your statement: critique is not necessarily linked to utopian thinking, there is always an inadequacy in the translation of ideas to practice, and critique alone does not suffice to launch a political program. In fact, in itself, it is inadequate even as a theory,

sons. The first relates to the prominence of the Occupation in Zionist ideology. The Occupation has been the major project of the Israeli state since the early 1970s; it has polarized the political and ideological sphere, and the debate over its legitimization and ways to consolidate or dismantle it has overshadowed everything else.

The second hypothesis, corollary to the first, is the role of nationalist categories and distinctions, which in themselves have been necessary for representing the Occupation, legitimizing it, or even justifying those who took part in the Occupation despite their disapproval of it. Within this scheme, class differences have been articulated in ethnic and national categories, while ethnicity and religious affiliations have become ways to express one's national identity and acquire recognition as "a good, faithful national subject." Even now, when the destruction of the welfare state and the forsaking of the lower classes is visible and undeniable, social movements that have been struggling against the dominant economic ideology of all Israeli governments since the late eighties are unable to overcome the nationalist barrier or to think about social and economic stratification of Israeli society as a cause, and not only as a result, of national and ethnic differences.

JL: How do you evaluate the present contest between secular and religious efforts to define family, social, and national life?

AO: In Israel today, secularism, as a worldview and a political position, is mainly embodied in a chauvinist, almost racist political party (Shinui), the politics of which is a politics of hatred, fear of the other, and oppressive nationalist

homogenization. It demonstrates all the disadvantages of the intolerance of French Republicanism without any of its universalist advantages. The very presence of this secularist discourse of hate forces one to distance oneself from any position that assumes that the separation between church and state should imply one form of citizenship; it also makes one more careful about the very distinction between secularist and religious positions.

I think that the real opposition is between conservatives and fundamentalists on the one hand, and humanists on the other. Secular conservatives and religious fundamentalists may fight each other, but they share a belief in ultimate truths and a conviction that these truths are in their hands. Humanists may be religious or not and interested in the

a very active part) seems to me much more significant and worthy of criticism than the religious opposition to the institutionalization of new forms of marriage. Utopia in this context would be fathers and mothers who conceive of themselves as the guardians of their children, who are obliged to protect them from the deadly projects of the state and struggle in order to find them safe haven when they are called to serve causes that have nothing to do with their welfare as individuals or members of the community. The mothers who established the protest movement against the war in Lebanon ("The Four Mothers"), and even more so the group of parents that proposes non-obligatory military service and tries to educate parents to redefine their relationship to the army ("New Profile"), are good examples of

Religious movements take much of the responsibility for the new form of Jewish racist nationalism, for the "Kahanization" of Judaism, but what is evil about their position is their nationalism, not their religion.

process and labor of secularization or not, but they share a suspicion of human pretensions to express absolute values and infallible truths and respect for the finite nature and fragility of human beings. Thus, for example, the transformations or redefinitions of the family, the community, and the nation offered by feminists, queer theory, and post-colonial theory are not necessarily secularist or anti-religious—though they definitely oppose certain religious traditions; in fact these transformations transcend the boundary between the religious and the secular.

Some of these experiments in new forms of the social are certainly utopian. Others may be new forms of oppression, but I don't think that in either case they reflect a particular religious or secularist position. The belief in the historicity of gender, for example, is compatible with a certain conception of God and the historicity of His Word and Law, whereas the national mobilization of the family is a modernist and mostly secular project. While religious movements try to mobilize the state in order to exclude and prevent certain sexual practices and the transformation of the family, it is nationalism rather than religion that seeks to determine the relation between the family and the state and to construct the family as mediation between the body of the individual and service to the nation. The nationalized family has become a place where the sacrifice of the individual for the sake of the nation becomes acceptable, acquires its redeeming meaning, and where young boys and girls prepare themselves for the role of sacrificial victims.

In Israel, this role of secular nationalist in the formation of the family (of which the people who voted for Shinui take

utopian elements in the work of social activists. Most of them are secular, it is true, but this is easily explained by the fact that religious boys and girls have legal and institutionalized ways to avoid the draft.

JL: You appear to be circumventing the role of religion in Israeli society, apparently viewing it as secondary to and less damaging than Sharon-style nationalism. Other analyses would point to the current inseparability of religion and citizenship as a continuing source of inequality, disenfranchisement, and human rights violations.

AO: Yes, I do circumvent the role of religion in Israeli politics. There is no role for "religion" in Israeli politics, only for various and different religious parties and movements. Thus, for example, the nationalist-racist interpretation of rabbinic Judaism of the Gush Emunim and its descendents is not "religion," but a particular outcome of the modernization of halachic discourse and its displacement from exilic to sovereign national existence. And this interpretation would have been negligent without the willing cooperation of secular nationalists and the military state apparatus. It is not religion that makes me be ashamed of being Israeli today, but nationalism. Indeed, religious movements take much of the responsibility for the new form of Jewish racist nationalism, for the "Kahanization" of Judaism, but what is evil about their position is their nationalism, not their religion. I believe that these two can and should be differentiated. Think about the role of Shas, and how different it is from that of the nationalists—after all, it was Shas that in the early nineties made the Oslo Accord possible.

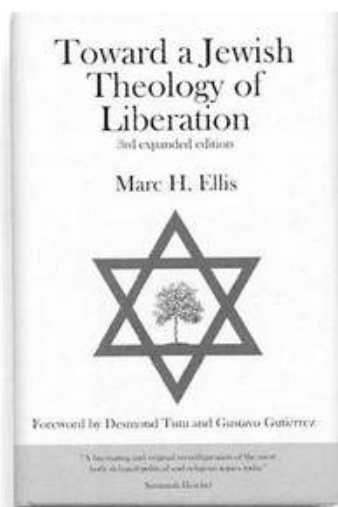
JL: Sixteen years ago you and others organized the long-defunct Year 21 group with an analysis and program seeking to end Israel's colonial occupation of Palestine. Year 21 definitely had the visionary consciousness of social alternatives that we discussed at the beginning. Now we are at Year 37. So can we return to the initial question and ask again "what happened?"

AO: I am not sure I can answer your final question. However, let me use this opportunity to say something about what happened to some of us intellectuals since 1987. In 1987, when we established the "The 21 Year" movement (just before the outbreak of the first Intifada), to name the Israeli presence in the Palestinian territories was the critique—to end the Occupation was the utopia. Today, both are inadequate.

Seventeen years ago we understood that the Occupation was not one more project that the state of Israel took upon itself, a project of the kind that going to the moon was for Americans or rebuilding Berlin has been for Germans, in which a government defines a mission for the nation. We understood that the Occupation was rather the mission that defined the State and structured its society, economy, and culture. Today, to speak about an Occupation is no longer

adequate, because the domination of a whole people devoid of rights over such a long period (a period that is now longer than the time passed from the Balfour declaration to the establishment of Israel) has created a new regime in Israel-Palestine, a Jewish form of apartheid. It is not that Israel is a democracy with a certain problem called the West Bank and Gaza; it is rather the case that the Israeli apartheid regime contains a Jewish-democratic enclave.

One cannot simply put an end to this situation with a series of political decisions. The entire regime must be deconstructed. Most people on the Left think that this can be done by national separation. I doubt this vision. It is based on the same nationalism that I so much abhor. Today, utopia is to dream of a separation of nation from state, so as to avoid the separation of the peoples and the partition of the land. Utopia, for me, is to believe that within the framework of a just political arrangement, respect can replace humiliation and hatred, and that there are material, political, and economic processes that can somehow bring people to see this and turn their bloody destiny into a decent future. It is out of a deep sense of despair that I write this, precisely because I don't want to give in to the much more reasonable and much more comfortable desperate, dead-end analysis. □



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On Howard Zinn

Noam Chomsky

The country has changed a great deal since Howard Zinn boarded his “moving train” a half-century ago. It has changed along very different trajectories. Some have been rich in achievement, often exhilarating, and full of promise for a better future. Others, in part in reaction to them, are ugly and ominous in their import. Which will prevail? It’s hard to overestimate the significance of the question. It’s hard to think of a better way to gain a clear understanding of what is at stake, and what can be done about it, than by reading, and pondering, the fascinating story of Howard Zinn’s crucial and intimate participation at every point, in thought and action.

One trajectory is illuminated by warnings from prominent figures, in the leading establishment journal *Foreign Affairs*, that for much of the world—probably most of it—the United States is “becoming the rogue superpower,” which they consider to be “the single greatest external threat to their societies” (Samuel Huntington, March/April 1999); “in the eyes of much of the world, in fact, the prime rogue state today is the United States” (Robert Jervis, then chair of the American Political Science Association, July/August 2001). That was well before the Bush administration announced a doctrine that sent many shudders around the world, including substantial sectors of the foreign policy elite at home: that the United States intends to rule the world by military force, the dimension in which it reigns supreme, and to rely on aggressive war (misleadingly “preemption”) to bar any potential challenge to its domination. Many analysts warned at once that the “new imperial grand strategy” announced in September 2002 threatens to “leave the world more dangerous and divided—and the United States less secure” (John Ikenberry, September/October 2002). One indication, revealed by public opinion research a few months later, was a sharp increase in fear of the United States around much of the world, and dislike or even loathing of its political leadership. Another was a reported increase in recruitment for al Qaeda-style terrorist organizations as a result of the Iraq invasion, and apparent acceleration of moves toward proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Closely integrated with Bush administration global planning is the dedicated effort at home to accelerate the Reaganite program of dismantling the progressive

legislation of the twentieth century, which grew out of the popular struggles of the conflicting trajectory.

Changes resulting from the activism of the past half-century are indeed dramatic. The country has become far more civilized as a result. The driving force in the early years was the Civil Rights movement, spearheaded by the young people for whom Zinn was a mentor and a participant in their courageous initiatives—the “new abolitionists” of SNCC [Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee], whose triumphs and travails he recorded memorably, in part from firsthand experience. Atlanta, where he began to teach in an African American women’s college in 1956, underwent a remarkable transformation, as did the South in general, with effects throughout the country.

Attitudes toward the resort to violence have also been transformed. Forty years ago John F. Kennedy was able to attack South Vietnam, arousing little interest or concern. It is scarcely even remembered that in 1962, his government initiated the bombing of South Vietnam that demolished much of the country, along with chemical warfare to destroy crops and ground-cover and programs to drive millions of villagers into what amounted to concentration camps, in which they would be “protected” from the indigenous guerrillas who, the administration knew, they were willingly supporting.

Opposition to the Vietnam War, much of it stimulated by the Civil Rights movement, was slow in coming, but finally became a considerable force. Throughout, Zinn was a constant, indefatigable, inspiring presence. His book on “the logic of withdrawal” provided the first careful, sustained argument for commitments that were just coming to animate sectors of the popular activist movements, and was an important stimulus for them. A year later, after the January 1968 Tet offensive, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were reluctant to respond to the president’s request to send more troops to Vietnam because they were uncertain that “sufficient forces would still be available for civil disorder control” as protests mounted against the war, joining with other rising popular movements. The Department of Defense feared that further troop deployments might provoke “a domestic crisis of unprecedented proportions.” By 1969, 70 percent of the population described the war as “fundamentally wrong and immoral,” not “a mistake,” departing sharply from the elite consensus; the figures have remained fairly stable to the present, even though they receive virtually no articulate support within the mainstream.

Influential radical nationalist (“neocon”) commentators deplored “the sickly inhibitions against the use of military

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force” that were hobbling policymakers (Norman Podhoretz, *New York Times*, October 30, 1985). As it took office in 1981, the Reagan administration, in a triumphant mood, assumed that the sickly inhibitions had faded, but quickly learned otherwise. Facing a serious threat to traditional centers of violence and repression in Central America, they attempted to follow the Kennedy model of South Vietnam. But they drew back in the face of an unanticipated public reaction, resorting instead to clandestine terror: “clandestine,” in the sense that it could be more or less concealed from the American public.

But not completely concealed. Popular opposition to terrible Central American atrocities organized or supported by Washington was broad-based, more so on Main Street than in elite centers. It also opened new paths in the history of opposition to imperial violence. Many thousands of people, often from generally conservative social sectors, were not satisfied with educational efforts, protest, and resistance, but went to live with the victims, to offer help, and also, by their presence, to offer at least some limited protection against state and paramilitary terror. Few had ever contemplated living in a Vietnamese or Algerian village under brutal attack by their own state, just to take a few recent examples; nor had this been considered before. The international solidarity movements that developed from these roots have since spread to large parts of the world, compiling a very honorable record of courage and dedication. In the same years, popular movements concerned with the threat of possibly terminal nuclear war became a force that could no longer be ignored.

When Bush #1 took office in 1989, his administration was presented with an intelligence analysis advising that in conflicts with “much weaker enemies”—any imaginable case—the United States must “defeat them decisively and rapidly,” or “political support” would erode. It was no longer the 1960s. Tolerance for aggression and terror had sharply declined among the general public. Forty years after Kennedy’s war against South Vietnam was publicly launched, there were huge and unprecedented protests against a war even before it was officially announced, not delayed until many years later when the targeted country was “threatened with extinction.”

By the 1990s, solidarity movements were taking new forms. In the United States, and throughout much of the industrial world, large-scale global justice movements were forming, and joined with mass-based popular movements in the South to work for new directions in global economic integration, shifting priorities from investor and corporate rights—the policies called “globalization” within the doctri-

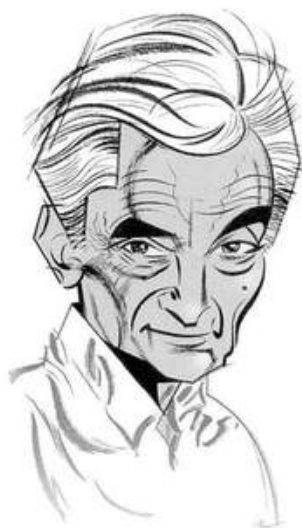
nal system—to the needs of the general population for freedom, democracy, and equitable and sustainable development. These and related popular movements, bringing together many concerns of prime significance and drawing from many social sectors, began to gain some institutional form in the World Social Forum that has met annually in Brazil, by now with many regional offshoots and with participation rising steadily in scale, energy, and enthusiasm.

There is, of course, no single source for these complex and multifaceted historical processes. They grow from the sources that Howard Zinn has highlighted and brought to general awareness in his historical work, and contributed to so impressively in his life of engagement and dedication: in his words, “the countless small actions of unknown people” that lead to “those great movements” that enter the historical record—a record that will be profoundly misleading, and seriously disempowering, if torn from its roots.

There are people whose words have been highly influential, and others whose actions have been an inspiration to many. It is a rare achievement to have interwoven both of these strands in one’s life, as Howard Zinn has done. His writings have changed the consciousness of a generation, and helped open new paths to understanding history and its crucial meaning for our lives. He has always been on call, everywhere, a marvel to observe. When action has been called for, one could always be confident that he would be on the front lines, an example and trustworthy guide.

It has been a wonderful privilege to have been able to join Howard on his “moving train” on many occasions over these years of challenge, inspiration, torment, and persistent concern over impending catastrophe. Like everyone who knows him, I, too, have been struck by his enduring optimism, which goes well beyond “optimism of the will” and challenges us also to question the “pessimism of the intellect” that complements it in the slogan that Antonio Gramsci made famous: “Pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will.” Howard’s life and work are a persistent reminder that our own subjective judgments of the likelihood of success in engaging human problems are of little interest, to ourselves or others. What matters is to take part, as best we can, in the small actions of unknown people that can stave off disaster and bring about a better world, to honor them for their achievements, to do what we can to ensure that these achievements are understood and carried forward. □

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Madonna's Challenge: Understanding Kabbalah Today

Or N. Rose

From Madonna to Matt (Daniel C. Matt, translator and scholar), Kabbalah has captured the imagination of North American seekers as never before. Increased numbers of college and adult education courses, the growth of spiritual retreat and Kabbalah centers, and the emergence of a cottage industry of books and tapes on the subject all point to a Jewish mystical renaissance. And because of celebrities like Madonna and Britney Spears (and the shrewd marketing strategies of their mystical mentors and public relations staffs), Kabbalah has received a startling amount of media attention, only adding to its popularity. Of course, most of this attention has focused on the authenticity of the spiritual quests of these Hollywood stars and on their teachers' controversial presentations of the Jewish mystical tradition. Is Madonna's metamorphosis from "Material Girl" into "Esther" real? Are Rabbi Berg and his Kabbalah Center associates actually mystics? What has been absent, by and large, from these discussions, however, is Kabbalah itself.

The current "Kabbalah craze" offers teachers and practitioners of this arcane lore an important pedagogic opportunity: communicating to a receptive audience why we believe Kabbalah is important. What does it have to say to people today? Of course, to those who know something of the history of Jewish mysticism, this suggestion might sound strange: after all, Kabbalah has been an esoteric movement for thousands of years. The word itself means, "that which is received," referring to secret teachings passed down privately from master to disciple. What business do we have "going exoteric" in a way that would astonish even the early Hasidic masters of the eighteenth century and other pre-modern popularizers of Kabbalah? The answer is simple: unless well-educated and sensitive interpreters of this tradition come forward, others will fill the void; and to date, it has mostly been swindlers, novices, and fundamentalists that have stepped into the breach. Thankfully, there is a small, but growing cadre of American and Israeli religious teachers and scholars, such as Daniel Matt, Arthur Green,

Melilah Hellner-Eshed, Havivah Pedayah, and Elliot Wolfson who are engaging in thoughtful explorations of the classical teachings of Kabbalah, asking what of this ancient tradition remains compelling to seekers today and what is better left aside. (See, for example, Lawrence Fine's recent study of Arthur Green's work in the Jan/Feb 2004 issue of *TIKKUN*.) Here I add my own voice to this chorus, briefly outlining some of the positive and negative features of Jewish mysticism from a contemporary perspective.

The Gifts of Kabbalah

Elohim: Theological Humility & Creativity

One of the most powerful kabbalistic teachings is the paradoxical assertion that while God is ultimately unknowable—in essence or fullness—we must persist in our quest for the Divine. Like Maimonides (d. 1204), the kabbalists often speak in negative theological terms, referring to God as *Ayin*, "No-thing." This is not an atheistic statement, but an acknowledgement of God's transcendence (He who surpasses all "things"—all thought or description). As the German pietist, Eleazar of Worms (d. 1237) writes, "When you contemplate the Creator, realize that His encampment extends beyond, infinitely beyond ... in front, behind, east and west ... infinitely, everywhere." Translating this spatial metaphor, the kabbalists say that God is *Ein Sof* ("Without End," Infinite), beyond the limits of space and time, and, therefore, beyond the human mind.

We can approach this unknowable deity because the kabbalists also insist that God is immanent, revealing something of Herself to us at all times. Our task is to open our eyes to the reality of the Divine presence (*Shechinah*) and to shape our lives around these moments of insight. This process requires theological discussion; opportunities to articulate our beliefs, hopes, questions, and doubts. And so, the kabbalists develop an array of images and symbols to express themselves theologically. This is developed most fully in the mystical map known as the *sefirot* ("numbers," divine spheres, emanations), the tenfold symbol system that attempts to chart the flow of divine vitality from the hiddenmost depths of God's mind into all of creation, including the human soul. This kabbalistic tree of life includes a broad range of personal and impersonal descriptions that

Or N. Rose is the author of two recent books: God in All Moments: Mystical and Practical Wisdom from the Hasidic Masters (Jewish Lights), and Abraham Joshua Heschel: Man of Spirit, Man of Action (JPS).



invite us to encounter God as parent (father and mother), lover, water, or light (among many other metaphors).

This paradoxical theological stance is expressed ingeniously in the opening pages of the Zohar (the masterwork of Kabbalah) in a reflection on the ancient Hebrew word *Elohim*, the most generic name for God in the Hebrew Bible (often translated as "Lord"). The Zohar authors deconstruct this name, reading it as two separate words: *Mi* and *Eleh*, "Who" and "These." This wordplay reminds us of the precarious nature of theology: On the one hand, all we can say about God is *Mi*—"Who are you? And what do you want of us?" On the other hand, we are given the freedom to engage imaginatively in God-talk—"Eleh, these are the ways in which we experience the Divine. And it is based on these encounters that we wish to shape our lives!" This dual message of theological humility and creativity remains as relevant today as it was for our ancestors.

Waves & Water: Diversity within Unity

While most Western religious thinkers speak of God, world, and humankind as separate entities, the kabbalists see life as one unbroken chain of being. All of creation originates in *Ayin*, No-thingness, which the kabbalists see as the great wellspring of Divine creativity. From *Ayin*, creation spreads forth through an elaborate process of ema-

nation. Beginning with a single, infinitesimal bundle of energy, often referred to as *Hokhmah* (Wisdom), God begins the complex journey from concealment to revelation. The result is the creation of a unified cosmos inhabited by multiple worlds and countless individuals, all animated by the same divine "stuff" of life. As the mystics put it, the One "clothes" itself in the many. For the kabbalist, the goal of human life is to come to a heightened awareness of the unity of existence and to focus our efforts on bringing balance and harmony to the universe.

If taken seriously, this kabbalistic teaching of the unity of all being can deeply impact our life experiences. How might we treat our friends and neighbors (and enemies) if we grasp something of the truth of our shared divinity? In what ways does this awareness affect our relationship to the earth and its resources? Rabbi Moses Cordovero (d. 1570) brings this eco-spiritual consciousness to bear when he writes, "Do not say this is a stone and not God!" While one might be concerned that this vision of unity threatens the value of the individual, Rabbi Zev Wolf of Zhitomir (d. 1800) writes, "God desires each of us, receiving added joy from our separate selves—every one in a distinct body." Of course, this is another example of kabbalistic paradox: while we are all but manifestations of the Divine—waves in the ocean of life—we must also see others and ourselves as full bodies of water, unique and irreplaceable.

Tikkun: Divine Need & Human Responsibility

While detractors of mysticism often characterize it as a "spirituality of solipsism"—imagining the mystic as the man on the mountaintop who has turned his back on the world—the thirteenth-century kabbalist, Nahmanides (d. 1270), understands it differently. According to the RaMbaN (Rabbi Moses ben Nahman = Nahmanides), the fate of the cosmos rests in human hands: to use his expression, there is a "supernal need" (*tzorekh Gavohah*) that only we can fulfill. This idea may shock traditional Western theists who conceive of God as omnipotent, impassible, and beyond all needs. But in Nahmanides' view, God begins the creative process with the intention of bringing human beings into existence so that we can serve as active partners in the re/creation of the world. In so doing, God surrenders a measure of control, insisting that we function as independent actors on the world stage. While this is a dangerous gamble—as Adam and Eve demonstrated—it seems that anything else would be unsatisfying to God.

Rabbi Isaac Luria (d. 1572), perhaps the most innovative kabbalistic thinker, uses even stronger language to make this point, asserting that by engaging in the great drama of *tikkun*; renewing, restoring, and healing the world, we actually heal God. By uncovering "sparks" of divinity in the world and using this energy for the good, we restore the luster to the Divine countenance. The Hasidic masters remind

us that the practice of collecting sparks is not limited to “religious acts” alone, such as Torah study or prayer, but is a way of life. As Rabbi Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev (d. 1810) teaches, “For wherever you go and whatever you do—even mundane activities—you serve God.” The challenge, of course, is to develop the consciousness to see the glimmer of divine light within the everyday.

The Shadow Side of Kabbalah

While Kabbalah has much wisdom to offer the contemporary seeker, it is no panacea. As one might expect of a tradition that blossomed in the Middle Ages, there are many teachings in the Jewish mystical canon that challenge contemporary Western ethical sensibilities. The problem is that far too many Kabbalah teachers do not address these issues openly, resorting instead to unconvincing apologetics. In exploring the teachings of this ancient lore, we must be honest in our evaluation of it, recognizing when we agree and disagree with our mystical ancestors and what factors—psychological and historical—cause this attraction or revulsion. While we cannot expect medieval men (sadly, they were virtually all men) to conform to twenty-first-century moral standards, we have a responsibility to challenge their assumptions when necessary. Rabbi Menahem Mendel of Kotsk (d. 1859) teaches that this is why the *Amidah* (the “Standing” prayer) opens with the words, “Our God, and the God of our Ancestors.” This liturgical arrangement reminds us that while we cannot ignore the wisdom of our forebears, their wisdom can never overshadow our own evolving relationships with the Divine. To take this example one step further, we might think of our relationship to Kabbalah (and other “sacred” texts) in terms of our relationships to family. While we have great love and admiration for our parents and siblings, the intimacy we share with them demands that we interact honestly, challenging and reproaching one another when necessary. It is with the same sense of care and candor that we must approach Kabbalah.

What About Unity? Non-Jews and Non-Jewish Religions

While many of today’s spiritual seekers come to Kabbalah through encounters with other religious traditions—mostly Eastern—and are fascinated by the spiritual affinities they discover between the various mystical systems, the kabbalists were not religious pluralists. They would have little appreciation for the contemporary ethos of spiritual eclecticism (despite their own adoption of various Christian and Muslim traditions). Their belief in the divinity of all life did not lead them to honor and respect non-Jews and non-Jewish religious traditions. The kabbalists often speak of non-Jews as possessing tainted or incomplete souls and view non-Jewish religions as demonic at worst and corrupted forms of Judaism at best. In most cases, the mystics articulate these positions through their commentaries on the

lives of biblical foes such as Esau, Laban, Egypt, and Amalek. However, it does not require great mystical insight to see that these attacks on ancient Israelite enemies were a safe way for them to lash out against their non-Jewish neighbors without the fear of reprisal.

Of course, this type of religious chauvinism is not uniquely kabbalistic; it has plagued humanity in one form or another since the dawn of time. Like other persecuted minorities, the kabbalists attempted to restore a measure of dignity to their lives by denouncing the majority culture. As history demonstrates, there was ample reason for these pre-modern Jewish writers to hate the Christians and Muslims in whose midst they lived.

Nonetheless, as heirs to this tradition we have an obligation to respond to these hateful texts, knowing that there are still many people—in Brooklyn, Hebron, and elsewhere—who read them uncritically. We no longer believe that Jews are ontologically superior to non-Jews—we do not believe that Jewish souls flow from a higher source within the Godhead than do the souls of non-Jews—nor do we feel that Judaism is a “truer” path to God than Christianity, Islam, or non-monotheistic faiths: each has its particular strengths and weaknesses. The dangerous game of religious triumphalism has no place in contemporary religious life. This is not to suggest, however, that all religions are the same or that religious thinkers should not continue to debate matters of ultimate concern. However, this debate must be accompanied by a genuine willingness to share with and learn from members of other faith communities.

The Male Gaze: (Mis)Perceptions of the Female

Historically, Kabbalah is a tradition written by men for men and is deeply misogynistic. While the mystics have great concern for the physical well-being of women and believe that women play a vital role in the Jewish family, they largely ignore the spiritual lives of their mothers, wives, and daughters. And when they do speak of women in relation to spiritual matters, much of their attention is focused on staving off the sexual temptations they feel women present. Women are often objectified and viewed as distractions from the “real” work of mystical growth, which is ideally carried out in the company of men exclusively. Again, these attitudes are not uniquely kabbalistic, but represent an unfortunate stage in human development (one that we have not yet fully outgrown).

Today, some adherents praise Kabbalah as a woman-friendly spiritual path precisely because the kabbalists introduced into the Jewish theological lexicon such potent female symbols as *Binah* (“Understanding, Upper Divine Mother, and Womb”) and *Shechinah* (“The Indwelling Presence,” Lower Divine Mother, and Vagina). However, when we examine the ways in which traditional kabbalists use these female theological symbols, we find that they are riddled with male biases. Take, for example, the symbol of

Shechinah: while She is accorded a place of great honor in the sefirotic system, regularly described as “Bride,” “Queen,” and “Mother of the lower worlds” in relation to the other sefirot, She is often portrayed as a damsel in distress, as the moon “who has no light of her own,” or as an empty vessel into which flow all the waters (or seminal fluid) of the upper (male) Divine channels. Rarely are these qualities of passivity and receptivity balanced by more active or autonomous images. There is even some debate by scholars today as to what extent the symbol of Shechinah was introduced into this highly erotic system as a safe buffer between the impassioned male mystic and his male God. As learned and law-abiding Jews, the kabbalists were well aware of the taboo against homosexuality in the tradition (despite the obvious homoeroticism in books like the Zohar).

As in the case of the non-Jew, we have an obligation to challenge the assumptions of the kabbalists on these gender issues. And here too, the continued abuse of women and the disregard for their spiritual lives in many Jewish communities makes this challenge an urgent one. While we do not want to abandon the language and symbols of Kabbalah (“throwing out the baby with the bathwater”), we need to be more imaginative in our efforts at kabbalistic renewal than we have been in the past. Can we envision a more fluid and balanced sefirotic system in which Shechinah is a full and active player in the celestial realms? What would the sefirot look like as a whole if women and other marginalized Jews were initiated into the world of kabbalistic myth-making (as is, thankfully, beginning to happen)? While we must live with the pain of our history—facing the legacy of Jewish patriarchy and misogyny directly—we need not be paralyzed by it. To use Luria’s imagery, there are “holy sparks” that are waiting to be uncovered, and in some cases,

it was our mystical predecessors themselves who obscured them.

Red Threads & Holy Water: Magic & Manipulation

Kabbalah is both a mystical and a magical tradition. While we are sometimes embarrassed by the magical element in this tradition, it cannot be avoided. Israel ben Eliezer, the Ba’al Shem Tov, the spiritual founder of Hasidism (d. 1760), was a folk healer who used amulets and incantations as part of his practice. In fact, the title *Ba’al Shem Tov* means “Master of the Good Name,” that is, one who is capable of using various Divine names (the “Good Name” is God’s, not the healer’s) to cure people of physical and spiritual ailments. And long before Israel ben Eliezer came on the scene, there were “practical kabbalists” throughout the ages who sought to use their powers to bless and curse human beings and to alter God’s will. What do we want to do with this magical tradition today?

There are some, following uncritically in the path of earlier kabbalists, who continue this magical tradition. For example, I have seen claims that drinking bottled water that has sat in the presence of a Torah scroll can improve your health. Others suggest tying a red string around your wrist (not a specifically kabbalistic tradition, by the way), or placing a copy of the Zohar on your bookshelf—without ever grappling with its Aramaic text—to ward off evil spirits. These are not the kabbalistic practices we need to perpetuate. At its best, Kabbalah provides seekers with a challenging spiritual path requiring hard work, patience, and determination, *not* quick fixes.

One redeeming feature of the magical heritage of Kabbalah, however, is its sense of holism. The Ba’al Shem Tov and his fellow healers believed that one could not easily separate the ills of the world from those of the individual body or soul. As Daniel Matt remarks, “the Kabbalah came of age long before the separation of cosmology and psychology.” While we are not going to adopt the medical practices of the Eastern European folk healers, they do remind us of the delicate interplay of nature, health, and spirituality.

Kabbalah Today: Blending Ancient and Contemporary Wisdom

Earlier in this essay, I translated the word “Kabbalah” as “that which is received,” but it also has another meaning: “the receiving.” The first interpretation emphasizes the value of tradition, and the need for intimate master-disciple relationships. The second interpretation shifts the focus from the past to the present—to how one experiences the flow of divinity in this moment. Contemporary seekers are wise to follow both of these impulses: engaging in honest dialogue with our mystical ancestors and balancing the wisdom of the past with the imperatives of the present. It is only through such a dynamic process that we can create what the authors of the Zohar call “new-ancient words.” □

Recommended Readings on Kabbalah

- David Ariel, *The Mystic Quest: An Introduction to Jewish Mysticism* (Schocken, 1992)
- Tirzah Firestone, *The Receiving: Reclaiming Jewish Women's Wisdom* (Harper San Francisco, 2004)
- Arthur Green, *A Guide to the Zohar* (Stanford University Press, 2004)
- _____, *Ehyeh: A Kabbalah for Tomorrow* (Jewish Lights, 2002)
- Lawrence Kushner, *The Way in Jewish Mysticism* (Jewish Lights, 2001)
- Daniel Matt, *The Essential Kabbalah* (Harper-Collins, 1994)
- _____, *The Zohar: Pritsker Edition* (Stanford University Press, 2004)

The Gift

A Short Story by Nan Fink Gefen

David arrived at the Indian restaurant a few minutes early and made his way past the ceramic statues of elephants and the colorful paintings of women in saris to a table in the rear. He'd chosen this place to meet Maya because it was quiet enough to talk. It had been a year since he'd seen her—and then only at a distance, with her husband—but recently he couldn't stop thinking about her. Something remained unfinished between them, getting in the way of his closeness with Lee, the woman he now was dating. He'd emailed Maya and she answered right away, saying yes, she'd been thinking of him, too, and shouldn't they get together.

A gold-framed mirror hung by the table and David glanced at himself, a lean, middle-aged man with rimless glasses, a respectable presence. He knew his strengths—calmness and clarity of thought—and his weaknesses—a touch of rigidity and unsociability. During the time he'd lived with Maya in Portland, she'd forced him out of his reticence with her constant jostling, her unpredictable moods, her music and her laughter. He'd thought of her as a slash of bright red to his subtle blue, and the image pleased him. But eventually he'd been overwhelmed by the chaos of her life and he yearned for the quiet he had once known. Five years ago he left her, the best he could do, and he told himself that the split was inevitable, that certain colors do not belong together.

Maya rushed into the restaurant, late as always. "I couldn't find a parking spot," she said in her throaty voice. "I'm in someone's driveway and I have to move, but I wanted to let you know I'm here."

"I'll wait," he said, amused by how some things never change.

She ran from the restaurant, her long silk scarf flying, and David started to read the menu, impatient for her return. He already felt unsettled by her, but that was to be expected: she always had that effect. It was her chestnut hair spilling from its clip, her full mouth, her quick gestures, and most of all, her eyes, radiant and turquoise.

Ten minutes passed, and the thrill of seeing Maya started to fade. Fishing through his briefcase for something to read,

David found a brochure he'd picked up at the museum last week with Lee. They'd gone to a photography exhibition, and as they strolled through the gallery, she spoke with great insight about distance and proportion, and he'd been intrigued by her understanding. Theirs was a softer intimacy than he'd had with Maya, but exciting in its own way.

Maya finally returned, breathless. "I bumped into someone on the street," she said, sliding into her seat. "Her daughter's acting out all over the place, and she needed to talk."

"Let's order," David's tone was short. "I'm hungry."

"Me, too."

Maya held the menu close to her face, straining to read, and David watched her for a moment. "Is something wrong with your eyes?" he asked. She began to tell him about the problem she was having. "Maybe you need reading glasses," he said, softening.

"I've been putting it off." She smiled at him, her face filled with light. "You're always so sensible, David. It's really good to see you."

David felt himself dissolve into her gaze, but this was dangerous, something to be avoided, and he called the waiter over so that they could order. "How are things going with you and Mariano?" he asked her. Mariano was Maya's husband of three years, and David had been at their wedding, a noisy celebration that lasted late into the night with Israeli dancing and boisterous toasts from her many friends.

"We have our ups and downs," she answered. She told him about Mariano's search for employment—a frustrating experience for a talented set designer—and her new position teaching creative writing at the community college. "It's hard when one person is discouraged and the other has a really great job. But we're working it out."

The waiter brought their vegetarian thalis, and as they began to eat, Maya lifted her eyes to David again. "But, tell me, how are you? I hear you have a new romance."

David began to talk about Lee, picturing her in his mind as he spoke. Lee resembled the graceful Indian women in the paintings on the restaurant wall, slender and composed, her black hair shiny, her eyes amused and intelligent. He thought of the solitude that surrounded her and the tender, slow ways they touched. "We get along wonderfully," he said.

"Is she Jewish?" Maya asked.

David paused. This was the question that came closest to what bothered him about Lee. "Yes, but in name only. She's really a Buddhist."

Nan Fink Gefen is the president of Chochmat HaLev, a center of Jewish meditation and spirituality in the San Francisco Bay Area. She was the founding publisher of Tikkun from 1985–1990. The author of two nonfiction books, she is currently working on a novel.



"That's a complication."

He shrugged. "Not really. She's one of the most developed people I've ever known." But as he said this, he wished again that Lee shared his interest in Judaism. The night they'd talked about it, she said she found his enthusiasm inspiring, even beautiful, but she wasn't drawn to the practice herself; she'd given up on Judaism because it didn't seem spiritual. He'd felt disappointed in her response and didn't know how to answer her, and he never brought up the subject again.

"No Shabbat?" Maya persisted.

"No."

Maya sighed deeply, a rumbling sound almost like a song. David had forgotten how much music came from her. "No Shabbat. No singing," he said, remembering those times with Maya when Friday night drew near and they'd prepared together for Shabbat. She set the table with a white linen cloth and brightly colored flowers, humming fragments of melodies, and he hummed along as he sliced the vegetables for a salad. When twilight faded into darkness, Maya said: "Come, it's time." They stood together

before the fireplace mantel and slowly, silently, lit the Shabbat candles. Then they began to sing. Maya's rich contralto voice soared with the Hebrew prayers, opening them for him, inviting him in, leading him to other realms. The colors in the room—the purple of the rug, the gold of the tapestry—grew more radiant, and a feeling of peace entered him like he had never known.

David, the rationalist, loved Shabbat with Maya. It brought them into harmony, expanding him, settling her. It was what they did best. He loved the feeling of timelessness, away from his computer and his law practice, and each week he could hardly wait to enter this world. Maya had been his guide and he'd been a willing follower. "I really miss Shabbat," he said softly to Maya.

"But can't you still have it?" she asked.

David, for the first time, let himself look fully into her eyes. "It's not the same without you, Maya." He thought of all the Friday nights in recent years when he'd lit the Shabbat candles alone, or even with friends, but he never had that intense feeling of completion he'd had with her. After a while he became discouraged and stopped the practice, and he

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hadn't even introduced it to Lee. Now, on Friday nights, they'd go out to dinner or catch a good film instead.

"It's not the same for me, either," Maya said.

"It was so beautiful."

"Yes," she sighed.

David grew quiet, reflecting on all they'd said. So this was it, the unfinished piece of their life together: They'd had the most magnificent Shabbats. David had hardly allowed himself to remember them, but he'd yearned for that state and mourned its absence these last five years. And now, looking at Maya, at her parted lips and her brilliant eyes, at this woman who had shown him such splendor, he couldn't recall why he had left her. Surely they should be able to come back together again, continuing what they'd once had.

But suddenly Maya's cell phone rang, and she rushed to answer it, spilling the contents of her purse on the floor, lipsticks and loose change rolling. "Oh, shit," she said. "Hello?"

She could have hung up quickly but she launched into a conversation, making arrangements, chatting about an upcoming trip to Mexico. Finally she glanced at her watch. "God, I'm late," she said to the person on the line. "I was supposed to be in a meeting by now."

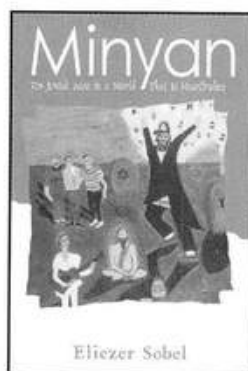
She turned off her cell phone and David watched as she got ready to leave, jamming everything into her purse, wor-

rying that she'd never find her car. It seemed there was nothing more for him to say. And when she rushed off, kissing him goodbye, telling him how great it had been to see him, that they'd have to do it again some other time and maybe include Lee and Mariano, he shook his head in wonder. He loved this woman, he'd always love her for those Shabbats together, but he had been right: he couldn't live with her the other six days of the week.

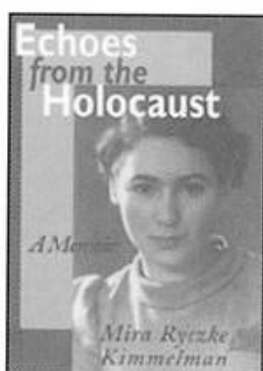
As David finished his tea, he felt light and full of laughter, and his mind stretched to the years ahead, all the years he could spend with Lee. He thought of her as pale purple, a color with depth and iridescence, a perfect match to his own subtle blue. In the future he would find a way to bring Shabbat into their lives, and it would be different from what he had known with Maya, not so exuberant or so complete with all the Hebrew prayers, but it would be beautiful in its own right. And Lee would teach him things, too. He pictured her sitting on her zafu in her bedroom, meditating as she did every morning, her back straight, her dark hair cascading over her shoulders, a sight that never failed to move him. She didn't know yet about the splendor of Shabbat, but she understood more than he did about silence.

The waiter stopped by the table. "Anything else you need?" he asked.

"No, thanks, I'm ready to move on," David smiled, with more conviction than he'd felt in a long time. □



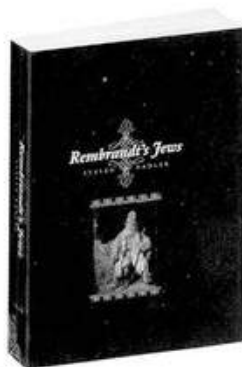
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After the End of History

Julian Levinson

I found myself more truly and more strange.
—Wallace Stevens, "Tea at the Palaz of Hoon"

A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away—1989 in the U.S.A. to be exact—a grand theory was bandied about that sought to explain the state of the world now that communism seemed to be in its final death throes. The theory, cooked up in reactionary think tanks and sent coursing through the collective national psyche, went by the ominous-sounding name of "the End of History." A convergence of Manifest Destiny and Hegelian philosophy, it asserted that if by history we mean the progressive development of social life established through conflict between opposing world views, then history in this sense had ended. In more concise words: the West had won, and it was a gosh darn good thing, too. With the end of the Cold War, the only political system left standing in the field was liberal democracy, the only ideology possessive individualism, the only economic system free market capitalism. Communism, according to the theory, had been humankind's last great effort to overthrow the dominant system and institute a new system based on a countervailing vision of human life. Now it was only a matter of time before every nation came around to embrace the basic ideals that were allegedly already in place in America, notions such as social equality, equality before the law, freedom of speech, and popular sovereignty. History as the scene of bloody revolutions and seismic cultural transformations had culminated in this, a world of nations designed as carbon copies of American democracy.

Hope, according to this view, was no mere thing with feathers. It was tangible in the collapse of the Berlin Wall. It was visible in images of people throughout the world suddenly wearing Benetton and drinking Coke. It was demonstrable according to statistics: from a grand total of three liberal democracies in 1790, the sum had risen to 61 by 1990, said Francis Fukuyama in *The End of History and the Last Man*. Most of all, hope in this new age was guaranteed



by a singular (and cynically reductive) conception of human nature. At their core, said the voice of the End of History, humans are a bundle of basic and calculable needs. In short, they want things. And now that we've reached our superlative level of technological progress and finally hit upon the right political system, we can finally give the people what they want. Or at least make them think they're on their way to getting what they want.

Today this version of unimpeded progress cannot help but seem slightly antiquated, at least to those with enough patience to tabulate casualties. It is like looking back at the fourth act of a tragedy from the standpoint of the fifth, after the hero has been trapped by his flaw. The endgame of history, it now appears, has been interrupted by a most recalcitrant foe, the uncooperative Islamic Other. Holed up in Najaf mosques, constructing nuclear arsenals in Teheran, infiltrat-

Julian Levinson is the Samuel Shetzer Professor of American Jewish Studies at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. He is currently writing a book on self-invention and cultural politics in Jewish American literature.

ing our office buildings and airports, “they” have derailed the smooth transition to a new world order of pliant, structurally identical nation states. Where once we saw one nation after another turning in their authoritarian regimes and joining the free market, we now have the prospect of endless battles against radically benighted enemies who reject all things American—our political system, our products, our lifestyle. In place of the End of History, we suddenly have a new paradigm: the Clash of Civilizations. (Of course, as in Nietzsche’s eternal recurrence or Freud’s return of the repressed, it may be but an old paradigm in a new guise, with a genuflecting, Koran-waving adversary rather than a coldly calculating communist one.) Already the voices for international trade agreements and global institutions are being overpowered by less sanguine voices for strengthened security measures and a retrenchment of American patriotism. And many progressives, who were suspicious about all of this Benetton and Coke being such a good thing all along, are suddenly terrified to realize how salient their critiques of globalization and American imperialism have been.

So where do we look for hope amidst our current wreckage? What does this new arrangement have to teach us about ourselves, our politics, and the work before us? One option, available mostly to those on the Right, is to cling doggedly to the idea that global uniformity modeled on American blueprints is still the ultimate destiny for the nations of the world, our current dilemmas being mere glitches in an otherwise perfect system. Another option, available to those on the Left (and not wholly without merit), is to redouble our efforts at protest, saturated as we are with proof of American destructiveness. But even this response, while vital, would not necessarily generate a renewed basis for hope, I fear. And without hope, protest can become its own form of violence, merely replicating in our own neighborhoods a version of the military conflicts in the Middle East. Let us all, then, rethink our place in the march of time.

The flaw inherent in the End of History scenario—one from which we all might learn—lies in the belief that the status quo we have arrived at is rational, that it has worked its way to the surface through an ineluctable development and that our only task is to remove the barriers to its universal extension. Whenever we worship rationality in this way, we forget that when we institute the systems according to which

we live, we always act on imperfect knowledge—not just imperfect data or an imperfect understanding of causes and effects, but imperfect knowledge of our very selves and of our own deepest motives. This is a lesson that must be learned and relearned, ever and anon. In a very real sense, we are fundamentally strange even to ourselves. Something remains hidden, whether it be in the recesses of the psyche or in the ultimately mysterious surface of an external world that beckons us while simultaneously withdrawing its secret when we felt ourselves on the brink of some ultimate decoding. And so what we have contrived to produce and set in stone is mutable. Or as it says in the old Yiddish proverb: *Der mentsh trakht un got lakht* (Man proposes, God disposes).

The end that we have created will end over and over again.

This is not to say that effort is irrelevant, all insight mere delusion. What it does suggest is that we tread lightly and more humbly when we sense our grandeur swelling, that we allow for, as Abraham Joshua Heschel puts it, “a mental interim, with the cultivation of a feeling for the unfamiliar.” Global solidarity is a worthy goal, no doubt. But its prospects are dim when we conceptualize our role as the dispellers of a final enigma, the exporters of a final solution, either from the Right or from the Left. (No solution, we should know by now, should ever be considered final.) Insight must always be seen as a provisional gift from the great unknown, one that is liable to be snatched

up again as soon as we overstep its province. And when it does come, it often takes the form of a question, a renewed sense of wonder in which all past certainties are suddenly insufficient.

I find hope in this, that we have once again been shown our folly. We have received notice again that it is time to return to ourselves, or to the ultimate strangeness that we inhabit and call ourselves. Instrumental reason, calculated risk, the totally administered society. These have left us marooned in repetition compulsion, desperation, and fury at the intractable other. The basis for solidarity and the prospect for hope cannot be the relentless imposition of our own design. It can only be in the willingness to bracket our grand theories and to open ourselves to the radical novelty that lies ahead. If our unknowingness can be embraced as a blessing, then hope can enter the clearing that is suddenly, strangely opened up. □

*The endgame of history,
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recalcitrant foe, the un-
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Holed up in Najaf mosques,
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in Teheran, infiltrating
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a new world order.*

Tikkun at Eighteen: The Voice of Radical Hope and Practical Utopianism

An editorial by Tikkun's Founding Editor, Michael Lerner

There has never been a time when it is more important to affirm a radical vision of hope. And there has never been a time when radical hope seems more difficult, more counter-intuitive, more out of sync with the dominant cynical realism that shapes contemporary culture. To many, radical hope seems little more than a willful ignorance of the cruelty and craziness that resulted from attempts to bring social change in the past hundred years.

We asked a wide array of writers in our community to address the idea of radical hope, knowing that we'd be writing this in early Fall but that you'd be reading it after you know (as we don't) the outcome of the 2004 presidential election. The excellent pieces we received were more than could fit into this issue, so we'll be saving many for the January/February 2005 edition of *TIKKUN*. We thought this would be a fitting topic for our eighteenth anniversary issue. So let me start the discussion.

It is true that we live in an age in which the hurricanes, global warming, droughts, and other plagues we describe as "natural events" provide us with irrefutable reminders that environmental destruction is proceeding at a pace faster than humanity's capacities to reverse them. Even those in the know are terrified to speak the truth lest they be labeled pessimists.

It is true that we live in an age in which America's imperial wars have begun to match the Roman Empire's reckless and ultimately self-destructive encounters with the people on the periphery (those the Romans called the barbarians and we call the terrorists). We share with the Romans the same inane blindness to the needs of anyone but the world's powerful and privileged elites.

It is true that the failed utopian movements of the twentieth century—from communism to psychoanalysis to the countercultures of the post-war era—provide conservatives with endless ammunition with which to ridicule those who still call for a fundamental transformation and transcendence of the globalized selfishness that calls itself capitalism.

And yet, it is also still true that there remains a persistent

tendency in the human psyche to affirm the possibility of possibility—to continue to believe, as secularists put it, in the indomitable human spirit, or in religious language, to continue to affirm God as the Force of Healing and Transformation inherent in the soul of every human being. Either language yields the same conclusion: that a messianic vision must not be discarded, that radical hope is necessary, and that secular utopian vision must be made practical and put at the center of any rational political agenda.

Or, to put it in other terms, *tikkun*—the healing and transformation of our planet, of our social relationships, of our global economy, of our politics, and of our inner selves—is more of an immediate necessity than it was when we founded this journal in 1986.

Since the beginning, we have approached this task with both a universalist and a particularist consciousness. *TIKKUN* emerges from the experience of the Jewish people and its 3,200-year history as wounded healers and flawed bearers of the message of the possibility of universal liberation. *TIKKUN* remains loyal to this legacy by refusing to allow those in power in the Jewish world to transform that legacy into its

opposite: a fawning admiration for the exploits of the powerful and a desire to identify with the victors and victimizers, thus abandoning our long history as a slave people who became free and who heard the sacred message that our task was to proclaim the possibility of change and healing. However much that legacy has been perverted by its identification with the cheerleaders for the current government of the State of Israel and the present regime in the United States, Judaism retains enough spiritual sustenance to be the foundation for a transformative vision that can never be fully assimilated into the reckless indifference, moral insipidity, selfishness, and materialism that characterize large parts (though not all of) American Jewish life today. We affirm the prophets' outrage at the perversion of Judaism's sacred message and their demand to the priests of the Temple for an end to privileging piety over social justice. We affirm Judaism's insistence that caring for the other, the outsider, the stranger, the widow, the orphan, and the powerless is the primary way that one loves and serves the divine.

It is precisely our rootedness in this particular tradition

in which we claim citizenship. In an ideal world, there should be a balance between these more immediate commitments and the commitment to a world of peace, justice, environmental sanity, and global kindness. But this relationship has been so unbalanced for the past centuries, and the consequences of untrammelled individualism have become so dominant, that a rebalancing effort will require a massive spiritual transformation of the consciousness of the human race and of every individual, every nation, and every religious tradition. It must start with the recognition that Americans' pursuit of self-interest has backfired precisely because it was not based on an understanding of interconnectedness.

So Americans thought we could pollute the planet and allow corporations to pursue their own self-interest without a corresponding demand for social responsibility, and that it would all work out. But now we are paying the price in our own lives and in those of our families and people we know personally: the air we breathe and the water and food we consume have been so heavily polluted that growing numbers of people are dying of environmentally-stimulated dis-

We affirm Judaism's insistence that caring for the other, the outsider, the stranger, the widow, the orphan, and the powerless is the primary way that one loves and serves the divine.

that immediately connects us to a universal vision of a world which takes seriously the commands of Torah to be stewards of the planet, love the stranger, pursue peace, and create a society based on justice. This is the irony of Jewish particularism: it is a universalism. The commands of Torah cannot be taken seriously in the contemporary world without a total transformation in the dynamics of the global economy and the physical environment.

And that is why TIKKUN has not and cannot be only a Jewish magazine and the Tikkun Community had to be an interfaith organization. There is no way to be a Jew in the twenty-first century without caring passionately about the well-being of the entire planet. The fundamental truth of our time is the interconnectedness and mutual interdependence of all human beings on this planet. There is no way to care about Jews without caring about everyone else.

And there is no way to care about America, or to be a true American patriot, without caring about everyone else. Our well being is inextricably linked to everyone else's, and to that of the planet itself. There is no personal or nation-specific salvation possible anymore, if there ever was. In the 21st century, our own personal and familial needs cannot be separated from the needs of the rest of the human race.

This is not to deny our moral obligations to those who are close to us: our loved ones, our families, our friends, our religious communities, our political allies, and the countries

eases; children are suffering from the inability to remain focused on ideas because their nervous systems are being altered by environmental poisons and mind-deadening television and computer entertainment, and our planet is unable to produce food and water that has not been polluted by chemical toxins that may have originated in other parts of the globe where we dumped our wastes.

And what we reap, we sow. Imagine the child who witnesses his mother or sister having to sell her body into prostitution in order to provide food for the family that has been pushed into urban slums because the global economic system has made subsistence farming impossible in the rural village where that family once survived. Think about the young man who witnesses others "getting ahead" in the new burgeoning ethos of "looking out for number one" that accompanies the American-sponsored corporate "modernization" of third world economies. It's not difficult to see how the situation American corporate penetration creates and American global media blithely celebrates can cause some people to become attracted to reactionary fundamentalisms that preach values of family sexual purity, community solidarity, belief in something other than money and power—and these fundamentalisms seem to many the only possible self-defense against the crumbling of a world that seemed more humane and caring than the new world being brought by American power. Most will feel resentful of what Ameri-

cans naively describe as "global progress," and a few may become so angry that they decide to learn the skills of terror, (which then get directed back to America either in the form of 9/11 direct assaults on the U.S. or in the form of attacks on Americans traveling abroad or even on our children who may face an expanded draft into a military increasingly called upon to defend American corporations' global interests). In the reality of the twenty-first century, a separation between caring for oneself and caring for the world is simply not possible.

The path of the American patriot, like the path of the Jew loyal to Judaism, must entail a universalist concern for the well-being of everyone, a passionate commitment to repairing the damage done to our environment, and a commitment to restructuring the global economy in ways that produce both justice and environmental sustainability; we must abandon cultural arrogance and learn from the wisdom and richness of the traditions of others, and share our own cultural and economic resources with others.

This transformation of consciousness is a spiritual transformation, a reshaping at the deepest levels of one's own cultural, religious, political and psychological makeup in order to truly see oneself as linked to the health of the planet and all of its inhabitants. In the context of the Jewish people, we call this transformation a Global Judaism: the transcending of every aspect of our tradition, every prayer and song, every religious practice, and every cultural prejudice that teaches us to see the other as being less than our equal or to see our needs as more important or pressing than their needs. That is the revolution in thought that TIKKUN magazine is pioneering.

In the context of American politics, this transformation of consciousness is expressed in our call for a New Bottom Line so that we'd begin to think of our institutions as productive, efficient or rational only if they went beyond producing material well-being for some (the narrow economic framework that has dominated both mainstream and left-wing thinking) to also foster more loving and caring, more generosity and open-heartedness, more ecological and ethical sensitivity, more awe and wonder at the grandeur of the universe, more awareness of our interdependence with every other person on the planet, and more celebration, gratitude and joy. Our point is that human beings have a set of needs that are not adequately understood in terms of the Old Bottom Line that continues to dominate American economic and political thinking—and that we need a deeper understanding of what it is to be human, reflected in our New Bottom Line.

We call this approach a Politics of Meaning or an Emancipatory Spirituality—recognizing that people have a need for a meaning to their lives that transcends the narrow utilitarian logic of the competitive marketplace and its materialist assumptions about what is important in human life. This is the foundation for the Tikkun Community and the guiding vision of TIKKUN magazine. We seek to support those

from every ethnic, religious, spiritual, or intellectual background who truly understand the need for the kind of healing and transformation that would make it possible for everyone to really care about the well-being of everyone else and of the planet. Not just as an abstract ideal but as a practical guide to daily decision-making. Not just their material well-being, but their "meaning needs" as well. Not every article in our magazine adheres to this perspective. In fact, the majority of what we've published over the past eighteen years does not, in part because we also believe that the best way to arrive at the deepest truths comes through the free exchange of ideas, that one's own beliefs must be constantly subject to critical scrutiny. And, in part, because it's not so easy to find people who are good writers and who share this perspective.

TIKKUN magazine is therefore not only a Jewish magazine, but a magazine for people of all faiths and of no faith (orthodox atheists are also welcome) who understand the need for this *tikkun*. Yet TIKKUN remains a magazine that will continue to give special attention to its Jewish roots and the struggles to develop a Global Judaism. Continuing to strike this balance is not easy. There are times when an issue of the magazine will feel unbalanced in one direction or another—either not giving adequate voice to the interfaith and the secular, or giving so much voice to politics and to interfaith concerns that our Jewish identity gets lost. Nevertheless, we've been blessed by many people, both religious and secular, who have tolerated this ambiguity, who have understood the value in our trying to maintain this delicate synthesis and have continued to subscribe to the magazine and to work with the Tikkun Community. Clearly, something's working.

Now, you might ask, if the need for healing and social transformation is so great, what is the obstacle? Why doesn't the rest of the world adopt TIKKUN's program? There are, of course, many sophisticated theories about stages in the development of the spiritual/psychological. However, most of them seem to do little more than ontologize historical differences in consciousness. Most developmental theories lack a dialectical quality, an account of what in the present provides us with a vehicle or a handle that could enable us to participate in the needed transformations of the human psyche. As a result, many of these developmental theories end up contributing to a distanced and elitist cynicism, i.e., "others just haven't reached the appropriate level of development and we, the supposedly enlightened, can only look at the current reality with a benign and bemused sadness." I find this a particularly obnoxious and patronizing form of elitism typical of many like-minded progressive organizations, liberal/left publications, spiritual gurus, and academic intellectuals.

We at TIKKUN have been committed to a very different approach, one that tries to find the goodness that underlies the energies of those with whom we disagree. We see our

task as helping people to connect with those aspects of their reality and consciousness that might be mobilized to transform themselves and their world in ways that move towards more complex and morally sensitive levels of development.

So, for example, we've insisted that people who are attracted to the entire spectrum of contemporary conservatism—for example, the political right, neo-fascism and religious fundamentalism—are actually seeking a way of coping with the emptiness and alienation produced by a market-driven society that reduces all meaning to the accumulation of money and power and discourages all focus on the development of community and solidarity.

People turn to these movements because they have an intrinsic desire for meaning and purpose in their lives that is not being fulfilled by global capitalism. Their desire for meaning is then channeled into frequently racist, nationalist, and chauvinist directions. While we've faulted right-wing social movements for manipulating people's hunger for meaning, we've insisted that the underlying desire of most people who get attracted to them is not born of a desire to hurt, be cruel, or dominate, but rather of a legitimate hunger that finds illegitimate means of expression, in part because neither society nor the Left provides them with a better way to satisfy it. We've pleaded with the Left (broadly conceived to include the entire spectrum of liberal forces in and out of politics—including the labor movement; the women's movement; the Civil Rights, social justice, and human rights movements; and the environmental movement) to explicitly adopt a politics of meaning. And we've largely failed, though there are pockets of people who have started joining The Tikkun Community, citing articles in *TIKKUN* magazine, and using books like my *Spirit Matters: Global Healing and the Wisdom of the Soul* and Peter Gabel's *The Bank Teller and Other Essays on The Politics of Meaning* in their academic courses, in their churches or synagogues, or even in their local civic or political action group.

Our insistence on finding the decent and rational part of the American public has also led us to understand one major reason why liberal and progressive causes consistently fail to win the kind of majority support that they seek: because most of these enterprises already assume that the people they are trying to reach are either too dumb, too morally deluded, too materialistic, or too thoroughly manipulated by media to be capable of responding to a coherent progressive worldview. Given that assessment of the American public, the Left presents itself in very partial ways that do not present a visionary, inclusive alternative to which people can reasonably respond with enthusiasm and life-commitment. This is not to say that progressives don't have such a vision—most of them have the same need for meaning as everyone else, and thus have either an explicit left-inspired worldview that they keep from public view when they do their political work, or a more private worldview that they withhold from their fellow activists, fearful of being per-

ceived as corny, old-fashioned, or idealistic in a world where cynicism is the hegemonic moral disposition.

I watched this lack of trust in others play out with disastrous consequences when:

The 1988 Democratic Party Presidential candidate, Michael Dukakis, failed to defend his own liberalism after being criticized by the Republicans for being a liberal;

Hillary and Bill Clinton abandoned the politics of meaning after having first espoused it, and instead adopted a health care program so convoluted by its attempts to appeal to the medical profession and insurance industry that it became incomprehensible to anyone else;

Yitzhak Rabin ambivalently embraced the Oslo Accord, failing to tell Israelis that they had reached the moment to recognize the humanity of the Palestinian people, learn Arabic, get to know Palestinians personally, and foster societal reconciliation. Instead, Rabin warned worldwide Jewry that he didn't trust the other side, said he would go as slowly as possible in withdrawing from the West Bank, and in fact accelerated the construction of new checkpoints that further harmed the Palestinian people, a position he only partly reversed in the last few months before his assassination by a right-wing Jewish fundamentalist;

Democratic Party voters selected a candidate for President in 2004 who had not vigorously opposed the war in Iraq, a candidate they thought would have more appeal because he couldn't be faulted for being weak on national defense or the war on terrorism. (How wrong they were on that!) They thereby guaranteed that no matter who became president, the war in Iraq would continue—even though most Democrats wanted it to end—and that there would be a war-oriented Congress that would constrain any serious attempt toward reducing defense spending.

In each of these cases, politicians thought they would look strong by accommodating to the worldview of the Right, when in fact doing so was precisely what made them look weak, indecisive, and hence untrustworthy—because they wouldn't stand up for the liberal or progressive values that underlie liberal political policies.

I imagine that if George Bush beats John Kerry (as I write, it's a dead heat once again), liberals will again learn the wrong lesson: that Americans are either so stupid or so venal that they could never respond to a peace-oriented worldview. But that is based on little evidence, since unlike the Republican Party—which has consistently used its electoral activity for nearly forty years to inculcate Americans with a nationalist ideology, the values of the global capitalist marketplace, indifference or hostility to the notions of universal human rights and international law, and a faith in the use of violence to achieve security, both at home and abroad—the Democratic Party has done little to offer a more humane worldview. Certainly the Democrats have never emphasized global solidarity, social justice, and ecological sanity, much less the notions that we've advanced in

TIKKUN: that homeland security would be most likely secured by a Global Marshall Plan and a commitment to end global poverty, hunger, inadequate health care, and poor education. So if they've never heard an alternative politics advanced, how can Americans be faulted for not responding to it? If, on the other hand, Kerry wins, we will be told it was because of "the economy, stupid" and once again the message will be that "what really matters" is money, so all the talk of a politics of meaning need not be given attention. Either way, our task is to challenge the dominant perspective and provide a new way to think about our world.

Of course, it would be naïve to think that just articulating an alternative politics of meaning worldview is sufficient. It could take decades for a coherent political force based on a vision of global solidarity and environmental sensitivity to win a majority. The tragedy is that no one is willing to even start that process as long as we all remain convinced that no

Subscribing to TIKKUN magazine and joining the Tikkun Community are important steps in that direction, because by doing so you make public your identification with a voice that is unapologetically utopian, messianic though not fundamentalist, prophetic and committed to radical hope, and pragmatic yet principled in its approach to social transformation. In other words, a community that insists that the means to achieve a better world must already embody nonviolence, non-manipulation, and treating the other as an end and not a means, an embodiment of the sacred and not just a vehicle to our own success or power. Beyond joining, there is activism: to end the Occupation of the West Bank and create reconciliation and peace between Israel and Palestine, to change American foreign policy and create a Global Marshall Plan, and to spread the ideals articulated in this editorial.

For example, we've advocated for a Social Responsibility Amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would require cor-

Instead of thinking of politics as an alternation between Left and Right, it would be more useful to see it as a resultant of the alternation between hope and despair, between love and domination, between generosity and selfishness.

one will listen. And this is the ultimate tragedy of our situation: there are actually tens of millions of Americans and billions of people around the globe who would respond to such a vision if they could hear it and find a practical way to identify with it. But they are unlikely to hear this perspective as long as it is consistently dismissed by the media, academia, and most politicians as hopelessly utopian and naïve.

It is for this reason that the creation of a community of people with a spiritual politics becomes so important—particularly to the extent that we are willing to articulate clearly and consistently the full vision underlying the Core Vision of the Tikkun Community (read it over to refresh your memory at www.tikkun.org/community/index.cfm/action/core_vision.html). The first step is to come out of the closet as someone who really wants a different kind of world and won't settle for less. Want to change American politics? Just keep saying, and meaning, the following in public: "I refuse to accept the current frame of what is 'realistic' in American politics, and I refuse to accept the one-dimensional discourse of the Left. I am committed to a world based on love, awe and wonder, generosity and open-heartedness, gratitude, joy and celebration at the miracle of life and consciousness itself, nonviolence, peace, and social justice, and the mutual interdependence and interconnectedness of all people on this planet, and I'm not going to get intimidated by those who claim that speaking that way, articulating a politics of meaning, is New-Agey, utopian, or unrealistic."

corporations with incomes above \$30 million a year to get corporate charters renewed every ten years and the renewal would require that they demonstrate to a jury of ordinary citizens a satisfactory history of social responsibility. We are organizing professionals to envision and then struggle for a New Bottom Line such that every public and private institution would be judged "productive" or "efficient" when it maximized not only money and power but also human capacities to be loving and caring, ethically and ecologically sensitive, and to respond to the universe with awe and wonder. We are also exploring the development of a global labeling of eco-kosher products, so that we can know as individual consumers that a given product has been produced in a way that is both ecologically sensitive and responsive to the needs of the workers who produced the product.

Yet, the most important aspect of our activism is creating and popularizing an intellectual and spiritual foundation for a global shift in thinking. Through its think tanks, magazines, columnists, and intellectual activists, the Right has for forty years engaged in a struggle to change the dominant assumptions of American society, so that today even the Democrats often incorporate into their public discourse the assumptions that seemed ultra-extreme when first articulated by the New Right in the sixties and seventies. We can do the same: shift our nation's thinking toward a recognition of global interconnectedness and speak to the hunger people have for a world with more love, kindness, joy, and generos-

ity. No matter who wins the presidential election, it is this struggle—at the level of ideas—that will shape the actual policies that get implemented by the next president and the next Congress. Ideas matter.

For thousands of years, there has been a major intellectual struggle between those who believe that the world can best be understood as the endless struggle between self-interested individuals who are likely to take advantage or seek to dominate and control you unless you dominate or control them first, and those who believe that most human beings have a desire for a world based on love and generosity. If you believe the former view, it seems plausible to think that security is only going to be achieved when we (whoever the “we” happens to be) manage to get absolute control over everyone else before they get that control over “us.” And from there, it seems plausible to make wars, build nuclear weapons, develop Patriot Acts and imprison—or at least impoverish—dissenters. If you accept the latter worldview, you realize that our best hopes for security lie with fostering a political, economic, and cultural world that nurtures and supports our most caring capacities.

Most people have both worldviews in their head, and whichever one happens to be winning at any given moment depends in large part on each person’s childhood experiences, experiences in the world of work, experiences in building loving relationships with others, the ideas to which they have been most heavily exposed, and their own current sense of where social/political energy is flowing at any given moment. In moments when fear and despair about others are prevalent, most people tend to give more credence to those views about and narratives of their experience that emphasize the most fearful elements. When the energy seems to be flowing toward hope, most people feel more open to giving more credence to their own experiences of giving and receiving love, of the generosity and kindness of others, and of the fundamental goodness of others (the “strangers,” the “foreigners,” the “gentiles”).

Instead of thinking of politics as an alternation between left and right, it would be more useful to see it as a resultant of the alternation between hope and despair, between love and domination, between generosity and selfishness. Because most people are not at one extreme or the other, it might well be argued that a healthy individual today needs some balance of these concerns. But if balance is what is sought, then today we live in a world that is wildly unbalanced toward fear and selfishness, and the task of recreating balance requires a preferential tipping of the scale toward hope.

The flow of social energy cannot be quantified, though it can certainly be experienced. And it can be influenced. We just celebrated the fortieth anniversary of the Free Speech Movement in Berkeley—and its impact historically was monumental. It started humbly when a few students in their late teens and early twenties decided to stand up to the Administration of their university and to risk their own acade-

mic careers to do so. When the first few were summoned to turn in their registration cards and be suspended for organizing civil disobedience, hundreds of others showed up to turn in their registration cards and insist that they face the same punishment, since they had participated in the same “crime”—and that in turn inspired thousands more to take similar risks. Energy began to flow toward radical hope—that a world could be based on solidarity and people would take risks for each other and for their principles, and not just for their own narrow material self-interest!

The essence of the change in flow of energy all through the sixties was based on this same formula: people showing that they were willing to put their ideals above their narrow self-interest, which in turn gave others the confidence to act on their own beliefs and to fight for what they too really believed in.

Conversely, the demobilization of social change energies was accomplished in large part by a powerful media and political leadership trying to re-interpret that idealism as nothing but sex, drugs and, rock and roll—that is, narrow narcissistic self-interest. And the reason why this kind of discussion becomes so culturally important is that when people believe that no one else is ever truly moved to act for values higher than self-interest, they lose confidence in their own ideals—or at least on the possibility of acting on them—become “realistic,” and inadvertently strengthen the voices of resignation, fear, self-invalidation, and fear of others. This weakens the voices of hope and our willingness to act on the assumption that others might respond to us if we were to actually start talking about and acting on our own highest ideals.

I hope what I’ve written here conveys some of why I’m proud to have been a major part of creating and sustaining TIKKUN, and why I’m so thankful to our original publisher Nan Fink Gefen, next publishers Danny and Victor Goldberg, and current publishers Trish and George Vradenburg, for helping to keep TIKKUN alive. Similarly, I’m grateful to the many people who have over the years worked at TIKKUN, volunteered at TIKKUN, donated to support TIKKUN, joined the Tikkun Community and/or written for TIKKUN. My greatest sorrows in doing this work have been my inability to publish all the many wonderful submissions we have received (if we had the money to be a weekly instead of a bi-monthly, we’d certainly have published many of these) and the pain that some of those rejections caused to people whose being I wished to affirm even though I couldn’t publish their work. Though I continue to play an important role, TIKKUN is not about Michael Lerner—it is a powerful international community of people who are deeply committed to a shared vision that manifests in a magazine. It is with deep gratitude to our subscribers and readers, the Members of The Tikkun Community, and participants in our activities, that I celebrate this eighteenth anniversary/birthday of TIKKUN and look forward to many more years of association with you!

The Need for a Critical Left

Eli Zaretsky

Why is it that in the United States today the Right Wing has developed a politics with a spiritual dimension; a politics that regularly connects the public with the private; a politics animated by a moral vision, a strong sense of community, a powerful and trusted leadership, and an awareness of its own redemptive role—everything, in short which the Tikkun Community's "Core Vision" urges upon the Left? In particular, in the present situation—I write this in the final months of the presidential election—why is a completely failed president able to run for office with a sense of moral rectitude and self-certainty, while his opponent, the advocate of entirely reasonable policies, seems, as I write, to wallow in confusion, opportunism and a sense of inevitable doom?

To discover how the Right Wing has been able to monopolize the essential symbols of American life—the flag, honor, and family—we must return to the history of the American Left. In this brief note, I want to situate the Left in relation to the presidency and political parties.

The American presidency is unique in the world in the way in which it encapsulates a sense of national unity and purpose. Many other nations, especially in Europe, are held together by a common race or culture, even a common language. The United States, by contrast, is made up of many races, cultures, beliefs, languages, and the like. In fact, in the United States, the presidency, along with the Constitution and the Supreme Court, constitutes the principal public locus of charismatic meaning—the only connection with the sacred and the universal, as opposed to the profane and the particularistic. No American Left worthy of the name can develop unless it maintains a consistent, ongoing, and complex relationship to the presidency, one that is sensitive to the role of leadership and moral principle in the country as a whole.

What then is a political party, at least in the United States, the country that invented the form? A political party is an association of different, often divergent, interests brought together as a means of guiding and modifying the trajectory of capitalism—leading it into certain directions, taking advantage of it for particular sectors or interests (for example, farmers, industrialists, or the West) and, in general, tempering its

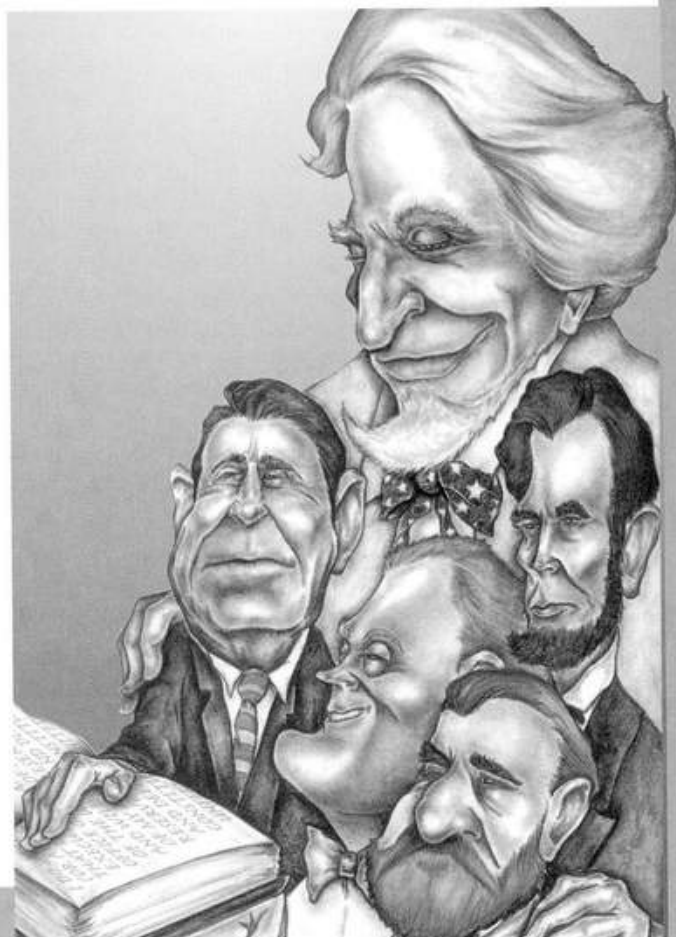
quasi-natural force. Compared to the two major political parties, the Left, at least since the 1840s or so, has been a much smaller social and, especially, intellectual movement, able to conceptualize philosophically and historically the nature of the capitalist transformation of its time, and to approach it critically. In other words, the Left examines capitalism from the standpoint of such critical ideals as justice and freedom, rather than from the point of view of immediate self-interest.

The really great presidents in American history—those who were able to give the country its sense of connection to enduring moral and spiritual values—were, of course, party leaders and party builders. However, what gave these presidents their moral force and coherence was not their parties but rather the existence of a critical Left, one that kept the presidency "honest," so to speak, by constantly forcing it to reorient itself from its immediate and particularistic concerns to the larger issues that are always at stake. Let me illustrate this with two examples: Abraham Lincoln and Franklin Roosevelt.

Abraham Lincoln presided over the beginnings of the first great change in American history—its transformation

ILLUSTRATION BY KIM BALTHAZAR

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into an engine of large-scale commercial and industrial capitalism between the 1850s or so and the 1920s. America became an industrial, urban, and global nation, and the Republican Party (which Lincoln largely created), won most of the elections, and so, for the most part, guided this shift. The Democratic Party, by contrast, was the party of the outs, the "losers," the disgruntled—the Party of "Rum, Romanism, and Rebellion." Lincoln had to bring together interests as diverse as Southern Whigs, newly emancipated slaves, Northern industrialists, and land-grabbing Westerners. He had to create a strong national government as opposed to the state-centered system that had protected the South, and he and his successors had to free up a market system (as opposed to the feudal plantation system based on slavery). But what gave Lincoln's presidency its charisma and power was its relationship to the abolitionists who constantly redirected attention back to the moral and spiritual stakes of slavery and then to the continuation of black oppression.

One way to grasp this point is to describe the exchange between Ulysses S. Grant and Otto von Bismark that occurred in 1876 when then ex-President Grant visited Germany: "What always seemed so sad to me about your last great war was that you were fighting your own people," said Bismark, adding "but it had to be done—you had to save the Union just as we had to save Germany." "Not only save the Union, but destroy slavery," answered the General. "I suppose, however, the Union was the real sentiment, the dominant sentiment," said the Prince. "In the beginning, yes," Grant responded, "but as soon as slavery fired upon the flag it was felt, we all felt, even those who did not object to slaves, that slavery must be destroyed. We felt that it was a stain to the Union that men should be bought and sold like cattle." Ultimately, when war broke out, it was the abolitionists who gave it its meaning.

My second example is Franklin Roosevelt. The "New Deal Coalition," which he created, presided over the transformation of the United States into a mass production, "Fordist" society. It created the modern welfare state including such "entitlements" as social security, unemployment insurance, and Medicare; it supported an enormously successful trade union movement, one that transformed the lives of the American working class; it integrated immigrants into a new, "ethnically" pluralist polity; it put the force of government behind conservation and rural development; it helped forge the great "popular front" that defeated fascism; and it sponsored the "second reconstruction" of the Civil Rights movement. Roosevelt, like Lincoln, was a master politician who had to play bankers against farmers, internationalists against autarchic economists, Southerners against Westerners, Churchill against Stalin. But what gave this enormous transformation of American society its coherence and meaning were the Social Democrats and Communists who raised so-called "economic" issues to the moral and at times spiritual level.

We often hear it said today that the Democratic Party should return to the self-interested "bread and butter" issues that supposedly defined it during its heady days. As I write, John Kerry is being urged to change the subject from foreign policy to the "pocketbook" issues in which, polls supposedly show, Democrats have the advantage. This, however, fundamentally misconstrues the matter. The reason these issues were so important in defining the Democratic Party in the 1930s through the 1960s is that they were part of a coherent narrative, one that was culturally conservative perhaps (focused on family, child rearing, and the protection of old age) but that made moral sense and that connected the individual with some sense of cosmic order. These were not simply "pocketbook" issues.

These examples should shed some light on our present dilemmas. The paradox of our time has its roots in the transformation of our society that began in the 1960s and 1970s. On the one hand, in contrast to nineteenth-century "free labor" capitalism and twentieth-century mass-production capitalism, the transformation of the United States into a consumerist, post-Fordist, globalized economy has been led by representatives of the Right. Sadly, pathetically, even tragically, if we seek a successor to Abraham Lincoln and Franklin Roosevelt, we will find him in Ronald Reagan. Meanwhile, the Left has developed with very little relation to the presidency or to political parties. On the contrary, it has developed largely as a cultural Left, which understands culture as an essentially separate sphere. This understanding, as I have argued elsewhere, is itself rooted in capitalist development, but no Left has yet turned this connection into a matter of public awareness.

Let me be clear: the great social movements that were born in the 1960s and 1970s—the women's movement; gay liberation; black, Hispanic, Asian and other forms of national or "racial" consciousness—these movements necessarily and inevitably have pursued their own interests with very little attention to the genuinely global transformation that has occurred alongside them. In other words, blacks will pay close attention to Africa (at times) and American feminists will address the oppression of women in Asia or Africa, but this is not the same as an attempt to understand the global totality, as abolitionists understood the global totality when they posed the question as one of freedom versus aristocracy, or as Communists understood the global totality when they framed the question as one of rational planning and co-operation as opposed to the unbridled market.

Let me stop there—just where a reasonable analysis should start. Of course, I do not have an easy solution. For reasons which were partly matters of structural transformation and partly matters of will, the Left and the world have moved in two different directions since the 1960s. The disastrous present situation—whoever wins the election—is the result. The path toward radical hope requires that we understand the roots of our despair. □

My Realistic Utopia

Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz

The first U.S. Army unit to invade Iraq in March 2003 was the Second Armored Cavalry Regiment (ACR). This unit, which also led tanks into Iraq in the first Gulf war and was the head of Patton's Third Army when it crossed Europe, was formed in the 1830s to fight the Seminoles in Florida's Everglades during the third U.S. war to destroy Seminole resistance to colonization. The ACR remembers its past. In the Associated Press, Ellen Knickmeyer reported that while awaiting orders on the Kuwait border before invading Iraq, unit members painted themselves and did "Indian dances" and "war whoops."

Who were the Seminoles, and why are the wars against them, given so little attention in U.S. history texts, so important to the military to this day? Why is the term "Indian Country" still used by the military to refer to enemy territory? Why is U.S. aggression against other peoples so effective in binding U.S. citizens together?

Perhaps it's because we are stuck. We are stuck in a false past and therefore are confused by the present. We can't move forward. We tell others and ourselves lies, often claiming that such lies are necessary in order to "win" people over. The biggest lie, told by both Left and Right is the lie of U.S. origins. The United States cannot envision a utopia, realistic or otherwise, until we realize that this is serious business, this lie, and no good can come of it.

To realize any utopian vision for the United States, we must practice what the people of Ghana call *sankofa*—returning to the past to move forward.

During my thirty years as a historian teaching Native American Studies, I often have required students to complete a specific research project: They must analyze one high-school- or university-level U. S. history textbook currently in use, assessing the quantity and quality of the treatment of Native Americans, looking for accuracy, distortions, and omissions. In this way, I have followed history-textbook development over three decades. My conclusion is that everything has changed and nothing has changed. The newer textbooks include materials on the previously marginalized—indigenous peoples, Africans, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Filipinos, women, workers, socialists, pacifists, anti-

imperialists—albeit mainly portraying them as victims, not actors. What has not changed and why nothing has changed is the essential origin myth.

Origin narratives (or myths) are important since they form the basis of the identity of a people and the ideology that guides them. The core of the U.S. origin myth remains the Columbus story, a story that celebrates colonialism and, ultimately, genocide.

It is true that very few progressives, at least, will openly embrace the Columbus myth anymore, especially since the widespread indigenous protests against celebrating the Quincentenary. However, "Columbus Day" is still celebrated as a national holiday, with the closure of schools, banks, and the U.S. post office, as well as war-plane air shows. The Columbus story remains central in textbooks. And, because of the way ideology works, some progressives have taken to replacing the story of the "bad" colonialist Columbus, not with authentic accounts of the indigenous peoples, but with the story a "good" colonialist, such as Bartolomé de Las Casas, the Spanish bishop of Chiapas. In films like *The Mission* and *Black Robe*, Catholic missionaries become the good Europeans whose actions have been revived to "balance"

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the "misdeeds" of Columbus and the colonizers that followed him. As scholar Martin E. Marty noted in *Bartolomé de las Casas, In Defense of the Indians*, "...as the stock of Columbus has turned bearish, that of Las Casas has gone bullish." And who was Las Casas? A colonizer whose mission was to convert natives, and whose land grant, which included all the indigenous inhabitants, was second in size and population only to Cortez's. Despite good intentions and a politically correct multiethnic focus in textbooks, the core of the U.S. origin myth remains untouched.

Historians are the keepers of secrets. In U.S. history, they act as the protectors of the origin myth. William S. Burroughs' narrator in his 1984 novel, *The Place of Dead Roads*, observes that in the United States "people are not bribed to shut up about what they know. They are bribed not to find

forbade settlers from advancing west, and ordered the return of those who were already squatting illegally in Indian country. From the beginning, the independence-minded settlers were imperialists. Independence and freedom for what else? To own slaves. The right to property. The Brits who won their civil war against the British monarch wanted their own empire and wanted unlimited access to property in the form of free land (taken from sovereign Indian nations) and free labor of Africans (taken from their homeland). The "American Revolution" was not an anti-colonial war of independence like Haiti's or Bolivar's (in both of which slavery was outlawed), but rather a colonial civil war.

The first major act of the Continental Congress—preceding the promulgation of the U.S. Constitution—was the Northwest Ordinance, a colonial scheme borrowed from

We contemporary citizens of this country deny and rationalize the facts of its founding in order to continue the myth that the United States is a benign democracy.

out.... Now Americans are told they should think. But just wait until your thinking is basically different.... You will find out that you AREN'T supposed to think."

What we need is not just free speech. To move forward from this false past we need to learn how to ask questions that are different. For example, when we look at other countries that were formerly colonies, we often ask, "Is this country legitimate?" Why not ask, "Is the United States of America a legitimate entity?" I find this question useful not so much to challenge the legal sovereignty of the current United States, as to challenge its official story.

All of us know the fact that there were thirteen original colonies that revolted against the hated King George. Yet, when I ask my students to quickly draw an outline of the United States in 1800, they draw the present continental form. This Rorschach test of unconscious imperialism (or as it is still quaintly called, "manifest destiny") is quite telling and absolutely innocent. We know better, and yet the subconscious rules. The origin myth works this way. Antonio Gramsci conceptualized ideological hegemony as the complete and total domination of individuals to the point that no overt force is necessary to maintain control. Instead, capitulation to the dominant system appears consensual. It does not appear as domination at all, but, perniciously, as common sense.

Why don't we call the "Revolutionary War" a civil war? Brits were fighting Brits, each loyal to a cause, half of them to the British crown and the other half to independence from it. Independence for what purpose? Jefferson envisioned "a republic for empire." The founders were determined to move over the Appalachian-Allegheny mountain ranges in defiance of the King's 1763 proclamation, which

the British colonial program with some novel innovations. It was the blueprint for gobbling up Indian territory on the other side of the mountains ("Northwest" referred to the Ohio valley and the Great Lakes region, down to what is now Kentucky and Tennessee). Nor did they intend to stop there. President Jefferson put it aptly when he enunciated the Monroe Doctrine in 1801:

However our present interests may restrain us within our own limits, it is impossible not to look forward to distant times, when our rapid multiplication will expand itself beyond those limits and cover the whole northern, if not the southern continent, with people speaking the same language, governed in similar form by laws.

So what? An elite created a new reality for itself, for its own benefit. This has been true all over the world, especially during the past five hundred years plus of capitalistic colonialism/imperialism. What is different is not the historical behavior of the Founders of the United States, but rather the way we contemporary citizens of this country deny and rationalize the facts of its founding in order to continue the myth that the United States is a benign democracy. We refuse to recognize that the overseas imperialism that became evident in the 1898 war with Spain was only a further manifestation of the continental imperialism against the peoples now known as Indians that began with this country's founding, followed soon after by the annexation of half of Mexico.

How do we end U.S. imperialism? How do we create a utopian democracy here at home? We begin by *sankofa*, going back to the beginning, writing a new story of who we are, the real story, that will finally allow us to achieve the country we can become. As the Navajos say, truth is beauty. □

Futilitarianism

Brad Blanton

“Abandon all hope, ye who enter here.” Dante was the First Futilitarian. His prophetic book tells us that to get to heaven, we must first journey through hell. And to journey through hell, we must first abandon all hope—which means we must abandon all hope for heaven as well.

The principle of the hopelessness of hope is the founding principle of the World Futilitarian Church. Our church is also called The Church of the Damned (otherwise known, simply, as the Damned Church). I am The Pope of No Hope.

We Futilitarians believe only two religious precepts, which we hold on to with all our might in order to crowd out any other possible religious beliefs:

Forget it. It's futile.

Pygmies are stealing our luggage. (Based on a holy vision of pygmies swarming all over the globe, stealing each other's luggage and fighting each other to keep their stolen goods.)

Our annual convention takes place every two or three years. We generally get drunk and talk nonsense. This is not much different than staying sober and talking nonsense, except that it's more fun.

In addition to our fundamental theology, we have a philosophy, a science, and a ritual. Our philosophy is cheerful cynicism. Our science is based on the theory that there is no such thing as gravity—the earth sucks. Our only ritual is to stand in front of each other with the fingers of our own hands linked together, demonstrating the hand movements that go along with ... “here's the church, here's the steeple. Open up the doors and look at all the damned people!” We are the best hope of humankind. We are a cult and we do plan to take over the world.

Here is the serious part. We, who are occasionally awake, and who have lived through the second half of the twentieth Century with some degree of intellectual and spir-

itual awareness, are all disillusioned. We doubt all utopian and messianic movements across the face of the earth, and we know better than to be true believers in anything. We've seen enough. True believers in alliance with the greedy are not just the cause of the current conflict in the Middle East and the war in Iraq, they are *always* the cause of war. Greed and malice were married long ago, and their unhappy relationship goes on and on—like most marriages. Attachment to belief is the source of hell on earth. All anger stems from our attachment to ideals and our insistence that we and others live up to them. Idealism with attachment is the source of all conflict between people, and the source of all war is this displaced, disowned, and disacknowledged anger toward people we know. If we could give up all the false hope, attachment to ideals, wishful thinking, attempts to

cheer ourselves and each other up, then something *actually* hopeful might emerge from the authentic acknowledgement of despair. Our only hope comes from the in-depth perspective of the comedian, from the love/hate relationship with our own minds as reflected in the conflict between ourselves and our loved ones, created by withholding and lying to protect ourselves. (Thus, at the level of government, our taxes pay for no less than thirty-six separate so-called “intelligence” secret agencies, who, in addition to being the primary formulators, through secret actions, of our foreign policy, mostly spy on each other a lot!)

Tom Atlee, the author of *The Tao of Democracy*, postulates the possibility of something he calls co-intelligence. He asserts that if people of divergent viewpoints get together and disagree to whatever degree possible but remain committed to solving a problem, they will eventually come up with a solution more brilliant and creative than any of them could have come up with alone. This form of deep democracy differs from the usual process known as co-stupidity. When people can honestly disagree and still stick with each other, instead of having an ideal that all must believe in, in common, before they can act together—we then have a process through which all can discover in common, and create together unique solutions. We substitute the process of mutual problem solving for idealism of any kind. That's it. That's very radical and that's our only hope. Radical hope depends on radical honesty. □



systems in which there are, or are not, elections.

None of these categories addresses the most important question for our future: What configuration of beliefs and institutions—from the family, education, and religion to politics and economics—will support relations based on mutual respect, accountability, and caring rather than top-down rankings backed up by fear and force?

The Partnership Model and the Domination Model

Two basic social configurations transcend our current categories: the partnership model and the domination model. Unlike earlier classifications, the domination and partnership models take into account the central importance of the primary human relations—the formative childhood relationships and the relations between the male and female halves of humanity—in molding our attitudes and behaviors. We now know from neuroscience that the brain's pathways are largely laid after birth. It is thus in our earliest relationships that we first learn respect for human rights or acceptance of human rights violations as normal, inevitable, even moral. These relations also teach us important lessons about violence. When children experience violence from parents or others in their families, or observe violence against their mothers within their own families, they learn it's acceptable to use force to impose one's will on others. If children grow up in families where females serve and males are served—and, as is the case in many world regions, where females get less food and health care—they learn to accept economic injustice in all spheres of life. Social categories that fail to consider the cultural construction of childhood and gender relations do not provide the information we need to build more peaceful and equitable societies.

Hitler's Germany (a technologically advanced, Western, rightist society), Stalin's USSR (a secular leftist society), Khomeini's Iran (an Eastern, religious society), and Idi Amin's Uganda (a tribal society) were some of the most brutally violent and repressive societies of the twentieth century. There are obvious differences between them. But they all share the core configuration of the domination model. They are all characterized by top-down rankings in the family and state or tribe maintained through physical, psychological, and economic control; the rigid ranking of the male half of humanity over the female half; and a high degree of culturally accepted abuse and violence—from child- and wife-beating to chronic warfare.

The partnership model has a different core configuration: a democratic and egalitarian structure in both the fam-

ily and the state or tribe; equal partnership between women and men; and a low degree of built-in violence because force is not needed to maintain rigid rankings of domination. Cultures with this configuration can be tribal, such as the Teduray of the Philippines; agrarian, as are the Minagkabau of East Sumatra; or industrial and postindustrial, like Sweden, Norway, and Finland. These are not ideal societies, but their beliefs and institutions support respect for human rights in families and the family of nations. Nordic nations are democratic cultures where there aren't huge gaps between haves and have-nots. They have laws prohibiting physical punishment of children and a strong men's movement disentangling "masculinity" from domination and violence. Here women play important leadership roles, constituting approximately 40 percent of legislatures. Accordingly, stereotypically feminine traits and activities such as nurturance, nonviolence, and care giving are considered appropriate for men as well as women. The people of these societies are supported by fiscal policies such as funding for universal health care, elder care, childcare allowances, paid parental leave, peace studies, and environ-



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mental protection. And these nations are regularly at the top of the UN national quality-of-life charts.

These more partnership-oriented societies offer living proof that a more peaceful and equitable way of life is possible. Indeed, as I have detailed in *The Chalice and The Blade* and elsewhere, there is strong evidence that the original direction of civilization was along the lines of the partnership model. What has happened once can happen again. We can change our society once we come to understand that the way a culture structures primary human relations is foundational for its entire system of beliefs and values.

Lessons for Activists

Ironically, those trying to push us back to the "good old days" when most men and all women still "knew their place" in rigid rankings of domination recognize the social importance of these primary relations. Be it Hitler in Germany, Khomeini in Iran, the Taliban, or the rightist-fundamentalist alliance in the United States, these people give top priority to "getting women back into their traditional place" in a "traditional family"—a code word for an authoritarian family where women are subordinate and children learn that it's extremely painful to question orders.

Yet many people working for democracy and equality still view "women's rights" and "children's rights" as secondary. And this despite the fact that the UN reports that

violence against women and children is the most widespread human rights violation worldwide, and that the ranking of male over female is a basic model children learn early on for equating difference with superiority and inferiority, which is then generalized to different races, religions, and ethnicities.

It is not coincidental that the 9/11 terrorists came from cultures where women and children are terrorized into submission. Nor is it coincidental that the rightist-fundamentalist alliance in the United States first organized as a powerful political block around a "women's issue"—the defeat of the proposed Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

We too need a new integrated political agenda: a politics of partnership that makes the human rights of the majority—women and children—a top social priority. Key levers for this kind of fundamental change are being created right now; for example, the Spiritual Alliance to Stop Intimate Violence (SAIV) is an international initiative of the Center for Partnership Studies to bring a strong—still missing—moral voice to end violence against women and children.

In sum, if we are serious about social justice and peace, we not only need a new vision of what a pragmatopia really looks like. We must also join together to help construct the solid foundations on which this better society can be built. □

Radical Hopelessness

Deepak Chopra

I want to write in praise of living without hope. The Sufi mystic and teacher Meher Baba once remarked, "The only prerequisite for enlightenment is complete disillusion." That bears on hope in a remarkable way, and on hopelessness.

For anyone who wants to see the world at peace, hope has not been kind. Let's stick with that single issue, since peace would be the touchstone of a new world. Hope hasn't been kind because no period of human history has been without war, and the most terrible conflicts have been in our own time—terrible in the loss of millions of lives but even more terrible because they were started by countries that considered themselves to be at the height of civilization. The barbarians are no longer the problem, even though popular

fear believes they are. The barbarians never had enough nuclear weapons, poison gas, and deadly germs stockpiled to kill the world twenty times over.

It's a great time to be hopeless, and in that attitude we may achieve everything that hope hasn't delivered.

I am thinking back to a famous poem, "Waiting for the Barbarians" by the great Egyptian poet Constantine Cavafy. He imagines the day the Romans sat, filled with dread, awaiting the arrival of the barbarian hordes from the north. The empire is already devastated. Only the final, fatal stroke remains. One feels an immediate tug to our own time and our own dread:

What are we waiting for, assembled in the forum?
The barbarians are due here today.
Why isn't anything happening in the senate?
Why do the senators sit there without legislating?
Because the barbarians are coming today.
And when they come, they'll make their own laws.

These are the perfect lines to have read the day after

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9/11, when an entire society felt paralyzed by the approach of "them," a people outside our notion of civilization. It was a moment when hope delivered one of its cruelest blows (although in sheer numbers Gettysburg and the Battle of the Sommes, the killing fields of Cambodia and the machete uprisings in Rwanda were far more horrific).

I feel myself standing there with Cavafy and the Romans. He describes how the emperor got up early so that he could sit in state when the barbarians crashed through the city's defenses. The wealth of Rome is also gathered there, equally vulnerable: Why are they carrying elegant canes/beautifully worked in silver and gold?/Because the barbarians are coming today/and things like that dazzle the barbarians.

It is a scene of utter hopelessness; there is no stopping the barbarians. They embody the violence of human nature, the greed of hordes overrunning a peaceful land for no better reason than their own lust for plunder. Cavafy tightens the strings of our nerves by the very fact that he paints no pictures of hurled spears, gashed skin, and screaming.

Then something bizarre happens. The massacre that the crowd expects does not happen. Restless and confused, people begin to disperse. "Because night has fallen and the barbarians have not come./And some who have just returned from the border say/there are no barbarians any longer."

Could this be true? Is it true for us, despite our paralyzing fear of "them"? Cavafy was thinking of his own time, during the era of Hitler and Mussolini, when he wrote these prophetic ending lines: "And now, what's going to happen to us without barbarians?/They were, those people, a kind of solution."

I think we have lived by that same "solution" for a very long time. The particular barbarians, whether Goths or Islamists, don't matter. In the perpetual existence of a single mind-set—"us versus them"—the hope for peace died. Peace never had a chance to begin with. It was utterly hopeless.

If only we could have lived up to that hopelessness. For hope poisons reality when it is based on falsity. What Cavafy so brilliantly realized is that if you eliminate the "solution," the problem disappears. Expanding this argument, the mentality of "us versus them" is actually an expression of the larger unreality, which is dualism. Spiritual people are just as prone to this form of illusion as non-spiritual people. They are prone to it because they devote themselves to fighting against duality all the time. But what is the alternative? Our senses are part of duality. Our thoughts arise in duality. Our actions and feelings express the natural fact that at every moment we choose between A and B. In so choosing, we reinforce duality each and every time.

In Nietzsche's famous phrase, if you stare at a monster long enough, you become the monster. Which is a provoca-

tive way of saying that if you dwell on duality long enough, it swallows you up.

Radical hope, as I understand the phrase, entails finding a practical way to escape the divisions that duality imposes. These divisions run deep. Good versus evil, dark versus Light, body versus soul, us versus them. Even when you try with all your might to be on the side of the angels, the inescapable fact is that good defines evil and vice versa. The day that good was born it discovered that it had a twin in the cosmos, and both are immortal.

So it really is hopeless to side with good. Hopeless if you want a radical shift in the world, that is. Of course, putting yourself on the side of good is the best, the only, way to live everyday life. But we are talking about radical hope, which means metaphysical hope. The question, then, is what it would be like if hope merged with hopelessness? Rumi, the most confident of metaphysical poets, says, "There is a field beyond right and wrong. Come, and I will meet you there." We must find that field, for we can't end duality one issue at a time. If hope is your guiding beacon, you must be willing to view it metaphysically, in that region where hope ends. The only kind of hope that will succeed is one that melts into its opposite and thereby achieves peace.

In India this is called *Vedanta*. *Veda* is the truth, the good life as handed down from God, but all the good people in the world don't make it a peaceful place. We have had good people for a long time, and yet the world is a sinkhole of violence, intolerance, famine, war, and greed. *Vedanta* means "the end of the Veda," or, in other words, looking beyond goodness. You may call this a form of radical hope, and I would agree, but what is it in practical terms? It's realizing that only spiritual solutions will work, that these solutions only come about with a change in consciousness, and that such a change in consciousness occurs one person at a time.

Transformation isn't a move into greater goodness. It's metamorphosis, and until you achieve it personally, hoping for deep change in the world is unrealistic.

Disillusionment is part of the process, and a blessed part. There is a metaphysical law that states that we should celebrate our losses, for only the unreal can be lost, and once it is gone, only the real remains. Hence Meher Baba's apparently cynical (but in fact very wise) advice that the only way to enlightenment is through total disillusion. The key word is "total." If you intend to change your consciousness so completely that duality is extinguished, you will no longer be an ego-driven personality. You will have no stake in politics or psychology or money or the future. Your only stake will be in the timeless region where consciousness is born. Find that seed ground, and every day that you touch it, even lightly, you will surely add to the peace of the world in a way that no other action can hope to do. At one level you will remain the concerned citizen, the doer of good, the person full of hope. But at a deeper level you will keep your eyes on the Absolute as the only begetter of transformation here on earth. □

Hope in Really Dark Times

Michael Nagler

I am not a visionary. I claim to be a practical idealist.
—Mahatma Gandhi

Do not conform yourself to this world, but transform
yourself with your renewed mind.
—Romans XII.2

Christopher Lasch wrote *The Culture of Narcissism* in 1979. In November of 2000, George W. Bush took office, one of the most narcissistic persons to hold power, by means fair and foul, since fascism ran off with Europe. Yes, “conservatives” have been systematically, relentlessly building their power through a network of think tanks and media since the 1970s; yes, they have more money than progressives will ever dream of; and yes, the Governor of Florida cheated voters. But even these events call out for some sort of explanation, and here is mine: American culture, overwhelmingly that of the commercial mass media, creates in millions of people a self-centered, materialistic worldview, which in turn strongly supports a totalitarian politics. Egocentric politicians appeal to the egotism in each of us. When that egotism is inflated, narcissistic “leaders” (they are really more like mass followers) come strongly to power.

According to one study, urban Americans are exposed to thirty thousand commercial messages every day. Underlying virtually every one of those messages is a subtext of narcissism. A new spa in my community brags, “It’s all about you.” Why bother to follow spelling rules if you’re that good a narcissist? Over the last four years our neoconservative directorate embarked on a mad agenda involving nothing less than markedly totalitarian control of the United States—a grim makeover to be sure—and a brazen re-colonization of the world. How could such an agenda seem even remotely sane, not to say acceptable, without a whole culture of self-serving narcissism resonating beneath it?

So where is hope? There is hope, first of all, in the negative fact that totalitarianism, like any form of violence (starting with violence to the truth) is unstable by virtue of its own contradictions. When Gandhi came through Rome on his way back from the Round Table Conference in 1931, Mussolini asked him what he thought of the fascist empire he

was building in Italy. With his God-given faith in the principle I’ve just stated—and his enviable *chutzpah*—the Mahatma replied, “You’re building a house of cards.” Narcissism, even before it plays itself out as physical violence, is a lie. It is based on a lie about human nature and the nature of life, teaching us that we don’t care about each other and we can find fulfillment alone. Anyone who does not dare succumb to despair believes, and we are right to believe, that there must be a way to mobilize the truth against such slander.

The lie that we’re addressing has a metaphysical foundation. It rests, in the last analysis, on the regressive idea that human beings, and the world in general, consist of matter and are therefore built up out of parts that are disconnected from each other and from any final meaning. This dreary worldview, rendering us misfits at best in a sterile universe, cannot but result in some form of totalitarianism, which, as Hannah Arendt chillingly said, “strives not toward despotic rule over men but toward a system in which men are superfluous.” But in the end, such systems fail. How long can human beings support a system that constructs their own irrelevancy? As totalitarianism exerts its grim toll, the human spirit must rise once again with the triumphant assertion that we are spiritual beings, deeply interconnected and bound together by a destiny of great meaning. And then the contradictions become the old system’s cleavage planes. Dan Baum, in *The New Yorker*, has recently described the “unaccountable” fact (it can easily be explained by the theory of nonviolence) that men in combat are often more traumatized by the harm they cause others than by the injuries they themselves suffer. A group of amputees just returned from Iraq, for example, was found to be quite eager to talk about how they lost an arm or leg, even to joke about it, but fell silent when asked to describe how they killed. Other returnees are, once again—just like Vietnam—having nightmares in broad daylight, “losing it,” attacking their wives, committing suicide. How does the Army respond? They don’t talk about it. To acknowledge this trauma would, in the words of an Army psychiatrist, “pathologize an absolutely necessary experience.” Well, imagine what would happen if it were known that war is *not* an absolutely necessary experience. We would at once see what we’re calling “pathological” is the sensitivity that makes us human! Only by shoring up this massive denial—and this is only one of many, all equally vulnerable—do we conceal from ourselves the insight that could refocus our entire culture, and the politics that grow from it.

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In other words, just as the cultural begets the political, there is a still deeper level of human being that in turn creates culture. Jan Christiaan Smuts, who had been Gandhi's opponent in South Africa, once told Churchill that Gandhi had beaten them because he had access to the people's spiritual yearnings while they, the ruling Europeans, did not. (Churchill retorted, "Nonsense, I have appointed many bishops.")

And Gandhi himself? He insisted that every one of us has the same latent spiritual power that he mobilized. We can only find out whether he was right, it seems to me, if we make every effort to develop that power through spiritual practice (such as systematic meditation). We also have to stay clear of the commercial mass-media (lest we get re-infected), and if we want to turn the consciousness purified by these practices into a force that can act on the surrounding world, there is one other thing most of us need to do. We need to spend some time learning about nonviolence—what it is and how it works. Nonviolence, as David Dellinger once said, is about as well understood today as electricity was in the days of Marconi and Edison. Once it is understood, we will see that nonviolence is the key to spiritual change, to peace within and from within.

As I write this, our fellow citizens are seriously debating a "choice" between a candidate who will do evil and a candidate who will fail to do good. If you're like me, you're getting daily "surveys" from one party or the other, but the issue we most care about, peace—isn't even listed. In other words, we are decisively shut out of the political process and—unless we have enough money to buy a television network—the mass media that shape that

process, or rather deform it. There is only one way left open to us, and that way lies in the spiritual ground of our own being. Perhaps it was the one we should have taken all along. □



The Messiah Did Not Come

Zalman Schachter-Shalomi

Look! Please! At our hardship,
Take on our cause,
And with urgent speed redeem us
For Your reputation's sake.
Are You not a powerful and effective liberator?
We praise You who constantly redeems Israel.
(R'eh na' v'onyenu, Amidah)

Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi has been at the forefront of pioneering Jewish spiritual renewal. His most recent book is *Wrapped in a Holy Flame*.

This prayer expresses our plight. Things are not rosy. We are under siege as souls in bodies, in a world that is under attack from the depredation of our fellow human beings. What can we do but look to God in hope to better our situation and to bring us to the *G'ullah shlemah*, the complete redemption?

R. Phineas b. Yair says: When [the Second] Temple was destroyed, scholars and noblemen were ashamed and covered their head, men of integrity were disregarded, and brutal and slick glib-tongued politicians grew powerful. Nobody inquires, nobody prays [for the oppressed], and nobody asks upon whom can we rely? Upon our Father who is in heaven. (Talmud, Sotah 49 a)

Our condition is the condition of exile, alienation, and disconnection from the source of the Good, the True, and the Beautiful. If anyone tells us that we are not in the condition that we characterize as exile, we point to our paralysis of feeling, our powerlessness and hopelessness, our suffering and hurt, our dying and wounded selves. This exilic sensibility is not only a Jewish view; you find it in Christianity, where a "second Coming" is expected because we are still "exiled children of Eve in the vale of tears" (*Salve Regina*). Islam also makes a distinction between *dunya*, the plight of this world, and *akhir*, that which is to happen in the coming world, and they too await the last Imam. Buddhism begins with the acceptance that life is suffering, *dukkha*, and Hinduism teaches that we are in the *Kali Yuga*, the dark age, and tells us in the Bhagavad Gita (Canto 4:7) that "Whenever righteousness declines and evil rears its head I, Krishna, in my magic take on a body to bring back righteousness." Native Americans and other indigenous peoples, having been subjected to genocide, feel oppressed as does every member of a minority among a hostile majority. Oppressed peoples hope for redemption.

The Messiah Did Not Come

Imagine how we felt in the years of the Holocaust. In 1943 I was studying in the Lubavitcher Yeshiva at 770 Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rebbe Yossef Yitzchak Schneersohn, had published a series of broadsides in the Yiddish papers in which he announced the coming of the Mashiach, the Messiah. The very first issue of a new Lubavitch journal known in those days as *HaK'riya v'haK'dushah* published a song called *Shir HaGe'ulah*, the Song of Redemption. That song—like many Hebrew prayers—included an acrostic. The first letters of each line of the song spelled out *B'at Meshichenu b'HaTaSba'g iy'h*, the coming of the Messiah will be in the Jewish year 5703, 1943 on the Western calendar. We were told that one way to hurry up the coming of the Messiah was to clear the air, which was polluted by all kinds of unspiritual, materialistic notions, and that the best way to purify the air was to recite the Mishnah, the code of law that forms the base of the Talmud. So we learned Mishnah by heart, and walking through the streets, we would recite it.

We were also given little stickers that said, "*L'alter LiT'shuvah L'Alter LiG'ullah*," or "The sooner you repent, the sooner the redemption will come." That fall I went to a meeting at which the Rebbe spoke. A public speech from him was a big event, and I was hanging on his every word, waiting for him to announce the coming of the Mashiach. But the year passed and *tafshin daled*, 5704, arrived, and the Mashiach had not yet come. At that point we were confused.

As time went on, the question grew in my mind: "I do not want to give up hope, I do not want to let go of redemption. How am I to understand the Messiah?" If the Messiah

was not going to be a Lubavitcher Rebbe descended from the House of David whose role was to save the chosen Jewish people, then what did it mean to hope and pray for the Messiah?

As I began to think about how these expected and hoped-for events might take place in a palpable reality, I began to see things in a different light. One of the ways I used to express myself at that time was, "How will I know that the Messiah has come? I will have to ask his wife what she thinks of him." My sense was that all those people who worked very hard for public recognition and public service neglected their own families. I couldn't imagine a messiah who had not redeemed his own family. The Messiah might not be a famous Rebbe, but rather a seemingly ordinary person.

Nor, I came to believe, could there be a messianic situation in which other people would remain unredeemed.

I started to keep in mind what Reb Zussya once said, or was it Reb Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev: "Dear God, if You don't send the Messiah to us, send Him to the Gentiles." The point being that the aim of messianism was not the redemption of our people, the Jewish people, but Redemption—if we were not to be redeemed, at least some people should be redeemed.

I made clear how I felt during the Cold War when I wrote the "Dirge on Auschwitz":

Alas, how poor are words to state our pain
In remembering the millions slain,
While yet upon our souls the stain
Of standing by while brothers called in vain.
Unshriven here we are depressed
As long as somewhere someone is oppressed
As long as the murderers the meek suppressed,
And grieving mothers wail distressed.
Shall You, O God, not bear Your guilt this day
For standing by while multitudes in blood did lay,
And silent You unmoved didst stay,
Your covenant to help us didst betray.
While millions' lives to ash were turned,
To their last breath Your intervention yearned,
Still hoping day and night, while all the ovens burned.
Why were our prayers of desperation spurned?
If Your own we are, O Lord, then You are King
If only by Your leave occurs each thing.
Then butcher You and we the offering,
Yet who, but You, can heal our suffering?
The help You send us must renew
All of humankind, not just the Jew
The Arabs and the Russians too
Must be freed, ere peace is true.
Send Your anointed Savior, Lord,
To Turn to plowshares atom's sword.
May each see Him, the One adored
And prophesied by prophet's word.

Saying that the Messiah does not come just for the Jews

does not mean I accept all the messiahs other religions have said already have come. Nor do I feel I need to engage in discussion with “messianic Jews.” There is no point in jousting with proof texts that have not been understood in the original languages and that have been misapplied. However, in their longing for salvation, I respect their dissatisfaction with the world as it is now. The questions they raise about the dire and corrupt condition of our society are good ones even if their answers are atavistic throwbacks.

As time continued—and after I took LSD—I personally stopped expecting an individual man to come and by some magic redeem us all. In fact, if such a pretender were to show, I would do whatever I could to unmask him, because I don’t believe that there is a single individual so groomed to redeem **all** the world’s peoples. How far my views had changed! No scion of the House of David came to redeem the Jews—my old sense of the Messiah had died. But not my belief in the Messiah.

I still continue, every day, to recite in the Amidah the words for “may the going forth of the sprout of David become strong; Do raise up his lot in your salvation, for we expect and look forward **every day** to his coming.” When I recite the Grace After Meals, I still ask, “May the Merciful One cause us to merit to live in the days of the Messiah and the life of the world to come.” Only now, each time I recite these words, I have to ask myself, “What do these words **now** mean to me?”

We Need The Mashiach

Here is one reason why I must continue to believe in the Messiah:

I was at the *Kotel*, the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, for Tisha B’Av night, the Ninth of Av. I was there to hear Reb Shlomo Carlebach give us a teaching on the Book of Lamentations. It was greatly crowded there that night. When I turned to view the crowd, I saw a fine-looking man with a beautiful crimson cape, gold embroidered, with a crown on his head. The Haredi kids were trying to trip him up, but he had a long big shofar in his hand and danced around them. I was eager to talk to him, to find out who he was and what he brought with him.

Just then, one of the Haredim came over and began to shout. The women, who were on the other side of the *mechitzah*, the barrier separating the sexes, had climbed up to the top to be able to see and hear what Reb Shlomo would be saying. This Haredi, in a very abusive way, yelled at the women, saying, “Tell those — to get off the wall.” When I heard the abusive language of this man, I grabbed hold of him and was ready to have it out with him. The soldiers who kept order pulled us apart, so we didn’t fight. To my regret, when I looked around later on for the man with the crimson cape, I no longer saw him. In my heart I knew that, once again, our baseless hatred for each other had driven the Messiah away.



Without the messianic expectation, we have no inspiration to stop this kind of hatred; without the messianic expectation, we fall into great despair. When I ask myself, “Do I still believe that there is a messianic future?” the words of Reb Pinchas of Koretz come to me: “When God saw how far we had gotten away from Sinai and how we had become so depressed in the exile, He took some light from the Mashiach and put it in the heart of the Ba’al Shem Tov and this is how we were given the courage to go on.”

When in my mind I had focused on the Mashiach, I had in the past zoomed **in** to the specific Jewish story. When I allowed my mind to zoom **out** to see a much larger field, I could see a more credible unfolding of a messianic scenario. For me, there is something in the future that is pulling us. I read Ilya Prigogine’s work, in which he points out that self-contained systems are due to fall into entropy because *structures are dissipative*. If it weren’t for the *strange attractor*, these systems would all get lost in entropy. It is my belief that humanity would also fall into entropy without a strange attractor, and that this attractor is the one who comes from the future and speaks to us in Messianic terms.

Planetary Messianism

What kind of Messiah could usher the world into the future, speaking to all of us, and reflecting each of us? I began to embrace the notion of Gaia, following Teilhard de Chardin's understanding of how we move from the biosphere into the *noosphere*. The noosphere is the promise that the whole world will be filled with the knowledge of God as the water covers the sea (Isaiah 11:9), and that from the noosphere we would move into the divinization of the planet. In this view, every one of the world's religions is intrinsic to the health of the planet. Each of us individual human beings is a vital organ of the planetary whole. The best way we can serve planetary interests and work for the healing of our planet is for us to become the best Jews we can be and to encourage the others to be the best Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Paganists, and so forth that they can be. I began to see a messianic future in the harmony of all of us working together for the healing of the planet.

I did not want to give up hope. How was I to understand the Messiah? If the Messiah was not going to be a Lubavitcher Rebbe descended from the House of David whose role was to save the chosen Jewish people, then what did it mean to hope and pray for the Messiah?

The Gaian principle also gave me an understanding that in some situations, one is to look at the event of the messianic time in incremental terms. By saying that I expect the Messianic age to come **every day**, I mean that every day brings with itself a redemptive feature. When I think of the scourges of smallpox and polio, I see that as far as these are concerned, the Messiah has arrived. When I see the continuing depredations of AIDS and cancer, I see that there the Messiah has not yet arrived. Each time Jews and Arabs celebrate a *sulha* in Israel, there is an incremental move toward the Messiah. Everything that we can do we must do to bring the "Messiah."

Here is where I like the formulation of Rabbi Arthur Waskow, in the way in which he speaks of a talmudic dictum: The Talmud tells us that certain laws are "*Hilkei ta lim'shichah*"; they are the laws of the messianic times. Rabbi Waskow interprets that to mean, "These are laws **toward** the messianic era."

If you follow these laws, you can bring the Messiah. This business of "I expect the Messiah every day (*b'chol yom*)" hooks into another phrase we chant in the liturgy: "You are holy, Your name is holy, and the holy ones **every day** praise Your name." I read that to mean that the people who have brought holiness into **every day** praise your name. It is that **everyday** holiness that I strive to understand (for myself and

for the world) to be the Messianic thing.

There are moments many of us have had that we call peak experiences, moments when it felt that we led an Edenic existence. These intermittent flashes of the Edenic, irenic-like, speak to me. Why couldn't we work to create the feeling of such moments? What if we began by creating first some small groups where we would work in an agape form, caring for and loving each other. Then we could spread this practice out in wider and wider circles, applying that loving behavior that comes from an understanding that we are all cells in the body of the living earth.

The ethic we would create would be what His Holiness the Dalai Lama once called a secular ethic, that is to say, an ethic that is not necessarily rooted in any particular religious pronouncement, but that arises from a recognition of the natural integration of all living things on this planet. My sense is that this kind of *b'chol yom*, this **everyday** expectation to be somehow in a more messianic place, can lead us to

move beyond the single moment and create an Edenic experience that would spread itself.

The Sufis have a way of discussing this experience. They say, sometimes we are in a momentary elation, which they call *hall*. Their hope is that this elation will become so established that it becomes permanent, creating a sensory state they call *maqam*. This is the work then that we have to do in *tikkun olam*, to be able to spread and extend the moments and the social fibers that have become so shortened, to extend them to more fully embrace not only human beings, but also all sentient life on this planet. This ethic is what I see as *Y'mot Hamashiach*, the way of the Messiah.

Because I believe in this secular ethic, every day I continue to say—even as I did as a Lubavitcher—"Harachaman Hu y'zakeynu li'y'mot hamashiach ul'chayyey ha'olam habba, May the Source of compassion grant us to live in the days of the Mashiach and experience the Edenic life." At this point I can open myself only to the imagination of what that may be like. If each of us would share these visions with each other and begin to live them *b'chol yom*, every day, we could create the field for the manifestation of that *oysgebenkte sho*, that "longed-for hour," that the survivors of the Shoah sang about. In engaged practice we find that there is always an oncoming moment of the Messianic in our lives. □

Celebrating Tikkun and Tragicomic Hope

Cornel West

Eighteen years of TIKKUN exemplifies the power of fearless speech in the face of the powers that be. Many predicted that Tikkun would not be able to survive for 18 years. In fact, it is growing, it has been influential, it has changed lives, it has changed public discourse, and it will continue to do so. While the Tikkun Community as a movement may have a Core Vision that I support, I am glad that TIKKUN as a magazine is open to perspectives very different from our own. We include both politics that, while rooted in a flawed secular Enlightenment view of progress, nevertheless have important things to say about the current moment, and also even more orthodox religious thinkers who have important things to say. So I want to pay tribute to TIKKUN and the people of the Tikkun Community for being courageous enough to cut against the grain, not only in regard to Israel/Palestine issues, but in regard to a whole new conception of how one talks about radical politics in our time. We are a community of pluralism, heterogeneity, variety, and diversity brought together by a fundamental commitment to making the world more just, more caring, more compassionate.

While the Tikkun Community believes that radical progress is possible, I have always had a profound suspicion of a certain kind of utopianism. However, I find in TIKKUN a different kind of hope, a tragi-comic hope that I would be reluctant to label utopian; an ideal that lures one but which we know will never be fully created by human hands, and that is what I'm hoping TIKKUN means by "practical utopianism."

I've found the tragicomic hope of which I speak in the blues developed by African Americans, but it is not the property of any one people. One finds it in Lucian in the Roman Empire, in Cervantes in the Spanish empire; one finds it in Chekov in the Russian empire, and one finds it in some of the great Yiddish writers. It cuts across cultures and national backgrounds.

Much of standard left politics is linked to a legacy of the Enlightenment, tied to a demystification and secularization of the world that many of us in Tikkun now find to be an unpersuasive narrative, though there were some wonderful lib-

eratory things done in the name of that narrative. A tragicomic view is one that, as Samuel Beckett and Franz Kafka made clear, locates human beings as already in "the mess" of the world with no way to ever fully escape it. When we see our lives through this lens, the stress is partly on what the Enlightenment also affirmed: the courage to think critically about one's situation. Yet it is also on what the Enlightenment did not adequately articulate: the courage to care, to feel deep agony and anguish, to deal with the tears generated by the suffering that people experience—and this is not only a matter of following some objective and rational moral law, but is also rooted in the blood-drenched tear-soaked traditions of resistance, critique, and contestation—and in the agency of the wretched of the earth. The courage to hope, like laughter and dance, is an attempt to endure, to persevere, to fight, and to struggle come what may. Nothing can extinguish or crush radical hope—no matter what we continue to think critically about, care deeply for, or hope substantively to achieve—and this is the blues shining through the darkness.

The Tikkun Community should continue to foster this kind of tragicomic hope, because tragicomic hope needs net-

AP PHOTO/RICH SCHULTZ

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Nothing can extinguish or crush radical hope—no matter what we continue to think critically about, care deeply for, or hope substantively to achieve.

works, friendships, communities, face-to-face interactions where you can talk and touch and interact and sustain each other in thinking out of the box. A community that genuinely emphasizes the spiritual dimension and is characterized by real questioning, dialogue, and compassion toward its own members and toward people who do not yet share our views has a good chance of sustaining itself. But of course there are no guarantees, and much depends on the people who actually get involved; who take on leadership roles and the responsibility of sustaining things; who do the hard work yet are willing to be self-critical, prophetic in its witness, open to new directions, and to project the authentic humility that is a nec-

essary component of spiritual maturity. Our activity must encourage laughter and a willingness to acknowledge the incompleteness and incongruity of the moment.

Tragicomic hope is only one among many other prophetic and progressive voices that *TIKKUN* magazine seeks to highlight. The magazine has been and must remain open to a serious dialogue about how to keep alive the mending of the world—the tikkuning of the world—in order to make it a better place. It is because *TIKKUN* magazine has in fact embodied both this openness and the spirit of tragicomic hope that it has been able to sustain itself and make such an important contribution for these past eighteen years. □

Radical Hope Has No Meaning

Eric Yoffie

The idea of radical hope has no meaning to me.

I am a religious Jew who attempts to devote his life to the study of Torah and to the observance of the mitzvot that I find there. I never question that it is my task to pursue justice in the world, because Torah commands me to do so.

In my daily study, I never cease to be amazed, fortified, and inspired by the ethical power of our traditional texts, which speak of justice in a clear and unequivocal way. I am astonished by those who profess to be religious Jews and yet fail to discern in Torah God's passion for justice on earth. God is preoccupied with the well-being of the poor and is immersed in such nitty-gritty matters as debts, mortgages, wages, and interest. I demonstrate my belief in God by emulating God's behavior. The notion that one can be a practicing Jew and yet be unconcerned with economic justice is beyond my understanding.

Do I occasionally get discouraged by my failure and the failure of others to implement the Torah's principles of justice in the world? From time to time. But when I get discouraged, that is not the fault of the world or of other people; it is my fault. I am not naïve about the human capac-

ity for evil. The advantage to being part of a 3500-year-old tradition is that we are prepared for whatever happens today because it has happened to us before. Believing Jews—at least those of the liberal variety—are students of history, and we Jews have had ample experience with prejudice, cruelty, mass murder, and death. Furthermore, Torah records in great detail the persistent unwillingness of the human species to submit to God's desire for justice on earth, and therefore no student of Torah has a right to claim ignorance of the realities of our world. But being a realist does not excuse me—or any other religious Jew—from fulfilling my Jewish obligations to the surrounding society.

And if I get discouraged nonetheless, what do I do? If I am able, I travel to Jerusalem and drink in the miracle of the rebirth of a sovereign Jewish nation in her ancient homeland. More often, I open my *Tanach* and turn to the prophets, who express in language of sweeping lyrical power their belief that no matter how wrong things are, God will someday put them right. Astute students of human nature who were also thunderous critics of how mighty nations exploited weak nations and the rich exploited the poor, the prophets nonetheless dreamed of a time when the lion would lie down with the lamb, nations would be joined together in brotherhood and sisterhood, and all of us would walk with God and delight in God's teaching. When I read

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their words, I cannot help but share their dreams and their hopes. In addition, I do as Jews have always done and find strength and reinforcement in prayer and the rituals of my tradition. Just as I am appalled by those right-wing Jews who refuse to acknowledge the ethical side of Judaism, so too am I saddened by left-wing Jews who see Judaism primarily as a culture of ethics and not a religion at all. In my experience, these Jews—denied the glow of the Shabbat candles, the structured holiness of ritual life, and the support of a religious community—are very likely to end up as discouraged dropouts or embittered fanatics in the fight for justice.

In short, hope is deeply embedded in the religious tradition that sustains me. I have no need for external sources of moral and spiritual encouragement. My advice: let Jews who want radical hope—or any other kind of hope—turn to their Judaism. They will find it there.

Of course, while Torah mandates certain values, it is not a political handbook. It endorses no particular political philosophy or system. The prophets were unbending in their demand for justice but pragmatic about political matters. Therefore, I study politics and political culture in order to learn how I and my community can effectively implement the values that we cherish.

Still, I am keenly aware that political systems are a means and not an end, and that tragedy always results when human beings make any political system—Marxism, socialism, fascism—into an ultimate value. To confuse human desire with God's will is idolatry, and this is what a justice-seeking religious Jew fears the most.

Finally, a word about religious messianism. There is a messianic element in Judaism that is hinted at in the prophets and further developed by the rabbis. But it is not a central strand of Jewish practice, and popular messianic beliefs flow largely from the world of sentiment and folklore. Recognizing the dangers of messianic tendencies, rabbis of all persuasions and in all eras have tried to control apocalyptic and redemptionist themes. Yet from time to time, especially during periods of upheaval and severe persecution, messianic enthusiasm has burst through rabbinic constraints, leaving despair, economic dislocation, and disbelief in its wake.

Today, as in days past, those who find romance in the language of the messianic future are embarking on a perilous path. The Jewish enterprise is devoted to the observance of Torah and fulfilling God's will; messianic claims, on the



other hand, are inevitably used to justify ethical lapses, to promote organizational and personal interests, and to glorify military victories or explain military defeats. Modern-day messianic practitioners, such as *Gush Emunim* and other settlement groups, have been no exception to this pattern. The result is to undermine rather than advance devotion to Torah.

Proper perspective was provided more than 800 years ago by Maimonides, who understood that messianism belongs at the peripheries of Jewish concern. He wrote in the *Mishneh Torah* (Kings 12:2):

Neither the sequence of these events (predicting the Messiah's coming) nor their minute details are of basic importance in religion. One should never deal with legendary topics.... One should not consider them essential, since they do not lead to love and reverence for God.

If we are guided by Maimonides' realities, we need not banish the Messiah from our religious world. There is surely no harm in a Jew waiting for the Messiah, as long as this is understood: the Messiah is one whose coming I await, while the Messiah who actually comes is always a false Messiah. □

Messianic Terror

Gil Anidjar

Since the Quincentennial celebrations of 1492, numerous events and publications have made ever more popular the mythical story of the "Golden Age" of medieval Spain, known by its Arabic name: al-Andalus. Referring to a period that began with the conquest of the Iberian peninsula by Arab and Berber soldiers and said to have (repeatedly) ended with the Almoravid and Almohad conquests of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the near completion of the Christian *reconquista* in the thirteenth century, the expulsion of the Jews in 1492, the destruction of the last Muslim Kingdom of Granada in the same year, or, finally, the expulsion of the last converted Muslims in 1609, al-Andalus is the Arabic name for the Iberian peninsula and for "Islamic Spain." It is the name of a long period of complex co-existence of Arabs and Jews, Muslims and Christians under various forms of political and cultural orders.

How do we explain the increased political and cultural investment in this myth, and the singular place it has come to occupy in the imagination? After all, Jews and Arabs, Christians and Muslims, have lived together, and continue to do so, from Baghdad to Cordoba, via Marrakech and Cairo and back to Baghdad, from the eighth to the twentieth century. Actually, Arabs and Jews, Christians and Muslims are still living together in both democratic and non-democratic countries. How well and for how long? This is a question that has little to do with any particular utopia. It applies rather to any population in the entire world, and to this day the answer is not too original: never well enough. Could be better.

The myth of al-Andalus has deep, if quite modern, roots in Western culture. Its current incarnation, which has gained renewed force since the Oslo accords in 1993, is not significantly different. Erudite narratives, rather than literary accounts, are setting the tone. Richard Fletcher's *Moorish Spain* and, more recently, María Rosa Menocal's *The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews, and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain* are exemplary in that they simultaneously warn against idealized narratives and confirm the singular blend of cultures for which al-Andalus remains a symbol. In this version, al-Andalus functions less as a site of nostalgia than as a symbol

of hope. Not everything was perfect, the story goes—consider the brutal conclusion—but then and there, and for a short time, Jews, Muslims, and Christians were able to live together, to produce monuments to the beauty of coexistence and a life of cultural, political and religious riches. Al-Andalus is the utopic, comforting model of a multicultural society where, in spite of tensions, a measure of harmony reigned.

It may seem superfluous to ask about the political function served by this myth today. Yet, two premises that underscore its contemporary resonance—its place and function today—have hardly been questioned. First, al-Andalus was an exception. Second, Islam—an Islam akin to fundamentalism—put an end to it all. Historical accuracy aside (the "responsibility" for the cultural and political destruction of Arabic culture in the Iberian peninsula lies rather in the so-called *Reconquista*, the crusade led by Christian kings for purposes that often had little to do with religious issues), one easily understands the appeal of al-Andalus. The story offers the image of an isolated country, a solitary beacon of light and civilization in a dangerous world. The force of the story comes from the limited size of the window of hope it offers—a few hundred years of multicultural coexistence on a relatively small territory—and from the reasons given for its sad conclusion: Its end and failure were and remain Islam's fault.

Hear it, then, as if you were asked to make a leap of faith: The battle to maintain civilization, to protect and expand it, was always a battle against Jews and Arabs. At once crusade and mission, it was always a fight for the better society—utopia—against the main sites of "backwardness" and "barbarism." The myth of al-Andalus is part of a larger, newer apparatus that parallels precisely the Oslo Accords and the current rhetoric, both of which are predicated on separation. Al-Andalus, like Oslo and its "failure," points to the impossibility of coexistence, the necessity of borders as the painful lesson of history. Al-Andalus celebrates and marks the sad but inevitable separation of Jew from Arab.

Where do we learn this from? We learn it from the history of Europe. It is the history of Europe that teaches us that every statement or image commenting on *either Jew or Arab*, has always been a document about *both Jew and Arab*. Until today, such documents are always about asserting that there is no connection between the Jew and the Arab. The persistent and strategic separation of the two questions remains

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unacknowledged. And with dire consequences: no essential connections are acknowledged between Islamophobia and Judeophobia, between Orientalism and anti-Semitism. Except for vague statements about racism and its comparable forms, or about historical and structural parallels, any explicit connection is dismissed or discouraged, if not condemned outright. It is as if there were two questions rather than one. For it is not just that these two names, the Jew and the Arab (among many others) have attained increased, if also unequal, visibility while historical and colonial legacies are still being played out and even acted out around them. In the final analysis, the one and only question is that of the continuous role played by Europe in perceiving and “managing” its minorities, whether at the level of policy or at the level of discourse and phobias, as open racism or covert discrimination.

Why Europe? Because Europe invented “utopia” while reinventing itself as free of Muslims and Jews—free, that is, of “religion.” It is a long story, of course, which I will not tell here. Indeed, there is reason to doubt that anyone has told it, aside perhaps from Edward Said and Mahmoud

tutional, intellectual, “expert,” and others) in the West who separate Jewish history from Arab history, Jewish fate from Arab fate.

The myth of al-Andalus has the advantage of playing two roles at once. It is the site of a hope that peaceful coexistence is possible, if only the other side still wanted it. On the other hand, it is a reminder that al-Andalus was not a democracy, that its political regimes of *califat* and, subsequently, of kingdoms never protected human rights. This anachronism governs most “historical” judgments, affecting primarily the understanding of the notion of *dhimma*, the legal status of minorities under Muslim rule, which compares—badly, of course—with the universal rights of man and of the citizen. Al-Andalus is the perfect embodiment of rallying image and stern warning, hope and fear all at once. Its historic place in our equal opportunity democratic judgment is thus operative, while compromised from the start. In the end, al-Andalus stands for a mitigated hope, and that hope is precisely the one that lives today: the uncertain hope—still worth fighting for, no matter how unsure we are—that democracy, pluralism, and multicult-

I am not arguing that Jews and Arabs are the “same.” I simply want to underscore that Jews and Arabs have to stand together against the myth of “coexistence” that negates both their separate existence and their shared history.

Darwish. It will suffice to say that under the name “Europe” I include everything that—in Paris, Washington or Tel-Aviv—participates in this logic of separation, the discursive and political, even messianic logic that separates Jew from Arab. Europe, then, is the myth of al-Andalus as the site of the impossible.

I am not arguing that Jews and Arabs are the “same.” I simply want to underscore that Jews and Arabs have to stand together against the myth of “coexistence” that negates both their separate existence *and* their shared history. Consider the silence that continues to surround the question of Arab Jews. Notwithstanding the important efforts of Ella Shohat and of Sami Shalom Chetrit, of Simone Bitton, Edmond Amran El Maleh and Ammiel Alcalay, of Zvi Ben-Dor and of Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, this silence remains deafening. Although there are periodic shifts in acknowledging the centrality of this question in Israel and Palestine (as demonstrated by the recent work of Israeli scholars Yehuda Shenhav and Hannan Hever), the question is much larger than the specific matter of Middle Eastern politics. And not necessarily less urgent. The second thing I want to underscore, or rather oppose, is the active stance taken by all-too-numerous Jewish voices (insti-

tutionalism are possible against the force of barbarism. Who would stand in the way?

The list of those standing, those unhappy and not so resisting ones, should include those whose uncertainty no longer includes comfort—as opposed to those of us who, obsessed with “security” (the first right of the citizen, according to a French pundit) would apparently endorse as a new revolutionary motto: “Security, Equality, Fraternity.” The list should be long enough to include whoever lives in a democracy and collects the fruits of an equal right to poverty. It should also include those enjoying an equal right to sleep under bridges, to get an underfunded or prohibitively expensive education, to join the army (as “volunteers”), to some measure of truthful representation.

Neither al-Andalus, nor—Samuel Huntington recently claimed—Mexico, nor even Quebec have ever enjoyed such progressive democratic conditions as the ones I just described. But the list should not be limited to those groups and individuals residing within our national boundaries. Why? First, because the meaning of such boundaries only comes to light when limiting or even barring the entry of undesirable Muslims (barring them from teaching at universities where they have been invited to teach, as Tariq

Ramadan just was). And second, because democracy hardly stops at national boundaries. The drive to export one's own civilization (as distinct from the drive to disseminate truth or, simply, power) has a recent history, one that begins with the invention of human rights and of modern democracy. Then too, democracy encountered what it called "barbarism." Islam and the Arabs were not the least of these. What is happening today is therefore all too familiar from the perspective of legitimating narratives. It suffers only from a higher level of self-righteousness, and from more efficient means of information.

What would the alternative entail today? What would messianism mean today? Today and not yesterday. Today and not in some exceptional and remote al-Andalus. Today when Jews and Arabs (and others) are, in fact, living together, for better and for worse. The alternative is perhaps messianic, but it is not utopian. It does entail more than I can say in a few words. But let us recall the link between colonialism and genocide. The history of the Holocaust is the history of colonialism. This truism (already

asserted by Aimé Césaire) is at the beginning of Walter Benjamin's lesson regarding the history of the oppressed.

This means recalling that the struggle against anti-Semitism cannot be exempted from the fight against Islamophobia and anti-Arab racism. It means recalling that today 75 percent of the Jewish community of France is of North African origin; that the Western fight against Islam was always a fight against Judaism, if often by different means; and that the last Messiah to compellingly galvanize the political imagination of the entire Jewish world (and not only of the Jewish world) did not become a Christian, even if Gershom Scholem and others made it sound as if that were the case. Sabbatai Zvi did not become a Zionist either. He became a Muslim. A Muslim Jew. An Arab Jew. Not an identity, but the movement of an identification toward a messianism for today. The name, today, of a theologico-political struggle, and of an economic one as well. "This country is a volcano," Scholem wrote long ago. "It houses language." It also houses Arabs and Jews. Arab Jews. More uncanny, perhaps, than messianism. □

The Politics of Hope in an Age of Illusion

Richard Lichtman

It is a well-worn cliché that hope is the opposite of despair. How could it be otherwise, since tautologically, despair is defined as the loss of hope. There may be times when this platitude prevails, when it bears credible weight. But ours is not such a time. How is this possible?

This is an age saturated by ideology, what Marxists, though not Karl Marx himself, refer to as false consciousness. The causes of this profound distortion in awareness are twofold: first, the nature of the economic structure of contemporary capitalism and the social and political systems that sustain, legitimize and implement it; and second, the massive apparatus of controlled media, that not only presents a particular perspective designed to make the social system appear reasonable and inevitable, but substitute fantasy for the reality of lived experience.

The result of this falsification of experience is a pervasive sense that we are natural entities, that is, that we are as fixed in

our nature as any natural-physical object. As the movement of the planets, tides, and material aspects of our world are unable to create for themselves new orbits or natures, so the prevailing sense of contemporary men and women is that our lives, our futures, our very being is given rather than created. Of course, unless we are wholly psychotic (an impossible condition for human beings), we retain a sense of our humanity. But under the influence of capitalist alienation, that human nature is experienced as patterned, habitualized, and reified.

As Marx wrote in a portentous passage in *Capital*:

The advance of capitalist production develops a working-class, which by education, tradition, habit, looks upon the conditions of that mode of production as self-evident laws of nature.... The organization of the capitalist process of production, once fully developed, breaks down all resistance.... The dull compulsion of economic relations completes the subjection of the laborer to the capitalist. Direct force, outside economic conditions, is of course still used, but only exceptionally. In the ordinary run of things, the laborer can be left to the "natural laws of production," i.e., to his dependence on capital, a dependence springing from, and guaranteed in perpetuity by, the conditions of production themselves.

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So, while human agency never wholly disappears, it is experienced as determined by society and by tendencies emerging from deep within ourselves, tendencies that have actually been seeded by that same social system and that appear external to our most intimate selves.

There can be no doubt that human beings change. Were this not so, the first groupings of human beings would still be in their historical and geographical place. The question is, rather, whether human beings can self-consciously and purposively change themselves. It is a profound paradox of the modern age that Adam Smith's vision of the best possible society began with the notion of a market society controlled by an invisible hand. But the full meaning of this mechanical conceit, clothed in the dying vocabulary of a previous theocracy, was that human beings would be forced by the laws of the economic system—over which they had no control—to produce through their own self-aggrandizement, the greatest good for the largest number. That is, they would be compelled by the market to transform their venality into general happiness.

It was left to Max Weber at the turn of the twentieth century to note that this process by which humans acted (but without the ability to control the results of their acts) would lead to what he saw as the hollowing out of humanity. From Smith's hope and the passion of the Protestant ethic, Weber saw emerge the horror of the "iron cage."

In this toxic environment, what becomes of utopia and hope? It is the accepted wisdom of our time that utopia is "nowhere," disconnected from the structures of present society. In this sense it is an ideal sprung loose from its moorings in the world, a system of value and obligation so pure that it brooks no contact with the realm of fact. And according to "political science," that twentieth-century corruption of politics, the attempt to bring utopia down to earth can only lead to the horrors of totalitarianism, as every element in an ideal society must be placed in the whole so as to maximize the beauty of the total configuration, from which no change can be tolerated.

And hope? Rather than repeat again a set of established banalities regarding the need for and desirability of hope, it is best to begin by asking what hope is. Is it a feeling, a sentiment, a fantasy, an image, an illusion, a sublimated desire, a tendency to act, or an attempt to deny the horrors of this world by constructing its opposite in a realm beyond our causal tendencies? In all accounts, hope transcends a strict, quantitative accounting of positive and negative estimates of the desired possibility. For hope is grounded in the ideal, which cannot, of course, be reduced to actuality. The normative is of a different modality, a different order of reality—an order of the good, the right, the obligatory. It is hope's distance from the realm of fact that provides its meaning and its grounding. So hope surpasses mathematical quantification: if it were not more than this it would simply be an estimate of possibilities resulting in a numerical as-

signment. The player who throws the dice knows that the probability of one appearing with any particular face is one out of six. The player does not hope for this result, but wishes for it. The idealist and the revolutionary cannot calculate the probability of their success; they can, however, embody the ideal that defines their identity.

Hope involves our dependence on a factor that is not strictly within the calculable features of the situation. For the medieval Christian, that hope was grounded in God's order and His magnanimous and incomprehensible love for humanity. For the proletariat rising against the savagery of bourgeois domination, it is the progress ingredient in history upon which any given act depends for its fulfillment. In our age, when the future has become the place of distraction, consumer gratification, and severed escape from the world, the future is not bound to any historical tendencies or ontological supports of the universe. In our age, the term has largely lost its meaning, for we have lost confidence in God's sustenance, the necessity of historical progress, or the goodness of humanity.

One thing is clear: if "hope" is to serve any useful function in our lives, it must be rooted in an understanding of the actual tendencies that move our world. Once again, Marx understood this point very well. In his dialectic of fact and value, the ideal, to be meaningful, must fulfill a process, a course of movement that is ingredient in the time. So he condemned and ridiculed the utopian socialists for their invocation of an ideal society totally sundered from the formations and pressures of their time. The ideal is always "other" than the actual, but it cannot impose itself on the world from a wholly transcendent vantage place. For at this distance it lacks leverage. The moral sense of men and women is not sufficient if it is bereft of the motive force of emerging needs and the demands, burgeoning in humanity, of a new social existence.

We can return to our original query: What is hope if it is not the opposite of despair? Hope is the denial of indifference, of aimless and unlimited distraction, of the hollow sense of satisfaction so vapid it cannot be pronounced in the depth of the self. Hope does not begin by negating despair but by embracing it. Hope looks straight into the face of Hiroshima, the Gulag, Dresden, and Auschwitz and pronounces them acts of man; and it keeps its eyes fixed on the terror as long as it can feel with the victims. Drenched in the denial of life, hope shudders fiercely and moves, not away, but through the catastrophe to the other side, marked with the suffering of this century and the flickering of a knowledge that we cannot permit this condition to be forgotten, and with the knowledge that it must be understood.

Hope, and the ideal that sustains it, must be rooted in the experienced urgencies of men and women, lest it become vacuous. Hope, simply reduced to the manipulated facticity of the time, collapses into reification. The dialectic is the only hope of hope. □

The Dialectics of Hope versus the Politics of Stasis in Art

Bram Dijkstra

Since just after World War II, American art has largely become stuck in a pattern of involution, circularity, and intellectual stasis. The thirties and early forties were still energized by the belief that the creative imagination has a major role to play in the search for a qualitatively better, more humane society; but almost immediately after 1945, the burgeoning paranoia of the Cold War helped institutionalize a general denial of the value of socio-critical, or even simple narrative, content in art in favor of a singular focus on structure and design as self-sustaining values. This attitude rapidly helped bring about the ascendancy of abstraction, which came to be marketed as an ideal vehicle for the expression of nebulous—and hence all the more unassailable—“universal truths” that were supposed to represent the stable essence of a higher consciousness. In true Orwellian fashion, this tendency toward a static intellectual millenarianism was cast as representative of a tireless search for the processes of creative change.

Irony, which, if unaccompanied by a socio-critical consciousness and the presentation of constructive alternatives, rapidly descends into mere negation, became the preferred vehicle of the postwar artists who returned to figuration when a narrowly focused emphasis on abstraction proved to be unsustainable. Thus a general disdain for content rapidly morphed into a relentless emphasis on gestures of cheap irony and wholesale anti-humanist involution, while the less aggressive among our artists were satisfied to serve as interior designers eager to supply wallpaper for corporation offices and the mansions of the very rich. In such ventures they were enthusiastically supported by critics who insisted that their—often quite attractive—patterns contained layers of deep meaning.

This is the rut of intellectual stasis that art continues to mine even today—particularly through the medium of “post-modernism,” which attempts to convince us that the tendency of postwar art to beat its head to a pulp against a blind wall is the source of all creative genius, as long as we mix it with large doses of Madison Avenue and/or Hollywood hype. Cheap irony still reigns (John Currin and his well-heeled pa-

trons claiming to satirize the Playboy mentality while exploiting infantile fantasies about women with preposterously overdeveloped breasts; Jeff Koons outdoing Thomas Kinkade in his efforts to hype the aesthetically challenged). Artists fresh out of the universities know that simple negation will allow them to gain notoriety (sophomoric art connoisseurs, too, know that they can show their sophistication by employing simple inversions: “if it is revolting to look at it must be art”).

Instead of engaging in critical inquiry about the nature and potentialities of the human condition, our artists are content to flagellate us with their facile revulsion against the undeniable fact that humans have bodily functions (always a favorite reactionary bugaboo), and that they are fragile. This has resulted in a pervasive preoccupation with “shock art” (you know the drill: piles of excrement placed in galleries, bodies hung from hooks placed in their skin, close-ups of mutilated genitalia, legs protruding from walls, sliced barnyard animals in formaldehyde). Is there anything more boring and *déjà vu* than yet another slab of meat crawling with maggots in search of a New York critic willing to describe such a production as a visceral recognition of “the horror of our transitory existence”? What these works represent is little more than a reconfiguration of the practices of religious self-abasement popular among medieval monks—but now disguised as avant-garde art. If these things don’t satisfy your need for “meaningful art,” there is always Marcel Duchamp’s concept of the “ready-made.” No doubt that idea lost its freshness some ninety-odd years ago, but it continues to satisfy the impulse of a large percentage of our artists to “make it new.”

The numbing ascendancy of style for its own sake and the accompanying celebration of decorator art by our critics, have also led to the new prominence of various forms of utilitarian craftsmanship “as art” (architecture as art, the motorcycle as art, tattooing as art, dress design as art, ad infinitum). The problem with this way of thinking is not merely that it celebrates the inherent vacuity of style as an end in itself, it also seeks to justify the vacuity of our current structures of belief as ends in themselves in a world without meaningful content: for content (which is inherently anti-ironic) requires social commitment and, at least implicitly, a search for qualitative change. The most thoroughly reactionary achievement of postwar culture is that it has succeeded in eliminating the

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very concept of hope (the belief that we can change the world for the better) and has replaced it with the concept of the void (a world incapable of moral—and hence social—improvement, and devoid of any motivating force other than immediate material self-gratification).

This cultural dilemma is a direct result of our inability to break out of the dualistic “high/low” pendulum set up by postwar critics such as Clement Greenberg, who sought to break with the blend of proto-dialectical Enlightenment principles that had governed the production of art since at least the eighteenth century (principles defined by Coleridge as ever seeking “a middle quality between a thought and a thing—the union of that which is nature with that which is exclusively human”). Until 1945, American art had been able to absorb the innovations of the early modernist period quite productively by conjoining these principles with the equally proto-dialectical push/pull between natural mysticism and populist materialism that energized the thinking of the American transcendentalists (Emerson, Whitman, Thoreau, and even Poe). All that ended when the postwar critics bluntly declared the notion of a dialectics of creative human development to be nothing more than a communist plot against the true function of art in a capitalist society: to be a beacon of wealth.

Flush with the victories of World War II and the rise of a new corporate culture eager to “brand” the nation, Americans suddenly discovered that there was a lot of money to be made in art—as long as “true art” was scarce, and hence worth overpaying for. The new critics recognized that the cause of scarcity could not be properly served as long as there were a lot of good artists making good art for the people. That would create far too chaotic a situation for art’s new clientele: busy millionaires, corporate CEOs and corporations in search of investment opportunities. What was needed was easily identifiable “investment art” that, by being outrageously expensive, had an inherent right to be considered part of “high” culture.

Abstract Expressionism was just the ticket. By 1950 the institutionalization of this new “high art” as a form of expression beyond the comprehension of the average citizen, and hence in dire need of the expert exegesis of specialized intellectual guides (anointed by a small group of influential New York dealers) was already complete. Contrary to what is implied by the “beleaguered avant-garde artist” myths that have grown up around this movement, works by its main figures were, by this time, eagerly sought after, while socially conscious artists were feeling the pinch. Indeed, in 1951, in a statement accompanying his contribution to that year’s Contemporary Painting Exhibition at the University of Illinois, Anton Refregier, an artist increasingly reviled by the new critics for his populist stance (and therefore, like most of the like-minded artists of his generation—the social expressionists of the thirties and early forties—virtually forgotten today), spoke up against what he saw as the country’s



“rapidly shrinking” cultural life. He foolishly hastened his own marginalization in the art world of his day by insisting that art was “a language, a means of communication of ideas, and that it must be created in the interest of the people, consciously and rationally.”

“I believe,” Refregier added, “that the role of the artist cannot be that of decorator and embellisher alone, nor is the preoccupation with formal problems an end in itself.” He recognized that these elements were “part of the complex language of our craft,” but he also emphasized the need for a larger synthesis, a conscious attempt to make art an expression of “man’s dreams and hopes.” He concluded: “In man’s struggle toward the rational, the artist can play a large role or he can contribute his share towards mysticism, can confuse and degrade.” But Refregier was fighting against windmills. The new realm of investment art needed work that would confuse the people and degrade the value of any art expressive of a longing for social change—for the very concept of social change militates against the “universality” of the existing human condition and hence against the legitimacy of “enlightened self-interest.”

The “stability” of investment-grade art depends on its scarcity and its ability to retain its value. The latter is obviously a factor of its qualitative excellence and its presumed ability to reflect the “universals of human experience.” The insistence, by a host of postwar critics, that “real” art exist-

ed merely as art, and that content was essentially irrelevant, opened the way to the self-anointment of these critics (and the dealers with whom they collaborated) as specialized, and therefore intellectually privileged, judges of quality, infallibly able to separate the scarce "high" from the copiously available "low."

The more abstruse the declared motivation of an artist, the more in need of exegesis his (or, very rarely, her) creations would be. Such work could therefore be separated quite easily from the art-chaff that still tried to announce itself as "populist" in motivation. In this manner art without any intrusive (read "humanist") content could be provided with an opportune, but usually thoroughly nebulous, "deep meaning" without endangering its principal function as a luxury product in search of a stable market.

The critics' convenient "discovery" that art should be a visual expression of the human mind's abstract capacity to chart the static realm of eternal truths (or its dualistic opposite, the pervasive absence of such truths), was directly linked to the postwar intellectuals' abandonment of the dialectically based existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre (his early contention that in a meaningless world the value of existence lies in our ability to create positive being out of nothingness), and their enthusiastic adoption of the predominantly static, proto-noir, "value-free" world of Albert Camus (in which action for the sake of action—like art for art's sake—becomes the sole realm of viable intellectual concern).

This politics of the void seduced even the more progressive postwar American intellectuals, most of whom were after all in search of university appointments during a period of vicious attacks on anyone continuing to hold a dissenting political opinion. Greenberg's 1939 admonition that it was time to recognize the "umbilical cord of gold" existing between "high art" and the cultural requirements of the economic elites thus came to define the central principle of postwar culture.

Nothing is likely to change in the realm of contemporary art as long as we continue to honor the postwar concept of a "high" art, the parameters of which are determined by abstruse "discourses" woven by critics who function as motivational speakers to the economic elite. We need to reject the reactionary contention that, unless properly mediated by irony, matters related to emotion and content are out of place in "real" art. Against the exploitative circularity of this mode of thinking only a rejection of cynicism for its own sake can return art to its true social function—which is to give imaginative shape to humanity's hope for a better and more inclusive future. There is nothing facile about an art that denounces the conditions of present-day social and economic exploitation in order to seek change. To re-establish a link with the restlessly creative dialectics of hope that dominated art until 1945 would be an act of true daring in contemporary culture: it is where the future of the real avant-garde in art resides today. □

When Hope is Subversive

Henry A. Giroux

Is it possible to imagine hope for justice and humanity after the torture of Iraqi detainees (including some just in their teens) by American soldiers at Abu Ghraib prison? What does hope mean when the United States is virtually unchallenged as it incarcerates unprecedented numbers of young people of color? What does hope teach us at a time in which government lies and deception are exposed on a daily basis in the media and yet appear to have little effect on President Bush's popular support? What resources and visions does hope offer in a society where greed is considered venerable and profit is the most important measure of personal achievement and social advance? What is the relevance of hope at a time when most attempts to interrupt the operations of an incipient fascism appear to fuel a growing cynicism rather than promote widespread indi-

vidual and collective acts of resistance?

It is hard not to believe that politics in American life has become corrupt, that progressive social change is a distant memory, or that hope is the last refuge of deluded romantics. Civic engagement seems irrelevant in light of the growing power of multinational corporations to privatize public space and time. We have less time—and fewer civic spaces—for experiencing ourselves as political agents. Market values replace social values. Power has become disconnected from issues of equity, social justice, and civic responsibility. People with the education and means appear more and more willing to retreat into the safe, privatized enclaves of the family, religion, and consumption. Those without the luxury of such choices pay a terrible price in what Zygmunt Bauman, in his book *Globalization*, has called the "hard currency of human suffering."

Given these social conditions, some theorists have suggested that democratic politics as a site of contestation, crit-

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ical exchange, and engagement has come to an end. We must not give up so easily. Democracy has to be struggled over, even in the face of a most appalling crisis of educational opportunity and political agency. Cynicism breeds apathy—not the reverse. The current depressing state of our politics and the bankruptcy of our political language issues a challenge to us to formulate a new language and vision that can reframe questions of agency, ethics, and meaning for a substantive democracy.

Crafting such a new political language will require what I call “educated hope.” Hope is the precondition for individual and social struggle. Rather than seeing it as an individual proclivity, we must see hope as part of a broader politics that acknowledges those social, economic, spiritual, and cultural conditions in the present that make certain kinds of agency and democratic politics possible. With this understanding, hope becomes not merely a wistful attempt to look beyond the horizon of the given, but what Andrew Benjamin, in *Present Hope*, calls “a structural condition of the present.”

What hope offers is the belief, simply, that different futures are possible. In this way, hope can become a subversive force, pluralizing politics by opening up a space for dissent, contingency, indeterminacy.

The philosopher Ernst Bloch provides essential theoretical insights on the importance of hope. He argues that hope must be concrete, a spark that not only reaches out beyond the surrounding emptiness of capitalist relations, anticipating a better world in the future, but a spark that also speaks to us in the world we live in now by presenting tasks based on the challenges of the present time. In *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature*, Bloch argues that hope cannot be removed from the world. Hope is not “something like nonsense or absolute fancy; rather it is *not yet* in the sense of a possibility; that it could be there if we could only do something for it.”

In this view, hope becomes a discourse of critique and social transformation. Hope makes the leap for us between *critical education*, which tells us what must be changed; *political agency*, which gives us the means to make change; and the *concrete struggles* through which change happens. Hope, in short, gives substance to the recognition that every present is incomplete. For theorists such as Bloch and his more contemporary counterparts like Michael Lerner, Cornel West, and Robin D.G. Kelley, hope is anticipatory rather than messianic, mobilizing rather than therapeutic. Understood this way, the longing for a more humane society does not collapse into a retreat from the world but becomes a means to engage with present behaviors, institutional for-

mations, and everyday practices. Hope in this context does not ignore the worst dimensions of human suffering, exploitation, and social relations; on the contrary, as Thomas Dunn writes, it acknowledges the need to sustain the “capacity to see the worst and offer more than that for our consideration” (in *Vocations of Political Theory*, edited by Jason A. Frank and John Tambornino).

Hence, hope is more than a politics, it is also a pedagogical and performative practice that provides the foundation for enabling human beings to learn about their potential as moral and civic agents. Hope is the outcome of those educational practices and struggles that tap into memory and lived experiences while at the same time linking individual responsibility with a progressive sense of social change. As a form of utopian longing, educated hope opens up horizons of comparison by evoking not just different histories but different futures. Educated hope is a subversive force when it pluralizes politics by opening up a space for dissent, making authority accountable, and becoming an activating presence

in promoting social transformation.

There is a long history in the United States of hope as a subversive force. Examples are evident in the struggles of the Civil Rights and feminist movements in the 1950s and 1960s against racism, poverty, sexism, and the war in Vietnam. More recent examples can be found among young people demonstrating against multinational corporations and the World Trade Organization in cities as diverse as Melbourne, Seattle, and Genoa. Hope was on full display among organized labor, intellectuals, students, and workers protesting together in the streets of New York City against Bush’s policies and his followers at the Republican National Convention.

This is not to say that a politics and pedagogy of hope is a blueprint for the future; it is not. What hope offers is the belief, simply, that different futures are possible. In this way, hope can become a subversive force, pluralizing politics by opening up a space for dissent, contingency, indeterminacy. “For me,” writes Judith Butler, “there is more hope in the world when we can question what is taken for granted, especially about what it is to be human” (cited by Gary Olson and Lynn Worsham in *JAC* 20:4). Zygmunt Bauman in a conversation with Keith Tester (in *Conversations with Zygmunt Bauman*) goes further, arguing that the resurrection of any viable notion of political and social agency is dependent upon a culture of questioning, the purpose of

which, as he puts it, is to “keep the forever unexhausted and unfulfilled human potential open, fighting back all attempts to foreclose and pre-empt the further unravelling of human possibilities, prodding human society to go on questioning itself and preventing that questioning from ever stalling or being declared finished.”

The goal of educated hope is not to liberate the individual from the social—a central tenet of neoliberalism—but to take seriously the notion that the individual can only be liberated through the social. Educated hope as a subversive, defiant

practice should provide a link, however transient, provisional, and contextual, between vision and critique on the one hand, and engagement and transformation on the other. That is, for hope to be consequential it has to be grounded in a project that has some hold on the present. Hope becomes meaningful to the degree that it identifies agencies and processes, offers alternatives to an age of profound pessimism, reclaims an ethic of compassion and justice, and struggles for those institutions in which equality, freedom, and justice flourish as part of the ongoing struggle for a global democracy. □

To Hope is Human

Zygmunt Bauman

Reports of the death of utopia are (thanks, Mark Twain!) greatly exaggerated. First and foremost, utopia means hope: that things may be better than they are, that evil can be defeated, sorrow and despair conquered, and injustice tamed or repaired. Utopia will never die because humans cannot and will not stop hoping. If we ever stopped hoping, we would no longer be human.

Armed—blessed or cursed—with language, with that curious particle “no,” that declaration of denial, rejection, and refusal to accept which lifts us above the evidence of senses and sets appearances apart from the truth, and the future tense that drives us beyond the immediate and the given—we, the humans, can’t stop imagining things as different from what they are now. We can’t just settle for what “is” because we cannot grasp what “is” without reaching beyond it. We ask the awkward “is” questions, demanding explanation and apology. We expect things to change—and we resolve to change them. Small things and big things alike.

Armed—blessed and cursed—with the knowledge of good and evil, we are judged and sit in judgment—over what has happened and over what have we done or desisted from doing. We place the “should” on the jury benches and put the “is” into the defendants’ dock. We carry the presiding judge (commonly called “conscience”) with us, inside us, wherever we go and whatever we do.

And we believe that judging makes sense: it has the power to change us and the world around us.

As inevitably as the meeting of oxygen and hydrogen results in water, hope is conceived whenever imagination

and moral sense meet. As Ernst Bloch memorably put it, before being *homo sapiens*, a thinking creature, man is a *hoping* creature. It wouldn’t be too difficult to show that Emmanuel Levinas meant much the same when he insisted that ethics comes before ontology. Just as the world out there must prove its innocence in the court of ethics and not the other way round—hope does not and needs not recognize the jurisdiction of “what merely is.” It is reality that must explain why it failed to rise to the standard of decency set by hope.

If the visions recorded in our books and history as “utopias” represented a world that recognized what could be, rather than what merely is, there would hardly be any talk of a crisis of utopian thought. But the term “utopia” went down in public memory associated with a peculiar variety of hope framed at the dawn of the modern era, the time of great expectations and unbounded conceit.

Disgusted by the ever more evident failings of human affairs, while intoxicated with the spectacular accomplishment of the freshly awakened scientific spirit, convinced of the inevitability of change, while worried about the turmoil and risk that change inevitably portends, some of the most valiant and venturesome minds of the early modern era took to painting images of perfection: of a state in which all needed change had been completed, and any further change could only be a change for the worse. In such “utopias” as they came to be called after Thomas More’s book, there was no room for accident and contingency, blows of fate and flights of fancy, uncertified differences, or unscheduled actions. Whatever was not obligatory was prohibited, and whatever was not forbidden was a must. There was a lot of freedom there, to be sure—but freedom meant joyously embraced necessity.

“U-topia” meant “a non-place,” a place that didn’t

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exist. That does not mean that the writers of utopias thought the products of their imagination were unrealistic. They believed in the omnipotence of human reason. Given a ruler with sufficiently formidable despotic powers, and philosophers with enough vision and pedagogic skills to enlighten that ruler about the foolproof ways of forcing or cajoling people into doing willingly what do they should, these modern utopian thinkers believed perfection would be just a matter of time.

We know now how things ended in the cases (fortunately, a few only) in which the promise of utopia was taken seriously and "enlightened" despots took it upon themselves to bring perfection to our unclean, messy, and unpredictable world. Hitler was such a despot, as was Mao. And so we came to believe that the utopia writers were misguided: they promised happiness, while the roads to happiness that they suggested were shortcuts to totalitarian hell. We no longer believe that a perfect society is feasible or viable. Most up-to-date thesauruses cast the "utopian" in

case of humans (if not in that of angels and beasts), can be attained only in a good *society*. It is that ancient wisdom that is now in danger of being forgotten.

Like so many other aspects of human life, the pursuit of happiness in today's world has been deregulated and privatized. Whatever the politicians may say when addressing their prospective voters, their practice when in office implies that "great society," if such a thing still exists, has washed its hands of the misfortunes its members may suffer. Citizens are now abandoned to their own cunning and guts while held solely responsible for the results of their struggles against adversities not of their making. Peter Drucker crisply summed up our attitude as: "no more salvation by society." Though declared to be in full charge of their life pursuits, individuals are neither invited nor encouraged to think of the conditions under which their life purposes are pursued—let alone to contribute to their revision and reform.

Instead, citizens' rights and duties tend to be reduced to

There were more than enough good reasons for the idea of "utopia" to fall into disrepute. And yet, when the experience one wishes to exorcise is particularly gory and bitter, and past frustrations exceptionally degrading, it is all too easy to avert the attention from the baby when in haste to get rid of muddy bathwater.

the unsavory vicinity of the "impractical," and "fanciful"; those of us with lingering experiences of failed utopian projects might also use the words "portentous," "sinister," and even "genocidal."

There were more than enough good reasons for the idea of "utopia" to fall into disrepute. And yet, when the experience one wishes to exorcise is particularly gory and bitter, and past frustrations exceptionally degrading, it is all too easy to avert the attention from the baby when in haste to get rid of muddy bathwater. The story of utopia's falling from grace was not an exception to that rule. The baby in question, needing undivided attention and loving care to unravel its remarkable promise and formidable potency, is the idea endemic to all utopias that is worth saving: that everyone's happiness depends on the happiness of all, that anybody's happiness can be secure only in the company of secure people, and that pursuit of happiness worthy of that name needs to be aimed at the ways and means of human togetherness. That, in other words, pursuit of individual happiness is a collective affair. Not a novel idea, as a matter of fact. The ancients realized that goodness, at least in the

those of the consumer; they have the duty to "lead the economy out of depression" by manifesting their willingness to buy more even if it means going deeper into debt; the citizenship rights of those who cannot do that because they lack credit cards and have no access to banking loans, are cast in doubt, publicly questioned, and threatened to be revoked or suspended. The side effect of such a surreptitious and tacit re-formulation of the meaning of citizenship is the diminishment of the public sphere. What was once a place of shared deliberation—where private interests were translated into public issues and public needs recast as individual rights and duties—has become at best a stage on which politicians reconfirm the incurable privacy of individual interests.

The public sphere has changed beyond recognition. It is now little more than a playground of private interests. The art of mutual translation between private interests and public issues, the great achievement of ancient and modern democracy, is fast falling out of use; seldom practiced, it is no longer learned and tends to be forgotten. The trend towards the public responsibility for survival and welfare of

each and any member of the community, which progressed in leaps and bound across the modern part of the globe since at least the middle of the nineteenth century, is now gradually, yet relentlessly, being reversed.

Drawing maps of utopia came to their draftsmen easily; they were just filling the blank spots or repainting the ugly parts in the grid of public space whose presence was, for good reason, taken for granted and seen as unproblematic. Utopias, the images of good life, were matter-of-factly social since the meaning of the "social" was never in doubt—not yet the "essentially contested issue" it was to become in the aftermath of the neo-liberal *coup d'état*. The question of who was to implement the blueprint and preside over the transformation was not a problem: king or republic was firmly in place, waiting for enlightenment and signal to act. No wonder that such a *public* or *social* utopia became the first casualty of the dramatic change undergone by the public sphere.

The trend towards public responsibility for survival and welfare of each and any member of the community, which progressed in leaps and bound across the modern part of the globe since at least the middle of the nineteenth century, is now gradually, yet relentlessly, being reversed.

Like everything else once securely located in the public sphere, utopia has become one of the many spoils of the conquest and annexation of the public by the private. The grand social vision has been split into a multitude of private, strikingly similar, but decidedly not complementary portman-teaus. Each one is made to the measure of the consumer's bliss—meant, like all consumer joys, for utterly individual, lonely enjoyment even when relished in company.

Can public space be made once more a place of lasting engagement—the space of dialogue, discussion, confrontation and agreement—rather than casual and fleeting encounters? Yes and no. If what is meant by "public space" is the public sphere wrapped around and serviced by the representative institutions of the nation-state, then the answer is, probably, no. Those public stages, constructed originally for nation-and-state political purposes, remain stubbornly local—while contemporary drama is humanity-wide, and thus obstreperously and emphatically global. The answer "yes," to be credible, requires a new global, public space. Any contemporary public endeavor requires a truly planetary sense of responsibility, an acknowledgment that none of us can any longer seek and find private shelter from storms that originate in any part of the globe. In short, to quote Habermas, the logic of planetary responsibility

requires the development of a "politics that can catch up with global markets."

Unlike the logic of local entrenchment dominant in the nation-state era, the logic of global responsibility ushers in utopia, an unknown territory—and opens an era of political experimentation. It rejects, as an admittedly blind alley, the road of local defense against planetary trends; it abstains (by necessity if not by reasons of conscience) from falling back on the moderns' imperialist strategy of treating the planetary space as a "hinterland" onto which the problems home-produced yet unresolvable at home could be unloaded.

We feel, guess, suspect what needs to be done. But we cannot know in which shape and form it eventually will be done. We can be pretty sure, though, that the shape will not be familiar. It will be different from all we've gotten used to. Political institutions at our disposal were made to the measure of the territorial sovereignty of the nation state. They resist stretching, which means that the political institutions

serving the self-constitution of the planet-wide human community won't be, can't be "the same, only bigger." We may well sense that the passage from "inter-national" agencies and tools of action to "universal"—all-human—institutions must be a qualitative, not merely a quantitative change. So we may ponder, worryingly, whether the presently available frames of "global politics" may accommodate (indeed, serve as an incubator for) the practices of the emergent global polity. Can the UN, for instance—briefed at its birth to guard and defend the undivided sovereignty of the state over its territory—possibly serve a global community?

Even though we cannot see ahead, we will move ahead if only because, as Reinhardt Koselleck once pointed out, we cannot stand still for long. This necessary movement into the unknown has been prophetically put in writing by Franz Kafka—as a premonition, a warning, and encouragement:

So if you find nothing in the corridors, open the doors, if you find nothing behind these doors there are more floors, and if you find nothing up there, don't worry, just leap up another flight of stairs. As long as you don't stop climbing, the stairs won't end, under your climbing feet they will go on growing upwards.

Hannah Arendt called compassion and pity "animal

instincts,” meaning that it takes a lot of “societal effort” to stifle them, and it is true that such impulses are oozing from every pore—and if you wish, they may offer “ground for hope.” In a larger piece, beyond the word constraints necessary for this eighteenth anniversary issue of *TIKKUN*, I would certainly include such evidence. In this case, however, I wished to make just one point: that hope is valid and real even if groundless, that hope needs no proof—it is the world that needs to prove (and will not!) that it is beyond

redemption and salvation. Hope is stronger than all imaginable “testimony of reality.” Hope is the destiny of humanity, one feature that cannot be defeated.

For eighteen long years, *TIKKUN* magazine has kept our hope alive, and with more determination and effect than most other books or magazines I happened to study or browse during that time. This effort will not by itself make our world more hospitable to humanity; but no attempt to make it such would start without it. □

Meet the Messiah; Kill the Messiah

Rami Shapiro

Late at night on the eve of my sixteenth birthday, my mom came into my bedroom and asked me if I was the Messiah. She was serious. I put down the Zen text I was reading and we looked at each other with an intensity I have not experienced since. “No,” I said softly, “I am not the Messiah.” She started to cry. We both did. Then she went back to her bedroom. We never spoke of this, but I have never forgotten it.

Did Mary ever wake Jesus up in the middle of the night to ask if he were the Messiah? Did Bar Kochbah’s mother know before Akiva that her boy was the one? What about Shabbtai Tzvi’s mom? Did she have to wait for Nathan of Gaza to inform her as to the status of her son? What did Mrs. Frank think of her boy, Jacob? Or Mrs. Of Bratzlav of her son Nahman?

Maybe my mother knew what I refused to know. Maybe she was right. Maybe I was the Messiah, or could have been if I had only answered differently. What would my life have been like if I had answered, “Yes, Mom. I am the Messiah”? Would I have gotten out of gym class? What about wood shop? Jesus was a carpenter after all.

Why do people want messiahs, anyway? Everyone does. The Jews have the Son of David; the Christians have the always-soon-to-return Jesus; the Muslims have the Mahdi; the Buddhists have Maitreya Buddha; and the Hindus have avatars popping up from time to time. Messiahs are incarnations of the human need to hope, and we can’t seem to live without hope. Too bad.

The whole point of messianism is to perfect the future and rescue us from our imperfect present. To make this hap-

pen, messianists work tirelessly to free humanity from its *yetzer harah* (capacity for evil). This is not only ridiculous, it is dangerous.

We cannot have good without evil any more than we can have in without out, or left without right. Nature is a swirl of opposites, and the messianic ideal is a violent distortion of the very fabric of existence. To place one’s hope in such a distortion is to lay the foundation for dystopia. This is why every messianic movement ultimately becomes fertile soil for the very evils it seeks to uproot.

People are not meant to be perfect, if by perfect we mean good without evil. People are meant to be the image and likeness of God; and God, as Isaiah tells us, is the source of both good and evil. People are meant to be just what we are: holy rascals with the capacity to praise God as we pass the ammunition.

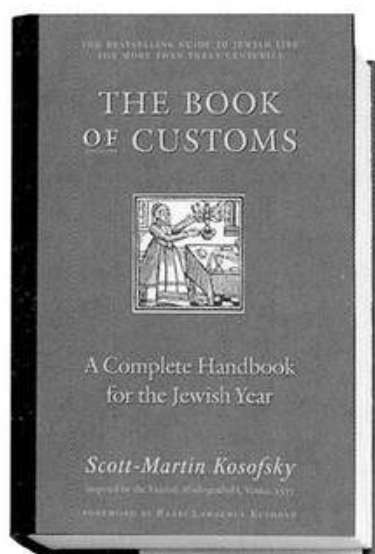
Humans are the way nature does Gauguin, Chagall, and paint-by-numbers. We are the way life composes Beethoven’s Fifth and Lennon’s Number 9. We are the way the universe writes *King Lear*, the Bill of Rights, and *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. We are the way she builds skyscrapers and melts them down. We are the way the world becomes conscious of itself and all its dimensions. We are the way life imagines utopia and oblivion, and, if we are lucky, avoids both.

When we place hope in messianism we pretend we can be other than we are. We can’t. When we imagine that we can be only good, we excuse the evil we do in the name of some higher purpose. Read your Torah: Moses is always condoning violence in the Name of God. Read your Church history: the God of Love is forever used to sanction torture and tyranny. Read your morning newspaper: the God-intoxicated are alive and well, perpetuating evil in the name of good, and sanctioning slaughter in the name of holiness. The greatest evil is always done with messianic hype, claiming to cleanse the world of that which the mes-

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sianists fear most: the messiness of human life.

If we can't hope for messianic deliverance, what can we hope for? Nothing. Hope is the mixture of expectation and desire. Hope is focusing on what you wish to happen rather than accepting and dealing with what is actually happening. Hope is living one step ahead of reality; but as rabbi Hillel taught, now is all there is.

I used to think that messianism was one of Judaism's greatest gifts to the world. Now I'm not so sure. I wonder if messianism isn't part of the human psyche and cannot therefore be credited to any one people. For example, if not for messianism, would we have had the destruction of the Second Temple and the exile in 70 CE? If not for messianism, would Shabbetai Tzevi have led us back to Palestine rather than try to convert the Sultan in Istanbul? If not for messianism, would the world have had Crusades, pogroms, Hitler, Stalin, Wahhabism, Yigal Amir, and Baruch Goldstein? (I am not equating these; I am simply noting the messianic roots of each of them.)

I don't want a utopia. I don't want a world of fronts without backs. I don't want a world where the capacity for evil (*yetzer harah*) masquerades as the capacity for good (*yetzer hatov*). I want a world where we admit to being unsure of what we are doing so that we will do everything with humility.

Humility is the antidote to messianism. Messianism knows what is right. Humility does not. Messianism knows how we should think, feel, and live; humility does not. Messianism paves the way to perfection; humility honors the deeper truth of human imperfection. Messianists say, "I know"; the humble say, "I don't know."

Not knowing and imperfection are key to humility and anathema to messianism. Not knowing means you take nothing for granted; you are never certain; you always question; and you keep an open mind and an open heart when confronting those who differ with you. Imperfection means acting with compassion, attention, and care recognizing that you are prone to the very evils you seek to undo.

Humility doesn't lead to inaction, but to imperfect action. When we act from a place of deep humility and not knowing, all our deeds are experiments: we act and see what happens. If the result of our action is an expansion of compassion, justice, peace, and good-will, then we continue to act in the direction we have chosen. If not, then we reconsider the direction. Messianism never reconsiders, because what it is doing is by definition always right.

I prefer the mess of life to the lifelessness of messianism. I prefer a world that admits that we each have a *yetzer harah*, and teaches us how not to disguise the fact. I prefer a world where not knowing and insecurity are valued above certainty and surety. I prefer a world that is aware of the fact that even the best intentions can lead to horrible disaster.

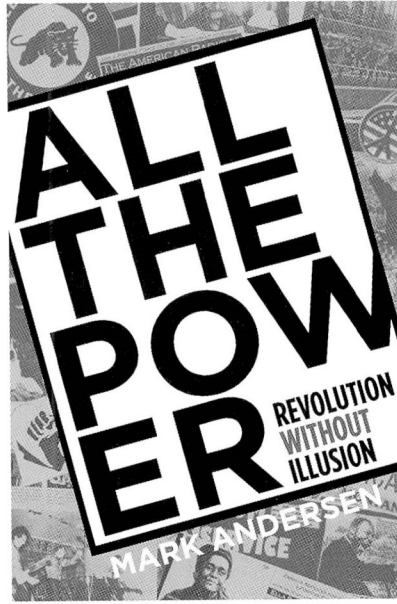
So if your mother wakes you up some night to ask if you are the messiah, offer her this advice: "Mom, if you meet the Messiah on the road, kill him!" □

Rethinking Revolution

Charlie Bertsch

- *All the Power: Revolution Without Illusion*, Mark Andersen. Punk Planet Books, 2004.
- *Roots for Radicals: Organizing for Power, Action, and Justice*, Edward T. Chambers. Continuum International Publishing Group, 2003.

Five years ago, when protests against the WTO escalated into the “Battle of Seattle,” it looked like political activism was entering a new golden age. Instead of tepid, *pro forma* gatherings of the usual suspects, street demonstrations once again had a chance of influencing policy. Although the breathtaking thrills of Seattle weren’t duplicated in subsequent actions by the anti-globalization movement, hopes remained high. All that changed on September 11, 2001. Since then, the expansion of the security state has driven many activists to abandon mass protest for less politically and personally risky forms of public expression. This is the background necessary for understanding Mark Andersen’s *All the Power: Revolution Without Illusion* and Ed Chambers’ *Roots for Radicals: Organizing for*



idealism, an in-your-face defense of “hard” activism, or a call to separate true radicals from the wannabes who make too many concessions to mainstream taste. But it is none of these. Reflective and conciliatory in tone, *All the Power* breaks the punk mold. While Andersen is sympathetic to the fury of the young people who sustain punk communities—he repeatedly draws upon his own experiences in the Washington, D.C. scene of the 1980s and

Nation’s Capital, Andersen regards the output of the independent record label Dischord as an example of how to do things right. “One of the lessons I relearned from Fugazi—especially singer-guitarist Ian MacKaye—during punk’s fractious post-*Nevermind* era was simple but saving: *Keep the focus on your own side of the street*. The idea of checking out your own actions and letting them stand as your message, while largely refraining from critiquing others, suggested how punk might find its way past either sell out or self-destruction.” Though some of Andersen’s best writing is devoted to the band Nirvana’s sudden and unexpected rise to massive popularity and its effect on the independent music world they represented to the mainstream, *All the Power* is not about punk *per se*. Andersen insists on writing from a position of strength, reflecting on what he knows best. But his message, stated repeatedly throughout, is that, “as powerful and transfor-

EDWARD T. CHAMBERS
FOREWORD BY STUDD TERKEL

BOOK REVIEW

mative as the punk scene has been for many of us, in order to truly 'revolutionize,' we need to step beyond." It's not that the punk scene is lacking when compared to other alternative communities, but that the experience of tightly knit togetherness it provides frequently hinders the formation of

ties that cross ethnic and religious lines.

Though Andersen is wary of programmatic advice—if anything, *All the Power* demonstrates too much self-doubt—the trajectory of his argument suggests that the easiest and best solution to self-marginalization is member-

ship in multiple, overlapping groups. By telling stories of his work in a Catholic church group as well as the punk underground, Andersen testifies to the importance of not letting devotion to purity overwhelm pragmatic political concerns. He has little patience for the more-radical-than-thou postur-

Our rage, then, can divide us from masses of potential supporters. Of course, self-defeating arrogance is hardly monopolized by the more militaristic on the left. Indeed, my Catholic parish has been rocked by the actions of one of our own after the 9/11 attacks. The woman in question—a white radical pacifist of undeniable commitment—roiled our congregation by praying for Osama bin Laden, while repeatedly calling for all Christians to leave the military immediately.

To some, her remarks suggested that those who died in the Pentagon got what they deserved. Given that one of St. Al's key longtime African-American members—Barbara Hill—lost her daughter in the attack, this approach was hardly likely to increase support for peace in our congregation. This was doubly sad, as our parish—one of the few genuinely integrated congregations in the city, and about as radical as is possible without exiting the Church—was already staunchly anti-war. The activist's actions only resulted in raising racial tensions rooted in a sense that whites care more for global issues than the poverty and violence in D.C.'s own mean streets.

A radically democratic approach starts with the marginalized themselves, as in community organizing. The organizer's role is to uncover the issues and aims of a given community, to support and nourish their leadership. You do not simply enlist them to a pre-determined agenda complete with strategy and tactics.

While such organizing is difficult, often painfully slow work, it is what I

believe we need: a more genuinely democratic, "people's" approach. One of the most powerful models for this has been provided by the Midwest Academy, an organizing institute started by Heather Booth, veteran of the '60s struggles.

Midwest focuses on what it calls "direct-action organizing," so named because it enables the people directly affected by the problem to take action to solve it. This approach is based on three principles: winning real, immediate, concrete improvements in people's lives; giving people a sense of their own power; and altering the relations of power. The entire process, by necessity, is rooted in putting the rhetoric of democracy into practice. The community itself identifies a problem, and then turns it into an "issue," which is the proposed solution.

Once the issue at hand is framed, the resulting community organization develops a strategy for its campaign. This is the overall plan, which is then to be advanced, step by step, with a certain set of tactics. The strategy comes first; the tactics flow out of this general scheme designed to achieve your aims, not the other way around.

With this plan as a guide, the organization seeks to involve large numbers of people in its campaign and then targets the appropriate decision-maker to achieve its goal. Once this aim is achieved, the victory is used to build the organization and move on to the next issue chosen by the community.

One of the strengths of this method can also be seen as a primary weakness. Rooted in pragmatic assessments of power, direct-action organiz-

ing does not initially aim to question the legitimacy of the system itself. Rather, it tries to build power that can achieve gains from the system for its marginalized community.

But what if the system itself is fatally flawed; what then? This is a book allegedly about "revolution," after all, however "practical." Is not the process described above suspiciously like "reform"? Perhaps. In a sense, "practical revolution" might seem hard to distinguish from reform, in that it accepts revolution as a process, not a one-time event.

There is still a difference, though. The key question is this: What is the ultimate aim? If it is a fundamentally different set of relationships, values, and structures, then we are talking revolution, not reform.

Seen in another way, the direct-action organizing model does not contradict this aim. While it starts from within the shell of the old society, it begins to build a new one, through its empowerment and organization.

At a certain point, if the process is faithfully pursued, and the system can't be made to respond to legitimate demands, the power built through this process will naturally turn toward questioning the system itself. It is from this foundation that revolution might be possible, as bases of organized popular support exist with direct experience of participatory democracy.

Excerpted from: Mark Anderson: All The Power: Revolution Without Illusion. Punk Planet Books/Akashic Books, 2004. (www.punkplanetbooks.com). © Copyright Mark Anderson, 2004.

lence will not be inviting to neophytes or even, generally, the less privileged."

Ed Chambers echoes these sentiments in *Roots for Radicals: Organizing for Power, Action, and Justice*. "The people you'll meet in these pages don't dress in black, wear masks, or kick in shop windows." To label these individuals "radicals" is to insult the hard-working activists who are in it for the long haul. "Radical means going to the roots of the matter and the roots of the spirit. A radical is a person who searches for meaning and affirms community." Successor to Saul Alinsky at the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), the now grandfatherly Chambers wants his book to be a worthy sequel to Alinsky's massively important *Rules for Radicals*. Like Andersen, he draws upon personal experience in order to reinforce his points. Unfortunately, the results are mixed.

Roots for Radicals is the sort of book you want desperately to like. And so long as Chambers is writing about the nuts-and-bolts work of the IAF or

his Depression-era childhood, it's not difficult. Though his prose inclines more towards the desert rather than the rainforest, its matter-of-factness is refreshing. "Thinking and calculating go into preplanning an action, but not much thinking goes on during the action itself. We cannot think and act simultaneously. Try rubbing your belly and patting your head at the same time." This is the sort of world-worn advice we expect from our elders. The problem is that its appeal comes at the expense of nuance. While it may be impossible to write a book in the heat of the moment, reflection and action need not be mutually exclusive. If basketball players can make split-second decisions, surely activists can do the same. Do we really want an activism that is too inflexible to make changes on the fly?

It's telling that Chambers reserves as much vitriol for scholars as window-smashing anarchists. "Avoid Ph.D.s. They get lost in writing books for one

another. They are good at a certain kind of analysis but never have a workable solution in the last chapter. For better or worse, at least a medical doctor gives you a prescription." While this attack on scholars is as American as apple pie—Ralph Waldo Emerson's "Self-Reliance" is one famous example—it sounds a false note here. Chambers ends up reducing the concept of action to something that would please an unreconstructed behaviorist. As a consequence, the helpful tips he provides throughout *Roots for Radicals* are suspect. His lack of self-reflexivity—this is a *book*, after all, and one filled with judgments undermines the goodwill that both his own story and the story of the IAF inspire. His book would have been a great deal stronger and more inviting to the people who most need to read it—those who have trouble translating thought into thoughtful action—if he had heeded the same advice as Mark Andersen: *Keep the focus on your own side of the street.* □



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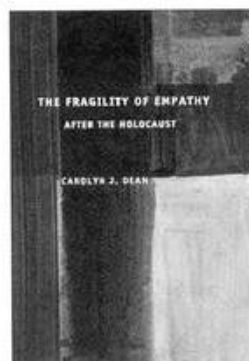
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Blending the Letter and the Spirit, Avoiding Apocalypse

Steve Newman

- *Scars of the Spirit: The Struggle Against Authenticity*, Geoffrey Hartman. Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.

Since *The Unmediated Vision* (1954), Geoffrey Hartman has elegantly scrutinized our drive to erase interpretation in the pursuit of ecstasy and authenticity. We hunger after an immediate experience of transcendence, and Hartman, as a great lover of art who has reshaped our image of Wordsworth and other authors, knows the pleasures of that pursuit. But he also knows its dangers. In addition to being a deeply learned and keen-eyed critic, he was a passenger on the *Kindertransport*. This experience acquainted him early on with the darker grain of history exemplified by the Nazis' murderous drive for the authentic Aryan. And so for five decades he has called attention to the dangers of foreclosing interpretation in the name of authenticity and transcendence.

Now, in *Scars of the Spirit*, he deepens his inquiry into these themes through a collection of thirteen essays. The title is taken from a line in G.W.F. Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind* (1807): "The wounds made by the spirit leave no scars." Given Hartman's commitment to active, even pugnacious, reading, it's not surprising that he quarrels with his own epigraph: "The spirit does leave scars, however, both evident and eloquent. Nor do the wounds always heal."

Hegel blithely leaps over this wounding because he's hot on the trail of Absolute Mind. Yet Hartman has seen the scars created by the slaughters of the last century, which proclaimed a Hegelian idea of seamless progress while mocking its utopian endpoint. Hartman's wise essays trace these scars and our persistent efforts to ignore them.

Scars of the Spirit opens with a shot across the bow at our culture's recent fascination with biography in everything from academic criticism to talk shows. For Hartman, our interest in biography is an effect of our desire for a "real" self that would protect us from the pleasurable but corrosive bath of simulations pouring out from the spigots of mass media.

Hartman himself is not immune from the attraction of authenticity. As the co-founder of the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, which since 1981 has recorded over 4,000 testimonies from survivors, Hartman in his book's second section analyzes the theoretical and practical difficulties in recording these searing acts of witness. It is one of the high points of *Scars of the Spirit*.

Conventional historical analysis has difficulty comprehending eyewitness accounts delivered decades after the event and riven by trauma. These difficulties can be countered somewhat by the power of the videotaped testimony.



But videotaping must itself guard against falling into the simulated falsehoods of the televisual. Hartman and his colleagues have tried to deal with this problem by avoiding stylized camerawork and the misleading "realism" of taping the survivors in some other context, like their homes, present or past. They aim to "us[e] television to cure television ... limiting even while exploiting its visualizing power." Still, this does not quiet Hartman's worries about how these testimonies will be received in a world saturated with images of suffering. Will they become just another item on a commodified menu of images? Will they be denied by revisionists who argue that they are propaganda from media-controlling Jews?

Or will they become the catalysts for what Hartman usefully calls "memory envy"? Hartman's term refers to

Steve Newman is an assistant professor of English at Temple University and a member of the Philadelphia Tikkun Community. He is currently finishing a book entitled *The Call of the Popular in High Lyric, 1660–1960*, and his interview with Geoffrey Hartman was published in the Summer 2003 issue of *Journal of Modern Literature*.

those who have not suffered great traumas like the Holocaust yet wish for the "social recognition" that comes with "strong memories." He cites Benjamin Wilkomirski's imaginary Holocaust memoir *Fragments* as perhaps the best-known case of memory envy; but he also detects it in Harold Pinter's play *Ashes to Ashes*. While Hartman does not mention it, there is a cautionary tale here for those of us who are Jewish. If we narrow our view of Judaism to the *Shoah* (Holocaust), we risk fixating upon it and claim its suffering as exclusively ours, whether or not we personally suffered in it.

A mode of appropriating Judaism much older than the memory envy of the Holocaust lies at the heart of the third section, which considers the millennial conflict between "the letter" and "the spirit." For Pauline Christianity, Judaism stands as the dead letter revived by Christ's sacrifice, which transforms the supposed literalism and legalism of the Old Law into the New Testament of Love. Hartman finds traces of this apocalyptic mode of Christian reading scattered throughout the present, not only in religious fundamentalism, Nazism, and Stalinism but also in the current fantasy of "transparent communication" that animates the mass media.

Our answer to this triumphing of the spirit over the letter should not be to attempt to reclaim the authenticity of the letter. For this would risk the stupid materialism that we see in the current riot of commodities. Rather than searching for the authentic truth in either letter or spirit, Hartman returns to the power of interpretation as he finds it in the Talmud. Although, as he points out, "Jewish exegesis ... did not feel a necessity to add a spiritual sense" separate from its readings, Hartman sees a method for uniting letter and spirit in the Jewish Talmud's interplay between text and commentary.

Hartman's recommendation of Talmud should not be taken as a parochial plug for Judaism. His primary interest has always been in interpretive method

itself. In his last section, Hartman returns to what constitute the sacred texts of his career, the works of Goethe and Wordsworth. These texts, Hartman writes, provide "an antidote to the growth of insensibility" through an "ecological compact" that offers transcendence without bloody apocalypse. Art of this order provides a bulwark not only against the passivity of current popular culture but also the misplaced materialism of recent cultural theory, known broadly as "cultural studies." Cultural studies is properly attuned to the voices of women and minorities neglected by prior criticism and admirably committed to social justice. But Hartman argues that in viewing the aesthetic as merely a tool of ideology that mystifies real history, cultural studies reduces the humanities to a weak form of sociology.

For the most part, I say "amen" to Hartman's recommendations. But I am also left with some questions.

While I sympathize with many aspects of Hartman's dim view of current popular culture, I find it hard to detect in this book the Hegelian hope Hartman says he prefers to T. S. Eliot's dour vision of cultural decline. I am not, of course, asking for some pollyannish affirmation à la Ronald Reagan's *Morning in America*. Rather, I want to ask: Aren't there popular films, television shows, and songs that do not fall into the apocalyptic traps that Hartman documents? And don't people, even if they lack Hartman's erudition and readerly legerdemain, often process these texts in searching and unpredictable ways? I imagine that Hartman's answer to both questions would be "yes," but the only example I could find of a more benign snippet of popular culture in these essays is Hartman's analysis of the scene in *The Shawshank Redemption* where classical music is piped over the prison courtyard. This suggests that Hartman might find it worth revisiting the orientation in rhetorical theory and cultural studies toward the complexities of how popular culture is not only consumed but

used and recycled by various audiences.

In the end, I'm not sure what space Hartman allows for ecstatic experience outside of sublime passages like the ones we both love in Wordsworth, although he does praise the "visionariness of the Bible...in which the Israelites, bearers of the blessing, struggle with man and God alike." Even ringed by the salutary fire of Hartman's informed skepticism, I think that we need a holy *impatience*. The key is not to allow our impatience to force the spring through violence toward the Other. We must instead channel that feeling into a commitment to recognizing what Hartman, citing Emmanuel Levinas, calls the prophetic "essence of the human, the traumatism that wakes it to its freedom." Perhaps this is where the *Träumerei* of productive dreams and the chastening power of trauma meet. I hear that possibility in a well-known passage from Emily Dickinson that Hartman wrote on some decades ago and that kept passing through my mind as I read this tough-minded and humane book:

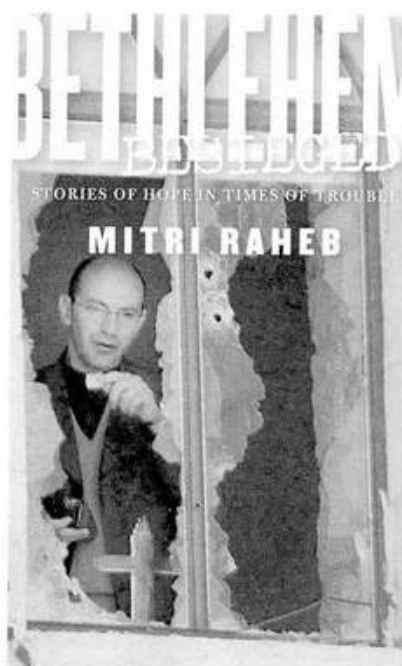
There's a certain Slant of light,
Winter Afternoons—
That oppresses, like the Heft
Of Cathedral Tunes—

Heavenly Hurt, it gives us—
We can find no scar,
But internal difference,
Where the Meanings, are—

None may teach it—any—
'Tis the Seal Despair—
An imperial affliction
Sent us of the air

Dickinson is unsure whether anyone "may teach" the knowledge of this "Seal Despair." But *Scars of the Spirit* suggests that we can come collectively to understand these woundings if we look closely for "the Meanings" of "internal difference" carved out by the letter, despite the oppressive orthodoxy of "Cathedral Tunes." What follows from that knowledge is another matter. □

Capsule Reviews



- *Bethlehem Besieged: Stories of Hope in Times of Trouble*, by Mitri Raheb. Augsburg Fortress (2004).

Mitri Raheb's *Bethlehem Besieged* is neither a sophisticated political tract, nor is it the kind of self-conscious memoir the *New York Times* best-seller list has come to expect. Raheb writes clearly and cleanly, but there's nothing particularly elegant about the writing itself. Rather, the power of this book comes from its author's insistence on viewing the world around him in unflinching detail.

What was it like to live next door to the Church of the Nativity in April of 2002? Why do people who have the opportunity to leave Bethlehem return to it? How do we define our lives when the mere fact of attending church is a rebellious act? What is it like to be a

Christian in the Muslim world? What is it like to be a Palestinian Arab living under Israeli occupation?

By the time I reached the third chapter, Raheb had me in the palm of his hand. What good Jewish lefty hasn't said these words before when it comes to Israel:

[While hearing their views], I was amazed at how the same issue can be interpreted so differently and how the same facts can be related to each other in such diverse and even adversarial ways, creating a new picture every time.

Or heard an Israeli say this:

I wonder if the day will ever come when the land will stop swallowing its children. I pray that they will be able to graduate, celebrate their weddings, and share with their children memories of the good old days.

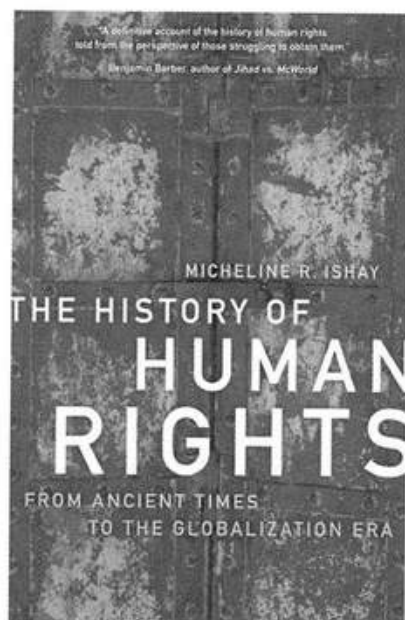
The strength of *Bethlehem Besieged* is that it articulates a seemingly "alien" Christian position from within the

Palestinian/Israeli conflict: Raheb is a Lutheran Minister and writes from within the language of his faith, not Islam and not Judaism. We might find Arab culture alien, but Christian culture is just like home, isn't it?

I was left feeling awfully naïve by the time I finished the book. I feel as though what I thought I knew, not just about the *matzav* (situation), but also about myself and what I believe in, has been called to question. There's nothing quite like putting a human face on a political position (in this case, life in the West Bank Occupation) to make it abundantly clear what the human costs of the political position are.

—Cynthia Hoffman

- *The History of Human Rights: from Ancient Times to the Globalization Era*, by Micheline R. Ishay. University of California Press (2004).



The United States has been entirely recalcitrant in implementing the international legal framework that has emerged to support human rights. As federal judge William Young observed in a May 2004 decision on prisoner rights, "When the United States ratifies human rights agreements, it often does so subject to extensive reservations, understandings, and declarations to the effect, *inter alia*, that the treaty is not understood to require a change in United States law or practice, that the United States does not submit to the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice...."

The March 2004 hearings of the U.S. House Committee on the Judiciary concerning the role of foreign judg-

ments in the interpretation of American law were a carnival for legal isolationists who reject the citation and use of foreign judicial opinions in human rights cases. This xenophobia receives support within the Supreme Court, as where Justice Scalia protested in his dissent in *Lawrence v. Texas* (which struck down a Texas statute prohibiting same-sex sodomy) that "this Court should not impose foreign moods, fads, or fashions on Americans."

Micheline Ishay's *History of Human Rights* integrates such "foreignness" into a comprehensive history of human rights, from ancient civilizations to contemporary globalization debates. This is an ambitious project, one that encounters the difficulties of historical summary and synthesis. The strengths that Ishay exhibits lie in European intellectual history since the Enlightenment. Her final chapters addressing globalism and human rights are excellent summaries of these emergent politics.

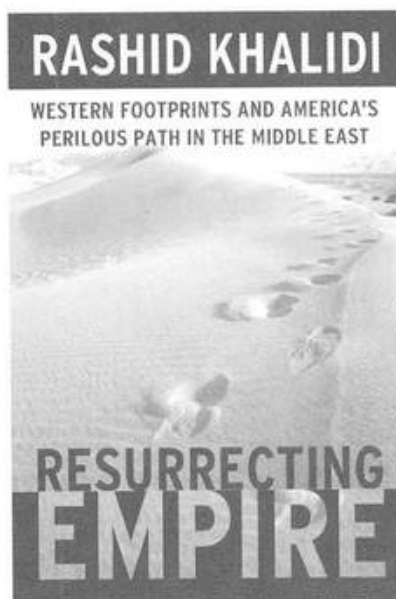
While Ishay makes numerous references to political histories beyond Europe, there is far less discernable fluency in the intellectual histories of human rights in Asian, African, and indigenous American civilizations. With only passing citations of Guatemala and Chiapas, for example, native American peoples emerge here as beneficiaries of human-rights thought, rather than as active and ongoing contributors.

Legal isolationism has a stridently loud voice in the United States, one that praises "American standards" that in fact offer significantly lower human rights protections than in many lesser-developed countries. Uninformed constitutional nativism now threatens to become overwhelming, with catastrophic effects for individual lives. Global histories of human rights development such as *The History of Human Rights* are crucial tools to provide U.S. legal thought with an intellectual map of its origins, its comparative international context, and its declining standing. —Joe Lockard

- *Resurrecting Empire: Western Footprints and America's Perilous Path in the Middle East*, Rashid Khalidi. Beacon Press (2004).

In the United States, debates over the war in Iraq have tended to focus on the immediate questions: Did the Ba'athist regime possess weapons of mass destruction or did it not? Was Saddam Hussein a madman bent on regional conquest and global terrorism or merely a run-of-the-mill dictator, no better or worse than other contemporary autocrats? By contrast, Rashid Khalidi's *Resurrecting Empire* invites us to consider the war in its historical context, suggesting that relevant aspects of modern Middle Eastern history have been overlooked by the administration in Washington, cable news pundits, and most of the public.

Khalidi highlights the region's movement toward political liberalization during the first part of the twentieth century, the role of European and American administrations in undermining its fledgling democracies, and the resulting memory (both living and historical) of colonial occupation and resistance. This history and Khalidi's extensive notes section provide a use-



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ful introduction for those seeking to deepen their understanding of the historical and modern Middle East.

Less helpful, perhaps, is the chapter devoted to U.S. support for Israel. Here, Khalidi details the shifts in U.S. policy but offers no direct analysis of the link between this issue and his main thesis. Many in the Middle East may see U.S. involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the war in Iraq as elements of a single agenda, but while some connections here are real, others are clearly false. *Resurrecting Empire* neither clarifies the former, nor dispels the latter.

A similar problem lies in the book's discussion of imperialism. Khalidi warns the United States against stepping into the boots of European imperialists, yet offers no guiding analysis of the forces that drove imperialism in the past and those that drive it today. Should the friction between the United States and the European Union over the Iraq war be read as a validation of Lenin's prediction of competition between capitalist states? Or should we recognize in the activities of multinational corporate profiteers the decentralized, deterritorialized form of empire envisioned more recently by Hardt and Negri?

Theory should not dogmatically guide the inquiry of social scientists but should, rather, be built and revised by our investigations. Khalidi's new work stops short of the riskier task of reconstructing our understanding of imperialism, but his contribution to that task will surely be a valuable one when it comes. —J. C. Myers

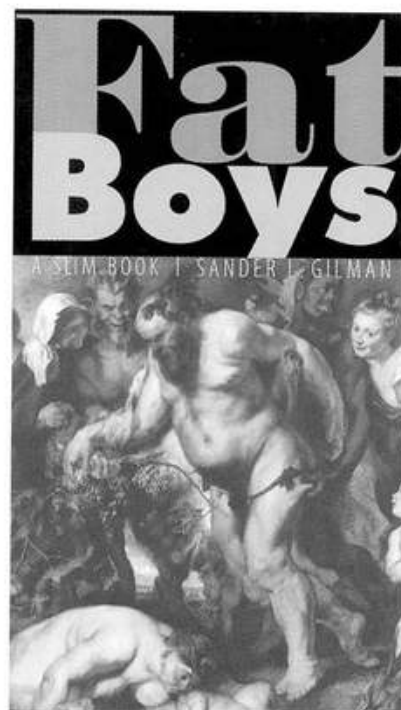
■ *Fat Boys: A Slim Book*, by Sander L. Gilman. University of Nebraska Press (2004).

Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle was a rotund slapstick actor and peer of Buster Keaton. Best known for playing gigantic man-children who topple into trouble, Arbuckle signed contracts that required him to stay heavy. His career crashed and burned when he was accused of killing a young actress during a sexual encounter by crushing her with his bulk and destroying her insides.

In Jerry Stahl's recent novel *I, Fatty*, the irony is that Arbuckle is unable to perform sexually because of years of heroin addiction. Framed by sleazy Hollywood insiders, Arbuckle is unable to admit to the fact that would prove his innocence.

But in Sander Gilman's *Fat Boys*, Arbuckle's reversal becomes a prism through which one can view the contradictory images of male obesity. Arbuckle is the ultimate non-threatening male, too fat and baby-like to harm anyone—until he transforms into a terrifying sexual bulldozer.

Those opposing images—the jolly fat man and the angry fat man—are typical of the extremes we project onto the plus-sized male body. In Gilman's view, "fat boys" become a focus for a whole range of cultural anxieties about male bodies. The legal and medical establishments, along with popular culture, strive to define the "normal" or "rational" person (who is always a



man) in part by contrasting him with the excesses of the large man.

Gilman documents dozens of instances in which large men are showcased as abnormal, and yet also appear imbued with special power or significance because of their fat. The book includes chapters on fat detectives (like Nero Wolfe) and fat ballplayers (like Babe Ruth). It also discusses the influence of Shakespeare's Falstaff, whom Gilman calls "Patient Zero."

Fat has long been perceived mostly as a women's issue, and Gilman explicitly attempts to reclaim it for men, by demonstrating the cultural significance of male obesity as an "abnormal" signifier, and drawing on the work of feminist thinkers like Judith Butler.

Fat Boys is a useful survey of images of male obesity in literature and pop culture, but in the end the litany of stereotypes and archetypes doesn't seem to lead to any coherent conclusions. (Also, don't pick up this book expecting a discussion of the 1980s rap group The Fat Boys, who only receive one brief mention.) Gilman's book almost entirely focuses on Western European, white, and Jewish fat boys.

—Charlie Anders

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Oy, a Punk: Liz Nord's *Jericho's Echo*

Ron Nachmann

During the eighties, I was one of many American Jewish kids raised by Israeli parents as a left-wing Zionist who also identified with the rebellious subculture of American and British punk. My attempts to link the two movements often met with bewilderment from my parents—they wondered what was so Israeli about punk's harsh music, politics, and style.

It turns out that the eighties already saw punk infiltrating Israeli culture. San Francisco filmmaker Liz Nord offers the best response to the surprised reactions she gets when she describes *Jericho's Echo*, her documentary-in-progress on today's Israeli punk scene: "I know—who knew?"

So what's there to know? The twenty-seven-year-old Nord came to the punk scene while growing up in a culturally conscious and denominationally searching Jewish family in Syracuse, New York. "Though I hadn't been to Israel at the time," she notes, "I had a grounding in Judaism with Israel as a crucial element. Then there was the punk community going on in my life, with music and artists, and all my friends doing all these crazy, wonderful things."

Nord's work with the independent Negative Progression record label got her connected with the well-known Tel Aviv pop-punk band Useless ID. "Suddenly it was like, wham, maybe these two things—punk and Israel—can converge in some way." She first formulated the film as a documentary focused on Useless ID, but by the time she arrived in Tel Aviv to start shooting, she saw the entire Israeli punk scene as a burgeoning and relevant



reaction to the country's general state of existential crisis.

Nord found a range of nuance to the punks' generally anticlerical, anti-authoritarian stance. "Some of them definitely identify as Jewish, and some of them are really glad that Israel's a Jewish state, even though they don't practice the religion. Other kids said that Judaism is what's ruining the country, that it's the religious that keep fucking it up for everyone."

But Nord doesn't see Israeli punk as necessarily anti-spiritual. "I sense that their scene is a way of expressing their emotions about what's happening both on the ground and within. When you go to a live small-scale punk show, there's definitely a high spiritual energy."

The dozen or so bands that appear in *Jericho's Echo* run the gamut of punk substyles and attitudes. Poppier bands like Useless ID and Beer7 (from Be'er Sheva) appeal to the scene's more escapist wing, while the crunchier Chaos Rabak represents the growing,

mostly Russian proletarian *olim* (recent immigrant) street punks.

But it's political—mostly anarchist and leftist—bands like Va'adat Kishut and Nikmat Olalim (named after a Jewish terrorist gang) that reflect Israel's new breed of anguished activists. Made up of politically conscious teens, these groups get harsher in their anti-authoritarian rhetoric as their members reach eighteen, the age of compulsory military service, which leaves many of the punks too burnt out to continue in the scene.

Nord notes that many of the new bands will stick around for longer because of an increasingly common phenomenon—their members are risking permanent social stigma by seeking insanity deferments from psychiatrists, a drastic move which will effectively cut off other possibilities. "I found it odd that the government was willing to stamp all these ID cards psychotic and let supposedly insane people roam the society," she says.

Nord even features the right-wing nationalist band Retribution as a foil to Israeli punk's generally progressive slant. Surprisingly, according to Nord,

Music editor Ron Nachmann is a journalist, editor, and culture worker living in San Francisco.

they're able to insist on the reality of proactively defending the country without explicitly pandering to Arab-bashing sentiment.

Jericho's Echo offers many other similarly compelling tableaux from this virtually unknown community. Kids relate that suicide bombings have robbed the scene of both band members and fans. In one sequence, a car full of young *haredim* (ultra-Orthodox Jews) drives up to a punk show, and the initial tension is relieved when one of the students emerges to embrace his brother, a member of one of the bands, who he's come to watch perform. With scenes like these, Nord shows these kids facing their need to connect as humans in an impossible situation.

Nord now faces her own need to fund *Jericho's Echo's* unavoidable technical costs. With the film now a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) project, Nord seeks to maintain the momentum generated by donations from the global punk scene. "Kids from all over have made little donations, which shows that there's a community building around the project. Now we're at a stage where we have to find a big chunk of money to bring the project up to broadcast standards." (Interested parties can find out more about the project and how to donate at <http://www.jerichosecho.com>.)

"Who knew" indeed. "I think the

movie breaks stereotypes of the ideal Israel," says Nord. "There's an under-side, there's poverty, not everything is

great. My movie exposes both those situations and some truly excellent things that people need to know about." □

Capsule Reviews

- *Radio Palestine: Sounds of the Eastern Mediterranean*. Sublime Frequencies, 2004.

In his liner notes for his audio-collage CD of mid-1980s eastern Mediterranean radio, *Radio Palestine*, album curator Alan Bishop (of the ethno-surrealist Seattle guitar trio Sun City Girls) offers a striking anecdote about how the album got named. When Bishop informed Mohammed—a Haifa Arab he met during his travels who became his music mentor—of his plans to release his recordings, Mohammed insisted on the title, "because someday there will be a radio station *here*" that sounds just like it. This unstated political desire to realize such a "here" makes *Radio Palestine* a thoroughly compelling listen.

Among other things, *Radio Palestine's* stew of music and news snippets hint at how stunningly prolific the Arab world's recording industry is. We hear yearning string stabs, desolate *bazouq*

solos, chugging belly dance rhythms, psychedelic guitar riffs, and soaring male and female vocals. Along the way, we encounter short, scattered examples of Greek *sartaki*, Egyptian orchestras, Algerian *rai*, and other styles. And, as is natural for such a culturally cosmopolitan region, Western pop's inescapable visage keeps reappearing throughout: a bit of Pink Floyd here, a touch of Louis Armstrong there, while in some distant corner of the radio dial, a French chanteuse sadly croons.

Unavoidable, of course, are the politics of the time. Alongside extracts of BBC shortwave reports chronicling the fading Cold War, Bishop tunes in fiery Arabic political speeches and denunciations of PLO terrorism on Israeli army radio, in tandem with the BBC-like opening tones of public radio station Reshet Gimme's hourly news program. Not to delimit all Israeli references to state broadcasting, Bishop also includes the short track "Voice of Peace,"



The Women Who Danced By The Sea  Finding Ourselves in the Stories of our Biblical Foremothers	THE WOMEN WHO DANCED BY THE SEA Finding Ourselves in the Stories of our Biblical Foremothers MARSHA MIRKIN, Ph.D. "This is the kind of writing that has the power to be life-changing." —Atlanta Journal-Constitution "This is a wise and wonderful book, a book to open minds and nourish souls." —Rabbi Harold Kushner "Mirkin is a passionate storyteller who enables us to see ourselves in each story that she tells. The connection between biblical women and people living today is so moving and insightful that it is almost impossible to read this book without feeling inspired to grapple with our own relationships that emerge more fully invested in life and love." —Harriet Lerner <i>The Women Who Danced By The Sea</i> is the first book of its kind to view the lives of biblical women through the lens of contemporary psychological theories. Mirkin ties the stories of Eve, Sarah, Hagar, Rebecca, Leah, Miriam and others to the struggles of contemporary women and men who have met in her twenty-year clinical practice and looks at what we can learn from their experiences.	OPEN SECRETS  The Letters of Reb Yerachmiel ben Yisrael Rami M. Shapiro	OPEN SECRETS The Letters of Reb Yerachmiel Ben Yisrael RAMI SHAPIRO "A prophetic voice for twenty-first-century Judaism." —Reb Zalman Schachter-Shalomi "Open Secrets invites us into the most intimate of settings, the whispered wisdom passed from an authentic hasidic master to his student. It radiates warmth, passion for the Divine, and earthy confidence in sacredness. A treasure for the spiritual seeker of any tradition." —Judith Simmer-Brown "A rare jewel, a powerhouse of spiritual wisdom that you can read and reread." —Joan Borysenko The fictional hasidic master, Reb Yerachmiel writes to his student who has moved from the old country to America. In providing answers to his questions about God, the nature of reality, Judaism, whether all religions are true, death, intermarriage and more, Reb Yerachmiel offers a Judaism as ancient as it is modern.
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named after (and sampling from) the long-forgotten renegade offshore radio station that American anti-war activist Abie Nathan ran throughout the 1970s and 80s.

What makes *Radio Palestine's* chaotic melange of voices and melodies cohere is the invisible glue of simple broadcast technology. We hear the wild "woo" of a captured sound wave, the crunch of static between stations, and intriguingly, the *thunk* of Bishop furtively punching his radio's preset button. Much as DJs compose by scratching and mixing together disparate pre-recorded sounds, Bishop effectively plays the radio like an instrument, subverting the region's ethnocultural boundaries with each whirl of the dial in order to broadcast a new future "here": a sprawling multicultural reality he calls Palestine. —R.N.

- Basya Schechter
Queen's Dominion
- Raz Mesinai
Cyborg Acoustics
Both from Tzadik, 2004.

For the past nine years, New York jazz composer John Zorn's Tzadik label has excavated compelling new Jewish music from under layers of typical notions, i.e., that Jewish music comprises klezmer and Israeli pop, folk, and early Zionist anthems. Indeed, Tzadik's aim for Jewish music has been to dig and—to paraphrase Art Blakey talking about jazz—wipe away the dust of everyday life, creating an entirely new Jewish musical idiom. Two recently released Tzadik recordings find composers Basya Schechter and Raz Mesinai standing at the ready.

Schechter is the founder and lead singer of Jewish/Mid-Eastern/Indian fusionist group Pharoah's Daughter, whose members appear on *Queen's Dominion*, her first solo album. The album's thirteen instrumental tracks find the composer merging Arabic

styles with Renaissance-era European touches, turning familiar folk sounds into exhilarating mood pieces that sluice through the boundaries of culture and history.



Between her own twanging *oud* and Alan Kushan's shimmering *satur*—Schechter's band finds room to both trek desert sands (the chugging "Dead Sea") and chat intimately in cozy tents (the delicate "Bedouin Tea Party"). By the time the richly minimalist *Queen's Dominion* swings into the ominous album closer, "Werewolf," it's clear she's created classically post-Israeli music that speaks both to Middle Eastern influence on diasporic music, and Israel's own indigenous music culture.

Moving in an entirely opposite direction, the Israeli-born Mesinai—a former yeshiva student from Mea Shearim known for artfully swirling Middle Eastern music into dub reggae—has embraced the "new music" scene, composing neo-classical electronic works for computers and turntables. His latest work, *Cyborg Acoustics* finds Mesinai exploring the psychological environment of large-scale human despair. The album is largely comprised of "Ghosts of the Gulag," a piece Mesinai was commissioned to create by the Ark Project, which is focused on finding missing prisoners of the Soviet Gulag.

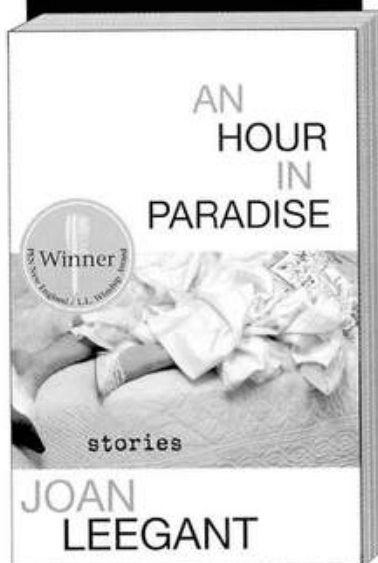
Mesinai's apparent first sketch for the piece appears as *Cyborg's* last track, a poignant, five-minute neo-classical theme for string quartet seeped in a Russian-Jewish folk style that veers between the opaque and the ominous. Mesinai laces elements of that more conventional theme throughout the work, an epically claustrophobic composition that combines found sounds and emotive melodies to create its overall atmosphere. Diverse historic re-imaginings like *Cyborg Acoustics* and *Queen's Dominion* prove ideal examples of Tzadik's much-needed program of Jewish sonic archeology.

—R.N.

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